

**CONFRONTING THE METROPOLIS:
A STUDY OF NORTHEAST STUDENTS IN DELHI**

Thesis submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the award of the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

B. LALZARLIANA



**Center for the Study of Social Systems
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI - 110067**

2012




20th July 2012

DECLARATION

This thesis entitled, "Confronting the Metropolis: A Study of Northeast Students in Delhi" submitted by Mr. B. Lalzarliana, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of degree of Doctor of Philosophy of this university has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other University. To the best of our knowledge this is an original work.

We recommend that this thesis be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

Prof. SURINDER S. JODHKA
(Chairperson)

 Chairperson
CSSS/SSS
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi - 110067

Prof. AVIJIT PATHAK
(Supervisor)

Professor
Centre for the Study of Social Systems
School of Social Sciences.
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi - 110 067

Acknowledgements

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." Proverbs 1:7.

The present endeavour cannot happen alone, it is only with help from friends and well-wishers that it is able to see the light of day. I here do express my heartfelt gratitude and omitting it will be a grave injustice on my part.

First, I would like to express my thankfulness to Prof. Avijit Pathak for his kind and valuable guidance. In spite of my shortcomings and limitations in the research, he patiently gave support and encouragements. Choosing a supervisor is not only for the sake of having one, but also a belief in their philosophy and outlook. I hope that kind of outlook comes out in the present work.

I express my appreciation to the University Grant Commission for giving me financial assistance during the course of writing this thesis.

I salute the teachers in my schools, Roseland School, Champhai High School and Gandhi Memorial Higher Secondary School, librarian and staff of Champhai District library. It is your belief in a boy who likes reading that I am able to stand where I am today.

Throughout the course of this work, many scholars and friends have expressed their interest in the work and made valuable contributions for which I am indebted. I express my thanks to Dr. Lam Khan Piang and Sabina Yasmin Rahman for showing active involvement in the process of writing.

I also want to thank Engkima, Neeru, Thanghminga, F-i, Aren, Lovi, Thang, Joseph, Ngura, Robert, Biaka, Buata, Partei, Tetea, Allen, Isaac, Zuali, Sangi, Mapuii, Vincent, Jackie and Mami for their support and encouragement in time of need. I also want to remember my wing mates in Mandavi hostel who had made my stay a pleasant and enjoyable experience.

Lastly, I want to thank my family members - my mother and father, B-a, Sangtei, Mapuii and my grandmother. Without your love and prayers, this work would not have been possible.

*B. Lalzarliana
20th July 2012*

Dedicated to my parents

B. S. Kailiana

and

Lalropani

CONTENTS

CHAPTERS	Pages
Preface	1
1. Introduction	3
1. Introducing the Subject	
2. Looking at the Urban Text – A metaphor of representation	
3. Northeast India	
4. Political Imbroglio	
5. The Identity Question	
6. The Landscape	
7. The Road to Delhi	
8. Locating Northeast Students in Delhi	
i) DU North Campus Area	
ii) DU South Campus Area	
iii) Munirka/Ber Sarai	
iv) Other Areas	
7. College Students	
2. Methodology	50
1. Concepts in Operation	
2. Significance of the Study	
3. Field of Research and Methodology	
4. Objectives	
5. Sampling Procedure	
6. Ethnography as Research Method	
7. Gatekeepers	
8. Ethics	
9. Studying One's Own Society	
3. Confronting the Metropolis	68
1. Introduction to Delhi Life	
2. The Admission Process	
3. Delhi University Undergraduate Admission	
4. What is there beyond DU?	
5. Private Institutions	
i) APTECH, Kamla Nagar	

ii) IACM, South Extension – I	
iii) Softdot, South Extension – I	
5. Delhi University- Everyday College Experience	
6. Class-Room Politics	
7. Everyday Identity Politics	
8. Individual Identity	
4. Northeast Students in Delhi – The Urban Experience	96
1. Why come to Delhi?	
2. Student's Life in Delhi	
3. Northeast Youth and Cyberculture	
4. Living the Cyber Life	
5. The Net as a Social Space	
6. A LAN Gaming Party	
7. Northeast Festivals In Delhi	
8. Tsüngrem Mong	
9. A Delhi Harvest Festival	
10. A Modern Festival: Delhi Mizo Kut	
11. Being Dead in the City: A Narrative of Death Rites in Delhi	
12. The Wake at the House	
13. The Northeast Tamchon Football Tournament	
14. Modern Headhunting: The Head in the Goal	
5. Conclusion	155
6. Bibliography	161
7. Appendices	

PREFACE

The present day scenario of urbanization and metropolises and the various factors that they imply carry a loaded weight. Anonymity and the melting pot of urbanism had lent credence to a whole new form of study. While traditional Anthropology has dedicated itself to the study and analysis of primitive and traditional cultures, sociology has since its inception ploughed deep into the urban experience and its social implications.

The culture of the city and every lived experience had captured the imagination and interest of the various sociologists and social scientists. They have tried to catch the essence of what it feels to lived in a city and experience the urban dream. The present study is another step in this direction, albeit with a slight nuance. While most of the studies on cities and urban culture are based on the city dwellers' point of view, the present study aimed to look at the lived experience from the view of a visitor, a stranger in the city who is far away from home. From the periphery of India to its centre : a journey from Northeast India to NCR Delhi.

Northeast India, by its location and representation in the national discourse is always seen as the exotic, the other in Indian mentality. In Delhi, they are always seen as different and their representations in the media always highlight this fact. While there are multiple representations, most of the text are not very flattering and paint more of a civilizational difference. The present study therefore attempts to look into urban society and the everyday experience of a particular group of people by analyzing them through the lenses of ethnography.

While drafting the synopsis for the present study, most of the time, I was preoccupied with the marginality that northeast students experience in Delhi.

From the newspaper reports and various NGO's statements, it seemed that the condition of the northeast student in Delhi was deplorable. With oppression and suppression from all quarters like landlords, police, local people and college authorities. Even the proposed first title was Confronting Marginality in the City. But, this was later changed to the present title. While gathering materials for the PhD synopsis, most of the available literature that I was able to find on northeast students in Delhi was on a negative side. It was with that in mind that I go out for the fieldwork. But, the ground was different from the hyper-reality as presented in the media and as felt by the students. Since then, the actual ground of marginality was relegated to the background (this was supposed to be the main focus). Rather, I discover Lefebvre and De Certeau and a whole new world of everydayness and everyday life came into the forefront.

This, therefore, is not a study of marginality (of course, some issues are definitely there), rather, it is an investigation of the city of Delhi as experienced through the lenses of the students and the investigator. The everyday life negotiations that everyone in Delhi has to go through, but which is amplified in this research for the northeast students and their community will be the main focus of investigation.

Henceforth, though initiated from a deeply negative context, I am happy to present a much more optimistic view of reality as it emerged from my findings over a period of four years. While negativity and positivity as well as the balance between subjectivity and objectivity make their play in the reseach arena, this is more of a celebration of life and its possibilities.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introducing the Subject

The study of cities and urbanisation is an important part of sociological inquiry. There is a poem by Kushwaha comparing the city child and the town child in which there is a comparison made between these two modes of life.¹ It was a simplistic comparison as befitting a poem written for young children. But, it is a profound and intriguing poem. We used to study this poem in standard VIII in Mizoram board. While reading it, we just learn it by-heart by rote learning as it

¹ The Town Child

I live in the town in a street;
It is crowded with traffic and feet;
There are buses and motors and trams;
I wish there were meadows and lambs
The houses all wait in a row,
There is smoke everywhere that I GO.
I don't like the noises I hear-
I wish there were woods very near
There is only one thing that I love,
And that is the sky Far above.
There is plenty of room in the blue
For castles of clouds and me, too!

The Country Child

My home is a house near a wood
(I'd live on a street If I could!) .
The lanes are so quiet Oh dear!
I do wish someone lived near.
There is no one to play with at all,
The trees are so high and so tall;
And I should be lonely for hours,
Were it not for the birds and the flowers.
I wish that I lived in a town-
To see all the trams going down
A twinkling street that is bright
With wonderful colours at night! - Surendra Kushwaha

was a task which was required of us. But now, it has become very important and interesting as to compare the experiences of a country and town child. The mentioned poems are a simplistic illustration of a self that is intrigued and fascinated by the other and the other-worldly. Another simple story about the comparison is to be found in Aesop's fable of the town mouse and the country mouse where the relative banality and simplicity of the country is compared with the lights and sounds of the city along with the danger and chaos besides the diversity. These two are just among the various narratives in popular culture in which the contrast is given.

City life with all its glitz and sights is always taken in contrast with the country life which is unchanging and simple. The rural-urban dichotomy has long been a subject of serious inquiry and research. At the other end of the spectrum, instead of vast divergences, the rural-urban continuum model is also used to investigate the social reality. What becomes important here is whether there is any marked differences between life in the city as compared to the one in the country. The myths of development and the confidence in a linear progress of humanity and habitation has fostered the belief that modernity and technological advances have also led to corresponding progress in human life. These concerns framed the various disciplines which seek to examine these processes.

The development of industrialisation and the rapid change in the mode of habitation and modes of production could be called to be the catalyst for modern urbanisation. The lived experience of the urban location has been a part of human history for more than three thousand years. The ancient civilisations were all mostly based on urbanisation and an urban form of production and livelihood. The Indus Valley Civilisation, the Egyptian Civilisation and the Sumerian Civilisation were mostly urban based. So, urbanisation and urbanism is not a new way of life. Rather, it is through the ebb and flow of political

fortunes as well as modes of development and production that urban centres have come to rise and fall in course of human history.

Metropolis as it implies is a dwelling, a *polis* which is large and not just a simple human habitation. It is a conglomerate of several villages which have come together. After the ancient civilisations and several civilisations in the Asian and African continents, it is the turn of Europe to experience urbanisation. The urbanisation in Europe and the rest can be different in the simple fact that while urban locales existed prior to it, it is the industrial revolution that spurred and hasten the development of urbanisation. The demand for labour and the loss of productivity in the countryside coincided with the rise of urban metropolises. Thus, the industrial towns and cities in England emerged during the industrial revolution of the 1840's.

Marx's period of activity coincided with the development of industrialisation in England. He was able to witness first hand, the impact of industrialisation on the workers and on the process of urbanisation. The critique that he raised was not only directed against capitalism and the indentured nature of labour but also urbanisation and its impact on the society and the landscape. Here we can see his observation:

"The bourgeoisie has subjected the country to the rule of the towns. It has created enormous cities, has greatly increased the urban population as compared with the rural, and has thus rescued a considerable part of the population from the idiocy of rural life". (Marx and Engels, {1848} 1972)

The twin observations can be clearly demarcated here. While the capitalists were mentioned for subverting the rural area through the cities, rural life was seen as a sort of stupidity and senselessness. In comparison with the urban life, it was looked down upon and presented as a source of stagnancy. This view continues

till late where country bumpkin, *gaon-walla*, and villagers etc. are still taken as representing simplicity and stupidity.

Even today the process of urbanisation is linked to a large degree with industrialisation and to some extent in India with the development of service industries. So, while we have industrial cities like Surat, Kanpur, Mumbai etc, we can also see development in service sectors like Bangalore, Hyderabad, Gurgaon etc. The development of Information Technology and the resultant sector that it brought up has led to the development of Bangalore into a global hub, so much so that the term "*Bangalored*" means that a job has been taken away by Indian service sector.²

Industrialisation has led to far reaching changes in the organisation of habitation and family structure. The development of industries do not usually happen in a planned and structured manner. The construction of factories, warehouse to store the finish goods and the dwelling places for the factory workers were usually done in a hurry, with importance given to economy rather than comfort, space and hygienic locations. Families which were used to living in wide open spaces in the country were subjected to cramped and shoddy housing, sometimes, even with their livestock in the same room (Mumford, 1961, Quoted in Stevenson, 2003). Mumford comments about city life thus:

"The change from organised urban handicraft to large scale factory production transformed the industrial towns into dark hives, busily puffing, clanking, screeching, smoking for twelve to fourteen hours a day, sometimes going around the clock...The new industrial city has many lessons to teach; but for the urbanist its chief lesson was in what to avoid." (Mumford, 1961)

² Depending on the reading, this can be taken both in the negative and positive stance. The term look similar to *Shanghaied* which is used to refer to sometime who has been taken against his will to serve in a ship. In this case, the connotation is negative as it refers to doing something against one's will.

The city was viewed as a place where bad things happen in the dark. Especially within the context of the factories, Blake (1808) even referred to it as the “*dark satanic mill*”. Contemporary commentators during the industrial revolution mostly talk about the depravity of life in the wake of the sudden upheaval in demography during the rush for the establishment of factories.

Beside social commentators and reformers, the city life was also a part and parcel of the literature of that period. Notable among them was Charles Dickens. His graphic descriptions of the squalor and wretched quality of life portray the living condition of prevalent during his times.

The study in Indian sociology and anthropology are largely based on the tradition and practices of the rural communities. Tradition was an important path of enquiry in early Indian sociology and social anthropology. The village studies can be taken as the precursor of the trend in which Indian sociology was taking its trajectory. The village studies tried to look at the traditional practices of Indian society and see how far they can be taken as a marker for the general Indian populace. Traditional practices in the villages are then studied and analyzed. It is no wonder that most of the early sociologists in India are known by their village studies. Srinivas, Dube, Bêteille among other are connected with their villages and most of their theorizing also comes from these studies initially. At the same time, Indian sociology is also concerned with modernity and modernisation (Bêteille, 2002).

However, urban sociology also has its adherents and practitioners. The rural-urban dichotomy that was for a long time a tool for the understanding of rural-urban divide and its terminological sister rural–urban continuum are taken as providing an understanding of the urban society.

Indian urban studies tends to focus on urban geography, industrial problems, equality, urban economics, slum studies, health related issues, usage and struggle for urban spaces for accommodation, urban culture and its representation in the mass media and entertainment media (see Patel and Deb 2006, Anjaria and McFarlane 2011). These diverse themes collectively tried to present an understanding of what urban studies as about. The tell-tale book titles can attest to this fact. Patel and Deb christened their book an unimaginative "Urban Studies" while Anjaria and McFarlane gave theirs a more geographical oriented title of "Urban Navigations".

The "city beautiful" as the name being given to an approach in urban design that came about in the central district of a host of European cities tried to present a landscape which is beautiful and aesthetically pleasing (Stevenson 2003). These were incorporated in others parts of the world including Delhi. Lutyen's Delhi can be still seen as aesthetically pleasing and more planned with wide open spaces and well laid out roads that were the hall mark of the city beautiful concept. Geographical rendition of the city and its studies and the form that it present propound that cities are not necessarily ugly and that they can also be beautiful. But, in the context of Delhi, this has been limited only to the area known as Lutyen's Delhi during the colonial period. After independence and especially after liberalisation of Indian economy in the early 1990's, the urban sprawl that is Delhi has changed the city landscape and we are now living in a place where there is no planning, the idea of city beautiful has been thrown out of the window and the space that is now being inhabited is more like a big joke. Houses are just constructed where there is space and there is no proper planning in evidence. Encroachment is rampant, slum clusters exist in various pockets of the city and are hard to dislodge, which in turn has a direct impact on the health and sanitation of their inhabitants.

The Commonwealth Games that was held in 2010 has changed the urban scenario to a large extent. Developments in various aspects of the cities can be seen. It has its share of critics too. The cost of living in the city has grown as the Delhi government increased spending on construction works like flyovers, over bridges and beautification of the city. Its repercussions can be seen in the narrative of the various workers also, who have come for the construction but are shunted out as soon as the job was done for cosmetic and aesthetic sensibilities. It drives in a range of inequalities and labor relationship which have their basis on economic and social differences.

The experiences of the urban are varied and part of a multiverse. There are multiple representations and images which are part of the urban landscape. A frenzied media that is hungry for fast paced news paints a picture that is both bright and dismal, a binary opposition which can be seen as some sort of balancing act, a yin and yang kind of interlinking relationship which is not whole without the other. At one hand, the picture of the city as a bright one, replete with golden opportunities and aspirations while on the other hand, that of an anonymous city where murder and rape occurs almost everyday, an underbelly which feeds both on the good and the bad. Thus, urban myths and legends gather their forces and momentum from this kind of synergy where there is a palpable presence of various forces to be harnessed.

Urbanism and urban life has various connotations and forms. The differences between different cities and diverse geographical structure and different contexts have been already pointed out. Wirth (1938) in his seminal work has talk about urbanism as a way of life: "that complex of traits which makes up the characteristic mode of life in cities, and urbanisation".

Looking at the Urban Text - A metaphor of representation

According to Raban, "The city as we imagine it, the soft city of illusion, myth, aspiration, nightmare, is as real, maybe more real, than the hard city one can locate on maps, in statistics, in monographs of urban sociology and demography and architecture" (Raban [1974] 2008). The everyday lived experience became an important part in the construction of identity and experiences. It is within these spaces that collective and individual spaces and meanings are constructed and lived out. Imagination about the city and the hard reality often merged into one another in the multiple histories and narratives of the inhabitants.

The rise of the re-urbanisation post the industrial revolution has posited it in the various literature of classical writer of both fiction and sociology. Thus, the story of *Oliver Twist* and the character of Fagin the Jew, are not only part of Dickensian representation of a particular period of the history of England. Rather, they also belonged to the present century and are an integral part of our own neighborhood. Histories and stories melt together and their presentation gained new forms. Even Dickens' Fagin got a new breath of life in Will Eisner majestic graphic novel *Fagin the Jew*. The story got retold again and again till they become a seamless part of urban memory. The storyline may change, but the internal narrative always remains the same.

City life and all that it brought about can be looked in different ways. Cities are important because of their size and political clout that they can muster. At the same time, they are also important because they are sites of urban culture (Gottdiener and Budd, 2005). This was relatively easy in the past due to comparison with the rural culture. But, this has changed in modern times due to technological advances in communication and sub-urbanisation. The influence of

the mass media has blurred the distinction between rural and urban to a considerable extent.

Barthes has explored the urban landscapes in a number of his works. These work try to look at the urban landscape where personal interpretation of the city and the relationship between the city and the individual is highly subjective and personal. Raban's *Soft City* is a city of senses and everyday mundane life where the individual is highly anonymous and just a part of the city at large.

While it may seem dull and not really a part and parcel of deep scientific research, the everyday lived experiences constitute an important part of the study. It is impossible to talk about the city without the lived experiences of the inhabitants. Lefebvre in *Critique of Everyday Life* dwells on the important theme of alienation (Lefebvre 1991). Lefebvre was talking about the heady days of post liberalization in France which was marked by a strong desire for social transformation and a deep patriotic sense of national purpose (Gardiner, 2000). Thus, his critique deals with the dynamics of modernity and the role of leisure and cultural consumption in modern life. According to Lefebvre, the everyday has been relegated as a trivial and inconsequential part in western thought since the enlightenment. In particular, philosophers have always thought themselves of dwelling beyond the daily dull everyday life in a realm of 'pure thought'. In order that the everyday should not be taken for granted or ignored, Lefebvre implied on the premise that the everyday is where we enter into a dialectical relationship with the external natural and social world in the most immediate and profound sense (ibid, 2000). It is through the otherwise dull and mundane interactions with the material world that both subject and object are fully constituted and humanized through the medium of conscious human praxis.

In pre-modern societies, the everyday is seen as part of the whole human structure and part of his existential life. As such, it is deeply embedded within

the normal fabric of social structure and life in general. With the consolidation of capitalism and capitalist society, this state of affairs changed to a different paradigm. Social activities are highly differentiated; labour became divorced from the individual and became a commodity. The individual became more isolated and inward looking. People spend most of their time within the limit of rigid rules and regulations. According to Lefebvre, "Under modernity imaginative and creative human activity is transformed into routinized and commodified forms, and the exchange -value of things holds sway over their utility, their use-value leading to what Marx called the 'fetishism' of the commodity." Thus, alienation is central to Lefebvrian analysis of the everyday life.

On the other hand Certeau (1984) beg to differ from Lefebvre and conceptualize a different paradigm. Instead of the traditional Marxist assumptions regarding the nature of production, needs and ideology, he asserts that it through the consumption that the individual acquires a sense of identity and self-hood. Or to put it more succinctly, consumption is the locus of production under the condition of late capitalism. Moreover, since needs are now defined in and through the everyday practices and desires of consumers themselves, rather than intellectuals, Certeau calls into question the validity between "true' and 'false' needs, or indeed between use-value and exchange value, (Marcuse 1965, Quoted in Gardiner, 2000).

Taken together, both Lefebvre and Certeau looked at the alienation of the self and the consumption of the masses in the everyday sphere. Within these two viewpoints, we can discern that the everyday is not only mundane but also a site of resistance and production of social reality whereby the forces of production as well as the individual exerts forces on the daily reality. These contradictions and dialogical nature of the process can be seen as what creates the everyday.

Northeast India

Northeast India is a part of the Indian Union which is on the northeastern border of India. Sharing international borders with Tibet, Bhutan, China, Bangladesh and Myanmar, it is one of the most diverse in ethnic and racial composition in India. Occupying an area of 262,230 square kms., the northeast states are eight in numbers, namely, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland Sikkim and Tripura. Earlier it was known as the seven sisters as Sikkim was not part of Northeast geography. With the formation of the North Eastern Council in 1971, Sikkim joined the other northeast states to be its latest entrant. This was mainly due to political compulsions and requirement for the administration of the area.

As an administrative unit, the northeast states constituted a cohesive whole. Compared to other parts of India, the population density in the region barring Assam and Tripura is very low. Unlike other parts of India, a feeling of oneness is present among northeast people *sans* state division when they go to other parts of India.³ The habits of writers and researchers of clubbing them together also played an important part in the confluence of the states in academic discourse.

The history of northeast India followed a different trajectory as opposed to the so-called mainland India. Historically constructed and represented in various discourse, the northeast is always constructed as the other of Indian history, the exotic land of taboo, part of India geographically but not culturally. The points given are always the lack or minimal existence of a Vedic religion and separation

³ However, this is not to negate the existence of deep heterogeneity in Northeast India as carried in various researches. Rather, the factor of unity can also be seen as superimposed from the mainland by the clubbing together of the eight state. From the perspective of the northeast belonging to a same geographical location and knowledge about one another as well as similar cultural practices also foster this unity to a long distance. However, deep internal divisions exist in terms of ethnicity, religion and geographical space.

of northeast India from the Indian mainland during the colonial times. However, various historical sources had presented the reality to be on the other side. Assam was known as Kamrup since ancient times. The existence of Manipur and Tripura was known prior to the coming of the colonizers. Even some tribes of present day Mizoram traded with the Mughals during their zenith. The Vedic epic of Rama and Sita was known in Mizoram long before the coming of the colonial powers (Sangkima, 2002). These are few but pertinent examples to show the knowledge and contact that other part of India have had with the northeast even prior to the coming of the British rule.

Thus, the term 'isolated region' could validly be interpreted only in terms of colonial and postcolonial state attitude, development of technology and means of communication in the region. Baruah observes in this context "...frontiers are not natural, they are man-made....Yet once an area becomes a frontier, the process is not easily reversed" (Baruah, 2007). Therefore, the isolation of northeast India in various discourses seems to be largely a post-independence construct.

In the backdrop of this, the ethnic differences and geographical location also played an important factor for the so-called isolation. Connected to India by the aptly named "Chicken Neck" in West Bengal, the connection with other parts of the country is largely hampered. However, this has come down to a large extent by the better communication and transporting facilities of modern days. The aviation boom has also helped a lot to opening up northeast, especially Manipur, Tripura and Mizoram side which are far away from the Guwahati rail head. This, however, still have its limitations as the cost of transportation for the public mass is still high. At the same time, the opening up will need to negotiate between the frontiers spaces first before going to the mainstream.⁴ However, the purpose here

⁴ Internal bandh and road blockade is a present reality in the northeast with inter-ethnic problems.

is not to portray the narratives about northeast but rather to present how northeast is often situated as the other in Indian national discourse. These national discourses often formed the preconceived notions that people ultimately have about the people. However alternate views regarding landlockness (Prabhakra, 2004) and issue of communications and permeability has also existed side by side. Thus it is in this conflicting space that the northeast question is still made relevant today and the notion of otherness kept reinforced and challenged again and again.

All these discourses, hinge up to a large extent on the question of an Indian identity and the various baggage that it came along with. Khilnani's searching but limited exploration of Indianness dealt largely on religious lines and regionally identities limit to the mainland. (Khilnani, 2004). His context of situating India and taking the motif of the Babri Masjid incident contested the two-nation theory that Indian writers are so fond of. Negotiating religious sentiments and identity fueled national debates and, the Batla House incident covered the national imagination than northeast sport persons winning laurels for India.

The political unrest alongwith various social issues that marked this region affected the younger generation. Born into the post-modern and globalized era, the question of identity and belonging become problematic for them, and they are in conflict wit it, both from within and without. The exodus of large number of students from the various northeast states, who leave their place of origin and comes to metropolitan cities like Delhi to pursue higher education or seek better opportunities exhibit this problem of identity and belonging. They came face to face with mainstream Indian culture and here, again, they are in a zone of conflict, both overt and covert due to their dual identity: one as Northeastern individuals, which they are constantly made conscious of, and the other that as

an Indian, which they have to assert and keep emphasizing at every steps because people in these places do not either acknowledge their Indianess or do not even consider them as Indians.⁵

At the same time, the issues of homogeneity and heterogeneity also have to be re-examined in the context of Northeast India. Almost every study pertaining to the area hardly has any particular state in focus.⁶ The diversity of the northeast states can be seen from the following. We will be looking at the ethnic and religious composition of each states of the Northeast.

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Arunachal Pradesh is the most northeastern part of India. It borders the states of Assam and Nagaland to the south, and shares international borders with Burma in the east, Bhutan in the west, and the People's Republic of China in the north. Most of the people in Arunachal Pradesh are of Tibeto-Burman origin. A large and increasing number of migrants have reached Arunachal Pradesh from many other parts of India, and this had created strife in the state as a result, with struggle for land and resources taking the centre stage.

⁵ I can put many narratives here to attest to this fact. The first time I have heard an incident like this was in 2000 when I just joined college. One senior from Arunachal Pradesh was asked by a Punjabi student to prove his Indian identity. The senior respond with a punch in the face. Another incident also happened the same year when my cousin sister, a student of CI-XI in a Delhi school, went on a school trip to Taj Mahal, Agra. As the northeast students went together, the ticket collectors asked for foreigner rate, so to prove that they are Indians, they had to sing the National Anthem in front of the ticket counter.

⁶ This is not denying the fact that there are several monographs on individual states and areas also. But, whenever possible, the terminology of Northeast is taken as a viewpoint to look at the states. Most writers, it seems, try to hit two birds with one stone by looking at the some particular area and calling it a study of the north east. At the other end of the spectrum, there are also study which are encompassing and broad in their swiipe but which really do not look at the nuances and intricacies of the region. Not withholding the present situation, there are, of course good books on northeast. But, the point here is the capitalization of the term northeast foe every single book.

Within the state of Arunachal Pradesh, there exist many ethnic groups based on geographical location. Near the border of Tibet, there are the Monpa tribes, with several subtribes speaking closely related but mutually incomprehensible languages, and also large numbers of Tibetan refugees. The Tani area includes major tribes like the Nishi, which is used by several scholars to cover Bangni, Tagin and even Hills Miri. The Apatanis also live among the Nishi, but are distinct. In central Arunachal, the Galo are predominant. The Adis are in the east with many subtribes.

In the southeast are the Tai Khamtis. They are linguistically and culturally different from the majority of other Arunachal tribes. There are also large numbers of Chakmas who had come from Bangladesh. The Nocte and Wancho exhibit cultural affinities to the tribes of Nagaland, which they border.

Large percentages of Arunachal's population are animist, and follow shamanistic-animistic religious traditions such as Donyi-Polo and Rangfrah. A small number of Arunachali peoples have traditionally identified as Hindus, although the number is growing as animist traditions are merged with Hindu traditions. Tibetan Buddhism preponderates in the districts of Tawang, West Kameng, and regions adjacent to Tibet. Theravada Buddhism is practiced by groups living near the Burmese border. Large numbers profess Christianity and this percentage is probably growing due to Christian missionary activities in the area.

ASSAM

The state of Assam is among the oldest state in the region. Along with Manipur and Tripura, they can claim the distinction of having a proper civilisation development while others are still in the slash and burn cultivation stage. The name Assam or Axom as it is written comes from the Ahom-Tai kingdom. The Ahoms are originally from Thailand who has settled in the Brahmaputra plain. The Ahoms consider themselves to be the original Assamese. Besides them, there are also several tribal groups in Assam.

1. Boro/Bodo

Bodos are one of the largest ethnic and linguistic groups of the Brahmaputra valley. The Bodo language is a member of the Tibeto-Burmese family. The Roman script and Assamese script were used in the past. Recently, Bodos adopted the Devanagari script. They generally have Mongolian features and this point their origin to somewhere in Tibet and China.

In the past, Bodos worshipped their forefathers. In recent years, Bodos practice Bathouism, Hinduism and Christianity. Bathouism is a form worshipping forefathers called Obonglaoree. The siju plant (belonging to the Euphorbia genus), is taken as the symbol of Bathou and worshiped.

After a decade long agitation, the Bodos have been granted the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), an autonomous administrative body that have within its jurisdiction the present district of Kokrajhar and adjoining areas. The movement for autonomy was headed by the Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT). The BSF, Boro Security Force, an underground organisation of the Bodos, now known as NDFB, National Democratic Front of bodoland, is still involved in insurgency. Following the establishment of the BTC, the BLT have come overground.

2. Mishing

The Mishings, formerly known as the Miris, belong to the family of the Tibeto-Burman group of Assam. They are now plain tribes of Assam chiefly inhabiting the districts of Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Sibsagar, Jorhat, Golaghat and Sonitpur. Next to the Bodos, the Misings are the largest Scheduled Tribe in the state of Assam.

The traditional religious beliefs and practices amongst the Misings are animistic in nature. Do-ni-polo, sun and Moon, are the chief god and goddess of worship according to the Mishing religious faith. However many Mishing had adopted the Vaishnavite faith of Sankardeva. As faiths, the two forms, animism and Vaishnavism, are poles apart, but they have coexisted in the Mising society without any conflict whatsoever, primarily because of the fact that the form of Vaishnavism, as they have been practising it, has not interfered with their traditional customs (drinking rice beer and eating pork, or using them on socio-religious occasions, for instance).

3. Karbi

The Karbis are the principal tribal community in the Karbi Anglong district of Assam. Besides Karbi Anglong district, the Karbi inhabited areas include North Cachar Hills, Kamrup, Marigaon district, Nagaon, Golaghat, Karimganj and Sonitpur districts of Assam; Balijan circle of Papumpare district in Arunachal Pradesh, Jaintia Hills, Ri Bhoi and East Khasi Hills districts in Meghalaya and Dimapur District in Nagaland., the Karbis constitutes the third largest tribal community in Assam after the Bodos and the Mishings.

The Karbis were among the earliest inhabitants of Assam. Racially the Karbis belong to the Mongoloid group and linguistically they belong to the Tibeto-Burman group. Most of the Karbis still practice their traditional belief

system, called "Honghari" which is animistic in nature. Christianity has also entered in a minor way.

4. Dimasa

The Dimasa are part of the greater Kachari group—one of the ancient Kachari tribes. They have Mongolian features and Dimasa Kachari are mainly found in the present-day Dima Hasao District (previously North Cachar Hills) of Assam. They also have a sizable population in Nowgong District of the State.

In Dima Hasao, the ordinary Dimasas have largely adopted Hinduism. The Dimasas in Nowgong District have come under the influence of Assamese Vaishnavism. . The religious practices of the Dimasas are reflected in their Daikho system. A Daikho has a presiding deity with a definite territorial jurisdiction and a distinct group of followers known as Khel. Every Dimasa Kachari family worships its ancestral deity once a year before sowing the next paddy.

5. Other Groups

Besides the five main groups mentioned above, there are also several group of people who lived in Assam. On the Southern frontier, there are several tribes who have both their inhabitants in Asam and the adjoining area like Hmars who are also found in Manipur and Mizoram, Garo also found in Meghalaya, Deori , Lalung, Rabha , Dubla, Madari and beside them, there exist a sizeable Bengali population from Bangladesh, some who have been here before the independence of India and many who are infiltrate into India due to better economic prospects. It is also pertinent to mention that the state of Nagaland and Mizoram are created from Assam and as such have their linkages with the state.

Manipur

In Manipur, the Meiteis who live primarily in the state's valley region, form the primary ethnic group (60% of the total population) but occupy only 10% of the total land area. Their language, Meiteilon (also known as Manipuri), is the lingua franca in the state, and was recognized as one of the national languages of India in 1992. The Muslims (Meitei-Pangal) also live in the valley; the Kukis, Nagas, Hmars, Kukis, Paihtes and other smaller groups form about 40% of the population but occupy the remaining 90% of the total land area of Manipur State. The state is bounded by Nagaland in the north, by Mizoram in the south, by Assam in the west, and by the borders of the country Myanmar in the east as well as in the south.

The people of Manipur follow several faiths and religions which can be traced down to its unique historical past. Sanamahism is an ancient indigenous religion. Early Manipuris were the devotees of a Supreme deity "Lainingthou Soralel" following the footprint of their Godly ancestors. That particular kind of ancestor worship and animism, with the central focus of worship on Umang Lai – that is, ethnic governing deities worshipped in sacred groves. The religious life of the people, even when they adopted non-mainstream Hinduism, retained many characteristics inherited from their prehistoric ancestors. The essentials of this religion remain recognizable to the present day. Hinduism has an ancient presence in Manipur. In the 15th century, a particular form of Vaisnavism was adopted and spread. According to the 2001 census Hinduism is identified with 47% of the population. Christianity in Manipur spread from the 19th century onwards after the influx by Christian missionaries. There also exists a sizeable Muslim populace.

Meghalaya

Meghalaya literally means The Abode of Clouds in Sanskrit. The state is surrounded on the north by Assam and by Bangladesh on the south. Shillong, the capital city is also known as Scotland of the East.

The Khasis are the largest group in Meghalaya, followed by the Garos. Other groups include the Jaintias, the Koch, the related Rajbongshi, the Boro, Hajong, Dimasa, Hmar, Kuki, Lakhar, Mikir, Rabha and Nepali.

Meghalaya is one of three states in India to have a Christian majority with 70.3% of the population practicing Christianity. Hinduism is the next sizeable faith in the region with 13.3% of the population practicing it. A sizeable minority, 11.5% of the population, follow traditional animist religions. Muslims make up 4.3% of the population.

One of the unique features of the State is that a majority of the tribal population in Meghalaya follows a matrilineal system where lineage and inheritance are traced through women. The Khasi and Jaintia tribesmen follow the traditional matrilineal norm where the youngest daughter inherits all the property and acts as the caretaker of aged parents and any unmarried siblings. However, the male line, particularly the mother's brother, may indirectly control the ancestral property since he may be involved in important decisions relating to property including its sale and disposal. In the Garo lineage system, the youngest daughter inherits the family property by default; unless another daughter is so named by the parents.

Mizoram

Mizoram is the southernmost of the northeast states, it shared national borders with Assam, Manipur and Tripura on the north and international borders with Myanmar in the east and Bangladesh in the west. The people of Mizoram are of Mongolian stock and belong to the linguistic family of Tibeto-Burman. It has a long history of movement for secession from the Union of India which was ended by the historic peace accord signed in 1986. Since then, the state is one of the most peaceful in the country.

Barring for the Chakmas and the Brus, Mizoram is mostly inhabited by the Mizo group with sub tribes like Lusei, Pawi, Mara, Hmar, Paite etc. Christianity is the major religion in the state. Buddhism is followed by the Chakmas. However, even among the Chakmas and the Brus, Christianity is gaining grounds.

Nagaland

Nagaland is situated in the eastern part of Northeast India. It shared borders with Arunachal Pradesh in the north, Manipur in the south, Assam on the west and international border with Myanmar in the east. It is inhabited by around 16 tribes who speak different dialects. Tribalism is rampant and individual tribes try to preserve their own ways of life. The Ao, Sema/Sumi, Lotha, Angami, Sangtam, Porchury, Zeliang, Rengma, Konyak, Chakesang, Phom, Yimchunger, Chang, have their own individual areas and tradition.

The Nagas engaged in one of the longest movement for secession in India. Even till today, there is still insurgency spearheaded by the NSCN which is divided into three factions.

While the Nagas are proud of their cultural heritage and their tradition, religiously, they are mostly converted to Christianity after the coming of the Christian missionaries in the 19th century. Yet, there are still pockets where traditional religion is still followed.

Sikkim

The majority of Sikkim's residents are of Nepali ethnic-national origin who arrived in the 19th century. The native Sikkimese consist of the Bhutias, who migrated from the Kham district of Tibet in the 14th century, and the Lepchas who are believed to have migrated from the Far East. Tibetans reside mostly in the northern and eastern reaches of the state. Migrant resident communities include the Biharis, Bengalis and Marwaris who own most of the shops in South Sikkim and Gangtok.

Hinduism has been the major religion in the state since Nepalis moved into Sikkim, followed by Buddhism and traditional religion practised by native Sikkimese people. The Christians are mostly Lepcha people who were converted by British missionaries since the late 19th century. Among other minorities are Muslims of Bihari ethnicity and Jains.

Nepali is the lingua franca of Sikkim. Bhutia and Lepcha are also common. English and Hindi are also spoken and understood in most of Sikkim. Other languages include Dzongkha, Groma, Gurung, Limbu, Magar, Majhi, Majhwar, Nepal Bhasa, Rai, Sikkimese, Sherpa, Sunuwar, Tamang, Thulung, Tibetan, and Yakha.

Tripura

Tripura is the third smallest state of India, according to area. It is surrounded by Bangladesh on the north, south, and west. The Indian states of Assam and Mizoram lie to the east. The capital is Agartala and the main languages spoken are Bengali and Kokborok. It was formerly an independent Tripuri kingdom and was merged with independent India on 15 October 1949 by the Tripura Merger Agreement.

In the 2001 census of India, Bengalis represent almost 70% of Tripura's population and the native tribal populations represent 30% of Tripura's population. The tribal population comprises several different tribes and ethnic groups with diverse languages and cultures with the largest tribal group being the Kokborok-speaking tribes of the Tripuri (16% of the state's population), the Jamatia, the Reang, and the Noatia tribal communities. There is some tension between these native tribal populations and Bengali settlers in tribal areas.

Today most of the Hindus in Tripura, both those who are Bengali and the Tripuri and numerous tribes, are adherents of an animist-Shaktism hybrid of Hinduism, which was the state religion under the Tripuri kings. Muslims of Tripura are second largest religious group in the state. They are mostly Bengali and follow the Sunni sect of Islam. There are also a number of Christians who are mostly from the native Tripuri people and other indigenous tribes.

Political Imbroglia

Barring Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya, most of the states in the northeast have insurgency at one point of time or even at present. The issues of marginality, difference in racial composition, religion, region and a desire for

self-autonomy has long been the hall mark of the region. All the various abbreviations like ULFA, SULFA, MNF, NSCN, PLA, KLNf, HLNf among hosts of the other can be seen as an indicator that there is always an ethnic rumbling deep inside. The idea of ethnic explosion has even been taken as title for a book and the book examines the ethnic background behind such an outpouring of desire for secessionism (Nibedon, 1981).

During the British rule, separate governance system was created for the tribal area as the colonial administrators felt that they would be subsumed by the plainsmen in the event of mass migration to the area. So, a policy of protective discrimination started in the mode of Excluded Area and Partially Excluded Area as well as Inner Line Regulations⁷. After the independence of India, the policy of protective discrimination was continued with the Excluded Area converted into the Sixth Schedule but with other considerations which were disliked by the people.⁸

During the Colonial period, all the respective Hills area was governed by the British directly without hardly any interaction with the rest of India and protected as can be seen from above. However, the events leading to the independence of India painted a different picture for the areas in the Northeast. The Naga unequivocally demanded to be separated from the rest of India and be either left alone and be a crown colony. In their memorandum submitted to the Simon Commission, 1929, the Naga Club stated that:

⁷ The inner line regulations specify that people visiting the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland has to take a special permit. For Indian Nationals, Inner Line Permit from the respective state's commissioner and Restricted Area Permit from the Union Home Ministry for Foreign National. Some groups in Meghalaya and Manipur are now demanding Inner Line Regulations to be incorporated in the states too.

⁸ The Sixth Schedule is only for the tribal area in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram and the other tribal area are dealt with in the Fifth Schedule.

“You (the British) are the only people who have ever conquered us and when you go we should be as we are. If the British Government, however, wish to throw us away, we pray that we should not be thrust to the mercy of the people who could never have conquered us themselves, and to whom we were never subjected; but to leave us alone to determine ourselves as in ancient times”⁹.

From this moment onward, the Naga movement spearheaded by the Naga National Council never look back and the demand for secession was forwarded and continue till the present day. Again here, let us look at the demand and aspirations of the various groups in short.

Assam

The problem of militancy¹⁰ in Assam has its origin in the large-scale migration of refugees from East Pakistan – what is now Bangladesh – since India’s Partition in 1947. The continuous flow of illegal migrants across the borders has disturbed the local demography and is a main source of contention between the local Assamese and the migrants in the struggle for survival. In July 1979, the All Assam Students Union (AASU) and the All Asom Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) launched a mass movement for the detection of illegal immigrants, their deletion from the voters’ list and their deportation to Bangladesh.¹¹ The Central government agreed to the policy of deportation, but insisted on a ‘cut-off’ date of 1971 for the identification of illegal aliens. Irrespective of the cut-off

⁹ Alemchiba, A, 1970, *A brief Historical Account of Nagaland*, Quoted in Misra, Udayon, 1988, *North-East India: Quest for Identity*, Omsons Publications: Guwahati/New Delhi.

¹⁰ The discourse regarding militancy and revolutionary movements as well as its typification still desire a lot more for more systematic analysis. The dominant one in the discourse just put whatever they want. In this respect Foucault’s Power and knowledge is quite relevant.

¹¹ It is interesting to note that on the basis of popular support for the migrant issue the Asom Gana Parishad formed by the Student leaders won the state election. However, the situation remains crucial even today as these migrants provide valuable vote banks for the politicians.

date, it is a fact that a minute fraction of the illegal migrants has actually faced deportation and the processes of identification have, even now, barely begun. However, talks between the Central government and the AASU-AAGSP agitators broke down on this point, and the agitation gathered momentum towards the end of November 1979, when the entire State administration was brought to a halt as government employees joined the movement. In December 1979, Assam was brought under President's rule. It is in this backdrop that the United Liberation Front of Assam was established in 1979 to establish a sovereign, socialist Assam through military struggle and still functioning today. However, the ULFA seems to be losing touch with the people as the group is involved in many activities which are anti-people and the irony is that while one of its main objectives is to drive away Bangladeshi immigrants, it is now functioning from that country.

Besides the Assamese main movement, there are also other groups in the states like the Bodo movement spearheaded by the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) established in 1988. Its objective was to protect the ethnic Boro/Bodo from exploitation by the Bengali settlers and the Assamese themselves. However, while their demands sometimes hinge on a separate sovereign territory, their present demand is more of autonomy as in a separate states rather than being part of the Assam state.¹² Lately, there have been dissident voices in North Cachar Hills and other tribal inhabited areas who are clamoring for a separate state.

¹² The Bodoland Territorial Council under Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution was granted on the 6th December 2003 [the Constitution (Scheduled Tribe order Amendment) Bill, 2003]. However, in spite of this, some tension is still there with aspirations for a separate state.

Manipur

Along with Assam, Manipur is one of the states in northeast with the most ethnic and cultural diversity. But the internecine conflicts among different ethnic groups and tribes have led to the slowdown of both development and democratic process in the state.

The Meiteis do not belong to the Scheduled Tribe (ST)-category while the hill tribes enjoy certain privileges like job reservation, protection of their lands from settlement and ownership by non-STs even if they are Manipuris. This has been strongly resented by the Meiteis who perceive that the hill tribes are garnering benefits disproportionate to their population.

Manipur was merged fully with the Indian Union on October 15, 1949, but it became a full-fledged State more than two decades later, in 1972. This delay in granting statehood caused discontent among the Meiteis who felt that their identification with 'Hindu India' brought them no political or economic benefits. This gave rise to secessionist tendencies among a section of the Meiteis and a number of separatist groups emerged thereafter.

The United Liberation Front (UNLF) was founded on November 24, 1964 to achieve independence and establish a socialist society. In December 1968, a breakaway group of the UNLF, led by Oinam Sudhir Kumar, established a government-in-exile called Revolutionary Government of Manipur (RGM) with headquarters in Syhlet, in the then East Pakistan. The RGM was backed by Pakistan. The primary objective of the RGM was to 'liberate' Manipur through an armed struggle. Later on, other Meitei outfit like the People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (Prepak), People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the Revolutionary People's Front among others were established. Their objectives

were similar; it is on the line that they all try to establish a separate sovereign state for Manipur and safeguard the right of the Manipuris.

Another development also took place at the same time among the hill tribes of Manipur. Feeling that they are marginalized by the dominant Meiteis in the valley and feeling development is not properly implemented. The various hill tribes also organize their own militant outfits. The demands varied. While the dominant demand is always for a sovereign state, some of the outfits have talks with the Government of India and it can be seen that militancy is seen as a way of negotiating with the non-performance in development of the state.

Meghalaya

The reasons of discord in Meghalaya are manifold. The divide among tribal residents of the State and the non-tribal settlers (mostly Bangladeshis) has been a prime factor for the growing discontent. Commencing with the divide that persisted through the nineteen seventies and eighties, events took a perilous direction in August 1992, when the Khasi Students' Union (KSU) and the Federation of Khasis, Jaintia and Garo Peoples (FKJGP) started issuing threat orders to non-tribal traders, compelling them to shut down their businesses in Meghalaya for not possessing valid trading licences. A riot - widely considered the fifth major riot against the so-called outsiders - followed, claiming 31 lives. In 1994, another round of trouble ensued over the Election Commission's orders for preparing photo-identity cards for all voters, which was resisted by the KSU. The KSU insisted that no photography for the cards would be permitted before the electoral rolls were revised with a 1951 cut-off date with regard to immigrants from Bangladesh.

In addition to the continuing divide between the locals and non-locals, issues of identity, growing corruption and perceived injustice in the Garo hills are considered to be reasons for the violence in Meghalaya. However, the Sharma Commission appointed by the State Government to investigate the various dimensions of the growing ethnic conflict in the State, observed in its report in 1995 that the primary cause of such disturbances has been economic, such as the increasing unemployment rate in the State.

Mizoram

At the time of Indian independence, the people of Mizoram were also debating whether to join India or not. One group, the United Mizo Freedom Organisation even felt it would be better to go along with Burma (Myanmar) as they feel that they have more ethnic similarity.

Self independence was not very big in the eyes of the Mizos. But, the debate seems to be more on the line of joining India or Burma. The implication can be seen from their draft document:

India or Burma?

India is a very populous country; they are very clever, cunning and know how to further themselves very well. They know how to please people when they want. We will not be able to protect our land and nation for long.

...we have no similarities with Indians; we are more alike with the Burmese. Indians look down on the hill people; on the other hand the Burmese cannot do so for long. So it is logical for us to join Burma.¹³

¹³ United Mizo Freedom Organisation Draft, quoted in Chaltuahkhuma, 2001, *Political History of Mizoram*, Vanthangi: Aizawl (translation from Mizo mine)

After independence, due to the efforts of Bordoloi, Mizoram became integrated in India with the status of a Hill District Council of Assam State. However, there was a clause in the Bordoloi agreement that the Mizos can decide whether to continue being with India or not after ten years. But, the ten years passed and nothing happened.

The case of Mizoram is more or less like Nagaland. While a perceived sense of loss of identity to Assamese domination was one of the basic factors that worked continuously to the dissatisfaction of a section of the Mizos, it is only one of the factors which led to the formation of the Mizo National Front and its spearheading the independence movement from India.

Discrimination against the Mizo people in various fields, including disproportionate representation at various levels of governance was another contributing factor. Finally, the neglect of the sufferings of the Mizos during the 1959-famine by the Assam and Union governments, among others, worked as the immediate cause that led to the launching of the Mizo National Movement in Mizoram.

The Mizo National Famine Front was established during the famine to harness and provide support to the famine stricken people. After the famine was over, knowing its powerful mobilizing force, it was converted into the Mizo National Front with proclaimed objective was the attainment of a 'sovereign independent greater Mizoram'. With the signing of the Mizo Accord on June 30, 1986, and the transformation of the MNF into a regional political party, the group has remained a part of the active political process in the State.

Nagaland

Among all the ethnic groups and tribes living in the Northeast, the Nagas were the first to raise the issue of independence from the Indian Union on August 14, 1947 under the aegis of the Naga National Council (NNC) led by A Z Phizo.¹⁴ In May 1951, the Council held a 'referendum' in which it claimed that 99% of the Naga people supported independence for Nagaland, though this has never been accepted by the government. The NNC boycotted the general elections in 1952 and launched a violent secessionist movement, with Naga insurgents raiding several villages and police outposts. On March 22, 1956, Phizo created an underground government called the Naga Federal Government (NFG) and a Naga Federal Army (NFA). In April that year, the Central government inducted the army to crush the insurgency in what was, till then, the Naga Hills District of the State of Assam.

The National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) was formed on January 31, 1980 by Isak Chisi Swu, Thuingaleng Muivah and S. S. Khaplang opposing the 'Shillong Accord' signed by the then NNC (Naga National Council) with the Indian government.¹⁵ Later, differences surfaced within the outfit over the issue of commencing a dialogue process with the Indian Government and on April 30, 1988, the NSCN split into two factions, namely the NSCN-K led by S S Khaplang, and the NSCN-IM, led by Isak Chisi Swu and Thuingaleng Muivah.

The objective of the NSCN-IM is to establish a 'Greater Nagaland' ('Nagalim' or the People's Republic of Nagaland) based on Mao Tse Tung's ideology. Its

¹⁴ See their letter to the Simon Commission above. Even before the independence of India, it can be seen that they are already politically aware.

¹⁵ The infamous Shillong Accord was signed in 1975 between the government of India and representatives of the Naga underground for restoration of normalcy in Nagaland. However, it was repudiated by both A Z Phizo and Swu, Muivah and Khaplang.

manifesto is based on the principle of Socialism for economic development and a spiritual outlook 'Nagaland for Christ'. The NSCN-IM primarily consists of Tangkhul Nagas who are in a majority in parts of Nagaland and the hills of Manipur. It has also been able to extend its influence to the Naga-inhabited areas of North Cachar Hills and Karbi Anglong districts of Assam and some parts of Arunachal Pradesh.

Tripura

The origin of insurgency in Tripura can be traced to the massive influx of Bengali refugees from East Pakistan following partition. The indigenous people, who accounted for 95 per cent of the population of Tripura in the 1931 census, had been reduced to just 31 per cent at the time of the 1991 census. This has led to serious discontent among the tribals, who have become a minority in their own land.

In addition to land, control of trade and business, government jobs are now in the hands of the immigrants. In order to protect their rights, some tribes formed a political front called *Tripura Upajati Juba Samiti* (TUJS) in June 1967. They demanded an autonomous district council under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, adoption of Kok Borok as official language and the restoration of tribal lands allotted to non-tribals

By 1970, some elements had come to believe that only armed action could secure their demands and the *Tripura Sena* (Tripura Army) was created. Subsequently, in December 1978, the Tripura National Volunteers (TNV) was formed under the leadership of Bijoy Hrangkhal to fight for an independent tribal Tripura state. To assuage tribal feelings, the State government passed the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council Act in 1979. However, it was strongly opposed by a section of the Bengali population. To counter the pressures from the tribal

extremists, they also launched a militant organisation called *Amra Bangali* (We Are Bengalis). Consequently, violent communal clashes broke out in several parts of the State in which about 1,800 people lost their lives and over 3,600 dwellings were burnt.

The Identity Question

The question of identity in the Northeast is one that have been deliberated and debated upon for quite some time. The concept of 'invention of tradition' by Hobsbawm is an important analytical tool which can be used for the propagation and inventing nations and identity. According to Hobsbawm, both nations and nationalism and nations are products of social engineering. What deserves in this process is the case of invented traditions by which he means:

...a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983)

This concept becomes important when we look at the predominant Naga discourse of identity and self-determination. The general assumption is that they are a 'unique' people who under extraordinary condition have been forced into the condition they are today. To present this aspect, they come out with a book (Lanungsang, not dated). However, the general content of the book do not ascribe any special status to them. Rather, just take the word Naga out of the book and what you have is a general description which fits many of the several northeastern tribes. The use of 'imagination' used in the construction of an 'imagined community' through the advent of print capitalism can be applied where the Naga identity is 'imagined' out of the various interlinking groups.

Constructing the Naga identity and the Naga nationhood can be look as a presentation of the larger picture of the regional imbalances and the fluidity of identity and the social context within which it operates. The idea of a sovereign free state as a primordial right inherent in their own is a feeling that is strong among the Nagas and the assertion is that they have lived in that part for a long time as contrast to other tribes such as the Mizo who are relatively young settler as compared to them.¹⁶ The Naga emphasis of their common identity is once again needed to look into the historicity of the 'shared traditions' and bonding. Prior to the British subjugation and complete annexation of the area, it remains debatable whether the various Naga tribes shared a sense of common identity.

Regarding the case of Mizoram and the Mizo identity, a paradigm shift regarding identity construction also takes place. Earlier, identity was based on ones own clan and the place of residence. A sense of belonging and oneness was shared with other village only of their chiefs are brothers or close relatives. Thus, the sense of commonness is there only on the basis of relations with the chief identity. Otherwise, a wide overarching identity as such was lacking. The political consciousness which emerges after the complete annexation of Mizoram by the British completely changed the area and the move for a Pan-Mizo identity comes up.¹⁷ The very word 'Mizo' itself being a modern construct.¹⁸ Thus, identity as a construct which permeates the inner being of the people cannot be said to exist prior to the British era. Whatsoever identity and self-assessment was

¹⁶ Some Naga ideologue even went to the extent of saying (through not on print) that they have live in Nagaland as long as they remember and do not migrate from anywhere but the surrounding nearby area only (Personal interview).

¹⁷ The Pan-Mizo identity can be linked up with the demand for the abolition of chieftainship and the coming up of the Mizo middle class who want to better their position in the new democratic atmosphere which they enjoyed under the British rule. Here an interesting parallel between Meghalaya and Mizoram can be seen wherein the *Lal* (Chief) and the *Syiems* are brought down by their up coming middle class. For Meghalaya see Nongbri, Tiplut,

¹⁸ The construction of the word Mizo is a very late. Earlier, the particular clan name like Lusei (misspell as Lushai), Pawi, Hmar, Ralte etc. were used. But, the more inclusive Mizo came into prominence and all the clans are now incorporated into Mizo.

limited. Rather than the concept of Pan-Nationhood, among the Mizos, the issue of local chiefdom and the immediate identity was more important.

However, in the present context, another interesting dimension of identity comes into the picture viz. the religious identity of Christianity among both the Nagas and the Mizos. A shift can be seen when both the Mizo National Front and the Naga Sovereign Nationalist Council both adopt Christianity in their political statement. As can be seen, identity is constructed not only on ethnic basis but also on the issue of religion especially Christianity which for the northeast is relatively young. The location and linkage of identity got entwined with more and more issues. For the Nagas, identity starts with the family to the clan, to the locality and to the village and to the Pan-Naga identity. While for the Mizo, it starts with the clan and goes on to the Pan-Mizo Identity. But, added to these was the new factor of religion.

Thus, one can see that the percolation of identity is still in the process and a solid cast identity is yet to come forward in this respect. But, what is clearly visible is that new forms of identification are appropriated as time pass on. As Erikson has pointed out identification is how we perceives ourselves and how we think other perceive us. So, that self-perception keeps changing on the basis of our positional location. Therefore, the Naga and Mizo identity when posited on the basis of ethnicity and religion as well as other factors all come together in positing themselves against the other parts of India and come to maintain that they are not part of India and deserves to be treated separately and be better left alone. While the Naga issue is still pending on, it is interesting to note that a study done by a lecturer in Pachhunga University College in Aizawl, Mizoram shows that while Mizoram is quite peaceful, a large number of Mizos do not still consider themselves as Indians and still prefer to maintain their Mizo identity over the Indian identity. Looking at the grassroots level one can still discern a particular

affinity to only one and not the other. The survey indicates that the majority of the people have to negotiate with the Indian identity vis-à-vis the Mizo identity.

The landscape

In the Northeast India, the struggle for independence and secession from India has been a permanent feature and straight from the independence of the Indian Union till the present, each succeeding decade has seen a separatist movement. The politics of identity and ethnicity have played a big role in these conflagrations. The protective discrimination as applied during the British times has led to drastic reversal in the post-independence scenario. The formation of a nation from many nations has led to the attempt to construct a majoritarian identity in the form of a pan Indian identity. In the Northeast also, the earlier ways of administering from different areas was discontinued and Assam has a large share in the governance of the area.

The unresolved point is that sensitivity to territorial aspects of existing disputes in the region is shared as much by the Meiteis as by the Nagas and the Kukis, and, indeed, by many other traditional communities of the region. The difficulties arise increasingly because of multiple overlaps of territories considered as 'homelands' by more than one of these communities, and the consequent dilemmas of resolution. More significantly, what is missed is that flexible traditional notions of ownership and habitation have suddenly and arbitrarily been replaced by modern notions of property and territorial rights. Subir Bhaumik portrays the conflict as one that necessarily accompanies the transformation of 'soft cultural frontiers' that once defined traditional territory into hard political boundaries of the modern polity.¹⁹ Without the benefit of an organic political evolution, traditional societies suddenly find themselves circumscribed by these 'hard political boundaries'. Furthermore, the question

¹⁹ Subir Bhaumik cited in "Sitting on a Volcano", www.epao.net/

that arises is, can there be any alternative to this line of political evolution? If not, then should the traditional communities not accept the hard realities that they have no choice but to face?

In today's Northeast, much of the turmoil can be attributed to a necessary clash between 'cultural frontiers' and 'political boundaries'. As ethnic communities awaken and attempt to define their identities (nationalities) as well as their living spaces (nations) in modern terms, the age-old equilibrium tends to get disturbed. In such a scenario, the efforts of the peacemakers, institutional as well as those that are thrown up from within the awakening communities must be to ensure that these equilibrium are not upset, but are, in fact, accommodated within the new ethnic reality. They must succeed in registering the message that the only other option to peaceful coexistence of all the communities is violent conflict, which, in effect, is no option at all. That the only forward looking choice at such critical junctures is a strengthening of traditional relationships within these shared parameters, so as to create space around each without disturbing the other.

The Road to Delhi

The development of Delhi into one of the hotspots of education in India has led to the arrival of large numbers of students from the northeast. While a majority of them pursue traditionally popular university course, an increasing number have started opting for vocational and professional courses. Today, it would be difficult to find good institution, college or private study centres in Delhi without northeast students.

This arrival of northeast students in Delhi can be seen from two major angles: 1. The Push factor and 2. The Pull factor. These two over utilized terms denotes an important causal effect for the students' coming into Delhi. Push factors include

those which propel a person from his native surrounding to a different area by conditions at home. Thus, it is often remarked that a large number of Manipuri students, especially from the hill areas are in Delhi because of push factors, the insurgency and the social disorder that it created leading to an unhealthy studying environment. For them, studying in Delhi means to be in the city because of better quality of education besides the unhealthy conditions prevailing at home.²⁰

The second factor, which is that of pull, can be taken as the pull of Delhi, the pull of the quality of education and educational institution, looking at the fact that a large number of institutions in Delhi consistently appear in various rankings done by the media. Thus, Delhi by its many virtues managed to pull or attract students who are working at furthering their careers.

If one takes Delhi as an educational venue, then other places in India can hardly compete with it in various counts. The factors which led to Delhi having an edge over other cities are many. Let's examine some of them. First, it is the capital of the country and thus has the distinction of being the centre, politically if not geographically. Secondly, the availability of many institutions of excellence in all spheres of education but more prominent is the fact of the possibility of working in Delhi and the many placements and avenues of post-education that it facilitates.

Thus, the points of push and pull factor combined for the large exodus of students from the northeast to Delhi and its surrounding areas. However, this encounter is not without its various problems and intricacies. Due to differences

²⁰ This was told to me in an interview with a research scholar from Manipur. He also mentioned that because of this, many students when they come to Delhi do not have sufficient funs for enjoyment and leisure. Therefore, the time they have money for consumption, they go out, get drunk and create nuisance of themselves. He was of the view that the pressure cooker type of social disorder needs some safety valve where the excess steam has to be released in order to maintain sanity and perspective.

in culture and lifestyles, the people of Delhi have a perception about the northeast that bordered on stereotypes. It is in this light that Lalchhuanchhuaka (*sic*) from Mizoram, who has taken admission in Shradhdhanand College says that life is even more difficult for students from the northeast, with people around nursing preconceived notions about them. He says, "people tease me on the roads but I still expect the uneasiness to be overcome as I go through college life."²¹

Instances of northeast dressing styles and free lifestyle has been covered widely by media from time to time. In case of rape incidents involving northeastern girls, the dressing style and the "inviting" nature of victim's clothes is portrayed as the main reason rather than the criminal intent of the perpetrator. It had even led to the principal of Kirori Mal College of Delhi University to proclaim a dress code for northeast students which was again hastily retrenched after widespread protest. Not only that, the Delhi Police has published a booklet for northeast students which list things to do and not to do entitled "Security tips for Northeast Students/Visitors in Delhi". The booklet advises girls from the region to avoid wearing any "revealing dress" and has suggestions about cooking "smelly" food without creating a "ruckus" in the neighbourhood.²² This also had attracted widespread protest from the students.

Coming from isolated remote area of the northeastern region without any prior experience of the metropolitan city life, the northeast students are confronting various challenges in the form of race, ethnicity, and every day experience of living by themselves in an alien environment. The process of accepting them as a part of the mainstream is rather slow due to their cultural difference and socialisation. However, the city life has altered their outlook and perception of the world surrounding them as a result of the interaction-both positive and

²¹ The Indian Express, July 16 2008.

²² See in annexure

negative - they have experienced in everyday life. On one hand, the city life characterized by individuality and anonymity culture gives ample freedom as they are far away from home and their community which exerts social control over them. On the other hand, they are in a different environment from what is familiar, the change from the known to the unknown and their confrontation with it.

The daily living experience is also very different. Living in hostels, PGs (paying guests) and renting their own room is very different from living under the shadow of relatives and friends. A majority of them lived in rented houses in and around Delhi University, JNU, Jamia Milia Islamia and other hotbeds of vocational courses like South Extension etc. In such a place, they have created a niche place for themselves where they can also recreate a home like atmosphere, if not so, at least a place of familiarity where they can see people from the same background and aspirations.

The educational institution they attended and their relationship with it is also another important aspect. As the main activity of the northeast student is to study, their engagement and negotiation with their institution, academic environs and their fellow students is of importance. The institution with all its rules and regulation, the environment-whether conducive to studying, free thought, types of education and influences etc. - and the fellow students with their view towards them all bring about the changes that the northeast students find themselves in.

At the same time, the northeast students also created an alternate northeast in Delhi through their various forums and associations. Festivals, religious and other cultural activities are celebrated and perpetuated. The space for an alternate existence is also present side by side with the mainstream culture.

Locating Northeast Students in Delhi

In any urban location, whenever groups of people settle, different groups always inhabit specific locales and have a particular distribution. While there are always some who are exception to the rule, it is always found that particular locations are always preferred to certain others.

Northeast students occupy a particular space where they are always in numbers. The reasons for these places can be attributed to the facts that since most of them are students; they search for places which are near to their place of education. One can also see a gradual change and movement in the choice of locale and settlement with the change in educational institution and the place of education changing with the time.

The place where northeast students are located can be identified with university campuses and cheap accommodation. Also, the places that they inhabited have a history of continued habitation by the northeast student. On the basis of this, we can demarcate five zones: DU North Campus Area, DU South Campus Area, Jamia University Area, Central Area and South Area. These are by no mean the only areas, but these are the places where they are present in large numbers.

DU North Campus Area

This area includes Kamla Nagar, Jawahar Nagar, Shakti Nagar, Vijay Nagar, Old Gupta Colony, New Gupta Colony, Kalyan Vihar, Malkaganj, Hudson Lines, Outram Lines, Indra Vihar, Mukherjee Nagar, Nehru Vihar and Gandhi Vihar.²³ These areas represent the hotbed of northeast student activities in Delhi. Earlier, a majority of northeast student stayed in these places, mainly because most of the students used to get admission in North Campus colleges or nearby not far from these places. So, for students studying in the North Campus colleges like St.

²³ From here on, when ever North Campus is mentioned, it refers to these area.

Stephen's College, Hindu College, Ramjas College, Kirori Mal College, Hansraj College, Daulat Ram College, IP College and Miranda House and those who do not get hostel accommodation, these nearby areas represent places from where they can attend/reach college in a short period of time. Due to their proximity to the Delhi University colleges, the landlords living in these areas also cash in on the fact that students need cheap and ready accommodation. Many houses are constructed for renting and the structure of many houses showed that the space was utilized in such a way that maximum numbers of rooms can be fixed in a limited space.

DU South Campus Area

By its terminology, Delhi University South Campus covers an area that is far larger than its northern sibling. Opened after the North College area has been saturated, DU South Campus Area covers the whole of New Delhi mostly. Thus, unlike the North Campus which is a cohesive whole, the South Campus area is spread all over the south Delhi.

But, in terms of locality and accommodation, the South Campus area can be zeroed down to the actual DU South Campus on Benito Juarez Marg and surrounding area. Thus, while studying in South Campus can mean anything from Lady Sri Ram College in Lajpat Nagar, Deshbandhu College in Kalkaji to Sri Venkateswara College near the South Campus, living in south campus denotes a much smaller area that is a stretch directly adjacent to Delhi South Campus office.

For purpose of accommodation, South Campus areas include Satya Niketan, Anand Niketan, Vasant Enclave and Nanakpura. Satyaniketan, Anand Niketan and Nanakpura are the one closest to the colleges in South Campus like Sri Venkateswara College, Ram Lal Anand College, Motilal Nehru College and

Atma Ram Sanatan Dharm College as well as the Post Graduate classes within the faculty in South Campus. However, as accommodations at proper Satya Niketan and Anand Niketan are quite costly, most of the students opt to stay in Nanakpura which is adjacent to Satya Niketan and Anand Niketan. In fact, it is in between the two. However, as Nanakpura is a village²⁴ many students usually say that they lived in Satya Niketan. This trend looks more like the easy association that people have about Satya Niketan and the ease of remembering Satya (as it is popularly known) as compared to Nanakpura.

Munirka/Ber Sarai

Located in the South-west of New Delhi, the two areas will probably account for the largest concentration of northeast people in Delhi. Due to its proximity to Jawaharlal Nehru University, Institutional Areas and good connectivity with various parts of South Delhi, these two areas are favoured by students studying in DU South Campus and other institutions. They are dominated by Jats and the housings are very congested. However, in Munirka, one can find signs of northeast almost everywhere. The moment you enter the area, you can immediately see large number of northeast students and populace in general walking thro and fro. There also exist several northeast restaurants, shops selling northeast foods, clothes as well as the ubiquitous phone booths.

Compared to other parts of Delhi which are accessible to students, Munirka offered the cheapest rent and most of the constructions are geared towards low cost accommodation. As such, the houses are simple and sufficient for students wanting a cheap place to stay. But, the environment is not very good with one student comparing it to a rat hole. He said, "*Munirka is like a human rat hole, big*

²⁴ One student disparagingly said that "it is a pig village and many students says that they lived in Satya Niketan when in fact they lived in Nanakpura." Thus, this student put herself a bit higher on the scale by maintaining that she lived in Satya Niketan which is a proper upper area as compared to the lower Nanakpura.

buildings with small footpaths and ways. There is always mud and puddles of water the year round, when monsoon comes, the drains overflow and sometime even human excreta are there out where we have to wade through the water. But, the rent is the most reasonable and the houses are not bad. All in all, its ok!" This sums up Munirka and its attraction for the northeast students. Munirka has bad reputation in regard to northeast students earlier. Sometime back, there was even a meeting of the Munirka landlords to evict all the northeast tenants from Munirka. But, the plan didn't materialize and the northeast people are entrenched in Munirka as before.

Incidents regarding violence against northeast students occur in Munirka frequently. This can be attributed to the fact that both the Jats and the Northeast people are prone to violence as a means of arbitrating matters. The murder of the Tangkhul girl in Munirka in 2009 by her neighbour has sparked many protests and the police also took cognizance of the matter.²⁵ Many stray incidents of fight between the locals and northeast students are happened. Most of the time, it is a peaceful area and the people of the area are getting reconciled to having northeast students as their tenants.

Other Areas

Beside the above hotspots, there also exist pockets of places where northeast students rent houses. Gautam Nagar, South Extension, Masjid Moth, Sarai Jullena, Kotla and Lajpat Nagar are the other areas with considerable northeast population. Beyond these, the other areas of Delhi are not so populated by northeast students. There may be two or three tenants, but not as much as in these areas.

Gautam Nagar is adjacent to AIIMS Hospital. Initially, this area was populated by northeast nurses and doctors, who worked in either AIIMS or Safdarjang

²⁵http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2009-10-26/delhi/28091062_1_ramchanphy-hongray-murder-case-naga

Hospital. Due to its central location, there are also many paying guest facilities. Most of the students in this area are usually not students pursuing regular courses in Delhi University. Rather, they are students who are enrolled in one of the many professional courses in and around South Extension.

South Extension I and Kotla are adjacent neighbourhoods on the Delhi ring road. South Extension was developed as one of the shopping destination in South Delhi and the area is quite posh. Kotla is the village behind South Extension. Most of the northeast students stay in Kotla village only. It is cheap and almost similar to Munirka and Nanakpura in locality and house construction. Due to its centrality of location, the rents are much higher as compared to other places. Most of the students who stay here are usually the same as those who stay in Gautam Nagar. But, as Kotla is the nearest cheap accommodation from Dyal Singh College, many students from there reside here.

South Extension II and Masjid Moth are on the opposite roadside of South Extension I and Kotla. The layout is more or less similar. Masjid Moth is located behind South Extension II and it is connected with Gautam Nagar. The place is similar to the surrounding area.

Lajpat Nagar can be seen as a step up from the other locality. While the houses are nearly similar, the rents are higher as the area is a commercial as well as residential area. As compared to the other places, the number of students in Lajpat Nagar is not very high as the rents are comparatively higher. Its proximity to Lady Shri Ram College has led many students from there to stay in Lajpat Nagar. But, since they are mostly girls, most of them stay in Paying Guest accommodations. However, it is often seen that few students get together and rent houses.

Sarai Jullena is the locality near Fortis Escorts Hospital. It caters mainly to students studying in Jamia Milia Islamia and nurses who worked either in Fortis Hospital or Apollo Hospital. The area is small compared to other localities inhabited by northeast students in Delhi. The number of students in Jamia is also less as compared to Delhi University.

College Students

The study of students constitutes an important part of sociological studies in contemporary times. Looking at the various studies available, one can discern an interesting plethora of various themes. Students are studied for their academic achievements, their psychological development, nationalism and other such factors that made up the social whole. Students as a point of reference and cross reference for various sociological analyses played an important part in social investigation. Various independent factors played role in the crystallization of the students in the social world. The encounter and experiences of students lead to cosequential change in their and their outlook.

Studies of students in sociology abound. There are many ways in which they are studied. Their college life, their examination habits, study patterns and social life. Their everyday experience is also a matter of study in which many contexts are drawn. Using their identity and form as a college students, many other forms of their life such as religion, love, culture, politics are also studied. So, many aspects of social research are entwined in their experience.

Among students, college students represent an interesting group. In India, college is the place, the world in which they experience adulthood and faced the world for themselves for the future. The changing environs of the college as well as the university from the rigid schoolings which they just passed from and the

marked difference between them created an encounter, a site for change and development. In the light of the above, this study is on the college going students from the northeast region of India. This work focused on the culture, identity and career aspirations of the northeast students who are presently pursuing their studies from national capital region of Delhi, their everyday experience, their habitat and the interaction between the two.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

Concepts in Operation

Identity: The social sciences have long been preoccupied with identity and its various implications; it is a field that has been widely researched. However, identity is almost always researched in conjunction with other factors. Here, too, identity will be researched along with various other connecting issues. Identity issues can never be taken up independently as a point of analysis. It has its rooting in various other points and spaces that need to be taken into consideration before one can arrive at a holistic view. For the northeast students, the factors of location, time and space of their individual and community affiliations, exert persistent influence on the process of their identity formation. Prior to coming to Delhi, the identity of a “northeast Indian” hardly crosses their minds. Identity is usually based on an individual’s ethnic roots, language, religion and geographical location. Thus, Eastern Naga, Southern Manipur, Upper Assam, Hindu, Vaishnavite, Christian, Khasi, Mizo etc. are all various terms that are best understood as melting pots of identities through which differentiation and/or inclusions are articulated and fostered. However, the location of Delhi has brought a radical change to such articulations of one’s identity. Here in Delhi, Kameng District, Tamenglong, Saiha and East Garo Hills are entities too small and intricate to be understood and comprehended properly;²⁶ and hence, the epithet of northeast. Even this identity has become more comprehensible to the general populace only recent years. Earlier, depending upon the evaluator’s standpoint, northeast people are *Thapa, Bahadur, Thai, Nepali, Japanese, and Chinese* etc. However, due to increasing influx of northeast population, the idea of

²⁶ In Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram and Meghalaya, respectively.

northeast has gradually permeated the social and public sphere of the city. It is within these shadowy depths that the question of identity needs to be observed and researched.

Again, identity formation cannot be taken as a singular, linear process of development. Its metamorphosis and rumbles are deeply convoluted and problematic. Let us look at identity formation as articulated by Erikson (1968):

“Identity formation employs a process of simultaneous reflection and observation, a process taking place on all levels of mental functioning, by which the individual judges himself [or herself] in the light of what he [or she] perceives to be the way in which others judge him [or her] in comparison to themselves and to a typology significant to them; while he [or she] judges their way of judging him [or her] in the light of how he [or she] perceives himself [or herself] in comparison to them and to types that have become relevant to him [or her]. This process is, luckily, and necessarily, for the most part unconscious...”

Furthermore, the process described is always changing and developing: at its best it is a process of increasing differentiation, and it becomes ever more inclusive as the individual grows aware of a widening circle of others significant to him [or her], from maternal person to “[hu]mankind” (Erikson, 1968).

Thus, we can see that identity is formed as we perceive ourselves in relations with the other. It is as much a process of inclusion and differentiation. Costello (2004) in her research has shown how we perceive ourselves in fashion as related to others. In her research on professional students, she has shown how consciously or unconsciously, dress and fashion pattern changes over time and space within the period of the course duration and how such dress codes are articulated through notions of appropriateness and stereotypes (Costello, 2004).

Religious Identity: Religious identity also plays a very important role in the articulation of identity. Even within Delhi University and Jawaharlal Nehru University, Christian organizations are very active which are mainly dominated by Northeast Christians. Thus, even though JNU Christian Fellowship, University Evangelical Fellowship and UESI have a pan Indian appeal, within Delhi they are highly dominated by northeastern people. Even among Church groups which target youth such as Kingdom International, the preponderance of northeast students is clearly visible.²⁷ Thus, Moran (2007) in her research has worked on two distinct processes of 'identity revelation' and 'identity authentication' in which she analyses the marginality of students and their perceptions regarding how they are different, and their negotiation in terms of revelation about their identity and other's perceptions of them (Moran, 2007). Identity authentication can be seen in a similar vein to Weber's analysis of protestant ethics whereby earthly success is seen as heavenly revelation. Thus, there exists this feeling that their peers are watching them to see "if their academic effort, in particular, reflected the religious identity that they claimed to espouse" (Moran, 2007). Therefore, such reflexivity on the part of some of the students can be seen as a part of the identity question that they may try to explore.

Hybridity: Hybridity, as a theoretical construct in postcolonial theory, has been over utilized in some ways. "As used in horticulture, the term refers to cross-breeding of two species by grafting or cross-pollination to form a third, 'hybrid' species. Hybridization takes many forms: linguistic, cultural, political, racial, etc. Its utilization by Bakhtin and Bhabha in cultural context will be taken as focus for investigation (Bakhtin, 1981; Bhabha, 1994).

²⁷ As visited and observed by the present researcher.

With its usage by Van Gennep and Turner among others in anthropological analysis, hybridity is a useful term for analysing cultural exchanges and interactions. Here also, it will be used for analysing the cultural relationship between northeast Indians and “mainland” Indians as represented by the populace of Delhi. Hybridity as a form of tradition-modernization question can also be delineated wherein the hybrid nature of both aspects can be seen and observed in various forms and presentations.

Another postcolonial construct, liminality, which is basically a threshold, as neither here nor there is also taken as a point for situating the condition of the northeast students in Delhi both geographically and culturally. While the geographical location can be the in-between state between home and away, the cultural negotiation of conflicting spaces is much more problematic. It is useful for describing an ‘in-between space’ in which cultural change may occur: the transcultural space in which strategies for personal or communal self-hood may be elaborated, a region in which there is a continual process of movement and interchange between different states (Ashcroft *et al*, 2004).

Liminality: Liminality, while being a problematic concept to a certain extent, however, captures the negotiation of cultural spaces and time perfectly. The mix mash of cultural symbols and identity that are in play showed the mix between various points. Thus, we do not find it incongruous if one sees a man dressing up in Levi’s jeans and sporting khadi shirt and Kolhapuri chappals in a Multiplex cinema hall. Whether this hybrid of both western and Indian is passable or not is not the question; rather, the point is that we are neither there nor here.

Metropolis: Metropolises are large urban centres and surrounding suburbs (Marshall, 1998). The question of metropolis among urban sociologists has been a high point of the Chicago school of sociology. Rather than the intricate and

statistical analysis of the city and its surrounding, the question of the city and its impact on the student's life and the very question of relocation and adjustability are the main points of analysis here. Simmel has unemotionally analysed the character of the city. For him "intellectuality and the metropolitan way of life go hand in hand". In arriving at this conclusion, Simmel goes directly to the consideration of the impact on the individual of the monetary basis of the modern city (Elias Jr. *et al*, 1964). The loss of life's richness and colour in the metropolis and the attempts of the individual to preserve his personal qualities in the face of money exemplify the negotiations that Simmel portrays in his work. A large part of Whyte's (1993) classical study *Street Corner Society* also deals with the urban condition of broken down housings and social relationship. The need to foster exclusive sets of social relationship to survive in the city, to escape from boredom, the need for friendship in an otherwise vanishing social sphere in the urban jungle in the light of a street corner gang life. However, even this study is not without its detractors and critics (Whyte, 1993). In some study, the metropolitan is the site of modernity as represented from a single institution, here Doon School (Srivastava, 1996). Here, the rupture with the primitive and the emergence of the modern ideals is explored; the desire to salvage the civilised from the savage. It also deals with the question of nationhood, identity and citizenship, which are equated to some extent to the Metropolitan project.

At the same time, the question of the metropolis and its impact on the mental needs is an interesting issue. First analysed by Simmel in his book, it looks at the increasing commoditisation of urban values and reduction of various virtues to monetary exchange value (Wollf, 1964). This is an important factor as a majority of northeast students come from cities and towns, not to forget, even villages, which are far smaller in magnitude and habitation.

The Ghetto: Closely connected with metropolis is the negative aspect of the city-the ghetto. The term “Ghetto” was first used to refer to the cluttered and crowded living condition experienced by Jews in Europe (Judge *et al*, 2008). Crowded living conditions and change in lifestyle entailed by the industrialisation and rising population of today’s India has also led to ghettoisation in Indian metros. Slums abounds the major cities today, fuelled by the demand for cheap labour and other menial works brought about by rapid modernisation and development. However, the slum is also part of the metropolis. The metropolis is not only the gleaming buildings, the nicely paved roads and the modern amenities. It is also the squalor and the dirt in the slums. Close to slums are the urban villages. These can be roughly understood as villages in the periphery of cities which are gradually enveloped by the growing urban sprawl. Thus, while in character and population they are still rural yet urban as they are within the metropolis’ geographical zone.

Belonging: As a theme, belonging too has been an important site for social inclusiveness and identity. Especially in the case of college students, sense of belonging to the institution and the surrounding area and academic success seem to correlate. At the same time, perceptions of campus, social relationships as well as social classes, also have direct relations (Hurtado, *et al*, 1997).

One’s social class and position “appears to have a substantial influence on a variety of important college outcomes via a sense of belong, rather than directly” (Ostrove *et al.*, 2007). The concept of belonging is also taken as a point for identity and patriotism to a certain extent in some researches. How the notion of belonging to one’s ethnic group or geographical location impinges upon one’s consciousness, and how such feeling or belonging is articulated in the social sphere is of importance. Its importance lies in the notions of migrant mentality and the question of ownership. Thus, belonging as a focal point for nationalism

and national imagery becomes an important terrain. Northeast is well known for its many revolutionary outfits and insurgencies clamouring for independence from India. It is at this point that the idea of belonging is sought to be examined. At this juncture, an exploration of the notion of belonging to the northeast will also be dealt with summarily to contrast it with the Delhi experience. This question of nationalism and belonging will be looked at from individual and group perspectives.

Social Change: Social change is an important and much researched area of sociological investigation. Linked with the twin concepts of tradition and modernity, it evokes some of the most problematic and interesting questions in studies of this kind. The hybridity of tradition and modernity and its many avatars has led to a large number of studies. Early Indian sociologists were captivated by this dichotomy and the ongoing village studies that were in vogue looking at the plethora of literatures available. Even today change is also a continuous ongoing feature. It is in such a climate that this concept is sought to be incorporated.

Two tangents are taken as points of reference here. One is change in environment, lifestyle and food habits. This deals with the temporal space and location where one environment is changed, lifestyle exemplified by living habits, dress style and change in food habit due to choice or compulsion. And secondly, change in value orientations and self perception. This is self explanatory. All these are in conjunction with the various themes presented above.

Subjectivity and Objectivity: Subjectivity and objectivity in social science research are of crucial significance, especially, with regards to analysis and interpretation of data. Due to the intimate nature of studying one's own society, there is the

question of neutrality and objectivity to the research end. Srinivas (1997) however consider it in a more positive light as illustrated below.

“I consider the study of one's own society not only feasible but essential, for it is best that a culture is studied by both outsiders and insiders. Alone, neither is complete. Each may have its own biases, but the two together may provide a more complete account. Given that anthropologists have no choice but to study other cultures through the prisms of their own, the need for anthropologists from at least two different cultures to study a single culture becomes a necessity. Anthropology has reached a state when such studies ought to be undertaken. The clash of multiple subjectivities would, to my mind, be better than a single subjectivity, whether that of the insider or outsider.”

Finally, looking at the sites of investigation, while major concepts are drawn and presented, an interweaving and overlapping of themes occur in the above discussion and these will be present in course of conducting the research. But, it is the combination of these various factors that will present the full pictures. So, the overlapping are not intentional, neither are they avoidable.

Significance of the Study

A sociology of the northeast, or to that matter, a study of the northeast mostly, if not always hinged on the notion of difference: a difference in ethnicity, culture, religion and so on from the mainstream, mainland India. It is these prevailing notions that form the public perception about people from the northeast in the mainstream. The significance of this study lies in the fact that people coming from the northeast, who people from the mainstream already stereotype, engage themselves in the very space where they are already labelled and marginalised. Yet, this marginality is twofold; first, marginality in the national imagination as a

northeastern and secondly, marginality within the metropolis as an outsider. The study looks at the question of marginality, identity, aspirations and belonging from the everyday experience of the northeast students.

However, the main purpose of this study is not only marginality and its presentation in the mainstream society, but an attempt to look at the daily narratives and the everyday life, the mundane that is the very reason for our everyday existence. At the same time, urbanisation and urbanism are also negotiated in the study. So, confronting the Metropolis is about marginality, identity and everyday life.

Field of Research and Methodology

The field of research is the national capital territory of Delhi. The main emphasis is on college students coming from the eight northeast states. Representative sample from each states were interviewed intensively, some of them over a period of time. As most of them do not know me, I have to develop a rapport with them. So, the first time I go, I usually just relax with them, introducing myself and the kind of information that I want from them. By the second or third meeting, most of them were ready for the in-depth interview. This covers the majority of the interviews. However, in certain cases some participants were interviewed on the first meeting itself. These participants were however, intimated earlier on phone on the kind of interview I am going to do with them. So, none of them were caught unaware and in almost all cases, the participants were prepared for the interviews.

The actual field includes the various social spheres where the students exist in everyday life. Thus, the college campus, the students' social activities, religious activities and political activities are all taken into considerations. Besides these,

an exploration into their habitat is also undertaken. This is important as the everyday life of any individual includes a large portion of his/her time spent in his/her home.

The research is basically an ethnographic study which is mainly qualitative in nature supplemented by relevant quantitative sources and literature. The researcher not only tries to interview them but also live among them as a participant observer, albeit a subjective one in many instances.

The research tools and techniques which are employed are:

1. Interviews: Interviews, both structured and unstructured constituted the main source of data collection. As the research is qualitative in nature, life histories and personal narratives of the samples formed the main source of data.

2. Participant Observation: As northeast students are mostly gregarious in nature and have their various functions and meeting, participant observation on many occasions were carried out. Observing the sample's day-to-day living constituted a crucial part of the study. This includes visiting them, staying for a short period with the respondents.

3. Recordings: Most of the interviews were captured in electronic media and were transcribed later. These were re-edited and relevant portions taken out. Photographs were also taken in order to record visual narratives. The majority of these photographs were taken by the researcher and some were contributions made by participants of the various functions which the researcher did not attend.

Objectives

The main objectives of the study are:

- To study the everyday experiences and the space and time negotiated by the college students.
- To analyse the networks of the students.
- To examine how far the notion of northeast-ness has permeated amongst the northeast students.
- To analyse the local community perceptions and acceptance of the northeast students.
- To determine the push and pull factors that make students choose Delhi as a place of education.
- To study the interface between tradition and modernity in the context of northeast students in Delhi.

Sampling Procedure

The research is designed as a descriptive and exploratory one using qualitative data analysis. Exploratory method is employed so as to provide an insight into unexplored dimensions of issues and facts. Therefore, the research method depends substantially from the exploration in the field. Multi stage stratified random sampling with snowball effect is employed in the present study since the selection of the universe is based on primary identification of locales for the area to be studied as well as the subjects and for participation.

Ethnography as a Research Method

Ethnography as a method for studying social reality has come a long way since it was used most successfully by Malinowski (Malinowski, 1922). In studying the

Trobriand islanders, he employed a first hand account. Earlier, anthropological accounts were based on analysis of secondary data and armchair theorizing. Here, the datum collected by 'amateurs' like travelers, missionaries, colonial administrators and their accounts were utilized by the anthropologist who hardly leave their universities. Malinowski was unique in a way that he himself went to the field and personally gathered the facts or data. This started a new trend in social anthropology wherein personal immersion in the field and participant observation started to be the *de rigueur* and requirement as well.

Because of the complexities in its historical antecedents, ethnography does not have a well defined standard definition (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). It has been reinterpreted with complexities and contextualized in various ways in order to deal with different circumstances. It is also influenced by a various theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches like functionalism, symbolic interactionism, marxism, phenomenology, feminism, hermeneutics, structuralism, post-structuralism and post-modernism among others.

However, within the overarching climes of ethnography, there are also several tropes that are required to be negotiated and analysed, the very act of ethnography that needs the understanding and a place from where the analysis and writing can begin. Clifford (1986) has listed six ways in which ethnographic writing is determined. 1) *Contextually*- Drawing and creating meaningful social milieu, 2) *Rhetorically*- Using expressive conventions, 3) *Institutionally*- Writing within and against specific tradition, audiences and disciplines, 4) *Generically*- One that can be distinguished from a novel or travel account. 5) *Politically*- The power of representation of cultural realities is unequally shared and contested, and 6) *Historically*- These conventions itself are changing.

Ethnographic narratives are thus subjected to many constraints and forms. Politically and culturally, the form and presentation of ethnographic texts is a contested one. Mary Louise Pratt (1986) has also delineated how the presentation of data as well as the form of book and its authenticity can be subjected to the whims of science. She pointed out how “it brought to the surface the anguished and messy tangle of contradictions and uncertainties surrounding the interrelation of personal experience, personal narrative, scientism, and professionalism in ethnographic writing” (Pratt, 1986).

The ethnographer can hold the personal to his chest and can play a political game within his narrative much like Hermes. Crapanzano (1986) develop on this idea of Hermes as the god’s messenger. Hermes promises not to lie, he did not promise to tell the whole truth. Here, taking allegory with this motif, Crapanzano articulate how the ethnographer shared Hermes dilemma, to tell the truth, but how far and how not to tell the whole story or narrate the whole story itself. This can also impinge on the ethical dimension of the whole narrative. Whether by selective analysis of data and presentation, a sort of leveraging out of data and information is left out.

Time period and the ‘present’ of the ethnographer’s social milieu presents an interesting ambit within which the time period and time frame of the social reality studied can be put into. Sanjek (1991) delineate four angles through which the ‘ethnographic present’ can be viewed: i) the ethnographic present as the present state of ethnography, ii) the ethnographic present as a mode of presenting ethnography, iii) the ethnographic present as the ethnographer’s presence during fieldwork and iv) the ethnographic method as a gift- the ethnographic present. These four angles present interesting ways of looking at the investigator’s standpoint and guide him/her in the representation of ethnographic material.

Auto-ethnography is the result of the postmodern turn in ethnography. While some advocate it as the immersion of the self in the narrative, it has also been seen as the 'voice' of the individual author (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). This form of ethnography treats the ethnographer as simultaneously the subject and the object of observation (ibid). The most important emphasis is on the texts as an exploration of personal experiences. Reflexivity is the main key. However, its acceptance within the researching community has been limited. In this light, its usage in the present research is limited to spaces where the authorial voice is necessary and no other experience and narration is available.

Ethnography takes the person out of the room into the social spaces that he or she is going to research. He is therefore both the researcher and the research instrument (Murchison 2010). Gaining an intimate familiarity with a locale often provides a better sense of how social life works, and where the most significant things to insiders are, in a more efficient manner (Puddephatt, Shaffir, Kleinecht, 2009).

The present study is largely based on ethnography. A qualitative study of this nature represents a shift from quantitative study where the number of questionnaires that one distributes and analyses consists of the more important part of the research. Ethnographic method by its very nature is suitable for in group study where the researcher is not only an observer but also a participant. For me, this is very important. Most of the social gatherings and observations that I have been a part of are on the basis of familiarity and connection within the society. Thus, ethnography is able to help me go deep into the psyche of the participants and their communities. At the same time, familiarity and similarity also create their own problems; such as, what is to be observed, whether to actively participate in the production of knowledge and discussion, etc. Here, subjectivity and objectivity are in a doldrums and the personal is interspersed

with the subject. The value neutrality is thrown out of the window and the value subjectivity comes into play.

From the field, studying an area which one has already trodden himself, it can be also seen as cathartic and purgative. Reliving the experiences of yester-years and correlating with the present study became an exercise not only for the present research but also as a sort of short historical sociology.

Gatekeepers

Since ethnography involves working with human beings during face-to-face interviews and onsite observations, it is essential to understand the importance of gaining appropriate access to the intended participants. There are many places which are out of reach for the lone researcher. These may be policed by gatekeepers. Gatekeepers can be put into two groups, i) Unknown person who holds the key to the places that we need to access and ii) Friends and acquaintances who by their capacity are able to help us gain access to places where we need to do our fieldwork.

Gatekeepers can thus ease the way to research by letting them make way for the researcher in the environment that is intimate to them, but not to the researcher. Even though the present study deals with northeast students with which the researcher is familiar. Still, there are many which cannot be accessed. In these instances, gate keepers really help in the research.

Ethics

In doing ethnography, the researcher has to take care about ethical questions which have to be negotiated. Especially in qualitative studies, the natures of ethical dilemma which can arise are many. We are intruding in the life of other individuals, looking at their daily life and invading their privacy. The main issues in ethical question in research concerns Covert or Overt research, Consent, disclosure, who is in control, confidentiality and balancing rights and responsibilities (O'Reilly 2005). These main issues deal with how we proceed with our research.

The International Sociology Association has come out with a comprehensive guideline on how to conduct research.²⁸ A portion is reproduced here:

2.3. Data gathering

2.3.1. As scientists, sociologists should disclose the methods by which they proceed as well as the general sources of their data.

2.3.2. The security, anonymity and privacy of research subjects and informants should be respected rigorously, in both quantitative and qualitative research. The sources of personal information obtained by researchers should be kept confidential, unless the informants have asked or agreed to be cited. Should informants be easily identifiable, researchers should remind them explicitly of the consequences that may follow from the publication of the research data and outcomes. Payment of informants, though acceptable in principle, should be discouraged as far as possible and subject to explicit conditions, with special regard to the reliability of the information provided.

2.3.3. Sociologists who are being given access to records are expected to respect the privacy conditions under which the data were collected. They can, however, make use of

²⁸ http://www.isa-sociology.org/about/isa_code_of_ethics.htm (Last accessed on July 12, 2011)

data gathered in historical archives, both private and public, under the legal conditions laid down in the country concerned and usually accepted by the international scientific community, and subject to the rules of the archive.

2.3.4. The consent of research subjects and informants should be obtained in advance. Covert research should be avoided in principle, unless it is the only method by which information can be gathered, and/or when access to the usual sources of information is obstructed by those in power.

Gathering of data thus necessitates the consent of the research subjects. As to their anonymity, pseudonyms are used throughout the research. Any instances which can lead to identification of anyone is taken care of. The problem of what to disclose and what not to disclose and what to include is of utmost importance in research.

Problems arise when a researcher opts for objectivity but at the same time, faces a dilemma whether to portray the community in good or bad light. Whether one should present only what is good and negate what is undesirable. Further, whether to present the respondents lifestyle. For the present research, this question came into play when I see many fellow Christian northeastern participants not leading a Christian lifestyle or going against the ascribed traditions and customs. These require deep introspection regarding what to portray for sociological knowledge and what to preserve. In this kind of situation, value judgments easily come into play. The question of whether to act as a mere passive investigator or participant observer in which one is actively involved reflects the dilemma that an investigator goes through.

Ethical balance has to be maintained. For me, the problem lies in the fact that I am very involved not only in my Mizo community but also in the wider northeast society at large. Thus, trying to balance the neutrality in terms of

analysis and stating the things that one strive for within the community often comes to clash. This can be detrimental to the research. So, I regularly have to maintain silence even when there are discussions and my participation is required.

Studying one's own society

Another question which is also of subjective-objective dilemma is the question of studying own society. According to Srinivas (2009), "the native have a view which will be of help to him when accessing the community. He also knows a large amount about his own society which will facilitate his understanding of his research in a more easy way. At the same time, it is easy to leave out important things which are taken for granted by the researcher but which are also of utmost importance." It is a double-edged dagger as mentioned by Srinivas. Due to intimate knowledge about the society to be studied, the research process is easier to someone who is familiar than to someone who is a complete stranger. At the same time, what is mundane and everyday matter for the researcher who is familiar to the community can be of utmost importance to the theme studied. So, a balance has to be maintained. The feeling of possessiveness about one's own community and the desire to seek the best for one's community, especially in well-connected communities like that of Northeast India also come into play. Research, while being an individual endeavour is also a contribution to the already existing body of knowledge about the community to the outsider. As a result, the question of what all to portray about one's community to the outsiders becomes of vital importance and at times poses a direct threat to the need for research objectivity.

CHAPTER 3

CONFRONTING THE METROPOLIS

Introduction to Delhi Life

After sitting on a bus for a day, John reached Guwahati from Manipur. As it was quite late in the night, he checks in at Hotel Vandana at Paltan Bazar. The rooms were dingy and the water was hard. But, he grimly thought, 'it's only a matter of a night sleep amidst the mosquitoes and the sultry heat.' Early in the morning he gets up, dresses and walks to the Guwahati Railway Station which is located just opposite to the hotel. He goes to the platform and waits for his train. It didn't take long; Poorvatar Sampark Kranti slowly eases its way into the station like a lazy snake on a hot day. John went to his compartment and did not come out again until he reached Delhi. This was his first visit to the city and he was quite apprehensive. However, his cousin was already there studying in Delhi University and he was going to pick him up at the train station, so, he felt a bit comforted by this fact. After nearly 40 hours of journey, the train majestically enters New Delhi Railway Station. After getting his luggage, John goes to the Ajmeri Gate side of the station where his cousin waited for him with a smile. The cousin hails for an auto-rickshaw barks one word "Indra Vihar" and they get in. John has arrived in Delhi.

Mawii gets up early in the morning. She thought everything was different and suddenly she breaks into a smile after recollecting what had happened in the recent past. The state board results have been declared and she topped the board exams in Arts stream. Her ecstatic parents had promised her that she will go to the finest college in India. Delhi University was the first choice. Today was the day of her flight from Aizawl to Delhi. She gets up and gets dressed for the journey. It's about one hour ride from Aizawl to Lengpui Airport. From Lengpui

she reaches Kolkata where she has to catch a connecting flight for Delhi. She arrives in Delhi without much trouble. Her parents had already booked the Mizoram House in Delhi for her stay. So, accomodation in a new city was not a problem. After taking bath, she sits to study the Delhi University brochure.

These two simple narratives, while composed, represented what a large majority of Northeast students experienced to reach Delhi. Earlier, before the advent of the low cost carriers like Indigo and Kingfisher Airlines (among others), the only way to reach Delhi was via Guwahati by train. Even today, students from Nagaland, Assam and Meghalaya routinely come via route as they are near the Guwahati railhead. For Mizoram, Manipur and Tripura, going by air sometimes cost as low as going via Guwahati by train and saves time and energy. So, the majority of students from these states usually take a flight. At the same time, many students still go via Guwahati due to economic reasons and cancellation of flights, especially during the monsoon.

However, the narratives also represent what students from different social and economic strata come to Delhi to study and what are their travails. They are very different. As narrated, some stay with their friends and relatives after arriving for the first time, this constitutes the majority. A minority can avail of government facilities and other such accommodation. From this mode of accommodation, the students search for admission in various colleges and vocational institutions.

In staying with friend and relatives, the students are supposed to help in the daily chores including cooking and washing. Sometimes, the newcomer used to bring back much-missed home food and food items which are not readily available in Delhi. Non-vegetarian items and traditional food ingredients used to top the list in such. Newcomers are encouraged to bring such things and can be

even seen as a sort of contribution to the house as they did not help pay the rent. If possible, staying with friends and relatives used to be the first choice as they could guide the newcomer in various ways and help them be better acquainted with Delhi. Many students who stayed in the State houses during admission timing mentioned that staying in the government house meant anonymity, no one knew or cared much about you and you have to be careful all the time as one experience narrated by a student illustrates:

“I stayed in the house, as all the staff were busy, I have no one to turn to. I called the student union leader's number and all they said was to come to Delhi University Campus where a help desk is being organized. I don't even know the way to the Campus. Luckily, some of my fellow students who also stayed in the house had relatives from outside helping them with admission. So, I just went along with them. Some of my friends who stayed with their relatives outside have no such problems as her relatives can take her or some of their friends are always going there. By the time class started, I hardly know anyone, but my friends knew so many people already. They feel much more comfortable going to the church and other social activities.”

The process of relocation phenomena also plays differently. For students staying in their friends/relatives place, many people used to drop in for visit, thus, their social circle was also enlarged even during the admission time. As they have friends and relative who are able to introduce them to the society at large in Delhi, they find their way easier and much faster.

The Admission Process

Getting admission in the college and course of choice became like a search for passport into better life. As such, many students studied the kind of colleges and

courses available to them. The five universities in Delhi, Delhi University, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Jamia Milia Islamia, Guru Gobind Singh IP University and Ambedkar University are the main university of choice. Many university offering distance education scheme like College of (DU Correspondence), IGNOU, Madurai Kamraj, Sikkim-Manipal, Annamalai University and so on are considered only if one do not get a admission in the main universities or if one is planning to work. Besides these, many students who wanted to pursue vocational courses also applied in various institutions in the city and surrounding area.

While going about in the search for institution and courses, the social network of various northeast groups come into play. Rarely is a decision taken alone. Various seniors and students union leader provides multiple inputs while making decision. Past students also chip in to relate their experience of what that particular institution is all about. If one has a choice, that choice is carefully exercised. Defaulting institutions and institutions friendly to northeast sensibilities are carefully demarcated. Many institutions are seen as not friendly to northeast sensibilities and culture. As such, educating the new students about such information is seen as the duty of the seniors who also took it upon themselves to do so.

Delhi University Undergraduate Admission

While many other universities and institutions also abound in Delhi, it is the fame of Delhi University and the myriad courses and famous name college that it boasts that attracts students to Delhi. First and foremost, unless there is another plan in the making, the majority of students coming to Delhi apply to Delhi University for undergraduate admission. According to university statistics, Delhi University has 77 constituent colleges, including the medical colleges and

institutes offering other professional courses. The admission process is also divided into three parts - General admission for general category, OBC category and ST/SC category. As a large majority of the student interviewed and studied got their admission through ST category, this will be the main focus of inquiry here.

Delhi University has a special admission procedure for ST/SC category students. Instead of basing their marks on cut-offs and applying to individual colleges as per their marks, DU created centralized admission for them. Through this centralized admission, four location viz. Art Faculty of North Campus, Deputy DSW office at South Campus, Shyamlal College in Shahdara and Rajdhani College at Raja Garden were designated as places where forms can be taken out and submitted within a specified period, usually 15 days. Here, on production of ST/Sc certificate and Class 12 mark sheet, OCR forms are given out wherein the students have to list their choice of colleges. Upto 30 choices can be filled up in the form. After all the applications are submitted, these are then centrally processed. In this manner, while percentages counts for getting admission in a good college, luck and chance also played their part to some extent. Earlier, a 70 percentage holder can get hold of North Campus College easily. However, with a large number of Northeast and other ST students studying in Delhi and other CBSE or ISC affiliated schools, even among the ST students, person holding 80% and above abounds. So, the reservation is only a small respite now.

Going to these admission places, one finds that a large majority go to either South Campus or North Campus, the other two spots being very far from the normal locales and area inhabited by the Northeast students. On reaching the DU ground, we can see that many student unions are having their admission help desk and doing brisk business. Earlier, the university authorities used to allow them to set up tents and pandal for these purposes and one can see large

pandal sponsored by national Student unions like NSUI and ABVP or sponsored by some other corporate with flashy decors. In the past three years or so, this has been prohibited and the student union has to make do with sitting on the lawns, getting one of the classrooms for filling up the forms. Recently, they started taking out the chairs and put them on the lawn, this is done mostly in North Campus as most of the student unions from the Northeast are on duty there. It used to be only the Mizo student union which has both student help desk in both North and South Campus.



Delhi Mizo Students Association on duty in North Campus (2009)

The help desk is usually the point of stop for most of the northeast students; not only them but also students from the reserved category used to go there for help as the Delhi University authorities are usually busy giving out the forms and checking the documents. These help desks are usually manned by senior

students who can guide a new student in making a choice for college on the basis of their marks.

(Z = Zara, SU = Student Union leader, Assam)

Z : How many students have you helped so far?

SU : We help around 10-20 everyday depending on the arrival of the students.

Z : How do you usually help them?

SU : We help them in filling up the forms. Many of them don't know how to fill-up the OMR sheets properly. They tend to make mistakes, so we guide them in this manner.

Z : How do they know that you are here?

SU : We give information to the state house, also by word of mouth.

Z : What are the subject choices?

SU : It is quite varied. I can't say there is any particular trend which one can follow. We get students applying in all streams. But, professional courses are less in demand than traditional subjects like English, History, Political Science and pure science subjects.

Another interview at the help desk. This one from Mizoram.

Z : How many help desks do you maintain?

SU : We have two, one in North Campus and one in South Campus.

Z : Why do you maintain them in both places, other student unions have it mostly in North Campus?

SU : Mizoram House is nearby (in Vasant Vihar) and many students who do not stay in Mizoram House stay with friends and relatives in Munirka, Satyaniketan/Nanakpura and Safdarjang Enclave. Some students also come from Gautam Nagar and Lajpat side. North Campus used to be the only place earlier, but now we have in four places, though most Mizo

students either go North or South Campus only. The ones going to North Campus are students who stay with friends in Vijay Nagar, Outram Lines and Indra Vihar side. There used to be a misconception earlier that those who apply from North Campus used to get into better colleges. But, that misconception has gradually eroded and now we have equal number of applicants in both north and south campus at our help desk.

Z : How do you run the help desk?

SU : The help desks are manned by senior students who have stayed back for the summer vacation. All student union leaders who are here used to help. Besides, other members also come and help us. However, we try to select the knowledgeable one to help us run the desk. As many students are not aware of the trend and percentages. Sometimes, if a non-knowledgeable one is on duty, then they can fill-up the wrong course and college. We have an incident earlier where a candidate claim that she did not fill-up the college she was allotted, that it was put in the volunteer. We don't know whether that's the truth or not. So, we are careful to maintain these kinds of things. At the same time, according to percentages, a knowledgeable candidate can help up to a large extent in which college a candidate can get allotment. Sometime, candidates get lower ranking college when they can get a better one with their percentage. But, it's a tricky business, as trend in the past year cannot be a strict guide. At best, it is a rough measure. But, this we do according to our capability. It is our duty to help our fellow students. Once, we were like them, but our seniors then help us with the admission. So, it is giving back to the community also.

Z : Do you help only Mizo students or you help others also?

SU : We mostly helped Mizo students as they come to us. Earlier, many other northeast students used to come to us. Now, most of the student unions have their own help desks, so we are all basically catering to our

respective communities. But, some non-northeast students come to us too. As these people are not well organized like us, there is no help desk from Jharkhand or Chhatisgarh who are also tribal. So, if they come, we help them. However, most of the time, it is just to borrow our stapler and correcting fluid.

Z : Do you get any funding for running the help desk?

SU : Yes, Mizoram government used to give us money to set up this help desk. However, the initiative is from our side. Once admission is about to begin, we make a proposal and give it to any minister who comes to Delhi. So far, they have given us for nearly a decade now.

Z : How important do you think is this help desk for the student?

SU : Well, for the student union, it is an important activity we have to help our fellow students and future members also. For the student, it is very important, especially if they come from Mizoram. Students who have done their Class-12 from Delhi and other metro cities are mostly knowledgeable about the kind of courses and colleges that are there in Delhi University, so, to a large extent they can decide the courses and college they want. But for students from Mizoram it is very different. The process back home is that when you want a college, you apply there directly. But here, as the admission is centralized, the decision making in choices regarding ranking it in the form and the way to do it. Which college is good for which course, all these have to be taken into consideration which is not possible for a student straight from Cl-12. So, I can say that the help desk is of utmost importance. Many students I know lament the fact that they didn't come for help and end up with colleges which are unsuitable for them. So, when DU admission is about to start we put out a press release back home giving information regarding the kind of certificate required and that the student union is going to be on duty. We used to get lots of calls from home.

- Z : Have you faced any problems in the running of the help desk?
- SU : Not really, as it is a straight forward process, we hardly encounter problems. But, sometimes, the student forgets to bring the required certificate necessary. In such incident, we have to approach the authorities, citing the long distance and other problems. Usually, these get resolved with most students submitting an affidavit saying that they will produce the required certificate during admission. The problem most of the time is that students with bad percentage want good colleges. If they do not get it, sometimes they used to blame us. We are very careful in this regard in telling the student that it is the university, not us which allots the college. Also, many students don't come for the registration; they just send us the documents for fill-up and submission. They just give us a list of all the good colleges they have heard without worrying about the difficulty of getting it. Unless they are very well known to us, we don't want to do this kind of process as we tend to be blamed if they don't get good colleges. But, all in all, we don't have many problems.

These are just two interviews regarding the admission process and the help desk. The students' volunteers talked about the various periods of intense activity and leisure. They mentioned that there is hardly anyone at the opening of the registration. Slowly, it picked up steam and many students even arrived on the last. This, they find very risky because so many students in the past have forgotten one document or the other. Connections to the Northeast states are sometimes sporadic as this is also the monsoon season with many flight cancellations. If any documents are left behind, there are few chances of getting it on time. As one put it, *"I was on duty one day when a teenage girl came with her mother for registration. But, they brought only the Xerox copies of all the documents. Since, they came on their own I asked them why they didn't bring all the originals with them. What happened was their neighbor said that it was not necessary to bring the*

originals and that the Xerox copies would suffice. I asked them whether they have seen our notice regarding the required list of original documents in the newspaper and whether their neighbor had ever studied in Delhi University. They said they had seen the notice and that their neighbour had not even visited Delhi before, but, they seemed to trust him." These are the kind of travails that the students on duty face during admission. Most of the students are quite knowledgeable. The context of choosing a college and course thus hinges on knowledge and availability of information.

The student unions on duty provide an important service of community and association. Going around the university campus, one can also see the national student union like the ABVP and the NSUI with stalls to help the students. As they have more clout, they are able to secure themselves a place to run their stalls. But, they do not seem to attract the northeast students who have their own unions. After observing them for sometime, one can see that only a few students approach them, that also from the general students who are there to inquire about various courses and forms, not for the registration.

A talk with one of the students revealed an interesting perspective about Delhi University and the admission process. He narrates, *"I want to come to Delhi mainly because of UPSC. Most of the UPSC candidates who get through either used to study in Delhi or prepare from here. So, I decided to come to Delhi University as people said that the course outline is most similar to the UPSC syllabus. However, I didn't realize the hassles I have to go through to get admission. In the northeast we just go to the college and apply. If they don't take us, we just go to another college. Here, we don't even have a choice. The only choice is in giving the ranking in our forms and we can't predict which college or course we will get. This is a chance we have to take, and it is like life that we have to take what come our way. Delhi has so many opportunities which we not have in the northeast. The kind of libraries and other resources also makes it worth coming here"*.

There are plenty of interactions between the seniors and fresher at these student union stalls. Membership drive and fee collection are also taken here. A sort of camaraderie and community spirit is enforced here. The discussion here, though hinges about academics and college, it is also a place to check the antecedents of the freshers. Which town/village they come from, which school, etc. If it's a well known schools like Assam Rifles Public School, Meghalaya, Don Bosco, Little Flowers, St. Paul's and the likes situated in different parts of the Northeast, Assam Valley School. etc., they are likely to find seniors here and the discussion naturally gravitates towards the various teachers and nostalgic recollections about their life in the schools. Same goes for village, and localities. In this way, larger identities give way to smaller identities and belongingness which is fostered in the wider sphere.

Since the popularity of Delhi University courses have reached even the hinterlands, the admission process has become more and more complicated. In recent years, there are many students who are not able to get admission in the first or second cut-off lists. This is usually due to filling less number of colleges or the percentage of the candidate not matching the required percentage asked by the particular colleges. A student who is on duty at a help desk talked about it in this way: *"We can usually predict to a certain extent from the previous year's percentage what a candidate can get. But, sometimes, candidates want colleges which are way beyond their percentages and they don't want to fill up the colleges which they can get through. So, there is a mismatch between percentages and the aspirations of the candidate."* If students do not get any allocation in colleges, they are called for counselling where the vacant college seats are intimated and the candidate have to choose from them. Here, the possibility of multiple choices is less as the students have to choose from the available seats.

What is there beyond DU?

While Delhi University captures the imagination of the majority of the students, other universities like Jamia Milia Islamia, Ambedkar University, IP University, Amity and others also have their share of students from the northeast. But, these are placed secondary to DU and as such there are hardly student guide and help desk set up. When inquired about admissions to these universities, one student union leader quipped, *“It is only Delhi University which have a centralized admission like this for ST/SC students. Naturally, it is much easier for us to organize a help desk as there is a specific spot, specific space and time. We are also assured of a steady number of students coming in everyday. Therefore, its worth the time and the investment of finance and labour. Say, an university like Jamia, I doubt whether we’ll have 20 students studying there in total while we number in hundreds in DU. So, we do not have help desk in these places. But, through our channels and newspapers, we advise the students how to apply there and we give out our cellphone numbers in case of individual problems. So we also help them out, but not on a scale like in case of DU. Also, universities like IP University and Amity have mostly professional courses. Therefore, those who want admission there are themselves very knowledgeable and choose those places after great deliberations. As a result, there is hardly any need for them to contact us. They can do everything on their own.”*

Thus, in the presentation, we can see that other universities are put on a lower scale than DU. Not much importance is attached to them. Especially in the case of Jamia, since it had become a minority institution, the quota for ST and SC has been cut down. So, the students are not applying there as they have to compete through the general quota. Talking to the students also help in clarifying this issue regarding their preference of DU. Most of the students apply to Jamia only after not getting admission in DU. The only students who apply for Jamia directly are the LLB integrated students. Unlike DU where LLb is a post graduate

degree of three years duration, Jamia offers it as a five year BA-LLb integrated course. So, many students think that the one year saved as a result is a great help. But as one student put it, *"While we talk about one year being saved, five years is a long period of time. Many of our seniors dropped out because they feel that their interest in the subject has gone down. Some of our seniors also advised us when we are going for this integrated course to study BA instead and apply for LLb again as that would broaden our horizons. But here we are, we took it and let's see where it takes us."*

There is a demarcation which is based on location and the name attached to the university whereby value and prestige are automatically presented. So, an university like Jamia and IP University are looked down upon because of DU. AS lamented by one student. *These universities are not bad by themselves; it is just that DU and JNU are also located in Delhi. Thus, the first choice naturally are the Du and JNU, when you have famous universities like them ,there is just no chance among northeast student to opt first for these universities. If they happen to locate in other places like Lucknow, Mumbai and other cities, they will also be very famous in their cities."*

The argument here is that these universities are not necessarily bad by themselves, but it is the known factors of DU and JNU and the popular perception about these universities that had formed the students' impression of these places. It also matters that most of the northeast students earlier used to study in DU since the independence of India and that it was only in the recent past that northeast students started going to these other universities.

Private Institutions

Development in various sectors and the opening of new job avenues had led to the creation of many jobs which traditional education did not fill the gaps for. Professional courses like BCA, BBA and Mass Communications offered in

government educational institutions are usually hard to get into due to limited seats and high levels of competition. So, private institutions offering these courses have flourished in Delhi and other cities in recent years. State universities give affiliation to institutes in Delhi to run their courses. Names like Sikkim-Manipal, Jamia Hamdard, Maharishi Dayanand University, Kurushetra University, ICFAI among a host of other have good set-up in the cities. These corporate driven universities have professional course and degrees which are well set-up, the quality of education depending to a large extent on the private institutions affiliated to it. Consequently, places having hubs of students like South Ex, Kingsway Camp, Kamla Nagar and such have institutions proclaiming their capacity to mould students into capable professionals.

Private institutions saw large number of northeast students. Looking at the profile of the institutions, Sikkim-Manipal and Jamia Hamdard are ranked high, getting the maximum numbers of students between them. The courses that are most popular in these institutions are BBA, BCA and B. Sc (IT). These are semester based and the fees are usually very reasonable for such a professional course. What the student so is they go to some franchisee of these institutions and get their admission from there. They go to classes in the franchisee only. Overall quality of education and teaching therefore, depend to a large degree on the franchisee. Even though they may enroll in the same university, different franchisees have different methods and their fee also varies accordingly. At the same time, one franchisee will have two three university on offer. The same franchisee can thus offer, let say BCA, from three universities Sikkim Manipal Jamia Hamdard and Kurukshetra University. It is up to the student to choose the particular university to affiliate to. Most of the time, the courses are more or less the same, the main difference being the name. Most northeast student stick with Sikkim Manipal for computer related studies and BBA. Recently, students have started studying in Jamia Hamdard study centers also.

A visit to these study centres provides deep insight to the working and their management policies. I went to three of these institutions with students wanting to take admission. The procedure and modus operandi are more or less the same with nuances in their interactions with the prospective students.

APTECH, Kamla Nagar

My first visit was to Aptech in Kamla Nagar, North Campus. It was located in a plush building suitable for such a corporate and upcoming institution. The person I was going with was interested in programming and did not have a specific course in mind. We were greeted by a pleasant receptionist who also doubles as a consultant for the courses. She asked us to sit on a sofa while she dealt with another student. The place was well maintained and looked more like a corporate office rather than educational institutions. The walls were covered with posters of their success stories. Being of different face, we were promptly death with by the receptionist who welcomed us there. She had a pleasant countenance and maintained a professional front at the same time. Since the person I went with could not speak English fluently, I acted as a sort of translator.

Being a northeast student, my friend felt a bit of hesitation. The consultant was quick to be aware of the change and she assured us that the institution was well attended by northeast students and that the teaching medium was English to ensure that northeast students can understand the instructions. She pointed out that past northeast students have complained about instructions in Hindi. So, they had made it mandatory to teach in English and to response in Hindi only to queries. My friend therefore got an admission there due to the assurance provided and also because of the fact that the institution was looked well maintained.

IACM, South Extension-I

IACM is located at the back lane of South Extension I. I had gone there earlier with some friend to check out their courses. But, that time it was on the front row of South Extension. Due to renovations they had shifted to the back lane. The first time I had gone there, it was a nice office with proper furniture and well spaced office. My friends then had wanted to shift to IACM as it had got a good reputation among Sikkim Manipal students. Their faculties were supposed to be among the best in Delhi. The second time, the offices were a bit dingy which may be because of the renovations going on.

The moment we enter, the receptionist beckons us to sit. Many students were there before us. So, we were made to sit and offered water. One look at our face and they called one particular consultant. I can see that she was used to dealing with northeast students when she started reciting various northeast tribes name saying so and so has studied in their institution. From her recital, one can make out that IACM was quite a hub of study for northeast students. We inquire about B Sc (IT) course from Sikkim Manipal. She told us the fees structure and the course, the kind of facilities her institution can provide to us. At the end, she gave us a bag, a black one with a slip-zip string at the top and we took her leave.

Softdot, South Extension-I

The third institution that I visited was Softdot located on the Ring Road in South Extension-I. It is not a very old institution and had come up recently. However, within a short span of time, they seem to have developed rather quite fast. The offices are also there at a prime location not far away from the road. It was very accessible and of students randomly searching for a study centre, it was quite easy to locate.

By the time we enter the institution, I can see that most of the institution had followed more or less a similar pattern. A receptionist who can also act as a counselor if the regular counselors are busy, and if it's a big institution, though there are counselors who can guide everyone, some counselor seems to specialize in talking to northeast students. This I observe after seeing that some counselors, even if they are free do not directly approach us, rather they wait for someone to deal with us.

Softdot was different in this matter. They had hired a northeast counselor to deal specifically with northeast student. She was from Manipur and could relate to most of our needs immediately. The main issue again was on language. She assured us that the classes will be held only in English and if they used Hindi, we are to report to her directly. She try to present herself as a concerned elderly sister who wants the best for her younger sibling in which she was quite successful. She tried to be personal and professional at the same time; the personal part by trying to relate us by virtue of being a northeastern person and the professional part by acting as a no-nonsense counselor. The study centre seems to realize the nature of northeast students that they had the foresight to hire such and she was the first one I ever encounter as a counselor in an institution like that.

Looking at the three institutions, one can discern commonalities and differences that marked their mode of functioning and their approach towards northeast student. On one hand, one can assume that for the study centers and institutions, northeast students are just like any other students who want to take admission in their institute. On the other hand, one can also assume that since they represent a different demographic picture altogether, they have to be approached in a different way. The profusion and the growth of the market in the realms of vocational and professional institutions has led to competition on all fronts. It

can be assumed that since most of the students who study in these centers are a mixed lot, a portion from Delhi and the rest from different parts of India, northeast students represented an important market niche for them to tap into.

The very fact that some counselor are portrayed and viewed as 'northeast experts' in their own rights can be seen as a representation and portrayal of an area that needs a special care; much like the big brotherly attitude that most mainland Indian scholars feel towards the northeast area- they are to be pampered and taken care of. The adult-child binary can be seen being acted out even in these microcosms. The proliferation of experts- real and so called on the northeast can also be seen in this presentation that the northeast has to be represented and understood as different from the mainstream. Special needs and care as represented by the much repeated assurance of English usage in the class, even though they advertise that the class will be held in English.

Power play within the classroom and the commercial intention of creation of experts reveal the time and space occupied by the northeast vis-à-vis education and commercialization in the city. This is altogether different from the Delhi university authority's attitude that, we are doing some good for them and for that they should be happy. One official during the registration had remarked patronizingly to one student, *"Are you happy now? You've got your form for free. DU doesn't do this for all the students, we did it only for you people. Are you grateful to us? We are here to help you. Make sure you have all your documents ready. We are not accepting any incomplete form. Since it is so easy, you should not have any problem. Do you?"* This and the corporate sector where northeast students represent another market to capture showed the two sides of the entry into institutions for northeast students.

Delhi University- Everyday College Experience

After the allotment list is out, the students have to go to the college which they were allotted for admission within a specific time, usually 3 or 4 days. The everyday narration and the usual vitriolic statements made on this occasion are the matter that make racism seems visible. The visualization and the portrayal of the kind of problems that seems to lie at the interactions and confrontations at the college level in popular narrative needs to be reexamined. The general perception among northeast students and the feeling of marginality and discrimination appear to be at play here starting from admission time. To look into this deeper, several interactions with students coming from different parts of the northeast was had and the meeting flesh out the intricacies of the matter.

Many of the students I talked to replied that they are treated more or less on par with the other students. One interesting insight came forth from one respondent, *"We have heard a lot about northeast student being discriminated starting from office clerks to lecturers. Coming to my college, I feel no such thing. It appears that many students complain of harassment and discrimination mostly because we are not fluent in Hindi and lots of us cannot speak it only. So, I am willing to bet that the students don't understand what the clerk was saying and vice-versa. Most northeast students, we are not aggressive and extroverts like many of the students here. We are not forceful. Sometimes we have to be blunt and a bit aggressive also. Students who can speak Hindi properly will not complain of harassment as much as the students who cannot speak Hindi."* This admission by a student throws some light on the idea. Language as a totalizing force and a discourse by which spatial differences are nurtured and misappropriated to create an artificial difference can be seen. While this is one incident and that also a conjecture, one can see that the perpetration of a discourse has already created a pre-conceived belief that things may happen.

Within this framework of misrepresentation and misappropriation of space, the whole notion of marginality and inequality needs to be re-examined.

Class-Room Politics

The office staffs are not dealt with everyday. It is only during admission, payment of fees and dues as well as during filling up the examination form that they are encountered. It is the everyday classroom interactions and discussions and lectures by the college teachers that another level of politics appeared.

Delhi University with its vast network of college is as heterogeneous as the northeast, to put forward an analogy, and as much similar still. Within the framework of the university syllabus and the university affiliation, they are under one rule. But, at the college level, things are very different. Though the colleges are all constituent to the University of Delhi, depending on the funding and the management the colleges can be classified into three types - the University maintained colleges, the colleges run by trusts and the Delhi Government colleges.²⁹ The trust maintained colleges are colleges like St. Stephen's College, Jesus and Mary's College, Sri Venkateswara College, etc., the Delhi government 100% funded colleges are twelve in number like Acharya Narendra Dev College, Maharaja Aggarwal College, Keshav Mahavidyalaya, Aditi Mahavidyalaya etc. and the rest are run by Delhi University. Even in this internal matter, there are great differences in the administration of each college. It is therefore, possible that internal matters will be decided differently.

²⁹ <http://www.education.nic.in/cd50years/n/2D/3L/2D3L0G01.htm> (last accessed 17 June 2011)

Everyday Identity Politics

Locality and belonging in a particular landscape and the formation of identity is an important part of life. While the issues of boundaries are often taken as a marker for social identification and a sense of belonging, there also exists marker and determinant that had led to formation of group identity as well as individual identity.

Consolidation of northeast identity and individual tribe affiliation can be seen as formed due representation and a sense of oneness. Anderson (1983) had put succinctly in his thesis the importance of what he called 'print capitalism' and its impact on the formation of national identity and subsequently nationalism (Anderson, 1983). Febvre and Martin (1976) have also shown that the coming of the book and the print revolution has led to an increase in the rise of reading and subsequently national language and culture. In these various relationships the identity question is very important for the formation of the collective identity.

For the formation of group identity to come up, various factors influence collection formation. Erikson's (1968) study on the psychological aspect of individual identity formation is important here. He relates personal identity closely with cultural identity recognizing the dynamic impact of the society on the individual identity formation. For him, identity formation "deal(s) with a process 'located' in the core of the individual and yet also in the core of his [or her] communal culture".

From the above discussions it is clear that the process of identity formation hinges largely on interaction with others within a close vicinity. Interaction is one of the key to personal awareness. A group became aware of its own distinctive cultural heritage by the presence of other cultural groups in its sight. This led to a

complex procedure in group identity. The emotional attachment does not come from a reflection within itself, but more from the action of judging and opposing a significant 'other'. Identity thus creates a temporal continuity between one's past and future. While past experience and memory brought one to his or her present identity, the present identity is also shaped by one's hope in the future. Pachau (2002) analysis continues that "the function of the anticipatory faculty is crucial for group identity formation and development, the group memory is also influenced by its anticipated future.

The formation of a northeast identity can be analyzed from various viewpoints and perspective. But here what we are trying to present is the formation of northeast identity and its impingement on the society at large within the northeast communities itself in Delhi and the other populace. Students are asked regarding their identity and the general concept of northeastness that they are supposed to exhibit and possess.

The observations and reflections on students' who were interviewed portray a sense of negotiation of multiple identities and belongingness. Most of the students feel that they are northeastern because that is their tag and that is what people identify them with. One student in Indra Vihar elaborates, "*We are known as northeasterners as that is the part that people understood. Our individual identities do not really matters to them, most of them know that there are states called Assam and Manipur. Beyond that, they don't know anything. If we managed to encounter students who are supposedly well-read, then they talk about Naga problems. Arunachal, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram do not really figured in the imagination of these people. So, if they asked me whether I'm from Assam or Manipur, then I just say yes than rather try to educate them about Indian geography.*" This partly cynical and realistic account more or less sums up the beliefs and encounters that a northeast student go through. Earlier, since northeast students had not really penetrated Delhi

society, they are usually thought to be from Japan, Korea, China, Thailand or other East Asian countries. Nepal is also frequently thought of as their homeland. With the increasing number of northeasterners in the city, their visibility has also increased.

Individual Identity

Relocating from home to Delhi has created a sense of differences and a change in identity perception. Locality and belonging to a particular geographical was suddenly subsumed by a larger entity, namely that of the city and the nation state. Disorientation and reorientation can be seen at play here. Identities which are not so sharp earlier became accentuated and other identities became muted. The negotiation of multiple identities and its fluidity became an issue for deliberations.

Back in the northeast, identities were based on localized geography and ethnicity. The locality you belong to, the tribe, clan you belong to and your village/town were your identities. So, when ever your identity comes into play, the level at which it is in play surface. For example, if you are within your hometown, your locality became your primary identity along with your sub-clan or clan for that matter. When you go out of town to another place, your identity is fixed to your town and your tribe. This is especially so in states other than Mizoram where the populace is more heterogenous in ethnic structure. Places like Manipur, Nagaland, Arunachal, Assam have multiple tribes living within it. Thus, tribal affiliation also becomes an important identity marker. Once you come out of the state, the pan-identity marker of state comes into play.

However, these negotiations not only brings out differences, but different thoughts about one own identity. Most of the students I talked to have not thought much about their identity as such while they are at home. It is only in

Delhi that the question of identity becomes consequential and starts attaching to itself new meanings. A Naga girl says that, *“identity is not one that I thought and talked about much. While I was back home, belonging to a particular village and being of a particular tribe was the way that identity was fixed. When I reached Delhi, that sphere has changed to something completely different. Now I am not just someone belonging to a particular village or tribe. Now, I have become a Naga, my individual Ao identity was not important to them. In Delhi, it is important only for my Ao community and other Naga tribes like Sema, Lotha and others. Not only that, Naga was also too small an identity in many places. Rather than my Naga term, the northeast tag was how people recognize us here. We all know that we are from the northeast. But, it was more of a geographical description for us rather than an identity. But, in Delhi it became our identity. Now, along with my fellow northeasterner, most of who I never thought would share a similar identity with me, I too am clubbed together with them.”* This indicates that identity becomes more monolithic in structure when one comes to the city. The individual identity that one has is now subsumed by a larger community marker; individuality gives way to a more pluralistic collective.

Northeastness as an identity thus becomes more coherent in the city. One is thus very happy to see a fellow northeasterners in any institute or college. Those people whom back in the northeast states would have been total strangers are now bosom friends. In most of the colleges and institutes, whenever northeast students are there, they usually group together, even leading to the accusation of having a gang mentality. A student from Bihar remarked, *“It is difficult to be friends with them. Most of the time, they hang out with their fellow northeast friends only. This is not good. We are in the same college, so, they should be friends with us also. Not just between themselves.”* At the other side of the coin, northeast students also replied that, *“Trying to be friends with them is also difficult. We have different culture. We follow different religion. They keep asking us whether we eat everything. They try to make fun of us. So, it is better that we just stay friends with fellow like-minded people.”*

However, if only we get together (i.e. Northeast) we tend to be more relaxed about our studies. Sometimes, we also have Indian friends, they are very helpful and they help us in our studies too." They also relate that among students who have friend from Delhi are usually students who studied in Delhi earlier. They maintain their ties with their school friends. Their being in Delhi also makes it easier for them to connect with the students here easily. However, a sort of class strata is also there, with students hanging out with the some economic status from which they belong.

Students coming from various parts of the northeast also find it easier to relate among themselves. Having the same ethnic stock, religion and culture and the fact that they are contrasted in look against their other classmates also makes the introduction to one another smoother. Music choice, fashion taste and similarity of taste buds makes them go along very well. The deep penetration of northeast by western culture and recently by Korean culture has given them a sense of belonging together. Contrasted with Bollywood culture and the prevailing societal predilections in the city, these outside factors helped cement their relationship.

Here we can see that the lack of awareness about northeast in general and the various states in particular has created a sense of alienation towards them. Representation in mainstream media and the cinema and the negative image that they portray can be seen as a subversion of identity and nationhood. The northeast states in the media are usually romanticized as an exotic place. The allegory of an untamed Africa can be put in the form of northeast representation. Even in Bollywood movies, they are usually put as the place where looting and raping happened. One student said, *"Even though these mainland India people thought us to be very uncivilized, a place of looting, raping and insurgency, the fact is that most of these things happened more in urban cities like Delhi and all, you can't pick the daily newspaper without an incident regarding murder, rape, theft and other forms of*

crime. We have less of these in the northeast, but they look at the northeast with danger and a place to be avoided. Even, our sportspersons are relegated to the side page even when they won honours for the country. If a Haryani or Sania Mirza gets into some semi final or quarter final, they are put on the front pages. So, our presence in the national media is just a side show."

Belonging to a mainstream identity is thus still a step away from realization. While the rhetoric of Unity in diversity³⁰ is still going strong, the ground reality is a shade different. The individual identity negotiation and its narrative can be seen within the various spheres and walk of lives. Belonging to a particular locality involves acts of loyalty to a place, the belonging which may be expressed through oral and written histories, narratives of origin as belonging and also through a sense of experience (Lovell, 1998). This notion of belonging is based on geography of location and a historical ontology. How such loyalties are framed and how they exercised themselves in everyday reality is relevant of an understanding of identity. However, such notions cannot really apply to the northeast student's reality in Delhi. For them, identity and belonging is based not on the historicity of Delhi and its environment, but rather in opposition to it.

The temporary migration that the student faced has led to a new change of an identity too. He/she has to encounter an identification process whereby they are categorized and put on a pedestal from various point. A person, who is an individual, of a particular community and location has to encounter a change after coming to Delhi which is very different from what they are usually used to. Thus, a Sema Naga may become only Naga or to a large extent, only a northeasterner or *nepali* to someone who will encounter them in Delhi. The person has to renegotiate with a new fluid and larger identity which will be

³⁰ This has been often used to represent India's diversity and pluralism as well as to showcase India's success in containing all the diverse elements within the Indian subcontinent.

immediately negated once they go back home, where they revert to their individual tribal and local identity.

CHAPTER 4

NORTHEAST STUDENTS IN DELHI - THE URBAN EXPERIENCE

The metropolis and the urban settings present a challenge and a sense of adventure for the northeast students. Many come out of the cocoon of their homes and get ready to face the world. Except for those students who had done their class 11 and 12 in Delhi, for the rest, Delhi is the first time that they come out of their homes. It becomes a daily struggle both for their survival in an alien city and for their everyday existence of managing the nitty-gritty of running a household including cooking, washing, and going to the market to buy vegetables, that is, if one is not a the hostel student. It is a new experience of living with people who they have met for the very first time. As for the ones who come to live in hostels, a whole new arena of experience, of living in a common block, eating in the mess hall and settling with strangers, etc. begins with the belief and hope that it will all turn out well.

Here in this chapter, I will deal with personal interactions, interviews and participant observations made of what the students are doing for their daily existence in the house and the locality. While the process of interaction with students at the college level is also dealt with to some extent, most participants seemed to prefer the relatively anonymous and safe environment of the home since the thought of being a part of research interviews somehow bore a slight weight upon their consciousness.

Why come to Delhi?

This is one of the most pertinent questions. The fact that by their choice, students want to come to Delhi cannot be just taken at face value. The media and the general public perception that the students are here since Delhi provides the best education, naturally defies explanation. But, besides this fact, many more intricacies and factors are play out in the field. The market and personal choice also hinges largely on the media projection and general opinion that prevails. These are not manufactured under dubious and unsound arguments, rather, what I try to present here is that beyond the simplistic argument of Delhi providing the best quality of education, there are the other motivational factors that bring new students into this city year after year.

One of my friends is a lecturer at Daulat Ram College. I asked her to help me out with my research by facilitating the interaction process with students since many students on being approached directly feel that they have nothing to tell me (which I feel, is a their polite way of telling me to get lost). I felt that with her authority and position, the students will take me more seriously. But again, one can reflect upon the power play and ethical dimensions of conducting a research. I wonder whether I have crossed any barriers regarding the interaction.

There were these two students who were first introduced to me at Daulat Ram College. I went there and I interacted with them for about ten minutes. I told them about myself and what I was doing and the kind of things I wanted to talk to them about. I briefed them in advance the kinds of question I was going to ask them and asked whether they would be comfortable answering them. They told me that they will think over it and get back to me in a week time. After a week or so, I meet them at Indra Vihar, at the lecturer's place.

(Z=Zara,. AS=Assam Girl, AP =Arunachal Pradesh Girl).

Z : Why do you choose Delhi as a place for pursuing your graduation? Have you studied in Delhi earlier?

AS : You know, Delhi is the capital of India. I come to Delhi because there are many opportunities here. My main aim is to give IAS exam, so, there are many coaching centers here in Delhi. In my hometown there aren't as many coaching centers. We don't know so many things in our hometown, but when I come to Delhi I broadly know about this UPSC exam and how to go about it. Coming here was my choice but my parents also forced me to come here because I'm the only daughter and they have dreams for me. I mainly wanted to see Delhi and see what type of life it would be, how are the competitions here, how are the students etc. Assam is good, but many facilities are lacking in Assam which I find in Daulat Ram College.

AP : I have done my schooling from Assam and Arunachal, back there I was literate. But, I don't know what happens outside Assam and Arunachal. From Cl-10th onwards I dream for outside. So, I started thinking of coming to Delhi. I wanted to join United Nations. Coming to Delhi, doing everything by yourself, that is what I want to do. So, coming to Delhi was my decision and never my parent's decision. Delhi University is spoken all over the world and the best in India. So, I wanted to do here. You get to mingle around and there is cultural exchange here

From the above simple narrative, we can see that the lure of Delhi was mainly because of its education system. By virtue of being the capital of India, they were also interested in the opportunities that it can offer them, so they choose Delhi. But at the same time, the kind of opportunities that it can give them also seems to come with caveats as they see it. The Assam girl narrates, *"Delhi is very well*

known for its high rate of rape, and as such, it will be difficult for us to adjust to the kind of situation it is. Nonetheless, it will be an adventure for us here to see what we can do and what we can achieve."

Here the onus on coming to Delhi hinges largely on the student themselves. The Arunachali girl even maintained that since she passed her Class 10, she could choose where she wanted to study. She said that her parents never gave her too many suggestions and that most of the time, she choose what she wanted to study.

Peter looks like a normal northeast youth. With his close shaven hair and his spectacle, he has a comfortable air around him. I went to a friend's place in Sarai Jullena where a friend calls him for me. At first he was apprehensive about the interview saying that his situation was different from other students. After some persuasion and discussion he agreed to do an interview for me.

He was presently studying in Jamia Milia Islamia towards a Master degree. Looking at him and his personality, it looks like he is quite older than his academic year. He said that, "I've come to Delhi to escape from ignominy, I kept failing year after year and all my friends had already graduated ahead of me. I know that if I don't have any degree, my future is very bleak. Therefore, I asked my parents to send me to Delhi. Even in Delhi I hardly go out as I don't want to interact much with others. I just want to get my degree and go home." Like him, another boy that I interviewed in Gautam Nagar has more or less the same story. "At first I came to work. I had done my BA but could not complete due to personal problems. So, I came to Delhi to stay with my brother and work. After some time I started college too as it didn't interfere with my work. I am presently doing BA (Pass Course) as private candidate. So this way I'll be working and getting my degree as well." On being asked what he intend to do, he said. "My

work is more important than my education. I study BA again primarily to refresh my brains. Gaining knowledge is important to me than the degree.”

A medical student’s reasons for choosing Delhi is based on a different line. Most of the northeast states except for Assam and Tripura do not have medical colleges. Because of this, they got allocation from the central pool for medical seats, the medical colleges in Delhi like Lady Hardinge Medical College and Maulana Azad Medical College have a sizeable number of students coming from the northeast, and these students usually got through the state medical quota. A student from Lady Hardinge said that the choice of Delhi was not made because of the location or any other reason. The main reason was that she was allotted a seat in the college by her state authorities. As such, she came here. However, even among the ones allocated by the state, it is the best students who top the medical seat allocation exams who get to come to Delhi.

Reasons for coming to Delhi differs largely and cannot be completely linked to the theory of better education and facility. These two stories imply that there are many more internal dynamics at work. It can be argued that Delhi is an all consuming city where one can hide his/her identity and assume a new one. Or, where one can lie low and do what they want to do without the society knowing anything. In a cohesive community like that of northeast, absence from community activities and programs is not conducive to community welfare in general. Some student union even used to fine students who do not come to the social gatherings.³¹

James, another student in Gautam Nagar has again another reason for coming to Delhi. His elder sister is a permanent nurse in AIIMS, as there was no one to stay with her. She asked him to come to stay with her as well as to get benefit from

³¹ This happened especially during Fresher Welcome Day and Fresher’s Sports day.

the good educational facilities that are available in Delhi. For him, the matter of accommodation and food does not arise as his sister was already well settled with rented flat and all necessary goods to run the household.

The reason for coming to Delhi are multiple and different for different students. Even if they do not come primarily for the educational institutions in the first place, if they are of college going age, they usually go to colleges and institutions instead of whiling away time.

Student's Life in Delhi

A place to live is one of the basic requirements for human beings. From the Stone Age till the present day, human beings strive for shelter in one form or another. Northeast students, when they come to Delhi also have to look for accommodation. Except for those lucky few who get hostels or opt for paying guests accommodations (PGs), the rest have to search for a house or room to rent. Searching for a house to rent was almost an adventure earlier. Four to five years back, most of the students used to go from house to house to see whether the ubiquitous sign, "To Let" was posted outside or not. Even though property dealer have started roping in then, most of the house were rented through personal contacts. But, the situation has changed now.

With increasing influx of students from outside, local people have started opening property dealerships where they list sale and purchase of houses. It is a very lucrative job option. Most of the offices are usually the ground floor or their living room converted into a makeshift office with property dealer signs above. They maintain a list of houses/rooms which are vacant and they show the students around to the rooms that are available. For this service they take an amount ranging from half of a month's rent of or a full month's rent as fee. So, if

the house rent is ten thousand rupees per month, they took ten thousand rupees as commission for just giving them the house.

The everyday lived experiences of the students are of utmost importance. Here we will look at the individual narratives. These narratives are based on individuals who have come to Delhi for their education and the kind of experiences that they have in negotiating with the culture and place that is so different from their places. We will look at four narratives of the dreams and aspirations of the students from various states of the northeast. As much as of an aim it is to compare experiences, it is also to delineate the boundaries between individual experience and initial starting positions in the academic environment. While these micro-narratives cannot hold claim to interrogate the wider existential premises of narratives in the city, we can see the divergent fractures and gaps within the grand narrative through the experiences of the individuals related here.

1. John, 23, Mizoram, Delhi University

John did his graduation from Mizoram and came to Delhi for his Masters. He finishes BSc Physics from Mizoram University. He realized that he would have better prospects if he studied in Delhi rather than Mizoram. So, hailing from a rural area in Mizoram, he came to Delhi for his masters. When he first came to Delhi, he didn't know anyone. So, he just stayed with the pastor in his quarters. The pastors called several students union leaders to advise him on his prospects and he finally got admission in Delhi University for MSc physics. After getting admission, he stayed in a rented house in Patel Chest Christian Colony in North Campus, the place being at a walking distance from the Delhi University Science faculty. I knew him because I was one of the student Union leaders called upon by the pastor to help him out. So, I went to their residence to talk about his

prospects and his future plan. Later on, I went to his house to have a talk with him again.

He said he selected Delhi over all other Universities because Delhi is the capital city of India and everyone comes to Delhi for their education. At the same time, especially for people preparing for civil service exam, it is the main centre. He nearly missed his admission as he did not realize that he was shortlisted for quite some time. Hostel accommodation was the first choice on his mind. But, due to the scarcity of hostel seats and his late admission, his friends advised him not to apply for hostels and go for a rented house. So, along with a friend they got a house in the mentioned colony.

The house or room that they rented was one of the smallest rooms that I have ever encountered in Delhi. It was approximately five and a half feet by ten feet. There was just space enough for a bed and a table in the corner of the room. There was no cupboard or places to keep things in. There were no cooking utensils also. I asked him how he managed his meals. He said, he used to go to the Kothari Hostel with his friend for food. The hostel mess managers charged them the same rate as they did from the hostel boys. The toilet and the bathroom were communally shared. There was also a water cooler installed by the owner of the building in each floor.

But looking outside, I saw that there were mini kitchens where their neighbours seemed to be cooking. As there was no space inside, all these mini kitchens were run outside. The whole building was full of these small rooms. Majority of them were rented by students preparing for UPSC and other competitive exams. John and his friend were among the very few who were regular students. Except for a few civil service aspirants from Bihar, the rest of the building was occupied by northeast students.

John's daily lifestyle was very simple. He gets up early in the morning in time for a bath. Then he goes to Kothari hostel, approximately a kilometer and half, on foot to take his breakfast. He then goes to the Science Faculty from there and spends the whole day attending classes and studying in the library after his classes. Only on Sundays and Saturdays, his routine will be varies. On Saturday, instead of going to the Faculty and library to study, he usually washes clothes and does a necessary chore or two back in his room. He also uses his free time to visit friends and do what he usually does for his recreation.

Being religious, John makes it a point to study the Bible and having devotions. Sunday is another day of rest. Instead of doing any studies unless exam times are near, he goes to the North Delhi Mizo Christian Fellowship. He is used to taking active part in it and is even known as one of the regular contributors of sharing personal religious experience that used to take place in the church. He is also known by other students as slightly eccentric due to his Spartan lifestyle and religious fervor. He hardly goes home due to financial problems that do not allow him to go home regularly. He says that education is his main purpose in coming to Delhi and he wants to do it properly before returning home.



Pic. 1



Pic. 2

Pic. 1 shows the whole room. It is five and a half feet by ten feet. The photograph shows a view from the entrance. Pic. 2 is the corridor where the students run their mini-kitchens.

2. Dechen, 21, Sikkim, Delhi University

Dechen is a girl who just finished her third year BA from Miranda House, Delhi University. I went to interview her in her rented flat in Vijay Nagar, North Campus. I was introduced to her by a Mizo friend who is her classmate in college. My gatekeeper thus helped me gain access to her; I would not have had any chance to meet her otherwise. My Mizo friend has to talk to her of my intentions and the kind of question that I was going to ask her. Only after a long conversation between them, I was able to gain access to her flat. The first time I went there, I just had some soft drinks which she offered me and told her my credentials. I roughly outlined the kind of questions that I was planning on asking her in the interview. I went for the real interview after a fortnight.

The flat she was staying in was on the third floor. It was simply and tastefully furnished. There was a common room upon entering the flat with two rooms and a kitchen. There was a bed in one of the room. In the other room, there was a mattress on the ground and a television. The common room also had a mattress which was used to seat the guests.

Dechen narrated that she did not opt for hostel in the first place. As the queue was very long for the hostel, she just decides to rent a flat. In addition to this, she had always stayed in hostel all through her previous student life, so she didn't want to stay in hostel again. Her sister was also here, so it made it simpler for her to rent a flat as she did not have to share it with anyone. Cooking food which one likes to eat was also an added benefit as compared to hostel food. She says that she is an average student and does not attend classes that regularly. Due to a good network of friends, she is usually able to keep up with her work.

Her everyday life is also very similar. On weekdays, it is consumed by classes. If possible she goes to Kamla Nagar, hangout place in North Campus where there are shops and restaurants as well as things for a college student to do. Weekends are slightly different. She usually goes for shopping or movies, and generally hangs out with friends. On Sunday, she just sleeps in and relaxes. As she is a Buddhist, unlike Christianity, there is no need to go to a specific place for her worship. Dechen admits that she is not very religious and that she only goes to temples in Sikkim. Even after living in Delhi for nearly three years, she has never visited a Buddhist temple.

3. Cindy, 26, Nagaland, Jamia Milia Islamia

Cindy is presently pursuing her PhD in education from Jamia Milia Islamia. She did her graduation and post graduation from outside before coming to Jamia Milia Islamia. She stays in a PG because she prefers it to hostel and living in a

rented house because of the food problems as well as cost factor. Being a Naga, she can't take much oily food and she prefers cooking her own food. Her PG is not far away from the main Jamia campus. She mentions that she used fermented soyabean (akhuni) in her food, but her PG doesn't fuss about her food preparations. She doesn't venture out much as she is not very familiar to her community. Jamia campus was a bit far from the main places where her community have their various functions.

These various narratives showed the differences between the lives of students from northeast India in a micro-way. The overwhelming generalizations of various accounts cannot be used to look into the daily reality of students' life. John' narrative will also have many parallel among students not from northeast, but among his fellow flat mates. Even among Mizos, his lifestyle is considered a bit different. Dechen on the other hand have many similarities with students coming from affluent background. Cindy's simplistic story also has its resonance with the lives of many other northeast students, who are not only invisible among the people in Delhi but also among their own community.

Northeast Youth and Cyberculture

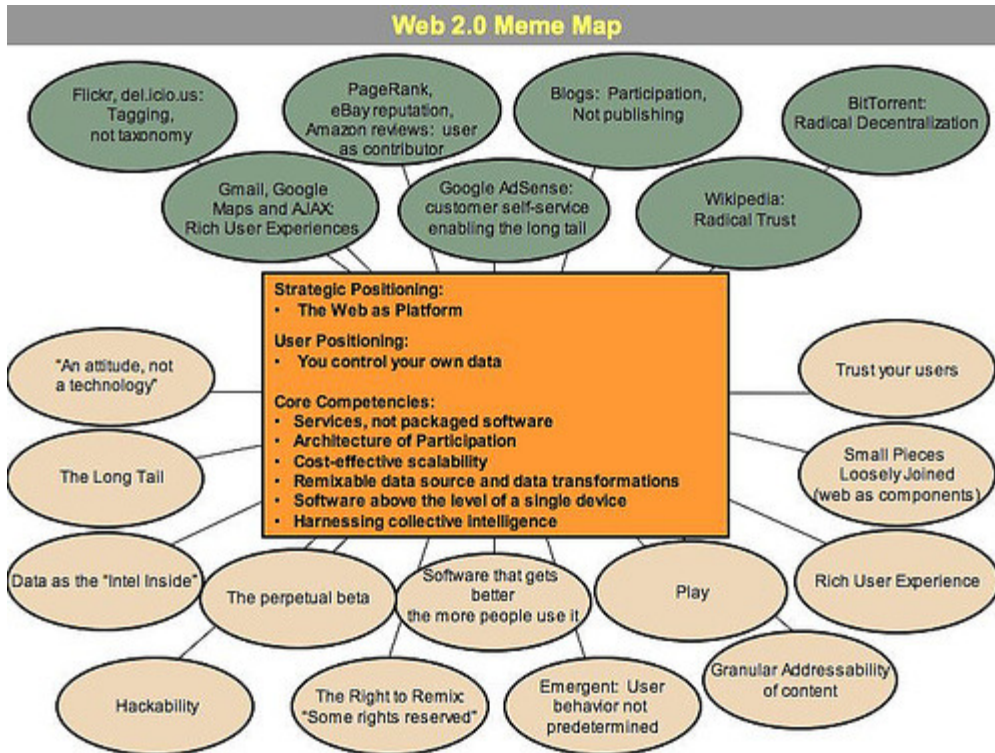
The pervasive presence of internet and its usage in everyday life is an interesting reality of modern life. The coming of web 2.0 has really changed the online scenario. Web 2.0 is a term that is used to showcase the increasing democracy and fluidity of control over internet data usage and presentation. According to various technology blogs, web 2.0 can be variously described as user centered design, rich web experience, software as a service, crowd sourcing, collaboration, power decentralization, dynamic content.³² What this signifies is that the users are able to create content and provide important inputs. User interactions

³² <http://www.techpluto.com/web-20-services/>

become more important. At the same time, content generation also took its impetus from the increasingly fluid net connectivity boosted by portable net capable devices like mobile and PDAs as well as the coming of the netbook. These devices facilitated easy access to the internet and their portability and cheap access ensures that the internet is always near them. Social networking sites which takes full advantages of these portability and interactions like Orkut, Facebook, Tweeter, Hi5 and most recently Google+ have all contributed to the nearly 24 hours connectivity. The changes have also entered the life of northeast students in Delhi. The cyber culture that was earlier exemplified by the mIRC chatrooms of the early 2000's and the cyber-cafes are increasingly changed by connectivity of internet in the personal room as well the mobile phone application.³³

Internet earlier was basically used for sending of emails, gathering information, news, etc. which are not very interactive. But, the coming of web 2.0 and subsequent technological advances has created many other usages which we will delineate below. These are all based from fieldwork in Delhi which may or may not have parallel significance elsewhere.

³³ mIRC is a software program used for internet relay chat. It is a fully functional chat software through which you can talk to friend online in real time. It popularity peaked during 2000-2003 when it was gradually replaced by other more personalized chat like yahoo messenger and now facebook. mIRC allow one to enter the chat channel where we can find someone to chat with. It is like a virtual meeting ground.



A pictograph showing the web 2.0 Map

Source: <http://oreilly.com/web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html>

Living the Cyber Life

Nisbett (2009) in his study of Bangalore and the Bangalore IT spheres talk about how the IT dreams have pervaded the atmosphere of the city. He went on to talk about how the knowledge about information technology was seen as the passport to success in life. In his interesting book, he also talks about the usage of internet among the various groups. One thing that came out is that most of his survey was done when cyber-café was the rage and internet has not really entered into the house. As a result, online life revolves around the cyber cafes unlike the 24 hours connectivity we have today. If he had done a survey again, some of the trajectories of his research might be different.

Cyber culture recent developments are all connected with web 2.0 more or less nowadays. Marshall (2004, Quoted in Bell 2007) emphasizes how it has tapped into a kind of 'will to produce' among a growing groups of users: the 'prosumers' and the 'produser' who does more than surf websites, shop online or send emails. The creative potentials of the web have been gradually harnessed. The most important is the demystification and subsequent democratization of the means of production. It is also a point to note that cyber culture not only encompass the web, but also online computer gaming, online shopping, and much more business activities.

The Net as a Social Space

One of the most penetrating and pervasive use of the net among northeast students in Delhi can be the social networking sites. It is very difficult to find a student without a single account in the numerous networking sites. Most of them have at least a facebook account which is the most popular among the social networking sites. These sites provides instant chat, browser based gamings, applications like horoscope, and many other time consuming applications. Due to the encompassing nature of the site, facebook is the most popular of all these social networking sites, so much so that nowadays instead of exchanging email ids, "I'll add on facebook" has become the way to keep in touch and socialize.

Mary is a BA student from Manipur. She has studied in Delhi for about four years and had done her Class XI and XII from Delhi itself. For her, facebook is not only the way to keep in touch with friends, it is her social life. *"Facebook is very important for me. I have an internet connection through portable Tata Indicom which I use on my laptop if I'm in the room. Otherwise, I always use my blackberry phone to be online. I hardly visit my friends except while going shopping or watching the movies. Facebook is there, we can chat all the time without going outside the house. I can*

also enable video chat if I want to see my friends. That ways, we can show each other stuffs if needed. Putting status on facebook is very important for me as I can express myself in the virtual world. I also used twitter as it is a little more private than facebook for close friends. Those friends which I have in school, but who have studied elsewhere, I can keep in touch with them everyday as if we are in the same college. So, it is very important for me." The portable mobile also helped them keep in touch. Even though the mobile phone smses and call can be done anytime, they also keep in touch on facebook. That way more friends can join them. The virtual life that they have is thus different from the real life world that they live.

Barkardjieva (2007) however caution against rigid typology of the term virtual community, the level of continuity and belonging being in a flux. She further maintained that "the concept of virtual community with all the normative load it carries, has led analysis into a not particularly productive ideological exchange disputing the possibility that genuine community can be sustained through computer network." The virtual with all its baggage is seen as more unreal or hyper real as compared to the normative everyday life.

Online community groups are however, by their own admission very active in real life also. Most of the students' unions have facebook groups through which they disseminate information and try to create a sense of togetherness beyond the real world. Earlier, online communities were nearly synonymous with websites which offers chat room capability or interaction among members through email and other means. The online community now, among northeast mostly revolves round facebook group. Beyond students' unions, community with culture specific jokes and even facebook groups for purchasing thing between users in facebook have emerged. These can be seen as having taken their inspirations from the success of ebay. Unlike ebay where electronic

transaction takes place, most of these student based online bartering and trading are more on the nascent scale.

The Delhi Mizo Secondhand group is a facebook group which attempts to connect student buyers with student sellers. The creator of the group said that, *“As we are all students, our residence in Delhi is not permanent. Some come, some goes home. In the between, the new students want to purchase things which will be wanted to be sold by the students leaving Delhi. Therefore, I created this group. Our Delhi Mizo student newsletter comes out every Sunday. But, that is accessible only to those who go to church as it is distributed there. The one needing the particular things I want to sell might not go to church that Sunday. Most of us have facebook accounts now. So, I find that it’s easier to let people connect that way. There is no commercial intention in this online group. If people connect and sell and buy stuff, then that is fine.”* There some successful transaction already. But, since the group is based in Delhi most of the discussion is followed by a phone call and a personal interaction between the buyer and the seller.

Thus, the social place has become a bazaar where one has to negotiate the nooks and crannies of digital lane rather than real life lane. Ricky who sold his data card ³⁴ this way said, *“It is far easier. I just post that I have a datacard and within half an hour, there were lots of queries. Among them, I can see who is interested and who is not interested. Accordingly, I reply to them and gave my number to the sincere ones. And I have sold my datacard without leaving my house at all.* This is one incident where internet is helpful for an online transaction. At the same time, due to many pranks on the net, these are sometimes taken in a jovial manner without seriousness. Yet, the medium seems to be catching up with many students posting what they need and what they are willing to sell. Since the group just provide the platform for interaction between buyers and sellers, the actual

³⁴ A internet access device which is portable, the size of a pen drive and looks like one.

success rate is difficult to gauge. Looking at the number of posts, it seems to be a successful initiative. The most interesting thing is while it is dedicated to selling of any secondhand goods, most of the items are portable electronics devices like mobile phone, data card, pendrive etc.

Another online activity which is also very popular is online gaming. These can be classified into two types of gaming, browser based gaming and software based gaming. Browser based gaming are games which are played through internet browser like Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox and Google Chrome. You log into the website through the browser and then play the games. Popular games are facebook based games like Empire and Allies, Farmville, Cityville, Zynga Poker and software or client based games like World of Warcraft and Garena. Client/software based games generates a link with the main virtual server and the game is played on the internet.

The browser games, especially in facebook requires many help from other players of the game. You need help from them to complete quest, to reach new level and for the general playing. But, in these games, except for poker, there are no real time interactions with other users in the browser. However, in the client based games, you can do so. Say, for a game like World of Warcraft, you are battling with other players in real time. Therefore, being online is of utmost importance. But, in the browser games, for example, like Farmville, you can just plant crops in the game and log out. Only after it is time to harvest that you need to log in again. In the meantime, even if you are not online, your friends can visit your farm and water them or harvest them as may be needed. But, in a game like warcraft, you are fighting with another in which you have to control your character personally. Thus, the need to be online is high and downtime has to be minimized.

Other client based games are games which can be played through hub without any need of the internet. Here, games like *Fifa World Cup*, *Call of Duty* are popular. Here, the only need is for the gamers to carry their individual laptops and with the help of the hub play games against one another. This is also a popular game among northeast students with several groups making themselves into clans and challenging others. This is more prevalent among normal students as they can organise the game at the time that they want.

Among northeast students, we can see two breed of gamers. The part time gamer that play mostly the browser based games and the individual old games mentioned. These players include a large portion of girls who play these games to while away their time. A girl from Kotla said, *"Since I don't go out that much, I have ample free time to enjoy. So, I used to play these games. I mostly play Farmville, which is basically running a farm. As the crops have to be harvested after a time period, I used to set my alarm clock so that I will not miss the harvesting. Otherwise, the crops get damaged."* After asking whether she consider herself addicted to the game, she said, *"I don't think I am addicted to the game. But, I usually play it because I hardly go out and don't have many friends. So, I don't think that it is that serious."*

Regarding the client based game, one player said. *"Most people think that we stay and play games all the time, it is not so. We can chat and talk with our friends who are also playing."* The development of these gaming can be traced to the easy availability of internet access. Earlier, most of the gaming was done on the individual computers with a single person playing the game. Thus, gaming can be done at one's will and stop according to individual free time and leisure. This has changed on the online gaming where timing and availability of others dictated what you can or cannot do. You alone are not in control of the timing and the play anymore. Another participant says that, *"When you are online, it is*

very difficult to concentrate on other things because you never know when your clan mates are going to call you for help in the game."

Since the games entails long duration of time on the internet, their community is restricted to their clan mates or gaming partners. However, several students who are casual player of these games have an interesting narration. According to them, *"Most of the better players in these games are misfits, who do not fit into society. To be a good player means that you have to be in front of your computer all the time. They are usually losers and failures in real life who are trying to make up their deficiency in real life by becoming heroes in the virtual world. Even they are college drop outs and those who flunk in exam. In Delhi, most of the players who are very good are usually not students but rather those who are just wasting their time being online without any future plans."*

A LAN Gaming Party

Kalyan Vihar, near New Gupta Colony, North Campus

Time: 11:46 PM 21st October 2011.

I got a call from a friend one afternoon. It was call inviting me to a gaming party. So, I went ahead and told him that I was very interested in their party. So, at 8:30 PM, I left with a member of their party and went via metro to North Campus. We had dinner at the organiser of the party at Outram Lines, from there we went to Kalyan Vihar. There were four of us who went there. Since the place where the party was supposed to be held was recently rented, there was a lack of seating arrangements made. So, we even carried three plastic chairs with us. Other three friends came from Vijay Nagar and with two more collapsible chairs. There were seven players including the host.



LAN Gaming Party

Rough Profiles of the Players

Most of the players were Delhi University students. Two of them were doing their BCom and BA Political Science in School of Open Learning. Another one was pursuing a degree in homeopathy. A BCA student was also present and was the main person setting up the gaming equipments. I went to their place with still another B.Com student from PG DAV College who used to stay in South Extension.

Pre-Game Preview

When we reached there, there were some people there: the host's two sisters and their non-northeast friends who were in Delhi for their vacation. While waiting for the others to arrive, there was a short discussion and pre-game chat. When the others arrived they all joined in the talk which was about reinforcing masculinity and about manliness. Smoking outside the house, there was good natured bantering and joke-cracking about the other's manhood. As the Delhi Mizo Kut (or Delhi Mizo Festival) was coming up, they had talk about the various practices they had during the day in the sports item that they plan to represent. For the purpose of the Kut, the Delhi Mizo community is divided in four groups and one was from another team, the rest belongs to the same team, i.e. North Campus. But since they were playing different games, viz., basketball, football etc., they did not get to meet during the day. So, it was good natured banter and the reaffirmation of friendship and identity.

Game Set-Up

The game set-up was not very difficult; they used a wireless router to connect the various laptops that they have bought for the game. The graphics, so that make it good for a LAN party as they can just bring their various laptops together. If they decided to play some other game, then there can be some problems as most games nowadays require high computer graphics. The setup was just two collapsible tables placed side by side; three players on each side with a total of six players. One team has three players.

The First Game (Took 40 minutes)

The game started and all the players choose the kind of player that they wanted to use. Sentinels and Scourge are the name of the clans or group. Sentinels guarded the World tree, and the Scourge guarded the frozen throne. In this, the two clans tried to destroy what the other groups had guarded and at the same time tried to destroy the others. Each player can select their particular hero from a wide range of characters. After all these selections are done, they match up and they are off.

The method of the game is basically a group or horde of characters that fight with another group from the opposite sides. So, in this particular context, the two teams of three that we formed were playing against each other. However, if the players so desired, they can also include Artificial Intelligence (AI) players, but, to do so will entail them to use AI map for the game.

The first game went well and the players were quite enthusiastic about it. The sound of clicking mouse and the creak of the whirling fan above were players to help them. Suddenly, one of the players calls a break. It turned out that one of the key in his laptop keyboard had come off and this was crucial for the game. So, there was a short break while he fixed his keyboard and the game was resumed. After some time, there were exclamations of worry and some exuding of confidence. The game was over and it took forty minutes for this particular gaming episode to end.

There was a short break, small talks about the game just ended while smoking and some eating sweet betel nut or *supari*. There was a friendly leg pulling about the moves that the various players made and then they were ready for the second game. This went on for the whole night. It's only when dawn was breaking and the sun was coming up that the gaming party broke up. We all packed up: the gamers packed their gaming laptops and the whole set-up while I also packed up my netbook while doing the observation. Then, we said goodbyes and departed from there. As three of us were from South Delhi, we stayed back in one of the gamers' houses in Outline Lines. We had breakfast and slept there.

An Interview with a Girl Gamer

The girl is presently pursuing her masters from DU in South Campus. She stayed in Nanakpura where I went to interview her:

(Z=Zara, M=Melody)

Z : When did you start playing this game, before coming to Delhi or after?

M :Umm, after coming to Delhi, I made my ID in 2009. I played for a short time, then I entered hostel. I started playing again in 2010 October

Z : Ok, by ID here, do you mean Garena ID. So that means that you know how to play DOTA earlier?

M : Yes, it's Garena ID. I didn't know how to play earlier. After coming to Delhi my friends used to play it and I used to watch them. I found it fascinating. I used to watch them all the time. Then they asked me if wanted to play. They taught me the basics and hero building. In the beginning I used to play against computer AI (artificial intelligence). That is how I started.

Z : Do you play any other computer games, besides these MMORPG games do you play games like browser games?

M : Not really, once I used to play Age of Mythology while I was younger, then its Bud Redhead...haha!

Z : Why do you think you play computer games?

M : I really don't know. When I first saw them playing, I immediately want to play like them too. I just find it fascinating.

Z : Then, how do you spend your time? What about going to classes?

M : We usually play in the night, starting around 12 PM till 4 AM.

Z : So, you don't do anything else?

M : Yeah, we come back from college around 2-3 PM. I usually do my assignments and studies in the evening. Also, the internet is faster in the night and it's a time when friends from Aizawl can come online. So, we play games mostly in the night.

Z : Do you know any other female gamer in Delhi?

M : I know one. I don't know whether she is still here. I don't know her personally, I know her through friend.

Z : Have you ever played with her?

M : Yes, of course.

Z : So you are a lone girl among mostly male gamers, do they treat you differently?

M : Yes, a bit. If they know that I'm a girl, they treat me decently. They are really into girls...hahaha..so some gamers used to pose as girls and all the gamers used to rush to chat with them...

Z : What about sexism, any bad comments or teasing?

M : They never tease me. I've lots of friends and I play only with my friends. Once they teased a girl gamer, afterwards they apologized. Such things have never happened to me so far.

Z : Do you think that gaming interferes with your studies?

- M : Not really, I think it's important to know how to allocate your time. When exams are near, I just stop playing. A month before the exams starts, I just stopped. If it is not vacation time, I restrict my playing time.
- Z : So, since you are a gamer, don't you think that it interferes with your social life. Gaming is also thought of as an introvert's pastime, no?
- M : I don't care that much. I like being by myself. I really don't hang out much with friends. They usually come to my house. What I really like is staying by myself and playing games. Even now, it seems that people are talking about me. They said that I don't involve myself with society and play games all the time. Haha....but, I really don't care about it.
- Z : Then what do you think about Mizo society in Delhi?
- M : It's good to be involved with the society. Human beings, we need one another. At the same time, as students there should be a limit in what we do. At the same time, the society leaders should know the limit when demanding involvement in society.



Melody playing DOTA on the internet

These two narratives of group gaming in a particular location and online gaming as well as gender issue that pop out in the arena showed some of the facets of gaming. While gaming can be seen as a way out of boredom and loneliness, it can also be seen increasingly as a way of bonding and forming an alter ego. The male gamers are usually very clannish, usually having a group or clan name under which banner they used to play. The LAN gaming session is one instance where a group of friends just wanted to enjoy the weekend and get together to have a good time gaming. It is in playing the game that they feel their bonding. It can be seen as a replacement for the weekend party. They played the whole night because they don't know when they can play next as coming together due to classes or studies is difficult.

The female gamer is still an elusive creature among northeast students in Delhi. While there may be female gamers back in the northeast states, they are quite

difficult to find in Delhi. The gender issue that she has to negotiate also shows that she is in a good position. As she mentioned, most gamers are usually male and introvert who also like to see girls, so the girl gamers are pampered, not so much to the extent that they will lose willingly to them. But, enough to spare them the male insults and mud flinging that happen in gaming forums. Here, the difference in her approach lies in the fact that she plays mostly from her house through the internet. So, she does not have to go out to gaming parlours and various sessions like the one mentioned earlier. Rather, from the safety of her home, she can easily play the games. This is a big advantage for her.

Cyber activity thus can be seen in two ways, first, as a way to negotiate daily leisure time and for social networking and for recreation and pleasure. While these two may intertwined themselves in various ways, we can see that online activity also entails a sort of identity building and negotiation. Real life identity and online identity play are very different. It was seen that in online space, one is able to construct identity without reference to one's physical body and place. An informant mentioned, *"Most of the girls have pretty pictures as avatar. Even not so pretty girls in real life edited and enhance their photos. You will never find a girl who is not pretty. Those who hardly speak in day to day life become very active and articulate online. It is a place where you can do everything and anything. The world is really your oyster online."*

While this strategy does reveal the usefulness of identity play, it also at the same time negated the claim that computer-mediated communication has a leveling effect on user status and identity. For boys, only those girls who have a beautiful avatar will be invited for a friend. Location and place of study are also important. A student studying in a prestigious college has more friends than one studying in normal college. Age is also very important. As facebook can show the age,

many prefer to hide in the apprehension that their prospective friends will be turned off by their age, especially if they are boys.

These various issues about the web 2.0 where the dynamics of online interactions are changing shows that identity formation within the cyber world has become fluid and malleable to a certain extent. At the same time, this world also offers multiple and contradictory identities which are different from traditional society (Cheung 2007). Traditional identities like social and cultural identities, gender, nationality religion etc. are changed by the internet offered to us. The identity is what we assumed and set up on our facebook and other online forums. Looking through the various northeast facebook user names, we can see a profusion of Japanese and Korean names, as well as names of various famous personalities. Thus, they can delve into their cyber identities when they enter their computer and the internet from their normal life. One student jokingly mentioned that *"it is usually the mediocre student with no excitement in their real life that assumed the most fantastic names. The introverts and the wall-flowers are the ones who make most used of it. Even though they may talk big and chat a lot in cyber spaces, in real life they are usually quiet and difficult to talk to"*. While this can be true to a large extent, the fact remains that the cyber domain is a free space where one can be what they want. At least till they log out.

Northeast Festivals In Delhi

Festivals represent the culture of a group of people. The various festivals celebrated in Delhi by the different northeast groups are divergent and different in their own ways. Most of the festivals that are celebrated in Delhi are the ones that are also celebrated back home. Thus, harvest festivals, spring festivals, etc are also celebrated in Delhi. Most of the festivals are not only festivals but also a place to build social solidarity and cohesion. The organisation of these festivals is

done usually by the welfare bodies of the particular groups and tribes. The nature of the festivals can be gauged from the mode of celebration and the way it is done.

Most of the Northeast tribes who settle in Delhi celebrate one or the other traditional festival which they have. The Christians among them also celebrate Christmas, New Year, Good Friday and Easter Sunday.³⁵ These are done within the communities only. While it is difficult to verify all the festivals celebrated in Delhi, it is clear that the Aos, Semas and Angamis from Nagaland, Mizos, Assamese, Meiteis celebrate festivals on a grand scale in Delhi. These celebrations are not just get-togethers but also replications of the same festivals back in the northeast. Here we will look at two festivals celebrated by the Ao Nagas and the Mizos.

Tsüngrem Mong

Tsüngrem Mong is a festival celebrated by the Ao Naga tribe of Nagaland. It is celebrated in the eve of the harvest. But this has been changed and the Aos usually celebrate it from 1st to 3rd of August. Prior to the start of the festival the Village will declare the Süngküm (Village Gate) closed and free entry or exit is restricted and regulated for people who do not belong to that particular village. Parties of old and young wearing their colourful costumes sing songs and perform dances to express their gratitude to the supreme power for helping the crops to grow well. They provide the best offerings to the supreme power for abundant blessings. These festivals provide opportunities to the budding generation and village stalwart to demonstrate their intellectual skills and physical prowess. A handful of young men hold the stage and tell amusing

³⁵ However, these religious festivals will be dealt separately under religious activities in Delhi.

stories about their elders. Peals of laughter greet them and young and old jump in excitement. These festivals are usually rounded off by a tug of war between men and women. Stories are galore that men lose to please their womenfolk. But none has refuted the argument that attracted by charm of their opponents, absorbed by their sweet songs and regaled by their very presence men lose gracefully. The only defence offered is that men have to pull uphill and the women downhill.³⁶

The above narrative is about the traditional celebration in the state. Even till today, the festival is still celebrated with pomp and festivities whenever there are large population of Aos. It is also celebrated in Delhi. That is what we are going to narrate here.

The Ao community in Delhi is a closed knit and well bonded one. They have the Delhi Ao Senso Telongjem which is the welfare association as well the Delhi Ao Kaketshir Telongjem (Delhi Ao Students' Union). These two work in tandem with one another. However, the Tsüngrem Mong is organised by the Delhi Ao Senso Telongjem with inputs from the students.

A Delhi Harvest Festival

Due to the problem of venues and location spaces for functions in Delhi, the location for the festival is changed almost every year. The location of the one being described here is also a non-permanent one. It was celebrated at an open space in Laxmi Bai Nagar, near Dilli Haat. The space was booked by an Ao doctor who was staying in the locality. The space was not big and it was located between several buildings. A big *samiana* was erected which was filled with

³⁶ <http://nagaland.nic.in/profile/festivals/ao.htm>

chairs. There was a small pedestal on which the participants can go up and perform their activities. The program started at 10 AM and got over by 2 PM.



Exhorting the audience about the importance of the festival and its significance for Ao community...

The function did not look much like a festival. Festivals in the northeast are a huge affair where almost everyone decks up in traditional attires and there traditional sports items are done. But, here it was different. It looks more like a normal community gathering. The traditional dresses which were visible were the Naga waistcoat, and the ubiquitous shawl, which no self-respecting Naga ever goes without to any cultural and traditional function. Most of the attendants came in their normal clothes and later seemed to don the various items just before the festival began.

The moment the function starts, there were speeches and exhortation from senior members of the Ao community in Delhi. As I could not understand the language, I had to ask my friend who invited me to translate the events and interactions for me. He said that it was the usual talk about Ao culture and the need for preservation and conservation of traditional values and ethics.³⁷ The main speaker was a senior research scholar from JNU who was researching on traditional Ao folktales. He talked about how the festival came into being and how it used to be celebrated.

To add to the festivities, the Ao students presented two cultural items. One was a cultural song which was presented by students from Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU). And the other was a traditional dance which was a mixed of different dances. The song presented by the JNU Students had a very modern twist to it. It was a song which was tuned to traditional tune. In the song, there was an invocation of the traditional god. But, the JNU students has twisted and modified it to refer to the Christian God. As most of the Nagas are Christians, this was deemed to be proper and not necessarily detrimental to the traditional song or customs. However, besides the speeches and the two activities, there

³⁷ A very interesting incident happened the night before this festival. I was sitting in a dhaba in JNU along with several Ao students. They were discussing the festival and how they plan to go to it. Several non-Ao Nagas and myself were also there and as we are also invited, we were just talking about it. A senior Ao student whom I have known for more than 7 years was also there. I asked him whether he was coming to the festival. His reply shocked me. He said he'd nothing to do with festivals which were not connected with Christianity and which just perpetuate the pre-Christian days. I reply that cultures are also gifts from God and that if we celebrate them within the framework of Christianity, there should not be any problem celebrating our cultural heritage. But, he kept on saying that he was not going to turn up for the festival the next day. Thus, even in Delhi, there are such divergent elements.

were no other items. To pass the time before the lunch was served, the traditional dance was enacted again. An interesting thing was that just before the lunch was served, the pastor of the Delhi Ao church said grace and blessed the food. Here, again we can see the change in the traditional activity of the Ao Nagas, a pre Christian ritual is being given a very post Christian context by allowing it to be a mixture of pagan rituals and Christian practices. Nobody seems to find any incongruence with the whole thing.



Singing a traditional song



Hee-ye he....We are dancing!

A Modern Festival: Delhi Mizo Kut

In a marked contrast to the Ao naga festival, we can find that the Delhi Mizo festival is much more modern in origin and activities. The Mizos have three festivals in a year out of which only one, the *Chapchar Kut* is still celebrated even today. *Chapchar Kut* is usually celebrated in the month of either February or March in Mizoram. This festival is traditionally celebrated when the cleaning of the jungle for the jhum is done. The free time between the clearance of the jungles for cultivation and then the actual plantation of the rice is utilised for a celebration. Traditionally, most of the able men in the village hunt for wild animals and those who don't get any meat kill chicken, pig or *mithun* according to their wealth. During this period, the weather is pleasant, not that cold as winter is left behind and not too hot or rainy as the monsoon is yet to set off. This time period used to be described as the best part of the year in the Mizo calendar.

In continuation of this tradition, Mizos whenever they go out of the state always try to have a festival where they can unite and celebrate together. Unlike the Ao Naga harvest festival, this festival is basically a celebration of life and enjoyment during little leisure time that are available to the Mizos in olden days. As the festival was celebrated in the pleasant time during the spring, Mizos everywhere tries to emulate the season and this *chapchar kut* evolves into a sort of general festival. After Christianity and the change in the occupational employment, except in Mizoram where it is fixed for February-March, the pleasant season are always taken into considerations. Thus, we have the *Thalfavang Kut* or Spring-Autumn festival everywhere there exists sizeable number of Mizo populace. Even in Delhi, the name has been formatted to a short and simple Delhi Mizo Kut or Delhi Mizo festival.

Mizos have been living in Delhi since the 1950's. However, in the beginning, there was no proper organisation among them. However, once the population increased, it started as a sort of picnic and general gathering where Mizo songs are sung and some simple games are played followed by feasting in the evening. This gradually changed and the festival evolved from a one day family affair to a three days long event covering sports and traditional items.

The Delhi Mizo Kut is jointly organised by the Delhi Mizo Welfare Association and the Delhi Mizo Students' Association. The whole of Delhi is divided into four groups by their locality and these are given names which changed from year to year. The Kut is not only a festival but also a competition among these groups. The first two days are spend in playing sport items like football, basketball, table tennis, volley-ball and modern sports items as well traditional sports like arm wrestling, race using bamboo stilts, cock-fighting³⁸, *inkawibah*, *insuknawr* among

³⁸ Different from the one using chicken, cock fighting here involves carrying one leg behind the back and trying to topple the other participant while hopping around on one leg.

others. Various games for the senior members are also organised, such as dart throw, air pistol target shooting, musical chair and sack race.



Starting the cock-fight



Cock-fighting in action



Another traditional sport

The previous two days are basically like any other sports meet except for the traditional games. The competition is tough and the games are usually well fought out. As the groups division is done area wise, there is some sort of local pride in each locality. It is usually the area who wins that gets the accolade, so territorial identity and spirit earned high during these games.

The third day, known as the *Kut Pui Ni* or the main day of the festival is completely different. The venue is usually a farm house which can hold the Delhi Mizo populace. The day of the *Kut Pui Ni* usually has a turn out of more than a thousand. The function starts with a Bible reading and a prayer. Then, the competitions start. The main competition in the *Kut Pui Ni* are group song competition (songs composed by Mizos), extempore speech with issues dealing with modern Mizo life especially concerned with Delhi, debate again on contemporary Mizo issues, solo singing, recitation of Bible verse or Mizo poetry, quiz competition, *lengkhawm* or traditional Mizo group singing.

The *Hlado Chham* and *Tlang Au* are new items that have been introduced only recently. *Hlado Chham* is when a brave hunter kills an animal and to tell others that he has killed an animal, he intones a song in a sing-song way, announcing his abilities and his skills at hunting. Traditionally, it was usually done on the outskirts of the village, to show the villagers that the hunt was successful. This was part of Mizo culture in earlier times, but with the increase in population, this was not possible so, it was gradually discontinued. This involves special oratory skills as well as creativity in the composition of the songs the individual has to intone.

Tlang Au is also another ancient Mizo tradition which has come down to the present times. The village crier, since time immemorial is of much importance to the villagers. All the information and news that the chief wanted his subjects to

know are channelled through him. This practice has come down to the present times as well and we still find the village crier. In some places, he has been replaced by the electronic loud speakers and sound systems.

These two ancient practices have been introduced as one of the main items to inculcate the younger Mizos to understand some parts of their past better. It is really interesting to see these two items. Even the crowd is enthusiastically involved in these two items.

The main item which is eagerly awaited is the drama competition. These are usually properly enacted plays. The themes are decided beforehand by the festival committee. They are usually based on traditional folktales or issues involving Mizos in Delhi. Thus, some of the past performances include themes like "*If there was no Mizo Welfare Society in Delhi*", "*Mizo Social Life in Delhi*" etc. All the four groups have to perform a play on the decided theme and present their own version of how they interpret the same. Besides being a part of frolic and festivities, these plays also highlight the reality of life in Delhi. It even performs an informing function for the masses and some elderly viewers are of the opinion that it opens their eyes to the real life situation of Mizos in Delhi. The interplay of various themes of tradition and modernity showed that there is a linkage between the past and the present.

In the evening, there is usually a jam session in which classic Mizo oldies songs are played and the crowd dances to the various melodious tunes. It is usually followed by feasting. After that, there is a short break and then, the night session starts.

The night session is basically a variety show where the parents take part. The womenfolk usually present a dance item while the menfolk come together to as a

rock band. Sometimes, winners of Mizo Idol competition in Mizoram are invited as guests to perform in the *Kut*.

As we can see, the *Delhi Mizo Kut* is organised on a grand scale. The groups prepares months in advance before the actual start of the festival. I too was appointed as group leader once, for the areas of Gautam Nagar, South Ex, Lajpat nagar area extending till Noida and Faridabad. The kinds of activities that I had to go through were really exhausting. Months before the *Kut* started, we organised football practice match every evening. Along with this, we also organised a traditional dance practice every evening. Every Sunday, we published a newsletter to challenge the other groups and to promote a friendly competitive spirit among the Delhi Mizo community. A pre-*kut* feasting was also organised in our particular group to foster closer cooperation and to invigorate the students before the *Kut*. A *Kut* T-shirt was also brought out.

The Delhi Mizo Kut can thus be seen as both an attempt at preserving and inculcating the youngsters about traditional Mizo culture and at the same time, exhibiting signs of modernity and progress by including many modern sport items as well as competition items. Moreover, *the Delhi Mizo Kut* is also about the desire of the community to find a space for themselves in the multicultural space of Delhi.

Being Dead in the City: A Narrative of Death Rites in Delhi

The concept of death and the accompanying procedure of last rites differ in different societies. In India, we can see divergent cultural practices regarding death. Even in the northeast, there are different ways of performing death rituals. Here, we will be looking at the Mizo way of performing death rites and in Delhi.

More or less the same rituals could apply to other Christian communities from the Northeast with variations caused by traditional customs and beliefs.

In traditional Mizo society, death is seen as a step from this world into another world which is more or less similar to this world. The term for village or dwelling place is *Khua* which is the same as *Mitthi Khua* (*Mitthi* signifying death). Thus, the dead have their own village. Traditional lores have it that the *Mitthi Khua* is organised more or less in the same way as the village in the present world. They were considered to have plantation, do household work and eat and do all the kind of work that they do in the present world. Only those who gain the title of *Thangchhuah*³⁹ can go to paradise or *Pialral* where they don't have to do any work and live in eternal bliss without any work. At the same time, the nature of the death and the death rites are suppose to have important connotation for life in the after-world.

If any baby is stillborn, the body is buried with a boiled egg. The egg is supposed to guide the baby to the *Mitthi Khua* without which it may not find the way to it and be lost forever. The famous Mizo dance, *Cheraw*, with its rhythmic bamboo clashing and agile dancers is also performed when any woman dies during childbirth. The dance is supposed to facilitate the easy entry of the mother's soul into the next world. Whenever a hunter who had killed a tiger is dead, the whole village used to come together near the dead body to save it from *Thihthiap*. *Thihthiap* is a kind of spirit which is send by the spirit of the dead tiger to desecrate the body of the warrior who had slain it. So, it is seen as an honour to the dead warrior that his body is preserved intact and lowered into the grave

³⁹ In traditional Mizo belief, there are two ways to enter *Pialral* or Paradise. One is to be a great hunter and killed a specified list of wild animals. The other is to be prosperous in cultivation and perform a series of sacrifices. Only these can enter into paradise. The people who do not perform these two acts are not *Thangchhuah* and are doomed to stay in *Mitthi Khua* or the Village of the dead where they have to continue to work as if they were still alive.

without any marks on his body. So, we can see that various rituals revolve around the death rites in the traditional Mizo society.

As Mizo society is close knit and of gregarious nature, whenever death occurs, all the community members come together and help the family of the deceased. Even the household works and duties that need to be done are done by the community members. They also come and participate in the mourning in *lengkhawm*.⁴⁰ Songs with slow drum beats which are more of dirge like in nature are sung. Most of these songs revolve around how the dead do not care for the living and after having lost a dear one, how they long to be united with them in the *Mitthi Khua*. The community visit and the regular singing are part of the bereavement process. It is only after some days elapse that the community members leave the family alone to restore normalcy. During this period, young men stay in the house to do all the necessity works like fetching water and doing sundry works.

After the coming of Christianity in Mizoram, the process was tuned towards Christian ethics and practice. The traditional *lengkhawm* is still practiced, except that the content of the lyrics have changed. Instead of the pagan belief of *Mitthi Khua* and the longing for life in the after world, the imagination of the people has been changed by a longing for the Christian heaven. The desire for deceased family members and other near and dear ones has been changed to the desire for Christ and heaven.

The tunes of these songs were initially banned and the use of drum was prohibited in the early days of Mizo Christianity. However, the Mizo psyche

⁴⁰ Lengkhawm literally mean visiting together or persons coming together. It is the name given to any group singing, especially in the Church and in the houses of the dead person. *Lengkhawm Hla* is the name given to the kind of songs sung in these occasions. The tunes are traditional in nature with poetic words used for them lyrics. It is usually sung to the accompaniment of the beat of the traditional Mizo log drum. Two drums of different size are beaten in tandem.

cannot do away with the traditional songs and the musical instruments. They were brought back within the folds of the church. The *Lengkhawm* songs are incorporated in the standard songbooks and these has been used along with modern tunes. The Christian death rites do not change the traditional rites to a large extent. Burial is done in both, the non-Christian practice of waiting for *Thihthiap* and other practices are done away with. Now, only the part of Mizo culture which can be linked with Christianity is retained. However, the bereavement process is more or less similar to the older ways.

In Delhi, the process of taking care of dead bodies and community activities regarding death is different from that of Mizoram. Here, in a place far away from home, death has become an exercise which is both more time and resource consuming. The act of taking care of the dead body and getting it ready for burial here in Delhi or sending it home involves various activities which will be narrated here.

Whenever somebody dies in Delhi, the first to be informed are usually the Students' Associations and the Welfare Associations. These two bodies work in tandem and try to go through the various processes. If the death is due to substance abuse or is of suspicious nature, a post-mortem and filing of medico-legal case is required. If the death is due to natural causes or in course of treatment at a hospital, then the two processes can be done away with.

Right after the information regarding the death of a person is received, the students' union and welfare association leaders go to the place of the deceased, whether house or hospital. Then, the process starts. If the death occurs in the evening or late at night, the body is usually kept in a mortuary. Here again, there is difference between bodies which have to be sent home, and the ones to be buried in Delhi. If it is going to be buried in Delhi, then the body is send for

embalming, put in a coffin and taken to Mizoram House in Vasant Vihar for a condolence meeting. Then, a wake is organised for the body with people singing the whole night. The body is then buried in any of the Christian cemetery in Delhi. However, if the body is going to be send to Mizoram, then, after embalming, the body is taken to Mizoram House for the last rites. There is *lengkhawm* till about 1.30 AM, and then the body is taken to the airport and flown to Mizoram the next day.

In doing these rounds, there are several intricacies. First, in case of Medico-legal case, the body has to undergo post-mortem first. Only then, it is taken for embalming. For embalming, Lady Hardinge Medical College is usually used. After the embalming, the dead body is taken to Paharganj Christian Cemetery where it is put inside a coffin and hermetically sealed for the journey back to Mizoram. For bodies which have to be sent outside Delhi, a “No Objection Certificate” has to be taken from the Delhi Police without which booking cannot be done at the airport.

The Wake at the House

Amidst the various practices and procedures involved in taking care of the dead body, it is the traditional wake that is of important focus here. In Mizoram, whenever someone dies, the youth in the community visit the family of the dead individual to console his/her family members. If the death occurs after 12 PM, the body is not buried and a wake is organised. The youth stay the whole night near the death body singing hymns and traditional bereavement songs. This practice is even carried out here in Delhi. However, the process is slightly different here.

After the dead body is put in the Mizoram House, a condolence meeting is organised, usually at 9 PM. A formal ceremony is organised by the Mizo Welfare Association, the Students' Union and the Mizo Christian Fellowship. The ceremony is a simple affair with most of the families in Delhi turning up for the formal condolence which usually last one to two hours. It is chaired by the Mizo Welfare Association while the message is delivered by pastors or executive members from the Mizo Christian Fellowship.

First Person Narration

I will present a first person narration here to convey the tone of the meeting. When I reached Mizoram House, it was about 8.45 PM, but, the conference hall where the condolence meeting was going to be held was already full. The hall can hold around 200 persons. Some plastic chairs were arranged and we were able to fit inside the hall. Till 9 PM, we sang some songs. The musical instruments used were a mixture of both traditional instrument and modern ones. The main beat was given by the log drum made from cow hide. The electronic keyboard, bass guitar and acoustic guitar lent a modern blend into the songs which were Mizo origin in tones. Even western hymns translated into Mizo were given that slow rhythmic pulsing beat which was low in key but which you can sing for a long period of time without being tired.



A Coffin being taken to the Mizoram House

At 9 PM sharp, the chairman of the Mizo Welfare who was also the Lok Sabha MP for Mizoram at that time, stood up and started the condolence meeting. A brief Bible reading and prayers were offered. Someone among the relatives of the deceased was invited to give a brief biographical account of the deceased. This took some time with the relative thanking the community for their help and relating how the parents back home were very grateful with the kind of service that the deceased body was receiving. After this, there was a short sermon by the pastor. The pastor talked about how we come to Delhi and yet to remain connected with God. As the deceased died from a drug overdose, there was not much that the pastor could say regarding the usual talk of the peace that the dead person will receive in the next world.⁴¹ Rather, the talk was on about how to maintain good character in a city like Delhi where many vices existed and

⁴¹ According to the majority of Christians, drugs abuse and death from overdose counts as suicide. Most Christian believed that a person committing suicide will go to hell and not gain eternal salvation.

even the present deceased was a victim of the sin of the city, so all were exhorted to maintain good life. A twist was also given that many people forsake the Mizo community in Delhi. But, cohesiveness and community life was deemed important to maintain links with the community as well as provide help in times of trouble.

Inside the Mizoram House Conference Hall

After the exhortation by the pastor, the chairman invited anyone from the gathering who wants to say a short speech to come forward and say something. But, no one came up and the chairman talked about how Mizos help each other in times of trouble and especially death, irrespective of social status and locality. So, it is an impetus among everyone in the community to be part of the Mizo community. He went on to reiterate that “those who live outside the pale of the community are the one who usually get into trouble” so community participation is seen as a sort of protection or shield. This was usually mentioned in the student functions, the welfare body has also started talking about more community participation as well as requesting the members to show their faces at least in the Church and the various community functions like festivals, freshers’ welcome, farewell and sports.



An elder giving the exhortation

There was a photo session after the formal function was over. After the formal meeting was over, tea was served and most of the elders and parents went home. It is now the duty of the youth to start the wake. Right after they had their tea and after most of the space occupied by the parents and elders was vacated, the youth mostly students, took their seats in the conference hall and started the *lengkhaawm*. It usually starts from 10-10:30 PM and will continue till the body is taken to the airport for booking.

The *lengkhaawm* as mentioned already is a form of singing in which the traditional songs are sung mostly. However, modern songs which are popular in Mizoram are also sung. The only thing is that only Christian songs are sung in the *lengkhaawm*. Even though the very family whom the *lengkhaawm* is supposed to console is not there, tradition is being maintained here and many feel that the dead body lying alone is lonely and that singing the songs warmed its heart. A

person mentioned that when he dies, he doesn't want to be just a dead body lying all alone. "Having a group of Mizos singing by my body will be great..." he quipped.

When I got out to get fresh air, I saw many students sitting outside the conference hall. Many were loitering around and I went to see what they were up to. I found that most of them were young students or freshers. It seemed that they were a bit afraid to go inside directly because of they were juniors. At the same time, some seemed to be using the chance to talk with girls; the occasion presented to them a ready ground for harmless flirting. Many such smaller circles were formed in and around the Mizoram House. The spaces that are thus created show the existing hierarchy and that the spaces which were once common for all, given a change of context and location, have to be renegotiated and used variously.

The Northeast Tamchon Football Tournament

Sports are one of the major areas that northeast students excel in. In the national level, various northeast players have achieved excellence in sports like boxing, football, martial arts and archery. Mary Kom has captured the imagination of the nation by her feats within the boxing ring in national and international spheres. The Indian football team has long been represented by Baichung Bhutia from Sikkim. Now, he is supplemented by various players from Manipur and Mizoram. In the field of martial arts, Manipur and Mizoram has represented the nation and won laurels for India. It is therefore natural that sports occupy an important part of the lives of the students. Even in Delhi, students are interested in sports. During sports events like Durand Cup and Subroto Cup, northeast students occupy an important space among the audience.

The Tamchon Football tournament is organised annually by the Tangkhul Naga Society Delhi, a registered society under the government of India. The Tangkhul Nagas are from Manipur and the present NSCN (IM) secretary is also a Tangkhul Naga. Tamchon Football tournament is organised to commemorate the memory of R.N. Tamchon, an IPS officer who died in 2006. The first tournament was organised in 2007. It is an invitational tournament which is open only to Northeast students' unions based in Delhi. Ameisingh Luikham, the president of the Tangkhul Naga Society, Delhi, narrate thus on the day of the first match: *"Today, a large number of people have gathered. Our Tangkhul society in a small way is trying to build up as we go along with support from government and many well-wishers. We want to build bigger bonds with the people so that people here notice us and get to know more about our culture"*.⁴² So, we can see that the Tangkhul society is striving for space and visibility not only among the northeast community in Delhi but also among the larger pan-Delhi community. At the same time, due to the ongoing Naga struggle in the northeast, this move can also be seen as a space where identity and Indianness is negotiated.

Nationalism and sports go hand in hand with one another in various places of the world. The India-Pakistan Cricket matches are one of the most important events in the sporting annals of India. However, among northeast, it is football that captures the imagination of the youth. So much so that in all of India, during the last world cup, i.e. 2010, it is the state of Assam which have the highest number of viewership.⁴³ Even in the other northeast states, televisions were installed in offices so that the office workers can catch up with the matches. Even tardiness and punctuality in everyday sphere gets a beating down during this time. So, even the Tangkhul Naga society looks at football as a way to capture

⁴² <http://www.topnews.in/sports/fourth-tamchon-football-tournament-held-delhi-214954>

⁴³ <http://www.wikinewforum.com/showthread.php?t=20668>

the dreams and aspirations of the northeast students in Delhi. Cricket and other sports would have not generated the same kind of enthusiasm.

Nationalism and identity go hand in hand with sports. As Torvi (2002) has shown, even among the Finnish people, nationalism and sports are part of the national longing and form. However, sub-nationalism and supra-nationalism are also present where identity beyond the nation state and within a sub-group within the nation states is also in interplay. According to Kaplan and Herb (1999), national identities are always negotiated within a hierarchy of geographical scale, which can extend above as well as below the nation state. Thus, neighbouring countries and places which can be seen to have the same ethnic lineages are found to be closer to the heart. At the same time, a sort of imagined community through self-identification with sporting nations can also be seen playing a role. It is not so amazing in this regard to see many northeast students rooting for European countries and South American countries rather than fellow Asians.

Comparing to the rest of India, the northeast states can be seen as a football area. Its proximity to South East Asia and the prevailing conditions there makes it conducive to the international arena where football is most important as compared to other games. Even, the Southeast Asian countries are more interested in their football affairs as exemplified in the issue of geopolitical dynamics.⁴⁴ Thus, even when India erupts in a cricketing fervour, only a small portion of the northeast populace engages in it. However, when it comes to football, almost every second person becomes a football expert.

⁴⁴ <http://mongpalatino.com/2011/07/football-nationalism-in-southeast-asia/>

Modern Headhunting: The Head in the Goal

Most of the northeast states are striving for recognition in the capital city of India. The space that can be had is a new space. Due to the slowing down of separatist movements in the northeast and the increasingly Indianising process, the northeast strives for a space in Delhi. Thus, in this regard, identification as a separate tribe and not as a northeast *per se* became an important process. Last year, during the commonwealth games, the Indian continent was lead by a girl in traditional Mizo dress. But, the Times of India reported it as a Naga dress. There was a big issue over it with many sending letters to the editor to the Times of India.⁴⁵ While this singular issue can be taken as a simple issue, the idea of misrepresentation where good name and bad image mingled together in the same space can be of problem for the aspiring tribes. In this manner, a Naga from Nagaland once told me, *“Whenever Nagas from Manipur have a problem, due to the apathy of Manipur state government; they always take the name of Nagaland. They make us look like fools.”* Thus, even belonging to the same ethnic group does not immunise one to the idea of another geographical identity and spatiality.

Thus, the Tamchon football tournament can also be seen as a sort of competition where the various competing identities come together. Even though one of the main purpose of the tournament was to foster brotherhood and unity among the northeast youth in Delhi, and presumably for the spirit to trickle back to the northeast, the fight for the championship is intense. When it was first organised in 2007, I asked the organisers why they allowed entry of players who are not even in Delhi, instead of letting northeast students of Delhi play since the invitation was tendered only to students unions. They said, *“If we allow only students to play, and that from Delhi, the quality of the match will suffer, therefore we*

⁴⁵ However, maybe due to the various complaints, the Times of India came out with a rejoinder the next day. http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2010-10-05/delhi/28229182_1_dress-outfit-mizo-girl

have to allow professional players to participate. At the same time, if players come from Northeast, this is a chance for them to gain employment. So, students are invited to get the best players from each state." In this light, the purpose of the tournament can be said to be two-pronged, to organise a good show as well as to showcase the northeast talent to the wider audience.



The tourney is sponsored by many Public Sector and MNCs.

This tourney is not the first time in Delhi that northeast students have organised a pan-northeast football tournament. Earlier, the NESFED or Northeast Students Federation used to organise football tournaments for the northeast students in Delhi. Here the difference is that only students from Delhi are allowed to participate. Each student union contributed funds for the tournament. But due to internal problems the tournament and the federation were both winded up. While it lasted, it used to be the talk of the northeast community in Delhi. Even till today, old timers longingly speak about the good times and the good natured

sports that they used to have and the bonhomie and camaraderie that the northeast students' community used to have in Delhi. They maintained that the Tamchon Tournament is a poor replacement for the friendship that the NESFED tournament used to generate.

The Tamchon Tournament can be seen as the ultimate fight for supremacy amongst the northeast students in Delhi. It can be seen as the new warfare. Traditionally, not counting the Assam plains and the Tripura areas, most of the northeast tribes practice headhunting. However, the purpose behind headhunting has many variations; there are some who took head for the social prestige and non-materialistic considerations like gaining spiritual benefits in the next world and other (Zou, 2005). At the same time, some were seen as basically incidental headhunter, the main purpose being raiding the other territories for material gain and slaves, headhunting being just a fall out of this. Whatsoever the facts, it is clear that most of the northeast tribes practice headhunting.

However, the space for competition now is dominated by the arena of education and sports leading to many sports enthusiast claiming the Tamchon Tournament as the new head hunting in the city. Here, we can delineate various factors and points. The most important point is that while only student unions are invited, any players, if he is from that tribal group is allowed to play. This can be seen as an identity process where anyone from the tribe is deemed fit to represent his tribe, the student union being just the enabling agency for the player. As a result of this, only few students from Delhi used to play, leading to complains that it being a Delhi based tournament, Delhi based players should be given priority. Regional champions and state level players were therefore engaged at great cost by the students unions to play for them. As the Delhi players are mostly students whose full time employment is not sports, they have no chance when compared

to the full time professional players. The quality of the football playing rise up to the loss of the Delhi based players.

Due to the sourcing of players from various parts of India, the student unions usually spend large amount of funds for the transportations and the management of the terms in Delhi. Thus, state actors like state ministers, and administrators are also involved. The prize money has also gradually increased annually. The money award is also a good prize by itself in addition to the honor of gaining the championship.



Supporting their team with banners.

The fight and struggle for the honour of the top position is not only for the financial gain but also for the honour of the football nationalism that one can see in other nations. As there is no other measure for supremacy, the supremacy in this field, and that also in the view of the rest of the country is of utmost

importance and is a source of great competition. Not only skills, but financial strength is also needed to win this tourney. Thus, winning the tourney can be seen as the ultimate headhunting in the modern era, a bloodless headhunting.⁴⁶

Inside the Field

A trip to the football ground to see the tournament and feel the heat and bustle of the crowd showed the synergy that is there in the tournament. The football matches are played in Ambedkar Stadium near Delhi Gate in Old Delhi. In 2010, due to the Commonwealth games, it was shortened and several matches were played in Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium practice grounds also. However, the opening and final were played at Ambedkar Stadium.

One can see the fervour and the excitement in the air. All other tribes were seen as friendly rivals. In the stadium there are always slight, though unofficial seats that each student union used to occupy. Most of the students' union from Manipur favours the ground area near the dais, the Paite students' union usually occupies the place opposite the stadium, and the Mizo students always occupy the first floor and so on. This has been the case from the inception of the match. Nagaland, Meghalaya, Arunachal and Assam usually do not have as many supporters, and as such, it is difficult to demarcate a spatial location for them. These locations are important in that the supporter used to not only encourage their teams but also tried various chants and jeer to try to demoralize the other team. Various swear words and epithets are casually flung over the railings. However, whenever any side score a wonderful and interesting goal, even the opposite supporters are easy to appreciate it.

⁴⁶ A small Mizo phrase can be inserted here. *Chem Lova Lu La* which means taking the head without a knife or sword. It means defeating/besting others in the modern term. Winning the tourney can be thus the ultimate headhunting without any bloodletting and as effective in prestige.

The rivalry within the teams and supporters are visible in various spheres. The problem of identity and loyalty are also present. In 2010, the Mizo Students' Union managed to recruit the whole Mizoram Police team to play in the name of the Delhi Mizo Student Union with the consent of the Chief Minister of Mizoram. Mizo players who in the previous years used to play for the Mizo teams are therefore invited by student unions from Manipur to play for them. When the Mizo Student team and the team where these Mizo players played clashes, there was a problem of loyalty with the Mizo team supporter taunting them as disloyal to Mizo identity. One of them later mentioned, *"We really want to play for the Mizo team, but, as a complete team was arranged, we are invited by our friend from these other tribes and since we like to play, we played. But, the jeering and taunting were uncomfortable."* Some of the students even taunt them saying that they will never play in any Mizo sporting events in Delhi. However, among the Naga tribes of Manipur and the Naga Student Union Delhi, there was fluidity with many players playing across various students groups. One Naga student I've known played for two different teams in two different years.

However, among various tribes, there is a consensus that to win with the help of others tribes will not be attempted and only member from that tribe will be allowed to play. Among the sporting clubs of Europe, Athletica Bilbao has this tradition. Located in Spain, among fierce national identity and nationalism, the Spanish League Major has recruited players only from the Basque region of Spain.⁴⁷ While other teams like the more famous Barcelona, Real Madrid in Spanish League and most of the English Premier League are recruiting player from France, Eastern Europe, Africa and South America.

The impact of these teams on northeast football cannot be done away with. Knowledge of football is an ice breaker and most northeast boys and even many

⁴⁷ <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/0,1518,546860,00.html>

girls carry football statistics and date that will be the envy of many a sports writer. The whole *tamasha* about the Tamchon Tournament hinges on the participation of the students both as participant players and as spectators. One student narrates, *"The initiative of the Tangkhul community is a great help in the reorganisation as well as brotherhood and friendship among the northeast in Delhi. In the northeast, while we live as neighbours, there also exist issues of identity, disputes regarding territory and every one striving for their own space. But, the manner of execution of the tournament is a bit problematic. While states like Arunachal, Mizoram and Nagaland can get state sponsorship, we from Manipur are in dire straits. It is very difficult to get sponsorship for us. So, we cannot get any good players from home. Let the Delhi boys fight it out."*

The nation state and the space the tournament aspire to fulfil can be seen from the nature of its organisation also. When the tournament was started in 2007, the name of the tournament was R.N. Tamchon Memorial Football Trophy, which was retained as 2nd R.N. Tamchon Football Trophy in 2008, changed as 3rd North East Tamchon Football Trophy, 2009 and the same name in 2010. The changing of the name can be attested to the fact that during the initial inception of the tournament, the aspirations of the organisers were at a lower scale but the response it received from the people made it hike up their aims and they tried to utilize the "northeast" label as it gained popularity. The tournament can be seen as the only function in Delhi which saw the maximum participation by northeast students.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

To have a proper understanding of the everyday lived experience of the northeast students in Delhi, one has to go and see them in their habitat. Looking at the media reports and mainstream perceptions, one can imagine a world where the northeast students are being marginalized and their daily life a messy grind. But, rather the lived experience is different from what is perceived. Sociology can come up with an explanation better than what commonsensical knowledge can do for the common man. What the present research attempts to achieve is to see what are the levels of confrontation of the northeast students and the city of Delhi and its environment as well as the development in technology that influences our everyday experience of reality. The relationship between tradition and modernity, which in the past has always been a focal point in Indian sociology, still holds relevance. Not only that, the new forms and the new permutations and combinations that it has achieved are issues that still need to be addressed. Modernisation and westernisation in the city has changed the outlook of the northeast students to a large extent.

The issues of marginality and belongingness need to be reassessed in the context of urban culture as well as change in space and location. The northeast students' perception of themselves and what they feel about how they are conceived by others need to be looked into again from these two points. What marginality means to a northeast student in Delhi and what is their level of belongingness. From the various narratives in this study, it is evident that the level of belongingness to India is still a poignant question up to some extent. At the same time, the identity that one usually attaches to them, that of northeastness is still

at an under-researched and underdeveloped stage. While the concept of northeast is not a young one though the addition of Sikkim to the northeast circle is more recent. Thus, the perception of the students from this place as belonging to northeast is less as compared to the others. At the same time, Bengali students coming from Tripura are more attuned towards West Bengal and the Bengali culture in spite of always being seen a part of the northeast region. The situation of Assam is also different. While the tribes in Assam can be said to have accepted the northeast identity to a large extent, the concept of northeast in the minds of the general student populace of Assam is comparatively diluted, or in the least, very different. Proximity to mainland India and similarity in features as well as religion and culture has led to their stronger identification with the mainstream Indian identity. Even while doing my ethnography, I came across one Assamese student telling me that *"compared to tribal northeast students, we face less problems because we look like them and eat more or less the same food. So, we do not have too many problems while dealing with exchanges in the markets or while renting houses. Even though we are also from the northeast, for us that is just a geographical location, not an identity marker"*. At the same time, one Sikkimese student also narrates that, *"We are looked as northerners though we are only a later addition to them. I want to be known as a Sikkimese, not as a northeast with whom we do not share much traits and culture. Ours is different, most of the tribal northeast students are Christian, but we are Buddhist."*

Thus, the issue of northeastness can also be seen as a trait that is not shared among the northeast students, but rather an identity that had been forced from above, an identity that is more politically and economically value laden rather than one that has emerged culturally and socially. Belongingness to the identity also seems to come upon in Delhi after already being identified as northeast rather than an identity which one possesses from before. As already mentioned in the narratives, the identity that the students feel at home with was their

individual identity which marked them more clearly out of all the macroscopic landscape of melting and intermingling identities that northeast India is composed of.

The problem of studying an issue like northeast students is very different from studying other students. By its very tag, the assumption is that northeast is a homogeneous whole and can be taken as one category. Many academic monographs and books are written, tackling northeast as an issue. For the ease of administrative purposes territory, it might be convenient to identify it as a unified geographical territory. However, convenience need not necessarily be the correct or even just way of understanding a huge chunk of the country's population. When it comes to studying it as a whole, the kind of massive and complex terrain that one is posed with in the form of northeast is insurmountable. One never hears of any study called South India, rather the context is more on a localised issue. As a result, to cover the whole of northeast coherently in all aspects is a monumental task. As a result, the present study has largely concentrated on students from Nagaland and Mizoram due to the accessibility and availability of gatekeepers. I was not able to continue with some of my participants because my gatekeepers who could have provided me access to these participants had to leave Delhi before I had a chance to interact with them. I have friends among Nagas since my graduation days. So, it was easy for me to enter into their domain and have a proper ethnographic engagement with them- both observation and participation wise. Since, I belonged to Mizo community, my access to this community was complete and I was able to research as an insider.

When Srinivas (2009) talked about subjectivity in studying one's own culture. What level of subjectivity can be safely breached and yet without losing objectivity enough is a question that the researcher has to ask himself. The various questions that turn up, like whether the phenomena I was going to study

is of sociological importance or not, are at the forefront of the my researcher mind. Sometimes, the everyday occurrence that we have taken for granted turn out to be interesting for someone not familiar to that culture. So, the everyday mundane things become interesting and it becomes worthwhile to follow Lefebvre's footstep again.

Religion is also another issue that is dealt with in the thesis to some extent. One can see a bias towards Christianity in the narration. The reason for the same is three-fold. First, as I am a Christian, all the routine and rituals of Christianity are familiar to me. As a Christian, it is also easier for me to gain access the kind of Christian activities that are going on. Secondly, the major part of research that I have done is among the tribal northeast students who are mostly Christians. And thirdly, most of the non-Christian students that I have studied are not very religious. Mostly, they have nothing to say about their religious faith beyond the fact that they belong to a particular religion. It is not to say that the Christian participants all follow the rituals, but as Christianity is more of a social religion than the others and encompasses various aspects of the individuals daily life, so social activities concerned with it are more in number.

As a researcher, ethical dilemma is one issue that needed to be dealt with. A large number of students that I have tried to interview are not interested in being interviewed. So, a mixture of cajoling and coaxing has to be used when going around doing fieldwork. Regarding photographs, unless it is a festival or collective items, I have used only photographs that the persons have duly consented for. Ethical issues also abound with studying one's own society. As an active member of a particular community, I also want to strive for its best. So, the dilemma arises regarding whether to show issues that can show a particular community in a bad light; whether subjectivity should be sacrificed at the altar of objectivity. This is a question that I would not be able to answer even as I

conclude this research, though I must say that that it has been a tightrope walking for me through and through.

Looking at the confrontation between the northeast students and the city of Delhi, we can see many issues that come up. Unlike other cities in India, it is very difficult to find a particular composite culture or city identity. Depending upon the location, we can see that there are many identities that are interplaying. The main identity that can be seen is the Punjabi identity, mainly because a large section of the habitation of the northeast students fell into Punjabi area like Indra Vihar, Lajpat Nagar, Satyaniketan, Outram Lines etc, while Munirka area is notable in the fact that it is inhabited by Jats. So, the hybridity that usually happens between migrant population and local people is negated to a large extent. The hybridity that the northeast students experience is more in terms of westernisation, and let's say, with an increasingly strong affinity towards Korean and Japanese culture. Especially in terms of dressing and attitude, we can see that among the younger students, the impact of Korean and Japanese culture is higher. This can be corroborated by the fact that the various Korean restaurants in Delhi are routinely frequented by northeast students.

This thesis has been an attempt to look at the everyday life of the northeast students in the metropolitan city of Delhi. The problems and issues that are dealt with are from the perspective of an investigator who has tried to maintain objectivity as far as possible. Using the framework of sociological analysis, it is an attempt to work with the representations of the common students as well as contrast it with the representations that are available in the media discourse. In these, the tensions and dynamics are balanced between objectivity and subjectivity. The thesis has raised a variety of issues in which ethnography as the main tool of investigation was chosen. This thesis has also dealt with the issue relating to the problem of using northeast as a conceptual category to blanket the

whole of heterogeneous northeast, which is much more than an individual, monolithic and simplistic directional identity can contain. It also looked at the discourse of media and the issues of marginality to see how far it is real or imagined, and the insider sociologist's role in going to the field and objectively recording the ground realities of a group of students whose identities have been jeopardised by the mainstream media and academia due to the category which initially colonialism, and lately, the present day nation state ascribed to them.

Bibliography:

- Alemchiba, A, 1970, *A brief Historical Account of Nagaland*.
- Anderson, B., 1991, *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso.
- Anjaria, J.S. and McFarlane, C. (ed.), 2011, *Urban Navigations: Politics, Space and the City in South Asia*, New Delhi: Routledge.
- Archetti, E.P., 1998, *The potrero and the Pibe: Territory and belonging in the mythical account of Argentinean football* in Nadia Lovell (ed.) *Locality and belonging*, London: Routledge.
- Ashcroft, Bill et al (ed.), 2004 (reprint), *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*, London and New York: Routledge.
- Awad, Germaine H., 2007, *The Role of racial Identity, Academic Self-Concept, and Slf-Esteem in the Prediction of Academic Outcomes for African American Students*, *Journal of Black Psychology*, Vol. 33 no. 2, May 2007.
- Bakarddjieva, M., 2007, *Virtual Togetherness: An Everyday-Life Perspective* in Bell, D., and Kennedy, B.M, 2007, *The Cybercultures Reader*, London: Routledge.
- Bakhtin, M., 1981, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, Austin and London: University of Texas Press.
- Baruah, Sanjib, 2007, *Post-frontier Blues: Toward a new policy framework for Northeast India*. East-west Centre Washington & Centre for Policy Research, Policy studies. No.33, New Delhi.
- Bayat, A., 2009, *Cairo Cosmopolitan: Living Together through Communal Divide, Almost* in Shail Mayaram (ed.) *The Other Global City*, London: Routledge.
- Bell, D., and Kennedy, B.M, 2007, *The Cybercultures Reader*, London: Routledge.
- Berger, John and Mohr, J, 2010, *A Seventh Man*, London: Verso.
- Bhabha, H.K., 1994, *The Location of Culture*, London: Routledge.

Bhabha, H.K. (ed), 1990, *Nation and Narration*, London: Routledge.

Castells, M., 2000, *Towards a Sociology of the Network Society*, *Contemporary Sociology*, Vol 29, No. 5 (Sep. 2000), 693-699.

Chaltuahkhuma, 2001, *Political History of Mizoram*, Aizawl.

Chatterjee, Partha, 1995, *The Nation and its Fragments*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Chatterton P., and Hollands R., 2003, *Urban Nightscapes: Youth Cultures, Pleasure Spaces and Corporate Power*, London: Routledge.

Cheung, C., 2007, *Identity Construction and Self-Presentation on Personal Homepages: Emancipatory Potentials and Reality Constraints* in Bell, D., and Kennedy, B.M, 2007, *The Cybercultures Reader*, London: Routledge.

Clifford, J., 1983, *On Ethnographic Authority*, *Representations*, No. 2, (Spring 1983) 118-146.

Clifford, J., 1981, *On Ethnographic Surrealism*, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol.23, No. 4, (Oct 1981), 539-564.

Clifford, J. and Marcus, G.E., 1986, *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Cobley, P., 2001, *Narrative*, London: Routledge.

Costello, C. Y., 2004, *Changing Clothes: Gender Inequality and Professional Socialization*, *NWSA Journal*, Vol. 16 No. 2 (Summer) 138-155.

Crapanzano, V., 1986, *Hermes' Dilemma: The Masking of Subversion in Ethnographic Description* in Clifford, J. and Marcus, G.E., 1986, *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Crook, Nigel, 1996 (2001), *The Transmission of Knowledge in South Asia*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Czarniawska, Barbara, 2004, *Narratives in Social Science Research*, New Delhi: Sage.

- Das, N. K., 1989, *Ethnic Identity, Ethnicity and Social Stratification in North-East India*, New Delhi: Inter-India Publications.
- De Certeau, M., 1984, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Deshpande, Ashwini and Katherine Newman, 2007, *Where the Path Leads: The Role of Caste in Post-University Employment Expectations*, Economic and Political Weekly, October 13, 2007.
- Elias Jr, C. E. et al, 1964, *Metropolis: Values in Conflict*, Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Co. Inc.
- Ellis, C. et al, 2011, *Autoethnography: An Overview*, Forum: Qualitative Social Research, Vol.12, No.1, Art 10, January 2011.
- Emerson R.M. et al, 1995, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Erikson, E.H., 1968, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, New York, W.H. Norton and Company.
- Febvre, Lucian and Martin, Henri-Jean, 1976, *The Coming of the Book*, London: Verso.
- Fetterman, David M., 1998, *Ethnography*, New Delhi: Sage.
- Foucault, Michel, 1972, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, London: Routledge.
- Frisby, David, 2002, *Georg Simmel*, London: Routledge.
- Gardiner, M.E., 2000, *Critiques of Everyday Life*, London: Routledge.
- Geertz, C., 1973, *The Interpretation of Culture*, New York: Basic Books.
- Gobo, Giampietro, 2008, *Doing Ethnography*, New Delhi: Sage.
- Gottdiener, M and Budd, L., 2005, *Key Concepts in Urban Studies*, London: Sage.

- Gronow, J, 1997, *The Sociology of Taste*, London: Routledge.
- Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P., 2007, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*, London: Routledge.
- Hobsbawm, Eric and Ranger, Terence, 1983, *Invention of tradition*, Cambridge: Canto.
- Howarth, D., 2002, *Discourse*, New Delhi: Viva Books Private Limited.
- Hubbard, P, 2006, *City*, Oxon: Routledge.
- Hurtado, et al, 1997, *Effect of College Transition and Perceptions of the Campus Racial Climate on Latino College Students Sense of Belonging*, *Sociology of Education* 1997, Vol. 70 (October): 324-345
- Jabinsek, Dietmar, 2003, *The Metropolis and the mental life of Georg Simmel: On the history of an Antipathy*, *Journal of Urban History* 2003 Volume 30, No. 1, November 2003.
- Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* April 1992, *Special issue on Street Corner Society*.
- Khilnani, Sunil, 2004, *The Idea of India*, New Delhi: Penguin.
- Kumar, Krishna, 2001, *Political Agenda of Education*, New Delhi: Sage. 2nd Edition.
- Kumar, Krishna and Joachim Oesterheld (ed.), 2007, *Education and Social Change in South Asia*, New Delhi: Orient Longman.
- Lanungsang, A, *Uniqueness of Naga History*, Concerned Senior Citizens: Nagaland.
- Lefebvre, H., 1991, *The Critique of Everyday Life I*, London: Verso.
- Lefebvre, H, 2002, *The Critique of Everyday Life II*, London: Verso.
- Lefebvre, H, 1991, *The Production of Spaces*, Cambridge: Basil Blackwell.
- Lefebvre, H, 1996, *Writings on Cities*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Lemert, C., and Branaman, A., 1997, *The Goffman Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Low, S.M, 1996, *The Anthropology of Cities: Imagining and Theorizing the City*, Annual Review of Anthropology 1996, 25:383-409

Malinowski, B, 1966, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An Account of Antive Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guines*, London: Routledge and Kegan paul Limited.

Marshall, Gordon (ed.), 1998, *Oxford Dictionary of Sociology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Marx, K and Engels, F., (1848) 1972, *The Communist Manifesto*. Moscow: Progress Publishers.

Miles, M., 2007, *Cities and Culture*, London: Routledge.

Mills, S., 2007, *Discourse*, London: Routledge.

Mills, S., 2003, *Michel Foucault*, London: Routledge.

Morris Pam, 1994, *The Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev and Voloshinov*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Misra, Tilottoma, 2007, *Crossing Linguistic Boundaries: Two Arunachali Writers in Search of Readers*, Economic and Political Weekly, September 8, 2007.

Misra, Udayon, 1988, *North-East India: Quest for Identity*, Omsons Publications: Guwahati/New Delhi.

Moran, Christy D., 2007, *The Public Identity Work of Evangelical Christian Students*, Journal of College Student Development, July/August 2007, Vol 48 No 4.

Nag, Sajal, 2002, *Contesting Marginality: Ethnicity, Insurgency and Subnationalism in North-East India*, New Delhi: Manohar.

Nandy, Ashis, 1998, *Exiled at Home*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

- Napolitano V., and Pratten, D. 2007, *Michel de Certeau: Ethnography and the Challenge of Plurality*, *Social Anthropology* (2007) 15, 1 1-12.
- Nibedon, N., 1981. *The Ethnic Explosion*, New Delhi: Lancers Publisher.
- Nisbett, N., 2009, *Growing up in the Knowledge Society: Living the IT Dream in Bangalore*, New Delhi: Routledge.
- Nongbri, Tiplut, 2003, *Development, Ethnicity and Gender*, Jaipur and New Delhi: Rawat Publication.
- O'Reilly, K., 2005, *Ethnographic Methods*, London: Routledge.
- Ostrove, Joan M. et al, 2007, *Social Class and Belonging: Implications for College Adjustment*, *The Review of higher Education Summer 2007*, Volume 30, No. 4, pp.363-389.
- Pachau, Lalsangkima, 2002, *Ethnic Identity and Christianity*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
- Patel, S. and Deb, K. (Ed.), 2006, *Urban Studies*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Prabhakra, M. S., 2004, *Is North-East India Landlocked?* , *Economic and Political Weekly*, October 16, 2004.
- Pratt, M.L., 1986, *Fieldwork in Common Places* in Clifford, J. and Marcus, G.E., 1986, *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Pieterse, Jan Nederveen, 2003, *Social Capital and migration: Beyond Ethnic Economies*, *Ethnicities*, Vol 3 (1) : 29-58, 2003.
- Puddephatt A.J. et al, 2009, *Ethnographies Revisited: Constructing Theory in the Field*, London: Routledge.
- Raban, J, 1974 (2008), *Soft City*, London: Picador

Sangkima, 2002, *'Impact of Ramayana upon the Mizo'* in Sujit K. Ghosh (Ed) *Ramayana in the North-East India: Proceedings of the National Seminar Organised by Bharatiya Itihas Sankalan Samiti, Silchar.*

Sanjek, R, 1991, *The Ethnographic Present*, *Man* (N.S.), 26, 609-628.

Sanjek, R., 1990, *Urban Anthropology in the 1980's: A World View*, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 1990, 19:151-86.

Simmel, G., 1976, *The Metropolis and Mental Life*, New York: Free Press.

Simms, K., 2003, *Paul Ricouer*, London: Routledge.

Simonsen, K., 2005, *Bodies, Sensation, Space and Time: The Contribution from Henri Lefebvre*, *Geografiska Annaler, Series B, Human Geography*, Vol. 87, No. 1 (2005), 1-14.

Small, Mario Luis, 2009, *'How many cases do I need?': On Science and the logic of case selection in field-based research*, *Ethnography* 2009; 10;5.

Smith, Greg, 2006, *Erving Goffman*, London: Routledge.

Srinivas M.N. et al (ed.), 2002, *The Fieldworker and the Field*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Srinivas, M.N., 2009, *The Oxford India Srinivas*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Srinivas, M.N., 1997, *Practicing Social Anthropology in India*, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 26 (1997).

Srivastava, S., 1996, *Modernity and Post-Coloniality: The Metropolis as a Metaphor*, *Economic and Political Weekly* February 17, 1996.

Stevenson, D., 2003, *Cities and Urban Culture*, Berkshire: Open University Press.

Tazi, Nadia (ed), 2004, *Keywords: Identity*, New Delhi: Vistaar Publications.

Thapan, M., 2006, *Life at School*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Van Maanen, J., 1988, *Tales of the Field*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Van Maanen, J., 2010, *A Song for My Supper: More tales of the Field*, *Organizational Research Methods*, Vol. 13, No.2, April 2010.

Ward, G., 2000, *The Certeau Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell Publisher.

Weber, Max, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, London: Routledge.

Wirth, L., 1938, *Urbanism as a Way of Life*, *American Journal of Sociology*, XLIV, 1 (July 1938).

Wolff, Kurt H., 1964, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, New York.

Whyte, W.F., 1993, *Revisiting Street Corner Society*, *Sociological Forum*, Vol. 8 No. 2 1993.

Whyte, W.F., 1993, *Street Corner Society*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press.

Appendix I

NORTHEAST STUDENTS' UNION/ASSOCIATIONS

In Delhi, most of the northeast states have their respective students' unions. The following is compilation a of them. This may not be exhaustive, but to the knowledge of the investigator, most of them are present here.

1. Assam

1. Assam Students' Union Delhi
2. All Bodo Students' Union
3. Dimasa Students Union Delhi
4. Karbi Students Union Delhi

2. Arunachal Pradesh

- Arunachal Students' Union Delhi

3. Manipur

1. Manipur Students' Association Delhi
2. Naga Students' Union Delhi
3. Siamsin Pawlpi (Paite Students Union)
4. Hmar Students Association
5. Khangthah Zuun Pawl (Simte Students Association)
6. Zillai (Vaiphei Students Association)
7. Zomi Sang Naupan Pawl (Zomi Students)

4. Meghalaya

Delhi A'chik Youth Association

5. Mizoram

Delhi Mizo Zirlai Pawl (Delhi Mizo Students' Association)

6. Nagaland

1. Naga Students' Union Delhi
2. Eastern Naga Students Union
3. Delhi AoKaketshir Telongjem, (Delhi Ao Student Union)

7. Tripura

Tripura Students' Organisation Delhi

8. Sikkim

Sikkim Students Association

These students union are mostly based around Delhi University as the majority of students study there. Their levels of activities differ to a large extent. While most of the student unions work for the welfare of their students and their education in Delhi, some of them are more involved in political issues. Looking at the distribution above, we can see that Naga Students Union Delhi (NSUD) is listed both in Nagaland and Manipur. This is because the individual Naga tribes like Sema, Angami, etc, in Nagaland and Tangkhul, Mao, Zeliangrong etc. in Manipur each have their own respective students' union. But, they are all affiliated to Naga Students' Union Delhi as the main union. Even

during elections, they can send their representation. Because of this, I have not included the individual tribe's student union which owe allegiance to NSUD. The other two Naga students' union listed in Nagaland do not have any affiliation with NSUD. In the case of Meghalaya, except for the Garos there is no students union of the Khasis. As a larger number of the Khasis staying in Delhi are working professionals, they have a welfare society which also includes the students and do the same work that many students unions are doing.

MAIN ACTIVITIES OF THE STUDENTS' ORGANISATIONS

The students' unions usually organise Freshers' Welcom Meets to acquaint the new comers with Delhi with the older students. These freshers' welcome are usually held after the Delhi University session are going under way. Thus, one can see the various students' unions having their freshers' socializing meet from August onwards. At the other end, they also organise a party where the outgoing students are felicitated. These kinds of activities are also done by most of the students organisation in Delhi not only from northeast.

Another important activity is the welfare of the community as a whole. For example the Delhi Mizo students association is involved in taking care of the needs of the community in time of death and blood donation. Any Mizo coming to Delhi can take the help of the students union in their need, if it is not too personal. Thus, the student union helps Mizo patients coming to Delhi for the blood donation. If any destitute Mizo patient is in need of help, the union and the Mizo welfare take care of his/her situation. Other students' unions also do this to a large extent. The students' union in Delhi is more like a voluntary organisation dedicated to serve the need of the community that they represent beyond their students activities. In the issue of politics, students' unions like Naga Students' Union Delhi and Manipur Students' Association Delhi (MSAD) take active part. The issue of sovereignty of Nagaland and the freedom movement that the

Nagas are presently pursuing is actively followed by NSUD. They even organize talks and seminars for propagating the Naga issues. The MSAD is also involved with Manipur issue to a large extent.

Besides the above mentioned activities, depending on the particular students' union, there are also sports meet, trips to historical places, basketball tournament, dance party and so on. What can be clearly said here is that the students' unions are the backbone of the northeast community in Delhi.

Appendix II

RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

While this particular appendix can be seen as having a Christian bias, I have already mentioned in the conclusion the reason for having a bias and would not repeat myself here. Church activities form an important part of the everyday life of Christian northeast students in Delhi, especially among students from Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland which have large Christian student population. Here, Christian Fellowships are organised on the lines of language and denominations, so even for one particular tribe, we can see that there exists two or more different churches. The various communities have their place of worship in different parts of Delhi like renting church from the Churches based here in Delhi like the Church of North India etc. Many also use spaces rented out specifically for this purpose.

The church is not only a place of worship, but also a place for giving out community information as well as something that fosters a spirit of togetherness. While the students' union have their activities and the festival, it the church with its regular Sunday services hold the community identity and spirit in place. As such, the church is usually a very powerful institution/organisation in having a say in the community life among northeast in Delhi. It exercises authority to the extent that if the church leaders feel that the students' unions are transgressing faith, they can reprimand and call them for accountability. Besides the normal Sunday worship services, there are special and important occasions like Good Friday and Easter and Christmas days celebrations. Easter morning sunrise services are also usually held, if possible in parks. Delhi University VC garden is a popular spot.

Another new trend that has started is the several para church groups have started their fellowship. These are usually from Korea and Phillipines. They started having worship services in places wher there are large population of northeast students. Many northeast students have started going to these places and stopped going to their particular tribe service.

Talking to one who used to go to these places, she told me that there was more intimacy and closeness that is not there in the tribe's service. She said that, "*In our tribe service, there are too much of us, so, it is more like a conference. No emphasis is placed on the individual as a believer. Here, i find that there is a close community, whenever i have problems, i can call my prayer cell and we can pray about it. The personal touch is there.*" Thus, individuality and personal touch is being preferred to the mass community service. Most of these groups usually target northeast students mostly. So, they can be seen as an extension of the traditional church into the para church.