DYNAMICS OF ETHNICITY : STATE, DEVELOPMENT AND IDENTITIES IN THE NORTH-EAST INIDIA

Dissertation Submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
in fulfillment of the requirements for the
award of the Degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

TASONGWI NEWMEI

CENTRE FOR STUDY OF SOCIAL SYSTEMS
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI – 110067

INDIA

2004

जवाहरलाल नेहरू विश्वविद्यालय
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI 110 067

Centre for the Study of Social Systems
School of Social Sciences

21st July, 2004

Certificate

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled "**DYNAMICS OF ETHNICITY :**

STATE, DEVELOPMENT AND IDENTITIES IN THE NORTH-EAST

INDIA" submitted by **TASONGWI NEWMEI** in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of this

University, has not been previously submitted for the reward of any degree to

this or any other University. This is a bonafide work.

We recommend this dissertation to be placed before the examiners for

evaluation.

Prof. Anand Kumar   Surinder S. Jodhka

CHAIRPERSON   SUPERVISOR

Acknowledgement

I am highly grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Surinder S. Jodhka for his invaluable suggestions, guidance and patience throughout the entire course of my dissertation, for which I will remain forever indebted to him.

I would like to thank the librarians and staff of JNU Library, DSA library of CSSS and Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial cum Library for their kind help and co-operation.

I would also like to thank the University Grants Commission for awarding me Junior Research Fellowship which has helped me in many ways in my research work.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Makiu Mpamei, A.G. Samuel, Nagonglung Riamei, Ashirii Pfoze, Sudhansu Mishra and Manish Kumar Jha for rendering their invaluable help, support and encouragement.

To my parents, brothers and sisters, brother-in-law and my friend, Phoebe Newmai for their love, inspiration and support which have been my constant source of strength and motivation.

New Delhi
Date: 21st July 2004

(TASONGWI NEWMEI)

CONTENTS

CHAPTER – I

INTRODUCTION

Sociological theorizing in the last 150 years has, in many cases, either assumed or argued the decline of ethnicity (Fenton 1999: 96). Sociologists have assumed that ethnicity would disappear with modernization and industrialization, the Gemeinschaft (intimate community) would give way to Gesselschaft (impersonal society): a movement from ethnic type affiliations based on irrational, kin-like bonds between people to affiliations based on the rational principle of mutual interest and social need. The invincible process of the rational market place would result in Gesselschaft, reigning supreme in modern world. Within this epistemological foundation, melting pot theories of assimilation thrived. It is then assumed that not only technological progress, democratization of politics, expansion of education and media communication would eventually wipe out ethnic assertions but also the peoples "without histories", the anachronisms, who are said to impede the wheels of progress (Pathy 1998:1).

The most unmistakable argument for the decline of ethnicity is to be found in the liberal-universalist sociology of Emile Durkheim. His argument centres upon what he calls the decline of the natal-milieu: the locale and social obligations, especially of family into which an individual is born. The belief that particularistic ties should decline is an element of liberal democratic ideology; while the belief that they will decline is a part of the sociology of modernization. Durkheim viewed the French Revolution as the beginning of redefinition of people as citizens, setting in trend the development of laws and social institution which recognized the freedom and dignity of the individual. Not surprisingly he viewed 'race' and 'ethnic' origins as declining facts of the modern social order, precisely because both were rooted in birth (Fenton 1999: 100)

It is curious to note that even the Marxists have assumed that ethnicity is a mere by-product of cleavages in the control of production and that these cleavages will give way to the greater proletarian brotherhood. Marx and Engels, in their urge for

1

international unity of the working classes, have overemphasized the role of capitalism in assimilating various ethnic categories. They thought of "natural differences and antagonisms between peoples are daily more and more vanishing", and that "the supremacy of the proletariat will cause them to vanish further" (as cited in Pathy 1988:1). In the same tradition, Lenin argued that with economic development, ethnic resistance to assimilation or voluntary integration tended to disappear and the ethnic question may survive only as vestiges. He wrote of two tendencies in the national problem under capitalism:

> ... the first is the awakening of national life and national movements, the struggle against all national states. The second is the development in growing frequency of international discourse in every form, the breakdown of national barriers, the creation of international unity of capital, of economic life in general, of politics, science, etc.... Both tendencies are a universal law of capitalism. The former predominates in the beginning of its development; the latter characterizes a mature capitalism that is moving towards its transformation into socialist society (Lenin as quoted in Pathy 1988: 1-2).

Likewise Stalin (1948) argued that the process of elimination of pre-capitalist relations of development of capitalism is at the same time a process of amalgamation of the people into nations (ibid). Fenton (1999:101) argues that the Marxists matched the liberal expectancy in foreseeing the decline of attachments to birth, whether racially, ethnically or nationally expressed. As capitalism developed, so too would class consciousness allying men and women on a 'rational' basis to those whose material circumstances they shared. The classical Marxists were justified in their statements with reference to the given stage of capitalist development, but that state is not there anymore. Capitalism at a certain stage of its development amalgamated some groups, but subsequently the inherent contradictions of capitalism have brought out the distinctions.

Contrary to the expectations of both schools of thoughts – the liberal and the Marxist – observers began to suggest that this expectation of the decline of ethnicity, broadly defined, was mistaken, undermined by events or informed by inadequate sociological theory. Ethnic activism and separatism first appeared in a big way in the post colonial societies which was crudely and ethnocentrically explained in terms of "tribalism", a characteristic of backward newly emerged societies. But soon ethnic

2

fragmentation and conflict afflicted even the developed, modern capitalist countries, demonstrating that centuries old nation-state structures of Europe cannot be free from the separatist movements. The melting pot myth has been irreparably shattered in the United States itself by the rise of Black ethnocentricism and native American irredentism, Latin activism and even of the Asian American, and of course the French speaking Canadians in Quebec (Glazer and Moynihan 1963). *"You can't kill your grandfather"* is the way Reverend Paul Asciolla described the death of the melting pot theory (Lahart as cited in Dashefsky 1976: 3). Asciolla contradicts the traditional theory of all ethnic groups "melting together" to form one unique American culture. The work of Glazer and Moynihan (1975) began to argue that, contrary to all expectations, ethnic loyalties remained important, even more important, they hinted, than class-based attachments. Not even the socialist states are free from ethnicity. In Czechoslovakia, politics revolves around Slovaks and Czechs; in Yugoslavia between Croatians, Serbians, Montenegrius and Albanians, which ultimately led to civil war and disintegration of the countries. The demise of the former Soviet Union has encouraged ethnic conflicts and national movements to flourish throughout its territory. In fact, since the beginning of the 1970's, ethnicity has become a worldwide phenomenon and ethnic consciousness is said to be "definitely in the ascendancy as a political force" (Connor 1972:327). Far from Gemeinschaft dying out, they have never been stronger, more complex, more overlapping and competing and prove determinative of our lives (Wallerstein 1986:12).

Ethnicity in the context of northeast India is given new salience, new form and meanings by the processes such as colonialism, modernization through western education and development in post-colonial independent India. Understanding the relationship between ethnicity, state and development is fundamental to the study of social change. However, unfortunately these concepts are so loosely defined that they overlap with a number of other related concepts. In previous years the term "nationality", "national grouping", and "minority" have been used in rough reference to the same phenomenon to which the term "ethnicity" is applied. In the past, "progress" and, now especially "modernization" have also been used for "development". Development is often presented in the literature as social change towards conformity with the legal entity and "ethnicity"

(or its substitute terms) as an obstacle to that direction of change, for which the state is to be used to overcome it.

Ethnicity is essentially an ascriptive phenomenon founded on certain primordial characteristic like language, religion, culture, geographical territory and so on. However, ethnicity is politicized when an ethnic group is in conflict with the political elite over such issues as the use of limited resources or allocation of benefits with which the state must deal. When ethnicity is politicized, the ethnic boundaries become contingent, flexible, negotiable and subject to change in time as well as space that its subjective connotation - sense of belonging to a group - is often found to be the only valid ground on which it stands. The phenomenon of ethnicity and state relation is more complicated than this simple outline would indicate. Ethnicity is seen as a disruptive form of national awakening, and appears to rival the nation, which is viewed as the legitimate entity. Ethnicity, in whatever form, competes with an entity, the nation- state, which completely is an integral part of modernity (Ronen 1986: 1-4). Thus, ethnicity is seen as an obstacle or a hindrance to be overcome by politics of assimilation, integration or incorporation into an existing body politic. But the emergence and reassertion of ethnicity (in the mid 1960s as seen above) may be seen as a reaffirmation of long existing ethnic identity in the process of positive development - as an integral part of development where the state (or at least aspects of it), not ethnicity, is an obstacle to development. In the case of the northeast India, the emergence and growth of ethnic consciousness based on ethnic identity has manifested through ethnic political mobilization and ethnic movements. In fact, ethnic issues have decisively influenced the political agenda of all the northeastern states. Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Ngaland and Tripura - all these states have experienced ethnic conflicts and its resultant ethnic violence.

Ethnic issues and inter-ethnic relations affect state-formation and integrative process in India. In the northeast India, much of the conflictual processes seem to be originating from the ethnic identity formation or ethnic consolidation and marginalized "nationality" identity problem. Understanding of the grassroot reality of the northeast problem and numerous social and political movements in the 'Seven Sister' states

4

requires conceptual insight and discernment of ethnic nationality. Many nationalities which contributed to Indian nationhood have been marginalized and in many cases reduced to an ethnic state but vying for nationality identity have been instrumental to the dynamic political processes in northeast India (Nunthara 2000:51).

Modernization instead of assimilation and integration "recreates primordial identities" and divergences and promotes wider measure of conflicts in northeast India. In fact, post-independence modernization and developmentalism have left unresolved many of the colonial problems. When independence came, the local elites started propping their distinct claims of nationality, on the basis of primordial cleavages, and ethnic identities. No state system remains stagnant and the peripheral states in northeast India have also undergone rapid economic and political transformation. In the process, it germinates a number of crises and strains, which have loosened the bond of unity and cohesion, achieved by the colonial state structure (Dutta 2000:8). Ethnicity, an amalgam of race and culture, language, religion and the tribal way of life, came to define "we" and "they". Being athwart international frontiers, and with historical memories and kin-group straddling them, the effort by these border peoples to resist "national integration" through differentiation appeared separatist or secessionist to "others or us" while plausibly offering such an option to "them" (Verghese 1996:4).

The ethnic situation in the northeast is unique. It is reported to have 209 Scheduled Tribes (Arunachal Pradesh-101, Manipur-29, Assam-23, Nagaland-20, Tripura-18, Meghalaya-14, and Mizoram-5) apart from a number of other ethnic groups not recognized as such though many among them are gradually becoming vocal about the justification of their inclusion in the list. Such claims for inclusion or recognition as Scheduled Tribes are a part of ethnic identity assertion or mobilization.

From the ethnic point of view, the seven units of northeast may be conceived as comprising of three distinct groups: (a) Assam and Tripura having a major non - tribal population and a minority Scheduled Tribe population; (b) Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh having a majority of Scheduled Tribes population and

(c) Manipur, the bulk of whose non-tribal population is concentrated in and around Imphal Valley while the smaller proportion of Scheduled Tribe population is concentrated in the hill areas. Of the total area nearly 70% is hilly and about 88% of the people in northeast India live in villages (Datta, P.S. 1994: 4). The result is that there had been a growing sense of alienation bred by geographical isolation, communication gap and, above all, prolonged neglect and indifference of the Union and state governments. Small wonder that the region is seething with secessionism, militancy and insurgency. The endeavours that had been made by the Union and state governments to bring the ultras to the negotiating table bore no fruit. In the process, there seems to be an all pervasive identity crisis with claims and counter-claims for identity formation or definition. In the light of the above context, the dissertation tries to focus on the following objectives:

a) to critically review the existing literature on ethnicity in sociology;
b) to look at the emergence and articulation of ethnicity in northeast India;
c) to examine the complexity of ethnicity in northeast India by making sense of the ethnic identity assertion, identity crisis and feelings of ethnicity among and between themselves by relating all these to state and development.
d) to look at the specific dynamics of ethnic identity formation among the Nagas and the emergence of sub-identities among the Zeliangrong Naga in northeast India; and

Methodology

In writing this dissertation, I have depended primarily on the secondary sources such as books, journals, magazines, newspaper clippings and few selected articles from souvenirs and news bulletins published by local organizations. In terms of the depth of investigation, this research is a combination of descriptive, analytical and explanatory methods. Ethnicity is by no means independent of the overall social process within which it is located. In order to comprehend its full significance, the dissertation attempts to situate ethnicity in its proper empirical and historical contexts. Thus, ethnicity in

6

northeast India and its socio-political implications have been seen in a diachronic perspective.

Chapterization

The dissertation has been divided into five chapters. In order to understand the conceptual and theoretical aspects of the term 'ethnicity', the following chapter deals with a review of the concept of ethnicity and ethnic groups from various theoretical perspectives. The problem of defining ethnicity, because of its meaning overlapping with other concepts and the way it is used both as a generic and specific term, is also discussed. This chapter also brings out that ethnic and cultural identity is not fixed because it is often politicized. Nevertheless, an attempt has been made to discuss ethnicity and ethnic groups based on some objective criteria to distinguish them from other sociological categories. It also discusses ethnicity in Indian context as process of mobilization of social categories and communities for self-conscious articulation of their social, economic and political development in society. The need for terminological shifts from tribe to ethnic group which suggests contact and inter-relationships and transcend ethnocentric bias is highlighted. While defining ethnicity as relationships and as process, the importance of the context is emphasized.

The third chapter deals with the inter-relationship between ethnicity, state and development in northeast India. The concepts - ethnicity, state and development - are discussed conceptually, and also theoretically their inter-relationship is explored in this chapter. Within the theoretical framework, an attempt has been made to see the emergence of ethnic processes in northeast India and locate within the three principal historical categories - the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial period. The artificial colonial construction of Assam, the impact of colonial rule, Christianity and the emergence of an educated middle class are traced here. The process of ethnic identity consciousness among the ethnic groups, particularly of the Nagas, is discussed. The state policy of assimilation followed by Assam and the consequent reorganization of Assam is also discussed in this chapter. The overall design of the chapter is to see the pre-colonial

ethnic situation, the incorporation of the indigenous people into the British Empire (Assam) and see to how the response of the ethnic groups is shaped by the British policy of 'divide and rule' and failure on the part of the state to appreciate the political and cultural distinctiveness of the tribes.

The fourth chapter discusses ethnicity and competition for resource. The overall thrust of the chapter is to provide an analytical understanding of 'ethnicity as resource competition'. It discusses migration, ethnicity and competition for resources in northeast India. The nature and process of 'development', the problem of 'underdevelopment' and economic backwardness leading to the problem of 'identity definition' and 'identity crisis' in the northeast India is discussed in the chapter. It is located within the overall process of social change and modernization, the capitalist path of development and regional disparities, economic crisis, massive influx of illegal immigrants and the politicizing of tribal society. Thus, the chapter relates ethnicity to the political and economic processes of the region.

The fifth chapter reviews the foregoing chapters and briefly summarizes the findings of the research. It is an attempt to contextualize ethnicity and place it in perspectives within the framework of the understanding of the northeast ethnic groups.

CHAPTER - II

ETHNICITY: CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

This chapter will examine the concepts and theories of ethnicity. The attempt in this chapter will be to critically review the various approaches, conceptual and theoretical perspectives on ethnicity so as to make sense of the empirical problems or reality of the ethnic phenomena in different contexts and northeast India in particular.

The word ethnicity comes from the Greek word 'ethnos' which seems to refer to a range of situations in which a collectivity of human lived and acted together and which is typically translated today as 'people' or 'nation' (Jenkins 1997:9). An early and influential sociological reference to ethnic groups and the ultimate rootstock of the term can be found in Max Weber's *Economy and Society*, first published in 1922. In Weber's view, an ethnic is based on the belief shared by its members that, however, they are distant from each other they are characterized by common descent. Weber's argument is that:

> Ethnic membership does not constitute a group; it only facilitates group formation of any kind particularly in the political spheres. On the other hand, it is the political community, no matter how artificially organized that inspires the belief in common ethnicity (1978:389).

Weber seems to be suggesting that the belief in the common ancestry is likely to be the consequence of collective political action rather than its cause; people came to see themselves as belonging together - coming from a common background - as a consequence of acting together. Collective interests, thus, do not simply reflect or follow from similarities and differences between people; the pursuit of collective interests does, however encourage ethnic identification.

In terms of collective action, this sense of ethnic community is a form of monopolistic social closure: it defines membership, eligibility and access. Any cultural trait in common can provide a basis and resources for ethnic closure; language, ritual,

economic way of life, lifestyle and more generally, division of labour and even endogamy are all possibilities in this respect. Shared language and ritual are particularly implicated in ethnicity: mutual 'intelligibility of the behaviour of others' is a fundamental prerequisite for any group, as is the shared sense of what is 'correct and proper' which constitutes individual 'honour and dignity'. By this token, an ethnic group is a particular form of status group. Weber thus argued that since the possibilities for collective action rooted in ethnicity are 'indefinite', the *ethnic group*, and its close relative the *nation*, cannot easily be precisely defined for sociological purposes.

The Problem of Defining

Ethnicity has become an important field of study for the social scientists. Owing to the historical resurgence of ethnic identities throughout the world, the field of ethnicity has become a sub-discipline with a large and expanding literature offering a whole gamut of conflicting propositions about the nature, causes and implications of ethnic phenomena. The rapid growth of this literature has led to competition and often confusion among both concepts and terms which has added to the difficulty of study (Jackson 1984:205, Pathy 1988:4).

Ethnicity is a dynamic and multi-dimensional phenomenon and it differs in its manner and intensity of expression. The relationship between the empirical datum and its sociological conceptualization is always difficult and becomes more so today when ethnic issues have become emotionally charged. Not only is the concept of ethnicity determined by the historical and the social conditions under which it is activated or originated, often it has been loosely defined that it overlaps with a number of other related terms or concepts. The other terms related to ethnicity range from "ethnic communities" (1938), "ethnocentricism (1941), "primordial and group attachments" (1963), "minority groups" (1964), "ethnic groups" (1969) to "communal groups" (1975). Recently, the term ethnicity is also connected with "nation-building" (1990), "nationalism" (1991), "culture" (1992) and, of course, "tribal identity" (1994). All these terms aim at identifying a particular social group. However, the different terms with

meaning ranging from "heathen nations" beyond western civilization and "alien minorities" within western countries, to metaphorical or imaginary 'descent groups' which are supposed to be universal to mankind do not really indicate the universal acceptance of the true significance of the term ethnicity (Pakem 1996:11-12, Ray 1989:1).

Ethnicity is also closely related to other social collectivities like race, nation, classs, interest group, ethnonation, etc. (Eriksen 1993, Jackson 1984, Epstein 1978, Glazer and Moynihan 1963). The problem of the crucial task of distinguishing ethnicity from other related social collectivities and concepts arises because there are no fixed markers or criteria for defining ethnicity. There is little consensus upon what types of distinctions should be regarded as ethnic in nature. Some analysts wish to include social distinctions based upon racial (or psychological) characteristics, religion, language, culture, historical traditions, nationality, or various aggregations of these factors. Others desire to see the concept used in a mere restrictive manner particularly separating out racial and nationality groupings.

However, the common thread to all discussions of ethnicity is ethnic identity: the attachment of the individual to the idea of the group and to his or her membership in the group (Martin 1999:112). The core concepts, the basic building blocks, of ethnicity are identity and culture. Identity and culture are fundamental to the central projects of ethnicity: the constructions of boundaries and the production of meaning (Nagel 1998:238, Jodhka 2001:21). The problem for the theory of ethnicity is posed by the use of the term 'ethnic identity'. Identity is both a psychological and a sociological term. It may provide a definition, an interpretation of the self that establishes what and where the person is in both social and psychological terms. On the one hand, it helps the individual to produce order in his or her own individual life. On the other, it helps to place that individual within a group or involves 'identification' with a collectivity. But 'the apparently monolithic or generalized character of ethnicity at collective level... does not preempt the continual reconstruction of ethnicity at a personal level' (Cohen as cited in Guiberneau and Rex 1997: 4). It is simply a fact of human existence that human beings

live within and identify with a multiplicity of groups according to occasion, without becoming individually psychologically disturbed; though such disturbance might occur among a minority. Moreover, there is a difference between ethnicity (ethnic identity) claimed by the people themselves and that attributed by others. In either case - chosen or imposed — the social perception of ethnicity will not rest upon some scientific sociological truth but on subjective interpretation. 'Identity can only be understood as a process. One's social identity (or identities) is never a final settled matter' (Jenkins as cited in Jodhka 2001:27)

Jackson (1984) argues that conflicting meanings and uses of the defining terms are problematic. A good example is the term "culture" which figures prominently in the ethnicity literature. Some texts employ "culture" as a generic term (as it tends to be employed in cultural anthropology) that encompasses more specific terms such as "religion", "language", and other aspects of culture. Others use it as a specific term alongside "religion", "language" and so on. Still others use it both ways. This malpractice is like a "category mistake" - the logical error of assigning incommensurate elements to the same category. Hence, "ethnic groups" are said to consist both wholly and partly of "culture", and, like "culture", "ethnicity" is employed both as a generic and a specific term (i.e. embodying, and differentiated from "race", "nationality", "religion", etc). "Ethnicity" and "ethnic entity" have emerged as generic terms that signify a class of social objects. These objects include not only the social collectivities, but also processes, activities and actors. It is misleading to simply state that ethnic groups are identical with cultural groups and that shared culture is the basis of ethnic identity. Culture is a changing variable and contingent property of interpersonal transactions, rather than a reified entity, 'above' the fray of daily life, which somehow produces behaviour (Jenkins 1997:12). Jodhka (2001:27) calls for an 'open-ended view of culture' that approaches community identities as a process of what Appadurai calls, 'conscious mobilization of cultural difference'. In this framework, as Hall argues,

> Cultural identity is a matter of "becoming" as well as of "being". It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something that already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But like everything that is historical, they undergo constant

transformation. Far from being externally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to continuous play of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in mere "recovery" of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity. Identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past (ibid. p.27).

Definitions of ethnicity vary according to the interest of the persons analysing it (Narayanan 1989:4). Social scientists tend to broaden the use of the term "ethnic group" to refer to not only subgroups and minorities but to all groups of a society characterized by a distinct sense of difference owing to culture and descent. Defining "ethnicity" also frequently becomes a political act. Whether an ethnic group should be called an ethnic group at all, or rather a nation, a nationality, a minority, a tribe, a community, a culture, a society or a people or be denied any of these labels, has become more of a political issue than a simple procedure of scientific inquiry (De and Das as cited in Narang 1995:1). Ethnicity is a plastic, variegated, and originally ascriptive trait that, in certain historical and economic circumstances is readily politicized (Rothschild 1981:1)

Reviewing the literature on the locations of ethnicity, Banks (1996) locates 'primordial ethnicity' to be in the hearts of the ethnographic subject, the person or persons studied by the anthropologist or sociologist, while 'instrumental ethnicity' could be considered to be in their heads. An alternative perspective which in some way subsumes the two locates ethnicity in the observer's head – as an analytical tool devised and utilized by academics to make sense of or explain the actions and feelings of the people studied. It is tempting to conclude that 'ethnicity' is, in the eye of the beholder something like beauty, that is all 'situational' or a matter of time and context, shifting, fleeting and illusory (Smith 1986:2, Oommen 1997:5). Thus, at this particular moment in history, the concept of ethnicity has become ambiguous image.

What is Ethnicity?

'Ethnicity seems to be a new term', state Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan, who point to the fact that ethnicity as 'the character or quality of an ethnic group' makes its appearance in the 1972 supplement of the Oxford English Dictionary. Its first usage is attributed to the American Sociologist David Riesman in 1953. The 1973 edition of the American heritage Dictionary defines ethnicity as (1) the condition of belonging to a particular ethnic group, and (2) ethnic pride (Glazer and Moynihan 1975:1). The 1993 Version of the New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary defines ethnicity as 'the ethnic character; the fact or sense of belonging to a particular ethnic group.

Etymologically, the term (ethnicity) traces its origin from the term ethnic that relates to community of physical and mental traits possessed by members of a group as a product of their common hereditary and cultural traditions. According to Webster's dictionary (1978), it is a noun from the expression ethnic, and refers to certain quality or affiliation based on hereditary as well as cultural considerations. We need to view ethnicity from the standpoint of the content as well as the context. In terms of content, ethnicity refers to "an overt expression of feeling of differentiation... It is conscious express feeling"(Zehol 1998:112).

As we have discussed earlier, it is difficult to define ethnicity. Authors often prefer to use terms such as 'basic group identity' or primordial affinities and attachments that derive from belonging to an ethnic group rather than use the term itself (Hutnik 1991:17). Some of the authors simply take 'ethnicity' is what the ethnic group has or expresses, and make use of 'ethnic (group)' without feeling the need for an associated abstract noun (ethnicity) and it is the adjective (ethnic) and not the term noun that has largely entered the public discourse. However, ethnicity is not simply a quality of groups and Marcus Banks, for example, tends to treat it as an analytical tool, devised and used by academics (Banks 1996:6). Similarly, Fenton argues that ethnicity is 'a broad and loose (term) denoting an area of interest; it is not, on its own, a theoretical standpoint, nor is it likely that there can be a unitary theory of ethnicity' (Fenton 2003:3). It is a term that invites endless and fruitless definitional argument which has been long and remained

inconclusive. It usually connotes a fragment, a partial, subordinates or encapsulated portion of the larger whole – a term that only makes sense in a context of relativities, of processes of identification and that nevertheless aspires to concrete and positive status both as an attribute and as an analytical concept (Pathy 1988:35-36, Chapman et al 1989:14-15). Although most of those who write on ethnicity do not bother to define the term, the extant number of definitions is already high – and it is growing (B. Williams as cited in Eriksen (1993:10). An attempt has been made here to give some definitions of ethnicity, culled out from a wide spread of literature and written from a variety of theoretical approaches.

Ethnicity has been loosely used in the sense of ethnic consciousness or sense of ethnic identity of a people or community relating to their political, social and cultural personality. Clifford Geertz has elegantly defined ethnicity as the 'world of personal identity collectively ratified and publicly expressed' and 'socially ratified personal identity' (Geertz as quoted in Jenkins 1997:13). It has also been defined as an ascriptive bond (Parsons as cited in Jackson 1984:209). It is a social identity characterized by fictive kinship (Yelvington as quoted in Banks 1996:4). The term 'ethnicity' refers to 'strife between... ethnic groups, in the course of which people stress their identity and exclusiveness' (Cohen ibid). Fenton argues that the simplest way to state what ethnicity is, would be saying that it is about 'descent and culture' and that ethnic groups can be thought of as 'descent and culture communities'. Using this as a starting point, ethnicity is defined as 'the social construction of descent and culture, the social mobilization of descent and culture, and the meanings and implications of classification systems built around them (Fenton 2003: 3). According to Milton Gordon, ethnicity is a sense of 'peoplehood' created by common race, religion, national origin, history or some combination of these (Gordon as quoted Hutnik 1991: 18).

Ethnicity is considered as a kind of consciousness about the status and problems of an ethnic group. It also connotes mobilization of an ethnic group in order to assert for its share of power and resources (Robertson as cited in Upreti. B.C. 2002:3). Kothari (ibid) views ethnicity as a movement of marginalized people on the basis of religion,

15

culture, etc. It can be said that ethnicity is a device for group mobilization by the leadership of an ethnic group through the use of its ethnic symbols for socio-economic and political purposes (Upreti, B.C. 2002:3). Similarly, ethnicity may be regarded as 'an enclosing device which curves out a recognizable social collectivity based on certain shared perceptions of distinctive commonness often augmented by diachronic continuity (Das Gupta 1975:467).

By ethnicity is generally meant the condition where certain members of a society, in a given social contest, choose to emphasise as their most meaningful basis of extra-familial identity, certain assumed cultural, national or somatic traits (Peterson as quoted in Narang 1995:12). In sum, ethnicity labels the visibility of that aspect of the identity formation process that is produced by and subordinated to nationalist programmes and plans – plans intent on creating putative homogeneity out of heterogeneity through the process of a transformist hegemony (B. Williams as quoted in Banks 1996:5).

While Epstein (1985:5) argues that the phenomena of ethnicity is evidently much more complex than earlier analyses allowed, Glazer and Moynihan (1975:1) comments, 'one senses a term still on the move'. And Jenkins (1997:14) argues that although the basic anthropological model of ethnicity has been the most useful analytical framework available, its potential has not been fully explored or appreciated. Discussing about what others have done and building upon their arguments, Jenkins (1997:165) offers the basic anthropological model, which is a series of loosely linked propositions and can be summarized as follows:

(a) Ethnicity is about cultural differentiation (bearing in mind that identity is always dialectic between similarity and difference).

(b) Ethnicity is concerned with culture-shared meaning – but it is also rooted in, and the outcome of, social interaction.

(c) Ethnicity is no more fixed than the culture of which it is a component, or the situations, in which it is produced and reproduced.

(d) Ethnicity is both collective and individual, externalized in social interaction and internalized in personal self-identification.

Marcus Banks (1996) gives a comprehensive definition, rather a comment – ethnicity as the name given to at least a part of the mapping enterprise of the constantly changing terrain of human relations, states:

> ... a collection of rather simplistic and obvious statements about boundaries, otherness, goals, achievements, being and identity, descent and classification, that has been constructed as much by the anthropologist as by the subject (Banks 1996:190).

There is a need to struggle against our tendency to reify culture/cultural identity and ethnicity. Neither, culture nor ethnicity is 'something' that people 'have', or indeed to which they 'belong'. They are, rather, complex repertoires which people experience, use, learn and 'do' in their daily lives, within which they construct an ongoing sense of themselves and an understanding of their fellows (Jenkins 1997:14). We would be well advised to state that ethnicity 'describes both a set of relations and a mode of consciounsness'. As a mode of consciousness, however, it is 'one among many... each of which is produced as particular historical structures impinge themselves on human experience and condition of social action' (Camarroff and Camaroff as cited in Eriksen 1993:157)

Ethnicity as Relationships, as Process

Ethnic identities are articulated around ancestry, culture and language which are subject to change, redefinition and contestation. Thus we cannot simply talk of 'ethnic groups'. It follows that if ethnic groups are not fixed and uncomplicated entities, then our subject is not 'inter-group relations' or 'ethnic relations' as it was once mistakenly conceived. Rather we should understand ethnicity as a social process, as the moving boundaries and identities which people, collectively and individually, draw around themselves in their social lives. Central to this process is the production and reproduction of culture, of acknowledged ancestry and ideologies of ancestry and the use of language as a marker of

social difference and the emblem of a people. The social relations which are only in part predicated on these systems of social classification are not a special and limited type, 'ethnic' or 'racial' relations. They are social, political and economic relations which have an ethnic dimension, and this dimension is activated or suppressed in a variety of contexts (Fenton 1999:10).

At the level of individual action, ethnicity is a signal of identification. At the societal level ethnicity refers to the systematic and enduring social reproduction of basic classificatory differences between people who see themselves as culturally discrete (Eriksen 1993). These categories are not stable or permanent orderings of people or symbols.

Ethnicity is a process which emerged through interaction between different peoples, colonization, immigration and conquest (Oommen 1988:6) According to Yogendra Singh (1993), the sociological phenomenon described as ethnicity is a process rather than a substantive sociological category (Singh 1993:155). Reviewing the literature on ethnicity and ethnic movements in India, he concludes that 'ethnicity in the Indian context could at best refer to processes of mobilization of social categories and communities for self-conscious articulation of their social, cultural, economic and political development in society' (ibid p.157).

Similarly Devalle (1992) argues that ethnicity should be viewed as a process whose meaning can only be understood in context, evolving within the flow of history and according to the particular social circumstances of a given people at different points in time. As a process, it becomes evident that 'ethnicity cannot be understood unless issues of social differentiation, processes of class formation and the development of class conflicts are considered in the context of their articulation with processes of ethnic differentiation (ibid p.233-4). Analyzing the ethnic phenomena in Jharkhand as a process from historical perspective, Devalle concludes that it (ethnicity) can be considered to be 'a mode of social consciousness as well as a form of ordering social relationships'.

18

Once we begin to think of ethnicity as a dimension of social relationships and not of 'ethnic relations' as a specific type of relationship, then it becomes possible to deconstruct some of the languages used in talking about ethnicity. We need to consider the manner in which ethnic identities and classificatory systems are constructed and the contexts within which ethnicity takes shape as a dimension of structure and action.

Types and Contexts of Ethnicity

Ethnicity as a social phenomenon is embedded in the social, political and economic structures which form an important element of both the way ethnicity is expressed and the social importance it assumes. Although the concept of ethnicity should always have the same meaning lest it ceases to be useful in comparison, it is inevitable that we distinguish between the social contexts under scrutiny. Following Thomas Eriksen (1993), Fenton (1999) distinguishes five types of ethnic-making situations.

(a) Urban Minorities: Examples being migrant worker populations in America and European cities and in the economies of the newly industrializing societies (for example, Indonesian workers in Malaysia) and trader minorities such as Chinese merchants in the Caribbean. In the context of North-East India, urban minorities will consist of traders and businessmen from mainland India and migrant workers competing for employment alongside the locals. This seems to be the cause of anti-outsiders' politics pursued in the region.

(b) Proto-nations or Ethnonational Groups: Peoples who have political leaders who claim that they are entitled to their own nation-state and should not be ruled by others (the Naga case). These groups are mostly territorially based and may be described in common terminology as a nation without a State. It is where the boundaries of modern nationhood, the state and the group autonomy remain contested, usually where a nationalist political movement (e.g. Kurds, Sikhs, Palestians, Sri Lankan Tamils, Basque etc) aims to secede or gain a high degree of autonomy, territory, regional autonomy or independence.

19

(c) Ethnic Groups in Plural Societies: The term 'plural society' usually designates coloniacally created states with culturally heterogeneous populations. The groups that make up the plural society, although they are compelled to participate in uniform political and economic systems, are regarded as (and regard themselves as) highly distinctive in other matters. In plural societies, secessionism is usually not an option and ethnicity tends to be articulated as group competition. As Richard Jenkins (1986) has remarked, most contemporary states could plausibly be considered plural ones. The typical example of ethnic groups in plural societies is India and within that, northeast India which we examine in more detail.

(d) Indigenous Peoples: This word is a blanket term for aboriginal inhabitants of a territory, who are politically relatively powerless and who are partly integrated into the dominant nation-state. Indigenous peoples are associated with a non-industrial mode of production and a stateless political system (Minority Rights Groups, 1990). Though the concept of indigenous people may be controversial and sometimes not accurate analytically, it can be applied to the North-East case partly.

(e) Post-Slavery Minorities: The Blacks (African) descendants of people formerly enslaved in the new world, of which Black or African Americans are a classic instance.

Ethnic Groups: Meaning and Usages

However, one can still identify some objective criteria to distinguish ethnicity from other sociological categories. Historically, the term "ethnic" is derived from the Greek word, 'ethnos' (ethnikos) which refers to Heathen nations or peoples not converted to Christianity. It was also used to refer to races or large groups of people having common traits and customs or to exotic primitive groups. Beginning with a restrictive definition to mean a small, homogeneous community with archaic characteristics, somewhat akin to traditional definition of tribe (Naroll as cited in Choudhury 2001:27), the meaning of ethnic group has expanded so as to include socio-culturally differentiated large communities in the highly industrialized developed countries. In anthropological literature, the term "ethnic group" is generally used to designate a population which (1) is

largely biologically self-perpetuating; (2) shares fundamental cultural values, realized in overt unity in cultural forms; (3) makes up a field of communication and interaction; (4) has a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order (Barth 1969:10-11). By ethnic group, sociologists generally mean a relatively stable socio-cultural unit performing an unspecified number of functions, bound together by a language, often linked to a territory and derived actually or allegedly from a system of kinship. In this sense, ethnic community is an extremely old collective reality (Fenet as cited in Narang 1995:2). International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences defines an ethnic group as "a distinct category of the population in a larger society whose culture is usually different from its own. The members of such a group are, or feel themselves or are thought to be, bound together by common ties of race or nationality or culture (Morris 1968:167).

In modern political usage of the term "ethnic" is generally used as a designation of social unity based upon common and separate language or dialect, historical living in a defined area, occupation and mode of life, cultural and social traditions, customs and folklore. It is also used for social class, racial or national minority groups and also for distinguishing cultural and social groups in society. However, there are differences with regard to emphasis. Some would include a religious denomination under the rubric, others not; some would identify a race as an ethnic group, whereas for others the latter is a smaller subdivision of race and so on.

There are some for whom an ethnic group is composed of what have been called "primordial affinities and attachments". By a primordial attachment is meant

> one that stems from the givens-or, more precisely, as culture is inevitably involved in such matters, the assumed 'givens'- of social existence: immediate contiguity and kin connection mainly, but beyond them the givenness that stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, and following a particular social practice. These congruities of blood, speech, custom and so on, are seen to have an ineffable and at times overpowering coerciveness in and of themselves. One is bound to one's kinsmen, one's neighbour, one's fellow believer, *ipso facto*... at least in great part by virtue of some unaccountable absolute import attributed to the very tie itself (Geertz 1963: 109).

For these theorists (primordialists), it is the identity made up of what a person is born with or acquires at birth. But for some theorists (instrumentalists), ethnic groups, though centrally concerned with cultural matters, symbols and values and with issues of self-definition, are not given entities but are social and political constructions. Paul Brass, for instance says:

> Any group of people dissimilar from other peoples in terms of objective cultural criteria and containing within its membership, either in principle or in practice, the elements for a complete division of labour and for reproduction forms an ethnic category. The objective cultural markers may be a language or dialect, distinctive dress or diet or customs, religion or race (Brass 1991: 263).

Some scholars view characteristics of ethnic groups primarily in alienation or migration, etc. T.K. Oommen (1997) opines that the ethnic is a group of people who share a common history, tradition, language and life-style, but are uprooted and or unattached to a homeland. Similarly, some writers in the U.S. have applied the terms ethnic groups to immigrant groups who are distinguished by cultural differences in language and national origin and who have no distinguishing physical characteristics. Still for others, territorial relationship is important. Smith, for instance, describes ethnic as a named population with shared ancestry, myths, history and culture having association with a specific territory and a sense of solidarity (Smith 1981). Taking the line of Benedict Anderson, R. Onufrizchnak (as cited in Narang 1995:3) suggests that ethnos are imagined communities, based to a great extent, on language, shared history and the dissemination of shared cultural expression through the media, print in particular.

There are differences among Marxist writers also with regard to basic features of ethnic communities. Some regard language and culture as fundamental features (e.g. P.I Kushner); others add to these territory and ethnic self-consciousness (N.N.Cheboksarov); still others include in addition the peculiarities of psychological make up (V.I. Kozlov); a fourth group adds common origin and state affiliation (S.A. Tokarov) and a fifth group sees the essence of ethnic communities only in specific psychological stereotypes (L.N. Gumilev) (as cited by Bromley and cited again in Narang 1995). Bromley defines ethnic group as a stable intergenerational totality of people historically formed in a certain territory who possess not only common traits, but also relatively stable peculiarities of

mentality, as well as awareness of their unity and difference from all formations of similar kind (self-consciousness) registered in the self-name (ethnoim).

The definitions of ethnic groups as mentioned above make it clear that there is no agreed meaning of the term "ethnic". However, each of them refers to some characteristics. A review of literature by Paul Brass suggests that there are three ways of defining ethnic groups: (a) in terms of objective attributes; (b) with reference to subjective feelings; and (c) in relation to behaviour. An objective definition assumes that though no specific attribute is invariably associated with all ethnic categories, there must be some distinguishing cultural features that may clearly separate one group of people from another. The features may be language, territory, religion, colour, diet, dress or any of them. An objective definition is problematic in that it is usually extremely difficult to determine the boundaries of ethnic categories in the manner they suggest. A subjective definition carries with it the difficulty of answering the basic question of how a group of people initially arrives at subjective self-consciousness. Behavioural definitions are really forms of objective definition since they assume that there are specific, concrete ways in which ethnic groups behave or do not behave, particularly in relation to an interaction with other groups. Behavioural definitions merely suggest that there are cultural differences between ethnic groups, and the critical distinctions reveal themselves only in interaction with other groups. But the existence of explicit codes of behaviour and interaction is rather more characteristic, more pervasive and more evident in simple rather than in complex societies in which people may establish their separateness with reference to specific attributes without adopting an entirely distinct code of behaviour (Brass 1991: 263).

However, it is not the pre-eminence of the subjective over the objective or vice-versa but the linkage between the two, the complementarity of one with the other that facilitates an understanding of the process of evolution and growth of an ethnic group characterized by continuity, adaptation, or change. Such a composite perspective has been provided by the syncretists. Taking a cue from the syncretists, Urmilla Phadnis defines an ethnic group as:

A historically formed aggregate or people having a real or imaginary association with a specific territory, a shared cluster of beliefs and values connoting its distinctiveness in relation to similar groups and recognized as such by others (Phadnis 1990:14).

This definition suggests five major traits of an ethnic group: (a) a subjective belief in real or assumed historical antecedents; (b) a symbolic or real geographical centre; (c) shared cultural emblems such as race, language, religion, dress and diet, or a combination of some of them which though variegated and flexible, provide the overt basis of ethnic identity; (d) self-ascribed awareness of distinctiveness and belonging to the group; and (e) recognition of the group differentiation by others.

What is important is the self-defined and "other-recognised" status. And it is this self-perception which is common in most of the definitions. Max Weber, for instance, defined ethnic groups as:

> Those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because similarities of physicals type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration; this belief must be important for the propagation of group formation; conversely, it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists (Weber as quoted in Jackson 1984: 229).

Similarly according to Talcott Parsons:

> Ethnic group is a group the members of which have, both with respect to their own sentiments and those of non-members, a distinctive identity which is rooted in some kind of distinctive sense of history. It is, moreover, a diffusely defined group, sociologically quite different from collectivities with specific functions. For the members it characterizes what the individual is rather than what he does (Parsons 1975: 65-67).

Contemporary writers, both liberal and Marxists, also give significant importance to this self-selection. In fact, Eriksen (1993) argues ascription as a decisive feature of ethnicity. Shibutani and Kwon, for instance, write:

> An ethnic group consists of a people who conceive themselves as being of a kind. They are united by emotional bonds and concern with the preservation of their type. With very few exceptions, they speak the same language, or their speech is at least intelligible to each other, and they share a common cultural heritage. Since those who form such units are usually endogamous, they tend to look alike.

Far more important, however, is their belief that they are of common descent, a belief usually supported by myths of partly fictitious history (Shibutani and Kwon as quoted in Narang 1995:5).

Similarly, according to Bromley, 'an ethnic group in the narrow sense of the word and in its most general form may be defined... also by an awareness of their identity and distinctiveness from other similar communities' (Bromley as cited in ibid). What emerges, therefore, is that an ethnic group encompasses the attributes of a presumed or fictive sense of relatedness, a kindred feeling which is perpetuated by myths and memories and reinforced by common understanding concerning the meaning of a set of symbols.

A.S. Narang gives a comprehensive definition of an ethnic group as:

A group of people who share a feeling of peoplehood based on real or fictional common ancestry, or real or presumed shared socio-cultural experiences or memories of a shared historical past and focus on one or more symbolic elements of religion, language, dialect, tribe or nationality diffused as the epitome of their peoplehood (Narang 1995:6).

While historical continuity is important, ethnic group formation however depends on a mobilizational process in the course of which various symbols become important. But no particular attribute of ethnicity can assume stable importance. The various components which figure historically have, by no means, been uniformly involved over a period of time. Also ethnic groups are not necessarily monoliths. The ethnic groups may have vertical and horizontal differentiations in terms of social categories, occupational and class categories.

From Tribe to Ethnic Group

Generally, anthropologists define tribe as a type of society characterized by political autonomy, a subsistence economy and territoriality. This resulted in the construction of a fixed idealized type, and in a perception that divorced 'tribal' societies from the

historical processes that affected them, most notably the colonial situation in which 'tribal studies' initially developed.

The vagueness of the category 'tribe', its uses, its derogatory implications and its lack of correspondence with reality has made anthropologists increasingly dissatisfied with it. The category 'tribe' was constructed out of ideas about what societies were thought to have been in pre-colonial past. Hardly any of the so-called tribes can be defined by their political autonomy, isolation and subsistence economy. A reality that included a new articulation of modes of production, new division of labour and new system of power inaugurated with colonial rule and, afterwards the structural changes that took place in the modern states bring to question the validity of this idealized type (Devalle 1992: 29-30).

One of the earliest anthropologists to cast doubt upon the usefulness of the notion of the tribe was Edmund Leach, in his study of inter-group relations in northern Burma. Leach argued that tribes as discrete bounded entities were essentially analytical models – developed by anthropologists or other outsiders, for their own purposes – rather than locally meaningful principles of everyday social organization in practice.

The mere fact that two groups of people are of different culture does not necessarily imply – as has always been assumed – that they belong to two quite different social systems (Leach as quoted in Jenkins 1997:17).

Locals may talk about themselves as if there were clear cut collective identities, but everyday interaction and organization revealed a more complex pattern of overlap and variation, the reality of which was recognized by the, locals. Leach argued 'culture groups as social isolates' was impossible in the Kachin Hills, due to the fact that 'named groups culturally or partly distinct were often all jumbled up.

By the 1960s the notion of 'the tribe' was beginning to be replaced by the, perhaps less embarrassingly colonial 'ethnic group'. While one still speaks of 'tribes' the

term ethnic group is nowadays much more common. This switch in terminology implies more than a mere replacement of one word with another.

Notably, the use of the term 'ethnic group' suggests contact and interrelationship. By definition, ethnic groups remain more or less discrete but they are aware of – and in contact with – members of other ethnic groups. In a sense, ethnic groups are created through the very contact, and group identities are defined in relation to that which they are not – in other words, in relation to non – members of the group.

The terminological switch from tribe to 'ethnic group' may also mitigate or even transcend an ethnocentric or Eurocentric bias (Eriksen 1993:10). This is because when we talk of tribe, we implicitly introduce a sharp qualitative distinction between modern and traditional or so called primitive societies. The concepts and models used in the study of ethnic groups can be applied to modern as well as non-modern contexts, to western as well as non-western societies. In this sense, the concept of ethnicity can be said to bridge two important gaps; it entails a focus on dynamics rather than statics, and it relativises the boundaries between 'us' and 'them' between moderns and tribals (ibid).

The Manchester School (Max Gluckman et al) was perhaps responsible for bringing the terminological shift from tribe to ethnic groups (Barks 1996). Scholars like Gluckman emphasized on the importance of context (sometimes known as situationalism) which means that the particular relations between the groups in question are influenced by the situation in which they find themselves in contact with any particular moment. In making this point, Gluckman is sketching the outline of what Barth was later to call 'boundary maintenance' (Barth 196).

Jaganath Pathy (1988), referring to the concept of tribe in the context of India, noted that there has been no scientific treatment of the concept of tribe and whatever superficial nature attributed to it is not subscribed to by the overwhelming majority of the tribes of India. Instead, almost all communities fulfill all the requirements of the ethnic

27

group. Also the tribes have maintained a certain degree of autonomy, a pre-condition for ethnicity (Pathy 1988:26).

Theoretical Perspectives on Ethnic Upsurgence

By this stage we have said enough to make the claim that ethnicity is not a unitary global phenomenon, everywhere reflecting the same cultural and social impulses and everywhere reflecting the same in its constitution. For all superficial similarities, the underlying 'social forces' differ from context to context (Fenton 1999:221). There is not a single discourse of ethnicity but a series of discourses attuned to the historical demands of specific countries, regions and internal and political dynamics (Fenton 2003:48).

There has been considerable academic and social debate in the last two or three decades on the underlying causes of the resurgence of ethnicity. Although the debate has helped to broaden our perspectives on the subject, it has at the same time created theoretical divisions. There is little consensus among social scientists regarding the nature and characteristics of the problem and its relation to other problems of the social sciences or even acknowledgement of their existence. Various theoretical approaches compare with its other, and the field is clearly divided into several schools.

These theories are wide ranging. On the one pole are the "primordialists" who consider ethnicity as a natural bond between people, immutable or primordial (Geewrtz 1963:109). Thus the formation of political identity from parochial loyalties is believed to be conditioned by natural law, a priori reality. On the other pole are those "instrumentalists" or "constructionists" who emphasize the utilitarian and thus rational bent of ethnic groupings, whose shifting shapes reflect changing times and conditions. Thus conceiving ethnicity as an emergent process of power struggles, they believe cultural factors are epiphenomenal to the process (Bentley as cited in Pathy 1988:4). Both the perspectives have certain relevance but the problem stems from their going to extremes. The primordial nature of ethnicity can be questioned on the ground of the boundary problem (Barth 1969), continuous generation of mixed ancestry, prevalence of

28

intra-ethnic (including class) conflicts and variables of ethnic groupings and conflicts. Similarly, ethnic groupings need not necessarily be situationally constituted entities and the cultural and linguistic backgrounds can hardly be treated as secondary. Now most of the scholars admit that ethnicity should include both the primodialist and instrumentalist perspective and objective and subjective perspectives. Ethnic groups are simultaneously both primordial and modern, because in social life, tradition and modernity are not necessarily mutually exclusive, nor is their interplay a zero-sum game. Indeed, technological modernization may even reinforce traditional, primordial bonds, as when radio and television broadcast sacred texts to communicate masses to deepen their sense of belonging to a special, precious, unique, organic community and thereby catalyze them into political assertiveness. Conversely, this politicization of the primordial bonds arms the ethnic group to survive under the exigencies of modern conditions (Huntington as cited in Rothschild 1981:30).

Broadly speaking, the current theories of ethno-nationalism can be divided into two categories: those which emphasize cultural and psychological elements and those emphasizing economic and political factors. And there is a general agreement that ethnicity can better be understood through multiple rather than unitary factors. A brief survey of various theories have been attempted here to help us understand the phenomenon of ethnic upsurgence.

Primordial Givens and Cultural Pluralist Approach

The primordialists suggest that "human nature and human psychology provide the necessary conditions for ethnocentric and nationalist behaviour, and such behaviour is universal" (Kellas as cited in Narang 1995:20). Taking their cue from the work of Edward Shils on the importance of 'primordial ties' based on language, religion, race, ethnicity and territory, proponents of this view claim that nations and ethnic communities are natural units of history and integral elements of the human experience (Smith 1986:12). This leads to the proposition that while forging of the individual and the sanctity of his choice in owing allegiance to whatever structures he prefers, there pre-

exist certain socio-cultural structures which the individual is born into and shapes his beliefs, orientations and behaviour patterns. People invariably retain an attachment to their own ethnic group and the community in which they were brought up. As there is interdependence between the individual and collective processes of identity formation, individuals expect to recognize themselves in public institutions. They expect some consistency between their private identities and the symbolic contents upheld by public authorities embedded in social institutions, and celebrate in public events. Otherwise, individuals feel like social strangers; they feel the society is not their society (Breton as cited in Narang 1995:21). The sociological version of this argument asserts that ethnicity is an extension of kinship, and that kinship is a normal vehicle for the pursuit of collective goals in the struggle for survival (Smith 1986:12). Some sociologists claim that ethnocentricism is a genetically-determined behaviour in which kin selection operates. This means that kins are preferred to non-kins as mates, and that the "inclusive fitness" of kin groups is the result. In sum, to the primordialists, ethnicity is genetically determined; it is given and not chosen.

The cultural pluralist approach is usually associated with J.S. Furnivall, who wrote extensively on Dutch and British colonies of South-East Asia (Furnivall as cited in Eriksen 1993:49). He regarded these plural societies as being composed of groups which were socially and culturally discrete, which were integrated through economic symbiosis (or mutual interdependence) and the political domination of one group (the colonial masters), but which were otherwise socially discrete, as well as being distinctive concerning language, religion and customs. There were no shared values in these societies, argued Furnivall, and so the groups were held together in a political system by the coercive force of the state, the police and the militancy – such societies were, in his view, deeply divided.

A leading contemporary interpreter of pluralist theory is M.G.Smith (Smith as cited in Eriksen 1993:49). In a typical plural society, the constituent groups will be differentially integrated: there will be a wide array of ethnically discrete fields of activity, so that extensive contact and influence are kept at a low level. In Smith's view, plural

societies are notoriously unstable precisely because they lack 'a common social will'. In such a culturally divergent situation, the structural requisites of a political order lead to the subordination of one group by the other. In the process, characterized as these societies are by domination, separation and instability, they are defined by dissents and are pregnant with conflict.

These approaches proceeding inexorably from the cultural givens of the past have been challenged by many. Since cultural discontinuity is a readily observable fact, this perspective may represent a challenge to ethnicity studies, which have largely been concerned with the social organizational and political aspects of ethnicity while disregarding the cultural dimension (Eriksen 1993:50). Urmilla Phadnis (1990) argues that ethnic identity is a significant but not sufficient to explain ethnicity. The very recognition of the primordialist sentiments and consequently, the differentiated character of ethnic groups does not explain why inter-ethnic group relationship- has been harmonious at one time but not at another. Although pluralist theorists acknowledge a possible correlation between economic differences and ethnic ascription, they fall back on models based on the assumption of social equilibrium, such as that followed by the modernization school. The theory of the plural society avoids the problem of the structuring of societies into classes (Devalle 1992:41).

Modernization and Ethnicity

Modernization theory was a dominant analytical paradigm in American sociology for the explanation of the global process by which traditional societies achieved modernity. It consists of (1) political aspects – the development of key political institutions – political parties, parliament, franchise and secret ballots; (2) cultural aspects – secularization and adherence to nationalist ideologies; (3) economic aspects associated with profound economic changes – an increasing division of labour, use of management techniques, improved technology and the growth of commercial facilities; and (4) social aspects – increasing literacy, urbanization and the decline of traditional authority (Abercombie et al 1984:270). Influenced largely by the writing of Karl Deutsch, most American

Scholarship assumes that modernization leads to loss of ethnic identity. However, while acknowledging that modernization leads to some identity loss and closure in an ethnic sense, Cheung and Parming (1980) argue that modernization creates simultaneous pressures which reinforce ethnic identities. Though modernization may reduce the scope of cultural variation, the emerging cultural consciousness or reflexivity brought about by this very process has also inspired the formation of ethnic identities stressing cultural uniqueness (Eriksen 1993:129)

Modernization is an uneven and disorderly process, conferring advantages on some regions and groups and facilitating their structural consolidation of those advantages and head starts, while relegating other regions and groups to marginality and subordination (Rothschild 1981:4). As a result, two sets of contradictions come into play as the modernization process develops: (1) among the regions and groups that are rendered unequal, (2) between normative promise and implemented results. These contradictions provoke conflict between advantages, dominant population segments and disadvantaged, subordinate ones. This conflict is often over control of the state apparatus and sometimes over the exasperated decision of one of the contending groups to secede from an extant state that it perceives as irredeemably alien and hostile.

As the process of modernization unfolds itself, it creates conditions of ethnic mobilization on the one hand, and extension of the authority of the modern state matters which hitherto were considered internal by the ethnic groups, particularly the minorities and indigenous groups. According to Rajni Kothari (1989), the source of the upsurge of ethnicity is fairly comprehensible. Firstly, it can be seen as a response to homogenization and majoritarianism. In fact, it is a reaction to the excesses of the modern project of shaping the whole humanity and its natural resource based around the three points of world capitalism, the state system and a 'world culture' based on modern technology, a pervasive communication, and information order and a 'universaling' educational system. The project of modernity entails a new mode of homogenising and of straitjacketing the whole world. Ethnicity represents a powerful rebuttal to this paranoid drive of the modern project of fashioning the world after the idea of a world that came from the occident

which has almost succeeded in subjugating the immense diversity and richness of the human experience. The modern means of audio-visual media and communications have created conditions for parochial political consciousness on ethnic lines far ahead of forces of trade, commerce and industry. Thus two things happened due to modernization:

(a) increasing gap between deprived and affluent communities; and

(b) increasing awareness among deprived ethnic groups and a sense of discrimination and insecurity.

Modernization produces alienation which the ethnic groups are ill prepared to withstand. Our modern scientific, technological world is so highly structured and overorganised that it actually presents itself to many individuals as chaotic (Rothschild 1981:5). As a result, modernization appears to lead to personality-level void, termed, by some as alienation and by others simply as 'rootlessness'. In part, alienation may ensue from the work situation, the impersonalization of a bureaucratized, formalized and urbanized existence. And in part, the general problem of rootlessness may be a consequence of the loss or destruction through modernization of those social relations which concretely define the relationship - between the individual and the collectivity in personal terms. The end result of these processes is the general loses of identity, the sense of who we are (Cheung and Parming 1980:134). To avert the resultant threat of personal anomic and fragmentation, they draw a reintegrating identity from identification with their ethnic group, which is the only social entity left that defines and accepts them for what they are rather than by what they do (Parsons 1975:56). Besides this, the challenge of modernization to socio-cultural and political ties, values, orientations, institutions and hierarchical social order is often viewed or perceived by the elite of the ethic groups as threats to identity. Modernization creates new elites, who have not only the skills to redefine their ancestral identities, but who also provide a new dynamic and competitive leadership to their groups of origin. These new elites create identity consciousness in an ethnic group and mobilize for political purpose against the state. This sharpening of ethnic consciousness has led to the transformation of ethnicity from ethnicity-in-itself to ethnicity-for-itself (Sharma as cited in Singh Balgit 2002:33). This has drawn ethnicity

into the arena of politics where it tends to take either of the two forms, as delineated by Brass (a) an interest group, and (b) a self-conscious political entity (Brass 1991:20).

In summary, modernization may lead to ethnic collective identity closure; but it may lead also the persistence of collective identity divergence or diversity along either an affective or instrumental path, or both, depending on specific social contexts. It sharpens differentiation, articulates identity consciousness, produces intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic competition and degenerates into violent conflicts.

Political Economy Approach

This approach is generally considered to be either associated with or influenced by Marxism, particularly the neo-Marxists. As we have discussed earlier, for the classical Marxists, ethnic identity is 'false consciousness' – a vestige of pre-socialist phase of social development. They consider ethnicity/ethnic group as an unnecessary distraction and assumed that modernization leads to a loss of ethnic identity.

Some neo-Marxists, however, recognize that ethic groups are in constant flux. They may arise, crystallize, decay and even disappear as identifiable units. Ethnic consciousness need not be 'false' but may rest on rational choice. However, neo-Marxists also feel that the causes of ethnic conflict are not to be sought just within the ethnic groups themselves, but rather within the contradictions of the wider society in which ethnic may or may not happen to be significant factors. Within this framework, it has been argued that the development of capitalism produces the conditions for the rise of ethnic self-consciousness and accelerates parochial loyalties (Smith as cited in Pathy 1988:6). Some others have located ethnicity as an integral part of the uneven development of capitalism, the domination of imperialism and the policy of the bourgeoisie to divide the working masses so as to procure a lease of life for the moribund system. Arising out of inequalities and non-fulfilment of aspirations is also the feeling of

34

relative deprivation which some observers suggest as a significant cause for ethnonationalism.

Relative Deprivation

Social movements and political action are the outcomes of perceived frustrations on the part of individuals or groups, who feel disadvantaged and deprived relative to others and handicapped in the race for wealth, status, services and power. Thus, according to this perspective, ethnic protest and ethnic nationalism are the outcome of regional relative deprivations (Smith 1981:28).

Relative deprivation is a gap between the expectations and perceived capabilities of a person *vis-a-vis* his economic situation, political power and social status in relation to others (Gurr as cited in Narang 1995:29). According to this theory, it is not just the poorer regions that develop ethnic nationalism. The rich region may also be nationalist if they perceive relative deprivation within the state or political and/or cultural matters. It is pointed out that in the process of development and modernization, some minorities have done better than the majority. Those who have done well feel they could do much better if only their future was not tied with others in the structure of a single state. Those who feel deprived also seek the same solution: to have their own state so that, once free of their deprivation they can develop better (Sheth ibid p.29)

Rothschild (1981) also maintains that politicized ethnic assertiveness appears to be the keenest among those who have been the least successful and the most successful in meeting and achieving the norms, standards, and values of the dominants in their several multi-ethnic states. The former resent at their failure while the latter are resentful because their economic success is not reflected in full social and political acceptance. Accordingly, "ethno-politics" seeks to address two sets of contradictions: the structural inequality of regions and groups, despite theoretical equal development, and the failure of the state to implement the "normative promises" which is its *raison d'etre*. Given the complexity of modern life and the overlapping groups which demand attention from the

existing power structure, ethnicity appears to be a rational organizational principle readily available to the political elite as well as to those who seek to replace it.

Ethnicity accordingly represents an effort by the deprived groups (real or perceived) to use a cultural mode for political and economic advancement or share. In most of the cases, it is the middle class, which finding the existing system detrimental to their prospects of development, wants to break the "status-quo". Realizing that it cannot be done by them alone, they emphasize the problems facing the masses and formulate strategies based on religion, language, culture or regional slogans that may appeal to all classes. Some observers, therefore, think that ethnicity is being used primarily as an instrument in "resource competition".

Ethnicity and Resource Competition

Political policies and designations have enormous power to shape patterns of ethnic identification when politically controlled resources are distributed along ethnic lines. Resources can be economic or political. To Rothschild (1981:2), for instance, politicized ethnicity is not the expression of some form of primordial attachment, but rather an instrument in the struggle for power, directly linked to the process of modernization. Roosens argues that the mobilization of ethnic groups in the United States has paralleled the development of the U.S welfare state and its racial policies. Ethnic groups emerged so strongly because ethnicity brought people strategic advantages in resource competition (Roosens as cited in Nagel 1998:246)

The observation that ethnic boundaries shift, shaping and reshaping ethnic groups according to strategic calculation of interest, and that ethnicity and ethnic conflict arise out of resource competition represent major themes in the study of ethnicity. Barth and his associates (1969) link ethnic boundaries to resource niches. Where separate niches are exploited by separate ethnic groups (e.g. herders versus horticulturalists), ethnic tranquility prevails; however, niche competition (e.g. for land or water) results in ethnic boundary instability due to conflict and displacement. Informal job competition among

36

different ethnic groups can heighten ethnic antagonism and conflict, strengthening ethic boundaries as ethnicity comes to be viewed as crucial to employment and economic success. The pursuit of economic and political advantage underlies the shift in ethnic boundaries, upward from smaller to larger identities in modern states. Thus in electoral systems, larger ethnic groups means larger voting blocks; in industrial economies regulated by the political sector, and in welfare states, larger ethnic constituencies translate into greater influence. According to this view, the construction of ethnic boundaries (group formation) or the adoption or presentation of a particular ethnic identity (individual and ethnic identification, can be seen as part of a strategy to gain personal or collective political or economic advantage (Nagel 1998:247).

According to Abner Cohen, social interaction and organization are essentially a dual phenomena: they comprise aspects of utility and aspects of meaning. Ethnicity, he argues, is an organizational form which exploits this duality for particular ends, which may or may not be acknowledged by the agents themselves. Ethnic ideology has an immediate appeal because it offers answers to 'the perennial problems of life': the questions of origins, destiny, and, ultimately, the meaning of life. However ethnicity must also have a potential function in order to be viable. Only by focusing on this aspect, it is possible to explain why some ethnic groups thrive while others vanish, and why only some ethnic identifications assume great social importance. Cohen depicts ethnicity as an instrument for competition over scarce resources, which is nevertheless circumscribed by ideologies of shared culture, shared origin and metaphoric kinship (Cohen as cited in Eriksen 1993:45). This theory looks like a combination of the instrumentalist and the primordialist approaches to ethnicity. As Daniel Bell puts it, "Ethnicity has become more salient because it can combine an interest with an affective tie" (Bell 1975: 169).

Elite Competition

The elite competition theory is propounded by Paul Brass. Paul Brass (1985) views the state as comprising of a set of persisting (repressive, allocative and distributive) institutions and decision-making bodies over which elites in conflict are engaged in

struggle for control. He argues that the state and its policies are a potential benefit to some groups and communities, but they are also a threat to others particularly to local elites and communities and to groups whose values differ from those of the secular, modernizing, industrializing state.

Using this framework, Brass says that ethnic identity and modern nationalism arise out of specific types of interaction between the leaderships of centralizing states and elites from ethnic groups. Elite competition, thus, according to Brass, is the dynamics which precipitate ethnic groups formation and ethnic group conflict under specific conditions which arise from the broader political and economic environment rather than the cultural values of ethnic groups in question. The theory is consistent with the assumption that ethnic identity is itself a variable, rather than a final or given disposition. The cultural forms, values and practices of ethnic groups, become political resources for elites in competition for political power and economic advantage. Brass argues that resource competition by itself does not produce ethnic political cohesion. It must be associated with groups that have a common pool of symbols to draw upon and an elite or elites capable of transmitting to the ethnic group(s) a sense of increasing attachment to those symbols as a basis for social and political mobilizations (Brass 1985:40).

According to this perspective, ethnic communities are created and transformed by particular elites in modernizing and in postindustrial societies by undergoing dramatic social change. In such societies, two processes are precipitated by the state action: uneven spread of education, industrialization and employment opportunities, and the creation of new elite groups – educated elites and secular elites. These two types of processes in turn precipitate two characteristics and well-known types of conflicts that affect the formation or transformation of ethnic group identities and the relationship between ethnic group and the state. On the one hand, there is competition between persons from different ethnic categories for state resources, and on the other, there is conflict between the old elites and the new educated and secular elites. The latter may take two forms: a struggle for a redefinition of the central value purposes of the group and/or a struggle between the two for support within the community and the right to represent the community in relation to

outside forces, particularly the state authorities, and in the new state institutions (ibid p.41). This brings out the dual dimension of ethnic identity formation of interaction or competition with external groups and of an internal struggle for control and of the right to speak on behalf of the group. According to Brass, the state's specific alliance strategies and policies may lead to long-term collaboration with particular segments of an ethnic group, which in turn influences the processes of ethnic mobilization and counter-mobilization. However, the ultimate extent of internal solidarity achieved by the ethnic group is likely to be influenced by external changes and conflicts among segments within the group and external relations and segments of other ethnic groups.

The central argument is that elites and inter-elites competition of specific types and alliance patterns with the state are the critical precipitants in ethnic group formation/conflict and political mobilization. All other factors – cultural symbols, inequalities, discrimination etc. are but backdrops and resources to draw upon for the purpose. Without elite entry into such situations, injustices and inequalities may be accepted, cultural decline or assimilation may occur and grievances may be expressed in isolated, anomic or sporadic forms of conflict and disorder. Skilful elites who lack such "objective" bases for mobilization as, say systematic discrimination or regional inequalities, will often create images of discrimination or specific instances of regional inequality.

Internal Colonialism

The theory of internal colonialism starts with the observation that the process of modernization and economic development is not a smooth, self-equilibrating flow but a discontinuous, disruptive pattern of waves that creates and leaves behind discrepancies between advanced and retarded groups and regions (Hechter as cited in Rothschild 1981:52). Over time, these discrepancies are institutionalized into stratifications, as the advanced sector ("the core") to dependent, overspecialized economic functions (for example mono-crop agriculture or extraction industry or unskilled services). The

periphery is left highly vulnerable to price fluctuations and to the basic investment decisions that the core reserves for itself.

Ethnicity enters the picture when certain cultural markers (of the anthropological type) that may distinguish the peripheral and the core populations from each other come to be perceived as identifying and categorizing the respective economic roles and functions of these two populations. It is in the interest of the core's elite to use this distinction and exploit these markers so as to maintain the peripheral population's instrumental dependency and restrict its access to the skills and resources that might enable it to challenge this stratification. Thus the markers (pigmentation, religion, language, and the like) are transformed from primordial givens into politicized discriminators, and the tagging of the peripheral population traits as inferior becomes a self-fulfilling social prophecy. This development does not necessarily entail deliberate discrimination against individuals. Rather, the periphery as a region or an ethnonational population being structurally disadvantaged, individuals in it and from it are to that extent also competitively, cumulatively (and quite impersonally) disadvantaged in many market situations, including access to good incomes, jobs, schools, housing, credit and capital. Eventually, the process comes full circle as the alleged inferiority of the peripheral population (lazy, wild, parochial, backward, etc.) becomes the elite's alibi for restricting investment among it.

The "core" establishes its own culture as defining the standards and norms for success and socio-economic mobility. Peripheral cultures come to be stereotyped, not only as a second class, but also as second rate. This circle is broken when the peripheral group reappropriates the cultural markers that have been manipulated to keep it subordinate or marginal and uses them as foci and levers to end and possibly reverse this relationship. The peripheral group turns to ethnicity to deligitimate prevailing arrangements which are no longer accepted as "natural" or "inevitable" but are perceived as flowing from the deliberate policy decisions of the dominants and demand such political and structural changes as would enhance its integrity and autonomy as a distinctive culture-bearing ethnic group. If it is also geographically concentrated in a

particular region, it may press secessionist claims either as a strategic goal or as a bargaining stance (Rothschild 1981:54-55).

According to Smith (1981), the thesis of 'internal colonialism' presents several problems. Theoretically, there is the difficulty of specifying the number and degree of variables of dependence which must be present in order to designate a particular area as 'internal colony'. Also, the notion of a unitary core is oversimplified as the economic (industrializing) and the political (state-building) need not be identical. Secondly, the model of an 'internal colonialism' has limited applicability as it possesses little relevance for most non-western areas, where despite some western commercial penetration, there was little capitalism or industry at the moment when ethnic nationalism emerged. Finally, it is not the fact of economic progress or decline that is relevant for the ethnic revival, but simply economic change per se because most changes are painful and uprooting.

Cultural Deprivation

The notion of cultural deprivation is derived from Oscar Lewis' work and his 'culture of poverty' theory (Lewis as cited in Devalle 1992:40). From this perspective, indigenous cultures are seen as broken residues of past traditions that are seen as the cause of the problems the subordinate sectors suffer, ignoring the social, historical and economic basis.

According to this view, one of the significant inducements to ethnicity comes from the feeling of insecurity among ethnic minorities of their fear of getting lost in the sea of majority. This may be either because of the discrimination and oppression by the majority, the state identifying with the majority, or homogenization process arising out of modernization leading to creation of synthetic state culture (Narang 1995:35).

The apprehension of minority ethnic groups about loss of their cultural identity arises from two sources. The first is the dominant majority, generally politically

powerful also, questioning the so-called privileges and rights of the minorities and attempting to impose its own religions or cultural values. It means making the political ideology of the core group also the basis of nationalism in the state. This naturally results in strong pressures towards assimilation of the non-dominant group.

The second arises from the ideology of the modern states to equate the state with the nation. According to Jasbir Singh Ahluwalia (2000), the nation-state with its ideology of totalitarian nationalism – as it arose in the west and later on adopted in the developing countries of the East - claims total and absolute allegiance of the individual to the nation-state to the exclusion of his all other allegiances: to ethnicity, religion, etc. This totalitarian nationalism is complemented by Unitarian polity leaving little room for the institutions and structures of the minorities, and the nation is taken as a homogenized society. Any challenge to such homogenization or resistance to identification of monolithic polity with the nation is condemned as secessionism, anti-nationalism, terrorism and subversive of the national unity. The ethnic groups under the pressures of (real or feared) homogenization gravitate towards seeking and preserving their respective self-identities in their culture or differentiated traditions. If certain forces in the majority are trying to ethnicize the national polity, there is a tendency, in reaction, on the part of certain elements among the minorities to politicize their ethnicity, i.e., their ethno-cultural, ethno-social, ethno-political identity in militant tones (Ahluwalia 2000:9-10). As Rajni Kothari (1989) argues, ethnicity can be seen as a response to homogenization, majoritarianism and a reaction to the excesses of homogenizing modern projects of nation-building which subjugate the immense cultural diversity and richness of the human experience.

The Civilizational Approach

The civilizational approach, developed in Latin America and Africa, is specially, addressed to the realities of present 'Third World' societies and, particularly in the Latin American case, to the situation of indigenous populations. It emerged in opposition to both extremes in the perception of ethnicity: to perspectives that maintain the autonomy

of ethnicity, and to economic reductionism. Ethnicity is seen from this perspective as an expression of civilizational alternatives based on people's awareness of the historical depth of their collective socio-cultural style. The existence of this awareness phrased in ethnic, national or cultural terms, is considered to indicate the possibility for a veritable process of decolonization to develop (Abdel-Malek as cited in Debvalle 1992:45). This approach views conflicts expressed in ethnic terms as confrontations with economic as well as with socio-cultural domination.

A new concept of civilization is central to this perspective. Abde-Malek (ibid) locates the driving forces behind the present world political transformation in the non-western social formations where combined processes of renaissance and national liberation have taken the shape of 'an explicitly civilizational process'. Importance is given to the 'depth of the historical field', the crucial factor for the maintenance of an ethno-national ('civilizational') style and the concept of specificity as a main conceptual tool. For Darcy Rebeiro (ibid. p. 46), ethnic formations are 'operative units of the civilizational process'. He gives the 'Emerging people' (pueblos emergentes) a central role in the forging of a new society. These peoples correspond to the historico-cultural configurations of oppressed national ethnic groups who are presently 'stressing their ethnic and cultural profiles as national minorities aiming at self-determination'.

This chapter has dealt with the concepts and theories with ethnicity from various perspectives. There is the problem of defining ethnicity because its meaning overlaps with other terms and concepts and ethnicity is used both as a generic and specific term. However, we have also discussed the advantage of, and the need to use ethnic groups instead of tribe and define ethnicity as relationships, and as process. The importance of the context is emphasized and we have delineated the types and concepts of ethnicity. In view of the heterogeneous nature of northeast India where there is a bewildering array of tribal, linguistic, religious and caste groups with distinct identities, our attempt has been to see ethnicity from various theoretical perspectives. And this attempt will be reflected in the coming chapters.

CHAPTER - III

ETHNICITY, STATE AND DEVELOPMENT IN NORTHEAST INDIA

As discussed earlier, ethnicity and ethnic groups cannot be seen as being the same phenomenon everywhere. Different kinds of settings have given rise to different types of ethnic movements and different modalities of ethnicity. In other words, ethnicity as a social phenomenon is embedded in social, political and economic structures of a given context which form an important element of both the way ethnicity is expressed and the social importance it assumes.

A review of literature on ethnicity invariably points to the importance of historical circumstances, the historicity of ethnic situation and the context in which it operates. Therefore, the historical and societal context requires us to entertain that, in studying 'ethnicity', we are studying collective identity and organization which differ significantly in accordance with their historically specific origins (Fenton 1999:28). In the context of north-east India, there are three principal historical trajectories within which ethnic formations have emerged. These are the pre-colonial situation, the colonial period and the post-colonial period. Within these historical processes, the state sponsored migration, the differential incorporation of societies into the colonial system, the rise of ethnic consciousness due to the processes of westernization and modernization, the rise of middle class, partition and economic stagnation, (under) development and competition for state-resources all contributed towards conditions for the emergence of different ethnic group formations in north-east India. Our task here will be to examine the emergence of ethnic processes in north-east India and locate it within colonial policy of 'divide and rule', westernization or modernization, nation (or rather state) building process and the consequent development in post colonial period.

Ethnicity, State and Development

Ethnicity does not operate in a vacuum. The ethnic aspirations of a group are directly related to its environment. The norms, values, behavior and expectations of the dominant groups within the society may affect aspirations of the minority. Where there is a clash of interest between the two, ethnic conflict may erupt. In this context the role of the state and its policies assume significance. Where the state is perceived as an instrument of the majority community, ethnic distinctions may intensify (Nongbri 1995:41-2).

The relationship between the state and ethnicity has been clearly brought out by Oommen (1998) in his paper on nation, state and ethnicity. According to him, while state is a political entity, 'ethnicity emerged through the interaction between peoples; it is a product of conquest, colonialization and immigration'. It is Oommen's contention that rapture between territory and other primordial attributes create ethnicity. Nation on the other hand is a cultural category alluding to a people belonging to a specific territory whose moral claim to it is perceived as legitimate. However, the relationships between the three concepts are not static but are in a constant flux.

A nation may dissolve into an ethnic group and an ethnic, that is, a people without common territory and citizenship, crystallize into a nation which may in turn lead to the establishment of socio-political formation - a nation state. The processual relationship between them can be reversed. Not only can a nation be constituted into a state but also a state can dismantle and destroy nations (Oommen 1988:33-5).

If we accept Oommen's definition of these concepts then the tribes of north-east India such as the Khasi, Naga, Mizo, etc. could be considered as separate nations each having a legitimate claim over their territory and it was the threat posed to their territorial rights that rendered them into ethnic groups. But as Oommen has pointed out, the fluidity does not make for permanent characterization of these categories. Yet whatever their particular character in a given empirical and historical context, the saliency of these concepts to political development cannot be underscored. In this context, Dipankar Gupta (1996) argues that in an ethnic movement the nation-state

gets clearly defined, either immediately or through some rather transparent mediation. In such movements, the validity of the home ground is justified with reference to the nation-state. Either the home ground deserves to be a sovereign entity, in which case secessionism is the foremost consideration; or as the Shiv Sena Movement in Maharashtra demonstrates, the specification of the 'Native Soil' is hallowed on putative nation-state sentiments. In an ethnic situation, the attention is on nation-state level thematics such as those of sovereignty and territory. In his case not only are the 'self' and 'other' ascriptively defined, but in addition the 'other' is invariably portrayed as being anti-national or secessionist in character (Ibid).

In the rivalry between ethnicity and nation-state, the latter is posited as legitimate entity by scholars and political actors. According to such a scheme ethnicity emerges due to the failure of national integration; ethnicity appears as a disintegrative factor, as an obstacle to be overcome. Such a negative casting of ethnicity is reinforced by our perception of development and the relationship of ethnicity to it. (Ronen 1986:4)

The difficulty in studying the issues of ethnicity and development is that both concepts are slippery. As we have discussed earlier, the definitions and boundaries of ethnicity are fluid and development is not a process that is easily given to objective study.

The word 'development' became increasingly popular after the Second World War, in large part because of the growing number of new states that were 'liberated' from colonial rule. It was because 'development', political as well as economic became a specific subject of study and an object of public policy after World War II. In ordinary usage development means 'a gradual unfolding; a fuller working out of the details of anything; the growth of what is in the germ (Oxford English Dictionary as cited in Bottomore 1983:285). According to Riggs (1984), Webster Third New International Dictionary defines ten sense of 'development'. None of these senses incidentally fits the new senses of 'development' as used in the post war, social science literature (p.126).

In most recent sociological writing the term 'development' has been used in a quite different way; first, to differentiate two broad types of society - on one side the prosperous industrial societies and on the other side all these societies (very diverse in other respect) which are predominantly rural, agricultural and poor - and secondly, to describe the process of industrialization or modernization (Bottomore ibid. p.286). Among the words used by social scientists that are sometimes treated as synonyms to 'development', we find 'modernization' 'industrialization' 'westernization', 'growth' and 'change' (Riggs ibid. p.127). As a word with many possible meanings, authors tend to use 'development' in a very careless way. 'Development' has come to be used for types of socio-economic and political change, especially in Third World countries and an over simplified definition of 'development' makes it equivalent to rising production and consumption. However, development is a far-reaching and continuous process of social, economic and political change, which involves the totality of human experience. Fried for example defined development as:

> an umbrella concept grouping together a series of interrelated process such as economic development, urbanization, industrialization, and education (Fried as quoted in Riggs 1984:188).

Similarly according to Huntington, development is:

> The overall process of social, economic, intellectual, political and cultural change that are associated with the movements of societies from relatively poor, rural, agrarian conditions to relative affluent, urban, industrialized conditions (Huntington as quoted in ibid. p.191).

Development is a process of change, or at least pertains to change. It is not, or at least should not be held to be, synonymous with modernization. Hence, development is not a process of change towards a specific goal of modernity. Development, as Enloe remarks, "Refers to change that takes place in stages". In effect development is a change towards goals at which government leaders or the state aims. In other words, development is a change that is seen as desirable by that state, and as such is a demand imposed on a given population. In the context of ethnicity and development, the demand may not necessarily be assimilation or for integration but nevertheless represents a direction of change posed (designed) by the state (Ronen 1986:8).

47

For our purpose particularly for the post-colonial independent India we view it here as a process - a planned and directed social change in the direction desired by the government and formally approved by the Planning Commissions. This is the nature of 'development' at least in the Indian context. Hence, there is a need to explore the theoretical link between ethnicity, state and development (Subba 1992:18).

In the 'Introduction to Ethnicity; Theory and Experience' (1975) Glazer and Moynihan write:

> The strategic efficacy of ethnicity as a basis for asserting claims against government has its counterpart in the seeming ease whereby government employs ethnic categories as a basis for distributing its resources (p.10).

Thus, it is the government that sustains ethnicity, to sustain itself, by channelising development or distribution of 'rewards' along ethnic lines. This contention finds more meaning under Indian states, which have mostly been formed along ethnic divisions particularly in the northeast. Glazer and Moynihan further point out that 'ethnicity' is also guarded by the various ethnic groups either to 'defend' the privileges they have been enjoying or to 'overcome' obstruction towards development (1975:15). In either case the state is pressurized to intervene or it intervenes itself in its own interest.

Examining the patterns of ethnicity at different phases of economic deterioration in Africa, Naomi Chazan shows how ethnic expressions are related to development strategies adopted by the State. The theoretical link between ethnicity, State and development was most marked during the post-independence period in Africa, he writes:

> The centrality of government as purveyor of development and distributor of social goods meant that state intervention contributed heavily to the sharpening of the social realities of ethnicity and class. The rhythm of ethnic politics was largely a function of state actions and of the fluctuations in the composition of state officeholders (1986:144).

The state, even when it loses its significance directly contributes to the ethnic resurgence indirectly. To quote Chazan again:

The failure of development strategies made association with the state less worthwhile. The context of these policies differently influenced various facets of state coherence. The loss of specific elements of statehood has generated a multiplicity of separate ethnic expressions (1986:151).

The need for social security, for instance, which earlier used to be fulfilled by the state, is now sought in ethnic solidarity. Ethnic groups, therefore persist under any circumstance because 'of their capacity to extract goods and services from the modern sector and thereby satisfy the demands of their members' (Bates as cited in Subba 1986:138).

The most comprehensive work on the relationship between ethnicity, state and development is perhaps that of Dov Ronen, one of the editors of 'Ethnicity, Politics and Development' (1986). In his introductory note to this book, he contends:

> Since social mobility reduced the salience of a rigid class identity in Europe, and since modern class distinctions were not yet institutionalized in the third world, the always available ethnic identity presented itself as a convenient rally point to be utilized as a political instrument for developmental gains. Ethnic identity by the mid 1960's had become an organizational form, a weapon, a tool and/or a means for the attainment of goals, just as integrative national identity often was in the nineteenth century (p.6).

He adds:

> Numerous studies of European ethnicity have shown that it is not poverty but prospects for advancement that enhance the utilization of ethnic identity. The case of the 'developing world' has been similar (p. 6).

It clearly emerges from the above discussion that ethnicity, state and development form a vicious triangle from which it is difficult to isolate any one of the three. According to T.B. Subba (1992) this triangle may be translated into simple but categorical statements.

(a) Ethnic groups always pressurize the state for greater share of developmental allocations.

(b) State allocates developmental rewards on ethnic lines, primarily to the majority group which decides who should stay in power, and obligatorily to the scheduled castes and

tribes, who are otherwise numerically and hence politically insignificant as far as the state is concerned.

(c) Development of the majority ethnic group takes place by depriving the minority ethnic groups of their democratic rights and opportunities.

(d) Development provides a communication system between asymmetrical or symmetrical groups and thereby facilitates stronger, more viable, ethnic solidarities.

(e) Regional and sectorial disparities in the development plans and programs further accentuate ethnic disparities because each region or sector is dominated by a particular ethnic group (p.22-3).

The development process is also found to impinge upon the traditional, cultural and ecological systems of a region. The 'outsiders' served the 'locals' as 'reference group' only for a short while after which a reversal of their value system – from assimilation to the quest for identity – occurs. This is capitalized by the new middle class - the only vocal class among them. Culture, language, religion, etc. are used by this class as reinforcing forces for the redistribution of 'power' and 'authority' rather than the means of production (Subba ibid). Within this theoretical framework our attempt will be to see how ethnic processes unfolded in the north-eastern states of India by examining the colonial history of these states, their location in the exploitative system of (colonial) capitalism and the way in which ethnic identities have been manipulated to serve the vested interest of the exploitative process.

The Pre-Colonial Situation: Geographical and Historical Background

Ethnicity in north-east India in general and particularly in the hills has deep historical roots. Although this is not a study in history, to place things in their perspective, a cursory glance at the geographical and history of the region is called for at this stage. Geographically, northeast India lies at a strategic position. Being surrounded by Tibet and Bhutan on the northern side, Burma on the southern side and India (Bengal) and Nepal on

50

the western side, north-east has been the meeting place of two great world civilizations - Indian and Chinese. Ethnicity has some sort of linkage with the geography of the region. The difficult hill terrain of the Himalayas acted as a natural barrier between this region on the one hand and northern hinterland on the other. Thus, first north-east as a whole is isolated and within north-east India, the hill areas are isolated from the plains and the valleys.

North-east had been receiving various races, languages, cultures and religions. It is estimated that at the time of immigration of the Aryans into India, various groups belonging to the Mongoloid race entered Assam from different directions - China, Tibet and Burma. The interaction, assimilation and integration of various culture and civilizations produced a distinctive synthesis of Assam's culture, economy, polity and society (Hussain1993:26). Migration of various groups to north-east did not take place at one time. It took place gradually over along period of time, throughout its history, since the ancient period, and from different directions. A very significant group that entered from Burma through the Patkai Hills was the Ahoms, a Tai-Shan tribe, which gave Assam its ruling dynasty from 1228 till the British colonial annexation in 1826.

The successive waves of migration at different points of time and from different directions made the population of north-east India diverse with a multiplicity of race, religion and culture. Though we find the presence of the Aryan group composed of various castes and believers in Islamic faith, it must be admitted that an overwhelming majority of the local groups racially belong to the non-Aryan Mongoloid groups - the Kiratas. This has been the most distinctive feature of north-east India's demography and society since ancient times (Hussains ibid p.27).

A salient feature of north-east India is also the high concentration of tribes in close territorial contiguity. Strictly speaking prior to the advent of colonial rule the hill areas were neither a part of Assam nor of the rest of India. Each of the major tribes, Khasi, Jaintia, Naga, Mizo, Garo, and Dimasa Kachari had their own political organizations which they managed according to their indigenous expertise. Further, the

geographical isolation of the region with difficult terrain and poor means of communication promoted the growth of a distinct culture and practices which were different from those in the plains (Nongbri 1995:44). Historical compulsions like physical and numerical weaknesses, inability to withstand hostile attacks from stronger neighbors and search for safer linking shelter had pushed migratory tribes-like the Nagas and Mizos (Lushais), to the hills or highlands whereas members of the Indian branch of the Caucasoid race dwelled in villages and towns of the plains and valleys. (Nag 2002:41, Furer-Haimendorf 1988:vii). This spatial segregation led to the continuation of individual traditions. And both culture and terrain divided the region several times over and suggested the nature of process that operated in the region (Ghosh 2001:15).

Social relations between the hills and the plains were minimal. Tribal life was associated with complete freedom, unrestricted movement and action, exclusiveness and insularity. Trespassers were aggressively retaliated. This is true of the tribes of the hills of the north-east India (Nag 2002:44) According to Das (as cited in Saha 1999:161), 'every Naga village has been a republic, having its own village government, each village being socially and economically self-sufficient'. There is evidence, however, to suggest that trade relations existed, with the Hillman serving as a bridge in the circulation of goods and services between the Indian merchants and the people across the frontier tracts (Roy Burman 1998:40-1). However, till the advent of the British the hill areas had their own political autonomy. According to Sajal Nag, the plains at the foothills were happy hunting grounds for the tribes for the perpetration of raids, kidnapping, headhunting and slave procurement. These raids were committed to procure consumer items (e.g., salt, iron, etc.) and slaves were procured by kidnapping to make up for the manpower shortage in tribal economy (2002:41-2). Skirmishes between the Ahoms and the Nagas were reported for possession of salt mines and the intermittent clashes and raids continued until Pratap Singha (1603-41) initiated a policy of friendship, awarding them (the Nagas) revenue-free lands or markets for the supply of grains and other essential commodities on promise of good behavior (Verghese1996:12).

Similarly even though the kings of Tripura, Cachar and Manipur claimed suzerainty over the hill tribes, they virtually had no control over them. The tribes on their part claimed themselves to be free and sovereign people who exercised authority in the plains of the foothills. Nagas and Mizos had self-assumed authority over the foothill and villages where they committed raids. They not only considered raids as display of their authority, but even imposed tributary levies on these villages which the terror stricken villagers paid (Nag ibid P.423) By and large, except for occasional encounters the hills and the plains co-existed without much encroachment upon other's territory and resources. The arrival of the British however, shattered the isolation of the tribes.

THE ADVENT OF BRITISH: ANNEXATION OF NORTH-EASTERN REGION AND COLONIAL CONSTRUCTION OF ASSAM

British Annexation of Assam

The British came in touch with the northeast once the East India Company acquired the Dewani of Bengal in 1765. By this time, nonetheless, they had taken over the Chittagong Hill Tracts (1760) and Tripura (1761). Yet till the early part of the nineteenth century, the British had followed a *laissez faire* policy, as they were preoccupied with wars elsewhere in the subcontinent. Further, there was no threat to their prized possession of Bengal from either its eastern or northeastern frontiers. For the money-minded East India Company the region was not perceived to have much commercial potential either. Most areas followed a barter economy and there was little lucre to lure the British imperialists (Ghosh 2001:26).

As happened elsewhere in India, there was no warring group in the northeast that would invite the British to intervene in their affairs. But soon the Moamaria rebellion of 1769 - an insurrection by the Moran tribesmen, loyal disciples of the Guru of the Moamaria Satra (Vaishnavite Monasteries) against a pillaging feudal system broke out. In utter despair, Gaurinath Singha, the deposed Ahom king sought British help. Lord

Cornwallis dispatched Captain Welsch with a small contingent to suppress Moamaria rebellion organized and spearheaded by a refractory Ahom Chief Krishna Narayana who proclaimed himself to be the sovereign ruler of Darrang. He was humbled by Captain Welsch in 1792. This was the beginning of British interest in Asam. Chandra Kanta who came next was at loggerhead with the Britishers and he invited the Burmese to assist him against the British. The British were furious at this perfidy and deposed Chandra Kanta and put Purandhar Singh on the throne. Infuriated by this, Chandra Kanta appealed to the Burmese for succor and with their help regained his lost crown. But as time went on, the Burmese found even their protégé Chandra Kanta thoroughly unreliable and invaded Assam again. Chandra Kanta fled to Goalpara and sought British help. This was a period of tense relation between the British and the Burmese owing to the latter's claim over the territories of Chittagong, Murshidabad and Burdwan (Singh Bhawani 1984:5)

The Burmese under Bagyidaw ran amok in the Bramaputra, Barak and Manipur valley and displayed unspeakable cruelty. The Assamese even today speak of the Burmese reign of terror and carnage as *manaar upadrab* - depradations of the Burmese (the Burmese were referred to as maan by the Assamese). Purandhar Singha, a claimant to the throne sought the British help again. The British could not remain a mute spectator anymore. Meanwhile, the Burmese had already conquered Arakans on the southeastern frontier of Bengal and entrenched themselves in Assam and Manipur.

The Burmese king demanded the return of the Arakanese refugees who sought shelter in Bengal and threatened to invade Bengal to capture the fugitive king Chandra kanta Singha. Gradually, he extended his threat to Chittagong, Dacca and Murshidabad. Next, his armies captured Manipur, Cachar and the Jaintia Kingdoms, posing a threat to Sylhet from one side and to Goalpara from the Assam side. But when his troops finally captured Shapuri Island, the government of Lord Amherst declared war on March 5, 1824. It was a war that would change the course of history for the northeast. The outcome of the first Anglo-Burmese war was to seal the future of the northeast once and forever. The Burmese were defeated and the war came to an end with the signing of the treaty of Yandaboo on February 24, 1826. The Burmese retreated from the Brahmaputra, Barak

and Manipur valley and thus began the paramountcy of the British in the northeast (Ghosh 2001:28-9). David Scott was appointed the commissioner of Assam. While the lower Assam was brought under the control of the British, upper Assam was placed under the charge of Purandhar Singh. The latter however was a thoroughly incompetent administrator and defaulted many times in paying the tribute (Rs.50,000 annually) to the East India Company, with the result that he was pensioned off and the Ahom territory formally annexed in October 1838 (Kumar 1994:8).

The sons of Muttock Chief, Bar Senapati who had helped the British during the Anglo-Burmese war refused to pay the promised sum of Rs. 800 to the British and their kingdom was annexed in November 1838. Political compulsions were now beginning to be replaced by economic interest - the British had discovered tea. The Khamptis and Singphos too were brought under political and military control for the same reason between 1839 and 1843.

The independent kingdom of Cachar, which was released from the clutches of the Burmese, was restored to its ruler Govinda Chandra, but was made a tributary state. After Govinda Chandra died issueless, Cachar became British territory. A small principality carved out of the north Cachar Hills and Mikir Hills by Tularam Senapati kept paying tribute to the British till it was annexed in 1853 because they were not in a position to protect their subjects from the Naga atrocities. With the annexation of these hilly tracts, the British annexation of the present day Assam was almost completed (ibid p.9).

The Incorporation of the Hill Areas into British Empire

The British occupation of Assam and Cachar brought them into contact with the hill tribes. Initially, the British showed no interest to occupy the tribal areas because it was not economically profitable. However, the Nagas, who raided British settlements every now and then, were becoming major irritants. There were 19 raids by Angami Nagas between 1852 and 1865, leading to the death of 232 British subjects. The British felt the only way to deal with the Nagas was to establish political control over them. The Naga

Hills district was formed in 1866, with headquarters at Samagooting (Chumukidima). The different Naga tribes held out as long as possible. The Angamis were among the most resilient. The last of their rebellions lasted for more than six months before Khonoma fell in 1879. The different Naga areas were incorporated into the British Empire slowly one after the other. The British occupation of the Naga inhabited areas became completed only in the 1920s (Ghosh 2001:30).

Similarly, the Mizos started raiding British settlements across the Lushai hills in spurts shortly after the first Anglo-Burmese War. The British launched an expedition against them in 1849-50. The Mizos accepted defeat, but were soon back to their old ways. Punitive measures were taken and the Lushais Hills gradually came under British Suzerainty. The annexation was completed by 1899 (Kumar 1994:14).

The story of the fiercely independent tribes like the Akas, Daflas (Nishis), Miris, Abors (Adis) and Mishmis was the same as that of the Nagas and the Mizos - raids followed by punitive action. However here the British did not go about physically occupying the land of the vanquished tribes. The British overpowered the khamptis and Singphos (1843), the Daflas, Apatanis and Miris (1887) and the Akas in 1889. It took a long time for the British to subdue the Abhors who were finally made to eat humble pie in 1912 (Bhatacharjee as cited in Ghosh 2001:31).

The Garo hills, more or less, had been part of British India since the time when Bengal came under the East India Company. The hills were free, but the submontane area bordering the plains were under the dominance of the Zamindars of Bengal. Battles between the Garos and the Zamindars were frequent. After one such clash in 1885, David Scott, the Commissioner of Rangpur, visited the areas of conflict and viewed the Zamindars as being oppressive. He suggested the Garo hills be brought under direct control of the British. Placed under Goalpara district initially, it was made a separate district in 1869 with its headquarters at Tura. There were occasional clashes and the Garo Hills were finally brought under regular British administration in 1873-74 (Kumar 1994:20-26).

The Jaintia king Ram Singh, signed a treaty with the British in 1824. He was promised protection in return for helping the latter in their fight against the Burmese. It was also agreed that Raja Ram Singh would abstain from all independent negotiations with any foreign power and the British promised to reward him with part of the territory won from the Burmese. After the war, his help was thought to have not been good enough and the British turned back on their promise. After a Lalung Chief, a vassal of the Jaintias, massacred four Britishers, the Britishers wanted retribution. Ram Singh died in 1835, Rajendra Singh was arrested and his kingdom annexed (ibid).

After Assam came under British rule, there was a need to have a direct road link between Guwahati and Sylhet. It had to be made through the Khasi Hills. There were 25 Khasi states at the time. David Scott, the Commissioner of Assam concluded a treaty with Raja Tirot Singh of Nongkhlow State in 1826. The Raja allowed the construction of road through his territory and promised to supply the materials. He placed his country under the protection of the East India Company and pledged military support in case the Company needs the same. However, Tirot Singh realized the folly of allowing the British in his territory and as a result revolted against the British in 1829. The pitch battle continued upto 1832. Tirot Singh surrendered on 9th January 1833 and was imprisoned for life in Dacca Jail. After the defeat of Tirot Singh, all the chief's, subchiefs entered into agreements with the British. Cherrapunji was made the headquarters and a British officer with adequate military force was posted there. The capital was shifted to Shillong in the year 1866 after the consolidation of the British rule in the district (ibid. 27-28).

British Paramountcy in Princely States - Manipur and Tripura

Manipur fell to the British for the same reason as did Assam - a fallout of the Burmese running amok in the kingdom and their subsequent decimation by the British. The Manipuri king Pamheiba (better known as Garib Niwaz) was a valiant king who not only held the Burmese at Bay, but also ruled ably and justly. After his murder, the state plunged into chaos. Royal rivalries and intra-palace intrigues rendered Manipur easy meat for the Burmese who overran it twice in 1755 and 1758. Kings ascended the thrones

and were overthrown. In 1762, Jai Singh signed a treaty with Harry Varelst, the chief of Chittagong who did not come to the king's rescue when he needed help most. Apparent stability returned after the first Anglo-Burmese War, following which Ghambhir Singh was installed as the king of Manipur but the Kabaw valley was separated from his kingdom and handed over to the Burmese in 1834, without even consulting him (Kumar 1994:31-4). The British political agent became the main arbiter of Manipur affairs, but resentment against outside interference persisted. The resistence came to an end with the Anglo- Manipuri war of 1891. Prince Tikendrajit Singh and his general fought, to the last but could not match upto the might of the British. Manipur fell, the two were tried and executed, and a five-year-old prince, Churachand Sing, was installed as the Vassal King of Manipur (Phanjoubam as cited in Gosh 2001:33).

The other princely state of Tripura on the other hand, put up no resistance. When the British acquired the Dewani of Bengal, the kings of Tripura were already subjects of the Nawab of Bengal. The name had been changed by the Muslims to Roshanabad, and the king was a mere Zamindar of the plain areas. The hills, nevertheless, remained independent. These areas came under British administration with the appointment of political agent in 1871 (Kumar 1994:34).

Initially Assam was a new division of Bengal. However, in 1874, Assam was made a new province of British India. The State of Assam that came into existence was an artificially created state. It included in addition to the present state of Assam, the states of Meghalaya, Nagaland and Mizoram. The North-Eastern Frontier Agency (NEFA) or Arunachal, though administratively separate, was tagged along with it. The British colonial administration annexing Assam after the treaty of Yandahoo by default went on annexing the surrounding areas- Khasi and Jaintia States, the Naga and Mizo hills, Tripura, Manipur and went on adding everything with the area of Assam. The frontier tribes were subdued and large parts of their lands were added to Assam without any regard to history, ethnicity or other social factors. Assam proper (Bramaputra valley) got submerged in a multitude of races with whom it had friendly neighbors by ties but over whom it never had any historical control. The problem was worst confounded when the

British first added the eastern part of Bengal after the infamous Bengal Partition and when it was finally annulled it left the populous district of Sylhet with Assam. Artificially created purely from the view of administrative convenience, fiscal solvency and law and order aspect, the British colonial administration opened up Assam to unbridled immigration of poor peasants from Bengal (Borah 1995:100).

The British Colonial Rule: Precursor of Ethnicity

Unlike other tribes in the Indian subcontinent, the tribes in northeast India were more able to retain control over their land and their traditional lifestyles because of the policy of protection and non-interference specially evolved for the region (Furer-Haimendorf 1985:35). In the seclusion of the hills, untouched by historic civilizations, the tribal groups retained their traditional forms of economy, social organization, rituals and belief until recently (Bhagabati 1992: 141). The British did not want to meddle with the frontier tracts since conflict with the tribal could jeopardize the supply of labor to the tea gardens. Dictated by economic and trade compulsions, the British adopted regulations whereby they could have absolute control over the two industries in the region (read Assam) - tea and oil. Though the tribes were conquered, the regulations and policies of the colonial rulers continued to keep them in isolation (Ghosh 2001:34).

In a sense it was the British who laid the framework for the emergence of ethnicity as a political force among the tribes. During the colonial rule attempt appears to have been made, albeit indirectly, to delineate the ethnic boundaries in terms of inner line regulation 1873 and Scheduled District Act 1874 (Nongbri 1995:44-5). According to the Inner Line Regulation, the Lt. Governor of Bengal was empowered to draw an inner line beyond which no British subjects, specified classes or foreign residents could enter without a valid pass or license issued by the deputy commissioner (Singh, K.S. 1990:32). Further under the Government of India Act, 1935, the hill areas of Assam were divided into two categories: the Naga Hills the Lushai Hills and the North Cachar Hills were classified as Excluded Areas and were placed under the direct control of the governor of

Assam; the Garo Hills, the British Portion of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, other than Shillong Municipality and Cantonment were designated as partially Excluded Areas (Ghosh 2002:36) No act of Assam or Indian legislature could apply for the Excluded Areas unless the governor in his discretion so desired. The Partially Excluded Areas were under the control of the Governor subject to ministerial administration, but the governor had an overriding power when it came to exercising his discretion (Nag 2002:74).

During the period preceding independence, plans were mooted to remove the tribal hill areas from British India and Convert them into a British Crown Colony. As early as 1929 and 1930, John H. Hutton, the Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills and N.C. Parry, the Suprintendent of Lushai Hills had prepared plans for a separate province to be known as the North-Eastern Frontier Province with as many of the backward tracts it could possibly include from Assam as well as Burma. Presenting the case of the Nagas to the Indian Statutory Commission (Simon Commission), Hutton, asserted that the tribals of northeast India were racially, linguistically, culturally politically and economically distinct from the Indians. The tribals would suffer by joining the people of an irreconcilable culture in an unnatural union, which would ultimately harm them and the people of the plains too. NC Parry shared Hutton's opinion and argued for the exclusion of the Lushai (Mizos) from the proposed constitutional reforms. In 1928, he suggested the establishment of a North-Eastern Province consisting of the Garo Hills, Khasi and Jaintia Hills Lushai Hills, North-Cachar Hills, Naga Hills, Sadya and Balipara Frontier tracts, Chitagong Frontier Tracts, Pokaku and other backward hill tracts in Burma (ibid p.74-5).

However, the approach to this issue had to be changed in view of the constitutional developments between 1933 and 1935. The post-1935 saw a new approach of supporting areas from India and Burma to constitute a Crown Colony Protectorate under the direct rule of the Crown. Convinced by Hutton and Parry's ideas, Sir Robert Reid, the then governor of Assam argued 'they [the tribal] are not Indians in any sense of the word. Neither in origin nor in appearance nor in habits nor in outlook and it is by historically accident that they are tagged to an Indian Province'. In his confidential 22-

page pamphlet, 'A Note on the Future of the Present Excluded, Partially Excluded and Tribal Areas of Assam' in 1941, Reid envisaged the proposed North-East Frontier Agency would cover an area of 68'985 square miles of administered and unadministered hill areas and 'native' state territories under India. Its population would be somewhere around 2.5 million. Reid suggested that the contiguous areas of north-east India and north-west Burma be dissociated from their respective dominions and placed under some appropriate department at Whitehall (Gosh 2001:37).

L.S. Amery, the Secretary of State for India passed Reid's note to an Oxford Professor, Reginald Coupland, a British constitutional expert. This gentleman turned Reid's private and confidential note into scheme that took his name- the Coupland Plan. This plan envisaged that the tribal areas of Assam and Burma be constituted into a Crown Colony under the British rule or that the governments of India and Burma might have a treaty with Britain and that each should take the share of responsibility for the States (Yunuo 1974:140). The issue was discussed at an informal meeting on March 10, 1945. The representative of Burmese government clamped his foot down; though all present agreed in principle that distinct tribes should generally not be divided between two administrations. The main deterrent in the creation of separate administration units was the belief of members at the meeting that those areas were not ready for western democratic institutions.

Reid's successor, Sir Andrew Clow flayed Reid's administrative proposals, insisting that there was a tendency to treat tribals as subjects 'for preservation and study rather than as objects of help and guidance'. He believed that the northern hills (present day Arunachal) and part of the Naga tribal areas should be treated as a federall agency. Yet he felt that for the rest of Assam hills to be included in the agency would be one on the worst solution to the problem. Clow narrowed down the possibilities to: (1) a merger of the hills and plains of Assam in a manner, which would conserve tribal rights and recognized in an effective manner the different needs and outlooks of the two areas; and (ii) the constitution of separate provinces for the hills and the plains with some

administrative links. He sent this memo to the viceroy, Lord Wavell, and wrote that he was in favor of the first possibility (Ghosh 2001:39).

On 6 May 1946, the Secretary of State for India, Sir Pethick Lawerence recorded in a minute, 'at the present stage of proceedings agreement had been reached by the secretary of State and the Viceroy, of the impracticability of transforming responsibility for the backward tracts from the provinces to any outside authority whether that should be a British High Commission or a United Nation's Mandate' (Syiemlieh as cited in Nag 2002:81).

This minute sealed the fate of not only the crown colony scheme for the hill areas of northeast India but also the special arrangements that were on the anvil for other backward areas. With the convening of the Constituent Assembly all eyes were turned towards Delhi rather than London. The Cabinet Mission of 1946 suggested the formation of an advisory committee to look into the rights of the citizens, minorities and tribals areas. When the Constituent Assembly was set up, an advisory committee on tribal areas was also set up under the chairmanship of Vallabhai Patel. This committee formed a North-East Frontier Tribal and Excluded Areas Sub-Committee under the chairmanship of Gopinath Bordoloi, the chief minister of Assam (then known as the Prime Minister of Assam) to look into the ethnic problems and ethno-geographical possibilities of Asam. The Bordoloi Committee co-opted two members each from the hill districts except from the Frontier tracts. Most of the hill districts had already made their demands known to the Simon Commission. The Khasis demanded the formation of 29 member Federation State Council of KhasiSyiemship and Jaintia Doloiships under Assam Province. The Garo National Union demanded a 25-member council for a Garo Hills Unon. The spirit underlying the various Government of India Acts provided the basis in the identification of communities for special protection and safeguards. The tribal policy initiated by the British, and consequently adopted by the government of India facilitated the process of ethnic consolidation among the tribes. The vexing separatist relics of the British imperialism still remained in the frontiers of India and Burma and sprawled thinly along with the demand of the Nagas that their sovereignty was passed by the British to India

and Burma that should in turn be returned to them, the consequences of which we will examine in the following sections.

Detribalization and Westernization: The Emergence of Middle Class

British rule and the subsequent cultural contact brought about changes in the technology, institution, ideology and values of the tribal society. In this regard, education rendered by the Christian missionaries can be described as the pillar of westernization and social change. In the absence of landed aristocracy and capitalist mode of production and commercial development, it was the coming of Christian missionaries and the spread of education which led to the emergence of middle class from amongst the erstwhile isolated and secluded tribes (Mishra 1988:33). A review of literature, however, suggests the emergence of middle class as more of a post-independence phenomenon, which became evident particularly after the tribals were given their own states in the 1970's. Nevertheless, it is instructive to see how the ideas of nation, nationalism, sovereignty, freedom and ethnic consciousness took shape especially among the Nagas through the emergence of a small educated middle class. For our discussion here, we will therefore confine ourselves to the process of westernization and detribalization, which was, reinforced by Christianity and the spread of western education among the Nagas - the forerunner of ethnic nationalism - which ushered in a process of ethnic mobilization and autonomy movements in the region.

As the turbulent years of Anglo-tribal conflict gave way to a more peaceful life, the emphasis of the British was to structurally detribalize the tribals while a superficial policy of non-interference in their life and culture was followed. The British believed that the only way to 'tame' these 'savages' as the tribals were referred to, was to bring about changes in their mode of production. So trade marts were established at the foothills in order that the tribals need not raid. In these marts the tribals sold or bartered commodities such as rubber, ivory etc. for salt, iron, brass utensils, tobacco and cattle. Agriculture was encouraged and the productive terraced type of cultivation was introduced with better

irrigation facilities. The barter system was giving way to a monetary economy, which altered the standard of their value of wealth (Nag 2002:54, Yanuo 1974:153).

The British administration was introduced in the Naga Hills in order to consolidate and establish British paramountcy so that the conquered tribes may not revolt again. In the process, the crude system of village government which to a certain extent, in many ways was identical to the English liberal government in form and character was modernized. The village headmen who were given the authority to decide civil and criminal cases according to the customary laws of the respective tribes and the *dobashis* (interpreters) became a part of the British bureaucratic machinery as a link between the rulers and the ruled.

The British government introduced western system of education but left it to the initiative of the Christian missionaries. The progress of education till 1908 was not quite encouraging. The number of students recorded in 1890-91 was 279, which rose to 319 in 1900-01 and to 647 in 1903-04. By 1903-04, there were twenty-two primary schools, one secondary and two special schools in the Naga Hills district (Yunuo 1974:110).

In the field of transport and communication, the progress was quite mentionable. In 1903-04, 73 miles of cart-road and about 473 miles of bridle paths were opened in the district. At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of 20th century, the development of railways, telegraphs, telephones, postal services, roads bridle paths, bridges and the like linked the Naga Hills with the rest of India and brought the previously isolated hills into contact with one another especially by opening the Assam railway through Dimapur where the Manipur road through Kohima provided an outlet for trade on commercial lines and for transport of goods to and from Nagaland (ibid p.156). Trade and commerce developed and British scholars, administrators, missionaries and Indologists began to study the people, geography, society, religion, language, culture, etc., which threw up a treasure of knowledge about the Nagas.

Christianity as a part of the 'civilizing mission' of the colonial rulers or rather as an instrument of western imperialism and colonialism followed the British flag wherever it went to the conquered land. Though sometimes the British administration was found to be ambivalent (Sinha, A.C. 1993: 151), on the other hand, it encouraged the missionaries to come to the hills of Assam. Scholars and colonial administrators like J.P. Mills, J.H. Hutton etc. were of the view that the role of missionaries among the tribes in general and Nagas in particular had been injurious and disruptive to their culture and feared it would lead to the phenomenon of social maladjustment. However, by and large, the colonial administration and the missionaries worked hand in hand. The former believed that the presence of Christianity would strengthen imperial authority by taming the tribes into loyal subjects, the latter pleaded for the extension of British rule to the Naga Hills in the interests of their evangelical activities as they considered the British Empire to be Christian government favorable to them (Clark as cited in Sinha ibid. p.152).

The mission to 'humanize' the wild tribes of the North-East Frontier region with full government support started with the opening of Baptists Missionary Society at Guwahati in 1829. It was followed by the establishment of the American Baptist Mission in upper Assam and the Welsch Presbyterian Mission in Khasi Hills in 1841. Various other missionaries groups began working in different parts of the north-eastern hills in the colonial period (Dena, Lal as cited in Bhagabati 1992:147). Rev. Miles Bronson from American Baptist Mission came to the hills of the Naga tribes in 1839-40 at Namsang Village. He established a mission school and persuaded the people to take up education. The work came to a standstill when Bronson departed prompted by illness and E.W. Clark replaced him in 1869. Clark with the help of Subongmeren, a local Ao convert and Godhula, an Assamese evangelist, opened the Baptist mission center at Molungyimsen village. As soon as the Ao area came under administration, the mission was shifted to Impur (April 1894) which emerged as the center not only for the Ao churches but also for the Sema, Lotha, Change, Phom and Sangtam churches (Yunuo 1974:144-6). In 1885 Rev. D.E. Witter came to Wokha, the center of the Lotha Nagas. He studied Lotha language and prepared something for writing the first grammar and vocabulary. However, he left the place due to ill health. In the Kohima Subdivision the American

Baptist Mission center was opened at Samaguting. Rev. C.D. King (1879-1886) was the first missionary who converted the first Angami in 1885. Dr.S.W. Rivenburg (1886-1923) succeeded Rev. Kings. This mission spread Christianity to the Angami, Rengma, Zeliang and Kuki tribes. In 1932, all the Angami village pastors were formed into the American Baptist Churches Council (Yunuo ibid. p.117-8).

In 1894, Rev. W. Pettigrew as sent for Baptist Missionary work in Manipur. When he was chased away by the animist Mao Nagas, he arrived at Imphal, the capital of Manipur. He was stiffly opposed by the Meiteis who had already adhered to Hinduism. Finally, he came to Ukhrul, the center of the Tangkhul Nagas where he found proselytizing prospects and began his work. By 1907, he had laid a strong foundation of Christianity in the Naga Hills of Manipur (ibid. p.118).

The Christian missionaries brought western medicine, sanitation and health services to the Naga Hills by establishing hospital and dispensaries which replace the Naga's dependence on religious rites, ceremonies and herbs to cure the sick. They built churches in the villages and preached against headhunting, village feuds, drinking rice-beer, taboos and gennas, sleeping in bachelors' or maidens' dormitories and taking part in the feast of merit held by the rich people for social religious and prestigious reasons. Schools were established, Christian hymn books were translated into local dialects and literature centers were established. The missionaries even learnt the local dialects, devised the grammar books and translated the Bible into tribal dialects, which were written in Roman Script.

With the growth of dialect, the study of the origin, migration and settlement began which led to the discovery and emergence of their own distinct identity. This changed their outlook, thought patterns regarding their neighboring tribes and helped in uniting some of the small and marginal groups into a single broader entity. Ethnic and political consciousness particularly among the educated middle class led to the formation of certain apex bodies to ensure their ethnic interest (Jeyaseelan 1999:85). Language changes the paradigm of thinking, seeing and being. The colonial discourse through

English had a big influence on the way the natives build up their sense of community. The British gave English as a common language to means of communication in place of the tribal numerous dialects and languages different from one another, and as a means of access to modern science, technology, political institutions, economic development, etc. So it was eventually a common unifying bond among themselves as well as the outside world. The study of Bible, singing of Christian hymns and songs and western English literature immensely heightened Nagas' love for freedom, equality, liberty, democracy and right to self-determination (Yunuo 1974:155).

Christianity and the western education it brought with it, which combined and Christian ideas of universal love with the political and social beliefs of western liberalism, no doubt helped the individual to overcome the aspects of tribal isolation, thereby helping them to see across his tribal boundaries. This contributed in no small manner to the emergence of the middle class in Naga life. The church making free education readily accessible to the average Naga brought tremendous change in the social fabric of the Naga tribes. Though tribes like the Aos naturally reaped greater advantages from missionary education because they were amongst the first to come into contact with the missionaries, as Christian proselytizing progressed, most of the other tribes also came to feel the effects of modern education. In the absence of commercial activity and landed aristocracy, and the village chief's attitude of suspicion and distrust towards modern education, education imparted by the church was not confined to any particular section of the population. Therefore, the spread of western education and modernization amongst the Nagas was not confined to any particular section of the Naga tribes (Mishra 1988:26-27). It can be said that Christianity was an inward machinery which brought modernization, western ways of life, education, the renaissance of Nagaism and unity among the Nagas (Yunuo 1974:120). There seems to be a strong process of acculturation sweeping Nagaland and far beyond the tribal areas of the Indian Eastern-Frontier region. This process signals to the quest for a new integrated form of society which will overcome the deep split introduced into their lives by colonialism and imperialism. This quest may have many forms and names: 'Nagaland for Christ' 'Naga Nationalism', 'Naga insurgency', 'Naga Statehood' (Sinha 1993:155).

The First World War and Second World War had a cataclysmic psychological effect on the Nagas. When the first World war broke out in 1919, some 4000 Nagas apart from the Nagas who were already regular soldiers were sent to France as Labor Corps (Yunuo 1974: 124). These men returned in the middle of 1918, not only with sufficient money, but also with new ideas, standards and with the so-called impression of the "Might of the Sarkar" (Reid as cited in Kumar 1995: 95). The Nagas who had seen a New World came into contact with the advanced people of the west became conscious that their interest and outlook should cross the bounds of their clans and village. In 1918, a few government officials, village headmen and educated persons formed the "Naga Club" at Kohima for promoting the interest of the Nagas which for the first time provided a common forum for the leaders of different tribes of Nagas (Yunuo 1974: 132).

The Second World War (1939-45) saw Nagaland as one of the theatres of the war. The Nagas were both physically and mentally affected, the Japanese invasion of Kohima led the British and their allies to mobilize men and supplies from India and abroad. The British government raised forced labor from the Naga village for the road building for the smooth mobility of the allied forces. The centuries old-isolation was broken because of the opening and improvement of rapid communication by road, railway and air linking them with the outside world, the Nagas came into direct contact with the different nationalities and began to conceive of themselves as a part of the larger world. The receipt of higher wages, earnings in cash, relief measures, compensation for war services and the reconstruction of the areas undertaken by the British as a debt of gratitude led to the emergence of middle class. The contact of this class with the people of different nations led to their wider outlook. They realized that the days of the British raj were numbered and the idea of complete independence gripped the politically conscious Nagas who dreamt of a nation of their own. A strong sense of unity and Nagaism emerged (Yunuo ibid p. 142-150).

At the initiative of C.R. Pawsey, the then Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills District, in April 1945, the Naga Hills District Council was formed for rehabilitation and reconstruction of war devastated areas of Nagaland. However, the fast changing political

situation transformed it into the Naga National Council (NNC) in the course of a year. The formation of NNC was indeed a "major step in the consolidation of Naga nationalistic forces". The most significant fact about the council is that for the first time the word "national" was used. The Naga National Council was composed of 29 members representing different tribes of Nagas on the basis of proportional representation (Mishra 1988: 7).

Ethnic Identity, State Policy and Autonomy Movements: State Formation and Reorganization of Assam

On the eve of independence the situation in northeast was very fluid. The impact of the World War II, the policy of colonial administration and the possibility of freedom in near future, the growing sense of ethnic identity among different communities and fear of losing identities were looming large on the horizon (Ray 1989: vii). The seeds of jealousy, discord and distrust, sown through education and administration began to germinate in independent India and movements for disintegration of northeastern India into ethnic and linguistic divisions set afoot (Bose 1989:100).

The attainment of independence generated ethnic tensions in the state of Assam. Assam-- a state artificially created by the colonial rulers without any regard to history, ethnicity and other social factors retained its status as a full-fledged state in India. It was, therefore, a state full of diversity in terms of race, religion and language - a veritable museum of nationalities each proud of its own cultural heritage. The different races could not coalesce together to form a cohesive identity and soon the tribes inhabiting a different and large tracts and terrain's of the plains became restive and nurse separatist feelings (Singh Manju 1990: 92). As a result, Assam underwent a phased vivisection leading to its areal shrinkage. The socio-economic and political ferment generated in the process of nation (or rather state) building led to the growth of ethno-national/political movements seeking goal of autonomy and freedom relying on means from constitutional agitation and insurgency. Following independence, the government approaches to tribals radically changed, the old policy of maintaining status quo and isolation was replaced by a policy

of development and integration (Bhagabati 1992:149). The process of state formation initiated by the government of India following the attainment of independence generated disquieting trends in all the major hill districts of the region. Conscious of their distinct identity and traditional political autonomy, some of the tribes felt that with the withdrawal of British from India they should be given the right of self- determination and recognized as sovereign powers in their own territory. In particular the proposed formation of the sixth schedule and their incorporation within the administrative power of the state of Assam led to stiff resistance from a large section of the freedom loving tribes, the strongest of the kind came from the Nagas under the leadership of Angami Zapu Phizo. The resistance reflected a deep rooted fear in the minds of the tribes, fear of losing control over their territory and hence being politically, economically and culturally subjugated by the more numerically and economically dominant population of the plains. That explains the uncertainties and doubts that pervaded the political climate on the hills (Nongbri 1995:46-8).

While the Centre's policy was marked by a rather simplistic approach, ignorance of the real situation and insensitivity towards the wishes of the small ethnic groups (Misra 1991: preface), a chauvinistic section of the Assamese, went further and sought to hasten the process of 'Assamisation' or extension of Assamese influence in the neighboring hills. They could make no distinction between integration and assimilation. Constant harping of assimilation and 'greater Assam' alarmed the hillsmen of losing their culture, language and even their main property namely land. Allegations were made of ministers and their underlings of injudicious acts of deforestation and settlement of non-tribals (naming after ministers) in municipal areas of Shillong which wounded the sentiments of the Khasis as the erosion of their constitutional rights (Barpujari 1998:16-7). Also, the tribals felt that the land policy of the government of Assam resulted in Assamese acquiring vast tract of land in the hill areas and year after year, the hill people were pushed out of their ancestral lands into the interior. They also complained that the lands of the tribal were acquired for the construction of hydro-electricity for the benefits of the people of the plains. In the economic front, the tribals complained that the state government wasn't serious about their welfare although Government of India placed

70

sufficient funds at the disposal of the state governments. In fact, the Dhebar Commission reported that the state government did not spend funds allotted for the promotion of the tribal welfare. Tribal leaders felt that the autonomy given to the district council was not substantial. They also complained that they had no share in decision making in the five-year plans and were simply asked to approve the schemes prepared by the Tribal Area Development Department (Singh Manju 1990:98-100).

During the British Raj, all these ethnic groups were kept together by a dexterous policy of cajoling and coercing and ensuring freedom to local and tribal laws by enforcing the inner line regulation. After independence,

> The Assamese instead of trying to integrate minority groups, endeavored to assimilate them by imposing their own culture on them. This was not acceptable to the diverse races of Assam. This gave rise to fears and suspicions in the minds of these ethnic groups, who finding the Assamese embrace tighter, decided to extricate themselves out of it and go back into their shell (Singh Bhawani 1984: 14).

The most important factor, which strengthens the separatist movement in the hill region, was an attempt to impose Assamese language on tribals. An author rightly observed:

> While discordant news had begun in the late fifties the major blow came with the passing of the Assam Official Languages Act of 1960 which stipulated the Assamese as the medium of instruction (Gupta Shekhar as quoted in Singh Manju 1990:93).

The introduction of Assamese as the official language in the state had opened the breach with the tribesmen on the apprehension of being swamped and losing their cultural identity. The tribesmen had every reason to resent the statement of Nilmoni Phukan, an ex-MLA, when he announced:

> All the languages of different communities and their culture will be absorbed into Assamese culture. I speak with rather authority in this matter regarding the mind of our people that this state government cannot nourish any other language in the province. When all state affairs will be conducted in Assamese, it will stand in

good stead for the hill people to transact their business in Assamese with their Assamese brethren (Assam Legislative Assembly Proceedings 1984 as quoted in Barpujari 1998:17).

While Gopinath Bordoloi and his compatriots sought to mention that it was for the unity and integrity of the state through the common vehicle of thought, namely Assamese language, the hill leaders construed it as a ploy of their counterpart in the plains to dominate the people of the hills. It afforded Williamson Sangma (the first Chief Minister of Meghalaya) and others the much-desired pretext to renew their agitation for the Hill State. The hill leaders said:

> The people speaking the Assamese language are determined to do away with the language and culture of those who do not belong to the Assamese speaking community. If this attitude continues, there will be no other alternative for the hill people but to go all out for a separate part A-Hill state which will enable them to preserve their racial identity, culture and language (The Hindustan Standard, 23, June 1954 as quoted in ibid. p.18).

An author correctly put it:

> In 1962, the Assam Legislative Assembly passed a bill prescribing Assamese as the official language of the entire state. This, for the tribals, was the point of no return. Admission to public services, universities and training institutes, the grant of scholarships and government patronage were likely to depend on expertise in the Assamese language and the tribal people could not expect to stand successfully in competition against plainsmen for whom Assamese was their mother tongue. It was Assamese chauvinism, ironically enough, that diminished Assam and lost her tribal population (Rustomji as quoted in Singh, Manju 1990:95).

Thus, the assertion of overbearing attitude of the Assamese alienated the tribals and hardened their attitude; the Assamese failed to reconcile their particularistic sentiment of Bramaputra valley with tribal cultures and, thus, in attempt to establish the hegemony of the Assamese identity, their sub nationalistic syndrome manifested and they tried to imposed their superiority over the tribals. To quote Nari Rastomji again:

The Assamese did not realize that people, however primitive, resent the imposition of alien culture. And so, one by one, the hill districts broke away from the parent body (ibid. p.99-100).

The process of integration and economic development in Assam during the post independence period gave way to the gradual emergence of two distinctly different types of inequalities, viz. (i) economic inequality within the Assamese Community and (ii) Social inequality (consisting of economic status and political inequalities) between the communities, i.e., Assamese and tribal communities in Assam.. The growing social inequalities created a sense of relative deprivation among the tribes in the hills as well as in the plains (Das, Gurudas 1997:178). The economic doses, the developmental packages, the glitter and glamour of the plainsmen, who began to penetrate into the hills, further estranged and horrified the tribal. The result was the final parting of way. Nagaland was the first to go, followed by Mizoram, Meghalaya, and Arunachal pradesh. We will briefly survey the main events leading to the balkanization of Assam and the formation of tribal states on ethnic lines.

The Formation of Nagaland

When the Simon Commission visited Kohima in 1929, the Naga Club representing different Naga tribes submitted a memorandum that their hill should be excluded from the proposed scheme and kept under direct British rule 'to save them from being overwhelmed by the people of the plains'. The delegation pointed out 'you are the only people who have ever conquered us and when you go, we should be [left] as we are'. The memorandum concluded with the demand that:

> If the British government however wants to throw us away, we pray that we should not be thrust to the mercy of the people who never have conquered us themselves and to whom we were never subjugated, but to leave us alone to determine for ourselves as in ancient times (Yunuo 1974:132-3).

This memorandum contained considerable political significance. It emphatically pointed out the obvious desire of the Nagas for the restoration of their independence (ibid.).

Exclusive in spirit, independent in bearing, the virile Nagas demanded not statehood, but sovereignty of Nagaland. The Naga National Council (NNC) which had developed by early 1946 as the political forum of the Nagas declared: 'Nagaland was never conquered by India. The British conquered a part of the Naga Hills and once the British left India it should revert to its original status'. (Alemchiba as cited in Barpujari 1988:20). Though a section of the NNC favored continuation of Nagaland as an integral part of India, the extremists wanted complete independence. Under the Nine Point Agreement, June 1947, Sir Akbar Hydari, Governor of Assam, effected a compromise with the NNC, under which the council was vested with increased administrative 'authority but the hurdle arose over the clause '9' 'whether they require the above agreement to be extended for a further period or a new agreement regarding the future of the Naga people arrived at'. To the NNC, the new government implied the right of self-determination or complete independence whereas the official version was certain administrative arrangement (ibid.).

On July 19, 1947, a delegation of Nagas led by AZ Phizo met Mahatma Gandhi in Delhi. Gandhi told the delegation that:

> Nagas have every right to be independent. We did not want to live under the domination of the British and now they are leaving us. I want you to feel that India is yours. I feel that the Naga Hills are mine, the matter must stop there. I believe in the brotherhood of man, but I do not believe in force or forced union. If you do not wish to join the Union of India, nobody will force you to do that (Yunuo 1947:181-2).

Since the Nagas failed in their mission to Delhi, the NNC declared itself independent on August 14, 1947. The NNC under the leadership of Phizo argued that the Sixth Schedule did not contain the terms of the Nine Point Agreement and rejected it.

Phizo became the president of NNC in 1951 and organized a plebiscite in which about 99 percent of the Nagas voted for independence (Ghosh 2001:44). The Nagas boycotted the 1952 General Election followed by a civil disobedience movement resulting in the mass resignation of school-teachers boycott of all Government of India functions and refusal to pay taxes (Mishra 1988:9). In an unfortunate incident in Kohima in 1953, during a joint visit of the Indian and Burmese Prime Minister, NNC demonstrated by withdrawing from the public meeting humiliating Jawarharlal Nehru who was addressing the meeting (Singh, Manju 1990: 107). The government of India decided to crack down on the NNC towards the middle of 1953 and armed hostilities started forcing the entire NNC set up to go underground. The NNC set up a parallel government- Nagaland Federal Government - on March 22, 1956 with a Parliament called Tatar Ho, a council of ministers with a Prime Minister. The Naga Hills district was declared a 'Disturbed Area' and the district was placed under the control of Indian Armed Forces (IFC). A Naga Peace Organizing Committee was formed in 1956. The successful operations of the IFC and the policy of pacification and reward extended to those willing to join the political mainstream led the moderate Naga Peoples' Convention (NPC) to negotiate for a settlement which resulted in the 16 Point Agreement and the creation of Nagaland as a separate State (Barpujari 1998: 21). In 1962, the state of Nagaland Act was passed by Parliament and the state was inaugurated by the President on December 1, 1963.

The birth of Nagaland marked an important milestone in ethnic politics. The creation of Nagaland signifies that the formation of a state in the Indian union does not depend on its economic and demographic credentials but on the distinctive identity of the people. This opened a new vista of hope for other identity-conscious tribes in the region to realize their long cherished dream of autonomy and separation from Assam. Ethnicity emerged as a strong basis of pressure politics.

The Formation of Mizoram, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh

The elevation of the Lushai Hills district into the state of Mizoram had elements common to the creation of Nagaland. The first step was the recristening of the district as Mizo Hills by the Lushai Hills District (change of name) Act, 1954. Around the same time when the Mizo Union joined the All-Party Hill Leaders Conference (APHLC) and realized that it was a forum mainly of Meghalaya tribals. The Mizo famine Front (MFF) was formed to mobilize opinion against the discriminatory attitude of the Assam government. The MFF, led by Laldenga, soon became the Mizo National Front (MNF) and gave a call for secession. The Prime Minister Indira Gandhi played the same card that Nehru had earlier in the case of Nagaland. On January21, 1972, under the North Eastern States (Reorganization) Act, 1971, the Mizo Hills became the Union Territory of India. The Union Territory status and the money that it brought with itself from Delhi were partially responsible for the fewer people joining the MNF insurgents. The MNF renounced arms and joined the mainstream with the 1986 Mizo Accord. The accord paved the way for the state of Mizoram Act, 1986, and constitution (Fifty-third Amendment) Act conferred statehood on Mizoram. It became the twenty-third state of the Indian Union on February 20, 1987 (Ghosh 2001:47-8).

Meghalaya, the abode of clouds was created after a series of lengthy deliberations and negotiations. The setting up of district council in the Garo Hills and the United Khasi and Jaintia Hills districts had not appeased the tribals. The announcement of the plan to make Asomiya as the official language galvanized the Eastern India Tribal Union, Garo National Council, Mizo National Council, among others into forming the All Party Hill Leaders Conference (APHLC). The APHLC's demand for a single 'hill state' including all tribal areas was rejected by the States Re-organization Commission in 1954. Internal contradictions cropped up and the APHLC's failure to forge an all-tribal unity led to a new pattern of ethnic alignment. The Khasi, Jaintia and Garos who are territorially contiguous to each other and share similar characteristics of matrilineal kinship system combined into a common platform to fight for a separate tribal state. When all efforts of increasing their autonomy - Scottish Plan, Nehru Plan, Pataskar Commission, Federal

Plan, Mehta Plan - within the existing framework failed to satisfy the tribes the Indian government came out with the concept of an autonomous state within the state of Assam. But the hill tribes were not happy with their simi-autonomous status and the APHLC would not accept anything short of a state (Singh, Manju 1990:127-21, Nongbri 1995:51). In 1968-69, the centre proposed the formation of the autonomous state of Meghalaya, which consisted of the Garo Hills and the United Khasi and Janitia Hills district. The Constitution (Twenty Second Amendment) 1969, sought to establish the new state of Meghalaya. The autonomous state was inaugurated on April 2, 1970. It became a full-fledged state on January 21, 1972.

Arunachal Pradesh's transition into statehood was a cakewalk in comparison with the others. The North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) consisting of Kameng, Subansiri, Siang, Lohit, Tirap and Tuensang Frontier Divisions was administered by the Ministry of External Affairs because of the area's strategic importance - its sensitive boundary with China. It was not a politically compact area till 1957. The Tuensang Frontier Division was merged with the Naga Hills in 1957, to form the Naga Hills-Tuensang Area. From 1965, NEFA was administered by the Ministry of Home Affairs through the Governor of Assam. It was renamed Arunachal Pradesh on being granted Union territory status along with Mizoram in 1972. It became the Twenty-forth State of the Indian Union on February 20, 1987 (Ghosh 2001:48).

The reorganization of Assam State did not rid the state of all-ethnic conflict and tensions. Some ethnic groups like the Zeliangrong and the Chin-Kuki and other Naga tribes were placed under different states. The increase in the influx of immigrants from Bangladesh and the failure of the government to check the demographic imbalance promoted the growth of nativistic ideology among the local Assamese, apparently to counter the threat posed to their identity. The Assam movement led by students mobilized mass struggle and the result was widespread political unrest and economic stagnation. The Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) came to power but the situation did not improve. Faced with partisan politics, widening economic disparities and growing Assamese

Parochialism, the tribes in the periphery felt that the only way to survive was to strive for their own political autonomy.

This led to the Bodos demand for the creation of a separate state of Udayachal on the northern banks of the Bramaputra with autonomy for the tribes living on the southern bank. The Karbis and Dimasa-kachari, on the other hand opted for the creation of an autonomous state within the state of Assam (Nongbri 1995:52).

Paradoxically, the rise of ethnicity in north-east India began with the process of nation-building because the state failed to appreciate the political and cultural distinctiveness of the tribes and sought to include them against their will within the state of Assam. Long isolated and administered as excluded/partially excluded areas, the tribals' accession to India posed a threat not only to their traditional political institution but more importantly to their social ethos and democratic principles of decision making. The dilemma which the tribes experienced with the state process also explains the different trends of ethnicity ranging from- sovereign state, autonomous region, statehood within Indian Union, to merger with a greater unit or creation of a district even (Kamei 2002:64).

As the power and resource wielded by the state proved too formidable for the tribes to resist, the tendency towards secessionism has been replaced by that of separation- a search for autonomy within the framework of the Indian Constitution. While the major tribes have achieved their political goal the smaller tribes at the periphery of power are expressing their sense of deprivation. While the state adopts ad hoc measures, political leadership in the tribal areas appears to have imbibed the same political culture from which they sought to escape- rampant corruption, party intrigues partisan politics and exploitation of resources. Empirical evidence suggests that the resilience of tribal ethnicity has less to do with the primordial characteristic of its members as with the response of the system within and against which it operates. Far

from being the ultimate goal, identity was in fact instrument on which they relied to prepare their political ends. Ethnic politics has its own internal contradictions. As ethnicity capitalizes on the identity of its people a process of identity evaluation among them may direct ethnicity in one direction or another (Nongbri 1995:54-7). The role of the tribal elites who are already well entrenched in the system, the emergence and role of middle class who share high stakes in the current dispensation, the differential process of integration, the social psychology of relative deprivation and the competition for resources are likely to determine the contours of ethnicity in the coming decades.

CHAPTER - IV

ETHNICITY AND RESOURCE COMPETITION

Ethnicity has become an instrument for competition over scarce resources, which is nevertheless circumscribed by ideologies of shared culture, shared origins and metaphoric kinship. I will attempt here to provide an analytical understanding of ethnicity as resource competition with special reference to Assam and Tripura and northeast in general. To illuminate our discussion, I will also see how the ethno-centric nature of state-sponsored development and competition for state resources can lead to redefining of identity or the maintenance of status quo in order to make it congenial for development or to get a better share of state resources. In this regard, I will examine the case of the Zeliangrong Nagas of Manipur, Assam and Nagaland.

Migration, Ethnicity and Competition for State Resources: The Case of Assam and Tripura

The colonial Assam experienced an unprecedented change in her demographic composition. Large scale state-sponsored migration from different parts of British India as well as immigration from neighboring Nepal changed the demographic composition to such an extent as to make it a fertile ground for persistent ethnic conflict in future. The migration dimension was organically linked with the British interest as well as with the dynamics of economic growth in Assam. The poverty-ridden and oppressed backward-tribes migrated to Assam in search of better living. The colonial situation in Assam opened the floodgates of migration and in the process, it transformed the social composition of Assam's population. In Assam's colonial administration, the Bengalis had nearly monopolized all the jobs meant for the Assamese. It had two pertinent reasons; first, by the time Assam was incorporated into British India, its neighbor Bengal already had a large western educated middle class. When Assam was annexed relatively advanced Bangalis came in together with the British rulers. Secondly, thickly populated part of Bengal, that is, Sylhet, was amalgamated with the province of Assam. Therefore, being the subject of the same province, many educated Hindu Bengalis moved into

Assam proper. In order to augment the contribution to the colonial offers, the rulers encouraged migration of various groups, so as to bring more and more land under habitation and cultivation, to enhance land revenue. Many people in order to avoid dual oppression of colonialism and feudalism migrated to Assam where feudal oppression was far below the level of East Bengal because of the abundance of land and their population. On the other hand, in the absence of local labour, the colonial rulers patronized the massive migration of Black-tribals from Jarkhand region in order to meet the growing need of cheap labor for the British owned tea-estate. There are four separate categories of migration which intensified the competition for resources: (i) tribal migration in tea plantations, (ii) Muslim Bengali migration in agriculture, (iii) Hindu Bengali migration in the service sector and (iv) Marwari migration in trade, business and industry (Hussain 1993:45-6). Besides these, Nepalese from Nepal also immigrated in connection with their service in the British army and Biharis migrated to this region mainly as laborers.

This migration, engineered by the colonial state by creating the push factor at home and pull factors at the point of destination had brought an enormous change in the ethnic composition of population as well as in the economy of British Assam. The land abundant valley became land-scarce. The relatively ethnic homogeneity of the society was replaced by ethnic heterogeneity. Moreover, due to the allotment of large tracts of land to the British planters in the Bramaputra valley Assamese peasants were marginalized. The core industries like tea, timber, oil and coal grew under both outside capital and labor, bypassing the local indigenous Assamese (Das Gurudas 1996:123).

In fact the indigenous Assamese had paid the highest price throughout the colonial period than any other ethnic group in Assam. They lost the political space to the British and economic space to the British, Bengalis and Marwaris. The emerging Assamese middle class mainly from traditional aristocracy realized the importance of re-occupying the political space first, which can, then, be used for getting back the economic space. The result of this realization was the growth of anti-British nationalist movement streamlined along the national programs.

The tiny tributary state of Tripura had experienced a replica of what happened in colonial Assam in regard to migration. In order to meet the ever increasing tributary demand from British power as well as royal expenses, the successive rulers of Tripura encouraged the immigration of the Bengalis from neighboring East Bengal (Bhattacharjee 1989). As the indigenous tribals were basically jhumias who could hardly produce any substantial surplus, plains land had been allotted to the Bengali Peasants in order to raise the land revenue. The process resulted in outnumbering the indigenous tribals by the immigrants. The tribal population dropped from 64 percent of the total in 1874 to 29 percent in 1971. Bengalis had become 68 percent of the total population by 1971 and are now estimate to be 70 percent (Singh, B.P. 1987:141). Political and administrative power has thus passed from the indigenous tribals to migrant Bengalis. The transfer of land from the tribal population to Bengali migrants proved to be the critical factor in deteriorating social relations. Thus the indirect British rule not only affected the indigenous tribal groups economically by way of encroachment of their land but also endangered their socio-political existence through state-sponsored immigration.

While the process of assimilation of the migrants in the Bramaputra valley was taking place through assimilation of the different ethnic groups, that is, through natural acceptance of the symbols of Assamese nationality by migrant groups, the process was operating in the reverse direction in Tripura. Unlike the Assamese, the indigenous population of Tripura did not have very well defined or well-organized symbols strong enough to assimilate migrants in their favor. As a result, the indigenous people themselves started adopting the ways and symbols of the migrants. This happened because of the deep influence of Bengali language both in the princely court and mass life through education in particular (Das 1996:124). The fear of linguistic and cultural domination by Bengalis in the minds of Tripuris or the Assamese is not unreal. In Tripura, the Bengali language and culture not only gets demographically superior support, but, over the years, Tripura's educational institutions have been shaped in the light of Bengali culture and values. There is a fear among the Asamese-speaking people

that they will be linguistically reduced to a second place in Assam if the immigrant Muslims decides to declare Bengali as their language. The linguistic profile of Cachar adds another dimension to the language dimension in Assam. Nearly 90 percent of Cachar's 2.5 million people speak Bengali, which is also the language of the district courts, administration and medium of instruction in most of the educational institutions (Singh, B.P. op. cit. p.156).

The flush of immigration on the region did not cease with the partition. The plains of Assam and Tripura became too small to accommodate the sudden influx of people. The economy became too weak to supply food to every hearth and to create job for every youth. Though the colonial rule had been overthrown and political space has been reoccupied by the new generation of Assamese elites, the colonial economic structure was largely retained only to make the region a periphery to the Indian capitalist system. Moreover, the corporate sector and trade remained in the hands of persons exerting control from outside, much of the profits of this sector is continuously siphoned off or remitted outside.

With the beginning of state-sponsored planned developmental programs after independence, some additional economic space emerged in different economic sectors of the region. The state with all its paraphernalia started playing a dominant role in education, health, administrative service and construction of infrastructural network. The growing Assamese middle class has to face a stiff competition from the Bengali counterpart who had been preferred by the colonial masters because of their early exposure to British rule and the consequent acquaintance with the British system of governance. In the race to gain mileage over the economic space, the state under the control of the Assamese elite played a significant role by flavoring Assamese against other ethnic groups. The state patronage in the form of issuing licenses, giving contracts for construction activities, issuing permits, providing jobs, financial and other activities, etc, has largely helped to grow a class of *nouveau riche* within the Assamese society. As a consequence, an Assamese bourgeoisie emerged through a process of negative ethnic

discrimination during the colonial rule and positive ethnic discrimination after independence.

As a class of exploiters operating under the same economy, the Assamiya ruling class is an inseparable part of the Indian ruling class. However, as a competitor seeking to gain control over the regional market, the Assamiya ruling class is also a competitor at the regional level. Therefore, at times, the Assamiya ruling class would fight against the Indian ruling class and at times would collaborate with them to enhance its own class position. (Hussain 1993:92). Though at times, they take the issues of general masses of Assamiya the Asamiya ruling class fundamentally represents the vested interest of these classes in Assam. Because of its weak position in the production process, this class is not sure about its destiny or its future. It has been able to pass on its own identity crisis, its lack of confidence and apprehensions as the crisis of the Assamiya nationality of Assam. As a partner of the Indian ruling class, the Assamiya ruling class would not like to reverse their coalition with the former, though at times, they wanted a redefinition and re-arrangement of their relationship. In order to wrest certain concessions from the Indian ruling class, this class might have used its secessionist card at times.

Identity definition on a wider scale and its assertion may be viewed as a part of the overall process of social change and modernization in Northeast India. Now ethnic mobilization can no longer be considered as an archaic, primordial or non-rational form of social action. It is rather a legitimate political force. Contrary to the general assumption that ethnicity primarily concerns with a traditional society, it appears that the more society is modernized, the more ethnic demands are manifested and similarly, the more economic development the more is ethnic conflict. Various cultural markers are used for ethnic mobilization. Tribal loyalties, religion, language, social discrimination on the basis of caste, sharing of political power and economic opportunities have been utilized for ethnic mobilization. This kind of mobilization and manipulation of group identity leads to ethnicity, which is harnessed as an ideology as well as a devise to wrest greater share of power and authority. Modernization increases the level of competition

for jobs and other economic resources among the ethnic groups. As a result, ethnic and social movements based on ethnic boundaries occur when ethnic competition increases, the awareness created by the process of modernization and democracy have made the various ethnic groups more assertive particularly after the formation of the hill states in north east India. The emerging elites of these communities seek to give an ethnic color to their problems in order to gain politically as well as economically. As the state is supposed to manage the affairs of the society, the ethnic movements have been directed towards it. The ethnic groups put pressure on the state to take certain policy decisions to accommodate their socio-economic and political demands (Phukon 2002:1-6) most of the social tensions, various social movements including those seeking identity and autonomy in northeastern region are to a great extent different manifestation of the competition among the different ethnic groups for state resources. The Naga rebellion may appear an exception with political factors having a greater salience. But this exception, if that, does not prove the rule.

Nature and Process of Development: Partition, Economic Stagnation and Underdevelopment

The northeastern region is not only underdeveloped but unevenly developed. If the northeast India remained as a hinterland of Calcutta during the colonial days, today the region not only retains the status of a periphery - geo-political, socio-cultural, politico-administrative and economic - but within the region itself the hill-states develop as a hinterland to the plains or valleys of the region or the state itself. Though the region is rich in natural resources, it remained socio-economically stagnant. Analysts feel the key constraints to economic development generally are arising out of the prevailing physical, social and economic conditions in the tribal states. The physical conditions relate to the hilly terrain, dense forests and difficult communication networking. The social obstacles are the people's initial apathy to the any kind of innovation and primitive methods of production. The economic difficulties are the dearth of capital, absences of marketing centers and similar other factors (Amar, K.P.2003:7).

India's north-east is a misshapen strip of land, linked to the rest of the country by a narrow corridor just twenty kilometers wide, at its slimmest which is referred to as the chicken's neck (Hazarika 1994: xvi). As a result, the region suffers from what is called the 'geographical inertia' or 'locational inertia' – travelling is too expensive and time-consuming and hence people are not willing to travel to or from the region. This locational inertia which is caused by the transport bottleneck is a major-contributing hurdle in terms of lack of development of markets. The problem is compounded by the annual floods in the most populous area of the region, the Brahmaputra Valley, which wash away whatever little good work is done in between the intervening period. Developmental activities in many cases have to be started right from the scratch (Ghosh 2001:87).

The northeast has long history of neglect, suppression and exploitation. There is a widespread feeling that the pattern of development to which Assam and the northeast generally has been exposed is purely exploitative and "colonial" with little reinvestment of profit. It has legitimate grounds for complaints. 100-150 years ago, the Brahmaputra Valley was in the Vanguard of Indian development and globalization. Its alluring and ever - expanding tea production and exports triggered a variety of investments with backward and forward linkages. Trading posts and markets were established and as the infrastructure developed and the lines of communication pushed eastward, thoughts began to turn to piercing through the Patkai range to connect with Markets beyond in Burma and China. The discovery of oil and coal in upper Assam resulted in the developments of mining, forestry and railways that brought up heavy machinery and took back tea for export. The region was a pioneer, an investment leader, a modernizer. It attracted capital and entrepreneurs (Verghese, 1996:325-36). The Northeast was then a part of the main and open economy well-linked to markets at home and abroad by river and rail through Calcutta and Chittagong.

What brought about the changes was the destruction caused by partition. The remapped political boundaries of independent India had a far-reaching effect on the

economy of the northeast. The partition of Bengal not only crippled Bengalis alone, but imposed a heavy price on the people of the region in general and Assam and Tripura in particular. The main modes of surface communication, viz., water, roads and railways were gone. The flourishing trade with the contiguous plains of Bangladesh was suddenly part and parcel of history. The cross-country trade with Tibet, Bhutan and Burma came to a grinding halt. The northeast region today is virtually landlocked, with under only one percent of its external boundaries contiguous with the rest of India - the tenuous 20-km wide Siliguri corridor. The remaining 99 percent represents international borders shared with Nepal Bhutan, China (Tibet), Myanmar and Bangladesh. The lifeline of communication that now passes through the corridor of north Bengal is still in a precarious condition. Little efforts have been made to reconstruct the partition disrupted transportation system. Thus the positional existence of the region in the newly drawn India political map and severe transportation bottlenecks have destined her to be a periphery of the India 'mainstream' (Das, G. 1996:125).

The physical and psychological severity of the partition was not fully appreciated elsewhere in the country and the disruption in the communication and markets was not repaired soon enough nor infrastructure developed to match the new needs completed as expeditiously as necessary. Isolated and traumatized the northeastern turned inward. A succession of insurgencies and movements to seek separation or autonomy, assert identity or exclude foreigners and outsiders aggravated to the hiatus, with the rest of the country coming to think of the northeast with disinterest as a far away place, perpetually troubled. Beset with its own internal problems and complexes, the northeast fell behind economically and despite its inherent wealth remains at the bottom (Verghese 1996:337).

For decades most northeastern states were far away from the railhead and lacked all-weather road connections. Many remote areas in the northeast are still air supplied through what are possibly the largest and oldest air maintenance operations anywhere in the world. Tripura, Mizoram and even Manipur have slender road links that are often severed by inclement weather, landslide and severe commotion. A flood in Assam

disrupts life and the economy of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura as well. Given Market disruption and uncertain transport leads with numerous transshipment points prices of everything even now rule ten to twenty percent higher than anywhere else in the country, while local produce perishes or is not developed on account of market lose.

Developmental process takes a back seat when the multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic and multi-religious composition of the population adds another dimension to the complexities in the developmental process. Large-scale immigration, unchecked at that, distorts the demographic equilibrium and has a far-reaching significance on the political and socio-economic fabric. The result was that the northeast became a latecomer to development. The SP Shukla Commission Report put it succinctly:

> The trauma of partition, political evolution and reorganization of Assam along the present state boundaries and continuing internal adjustments to achieve decentralized sub-states structures such as autonomous Councils punctuated with protest movements and insurgencies, have interrupted progress (as quoted in Ghosh 2001:88).

The report also pointed out that the building of new political institutions, with former districts graduation to statehood has necessarily been a slow process. Traditional institutions were also in some cases too soon or somewhat carelessly bypassed for newer structures that are perhaps not always well suited to the region. Likewise, all- India norms and patterns of administration and planning have been extended to or have sometimes been sought by these units only to prove an embarrassment. The commission identified four basic deficits: *an infrastructure deficit; a resource deficit; and a two-way deficit of understanding with the rest of the country.*

The capitalist path of development has generated severe regional disparities because of which the northeast has remained a depressed region. The path of development that the Indian State adopted for the country is fundamentally capitalist in nature wherein the private capitalist were given decisive role in developing and

modernizing the post colonial economy. Though, India has a large public sector and a nationalized banking system, both serve only the private sector, particularly the big business in furthering their class interests. Simply speaking, the private capitalists guided by profit motive and by a desire to maximize their profit margin, do not, hence look upon investments in northeast as profitable, as it does not ensure them good returns. With perennial floods, political disturbance and severely underdeveloped infrastructure of roads, railways, communication, power, terminal and institutional facilities, abject poverty with low indigenous capital formation northeast has failed to draw worthwhile private investment for its economic development (Hussain op. cit. 67).

The lack of local or regional market and the consequent diseconomies of scales had been cited for not establishing viable industries in the northeast commensurate with its resources endowments. Moreover, the 1962, 1965 and 1971 wars and their aftermath did pose security issues and technical opinion favored locating the refineries and fertilizer plants nearer to the points of final consumption. The Assamese in particular and the northeast in general do not go along with this argument. This argument is seen as accepting a vicious circle: *because there was no infrastructure, there was no industrialization and because there was no industrialization there was no compelling reason to develop the infrastructure.* The process of development on closer scrutiny is found to be more security oriented and state-centered than emerging form people's need. According to Sanjib Baruah (2003a), the 1962 war against China along with sign of unrest among the indigenous peoples in the neighborhood exposed India's vulnerabilities in the region. Since then nationalizing this frontier space (northeast and Arunachal Pradesh in particular) by extending the institution of the state all the way into international border region has become the thrust of Indian policy. This goal of nationalizing a frontier space, Baruah argues, has been the major thrust of Indian policy vis-à-vis Arunachal and northeast India as a whole. The imperative to nationalize space directed by the 'high politics' of national security has determined the choices made in every policy area. To quote Baruah:

> The interest of the people of the area, or of the unique environment, the political choices between alternative development strategies, the respect for

the autonomy of sub-national government enshrined in India's federal constitution, the rights of indigenous peoples and even consideration of political stability—all have had to play second fiddle to the imperative of nationalizing space (2003a:922).

Most of the northeastern states have very few revenue sources; they are 'special category states' that rely primarily on central government assistance, which they get on a concessional basis of 90 percent grants and 10 percent loans. A look at the Reserve Bank of India's finances of northeastern states for 2003-04 clearly brings out the region's dependency on the center for funds. If all the northeastern states are put together, then an overwhelming 87 percent of the regions total revenue came from the centre. The state governments generated the remaining 13 percent (Singh, H.K. Hindustan Times 29th June 2004). The states' contribution to total revenue in percentage figures are: Manipur 9 percent, Arunachal Pradesh 12 percent, Tripura 13 percent, Meghalaya 19 percent, Assame 32 percent, and Mizoram and Nagaland 8 percent each (ibid). The overwhelming dependence on central government funds also means that most development projects are both funded and designed far away from the region with little likelihood of reflecting visions of the future and these states governments have little power vis-à-vis New Delhi. With only one or two Lok Sabha members from each state (excepting Assam, which sends 14 MPs) the northeastern states are political pushovers. Thus, having a 'friendly' central government is almost a matter of survival. Completely dependent on New Delhi for their finances, the northeastern states became vulnerable to New Delhi's direct involvement in their affairs on a daily basis, fitted very well with India's national security goals in the regions.

The North Eastern Council (NEC) though envisaged as an institution to promote security and development initially did not even include the elected Chief Ministers of the States. It was made up of the governors, who represent the Central Government and who, elsewhere in India, are only the constitutional heads of State governments. A military· man, the Inspector-General of Assam rifles, was the Security advisor to the council. And by appointing retired military generals former intelligence and police officials with close

ties to the security establishment in New Delhi as governors, India's Home Ministry managed to oversee a parallel political structure in the northeast, which is both directly controlled from New Delhi and autonomous from the formal democratically elected government structure of the states (Baruah op. cit.925-926).

Of course, over the years, three factors of national policy in northeast India have crystallized: first, a higher allocation of resources is made to the states of the region than elsewhere; second, the infrastructural development in the region has been accorded high priority with major changes in the field of railways, roads, power generation and telephone services, and third, the Central government, the NEC and the respective state governments are moving in the direction of expanding energy and a network of industries connected with oil refineries, petro-chemical, fertilizers, cement pulp and paper.

However, several factors continue to militate against the successful implementation of the plans outlined. There is justifiable unanimity among economists and planners that the growth of economic growth in the region so far has been much too inadequate to make the process continuous and beneficial to all class (Singh, B.P.:1987: 165-66). It must be admitted that the pace of development has been extremely slow and lethargic as compared to the developed regions of India. The legacy of the colonial economy has continued in the postcolonial northeast India. The raw material supplier status of the northeast has not changed in any significant way. There is no synthesis between the agricultural economy and the industrial economy and profits and wages of the migrant laborer are remitted and invested in more advanced urban centers outside the regions. The region continues to remain agriculturally and industrially backward in spite of the rich water, forest and mineral resources and vast potentialities. The dependence of the northeastern economy on non-northeast cities for manufacturing products, skilled manpower and capital became accountable for the lopsided economic growth of the region. Ranked by the state-wise relative index of development (1993), all the northeastern states fall well below the all India median of 100 and stand at the very bottom of the list (Verghese 1996:339).

Development, Migration and Competition for Resources: Crisis of Identity and Politics of Ethnicity

The process of migration from East Bengal, in particular continued despite the partition of India in 1947 and official efforts to terminate the inflow of people to the northeast India. The result have been alarming, the region's population has been increasing at an abnormally high rate. The increase is due mainly to the immigration of foreigners from Bangladesh and Nepal [the Indo Nepal Peace and Friendship Treaty 1950 - a pull factor] and migrants from the other states of India rather than to a higher natural growth rate or the local population. Although the actual number of foreign nationality is difficult to establish with certainty, the influx is large enough to cause serious economic and social problems and pose a grave threat to the cultural identity of various communities in this region.

During the last one and half centuries the population of northeast has witness an unprecedented increase from less than one million to a sizable 26 million people. The population of the present day Assam has risen from 3,290,000 in 1901 to 19,902,826 in 1981, a growth of 505.01 percent as compared to 186.84 percent for India as a whole during the corresponding period. The figures in millions for the other states of the northeast from 1901 to 1981 are Arunachal Pradesh, 0.2 to 0.63; Mizoram, 0.08 to 0.49; Nagaland, 0.12 to 0.77; Tripura, 0.17 to 2.05; Manipur, 0.28 to 1.14; and Meghalaya, 0.12 to 1.32. The population growth rate from 1901 to 1981 has been 419.71 percent in Mizoram, 661.48 percent in Nagaland, 1088.63 percent in Tripura, 404 percent in Manipur, and 189.95 percent in Meghalaya. The impact of this phenomenal growth on the society, polity and economy of the region has naturally been very significant. The emerging ethnic identity is the outcome of the factors such as immigration, resource competition and cultural contradictions. While the indigenous tribals have been reduced to a mere 28 percent in Tripura, there is a widespread apprehension in the minds of the Assamese caste Hindus that in near future their political power will be taken from them by the migrants. The other states of the region also share similar fear (Singh, B.P op. cit.150-41).

In the period 1991-2001 most of the states show population growth rates that are well above the national average (the exception are Assam and Tripura, where growth rates are very high during earlier census periods). Nagaland's growth rate of 64.41 percent for this period is the highest in India. In the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland as well as in Assam's two tribal districts (Karbianglong and North Cachar Hills), the size of the total population is on the decline, although at the moment —except for the tribal districts of Karbianglong in Assam - the majority status of tribal people is not immediately under threat (Baruah 2003:931). According to 2001 census, the total population of Northeast India is 3,84,95,089, which is 3.75 percent of the Country's total population. It is 0.02 percent more than in the earlier decade (1981-91). In the national level, the rate of growth was 21.34 percent in 1991-2001 and it is 2.52 percent less in comparison to the earlier decade 1981-1991 (23.86). Therefore, the rate of growth of population is much more in northeast India in comparison to national average. The immigration from other states of India like Bangladesh and Nepal is the main cause of rapid growth of population in the region. (Goswami 2003: The Assam Tribune 29, December). Nagaland recorded an abnormal growth rate in 1981-91 and 1991-2001, which was 56.08 and 64.41 percent respectively. The growth was the highest in the county. Immigration from neighboring countries to Nagaland, according to Depak Goswami is the main cause of such an unprecedented growth. The heavy influx of illegal immigrants into the state is distorting the composition of population in various districts, particularly Dimapur (see the Assam Tribune, December 29, 2003).

In a state like Nagaland where there is the Inner Line Permit and restricted Area Permit to control outsiders from immigration into the state, it is interesting to see how the influx of illegal immigration is made possible or operates. In the northeast, border disputes between neighboring states are endemic. There is an inherent crisis of territoriality, which stems from the colonial policy of 'divide and rule'. The Naga Hills, where a multiplicity of cultural forms had historically reigned supreme are best seen as

what James. C. Scott terms a non-state space - an 'illegible space' from the perspectives of the state in the lowlands (Baruah 2003 b:4). The political boundary and the effective domain of British rule, i.e., the boundary of direct as well as indirect British administration, had little coincidence particularly in the northeastern part of the British Indian Empire. The territorial claim of the colonial government extended well beyond its system of governance which had created a long stretch of 'no man's land' (Das, G. 1997:169). While the Nagas argued that they are determined to restore the land which originally and ancestrally belong to them because they had been placed arbitrarily under different administrative units in the post independence India without their knowledge and consent, the Assamese accuse the Nagas of trying to encroach on their land; vowing not to part with an inch of land that rightfully belongs to them. Claims and counter claims had led to conflicts and tensions including short but bloody skirmish in the border areas in the past particularly in the middle of 1980s. At present, there is a dispute in Marachui (Marapani) area, which the Nagas claim that it belongs to them. In fact, the Naga Students' Federation (NSF) reminded the Government of Assam, the historic Nine Point Agreement of 1947 section 6, /clause (1) to bring back into the Naga hill District all forest transferred to Sibsagar and Nawgoan district of Assam in the past and to bring under one administrative unit all Naga area as far as possible (The Assam Tribune 24, February 2004). The NSF pointed out that the Assam Government had been playing 'hide and seek', pushing in Bangladeshi and Adivasi immigrant in border areas in order to grab the land that belongs to Nagas. The state government of Nagaland, despite the legal mechanism available to detect and deport illegal infiltrators, pleads its inability to do so mainly because the infiltrators/immigrants claim themselves to be Assamese and posses documents to prove it.

An article by Devesh K. Pandey throws light on the daunting task for the authorities to identify and deport illegal migrants. It is well established that a large number of Bangladeshi nationals have infiltrated into India and settled in various parts of the country over the past two decades, claiming to be residents of West Bengal etc. A common modus operandi they follow is to cross over to West Bengal, settle in some non-descript villages for sometime to get used to their culture and language and then move to

other states, including Delhi, impersonating as original residents of those villages, to avoid detection and deportation. Over two lakhs Bangladeshis are believed to be in the capital and neighboring areas alone. Many of these illegal immigrants have even obtained ration cards and other papers to prove that they were Indian citizens. Interestingly, they are suspected to have got plots registered in their names after recent drive launched by the government for rehabilitation of Jhuggi dwellers. As "bonafide" citizens of the country they have the 'right' for their share in its resources (The Hindu, 30, June 2004). In the northeast India, the problem of illegal immigrants seems to have been compounded by the politics of vested interest. Unfortunately the influx into northeast has created an unwholesome communal, linguistic and even tribal/non-tribal polarization which has been exploited by vested interests for petty, partisan ends, unmindful of the bigger consequences.

The influx of immigrants and demographic transformation has led to increasing pressure on land and other economic resources, inadequate and unbalanced economic growth. In addition, inadequate industrialization of the northeast in spite of its rich and vast potentialities placed it in a vicious trap of underdevelopment. On the other hand, over the years, large armies of educated, semi-educated and illiterate unemployed have accumulated in both rural and urban areas in northeast India. Obviously such a situation of near crisis has made the indigenous people/local people apprehensive of their future in their own homeland.

The once vacant land of the northeast have been filled by people over the past century, and to this burgeoning population has been added cross border movements and immigration from other parts of the country which have created the foreigner-outsider syndrome. This happens due to disparate levels of development, land availability and economic opportunity, which constitute one set of causative factors. The other is the demand for cheap labor, special skills and the collateral benefit of using vote banks to create pocket boroughs or alter the demographic balance for self-regarding motives. Money too plays a role (Verghese 1996:395). The role of development process itself as a

'pull factor' is very important in the northeast India. Development projects, for instance, have actively sought to bring about a transition from shifting cultivation to settled agriculture and from the clan control of land to commodification of land, creating new opportunities for immigrants. The development projects that aim at the transformation of pre-capitalist economies also generate economic niches attracting new immigrants. Furthermore, in sparsely populated areas like Arunachal, the state bureaucracy itself is a substantial demographic presence in the new urban centers (Baruah 2003:930-931). In fact with the emergence of the hill states and beginning of the state sponsored developmental programmers, people from different states of the country migrated to the hills of this region in response to the newly opened economic opportunities. Some state-sponsored immigration also took place in the hills of Arunachal Pradesh following Tibetan revolt against the Chinese in 1959 and Indo-china border conflict in 1962. A large number of Tibetan as well as Chakma refugees were settled along the Indo-Chinese border on security grounds (Das G, 1996:130). Unlike the Tibetan, and the Chakma immigrants, migrants from different states of India have come to the hills mainly in connection with government and non-government services, trade and commerce, etc.

The pressure on land is already very high in the plains; even in the less densely populated hill areas there is a scarcity of land due to low carrying capacity of land under the tradition of jhum cultivation. Land has got commodified and is being enclosed, privatized and sometimes deposited by felling irreplaceable timber to feed sawmills and plywood plants in a manner that has degraded the environment. Tribal identity and livelihood is closely tied to the land and forest. The steady erosion of the tribal blocks and belts over the years for development purpose and by encroachers including illicit immigrants had sharpened discontent.

To the tribals, the environment is an ecosystem with their communities at its centre. Given their symbolic relationship with it, their communities recognize their own right and that of nature to a life with dignity and perceive it in a sustainable manner. The people's dependence on environment as land, forests, bio-diversity, water resources and

knowledge is very high, so is their level of education but the investment in employment generation in the secondary sector is low. In 1996 the seven states of northeast together had 214 major and medium industries, 166 of them in Assam, against 374 in the industrially "backward" Orissa. Some of them have been closed down since then and no new units have been opened. It results in the predominance of the primary and tertiary sectors. In 1996, 75.26% of the Nagaland work force, 74.81% of Megalaya, 73.99% of Assam and 70% of Manipur were in primary sector against an all India average of 67.53. Against an all India average of 11.79%, the secondary sector employed around 4% of the work force in the five states and 8% in the remaining two. The tertiary sector employed around 24% of the work force in Arunachal Pradesh, 20.45% of Assam, 21.46% of Meghalaya, 21. 26% in Nagaland and 29% in Mizoram against an all India average of 20.5% (D' Souza as cited in Fernandes 2003:244). These sectors are saturated and cannot employ many more.

These conditions are the setting for an understanding of development in the region. Their high dependence on land is the main reason why immigration caused tension in the colonial age and laid the foundations of the Bodo-Adivisi and Bodo-Assamese conflict and tensions with Muslims. Landlessness was the result of the coming of East-Pakistani refugees in 1947 and continued with the Gangetic valley, Nepali and Bangladeshi immigrants. Most of them displace the local people by encroaching on their land, forests and water resources. Though the focus today is on the Bangladeshis, studies indicates that around two-third of the immigrants are from the Gangetic plains and some 12 lakhs are Bangladeshis. They flee from the feudal system and lack of land reforms in their region to encroach on the sustenance of the people in this region. Also, the Chakma and Hajong who migrated to Arunachal Pradesh after being displaced by the Kaptai dam in the erstwhile East Pakistan have deprived the local of their sustenance.

The ensuing shortage and reckless depletion of the natural resources results in the hardening of ethnic identifies and exclusive claims to livelihood to the exclusions of all others. The conflicts that follow have caused more internal displacement. Thus, the issue

at stake is not migration per se bur, alienation of livelihood, marginalization of the indigenous communities resulting from deprivation and environmental degradation. The environment—the natural resource base for their livelihood—is land, water and bio-diversity around which they have built their culture, economy and identities. They view the migrants as a threat to it. Hardened identities and exclusive claims for the resources ensue. Be it the Naga-Kuki conflict in Manipur, Bodo-Santhal and Dimasa-Hmar tension in Assam or the Tripura tribal demand for a homeland all have their origin in competition for land and result in ugly and bloody massacres and ethnic cleansing.

An identity crisis is inherent in a society undergoing as rapid a change as is the case with northeast India, particularly amongst the tribes. It is essential to realize that the widespread identity crisis in northeast India has been caused by the large-scale migration of population from outside the region and the total dependence of people on the *land the states' apparatus* for a livelihood. The phenomenon has made the local population feel outnumbered and swamped by people of different cultural origins. The failure of various section of the migrant population to adapt themselves to the local language, customs and traditions has further accentuated the identity crisis. A proper socialization process, which alone could have helped generate understanding among different communities, is frequently impaired in the wake of periodic inter-community clashes and killings and the tendency of each person to confine himself to his own group. The administrative system is always pre-occupied with fire-fighting operations either in containing human tragedies or giving relief to the victims of natural calamities, thereby neglecting its roles as an instrument of development and a meaningful agent of socialization and progress (Singh, B.P. 1987:162).

As discussed earlier, development itself has come to be viewed from a national security perspective. Many cite the lack of meaningful development as the root cause of ethnic insurgency, which is viewed only as a law and order issue. In an ironic twist, both the state and the insurgents use underdevelopment to legitimize violence. So the state has a vested interest in ensuring development since it would take away what is supposedly

the major cause of insurgency (Fernandes 2003:245). Insurgency impedes development while lack of development breeds the discontent that feed insurgency. This is a vicious cycle, which has been crippling the economy and overall development of the region.

The 'identity crisis' crisis of cultural groups and tribes in the region has strong economic aspects. In fact, the main sustaining force behind the 'identity' syndrome emanated from the complex operation of economic forces in the region. There is an increasing pressure to remove inequalities, generate employment and accelerate the pace of development. Although the poor are numerically large in the region, they are not organized to articulate their demands and put pressure on the state system. In a democracy the political parties might be expected to organize the poor in a bid to capture power, but this has not happened in the northeast. The politicization of ethnic, caste and religious symbols has greatly blunted the self-awareness of economic class in the region (Singh, B.P. op.cit:166).

There has generally been a lack of commitment and the necessary preparedness amongst the political elites to facilitate the economic development of the people. On the other hand, the nascent middle class in the northeast India and Calcutta has grown rich by diverting and selling scarce raw materials to capitalists before they reach any part of the northeast. It is not uncommon to find that in the execution of even limited tasks only fifty percent of total outlay is actually utilized as it should be, with the rest siphoned off and distributed among corrupted and vested interests (ibid. 166-67).

Never in recorded history has there been such rapid change in northeast India as during the years after independence. During this period, the customs of centuries, music and the arts, production and consumption patterns have undergone radical transformation. There has been a swift magnetization of the economy, a phenomenal expansion of the middle class, the intelligentsia, professionals and the bureaucracy. In the hill areas, the efficacy of institutions related to the communal ownership of property has declined. The

spread of education has increased manifold the capability of the population to interact with economic, political, cultural and administrative organizations. These organizations are multiplying themselves in number and widening their areas of operation. Today every section of society demands the fruits of 'progress' and a great wave of economic aspirations sweeping the middle class of northeast India. The support of culture, language and identity emanates from a desire for economic advancement.

The answer to a resurgence of ethnic identity is found not only in the history of migration of various ethnic groups to the region and the forces that helped their integration or in keeping them apart, but also in recent spurt in modernization and the increasing politicization of ethnic elements. Post-1947 development have modernized and politicized tribal society in northeast India. Whereas in Western countries the democratic system grow out of bourgeois societies and capitalist economies, in the tribal areas of northeast India, democratic political institutions have been transplanted to become instruments of social and economic change. The failure of the congress and other political parties to provide an overall umbrella for different ethnic group has indicated in clear terms the breakdown of political compromise in almost every political units of the region. Besides, the emergence of the middle class in the northeast was late, and this class has failed to displace ethnic identity as a factor in social, economic and political relations. In the near absence of the bourgeoisie, the middle class exercises its hegemony as the most powerful group. Torn between a "particularistic ethnic-centered political culture" and the "desired universal economic progress", the rudimentary middle class complain of economic, political and ethnic exploitation by outsiders, while themselves benefiting from the "exploitative, unequal, discriminating system" (Sinha, A.C. 1984). Attempts by sections of the middle class to evolve a narrow, parochial and occasionally chauvinistic political culture are the result of the growing competition for the power, resources, services and development benefits.

According to J.B. Ganguly (1984), the view that the current troubles in the northeast are due to the insufficient transfer of resources from the centre for economic

development and public welfare is wrong. He, however, concedes that despite a considerable flow of resources, there has been no reduction in disparities in consumption and income levels between this region and the rest of the country. He particularly stresses how the development process itself—including the tribal welfare development programs of the centre and state governments—has given rise to new economic, political and social forces and institutions, that generate the present social and political tension. The wrong educational and social welfare policies of the government, buying of loyalties through generous welfare grants, special incentives, concessions, etc., have led to the destruction of certain tribal institution and values that were important for mobilizing their initiative and energies for creating "productive assets for the general welfare of the people. This has led to the development of social and economic inequalities, especially the rise of the propertied 'middle class' elite, who are particularly sensitive about their cultural identity, and who deflect the internal economic and social dissensions within tribal societies to non-tribals and the government to maintain and enhance their own privileged position.

The process of ethnicity formation in the northeast shows a uniform trend. Initially it projects an external threat to its culture and identity and subsequently transforms into political organization demanding administrative autonomy. The politics of ethnicity has now become an endemic phenomenon in the northeast owing to repeated mistake of endorsing the hegemony of a particular culture over others mostly in the name of bringing an assimilation of the other sub-cultures (Gogoi, N.K. 1998:330). In a backdrop of limited socialization among ethnic groups, the ruling elites view every development that has a bearing on their control over the levers of political power with great suspicion. The break-up and various divisions of political parties have given greater importance to ethnic loyalties in electoral behavior in northeast. Besides, there is a fairly long tradition among the ruling elites of furthering the interests of their ethnic brethren through the use of state machinery in securing position in the economy and educational system of the state. With politics losing sense of purpose, the consequent degeneration of political process has greatly contributed to the ethnic unrest. In the northeast region, it is a well known fact that leaders with various political affiliations have supported and

nurtured various insurgent groups at various time to advance their political interest and to defend their political opponents (A Syndicate Report 1995:188, Hazarika 1994:247).

With the degeneration of political culture of the ruling bourgeoisie, they have lost much of the public confidence. Many politicians in their bid to gain credibility in order to survive in electoral politics made clandestine compromise with the underground movements. The underground movement in return receives the necessary logistic support from the politicians holding high public offices in the states. This mutual interdependence between the constitutional and extra-constitutional forces has not only largely impaired the legitimacy of the state; a huge fund is also being siphoned off by the insurgents in the form of 'protection' money, 'trade tax'. 'professional tax' and various other means from both the tribal bourgeoisie and their natural collaborators. As a result, it appears that the Central fund directed for counter-insurgency measures is rather largely financing the insurgent activities (Das, G. 1997:176).

The dilemma of the state is that there is insurgency problem and yet until there is peace the fund meant for developmental purpose does not go to the right people. In this regard, Mishra (1988) has shown how the Centre's pumping in of the huge sums of money into the hills without building the necessary infrastructure has helped to create a new middle class which, while serving as a bulwark against insurrection, has given birth to the forces of opportunism and social corruption. The formation and creation of the states in the northeast has no doubt fulfilled the political aspirations of the educated middle class but has failed to solved the real problem of the people. The social psychology of relative deprivation developed among the people of the region in general and the smaller tribal communities in particular. As a result groups have started demanding for state or district even within a state.

While the process of integration and development has generated the subjective feeling of relative deprivation among various ethnic groups in the region which in turn

has created objective material condition for ethnic insurgency, the contribution of different parliamentary political forces for the growth and perpetuation of violent ethnic movement is also no less important. Gurudas Das argues that a close observation of the contemporary political situation in Tripura for example, reveals the cobwebs of insurgent activities and electoral politics. The relative backwardness of the tribals and the resultant tribal militancy in Tripura have profitably been used by the parliamentary forces for electoral gains. Discussing major incidents before 1998 Assembly election—genocide and massacres and the signing of accords between the government and the underground immediately after the election, Das argues:

> Thus, it appears that the opposition forces, in their bid to capture the state power, not only patronize the militant outfits even, more often then not, float such organizations to carry certain subversive missions in order to destabilize the existing regime. As soon as the opposition forces come to power, they stage a surrender making drama with much fun-fare by granting amnesty to all militant activists along with provisions for economic rehabilitation (1997:187).

Such a clandestine understanding between the political parties and the militants benefits both the parties. First, it helps the opposition to make a come back to the seat of power by tarnishing the image of the ruling political force. Second, the surrender making drama boosts up the political image of the hitherto opposition forces, now in power. As if it is their credit that they have brought normalcy and peace in the turbulent socio-political environment. And for the actors it simply pays them in terms of government job, license, permits, and other benefits on return to mainstream which are indeed unique rewards from the mentors and would have been almost impossible to get them otherwise.

The ruling elites at the state level also sometimes extent clandestine support to insurgents to keep them alive, which is then used as a ploy in bargaining for more central assistance. As expenditure incurred in the name of counter-insurgency operations, like other secret services remains beyond the audit surveillance, there is hardly any way to make the ruling elites accountable even if a large share of such fund is siphoned off for personal gratification. In the context of high level corruption and nepotism prevalent in all the states of northeast India, the motive of attracting additional central assistance may

also be another plausible factor behind the perpetuation of certain insurgent movements in the region (ibid: p.188).

Besides this direct movement in the region the ruling elites sometimes also seem to allow the insurgents movements to perpetuate in order to make themselves indispensable in state politics as well as to ensure their political security. They fear that such a settlement may push them out of power. Therefore, the ruling elites instead of complete political solution engineered a vertical split within the underground and followed a policy of divide and rule in order to secure their own political fortune (ibid).

Though there is genuine fear of losing their own identity, culture and distinct way of life, it should be noted that the power and resources wielded by the state has become irresistible for the middle class who are actually the elites of the tribal society. It is this tribal urban middle class who are competing with non-tribal middle class for jobs, and newly emerged tribal bourgeoisie who are competing with the agents of the national bourgeoisie in trade and commerce in the urban centers of the hills. In fact, it is the tribal bourgeoisie who is projecting the identity issue in its bid to outcompete its rivals and to monopolize the limited state resources in the hill states of the region. In order to mobilize the tribal masses in favor of their own vested interest, they politicized the identity issue by conceding the hidden elements of competition. The competition for power, resources, services development benefits among and between the middle class explains most of the ethnic mobilizations and the phenomenal rise of ethnicity in northeast India.

The sense of relative deprivation among the smaller and peripheral ethnic groups, real or illusory has resulted into both constitutional as well as extra-constitutional ethno-political movements. Thus the internal politico-socio-economic conditions are the basic causes for the growth of such movements.

The state system was crippled by an ad-hocism oriented to fire-fighting natural calamities or severe social stress, with a consequent loss of perspective. The response of the centre in dealing with such movements has greatly been shaped by the personalities of the central leaders, ministers and the ruling party in the states. Even during long spells of President's Rule (imposed most frequently in northeast states), there has been no clear-cut sustained policy of any administrative will in this regard. The breakdown of consensus at national level, erosion of corporate cohesion at the centre after Nehru and after the absence of a single united forum in the state of aggrieved groups have definitely lead to such a situation (A syndicate Report 1994:190). The state did not free itself from dependence on the local upper-middle class and bourgeoisie, to the cost of its relation with the deprived. The continuing unorganized state of the poorer classes in the region does not suggest that matters will be different on this count. On the other hand the increasing politicization of ethnic, religious and linguistic groups have generated powerful pressures that political parties have exploited in order to remain in power, even at the cost of society. The ethnicization of politics and politicization of ethnic identity, have sharpened ethnic consciousness in the northeast region even among the small groups to redefine their identity.

In the context of northeast India, ethnicity can be seen as a consequence of the failure of the developmental efforts and the failure of state-system. A large gap exists between the administrative goals and the actual performance of the administration. While expectations of the people for the better life have been ever increasing, the apathy, insensitivity and the lack of commitment have led them to see the state or administrative machinery only as agents of imperialist India (ibid). The social and economic crisis is deepening faster than any time in the region. This crisis is the crisis of underdevelopment and the capitalist mode of development has failed to managed the crisis so economic backwardness. Positioned in a situation of resource poverty, the middle class urban politics is attempting to survive by strengthening ethnicity and regionalism as a concept of cohesiveness for self-defense. The competition for resource include anything that gives them an added advantages in exercising political or economic power-financial packages,

seats in the Assembly elections recognition of one's tribe or dialect by state, control of trade and commerce, government jobs, even media attention, etc. (Zou 2000:25).

Ethnicity Versus Development: The Case of Zeliangrong Naga

As discussed earlier, ethnicity is essentially an ascriptive phenomenon, founded on certain primordial characteristics like language, religion, culture, geographical territory, and so on but its boundaries being flexible and subject to change in time as well as in space its subjective connotation- sense of belonging to a group- is often found to be the only valid ground on which it stands.

The elasticity of ethnicity depends on how much one group can appropriate from it and for how long. The constituent groups seem to oscillate during the period of fulfilling their aspirations and later either surpass and dominate or prefer to form their own ethnicity (Gogoi, N.K. 1998:329). Orlando Patterson argues that ethnicity is a phenomenon that can only be seen in the dynamic context of underlying socio-economic interests of group members (cited in Ayoade 1986:112).

.Ethnicity, as we have discussed earlier, is closely related to the political and economic processes of the given society. In the case of the northeast India, the ethnocentric nature of state-sponsored development has been a major factor in creating ethnic rifts. This has created conditions for the partisan use of the state power or machinery and played a key role for the emergence of internal contradictions and undercurrent surfacing in various proportions and manifestations even within a small ethnic community like the Zeliangrong Nagas of Manipur, Nagaland and Assam. This happens because of the emergence of ethnic politics in the process of development which is primarily concerned with protecting the rights of the group members within the existing state structures through negative discrimination against those who are from outside the state and positive discrimination in favor of the indigenous residents of the

state. Placed in a situation of acute poverty, economic crisis and absolute backwardness, the ethnic (sub-tribe) and development priorities seem to be competing with each other throwing the Zeliangrong tribe in a state of multiple ideological conflicts. Though the Zeliangrongs regard themselves as a single people, in the last half century since independence, their division into three administrative units has brought sharply contrasting experiences in terms of socialization leading to different aspirations in the process.

The Zeliangrong tribe is one of the numerically dominant Naga tribes mainly found in compact and contiguous areas in the states of Manipur, Nagaland and Assam. The total area of the Zeliangrong inhabited land is about 12000 sq. km (Longmei 1995:10).

The Zeliangrong, according to their legend preserved in religious hymns and folk songs originated from a mythical cave called Taobhei- they moved to Makhel and Ramting Kabin then to Makuilongdih where from they migrated to South, West and North (Kamei 1996: 16). According to the popular legend of the tribe, *chabangcham* meaning genesis, the Naga as a whole migrated from the extreme north and finally settled down in Makhiang or Makhel village (now in the Mao Naga area of Senapti district, Manipur) for a long period. As time went by the village became overpopulated. So different clans decided to leave their original village and before the departure, they erected a huge store which is popularly known as 'Tadmaratu'- 'tad' means go, mara means disperse or scatter and 'Tu' means stone in Liangmai dialect (Newmai 1995:57).

Traditional beliefs of the Zeliangrong tribe say that they are the descendants of three brothers- Magangtubou, Kadingbou and Rembangbou (Miri 1991:18). Legends have it that the number of households in Makuilongdih- the Zeliangrong ancestral village - reached 7777, leading to pressure on land and resources. In those days, they were known as *Hamai*, and they spoke one common dialect, probably the present Liangmai

Naga dialect. As per the popular legend, *Chabangcham*, these three brothers (Zemei, Liangmai and Rongmai) were separated after a conflict over chieftainship between the eldest brother Magangtubou, son of the village chief's second wife and his younger brother Kading, son of the first wife (ibid).

There is another view regarding their exodus from Makuilongdih. According to Namthiubuiyang Pamei (2001), the village (Makuilongdih) was divided into areas of settlement viz, the North, South, East and West. After some years each of these areas became autonomous having separate sites for Jhuming and separate *Khangchiu* or dormitories. As the village continued to expand, the areas used for jhuming became very extensive. Trips to from the jhums became a problem. So the villagers made camps for the whole crop year where they spent most of their time. And the cohesion among the campers developed into a community. And their attachment to the original village lessened with each passing year (Pamei 2001:14). Later on, they moved out in group or according to sectorial division of the village.

The names by which the tribes are now called are the names of the directions to which they migrated and the areas in which they settled down. Those who moved towards a vast unoccupied area to the Southern side came to be known as Rongmei from the Liangmai word *Maruangbo* (*Maruang*: empty/unoccupied; *Mai*: people). The Liangmais called the Rongmei as Maruangmei. Those who moved towards the valley or plain are known us Zemei/Zengmai. The term 'Zemei' is derived from the word, *Ramzengning* or *Azengning*' meaning valley and *Mai* means people in Liangmai. The Liangmai were those who stayed back in their original village. Those who left the settlements at Makuilongdih called them *kiliang khatmai* (*kiliang*: a sector in the village; *khat*: one; *mai*: people). And other began to call them Liangmai. The Puimai are believed to have separated from the Liangmai much later, and formed a buffer between the Liangmai and Rongmai (Saul 1995:38, Pamei ibid, Newmai ibid).

The name of Rani Gaidinliu and the Zeliangrong movement under Jadonang (1905-1931) and Rani Gaidinliu is prominently known. From 1926 to the early 1930s, Jadonang started a religious and political movement called the movement for 'Naga Raj" against the British rule. However, he was arrested in February 1931, falsely implicated in a murder case and was hanged on August 29, 1931 at the age of 26 years (Kamei 1997: 35-46). After his death, the movement continued under the leadership of Gaidinliu, his 16 year-old sister (cousin) as political and spiritual leader. She was also arrested and imprisoned by the British in 1932 till the British left India. After India became independent, Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru recognized the political sacrifice made by Gaidinliu and she was given the title "Rani". According to Asoso Yunuo (1982) the Zeliangrong movement laid the foundation stone of the Nagas along with other people of India for freedom.

Followoing the elimination of Jadonang and imprisonment of Gaidinliu, the British banned all the Zeliangrong movement and took up repressive measures:

(a) The government stopped all developmental works for the Zeiliangrong people so that they remained isolated, illiterate and uncivilized.

(b) Following the policy of divide and rule the Zeliangrongs were divided and put under three different administration- North Cachar Hills (Assam), Manipur State and Naga Hills (Nagaland) and.

(c) The Zeliangrong people were brought to Imphal and Kohima, and employed in degrading occupations as Sweepers, removers of night soil, etc. (Kamei 1993:177).

Totally rejecting their common and mutual interests, the Zeliangrongs were arbitrarily divided and placed under different administrative jurisdictions on the pretext of administrative convenience. The administrators used anything – the rivers, the hills and valleys as the boundaries as lines of control between these brothers and made them minority wherever they lived. As a result, even though they are in a compact area, they are flunked in the badly linked extreme corners of the three states of Manipur, North

Cachar hill districts of Assam and Nagaland. The Zeiliangrongs and their areas are today known as the most undeveloped in the records of the governments of the three states (Pamei 2001:IX).

The names 'Kabui' and 'Kacha Nagas' were imposed on the Zeliangrong people. When the British came, Puimei and Rongmei were clubbed together and named as the 'kabui'; whereas Liangmai and Zemei were called as Kacha Nagas. They do not know why they have been named as such even today (ibid). Thus the official names for the Zeliangrong tribes are different from state to state. In Manipur they are known as Kabui and Kacha Naga; in Nagaland, Zeliang in the official name, whereas in Assam, separate names like Zemei and Rongmei are used. The Zemeis are concentrated in the Peren district of Nagaland; North Cachar Hills district of Assam and Taosem subdividion of Tamenglong Manipur. The Liangmais are more or less confined to Tamei subdivision, Tamenglong, Sadar Hill subdivision of Senapati district, Manipur and Tening subdivision in Nagaland; whereas the Rongmeis are the most dispersed group, as they are found in Tamenglong district, Imphal plains, Cachar plains and in Nagaland. The Puimeis are only in nine villages of Manipur.

The policy of isolation, exploitation and neglect of the Zeliangrong people in unfortunately continued even in independent India. The political and administrative balkanization have reduced them into political minorities. In fact, the Zeliangrongs were more stringently suppressed by the policy and measures of independent India than what was done to them during the period of the British rule. They felt that they were treated as colonial and unwanted subjects and the authorities had desire to keep them illiterate and backward so that they remained isolated from the mainstream of the Nagas and do not pose a serious threat to the government by not joining the Naga freedom movement led by Phizo, the then President of the Naga National Council (Zehol 1998:76).

While the ethnic phenomenon in often made a scapegoat for lack of development or blocking it and therefore consider it as anti-development, ethnicity is more acceptably seen as a consequence of the failure of developmental efforts (Esman cited in Subba 1998: 365). No doubt the Zeliangrong Nagas are a single people but the arbitrary boundaries superimposed upon them by the British and after independence by the government of India placing them under different administrative units within Assam, Nagaland and Manipur have brought sharply contrasting experiences, aspirations and separatist tendencies among or even within themselves in different states.

I shall attempt here to bring out some of the issues that are confronting the Zeliangrong Nagas because of ideological conflict and the resultant ambivalence about their identity or a quest for separate identities along sub-tribal or linguistic/dialectal lines in the process of development.

It is only in social organization and in the academic books (thanks to the Zeliangrong movement) that the word Zeliangrong in recognized. As we have seen earlier, officially there is nothing called the Zeliangrong tribe. Though there are many organizations such as the Zeliangrong people's convention (ZPC), the Zeliangrong Union (ZU), the All Zeliangrong Students' Union (AZSU), etc., striving for Zeliangrong tribe recognition but the issue seems to have been politicized by vested interests and reduced to clash of opinion or rather personality clash at the leadership level. Samson Remmei, Chairman of AZSU writes:

> While the struggle for recognition was in progress, some Zeliangrong leaders without the consent of the Zeliangrong public tried to rename the Zeliangrong tribe as Haomei/ Hamei. The people are totally against the renaming of the tribe as Haomei/ Hamei because it is the name given by the Meitei to all the hill dwelling people of Manipur in derogatory sense (1995:19).

Remmei argues that confusion was created among the Zeliangrong mass and it threatened the unity and integrity and identity of the Zeilangrong. This is understandable because Haomei or Hamei will consist of many other tribes apart from the four sub-tribes

of Zelinagrong Nagas. A former convenor of the Zelinagrong Students' Union Delhi (ZSUD) argues that the Zeliangrong identity as an indigenous tribe is still to be decided and given legal recognition by the state because of disunity. He says:

> Some Zeliangrong brethrens are trying to repeat the blunder of the exodus from Makuilongdih citing reasons like social, political and economic benefits for each one of us [Zemei, Liangmai, Rongmei] if we part ways for good taking undue advantage of the non-recognition of Zeliangrong as a scheduled tribe...and the chaos and confusion arising therefrom (Gonmei 2004:4).

Despite having elected representatives to the state Assembly of Nagaland and Manipur and even Parliament, the issue of non-recognition dragged on and the people seem to have lost patience, faith in their leaders thereby allowing cynicism to set in. The Zeliangrongs are now divided on the issue of their own identity. The Zeliangs (Zemei + Liangmei) in Nagaland state want to retain their tribe name as Zeliang. The Rongmeis in Nagaland feel isolated because despite their claims to be an indigenous tribe of Nagaland, they are not given any official recognition. This has become a very emotive issue because they are denied even scholarships whereas the Zeliangs have reservations even for jobs and other benefits as a backward tribe. The Liangmais in Manipur are striving for getting themselves recognized as Liangmai Naga since kacha Naga is a misnomer and hence derogatory. Some among the Rongmei and Zemei are also striving to get official recognition as Rongmei and Zemei Nagas respectively in Manipur. The Puimei have officially come out of the Zeliangrongs because the word 'Pui" is not included in the nomenclature.

The question of dialectal difference has also become a major issue among the Zeliangrongs. Though the root words remain the same, variations in local accent in due course of time because of their isolation from one another became prominent. The political boundary and the lack of transport and communication accentuated the problem as people hardly have meaningful social interaction. In this regard, A.G. Samuel asks:

> Is it any wonder that the community feeling and viability in us (as Zeliangrongs) has been questioned time and again? How can one have any sense of attachment with people one doesn't even know exist [due to lack of interaction] (2003:4).

The problem of transport and communication, and the consequent lack of social intercourse among the Zeliangrong is summed up by the same observer:

> ...Our people don't go to our people; we go to 'others'' lands and people, learn their culture and language [Assamese, Nagamese, Manipuri] and, in the process, slowly but surely drift away from our roots. At this rate it will not be long before we are completely uprooted not only from our language and culture but also from our own land (ibid. p.5).

Today all the sub-tribes have their own literature committees to develop their distinct dialects. The need to write Hymns and Bible translation into their own tribal dialects has also led to the formation of literature committees among each group. In fact, one can attribute the formation of Liangmai Naga Baptist Association (LNBA), the Zemei Naga Baptist Association (ZNBA), the Rongmei Naga Baptist Association (RUBA) and the Puimei Naga Baptist Association (PNBA) to the dialectal difference (see Rev. Pamei 1996:94).

The Zelingrong ethnicity has been crippled by the conflict of political or cultural ideologies, dialectal differences and their overall backwardness. It seems the ethnic and development priorities are competing with each other throwing the community in a state of multiple ideological conflicts and ambivalence about their own Zeliangrong identity. Identity formation along ethnic lines does not take place merely to claim that a particular group is different but it is intimately related to perception of gain and loss in interaction and has political, organizational and symbolic significance (Eriksen 1993). It seems all the constituent units – Zemei, Liangmai and Rougmei- are willing to remain as a Zeliangrong, and even dream of getting a homeland for themselves (they fought for this till the late 1980's) within the union of India, but not at the cost of their own official sub-tribal identities. It appears that the need for their own tribe development is so compulsive that they are ready to redefine their identity or maintain the status quo in order to make it congenial for development or to get a better share of state resources. It does not matter much whether such a separate identity will give them better benefits or

not. What counts is that the people believe this to be case and that this has real, if unanticipated consequences for them. The attempt to assert their official identity among themselves can also be seen as a ploy to gain legitimacy for a better representation and bargaining of each tribe in the crucial process of decision-making and for a better control over local resources or better distributive justice. The centripetal forces operating at the ethnological and cultural plane, leading the sub-tribal boundaries- a product of hostile geography and history- towards convergence, seem to be working in reverse direction creating ever smaller and smaller ethnic boundaries or consciousness based on political boundaries, dialectal difference and sub-tribal official recognition mainly due to the failure of developmental efforts in the Zeliangrong country.

In the above discussion, I have documented the historical and political processes thereby providing a brief ethno-historical profile of the Zeliangrong Nagas. The discussion shows that ethnicity is closely linked with the ethnocentric nature of state-sponsored developmental programmes. Also, the Zeliangrong case shows the complexity of ethnic groups and ethnicity in northeast India which is a fallout of colonialism. The discussion highlights that ethnicity and its resilience has more to do with the response of the system within and against which it operates rather than primordial characteristics. As the chances of getting a state for themselves (for which they struggled for so long) grow dimmer, a process of identity evaluation seems to have directed their sense of self-identification for their own gains. The role of state becomes quite eminent here. It was the state that divided them into different administrative units. In the process, the emergence of ethnic politics in these units created a situation where discrimination between the same groups starts operating based on the political boundaries created by the state without their consent. Overall, the discussion shows the instrumentality of ethnicity.

CHAPTER – V

Conclusion

The dissertation is an attempt to place in a theoretical framework the various dynamics of change such as modernization and development processes mediated by the state, and how it has helped ethnicity to assert itself with special reference to the northeast of India. The foregoing chapters have dealt in the detail the basic nuances of ethnicity from different perspectives. Ethnic assertion and mobilization as a worldwide phenomenon have been strongly felt in the northeast of India, especially in the aftermath of the coming of modern development since independence. As a global phenomenon, ethnicity has come to stay. It has become a fact of everyday life. Contrary to the expectations of both the liberal and the Marxist schools of thought who assumed that, ethnicity as primordial sentiments, attachment and false consciousness would disappear in the course of development, ethnic factors have come up to pose a challenge to the state and state development programmes. In fact, development as directed social change, posed, designed, desired and hence pursued by the state, has created a fertile ground for the emergence of ethnic identity mobilizations, particularly in the northeast India.

With regard to the effect of modernization and development on the ethnic groups of northeast of India, one finds that despite the developmental processes in the region and modernization of its infrastructure, its way of life, ethnic identities seem to deepen and ethnic conflict seems to intensify. Instead of helping the ethnic and other differences to 'wither away' or disappear, it has actually hardened cultural and ethnic identities, and even provoked conflicts and generated violence across the region.

A review of literature on ethnicity shows that ethnicity is a dynamic and multi-dimensional phenomenon which differs in its manner and intensity of expression, depending upon the context. It is determined by the historical, political and socio-economic conditions under which it operates, originates and gets activated. Though attempts have been made by sociologists, anthropologists and other social scientists, there

is no definition of ethnicity that is acceptable to all, and the meaning and usage differ from context to context basing on the aspirations of the people or society concerned. Moreover, there is no consensus on what constitutes an ethnic group. It is because there is no fixed marker or criteria for defining ethnicity or ethnic group. However, the common thread to all discussions of ethnicity is culture and identity. But culture and identity can be understood only as a process. It is so, because one's social and cultural identities are not fixed or permanent, but are dynamic and have to be properly located within the specific context. One's cultural identity is never a final settled matter. And ethnicity as an ascriptive phenomenon based on primordial characteristics such as language, religion, culture, geographical territory, etc., is readily politicized in certain historical and economic circumstances. Hence, ethnic groups are always in the process of change depending upon the historical, political and socio-economic contexts.

Though there are various streams of thought and theoretical perspectives on such a popular topic as ethnicity, the dissertation is agreement with Eriksen's (1993) position that, despite various approaches, ethnicity is an aspect of relationship, and that ethnicity has something to do with classification of people and group relationship, in short, groups who consider themselves and are regarded by others as being culturally distinct or otherwise. Ethnicity is best seen as relationships and as social process – the moving of boundaries and identities which people collectively and individually draw around them in their social lives. Ethnicity is a process which emerged through interaction between different peoples, colonization, immigration and conquest. For sociologists like Oommen (1988), the rupture between territory and other primordial attributes creates ethnicity. As a process, the meaning of ethnicity can only be understood in context, evolving within the flow of history and according to the particular social circumstances of a given people at different points in time. Reviewing the available literature and ethnic movements in India, Yogendra Singh (1993) concludes that ethnicity in the Indian context could best refer to processes of mobilization of social categories and communities for self-conscious articulation of their social, cultural, economic and political development in society.

However, the appropriateness of the term 'ethnicity' to the mobilization of various ethnic groups has been debated by the sociologists from the northeast region (e.g. Nunthara, 2000) as they have been occupying their ancestral territories for centuries. Also, they are not 'ethnie' – people who are uprooted from their homeland (Oommen 1990:10) – but correspond to 'nationality' because they have the needed psychological identification with and successful moral claims over the territories in which they live. In this sense, the case of the northeast India is quite unique from the rest of the country. So considered in this line, India can be termed as a multi-national, multi-cultural, political entity.

However, unlike in other parts of India where community identities and communal movements are the focus of media and academic research, ethnic identity and ethnic movements are extensively used for explaining the social and political ferments that are seen in northeast India. The reason for this is not difficult to find. Dipankar Gupta (1996) argues that in an ethnic situation, the nation-state is questioned and perceived as being partisan, and the issues that come to the forefront are those of territory and sovereignty. The question of 'outsiders' is raised whenever mobilisation of people on the basis of ethnic consciousness takes place. This holds true in the context of the northeast India. As the state is supposed to manage the affairs of the society, the ethnic groups put pressure on the state to take certain policy decisions to accommodate their socio-economic and political demands. And it is this posturing against the state (Indian nation-state) which qualifies most of the social movements in northeast India as ethnic movements.

In order to understand the process of ethnic identity formation in northeast India, it is important to look into the wider context of the historical, social, political and economic structures of the people and the region as a whole. In the northeast India, the process of ethnicity is a result of the transformation of ethnic groups into self-conscious political entities. This happened through the impact of colonial rule and administration, their conversion into Christianity and the emergence of educated middle class. In this context, the ethnic groups, till the advent of the British had their own political autonomy.

Social relations between the hill peoples and the plain peoples were minimal. The tribal life was associated with complete freedom, unrestricted movement and action, exclusiveness and insularity from outside forces. This was possible because of the rugged hilly terrains, river valleys and dense forests, making the society ethnically diverse. The spatial segregation led to individual traditions and both culture and terrain divided the regions several times over which determined the nature of ethnic process that operated in the region. Unlike the tribes in other parts of India, the tribes of the northeast were able to retain control over their land and traditional life-style, because the British followed the policy of non-interference, especially evolved for the region. In the seclusion of the hills, untouched by historic civilizations, the tribal groups retained their traditional forms of economy, social organizations, rituals and beliefs.

In a sense, it was the British colonial administration that laid the framework for emergence of ethnicity as a potent political force among the tribes. The British policy of non-interference by way of Inner-Line Regulations, the classification of tribal areas into Excluded Areas and Partially Excluded Areas became one of the basic foundations for further delineation of ethnic boundaries. Various plans mooted to convert the hill areas into British Crown Colony, the Northeastern Province and Northeast Frontier Agency, and the arguments given in favour of these plans that tribals of northeast India were racially, linguistically, culturally and economically distinct from Indians with whom they have been tagged along by historical accident had paved the way for future political consciousness along ethnic lines. The British colonial rule and the cultural contact brought about changes in technology, institutions, ideology and values of the tribal society. Political and ethnic consciousness took shape among the few educated middle class educated at mission schools established by the British missionaries. Education became the pillar of westernization and social change. Ideas of nation, nationalism, sovereignty, freedom and liberty took shape in the minds of this section of the educated middle class. With growth of literature in various dialects, heavily influenced by western literature, the study of origin, migration and settlement began which led to the discovery and emergence of their own distinct identity. This changed their outlook and thought patterns regarding their neighbouring tribes and helped in uniting some of the small and

marginal groups into a single and broader entity. The growth of English as a lingua franca in the region eventually became a unifying bond among themselves as well as the outside world.

The impact of both the First and Second World Wars had an interesting impact on the northeast as a whole, especially among the Nagas. The Nagas who were sent to France during the First World War and their contact with different nationalities helped them to conceive of themselves as part of the larger world as a nation. Moreover, the wars brought foreign nationalities to the northeast India. The wars necessitated building of road and communication links to mobilize man and resources which led to the breaking down of their centuries-old isolation from the outside world. This began the process of modern forces having a big say in the affairs of the peoples in the northeast. Thereafter, a strong sense of unity emerged and the possibility freedom in near future, the growing sense of ethnic identity among different communities and fear of loosing identities were looming large on the horizon on the eve of India's independence.

The attainment of independence generated ethnic tension in the state of Assam. It was because though Assam was a state artificially created by the colonial rulers without any regard to history, ethnicity and other social factors; it retained its status as a full-fledged state in India. The problem of ethnicity crops up when the term 'nation' is applied to societies such as the Nagas, the Mizos, etc. as it is very often considered by the state as a threat to the nation-state and national integration. In the context of the northeast of India, different 'nationalities' have their own history, language and ancestral culture which distinguish them from the mainstream and between and among themselves. In this context, any effort to liquidate the different culture and assimilate them into an artificially contrive 'national cultural mainstream' would invariably create unbearable stress and strain on the state polity. Unfortunately, the ruling elites which inherited the political legacy of the British did not take into account the ethnic diversity and followed a biased policy in favour of the majority. The Assamese chauvinism and their hegemonic design of imposing their language on the hill districts led to the rise of ethnicity among the hill tribes. The objective differences such as language, religion and territory were

transformed into group culture and bases of consciousness of group solidarity thereby giving rise to the process of ethnicity. In this context, ethnic identity assertion and conflict in northeast India which involved a particular ethnic group as against the state can be categorized as a reaction against cultural and political assimilation. And the attempt to ignore this fact through assimilation, political and administrative imposition, division of their ancestral homeland between nation-states (e.g. the Nagas) or into different administrative units has rendered them into ethnic groups. The process of integration and economic development in Assam during the post-independence period gave way to the gradual emergence of two distinctly different types of inequalities, viz. economic inequality within the Assamese community and social inequality consisting of economic, status, and political inequalities between Assamese and the tribal communities in Assam. This growing sense of social inequalities created a sense of relative deprivation among the hill tribes. The result was the final parting of way. Nagaland was the first to go, followed by Meghalaya, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. The birth of Nagaland marked an important milestone in ethnic politics as it opened a new vista of hope for other identity conscious tribes to demand for autonomy and separation from Assam. Ethnicity emerged as a strong basis of pressure politics.

Thus, paradoxically, the rise of ethnicity in the northeast India began with the process of nation building because the state failed to appreciate the political and cultural distinctiveness of tribes and sought to include them against their will within the state of Assam. Crystallization of identity consciousness began to take roots hereafter, cutting across tribes irrespective of their size or number.

However, while the major tribes achieved their political goal, the formation of hill states left many tribes straddling between different administrative units (e.g. the Zeliangrongs, the Chin-Kukis, etc.), thereby further marginalizing and reducing them into political minorities. Meanwhile, a paradigm shift in ethnic politics took place – the tendency towards secessionism was replaced by that of separatism – a search for autonomy within the Indian constitution. This happened as the power and resources

wielded by the state proved too formidable for the tribal elites who became well-entrenched in the system and had high stakes in the dispensation.

Identity formation on a wider scale and its assertion may be viewed as a part of the overall process of social change and modernization in northeast India. As a process, ethnicity cannot be understood unless the issues of social differentiation, process of class formation and development of conflicts are considered in the context of their articulation. The rise of the middle class among the various communities in northeast India accentuated the process of ethnic identity mobilization. Ethnicity became a legitimate political force and was harnessed an ideology as well a device to raise greater share of power and authority. Modernization increased the level of competition for jobs and other scarce resources among the ethnic groups. The awareness created by the process of development and democracy made the various ethnic groups more assertive, particularly after the formation of the hill states in the northeast India. The emerging elites of these communities sought to give an ethnic colour to their problems in order to gain politically as well as economically.

It is pertinent at this point to note that whereas elsewhere the democratic system grew out of bourgeoisie societies and capitalist economies, in the tribal areas of northeast India, democratic political institutions have been transplanted to become instruments of social and economic change. It is also to be noted that the formation of the so-called Seven Sisters states in the region was a political strategy of the Centre and so, from the political direction there is little scope for forging closer harmony among the states for integrated development approach. As a result, the elite competition and division among the new educated middle class led to the internal contradictions and struggle for power and resources which further led to competition for scarce resources along ethnic lines.

The northeast has a long history of neglect, suppression and exploitation. The capitalist path of development has generated regional disparities rendering the region into colonial hinterland. Not only is the region underdeveloped but unevenly developed. Partition and the abnormal increase in population due to the massive influx of

'foreigners' and 'outsiders' over the years had far reaching and crippling effect on the economy of the region. By and large, the region suffers from industrial and economic backwardness, the pre-dominantly rural character of its economy, the poor means of transportation, the colonial type of exploitation of resources and very high rates of unemployment among the youth. Economists and planners are of the view that the economic growth in the region so far has been too inadequate to make the process continuous and beneficial all sections of the society. The overwhelming dependence on central government funds and on non-northeast states for manufacturing products, skilled man-power and capital is accountable for the lopsided economic growth of the region. Not only does migration continue unabated but also development as a 'pull factor' brings foreign nationalities and 'outsiders' to the region large enough to cause serious economic and social problems and pose a grave threat to the cultural identity of various communities in this region.

The pressure on land is increasing day by day due to increase in population and low carrying capacity of land under the tradition of jhum cultivation. While tribal culture, identity and livelihood are closely tied to land and forest, commoditization of land and the steady erosion of the tribal lands and degradation of their environment have sharpened ethnic discontentment. The fear of marginalization, alienation in the face of reckless depletion of their natural resources results in the hardening of ethnic identities, and exclusive claims to livelihood to the exclusion of all others. The widespread identity crisis in northeast India is caused also by the threat from the migrants and their total dependence on land and state apparatus. The middle class politicize the identity issue in their attempt to survive by strengthening their positions in the competition for power, resources, jobs and other development benefits. This class plays ethnic politics and the resultant ethnocentric nature of state-sponsored development breed a sense of relative deprivation among the smaller and peripheral ethnic groups. In the face of economic crisis and politicization of ethnic identity and ethnicization of politics, the ethnic consciousness gets sharpened even within the same group to redefine their identity to overcome any perceived or real hurdle to development or maintain their status quo so as

to protect their privileged position within a particular state structure. Social redefinition can be attributed first and foremost to the breakdown of development in northeast India.

Today the most important factor in the analysis of ethnicity is the class nature of the present day ethnic groups, the underdevelopment of the economy and scarcity of resources. The underdevelopment of the economy results in the uneven development of the economy in tribal societies and this uneven growth brings the problem of tribal or ethnic identity in the limelight. One reason for ethnic movements lies in the conflict of control of political power and economic resources by the elite of the tribal societies and neighbouring societies. The problem of insurgency is a militant assertion for a share of its limited economic resources by various ethnic groups. The rising ethnic expressions in the northeast are expressed through regional movements on cultural identity crisis the basis of which is economic. Thus, the rise of ethnicity can be attributed to failures of developmental efforts.

In the context of the northeast India, the quest for new identity can be considered as an adaptive mechanism to the changed social, cultural and political circumstances. Ethnicity and identity movements are a new kind of interest articulation through which people are trying to achieve ethnic equality in a multi-ethnic polity – a precondition for integration of the tribesmen in the wider body politic of India.

We can discern from the above discussion that the process of ethnicity has been responsible for various changes whether political, economic, social or cultural. The inter-relationship between political economy, ethnicity and the framework of political interaction, is still indispensable to understanding political and social processes in northeast India. The prescription for the rectification of social and political problems in the region cannot be adequately tackled without a thoroughgoing review of the concept of nationalism and ethnicity, development and the state. Those truly and those concerned with ameliorating the exigencies of the contemporary northeast experience must first face the preliminary challenge of changing the perception and operationalisation of this fundamental processes and reassessing their inter-relationship.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abercrombie, N. Hill, S. and Turner B.S. (1994), *Dictionary of Sociology*, London: Penguin

Ahluwalia, J. Singh (2000), "A Holistic Approach to Ethnicity: A Postmodernist Perspective", Presidential Address, International Conference on Ethnicity, Patiala: Punjabi University.

Amar, K.P. (2003), "Nagaland Economy on the Road to Prosperity", in *The Assam Tribune*, Guwahati, December, 3.

A syndicate Report (1995), "Understanding Ethnic Unrest in Indian Peripheries – A syndicate Report" in P.S. Datta (ed), *The North-east and the Indian State: Paradoxes of a Periphery*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.

Ayoade, John A.A. (1986), "Ethnic Politics in Nigeria: A Conceptual Reformation", in Dennis L.Thompson and Dov Ronen (ed), *Ethnicity, Politics and Development*, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Banks, Marcus (1996), *Ethnicity: Anthropological Constructions*, London: Routledge.

Barpujari, H.K. 1998), *India's North-East Problems Policies and Prospects Since Independence*, Guwahati, Spectrum publications.

Barth, Fredrik (ed) (1969), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Differences*, London: George Allen and Unwin.

Baruah, Sanjib (2003 a), "Nationalizing Space: Cosmetic Federalism and the Politics of Development in North-east India", in *Development and Change*, Vol. 34, No.5 November, The Hague: Blackwell publishing.

_____ (2003 b), "Confronting Constructionism: Ending India's Naga War", seminar paper presented on 22, January, New Delhi: CPS/SSS, J.N.U.

Bell, Daniel (1975), "Ethnicity and Social Change" in Glazer and Moynihan (eds) *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, Cambridge M.A: Harvard University Press.

Bhagabati, A.C. (1992), "Perspectives on Ethno-cultural Identity Movements in North-eastern India", in K.S. Singh (ed), *Ethnicity, Caste and People*, New Delhi: Manohar Publications.

Bhattacharjee, S.R. (1989), *Tribal Insurgency in Tripura: A Study of Exploration of Causes*, New Delhi: Inter-India Publications.

Borah, Dhrubajyoti (1995), "Understanding Assam and North-east", in P.S. Datta (ed), *The North-east and the Indian State: Paradoxes of a Periphery*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.

Bose M.C. (1989), *Social History of Assam: Being a Study of the Origin of Ethnic Identity and Social Tension During The British period 1905-1947*, New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.

Bottomore, T.B. (1983), *Sociology: A Guide to Problems and Literature*, fourth Indian reprint, Bombay: Blackie and Son Publisher Pvt. Ltd.

Brass, Paul (1985), *Ethnic Groups and the State*, London: Groom Helm.

_____(1991), *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Chazan, Noami (1986), "Ethnicity in Economic Crisis: Development Strategies and Patterns of Ethnicity in Africa", in Dennis L. Thompson and Dov Ronen (eds), *Ethnicity, Politics and Development*, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Chapman, M. Maryon McDonald and Elizabeth, T. (1989), *History and Ethnicity*, London: Routledge.

Cheung, L.Mee-Yen and Parming, T. (1980), "Modernisation and Ethnicity", in Dofny, Jacques and Akiwowo, Akinsola (eds) *National and Ethnic Movements*, Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

Conner, W. (1972), "Nation Building or Nation Destroying?", *World Politics*, 24(3);(332-355).

Chaudhury, N.C. (2001), "Ethnic Identity and Ethnicity Processes in India: Some Theoretical Perspectives", *Journal Anthropological Survey of India*, Vol.50, No.1 and 2, March-June.

Das Gupta,Jyotidra (1975), "Ethnicity, Language Demands and national Development in India", in Nathan Glazer and D.P.Moynihan (eds), *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, Cambridge M.A: Havard University Press.

Das,Gurudas (1996), "Migration, Ethnicity and Competition for State Resources: Cause of Social and Tensions in The North-East", in Mehtabbudin Ahmed and Prosenjit Choudhury (eds),*The Turbulent North-east*, New Delhi: Akshar Publications.

125

_____(1997), "Understanding the Insurgency Phenomena in India's North-East: An Analytical Framework" in B. Pakem (ed), *Insurgency in North-East India*, New Delhi: Omsons Publications.

Dashefsky, A. (1976),(ed), *Ethnic Identity in Society*, Chicago: Rand Mcnally College Publishing Company.

Devalle, Susana B.C. (1992), *Discourses of Ethnicity: Culture and Protest in Jharkhand*, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Epstein, A.L. (1978), *Ethos and Identity: Three Studies in Ethnicity*, London: Tavistock Publications.

Eriksen, T.H. (1993), Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives, London: Pluto Press.

Fenton, Steve (1999), *Ethnicity: Racism, Class and Culture*, London: Macmillan.

_____ (2003), *Ethnicity*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Fernandes, W. (2003), "Development Environment and the Livelihood of the Poor in The North-east", *Social Action*, Vol.53, No.3, July-September.

Furer-Haimendorf, C. Von (1985), *Tribes of India: The Struggle for Survival*, Delhi: OUP.

_____ (1988), "Forward", in N. Sanajaoba (ed), *Manipur: Past and Present: The Heritage and Ordeals of a Civilisation*, Vol.1, New Delhi: Mittal Publications.

Ganguly J. B. (1984), "Economic Development and Social Tensions in the North-Eastern Region", in B.L. Abbi (ed), *North-East Region: Problems and Prospects of Development*, Chandigarh: Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development (CRRID).

Geertz, C. (1963), The Negative Revolution" in Clifford Geertz, (ed), *Old Society and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa*, New York: The Free Press.

Ghosh, Subir (2001), *Frontier Travails, North-East: The Politics of a Mess*, New Delhi: Macmillan.

Glazer, N. and Moynihan D.P. (1963), *Beyond The Melting Pot*, Cambridge M.A: Harvard University Press.

_____ (1975) (eds), *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, Cambridge M.A: Harvard University Press.

Gogoi, N.K. (1998), "Politics of Ethnicity in North-East India: An Appraisal", in A.K. Ghosh and M.K. Raha (eds), *North-East India: The Human Interface*, New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House.

Gonmei, Poujianlung (2004), "Makuilongdih and the Great Exodus: Are we Headed for another Exodus?", in *The Herei Ngam Hoi*, Vol. iv, Issue iii, March, New Delhi: A publication of Zeliangrong Christian Fellowship Delhi.

Goswami, Dipak (2003), "Demographic Profile of North-East India", *The Assam Tribune*, 29, December.

Gupta, Dipanker (1996), *The Context of Ethnicity: Sikh Identity in a Comparative Perspective*, Delhi: OUP.

Guiberneau, M. and Rex, J. (eds), (1997), *The Ethnicity Readers: Nationalism, Myth, Multiculturalism and Migration*, Cambridge: The Polity Press.

Hutnik, N. (199110, *Ethnic Minority and Identity: A Social Psychological Perspectives*, New Delhi: OUP.

Hussain, Monirul (1993), *The Assam Movement: Class, Ideology and Identity*, New Delhi: Konark Publications.

Hazarika, S. (1994), *Strangers of the Mist: The Tales of War and Peace from India's North-east*, New Delhi: Penguin Books.

Jackson, R.H. (1984), "Ethnicity" in Giovanni Sartori (ed), *Social Science Concepts*, Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

Jenkins, R. (1997), *Rethinking Ethnicity: Arguments and Explorations*, London: Sage Publications.

Jeyaseelan, L. (1999), "Impact of Christianity on the Tribal Society of Manipur", in Dr. Gailangam Kamei and Dr. Gina Shangkhan (eds), *Change and Continuity in the Tribal Society of Manipur*, Imphal: Manipur Tribal Students' Union.

Jodhka, S.S. (2001), *Community and Identity: Contemporary Discourses on Culture and Politics in India*, Delhi: Sage Publications.

Kamei, Gaichanglungliu (1993), *The Zeliangrong Nagas: An Analysis on some Socio-political Aspect with Special Reference to Their Movement*, (unpublished) M. Phil. dissertation, New Delhi: CSSS/SSS, JNU.

Kamei, Gangmumei (1996), "Origin of the Nagas", in R. Vashum (et al) (eds) *Nagas at Work*, New Delhi: Naga Students' Union Delhi Publication.

_____ (1997), *Jadonnang: A mystic Rebel*, Guwahati: SPN Associates Pvt. Ltd.

_____ (2002), *Ethnicity and Social Change: An Anthology of Essays*, Imphal: Smt. Pouganglu Gangmei.

Kothari, Rajni (1989), "Ethnicity", in Kumar David and Santasilan Kadirgamar (eds), *Ethnicity: Identity, Conflict and Crisis*, Hong Kong: Arena Press.

Kumar B.B. (1994), *Trends in British Annexation of North-East India*, New Delhi: Omsons Publications.

Longmei, A.X. (1995), "Zeliangrong Movement: A Search for Identity" in *Sovenir, North-East India Zeliangrong Naga Festival-cum-Seminar*, Imphal: Literature and Souvenir Committee.

Martin, K.P. (1999), "The Evolution of Ethnic (Ethnicity): Integrating Psychological and Social Model", in Larry L. Naylor (ed), *Problems and Issues of Diversity in the United States*, Westport: Bargin and Carvey.

Miri, Sujata (1991), *Liangmai Nagas: Legends and Stories*, New Delhi: Har Anand Publications.

Misra, Udayon (1988), *North-East India: Quest for Identity* (A Collection of essays Socio-Political Topics), New Delhi: Omsons publications.

_____ (1991)(ed), *Nation Building and Development in North-East India*, Guwahati: Purbanchal Praskash.

Nagel, J. (1998), "Constructing Ethnicity: Creating and Recreating Ethnic Identity and Culture", in Michael W. Hughey (ed), *New Tribalism*, London: Macmillan.

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

.Narang, A.S. (1995), *Ethnic Identities and Federalism*, Shimla: IIAS.

Narayanan, L. (1989), *Ethnicity in Urban Context: The Gujaratis in Madras City*, Jaipur: Rawat Publications.

Newmai, H. (1995), "The Zeliangrong Identity", in *Souvenir*, North-East India Zeliangrong Naga Festival-Cum-Seminar, Imphal: Literature and Souvenir Committee.

Nongbri, Tiplut (1995), "Ethnicity and Political Activism in North-east: Tribal Identity and State Policy", in Datta P.S. (ed), *The North-East and the Indian State: Paradoxes of a Periphery*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.

Nunthara, C. (2000), "Ethnic Indentity Formation in Northeast India", in Phukon Girin (ed), *Political Dynamics of Northeast India: Essays in Honour B. Pakem*, New Delhi: South Asian Publishers.

Oommen, T.K. (1988), *Ethnicity, Immigration and Cultural Pluralism: India and United States of America*, New Delhi: CSSS/SSS, JNU.

_____ (1988), "Nation, State and Ethnicity: Towards a Conceptual Clarification and Empirical Explanation", *Social Action*, Vol.38,Octocber-December, pp.333-343.

_____ (1990), *State and Society in India*, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

_____ (1997), *Citizenship, Nationality and Ethnicity: Reconciling Competing Identities*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Pamei, Namthiubuiyang (2001), *The Trail from Makuilongdih: The Continuing Saga of the Zeliangrong People*, Tamenglong: Gironta Charitable Foundation.

Pamei, Rev. Ramkhun (1996), *The Zeliangrong Nagas: A Study of Tribal Christianity*, New Delhi: Uppal Publishing House.

Pakem,B. (1996), "Inaugural Address", in M.M. Agrawal (ed), *Ethnicity, Culture and Nationalism in North-East India*, New Delhi: Indus Publishing Company.

Pandey, D.K. (2004), "Police in a Fix Over Bangladeshis", The Hindu, 30, June, p.4.

Parsons, T. (1975), "Some Theoretical Considerations on the Native and Trends of Ethnicity", in Nathan Glazer and D.P. Moynihan (eds), *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, Cambridge M.A: Harvard University Press.

Pathy, J. (1988), *Ethnic Minorities in the Process of Development*, Jaipur: Rawat Publications.

Phadnis, Urmila (1990), *Ethnicity and Nation Building in South Asia*, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Phukon, Girin (2002)(ed), "Introduction", in Girin Phukon (ed), *Ethnicity and Polity in South Asia*, New Delhi: South Asia Publishers.

Ray, B. Datta (1989), *Tribal Identity and Tensions in North-East India*, New Delhi: Omsons Publications.

Remmei, Samson (1995), "A Brief Account of the all Zeliangrong Students' Union (AZSU)", in *Souvenir* of the North-East India Zeliangrong Naga Festival-cum-Seminar, Imphal: Literature and Souvenir Committee.

Riggs, Fred W. (1984), "Development", in Sartori Giovonni (ed), *Social Science Concepts: A Systematic Analysis*, Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

Ronen, Dov (1986), "Ethnicity, Politics and Development: An Introduction", in Dennis L. Thompson and Dov Ronen (eds), *Ethnicity, Politics and Development*, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Rothschild, J. (1981), Ethnopolitics: A Conceptual Framework, New York: Colombia University Press.

Roy, Burman,B.K. (1988), "The Naga Upsurge :Ethnic Identity and Social Change", *Social Action*, January-March, pp. 37-49.

Saha, R.K. (1999), "Ethnicity and Polity Development in Manipur" in Ajit K. Danda (ed), *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Integration*, Calcutta: The Asiatic Society.

Samuel, A.G. (2003), "Journey to and from the Fringe" in *The Heroi Ngam Hoi*, Vol. 3, Issue IX, September, New Delhi, a publication of Zeliangrong Christian Fellowship Delhi.

Saul, Jamie (1995), "Expanding Identities and the Zeliangrongs", in *Souvenir*, North-East India Zeliangrong Naga Festival-Cum-Seminar, Imphal: Literature and Souvenir Committee.

Sheth, D.L. (1989), "State, Nation and Ethnicity Experience of third World Countries", EPW, March 25.

Singh, Balgit (2002), "Nation-State, Ethnicity and Globalisation: An Analysis", in Gurnam Singh (ed), *Ethno-nationalism and Emerging World (Dis)order*, Delhi: Kanishka Publications.

Singh, Bhawani (1984), *Politics of Alienation in Assam*, Delhi: Ajanta Publications.

Singh B.P. (1987), *The problem of Change: A study of North-East India*, New Delhi: OUP.

Singh, H.K. (2004), "At the Centre's Mercy", *The Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, 29, June, p.10.

Singh, K.S. (1990), *Ethnicity, Identity and Development*, New Delhi: Manohar Publications.

Singh, Manju (1990), *Assam: Politics of Migration and Quest for Identity*, Jaipur: Amita Publications.

Singh, Yogendra (1993), *Social Change in India: Crisis and Resilience*, New Delhi: Har Anand Publications.

Sinha, A.C. (1984), "Managing the Consequences of smallness: The Development Strategy for the Small Indian Frontier State", in B.L. Abbi (ed), *North-East Region: Problems and Prospects of Development*, Chandigarh: Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development (CRRID).

_____ (1993), "Christianity and Ethnic Identity Among the Nagas", in Mrinal Miri (ed), *Continuity and Change in Tribal Society*, Shimla: IIAS.

Smith, A.D. (1981), *The Ethnic Revival*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

_____ (1986), *The Ethnic Origin of Nations*, Oxford: Blackwell Publications.

The Assam Tribune (2004), "NSF Raise Greater Nagaland Issue Afresh", in *The Assam Tribune*, 24th, February.

Upreti, B.C. (2002), "Ethnic Identity Consciousness and Nation Building in Plural Societies: Some Observations", in Gurnam Singh (ed), *Ethno-nationalism and the Emerging world (Dis)order*, New Delhi: Kaniska Publishers.

Verghese, B.G. (1996), *India's North-East Resurgent: Ethnicity, Insurgency, Governance, Development*, New Delhi: Konark Publishers.

Wallestein, I. (1986), "Societal Development or Development of the World System?", *International Sociology,*1(1):3-17.

Yunuo, Asoso (1974), *The Rising Nagas: A Political and Historical Study*, Delhi: Vivek Publications.

_____ (1982), *Nagas Struggle Against The British Rule Under Jadonang and Rani Gaidinliu 1925-1947*, Kohima: Leno Printing Press.

Zehol, Lucy (1998), *Ethnicity in Manipur: Experiences, Issues and Perspectives*, New Delhi: Regency Publications.

Zou, D.V. (2000), "A Micro-History of Conflict in Manipur 1990-2000"(unpublished), M. Phil. seminar paper submitted to CHS/SSS, JNU.