Social Change and Development

A Journal of OKD Institute of Social Change and Development

Vol. XIX , No. 2 **July** **2022**

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Book Review

'Natun' Regionalist Parties and Assam Assembly Elections (2021)

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Abstract

The results of the Assam Legislative Assembly elections (2021) were undoubtedly a big blow for the anti-CAA movement and the new political outfits, namely Raijor Dal (RD) and the Axom Jatiya Parishad (AJP). The biggest takeaway from these elections was the inability of the 'natun' regionalist parties to carve out a political space for themselves. The anti-CAA movement provided a platform for the two new regionalist parties; however, they were besieged with organisational challenges and a limited agenda. They failed to mount any credible challenge to the ruling establishment. This article concludes that the agenda of citizenship and illegal migration will remain on the political horizon for most parties; it only brings about limited dividends for the new parties. While it may not be the 'end' of regionalist parties in Assam, winning the electorate's confidence will be a substantial challenge for these two new parties to succeed.

Introduction

Central to any analysis of Indian parties and elections is one fundamental fact: the political necessity of coalition building often transcends programs, ideologies, and class interests (Weiner, 1982).

The anti-CAA movement in Assam had gained momentum, and the clamour for a *natun* or alternative party that would have helped secure Assam from foreigners and protect the rights of the indigenous peoples has certainly ended in a whimper. The issues that led to the formation of a regionalist party in Assam in 1985 continue to be prevalent even today; however, the *natun* (new) party failed to capitalise on it. The Assam Assembly elections (2021) reflect that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led 'Mitrajot'or alliance of friends has only strengthened their position and has not yet ceded any political space to these 'natun' parties. Furthermore, the electoral results only question the continuing relevance of the 'foreigners issue' in Assam. Divided

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into three sections, this paper focuses on the growth, aspirations and the role of regional parties in Assam along with their agenda, and fault lines. Additionally, it focuses on the the anti-CAA movement and its impact on the Assembly elections in Assam (2021).Finally, supplemented by the findings of Post Poll Survey-Assam Assembly Election Study (2021) conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS, New Delhi), it critically evaluates the electoral performance of the *natun* regionalist parties of Assam. This paper also analyses the reasons for the poor electoral performance of the two new political parties, namely the Raijor Dal (RD) and Axom Jatiya Parishad (AJP).

Regionalist Parties: Growth, Aspirations and Role

The strength of a democratic country is reflected in the robustness of the political parties and the goals it espouses. Under the first past the post system, electoral compulsions ensure that political digressions would come to the forefront and most political parties would fail to meet the expectations of the electorate. Most parties would 'compromise' or shift the goals to suit their needs in their quest to cross the line. Effectively, in a first past the post system, the political party's agenda, functioning and 'constituency' would be based on several permutations and combinations, effectively negating the concept of an ideal political party. A democratic polity is procedurally a level playing field for entry of all kinds of actors. However, the survivability of those actors, in the long run, depends on numerous factors. Critically, it not only depends upon what role a political party wants to play in the electoral battle, but its fortunes also depend upon how the electorates see a particular party. While political parties are well entrenched in a democratic polity, the emergence and success of a new political party largely depend on how it offers itself as a viable alternative to the already dominant parties.

National parties have a political advantage when compared to regional parties. Besides being endowed with more incredible financial prowess, organizationally, they are strong, hierarchical in nature, and deeply entrenched with regional leaders in most states across the country. The national parties also have formed governments in many states in India, either alone or through a coalition. However, even national parties have started focusing on a particular constituency of the society, which is identified in terms of religion, caste, ethnicity or tribe. As Suhas Palshikar points out, 'Parties are now increasingly trying to focus on specific sections or interests rather than claiming to be 'catch-all' parties' (Palshikar, 2004). Indian federalism has come under strain from various forces. The regional actors have raised their voices against all Indian parties, who represent dominant interests at the cost of regional aspirations.

Since the 1960s, in many states, both the national parties have been supplanted by regional parties (Ziegfeld, 2012) and' regionalist parties' (Kailash, 2014). The critical difference is that certain regional parties are spread across states (Samajwadi Party, Bahujan Samaj Party,Janata Dal (United),Rashtriya Janata Dal etc.). In contrast, regionalist parties continue to be confined to few pockets only (All India Anna Dravida

Munnetra Kazhagam, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, Shiromani Akali Dal, Asom Gana Parishad etc). As Kailash notes:

> *'Regionalist parties essentially make three types of claims. One, the so-called national parties are not addressing the interests of particular states, and they can do it better. Two, regional or state pride, honour, culture and so on must be protected. Three, they make demands on the Centre to relinquish power on certain subjects and areas (Kailash, 2014).'*

The strength of a regionalist party will vary according to the political exigencies. In states with two major regionalist parties, the national parties play an 'outsider role', State's like Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Jammu and Kashmir are some states where national parties support the regionalist parties. However, there is a role reversal regarding the Lok Sabha election and forming the government at the Centre. The regionalist parties assume secondary roles and become 'outsiders' and support the national party.

There are several instances where there is only one regionalist party in a state, *e.g.* Assam (Asom Gana Parishad), West Bengal (Trinamool Congress), Punjab (Shiramoni Akali Dal), Maharashtra (Shiv Sena), Orissa (Biju Janata Dal).The rise of such parties is often linked with opposition to the party at the Centre. In most cases, the rise of such regionalist parties is associated with opposition to the Congress dominant system at the centre and state level during the 1960s and 70s. At times, the emergence of such regionalist parties can be linked to voter apathy towards national parties at the state level. Often regionalist parties can be 'free-riders and will bandwagon along with the party that controls the purse. While there is no way to generalise the behaviour of regionalist parties in terms of alliance formation or their support for some agenda, what is clear is that in politics, the emergence of BJP as the major party has ruffled even regionalist parties under its camp. Ideally, no regionalist party would like to cede space to a national party at the cost of its political existence.

Regionalist Parties in Assam: Agenda, Fault Lines and Balkanisation

To state that Assam is an 'ethnic garden' is an understatement because this garden has become a turf-war wherein different groups compete for limited resources, each constructing its own identity and history while limiting the claims of others. Assam was never linguistically or ethnically monolithic. Instead, different groups have come to this region and have amalgamated to compose what we know as Assamese society. Beneath the composite Assamese identity lies several fault lines – Assamese language versus Bengali language, Upper Assam versus Lower Assam, tribals versus non-tribals, Indians versus foreigners, *axomiya* versus *na-axomiya* (neo-Assamese), indigenous versus outsiders *etc*. Such fault lines are subtle, but in times of electoral politics, scarce resources and the emergence of new elites, its ramifications can be felt in different aspects of society. Scholars like Sanjib Baruah (1994) have stressed the 'micro-nationalistic' politics that seems to dominate the political discourse in Assam.

The issue of illegal influx and language politics became the dominant themes in the 1970s. The stage was set for a new phase of politics in Assam wherein regional voices became louder, and sections of the society silently hailed resistance to 'New Delhi'. In 1979, the AASU staged the first state-wide strike for deleting the names of 'foreigners' from electoral rolls. The issue of 3Ds- *i.e.* 'detection' of foreigners, 'deletion' of names of foreigners from electoral rolls and 'deportation' of foreigners received widespread support from various quarters in Assam. The formation of All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad, a conglomerate of youth organisations, AASU and Asom Sahitya Sabha led the demand for the 1951 National Register for Citizens to determine the issue of citizenship and detection of foreigners. Mass agitations became a norm for the next six years. The anti-foreigners movement or 'Asom Andolan' was supported by different ethnic and tribal groups, social organisations and student unions from across the state. On December 12, 1983, the controversial IMDT Act was introduced and passed in Parliament, and this created a major furore in Assam. The 1983 Assam Assembly elections that followed were violent and farcical as the masses boycotted it. Incidentally, the "anti-foreigner" movement also gained momentum in other states of Northeast India where 'non-Bengali migrants, including Biharis, Punjabis, and Nepalis, were targeted (Roy &Singh, 2009).'

After years of protests and agitations by students unions, intelligentsia, cultural and tribal groups, it culminated in the signing of the historic Assam Accord in 1985. This accord was a Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) signed between representatives of the Government of India and the leaders of the Assam Movement in New Delhi on 15 August 1985, which sought to bring Assam agitation to an end soon paved the way for state elections in Assam. The 1985 Assam assembly elections saw the emergence of the AGP as the party that was supposed to represent indigenous interests. While the AGP did perform reasonably well in tribal and Muslim dominated constituencies (Baruah,1986; 1994), its support base continued to be somewhat limited; 'even at the height of its appeal, in the wake of the signing of the Assam accord and the formation of Assam's own regional party, the AGP could not work on its own win a majority of seats in the Assam assembly. Even in the Brahmaputra valley, its appeal was confined only to those areas where the Assam agitation had drawn support (Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 25, No. 5 (Feb. 3, 1990).' Much to the dismay of the electorates, 'when the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) came to power, they appeared to be in no hurry to secure those safeguards, and the centre fell into a profound slumber as far as the demand for 'constitutional safeguards for the Assamese' was concerned (Gohain,2008). The AGP failed to perform its key task, *i.e.* detect and deport foreigners. With the Assam Accord, voices of the tribal communities which were simmering, began to grow louder; the 'balkanisation of the state' had entered a rich phase wherein tribal groups had become increasingly militant in their demands for an autonomous homeland, especially Bodoland (Misra, 2000). The Lok Sabha Elections of 1996 and 1998 reveal that smaller ethnic parties could carve a support base for themselves. In the decade since 1991, Muslim alienation and tribal fragmentation have meant that

non-Ahomiya has begun to declare their native language, rather than Assamese, as their mother tongue (Borooah, 2013).Furthermore, the emergence of autonomous councils and non-territorial councils as a tool to placate tribal groups has further crystallised communities in Assam. Nearly every region in Assam is now witnessing some form of contention between communities that wield power and communities that are challenging the status quo.

The 2009 Lok Sabha elections was a turning point for the Congress in Assam, as it lost a major support base. Studies reveal that 'the Congress lost virtually all its immigrant Muslim voters; 78 per cent of them voted for the AUDF'[3] (Goswami, 2009). In the 2014 general elections, the BJP managed to make major inroads to constituencies in upper Assam, considered the Congress bastion. Tea garden community dominated Lok Sabha seats such as Tezpur, and Jorhat was wrestled from away the Congress by the BJP (Mahanta, 2014).The 'bandwagon effect' is now well deep-rooted amongst the regionalist parties in Assam. The AGP has always been part of the anti-congress coalition because of the historical baggage. Likewise, the AUDF is part of the Anti-BJP coalition because of 'ideological differences'. However, other regionalist parties like the BPF, which in 2011 supported the Congress party in Assam, now stands with the BJP at the the state level. Likewise, the Ganashakti Party, which had previously supported the policies and Congress government in Assam, now is aligned with the BJP. It is not surprising because smaller parties will invariably support that party that controls the purse at the state level in Assam. The BJP has now replaced Congress as the 'fulcrum party'[4](Konwer, 2019), wherein regionalist parties have aligned with it.[5]

In the formation of the government at the Centre, regionalist parties' performance in Assam has gradually reduced to being that of an 'outside party' of a larger alliance. The outsider party performs three essential functions: First, as a pre-poll alliance partner, it indulges in a seat-sharing arrangement; secondly, through negotiations, it seeks to make its presence felt in the Upper House of the Parliament; thirdly, it seeks to give legitimacy to the policies of the government at the state level. The AGP and the BPF have been reduced to an 'outsider party' in the NDA alliance system. Likewise, the AUDF, too, has attained that status in the UPA alliance system.

[3] AUDF was founded by Maulana Baduruddin Ajmal in 2005. However, the party was re-launched and got its current name i.e. All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) on 2nd February, 2009.

[4] In the 2014 Lok Sabha Elections (LSE), seats for the Congress party was reduced from seven to three; in contrast, BJP's seats increased from three to seven in the same. Besides, the vote share of Congress reduced from 34.9 per cent to 29.6 per cent in 2014. On the contrary, there was a significant rise (20.18 per cent) in the vote share of the BJP. The party which got 16.62 per cent of votes in 2009 LSE got 36.8 percent in 2014 LSE.

[5] The formation of UPPL under the leadership of Promod Boro and its alliance with the BJP brought about major electoral dividends for this new party. For more than 15 years, Bodoland was dominated by the BPF; the anti-incumbency factor was clearly visible as the number of seats for the BPF was reduced from 12 to four seats in 2021 Assembly election.

Table 1: Performance of Political Parties- Lok-Sabha Elections

Political Parties	1991		1996		1998		1999		2004		2009		2014		2019	
	Seats	% Votes	Seats	% Votes	Seats	% Votes	Seats	% Votes	Seats	% Votes	Seats	% Votes	Seats	% Votes	Seats	% Votes
INC	8	28.5	5	31.6	10	38.97	10	38.42	9	35.07	7	34.9	3	29.6	3	35.79
AGP	1	17.6	5	27.2	0	12.7	0	11.92	2	19.55	1	14.6	0	3.8	0	8.31
BJP	2	9.6	1	15.9	1	24.47	2	29.84	2	22.94	4	16.62	7	36.8	9	36.41
AIUDF											1	16.1	3	14.9	1	7.87

Source: Election Commission of India

Table 2: Performance of Political Parties-Assam Assembly Election

	2006		2011		2016		2021	
Party	Seats	Vote Share (%)	Seats	Vote Share (%)	Seats	Vote Share (%)	Seats	Vote Share (%)
AGP	24	20.39	10	16.29	14	8.14	9	7.91
AIUDF	10	9.03	18	12.57	13	13.05	16	9.29
BPF	-	-	12	6.13	12	3.94	4	3.39%
BJP	10	11.98	5	11.47	60	29.51	60	33.21
INC	53	31.08	78	39.39	26	30.96	29	29.67
IND. and others	7	8.23	2	9.17	1	11.51	8	19.89

Source: Election Commission of India

Lack of vision, poor administrative capacity, and corruption issues have stalked the AGP for quite some time now. There has been a steady erosion of its support base, and the BJP emerged as a powerful alternative to the Congress party. The emergence of tribal parties too did not help the cause of the AGP; the AGP has become not only the 'outsider party' of the NDA alliance at the Centre, and worryingly, it has assumed this role at the state level too.[6]

For the state of Assam, 2020 started tumultuously. The introduction of the CAA in 2019 in the Parliament and the vociferous support given to it by the Assam BJP unit had led to major heart burn amongst the vast sections of the people of Assam. It renewed the debate amongst the section of the society on the need for a new political party in the state of Assam that would protect the rights and culture of indigenous people. With state assembly elections in 2021, the decision had come for the anti CAA protestors to take the call- to start a new political party or to support those parties which support the anti CAA agenda. While 'spontaneity' had come to be associated with most of the anti-CAA protestors, political commentators, student community as well at other ethnic groups had stressed the need for an alternative political party that could genuinely challenge the imposition of CAA in the state of Assam and pursue the implementation of Clause 6 of the Assam Accord in a more upfront manner. In general, the public in general, upper Assam in particular had accused the existing mainstream parties such as the BJP, Congress, and the AGP of betraying the cause of the *'khilonjiyas'* (as known as indigenous). The subsequent events on the ground led to the formation of two new parties; the anti-CAA movement was on shaky grounds.

Anti-CAA and Assembly Elections in Assam (March –April 2021)

The importance of Duverger's law- "the simple majority, single ballot system favours the two-party system" (Riker, 1976) may hold in many parts of the world. However, in India, the emergence of parties is linked to certain socio-political circumstances. Even after 35 years of the historic Assam Accord, the vexed issue of *'bideshi*' (foreigners) in Assam continues to shape the state's political agenda. Indeed, as Goswami (2011) notes, the structural reasons that have produced regional parties in Assam have not disappeared. Rather these may be present in some areas even more tensely but in a dormant state. In the 2019 Lok-Sabha Elections, despite vociferous opposition from civil society groups and student union groups like the AASU and the NESO, the BJP-NDA alliance won 9 parliamentary seats in Assam. While there was little unison between the different groups that led the anti-CAB opposition, this greatly benefitted the BJP led NDA alliance. The transformation of CAB to CAA has renewed protests in many parts of Assam. While numbers continue to be debated and discussed across political and academic circles, the introduction of the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019,has given a new impetus to the anti-foreigners movement in Assam.

[6] Though there has not been significant reduction in the vote share of AGP, its seat share has reduced from 14 seats in 2016 to nine seats in 2021 Assam assembly election.

Opposition to the CAA comes from different quarters- students and youth bodies (AASU & AJYCP, KMSS), the *xilpis* (artists) of Assam- who consists of artists, members of the Assamese film industry singers and litterateurs, the political parties like Congress and the AUDF. Incidentally, even as it continues to consort the BJP, the AGP has filed a petition against the CAA in the Supreme Court of India. In the first two months of 2020, Assam has been gripped between two types of rallies-anti CAA rallies and pro-peace rallies led by BJP and the AGP. So, the ambivalent position of AGP on the issue of CAA has not only hurt its credibility, but it was subject to ridicule from all walks of life. Even its party members have raised slogans against CAA and party higher-ups in front of the headquarters in Ambari, Guwahati. Pressure groups like the AASU, AJYCP and the KMSS have criticised the Modi-Shah led government at the Centre and Sarba-Himanta combination at the state level. Though the AASU and the AGP have had very cordial relations in the past, 'AASU leaders have, time and again, been asserting the independent status of their organisation and have cautioned the AGP government not to take AASU's support for granted (Misra,1987).

Like in the past, the AASU saw itself as 'the custodian of Assamese civil society' (Baruah,1994); AASU has been at the forefront of this Anti-CAA movement. The violent anti-CAA protests in Guwahati soon paved for peaceful protests across the state. Famous figures like Zubeen Garg led them, and people in large numbers from all walks of life did join these protests across different parts of the state. Under these circumstances, the talk for the need for a new political party gained momentum; a party that would implement the Assam Accord and whose key agenda would be to prevent entry, detect and deport all foreigners. AASU General Secretary Lurinjyoti Gogoi said, "We sense that there is a strong desire of the people to have a new political party. We will discuss this in our state executive and delegate-level meetings. We will form a new political party if people want. The rise of an alternative political force in Assam is inevitable if people want us to do so (The Times of India, 2020)."

Meanwhile, ahead of the 2021 Assam Assembly elections, Akhil Gogoi led KMSS announced a new political party, Raijor Dal. The formation of these two parties came at a time when the Congress and AIUDF, along with the Communist Party of India, CPI (Marxist), the CPI (Marxist-Leninist) and the Anchalik Gana Morcha, announced the formation of the *'Mahajot'* or grand alliance. With less than two months for the assembly elections, an alliance between RD and the AJP was announced as events on the ground unfolded.[7]

[7]See the Sentinel digital desk (February 4, 2021), "Assam Polls 2021: AJP-Raijor Dal Alliance Finalised: AJP President Lurinjyoti Gogoi", https://www.sentinelassam.com/north-east-india-news/assam-news/assam-polls-2021-ajp-raijor-dal-alliance-finalised-ajp-president-lurinjyoti-gogoi-523400, accessed on 05/05/2021.

Mapping the Electoral Performance of the New Parties in Assam

When compared to the BJP[8], the two new parties are in a nascent stage. For Palshikar, the BJP has emerged as the 'second dominant party system'. It has successfully woven the ideas of Hindutva, nationalism, and development (Palshikar, 2017); this formula has worked in its favour in most elections. The BJP is forever in an election mode; it never rests on its electoral laurels. At the ground level, its senior leaders and 'pannapramukhs' are equally connected with the voters. Based on demography and voter composition, the leadership scrutinises the list of candidates and the seat-sharing arrangement well in advance.

In contrast to the BJP, with elections in the last week of March 2021, the decision of the RD and the AJP to form a 'united regional front' came in rather late. It indeed led to significant problems of seat-sharing arrangement, a limited manifesto and 'friendly' contests in many electoral constituencies. Again, the foundation of these two parties was based on shaky ground. The anti-CAA protests, which saw days of protests in Guwahati, were seen as imperative strides in protecting the rights of indigenous Assamese people. Musicians, actors, poets and essential members of the civil society came forward to highlight the dangers of CAA. It was expected that such groups would continue to play an essential role in supporting the new parties electorally. The urban middle class broadly welcomed the birth of not one but two new regionalist parties in Assam; however, in the political circles, the murmurs of a power struggle between the different leaders became louder with time.

However, the dearth of planning was further reflected in the inability of the R.D. to register itself as a party with the Election Commission; as such, all their candidates contested the elections as independent candidates. Lacking a common election symbol and with a limited agenda, the voters of Assam could not identify with RD or its vision. Moreover, the inability to fight elections under a standard banner and the incapability to produce a joint manifesto only reflects the state of poor coordination between the leaders of two parties. Both parties were organizationally undercooked and lacked the financial clout to challenge the BJP and its allies effectively.

Furthermore, the poor organizational network, and lack of leadership at the grassroot level also arrtibuted to the poor performance of both the parties. However, so far as RD is concerned, the concentration of leadership in the hands of Akhil Gogoi who was in jail throughout the campaign period, did not help its cause. It became increasingly difficult for supporters of Akhil Gogoi and party personnel of RD to coordinate its plans and programmes with the AJP. As a result, substantial number of 'friendly contests' was witnessed in several Assembly seats. Assam which was all set for a triangular contest in the 2021 Assembly elections, but as results trickled (3 May 2021), it only

[8] There has been no change in the BJP's seats share; importantly, when compared to 2016 assembly elections, their vote share has increased by three per cent in 2021 elections.

revealed the electoral dominance of the saffron party and the deficiencies of the *natun* parties. The BJP led 'Mitrajot' secured 75 out of 126 seats and it reflected the extensive reach of the saffron party. The electoral success of the BJP can also be attributed to the success of its 'rainbow coalition' and 'hyper-populist' welfare schemes (Sultana, 2021).The rise of 'beneficiary politics' coupled with the BJP war cries to protect '*jati, mati, bheti'* (community, land, and hearth) was enough to secure a second term in the State Assembly. The growth in the number of 'beneficiaries' is a prominent political coup for the BJP, for it enabled the government to masquerade its failures. Additionally, the narrative of 'threat to Assamese language, culture and identity from Banglageshis' found resonance in most election rallies of the BJP. Polarising issues such as the NRC and the uncontrolled population growth of East-Bengal origin Muslims further reinforced this threat. With the AIUDF increasingly being identified by the BJP as a 'party for the immigrants', the 2021 Assembly elections in Assam was communally charged. Of course, during the election campaign, the dynamism and leadership skills of Himanta Biswa Sarmah were all too visible, who ran a highly polarized election campaign. The result was fruitful for the BJP; it consolidated the Hindu votes in upper Assam, northern belt, and the Barak Valley and the BJP secured a landslide victory. Subsequently, Sarmah went on to occupy the top seat of the Assam Government.

In contrast, the abysmal electoral performance of the two new regionalist parties, the AJP and RD, can be attributed to a combination of factors that could have been avoided through planning or a little cajoling. Protests movements led by the civil society groups against state policies do not necessarily bring an electoral windfall for the opposition parties. While it did shake the confidence of the ruling party, it was not enough for the voters of Assam to lose faith in the government. With a sample size of 3473 respondents, the "Assam Assembly Election Study - 2021 Post Poll Survey', conducted by the Centre for the Developing Societies (CSDS, New Delhi), reveals that though it seemed that anti-CAA protests did spread to many districts across Assam, it remained a rather oblivious issue for the majority of the electorate. Furthermore, some of the key points that have emerged from this survey are:

- The anti-CAA movement was confined mainly to urban areas of the state, and most tribal Assam continued to remain unaffected by its cacophony. The Post Poll Survey reflects that only 47.6 per cent of the urban voters and 43.7per cent of rural voters 'fully' opposed the CAA. The anti-CAA movement never became an electoral concern for most of the voters in Assam. The poor performance of the two new parties was its over-reliance on the anti-CAA.
- Despite all challenges, the BJP's support base in rural and urban areas is high compared to Congress and other political parties. The study shows that while 14.1 per cent of rural voters voted for Congress, 17.5 per cent voted for BJP. Likewise, when compared to Congress and other parties in urban areas, the BJP enjoyed a very comfortable support base; 16.3 per cent voted for BJP while only 5.3 per cent voted for Congress.

- In the post-poll study, it has been found that out of the total respondent, 26.6 per cent of CAA supporters voted for BJP. The study also reveals that for those who opposed the controversial legislation, 16.9 per cent voted for Congress, and 16.1 per cent voted for the BJP. Effectively the anti-CAA supporters were split, some supporting even the BJP. Essentially for some of the electorate, while they supported the anti-CAA movement, they voted for the BJP because factors beyond the CAA influenced their voting behaviour. The anti-CAA movement had no impact on the ruling party's vote share; instead, BJP's vote share increased further by 3.71per cent when compared to the 2016 Assembly elections (29.50 per cent). Electorally, the two new regionalist parties did not benefit from the anti-CAA protests.
- While the anti CAA agitations might have affected BJPs image briefly, the onset of the Covid19 pandemic (March 2020) gave enough time to the saffron party to regroup and subsequently embark on a slew of schemes to woo the voters in Assam. The Atal Amrit Abhiyan Health Insurance Scheme, wherein 85,717 people had received treatment, was broadly welcomed by the people of Assam. Additionally, schemes like the Assam Orunodoi Scheme, Arundhati Gold Scheme, Swanirbhar Nari-Atmanirbhar Assam Scheme generated enough goodwill, relegating the issue CAA to the background (Singh, 2020). In the past, the BJP was perceived as unpopular amongst the women (Deshpande, 2009); this party has now slowly revamped its policies towards women. The study also shows that the success rate of women-specific schemes is very high compared to other schemes. According to CSDS data, 16.8 per cent of the respondents benefitted from the scholarship scheme, while another 23 per cent benefitted from the Orunodoi scheme, and 18.5 per cent benefitted from the widow pension scheme. The survey also reflects the same and shows that women supported the BJP more than the Congress party.
- Organisationally and strategically, the performance of the new regionalist parties was poor. The Assembly Elections (2021), held in three phases, saw the RD and AJP contest in numerous seats, some of which were 'friendly contests'. The lack of coordination between the two parties is well evident to all. The AJP and RD fought a total of 120 seats in the assembly elections (2021), out of which 26 witnessed 'friendly' contests; considering the limited number of seats, it is an unusually high number. The seat-sharing formula, if any, was a dismal failure. The latter did not win a single seat and was second in 1 seat (Palasbari); the former won only one seat (Sibsagar) and was second in 3 seats (Bilasipara West, Dhing, Noiboicha).
- Backed by the KrishakMuktiSangramSamiti (KMSS), the 'RD' with the slogan 'think globally, act locally' was launched on the occasion of Mahatma Gandhi's 151st birthday. Importantly Akhil Gogoi, during the launch of this party, was still behind bars on the grounds of 'sedition'. Gogoi's popularity can be gauged by the fact that he later won the Sibsagar assembly seat without ever hitting the

campaign trail. However, the electoral performance was far from commendable. The RD secured 6.4 per cent of the total vote share. However, there are three constituencies where RD stood second. In Bilashipara West, the party secured 19.09 per cent of the total votes; in Dhing 20.71 and Naoboicha, the party secured 25.47 per cent of the total votes. Besides, in nine constituencies, namely Karimganj North, Dhubri, Goalpara West, Jania, Jalukbari, Kamalpur, Chapaguri, Jamunamukh and Teok, the party came to occupy the third position.

- Given the history, the AJP, backed by two powerful student bodies- AASU and the AJYCP- should have performed well; it performed even worsethen RD. The AJP secured 3.66 per cent of the total vote share. Out of the 26 seats where the RD and AJP had friendly contests in as many as 12 seats, AJP stood third position. However, it is worth mentioning that the combined vote share RD and AJP is less than the margin of the winning candidates.

The problem for this alliance was that it was focused driven by the anti–CAA agenda. While issues of citizenship and illegal migration continue to be emotive for the people of Assam, the electorates have become more demanding. As Ignazi (1996) notes, 'Voters no longer sign a blank cheque.' Beneficiaries of several schemes too voted in favour of the BJP. In a significant blow to the anti-CAA movement, before the elections, crooners like Simanata Shekhar and others joined the saffron brigade (27 August 2020).[9] This seriously hurt the credibility of the anti-CAA protests in Assam. It must be highlighted that after the elections, several artists, including Zubeen Garg, who had supported the anti-CAA protests, have been appointed brand ambassador for Assam in 'agriculture and allied sectors' by the BJP government (Taskin, 2020). Jatin Bora, who had left the BJP during the anti–CAA protests, rejoined the same[10]. Essentially, what the BJP has achieved is making a wedge amongst the cultural community. Notably, the results of this Assembly elections also revealed the declining importance of civil society groups who claim to represent indigenous interests. Lacking a towering personality, the opposition parties could hardly stand a chance against the might of the BJP. The anti-CAA movement, which was later abandoned by the cultural icons, received lukewarm electoral support from a member of civil society. While other mainstream political parties continued to adopt an ambivalent position on the issue of citizenship, it only strengthened the position of the BJP. So, when Assembly Elections approached, the anti-incumbency factor was largely absent.

[9] See the Sentinel digital desk (August 25, 2020), "Assam: Singer SimantaShekhar& 26 others join BJP ahead of polls", https://www.sentinelassam.com/north-east-india-news/assam-news/assam-singer-simanta-shekhar-26-other-entertainers-join-bjp-ahead-of-polls-497350, accessed on 12/12/2021.

[10] See the Sentinel digital desk (August 12, 2020), "Assam actor Jatin Bora likely to rejoin BJP months after quitting over CAA", https://www.sentinelassam.com/north-east-india-news/assam-news/assam-actor-jatin-bora-likely-to-rejoin-bjp-months-after-quitting-over-caa-494787, accessed on 12/12/2021

Conclusion

After performing abysmally in the assembly elections, the leadership of both these parties should have introspected and chalked out an electoral strategy; instead, in July 2021, ahead of the by-polls, RD announced the termination of its alliance with the AJP.[11] In October 2021, by-elections were held in five seats- Gossaigaon,Tamulpur, Bhabanipur, Thowra and Mariani; once again, the opposition failed to make up for the lost ground. The combined electoral failure of Raijor Dal and AJP and their 'unwritten' partnership with the Congress in the recently concluded by-election in the five assembly seats marks a new low for the opposition parties in Assam. The Congress which had controlled the Thowra and Mariani seats, the AIUDF which controlled the seat of Bhabanipur, were left annihilated in the by-polls; the new parties fared worse. The by-polls results reveal that despite the prevalence of challenging issues, the BJP continues to be electorally dominant.

The victory for the BJP in the 2021 Assembly election and the bypolls (October 2021) in the state of Assam can be attributed to many factors- the flaky nature of alliances and dismal seat-sharing arrangement among the *natun* as well as other opposition parties, which undoubtedly helped BJP's cause. In general, while the AIUDF has managed to retain its electoral base, the Congress had fallen to a new low- in the number of assembly seats and vote percentage. The demographic pattern and the first past the post system has greatly benefitted the BJP in Assam. Assam has a population of 61 percent Hindus; while the BJP got only 33.21 percent of the votes and went on to form the government, of the 31 Muslim MLAs elected to Assam Assembly, none belonged to the BJP and its allies (Karmakar,2021).The politics of demography and the increase in the number of 'beneficiaries' brought about electoral dividends to the BJP and its allies. The construction of infrastructural projects-hospitals, roads and bridges, has generated enough goodwill for the BJP and its allies. The failure of the opposition parties to catch the ruling government on substantial issues such as inflation, the failure of the government to grant S.T. status for six communities of Assam, the growing interstate border tensions along with Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Arunachal Pardesh, issues of corruption and construction of mega-dams in Assam reflects their growing disconnect with the voters of Assam. Data from the CSDS reveals that the voters who have benefitted from government flagship policies, while continuing to raise concerns about 'substantive issues', have voted for the BJP; the anti-incumbency factor has not yet materialised. The failure to mark a dent in the assembly elections and bye-elections in Assam reflects that the CAA honestly ceases to be an electoral concern but continues as an emotive issue.

Despite the claim of being backed by 70 indigenous groups, organisationally, the

[11] See the Hindu (July 4, 2021), "No more in alliance with Assam JatiyaParishad :Raijor Dal chief AkhilGogoi", https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/no-more-in-alliance-with-assam-jatiya-parishad-raijor-dal-chief-akhil-gogoi/article35131415.ece, accessed on 04/07/2021.

support base for the RD was wafer-thin. When the moment of truth came, the numerous student organisations that had backed the AJP remained relatively silent while questioning the CAA. The student community did receive considerable support from the incumbent government-scooters for first division holders, complete fee rebates for higher education, scholarships, etc.

The new parties faced challenges from the incumbent ruling party, but other parties too would be highly unwilling to cede any political space to it. The fact is that any political party driven by only the 'anti-CAA' agenda in Assam is bound to have severe electoral limitations. Besides, the anti-CAA movement has been relatively weak in the Hill districts and virtually insignificant in the BTAD. The political future of these 'natun' parties will now depend upon their ability to reach out to constituencies beyond their comfort zone. If the issue of alliances with different tribal groups and the numerous tea growing communities are sorted out, the resurrection of regionalist parties in Assam does seem possible. Essentially, the new parties' long-term challenge will not only be to represent different sections of the society; its economic agenda and the political programme should also be broad-based, which can well appeal to the vast majority of the electorates in Assam. While the BJP may have been able to hide its failures, it has successfully projected its image as the only party capable of delivering public goods and protecting *axomia* identity.

In the future, any kind of electoral success for the new parties in Assam will largely depend on their ability to reconcile differences and spin out a narrative reflecting on the ruling establishment's shortcomings. Opposition parties will have to look at issues beyond the CAA and the NRC. Additionally, the voters today have become more demanding. The anti-CAA protests led by artists, singers, litterateurs, intellectuals and numerous other civil society groups did make the same more attractive. However, they ran out of steam rather quickly. Some joined the BJP, too, just prior to the 2021 Assembly elections. Therefore, in future, the participation of artists and cultural icons in any such movement will always be looked upon with suspicion by the larger community.

The anti-CAA movement in Assam is at crossroads; while it is yet to bring about electoral dividends for any party that has supported it, the irony is that it continues to be emotionally appealing for most of the people. With a limited agenda, parties such as RD and AJP are yet to catch the imagination of the ordinary voters. Based on the electoral performance of the 2021 Assembly elections, it may be too premature to predict the 'end' of regionalist parties in Assam. The AGP has become a secondary partner to the BJP[12]; the two new parties have yet to make a significant dent in votes and are far from setting the electoral agenda in the coming months. The 2024 Lok Sabha elections will be a fresh challenge for all the parties, especially for the new regionalist parties. Promptly, parties such as the RD and the AJP must overcome the

[12] The AGP's vote share has further declined from 8.1per cent (2016) to 7.9per cent (2021) in Assembly elections.

coordination problems and create a common platform that seeks to represent different communities and have a solid political agenda; indeed, they cannot leave it too late.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to acknowledge the Centre For Developing Societies (New Delhi) for providing the data related to the Post Poll Survey-Assam Assembly Election Study (2021).

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Manuscript received 10/08/2022; Final version accepted 30/10/2022.

Mobilizing the Marginalized: Understanding the Rise of Bharatiya Janata Party in the Frontier State of Arunachal Pradesh

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Abstract

The growing popular acceptance of the Bharatiya Janata Party(BJP) in a well-entrenched multi-cultured tribal society in the contemporary frontier state of Arunachal Pradesh could be situated behind the horizon of structured electoral politics. There upon, it is contemplated as a cumulative after-effect of the right-wing ideological narratives strategically navigated through the complex socio-cultural settings to establish itself in the cultural and political imagination of the tribal people. Further, banking on dynamically structured political mechanisms, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) led BJP has persistently attempted to reset cultural and political discourse by leveraging on the multiple cleavages. Thus, this paper seeks to identify and examine the plethora of the Hindutva discourse engineered by the RSS-led BJP in the realm of socio-cultural setting that facilitates the political goal of the current dispensation in the state.

Introduction

Embarking onto the strategically sensitive space located at the extreme periphery of the country that has a little communication with mainland India for many decades; and represents complex demography- a mélange of races, ethnicities, faiths, tribal customs and cultures and a multiplicity of issues make it difficult for an ideology riding on religious nationalism to gain a foothold in the tribal state (Bhattacharjee, 2016).The BJP nevertheless managed to make an inroad into the state in 1982 and subsequently entered into electoral politics of the state in the third assembly election of 1984 by registering its presence in the psephological map of the state by winning one seat. Though, unlike the glorious electoral history of the Congress party that sustained for more than three decades since the introduction of electoral politics in the state. The BJP,

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on the other hand, could not succeed in establishing a well-organized party structure with effective leadership and remained a seasonal political party marginalized for decades. The primary reason for this could be attributed to the rule of the Congress party in providing symmetric government at the national as well as the sub-national level that has left a few spaces for the new entrants in a politically uncontested space for decades. Significantly, the political pattern of the state has always been influenced by the party in power at the Centre mainly because the state's geo-political and economic situation is heavily dependent on the Centre's assistance for various socio-economic development making the government of the day mere an appendage to the party in power at the Centre. And in congruence to this, the ruling government of the state has been habitually adhering to the conventional trend of 'flowing with the ruling party at the centre' causing 'ruling-syndrome edge' depicting unique and peculiar characteristics of Arunachal politics (Bath, 2009).Further, the changing dynamics of politics at the national level in the post-1990s led to the formation of the BJP led National Democratic Alliance government in 1998 have unleashed a new political discourse at the national vis-à-vis state level. Subsequently, the corresponding impact of new political development was also realized in the state. The changing dynamics of party leadership within the Congress party cultivated factions, one group being the Congress (M) headed by the then chief minister Mukut Mithi and another faction known as Congress (A) headed by Gegong Apang. In an unprecedented political development, a faction led by Gegong Apang break off from the Congress party and crafted an electoral alliance with a United Democratic Front and formed the BJP-led coalition government in 2003, thus giving the party its first state government in the Northeast. However, after the BJP-led NDA lost the 2004 general election, the faction patch-up with the parent party. Though the coalition government survived only for 45 days but significantly it further reassured the RSS-led BJP in consolidating the party's outreach deep inside the grassroots level and acquainted ideology, policy, and programmes of the party with the tribals. Consequently, in the parliamentary election of 2004,the saffron party was able to win both the east and west parliamentary seats. Moreover, the party managed to secure 18.99 percent of votes polled for the first time in the assembly election as evident in (Table 1. & Table 2.)

The BJP emerged as a potential alternative to the Congress in the state over the decades but the subsequent revival of the Congress party and its successive electoral victories in the state has stagnated the BJP's prospects for more than decades. However, the 2014 Lok Sabha election witnessed a new paradigm shift in Indian politics where a tectonic shift of political equilibrium at the centre from the middle of the centre ideological pinning of the Congress to the right-wing brand of politics of the BJP that rolled out a new political discourse to usher in a new India free from the Congress (Rai & Kumar, 2017). Correspondingly in sync with this new political development, within the two years in 2016, the state also underwent a political transformation marked by frequent mergers and defections which ultimatelyled to the fall of the Congress government after the 33 legislators headed by now Chief Minister Pema Khandu quit the Congress party and merged into the Peoples Party of Arunachal (PPA).

Table 1:Electoral Performance of the Bharatiya Janata Party in General Elections to Lok Sabha held in Arunachal Pradesh (1991-2019)

Year	Total no. of constituencies	Seats contested	Seats won	Seats lost	Total valid votes polled by party	Votes share (%)
1991	2	2	0	2	15,943	6.11
1996	2	2	0	2	51,085	17.41
1998	2	2	0	2	71,505	21.75
1999	2	1	0	2	69,389	16.3
2004	2	2	2	0	2,97,286	53.85
2009	2	2	0	2	1,86,076	36.24
2014	2	2	1	1	2,75,344	46.62
2019	2	2	2	0	3,79,679	58.89

Source: Statistical Reports of General Election to Lok Sabha from (1991-2019)issued by the Election Commission of India.

Note: BJP fielded a party candidate for the first time in the 1991 Mid-Term Election.

Table 2:Electoral Performance of the Bharatiya Janata Party in Arunachal Pradesh Assembly Elections (1984-2019)

Year	Total no. of Constituencies	Seats contested	Seats won	Seats lost	Total valid votes polled by party	Votes share (%)
1984	30	06	01	05	17,280	7.69
1990	60	-	-	-	-	-
1995	60	15	00	15	43,116	3.37
1999	60	-	-	-	-	-
2004	60	39	09	30	87,303	18.99
2009	60	18	03	15	29,929	05.21
2014	60	42	11	31	1,57412	36.21
2019	60	60	41	19	3,15540	50.86

Source: Compiled from Statistical Report on General Elections to the Legislative Assembly of Arunachal Pradesh.

Note: BJP fielded a party candidate for the first time in the 1984 Assembly Election.

But in a dramatic political move, all the 33 legislators from PPA again defected to the BJP in December 2016 and it staked claim to form the government for the second time without winning the mandate directly. Further, in a much-anticipated state assembly election of 2019, the BJP emerged victorious crossing the major threshold with a resounding majority despite of its multiple contradictions and challenges. Thus, it has demonstrated the party's capability in sustaining electorally in a varied situation. In this context, it is argued that the electoral success of the party has made it more centrist, and it has acquired a capacity to signal different meanings to different sections of its followers (Palshikar, 2016).

Though the unprecedented rise of the BJP in the state could be attributed to the conventional after-effect of the party in power at the centre. However, this paper argues that the popular acceptance of the BJP in a well-entrenched complex multi-cultured tribal society in the contemporary frontier state of Arunachal Pradesh, among the other reasons, is believed to be premised onwell-calibrated ideological narratives engineered by the BJP's ideological parent-RSSin the realmof a socio-cultural milieu of the tribes through various mechanisms. The region's significance to the BJP's ideological project is guiding the party's political strategy (Yadav, 2018) as RSS and its affiliates view the region as strategically significantmainly because of its geopolitical and unique socio-cultural settings. Moreover, the RSS has considerable support base in the state, making it a strong centre for the activities of the Hindutva in the region (Kanungo, 2011). Thus, the paper intents to examine the various nuances of new cultural and social reconfiguration processes unleashed by the RSS-led BJP in the region which is certainly facilitating the political goal of the party.

Hinduizing the Nation Building Process

The underpinning ideological discourse of the RSS-led BJP in the context of the frontier region has a long genealogy dating back to the circumstance under which the state has evolved.A Philosophy for North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA)endorsed by the Nehru-Elwin outlined that'let the tribes grow in their way on their own heritage, according to their own genius and tradition that there shall be no forceful imposition of another culture and…old culture should be helped to grow and developed into the new' (Elwin, 1957, p. 137)had been contemplated as a guiding principle for the development of the NEFA. Paradoxically, the process of integration of the frontier with the mainstream India was largely dominated by the exclusionary policy with minimal contact with the ethnic minority and one cultural section monopolizing power, controlling the state apparatus, and delineated the cultural identity of the minority groups (Hashmi & Saeed, 2014). Moreover, such precepts were further postulated through the process of appropriation of the tribal cultural practices rather than cultural harmony in NEFA (Darwar,1999). Notably, the process of setting the 'Hindu nationalist' (Jaffrelot & Therwath, 2007) ideological discourse was indoctrinated through the state apparatus that was evident in the whole process of 'nationalizing the frontier' (Bath & Babin, 2021). Sanjib Baruah in his book 'Durable Disorder' maintained that 'post-1962; cosmetic federal order involved giving new Sanskritic name to Arunachal Pradesh-name that in a Hindu nationalist world view proclaim the region's ties with the rest of India' (Baruah, 2005, p. 53).Therefore, Hinduizing the frontier tribes as a prerequisite in fostering the national integration were deeply embedded in the whole process of integration with the mainland India. Moreover, the state, through multiple agencies have played a critical role in Hinduizing the frontier. For instance, Ramakrishna mission formed in 1966 was only among the other missionaries that were particularly endorsed by the government authorities to carry out their missionaries' activities in NEFA after independence (Chaube, 2012, p. 39). The underlying objective of such policy was to mainly inculcate the values of Indian patriotism and acquaint the tribes

with tenets of liberal Hinduism through education and other allied services in the tribal belts. In addition to this, integration of the tribes with the mainstream was attempted by imposing Hindi as the medium of instruction. The Hindi language was taught along with basic education and the mission's firm roots in Hinduism were no doubt preferable to the central government than the introduction of Christianity into the frontier (Lintner, 2018).

Significantly, post-1962 Chinese invasion in the erstwhile NEFA(now Arunachal Pradesh) has led to a paradigm shift in the government's policy toward the frontier borderland areas. Consequently, substantive politico-administrative structures and institutionslike all Indian patterns were gradually introduced in the frontier. Simultaneously, in pursuit of nationalizing the frontier along with the intent to contain the increasing cases of proselytization activities by the Christian missionaries in the tribal areas, the then prime minister Indira Gandhi tacitly endorsed the right-wing organization to carry out their organization's activities in the frontier borderland as she 'did not want the church in Arunachal and would rather have Hindu Missionaries, the Ramakrishna mission and the RSS fill in' (Rediff.com).

The consolidation of Hindutva politics at the national level in the 1980s has led to the formation of a right-wing political front BJP. Subsequently, the BJP extended its political outreach in the state in 1984. Though the party could not succeed electorally for another decade. But, with the help of a dynamically structured political mechanism, the RSS-led BJP has certainly expanded their ideological footprints into new areas by establishing and extending the sphere of influence with the help of the local notables (Kanungo, 2003).Beside the state, other non-state entities became the prime mover force in Hinduizing the integration process at the frontier. In this endeavor, the Right-Wing Hindu organizations under the umbrella of Sangh Parivar (family of associations) pioneered the discourse further. Their primary goal was to inculcate a sense of patriotic nationalism among the tribals living along the border areas. Though the Central to their idea of nationalism is that of Hindutva and establishing a Hindu nation (Hindu Rashtra) (Longkumer, 2020). Moreover, the apprehension of the right-wing groups on Christian missionaries' conversion activities in the state is seen as posing threat to Hinduism in particular and the national integration in general. Thus, apart from proselytization activities, the rightwing groups held the Christian missionaries responsible for the insurgencies and separatist movements in the frontier state and because of this, the Hindu nationalists see Christianity as antithetical to the national integration process. In this context, to contain the rise of conversion in the tribal areas, right-wing groups' affiliate Bhartiya Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram was formed in 1952 spreading across the tribal belts with the sole purpose to check the conversion and reconverting those who had been converted to Christianity and bring them back to Hinduism. They argued that the 'traditional faith and culture of different janjatis is precious, preserve it and protect it to re-establish peace and tranquility among the different ethnic groups and the northeast region. If the traditional faith and culture (Sanatan Dharma-Sanskrit) are protected, the society itself gets protected, which is essential for the national security

and integration' (Roy & Ray, 2008). Thus, invariably juxtaposing the Sanatan-Dharma as the traditional faith and culture of tribal through the mechanism of the 'cultural appropriation' (Ziff & Pratima, 1997) of the local tribes' demonstrates the discourse convincingly orchestrated in sync with the larger 'Hindutva nationalist' (Banerjee, 1991) agenda of the RSS in the region.

Reconfiguring the Socio-Religious Settings

The deepening roots of Hindutva discourse in the contemporary frontier state of Arunachal Pradesh could be thus attributed to the decades of hard work, behind the scenes by the 'Sangh Parivar' (Jaffrelot, 2005)in pushing their ideological narratives strategically in the realm of the socio-cultural domain. The exertion of their ideological narratives into the socio-religious settings of the tribes is done by way of appropriation that often-attempted to link the local histories, myths and fables and idioms of the tribes with the larger Hindutva narratives. The region illustrates a complex demographic landscape. Arunachal Pradesh is ethnically a tribal state composed of 26 major tribes and more than 110 sub-tribes embracing distinct cultures and traditions. Moreover, based on their socio-cultural pattern, they can be classified traditionally into three sects; the dominant group being a follower of the traditional faith of 'animism' known as Donyi Polo or Sun-Moon worship, the second being the followers of both the Buddhist traditions-Mahayana and Hinayana followers, and third is Vaishnavism faith. However, this structural religious taxonomy has undergone the process of transformation because of the stress and strain due to the differentiation pressure exerted by the outside entities. The socio-cultural space has become a highly contested sandwiched by Christianity on one hand and right-wing Hinduism on another side. While underscoring the proselytizing activities by the Christian missionary, the RSS has actively exerted their influence through the process of appropriation by conscientiously placing their ideological narratives which suit the peculiar condition on the ground. The initial strategy of the expansion was mainly by facilitating the tribes in mobilizing the reformist agenda primarily targeting Christian missionaries whereas on the other hand, the right-wing groups encouraged the tribes in developing and institutionalizing the religious practices. As a result of it, a new religious taxonomy such as Rangfrism, Donyi-Poloism, Intayaism and so on flourished under the saffron arrangement and because of this, it is often claimed that the Donyi-Polo, considered a dominant traditional god for the majority tribes in the state were also seen asa branch of Hinduism (Chaudhri, 2013) by the right-wing associates. Further, the process of reconfiguring the socio-religious pattern has been operationalized by appropriating the cultural and religious practice of the various tribes and introducing the images of gods and goddesses, constructing temples and textualizing religious chants in a manner very similar to Hinduism (Daughrity, 2020) which was alien to the tribes. Besides, they have been facilitating the tribes to 'Hinduize' their gods and goddesses by incorporating them into the Hindu pantheon in pictorial form appeared frequently in households of every tribe in villages is another testimony. Interestingly, the process of constructing the socio-cultural appropriations was attempted primarily based on

myths and histories of the tribes that fit the region within the larger Indic imagination of the Hindutva. They often use names, places, artefacts, and natural landscapes in the region that are imbued with new meanings. Moreover, myths and experiences are construed to make it relatedness with the larger notion of Bharatvarsh. Places such as Malinithan, Bhismaknagar and Parshuram Kund are some important places often claimed by the Sangh Parivar to trace their connection with the tribals living in the region. For instance, Madhvapur Mela (2020) was organized in Gujarat to represent the spatial continuities between the Dwarka in Gujarat with the Bhismaknagar of Arunachal Pradesh based on the mythological story of the conjugal union between the Lord Krishna and Rukmini (mother goddesses), though according to the Archeological Survey of India, Bhismaknagar city was built in the 8th century by the King Bhismak from Chutiya dynasty (The Citizen).Such an appropriation attempt has gained further momentum by extending an outreach exercise through the various educational incentive schemes. The RSS and its affiliates have setup a plethora of organizations such as Ekal Vidyalaya, Vidya Bharti, Bal Sanskar Kendra, and Friends of Tribal Society imparts formal as well as the informal education system. Moreover, organizations such as Seva Bharti and Bharat Kalyan Pratisthan run various student exchange programmes. Accordingly, to draw the people into the Hindu fold, they have been rendering various structural and economic support. Thus, by strategically synthesizing all the contradictory and contesting identities, the right-wing group has expanded their narratives into the socio-cultural and religious domain that has a wider ramification.

Implications on Socio-Religious Settings

It is in more recent times, with the development of communications networks, the right-wing Hindu organizations under the umbrella of Sangh Parivar led by the RSS have broadened their social base in a multi-ethnic tribal society. They present themselves as an inclusive group working for the welfare of the tribes by engaging the local communities in providing easy access to education, healthcare and so on. The RSS has 36 Shakhas and 50 units (First Post) and its affiliates are functioning in a diverse field across the districts of Arunachal Pradesh. Generally, school dropout youths and local public leaders are engaged in mobilization through regular Shakhas, Sammelans and Shivers. Significantly, the increasing right-wing exertion has also led to far-reaching implicationon the socio-cultural and religious settings of the tribes. In a number game, Hinduism has achieved an incremental gain from 22 percent in 1971 to 29.4 percent; the Christian population bounced from 1 percent in 1971 to 30.26 percent whereas the followers of the indigenous faiths such as Donyi-polo, Rangfra and Amik-Mati sharply declined from 51.6 percent to 26 percent in 2011 census (Scroll.in). Thus, the primary adversary of the RSS led BJP in the state is the increasing number of Christians. Further to check the rapid conversion, Indigenous Faith (Protection) Act 1979 was passed in the state during the Janata Party government headed by P.K Thungon. The right-wing groups have a conviction that when tribes become the Christian, they cease to be tribes and therefore ineligible to apply for state benefits as tribes (Xaxa, 2005) and working on the similar objective, the Sangh Organizations have been facilitating the indigenous

organizations such as Indigenous Faith and Cultural Society of Arunachal Pradesh (IFCSAP) for revocation of the Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to those individuals who have embraced the Christianity. Moreover, the ongoing contestations have largely diluted the tribes' socio-cultural and religious traditions and subtly moved in sync with either Hindu or Christian traditions in their conduct and character. Nevertheless, the tribal society maintains a complex strand of relationships holding a strong grip over the customary laws and traditions and because of this, generally, people identify themselves with their respective clan and community more than any other religious or ideological affiliations. For instance, RSS led BJP's conspicuous silence on the beef consumption issue in the state, contradicts their own position in the Hindi heartland region is one such manifestation of their manifold limitations that remains a challenge for the right-wing groups.

Implications on the Political Settings

Though the RSS maintains a non-political front, it has worked hard from behind the scenes which has laid the ground for the BJP'S electoral success in the region. In the context of electoral politics, the RSS-led BJP could not initially succeed in leveraging the electorates for decades until the 2019 assembly election. However, the party had formed the government in 2003 and 2016without winning any majority seats in the assembly elections and is widely anticipated that the RSS being the main conspirator in toppling the elected governments (DNA).Besides, the implications of the contestation between Christian and right-wing affiliates have political ramifications because till then religion was generally seen as a dormant issue in state politics, but it is gradually playing a major role during the elections. For instance, the role of religion was explicitly demonstrated in the parliamentary election of2004 when the Arunachal Christian Forum passed a resolution urging Christians to vote against the BJP given the VHP's 11-point Hindu agenda (Bath, 2004).Significantly, the change of party in power at the Centre in 2014and the subsequent reconfiguration of state politics led to the emergence of the BJP as a dominant political player by securing record breaking vote shares of 50.86per cent in 2019 state assembly election opened new vistas. Though, the state is specially protected under the 'inner line regime' (Bose, 1978) along with the provisions of Article 371 (H) of the Indian Constitution. However, embarking on the structural and institutional arrangements of the state, RSS-led BJP has been allegedly attempting to reset the structures as a part of the homogenizing idea of Hindutva. For instance, the creation of the Indigenous Faith and Cultural Affairs along with the adoption of the Tibetan Rehabilitation Policy by the current dispensation has been seen as the brainchild of RSS in countering the rise of Christianity (The Arunachal Times).Therefore, the RSS led BJP in recent years has assertively pushed their Hindutva narratives touching upon the critical issues that have a larger ramification on the politics and state in general. Nevertheless, it also contains the roots of multiple challenges primarily on the ideological and electoral fronts. On the ideological front, the RSS-led BJP has been attempting to absorb all the alternate socio-religious discourse into the larger Hindutva narratives. However,

because of the contradictory nature of the tribal society, mobilizing them into a complete homogenizing culture under the Hindutva umbrella is a challenging task. The Second is on electoral sustenance, the state is known for its political instability and in such a volatile situation party riding on homogenizing ideology's credibility still larger question and the party in power at the Centre has always swayed over state politics. Moreover, voting preference is mainly based on ethnic considerations such as clans and tribes during the election. More significantly, unlike the Congress party, the saffron party is yet to sustain itself in electoral politics because it has been able to form an elected government for the first time in 2019 only and has yet to go through the public scrutiny ahead. The party also has not yet fully developed functional organizational structures at the grassroots level to mobilize the electorates. Nonetheless, the RSS-led BJP have broadened and deepened its outreach into the far-flung areas in the frontier region recently and assumed an inevitable cultural and political force to establish itself in the imagination of the tribes.

Conclusion

The prima facie study suggests that the reverberations of the BJP's rise in the state runs beyond the formal structures of electoral politics. And its underpinning political construct has historical antecedents that was strategically navigated across the complex socio-cultural settings of the tribes that facilitates the political agenda of the current dispensation. Moreover, in this endeavor, the right-wing groups have utilized the tools of appropriation to shape a vision of what it means to be Hindu(Longkumer,2017). Significantly, the mobilization strategies of the RSS-led BJP in the state presents a contrasting impression as they have subtly moved away from the conventional techniques of mobilization generally employed in the Hindi heartland states. And in the context of the state, it has acquired regional facet by strategically recalibrating its operational aspects to sustain itself in a highly contested space. They sought to make an optimal mix of cultural and identity localization under the rubric of Hindu nationalism. Based on the above analysis, we contend that the growing popular acceptance of the BJP in recent decades is partly contingent upon the role of theright-wing ideological assertion navigated into the realm of socio-cultural and religious settings that managed to capture the political and cultural imagination of the tribes living at the periphery who felt marginalized by the mainstream. Moreover, with the help of dynamically structured political mechanisms, the party has managed to capture the political vacuum left by the Congress party. Further, despite of its electoral success in recent years, the BJP's political sustainability in the state will be severely tested in the three situations. Firstly, the state's political complexities in relation with the national and regional dynamics dictate the trajectory of the politics in the state. Secondly, the cross-cutting cleavages of clan and community shape the electoral landscape of the state and the last not the least, crisis of leadership.

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Manuscript received 25/07/2022; Final version accepted 10/11/2022.

The Dialectics of Economic Change in a Non-Farm Kerala Village

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Abstract

The rural Indian economy witnessed profound growth and diversification in the post-independent period. Though the change process was subjected to intense academic scrutiny, most of them are premised on the general assumption that rural economies are agrarian. In reality in many villages the traditional industries dominated and provided sustenance to majority of households in the past. A holistic approach in understanding the nature of development of such economies is missing and this paper is an attempt in this direction. The Edakkad village of Kannur district was selected for the study as the economic structure of the village was dominated by traditional industries in the past. On reviewing development of the village stretching over five decades starting from 1960 it was found that though the economy of the village made profound growth the traditional economic activities languished and in its place a variety of new activities emerged. In the course of development, the organic development witnessed by the village in the past was lost.

Introduction

The Indian villages have been witnessing economic change for centuries. After the country's independence, the pro-active policies gave much-needed momentum to village development. Thus the village economies have been diversifying leading to the growing dependence on non-farm employment. The number of households that depend on rural non-farm employment as their primary source of income has increased from nearly 32 per cent in 1993-94 to over 42 per cent in 2009-10 (IDFC, 2013). What drives the changes have been subjected to intense academic scrutiny. Mellor (1976) first outlined the logistics of farm non-farm interaction at the regional level in the Indian context. It was observed that development would occur through multiple linkages of agriculture with non-farm through both consumption and production linkages.

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Followed by this, several studies concluded that agriculture acts as stimulant to growth and non-farm employment generation (Hazell and Haggblade, 1991; Bhalla, 1993; Dev, 1990; Papola, 1992; Shukla,1992; Unni, 1994). However, given the diversities of Indian villages further exploratory studies have identified a host of other factors as decisive for non-farm development and some of them run on the lines of rural infrastructure (Hebbale, 1991), literacy and education (Eapen, (1994, Jayaraj, 1994, Samal, 1997 Basant, 1993), role of administrationand development of social services (Eapen, 1995), migration (Sharma, 2019),proximity to urban centres (Bhalla, 1997) etc.

One of India's most important village-level diversities is the presence of traditional industries, which even now account for a large share of employment. In fact, they dominated the economic activities of many villages in a good number of villages in the past. A holistic approach in studying the dimension of change of such villages like the agrarian based economies is by and large missing. Such a study assumes importance as it has also been found that rural diversification has a dampening effect on traditional industries (Samal, 1997). Further, if growth in rural non-farm employment is distress-induced as evidenced by Vaidyanathan (1986); Shah and Pattnaik (2021) in the traditional industries-dominated economies the hypothesis becomes equally valid. In this context, this paper after portraying the economic structure of a non-farm village economy in the nineteen sixties attempts to depict the nature of economic change over five decades and the driving forces of change.

The Study Village and the Data

The study is based on primary data collected from the Edakkad village of Kannur district. There were a few reasons for the selection of the village. The economic activity of the village was characterised by the dominance of traditional industries in the past and a good account of the economic structure and socio-economic conditions of the village in the early1960 was available from the Village Monograph of the Census organisation. Over the years the economy made profound diversification. Also, the researcher, a native of the village, has been witnessing the change for more than half a century, thus better placed to portray the developments and gather more reliable data. We attempt to depict the development stretching for about six decades starting from 1960. For the study primary and secondary data of the village was collected. For collecting primary data in 2017, out 21 of wards, six representative wards were selected, and the list of households of the selected wards was collected from the Panchayat office[1]. From the household list of the six selected wards 65 households each were randomly selected. A questionnaire was prepared, and by personal interview method, data pertaining to socio-economic conditions were collected from the sampled households. The primary data is with reference to 361 households as some households were eliminated due to doubtful nature of data. On visits to all village areas, all the non-farm activities were listed. For a considerable part of two years, 2017 and 2018, the researcher stayed in the field, visited all the village areas, and held discussions with different sections of the village community. The visual observations of the researcher

over the years supplemented this. Structural changes were assessed with reference to the major economic activities, the nature of non-farm activities and employment patterns.

The Edakkad Village Setting

The village belonged to the Kannur district, the northern part of Malabar which was under Madras Presidency before independence. The village is equidistant (about 6 kilometers) from the two towns of Kannur and Tellichery, the important settlements of Europeans in the past. The sea coast of the village extends to about seven kilometers. On entering the village from the southern town of Tellicherry by rail or road, one first passes through the low-lying areas of the village, most of which were paddy fields or coconut gardens. The terrain then gently ascends towards the north, particularly on the western side, and presents an undulating surface similar to the middle land region of Kerala. On the sea coast the land slopes are steep over the northern half of the village and the beach is narrow and rocky. On the eastern side of the road and railway line again the land slopes down and once more the lush green paddy fields and coconut gardens appear. Further north the landscape gently slopes and merges into flat paddy fields except over a narrow belt along the coast and the valleys of paddy fields on either side of the railway line. The elevation of the land varies from 10 to 50 feet. There are pools and marshy places amidst the waste land here and there and a number of artificial canals cut the village particularly in the southern half into different segments. A stream called 'Brinnikalpuzha' flows from northeast to south west in the southern portion of the village and divides that portion into two parts. The stream was navigable for country boats throughout the year and its banks were used for retting coconut husks, since the water is brackish. The abrupt change in physical features from flat coconut gardens and paddy fields to ups and downs to denuded rocks is an interesting feature as one travels from the south to the north of the village. As per the 1961 census the population of the village was 18676 living in 2599 households. The density of population was 2442 persons per sq.mile. The population consisted of predominantly Hindus and Muslims. Hindu households belonged to a variety castes dominated by Ezhava community (Other backward caste). By 2011 the population increased to 40818 living in 8776 households.While population increase was 118.56 percent households increase almost doubled to 237.67 per cent. The population composition got diversified by 2011 as the religious classification was 69.10 per cent Hindus, 29.42 per cent Muslims, 1.06 per cent Christians and 0.02 belonged to other religions. In the case of 0.39 per cent the religion was not stated (https:census2011.co.in/data/town/627245-thottadaa-kerala).

The Economic Activities in the 1960's and their Development Course

The main economic activities of the village in the 1960's were industry followed by the primary activities. First we examine the developments in the primary sector of the village economy.

Primary Sector

The main primary activities were agriculture, fishing, animal husbandry and poultry. Given the village's landscape, there was diversified cropping pattern and somewhat developed agricultural practices in the nineteen sixties. Paddy and coconut were the most important crops. In wetlands, except small plots here and there two paddy crops were raised. In garden land the most important crop was coconut. Areca-nut and pepper were grown as mixed crops. In most plots pepper vine was grown. In little elevated lands there were a naturally grown wide variety of mango trees, jack fruit trees, a few other edible fruit plants, and a variety of wild trees of commercial value. They had a direct or indirect bearing on the consumption of the people. Tapioca was cultivated in the laterite soil over the eastern part of the village. Occasionally tapioca and banana were grown in the elevated paddy fields. Cashew was another crop suited to the soil conditions of the village. Cashew trees fully covered the high land with hard laterite soil as natural growth except for a few pockets. The yield was comparatively less. In most household compounds, the trees were grown and yield was heavy. During the summer season, extensively sweet watermelon was cultivated as a commercial crop in paddy fields, known as 'Edakkadan bathaca'.

To some extent, most households were self-sufficient in vegetables in the summer months. There was an extensive and well-developed system for vegetable cultivation. In the summer months, all low lying paddy fields were open for vegetable cultivation without any kind of rent charges. Most of the households used to engage in the cultivation. Except in land preparation for all other works, family labour was employed. A variety of items such as chilli, ladies finger, bitter gourd, ash gourd, ridge gourd, snake gourd, pumpkin, yard long beans, red amaranthus, cucumber and watermelon were grown. Attack of pests and insects was absent and was purely an organic cultivation system. The yield was heavy and provided near self-sufficiency in vegetables to participating households in the season and limited self-sufficiency throughout the year as cucumber,ash gourd and pumpkin used to be preserved for one year. Thus in the summer months, particularly in the evening, the paddy fields were very live as men/women (high caste and well-to-do household women an exception) and children used to engage actively tending the crops. The paddy fields throughout also appear very colourful. The cropping pattern spread over 2276.65 acres in 1961 revealed that coconut cultivation claimed more than three-fourths of the area followed by paddy in 13.78 per cent of total area. Other crops claimed less than 5 per cent of the total area**(**Superintendents of Census Operations, 1966**)**. Except in highland in other areas, groundwater availability was good throughout the year.

Fishing, although it does not account for a significant share of income to the village economy, 148 Muslim households of the coastal area were depended entirely upon it for livelihood. The workers jointly owned the boats and nets. The best catching season starts in October and lasts for four months.

The animal husbandry and livestock wealth in the village comprised of 1047 cattle (1 per 2.48 households), two buffalos, 250 goats(one per 10.40 households) and poultry numbering 2077 (one per 1.25 household) in 1961.

From the main primary activities depicted it is seen that even in the nineteen sixties the village had a fairly developed agricultural system and this resulted from land reform measures initiated during the British rule. For the first time, the Malabar Tenancy Act 1929 conferred certain rights to the tenants and gave them assurance regarding the fixity of tenure. It provided that the lease should be renewed every 12 years, subject to certain conditions. Although the lease renewal took place at the end of the specified period, by 1950 the renewal became rare, Thus the tenant cultivators continued to enjoy the land without any threat of eviction from the landlords. The rent that the tenants had to pay also came to be defaulted by many. On the formation of the state, the Kerala Agrarian Relations Act, 1960 conferring more privileges for tenants and provision for the purchase of the ownership title of the land subject to specific provisions/restrictions was enacted. Though the Court suspended the Act, the tenants were not disturbed by the landlords (Janmies). Given the security of tenancy rights, the outlook of tenants changed and they took an interest in the improvement of the land. Thus, the slopes were terraced to prevent soil erosion, and marshy areas were converted into coconut and areca-nut gardens. Apart from land improvement, all available land was brought under cultivation of one or the other crops by 1961 as except 3.41 per cent consisting of the *puramboke* (government land) and the unassessed wasteland of the village all other lands were brought under cultivation.

Given the limited scope for extensive farming, the following few decades witnessed intensification of agriculture. A more enabling environment also emerged. First was the repealing of the Kerala Agrarian Relations Act, 1960 and all the other earlier tenancy acts and enactment of a single statute known as the Kerala Land Reform Act, 1963, governing the relationship between landlords and tenants throughout the state. The Act considered as radical and exemplary came into effective force in early 1970. This helped the tenants to become owners of tenancy lands. Many hutment dwellers could purchase their homesteads and the excess land above the ceiling area was also distributed. There was thus a reduction in the number of landless agricultural households and the abolition of absentee landlordism.More or less coinciding with this came the construction of two check dams along the main stream and the agricultural promotion schemes. Under the Intensive Paddy Development Programme, few farmers in the village were identified and trained to develop demonstration farms. Thus by the early nineteen seventies, improved paddy cultivation practices were extended to other areas. In garden land, the only change was the widespread application of chemical fertilizers. This was popularized with no less significant provision of subsidies by the Block Development Office. In cashew cultivation, not much change occurred as it was left to natural growth as land development practices were absent. In the case of a variety of other inter-crops, the farmers made every effort to raise yield level and on the whole agricultural sector of the village with important crops such as coconut

and paddy witnessed much more prosperity for about two decades. But this was not sustained as later years witnessed sustained weakening of the primary sector and the extinction of paddy cultivation.

Even in the nineteen sixties, the tendency to shift to garden crops was noticed as marshy areas were raised with the dumping of the earth to facilitate plantation crops. On an accelerated scale the trend was continued, and apart from that, there was a tendency to abandon the paddy cultivation. Hence the area under paddy, which was 288.2 acres (Superintendents of Census Operations 1966:133), declined to 61.75 acres in 1996 (Edakkad Panchayat 1996:6) and in 2015 further dropped to 12.35 acres (Edakkad Panchayat, 2016). Our extensive visit to the former paddy growing areas in the village in 2017 revealed that in a few scattered fields, paddy is cultivated and at best, the area may not exceed three acres. On a marginal scale, some households cultivated either banana or tapioca in the raised paddy fields, exclusively employing family labour either on their own or leased in-land. The rest of the paddy fields running to a significant area are invaded by shrubs and creepers, including acacia trees being uncultivated for years. Here it is worth mentioning that this decline in area under paddy is a state-wide phenomenon as it has been cited that area under paddy, which was 21.7 lakh acres in 1970-71, declined to 4.7 lakh acres by 2016 (Malayala Manorama, 2000a).

The other significant development in the former paddy fields is the disappearance of summer season cultivation of vegetables and sweet watermelon.

In the case of garden land where coconut and areca-nut are cultivated, the emerging picture is not rosy. Though as noted, the area under cultivation of coconut increased to 2484 acres by 2016 (Edakkad Panchayat 2016:16) as against 1756.3 acres in 1961 (Superintendents of Census Operations, 1966), productivity declined perceptibly. As emerged in the field discussions in garden land in well-maintained coconut gardens, the productivity per tree was 110-130 nuts annually in the past. It is around 35 coconuts per tree (Edakkad grama Panchayat 2006:16). An exception is the trees grown in house compounds for self-consumption, which yields better crops being well nurtured and maintained. This low productivity syndrome is a state-wide phenomenon as recently it is reported that the coconut yield per hectare in Kerala is only 8500 nuts compared to the yield of 14251 nuts of Tamil Nadu (Malayala Manorama, 2020b).

Pepper as an intercrop grown by most households is now for self-consumption except few households. In highland, where cashew trees are grown, the area declined drastically. The crop is totally neglected to the extent of not gathering the nuts. Due to neglect now acacia trees have invaded the high land also.

In the case of fruits with extensive road developments throughout the village, large-scale tree felling took place, mainly mango, jackfruit and other trees of commercial value with the entry of timber lobbies. Thus all indigenous varieties of mangoes became extinct. In its place, modern varieties are grown in the house compound by

many households. Jack fruits availability considerably reduced. Even the available fruit is wasted now as it is considered inferior food.

Coming to animal husbandry, the activity too perceptibly declined over the years. In accordance with the Block Development Office survey report, 2008 the livestock resources, when related to the total households of 2001 Census it was found that in the village every 8.50 households possessed one livestock against every 2.46 household in 1961. The poultry ownership was one poultry for every 14.41 households, which was 1.25 households in 1961. Our primary survey revealed one livestock for every nine households and one poultry per 1.48 households. The higher poultry ownership compared to the Block Office survey was on account of a poultry farm owned by one household. The activity, too witnessed a drastic decline.

The fishing activity too declined perceptibly. Even in the nineteen sixties, the tendency to give up the activity was reported and the trend continued in the latter decades. Now very few, at the most 15 households, are engaged in fishing in the village. Thus the role of the primary sector fell perceptibly and as noted, none of the sample households of the village reported the primary sector as an important income source.

Industrial Structure

Industrial development too run parallel to this as the dominant activities though landed in crisis later made profound growth and started languishing. In the nineteen sixties in the village's economic structure, the handloom industry was most dominant. There were 52 handloom units in the village spread throughout the village, ranging from large factory units with production facilities from dyeing to calendaring of cloths to home-based tiny units owning one or two looms operating with family labour. The chief products of the village were coloured lungis, shirting, fine varieties of bedspreads, towels and furnishing cloths. The products were able to withstand the competition of mill products. The coarse variety enjoyed great demand among the plantation labourers of Bengal and Assam. In the industrial sector, nearly three fourth of the industrial income of the village was generated by the handloom industry. In different capacities, the handloom also employed about 50 per cent of the total workers of the village (Superintendents of Census Operations, 1966).

The other important industry was beedi as the four branded beedi factories based in Kannur and Mangalore established factories in the Kannur town. Besides factory-based production, sizable production was organised by sub-contracting work to an intermediary called Mestry (Supervisor). Several such beedi rolling centres run by the Supervisors functioned in the village, some with more than 35 labourers. Apart from branded units, a few non-branded beedi units catering to the local market employed directly a number of labourers of the village. These workers were scattered as the job was done either at home or occupying a small portion of country shops. Besides these two main industries there were a few other industrial units in the village. The

overall industrial profile of the village is presented in Table 1. Observably handloom industry accounted for 40.85 per cent of total units, followed by tobacco products 36.62 per cent and cotton spinning 6.34 per cent. Altogether, textile and tobacco-related industrial activities dominated, accounting for 76.47 per cent of total units. Evidently manufacturing activity thrived in the village in the nineteen sixties.

Table 1: Industrial Profile of Edakkad Village in 1961

Nature of industry	Nos	%
Food processing	3	2.11
Edible fats and oils	4	2.82
Tobacco products	52	36.62
Cotton spinning	9	6.34
Handlooms	58	40.85
Textile garments	3	2.11
Hardware, engg. Products	5	3.52
Jewellery	5	3.52
Others	3	2.11
Total	**142**	**100**

Source: Superintendent of Census Operations (1965:87)

Both the major industries were in crisis in the later nineteen sixties as minimum wage legislation and Factories Act, which were made applicable much earlier, was strictly enforced. In the handloom sector, the factory units dismantled production activities rendering sizable labour unemployed. In this context, the Kerala State Handloom Development Corporation was set up in Kannur in 1968 to rehabilitate the unemployed handloom workers. The private sector evolved a three-tier sub-contract system. A number of small units sprang up to execute works, many set up by former factory labourers. They were offered redundant looms and accessories either at nominal cost or free by former factory owners. In suitable form work orders were provided to them. Even in this fluid state, the industry witnessed a major boom in the nineteen seventies, and that was with the introduction of a new variety of cloth known as crepe (fabric with a crimp appearance). The product enjoyed flourishing markets in European markets, USA, Italy and Japan. A number of small units expanded to cater to the rising demand. The wage rate rose sharply and labour scarcity was felt. This attracted labour of other sectors to handloom weaving. The industry was at the zenith of glory in its history of development. Thus the Kannur handloom industry, dominated by the private sector[2] in the 1970 decade, came to occupy a much more pivotal role as it was estimated that accounting for hardly 2 percent of total handlooms of the country (Estimate's Committee, 1977-78), Kerala rolled out nearly one-tenth of the total handloom output of the country (Indian Institute of Foreign Trade, 1975). The estimated export was roughly one third of the total handloom exports of the country (Nair, 1977). Kannur is estimated to have contributed 98 percent of total handloom

exports of Kerala (http//:filmingindi.com/blog-post/Kannur-the-handloom-city-of-Kerala-India/).

More disastrous was the impact of regulations on the beedi industry. The Mangalore-based companies fully winded up their operation in the district rendering a large number of workers unemployed and threatening the day-to-day life of the dependent families. The Kannur-based company also substantially reduced the scale of operation. To cope with the unemployment situation, while some capable workers shifted to other occupations like handloom, construction, and agriculture, many migrated to Mangalore for beedi rolling work. Given the numerical strength of workers, pressure was mounted on the government, and this resulted in the formation of an apex co-operative society known as the Kerala Dinesh Beedi Central Co-operative Society in Kannur in 1969. A number of primary cooperative societies were formed under the apex society. Few primary societies were organized in the village, thus bringing most of the beedi workers under its fold. This brought comparatively better fortune to the workers being under an organization fold; they enjoyed the security of employment and most of the employment benefits. The society made exemplary performance in terms of growth and financial viability for a few decades. In its development history, it is recorded that there were 22 primary societies employing 42000 workers (Malayala Manorama, 2019) under the apex society. The organisational change attracted many new entrants to work, mainly female workers.

In this background, if we look at the later developments of the industry, the evidence indicates that the decline of handloom industry in the village was very accelerated. In its place few power loom units came up. By 1996 beedi rolling emerged as dominant in employment, accounting for nearly three-fifth of total employment, followed by power loom units and a steel mill (Table 2). The handloom industry turned out to be of peripheral importance employing 4.29 percent of total workers. In 2017 we did an extensive search for handloom units. It was found that the handloom activities have become almost extinct as we could identify only two units, one each in the private and cooperative sector. The private sector unit operated five looms, and the same was working for the Khadi Board. In the surviving industrial type handloom cooperative unit, only five looms were working against 127 looms in 1954 when it was started. Thus in effect, in the entire village, only five handlooms were producing cloth. None of the workers of our sample households belonged to the handloom industry. Manifestly handloom industry that provided sustenance to most village workers in the nineteen sixties is almost extinct.

The fate of the beedi industry was not different. In the village, we found three primary societies as active and all put together employed around 120 workers. In the study, it was observed that out of the 555 workers of sample households, 19 (3.42 per cent) constituted the beedi workers. The total members of the apex

Table 2: Distribution of total workers by nature of industry in Edakkad village in 1996

Type of industry	No. of workers	Percentage
Flower mills	14	0.90
Powerlooms	161	10.31
Handlooms (Private)	5	0.32
Handloom (Cooperatives)	62	3.97
Hosiery	20	1.28
Welding	30	1.92
Workshops	98	6.27
Leather	40	2.56
Steel company	85	5.44
Beedi rolling	925	59.22
Others	122	7.81
Total	**1562**	**100.00**

Source: Edakkad Grama Panchayat (1996:21)

society steeply declined from the peak level of 42000 to 5800 (Malayala Manorama, 2019). Evidently, the activity, too, is on the verge of extinction. Manifestly the development course of the village economy was characterised by the near-death of main traditional livelihood activities.

The Contemporary Economic Structure

Notwithstanding this decline of agriculture and industry, the village economy was on the growth path propelled by the emergence of new industries and a variety of other economic activities. To highlight the structural change first, we consider the industrial scenario based on the listing of industries of the village in 2017. It was found that there were 81 industrial units. There was even absolute decline in the number of industries from 94 of 1961 to 81 in 2017. The distribution by nature of the industry is given in Table 3. Out of 81 industrial units, two were handloom units. Largest segment was the small engineering workshopsincluding aluminium fabrication unis, 62.96 per cent followed by 7.41 per cent each tyre re-threading and food processing industries and 6.17 per cent each power looms and garment making units. All other industries together constituted the balance of 9.88 percent. We noted that all the old industries vanished. Even the steel mill, an important industry started in the late nineteen sixties employing significant number of workers winded up the activity. In its place a villa project is now coming up. While industrial activity decelerated the new economy can be observed as dominated by the non-agricultural and non-industrial activities. Such activities classified by a few categories is shown in Table 4. Dominant are provision stores, hotels and restaurants, cloth shops, fish/chicken stalls etc. Except transport, building products dealers and others covering a variety of activities constituting less

than one third of total units all other activities are of units catering to household level demand. The major activities that account for income and employment in the village as classified as others are two national Malayalam dailies, a garment unit, a theme park, sales service centres of major automobile companies and automobile repair shops. All other units are tiny either employing family labour or combining family labour and few hired labour.

Table 3: Industrial Profile of Edakkad Village in 2017

Nature of industry	Number	%
Plastics	2	2.46
Paper bags	1	1.23
Garments	5	6.17
Power looms	5	6.17
Handlooms	2	2.47
Tyre rethreading	6	7.41
Building materials	3	3.70
Food processing	6	7.41
Engg. Workshops	51	62.96
Total	**81**	**100.00**

Table 4: Non-Farm Non-Industrial Activities of Edakkad Village in 2018

Nature of activity	Number	%
Provision stores	93	18.56
Hotels and restaurants	84	16.77
Transport	58	11.58
Cloth shops/ tailoring shops	37	7.39
Cool drinks and milk booths	28	5.59
Fish and chicken stalls	24	4.79
Stationary, fancy, chappal stores	35	6.98
Hairdress/beauty parlous/wellness	13	2.59
Bakery	29	5.79
Building products dealers	19	4.39
Others	88	15.57
Total	**501**	**100**

The decades of development scenario depicted above raises the question what is the nature of growth of the economy? Clearly an organic growth which was witnessed by the village for more than two decades slipped to an inorganic growth. The economy

in the past made optimum use of local available resources. Thus cultivable land was deployed for crops ideally suited. The marine resources were optimally exploited. All the economic activities more or less employed local labour. Most of the industrial units were owned by natives as family business by and large employing available own capital and marginal borrowings from local or other sources. This basic character of the economy though further got strengthened for few decades was later lost and in its place emerged a development pattern by and large alienated from the village resources. In all the major activities the players are non-locals now. Important enterprises are all owned non-locals, by and large organised on the modern enterprise model.

Table 5: Nature of Employment of Workers of Sample Households

Nature of employment	Number	%
Daily wage	136	24.50
Self employment	101	18.20
Trade/business	66	11.89
Beedi rolling	19	3.42
Migrants	77	13.87
Regular employment	91	16.40
Others	65	11.71
Total	**555**	**100.00**

In the enterprise development the opportunities open to the locals are of residual in nature like petty shops, restaurants including way side *thattu kadas* (dhabas), small engineering units, carpentry units, road transportation of goods and passengers, small building material producing units, flex printing, construction contract unitsetc. Land resources are no longer a productive and income yielding asset but a high value commercial commodity given the demand for housing and commercial purposes. On the labour front the traditional industrial skills met natural death as very thin minority of workers are engaged in them. The opportunities in the modern leading sectors are hardly open to the locals as on the one hand there was only a shift in job place and on the other hand the job skill requirement does not match what is endowed with the local labour. We have noticed that the share of locals in the new important employment avenues within the village are not only limited but is confined to lower category jobs. A number of others are employed as shops/restaurant assistants, construction labour, beedi rolling, electrician, plumbing, carpentry, welding, stitching, repair of household equipment and mobiles etc. within and outside the village. The growth process also opened up a variety of new odd employment to locals. They run on the lines of soil brokers, construction material brokers, land and real estate brokers, lottery agents, vehicle brokers, mobile repairers, electronic equipment repairers, household appliances repairers, flex printing units, etc. Many workers also migrated to other places, including Gulf, and either works as labour or own petty trading units. The nature of employment of the workforce of the sample households bear further testimony to this emerging

pattern of development (Table 5). Nearly a quarter of the workforce are casual daily wage earners in various occupations followed by 18.40 per cent self-employed in a variety of activities. Workers with a regular employment status comes to 16.43 per cent, followed by 13.87 per cent migrants. The traditional industry of beedi rolling accounted for 3.42 per cent of total labour. The balance 11.71 per cent were other workers. There is no denial that a notable number of workers are well employed in organised economic activities, mainly in teaching, including the government sector. However, to a vast majority the quality of employment cannot be said as decent.

In sum, in the growth and structural transformation process of the economy of the village not only organic growth is lost but the share of benefits accruing to the local households turned out to be marginal. Neither there is any farm non-farm linkage nor rural urban linkage as a variety of unrelated economic activitiesdeveloped.

The Catalysts of Economic Change

The initial growth of the commodity producing primary and secondary sectors, their later decline, and the emergence of new economic structure was influenced by the developments both within and external to the village economy. Some of the important factors can be outlined.

In the past the village was endowed with an entrepreneurial class and most of them belonged either to the Thiyya (very dominant community belonging to the OBC of the village) and Chaliyas. They to a certain extent succeeded in availing the opportunities open in their field and some of them even diversified their activities. The cultivators too responded positively in utilising the opportunities open under the agricultural development programmes. The role of labour was no less significant. They were skilled in their works, committed and hardworking. In the role of human resource mention may be made of the exemplary voluntary participation of people in development activities. Most outstanding was in the development of road networks within the village as most them were developed by people voluntarily pooling labour and other requisite resources. The participation cut across class, politics and religion/ caste. Most of the roads so constructed were later on taken over by the panchayat or PWD for development and maintenance. Wherever required thepeople displayed exceptional spirit of co-operation.

Institutional development was another factor. The Edakkad panchayat covering only the Edakkad village was formed in 1955. Out of the nine development blocks of the district one was Edakkad which came to function in 1957 with headquarters in the village. The formation of the Block gave a boost to economic activities of the village. Construction of two check dams, provision of inputs and dissemination of modern cultivation practices, implementation of promotional schemes for industries were some of the initiatives. Presence of co-operative institutions was another factor. There were two cooperative weaver's societies, one an industrial co-operative society with all

production facilities in house, a Cooperative Spinning not very far from the village and three cooperative financing societies. All of them were functional even before 1960. In the post 1960 decades the only notable development was the formation of two more service cooperative banks, the conversion of the old institutions as service cooperative banks and setting up of branch network in several centres within the village. Being the deposit receiving type the scale of operation had grown enormously. A public sector bank branch too functions within the village and with these developments institutional finance availability was well developed. Also an Institute of Handloom Technology was set up in the village.

Coming to the contemporary alienated development several factors can be identified for its emergence. One was the developments on the labour market front. Even historically it is recorded that the village witnessed migration and this was noted as an important reason for sizable sex ratio in favour of women in the village. Migration was sustained in later decades too and peaked with the opening of opportunities in the Gulf region. The remittances especially from Gulf gave a shift to the development pattern. There was construction boom, acute shortage of labour, unprecedented and sustained rate of increase in wages for construction labour. This in general became the reference wage in other sectors and demand for wage rise. There was also the emergence of organised bargaining of labour in every important fields of economic activity. Around this time the state also turned out to be less investment friendly due to labour unrest. In the scenario of sustained wage rise while some of the activities like construction and agriculture has no mobility they were forced to absorb the wage rise. While the cultivators absorbed the shock for some time, a situation emerged where labour intensive paddy cultivation became too uneconomic, forcing farmers to abandon the crop. In garden land development and maintenance works started compromising affecting the crop yield. The traditional industries like handloom and beedi were unable to absorb the wage shock as they have to compete with products of other states where labour cost is low. The wage rate rose with considerable disparity between the construction including other casual labour and labour of traditional industries. In 2017 the daily wage of a male agricultural labour and other casual labour in the village was Rs. 800 with two times reasonable food and for female labour Rs.500. In construction the wage daily rate was above Rs. 1000 with food. In sharp contrast to this the daily earning of beedi worker and handloom weaver was in the region of Rs. 150. Thus for decades no new labour is attracted to the traditional industries and a good number of them moved to other jobs fetching high wage. For some time though the female labour filled the gap the same too drained up. In this scenario the option was to downsize the activities in accordance with the labour availability or quit. This was the development course of the traditional industries. Manifestly in the scenario depicted here the labour of traditional industries were in distress as the wage rate was depressed compared to other sectors. This has forced them to search for other employment opportunities and to that extent the employment diversification of the village can be stated as distress driven. This development trajectory is not village specific, it is felt

throughout Kerala in varying degrees. Another factor on the labour market front is the change in the people's attitude as there was aversion to manual work leading to the acute shortage of labour for most of the traditional activities. Even among the available labour there was attitudinal change. Labour productivity decline is very conspicuous in the time wage rate jobs. This was invariably articulated during the field work by those employing labor on time rate basis. Widespread absenteeism is also observable among the labour. In reality now for construction works and a variety of other casual works large dependence is on migrant workers. Another factor is the shortage of entrepreneurship. The widespread failures of industries killed the entrepreneurial spirit among the young generation. Now most of them prefer less risky business. There was also the development of rent seeking behaviour. The construction of shops and houses for generation of rental income, renting out of pucca factory sheds as go downs, renting out construction and other machineries/equipments by not engaging in any other activities noticed in the field work are manifestations of this phenomenon. On the demographic front the village witnessed substantial in-migration of population for settlement.As found while the population growth in the district during the 1991-2011 period was 12.03 per cent the village witnessed 22.72 per cent increase in population. The well-developed transport facilities, development of educational facilities[3] and proximity to the important two towns of Kannur and Thalassery were other attractions. Parallel to this the village attracted many of the commercial establishments from the congested Kannur town. The process got accelerated with the commissioning of the by-pass road connecting Mangaluru with Cochin. These developments led to the demand for land, unprecedented price rise and speculative land deals in the village. This also impacted the agricultural practices as paddy fields were converted into housing or commercial plots. Besides, the bye pass road construction had detrimental impact as a substantial portion of the road cut the former paddy fields at a height ranging from 3 to 5 feet for about three kilo meters. The problem of water logging too led to the abandonment of paddy cultivation. Thus, while most of the two sides of the roads are now occupied by the village's important economic activities, the rest of paddy fields have been invaded by shrubs and plants. In sum, the transformation resulted from the confluence of several factors. Important among them were the developments on the labour market, migration, development of infrastructure facilities, proximity to the towns and distress experienced by the traditional sector labour.

Conclusion

The rural Indian economy witnessed profound growth and diversification in the post-independent period. The change process was also subjected to intense academic scrutiny. However, most of the studies are premised on the general assumption that rural economies are agrarian. In reality in many villages the traditional industries dominated and provided sustenance to majority of households in the past. A holistic approach in understanding the nature of development of such economies is missing and this paper is an attempt in this direction. Specifically, this paper after portraying the economic structure of a non-farm village economy in the nineteen sixties attempts to depicts

the nature of economic change for over five decadesand the driving forces of change.

The Edakkad village of Kannur district was selected for the study as the economic structure of the village was dominated by traditional industries in the past. Some of the other reasons for the selection of the village was that a good account of the economic structure and the socio economic conditions of the population was available from the Village Monograph of the Census organisation. In 2017, we conducted a study on the socio-economic conditions of the population and economic structure of Edakkad village for which 361 sample households were systematically selected and interviewed on personal visits with a questionnaire. An enumeration of all household and non-household enterprises of the village was also conducted. Being a native of the village, the author witnessed the developments in the village stretching for about six decades from the 1960's and better placed to collect reasonably accurate data. Structural changes were assessed with reference to the major economic activities of the village, the nature of enterprises and employment pattern.

In the nineteen sixties the major economic activities of the village comprised of handloom cloth production, beedi rolling, agriculture, fishing, animal husbandry and livestock. The industrial and agricultural activities made profound development for about two decades. There was also an enabling environment. In agriculture land reform and agricultural development initiatives led to intensification of agricultural sector. Though the two main industries were in crisis later they emerged as much more dominant. In handloom it was the result of the introduction of a new variety of cloth which enjoyed flourishing market abroad. The district emerged as one of the most important centre for handloom production and export in India. Organisation of beedirolling workers under cooperative fold was milestone in the development of beedi industry. A number of factors accounted for this prosperity of commodity producing activities important among them being the presence of entrepreneurial class, availability of skilled hard working workers, institutional development and governmental developmental initiatives. However, the growth tempo any of these activities was able to sustain and later decades witnessed their decay and more less extinction.It was found that the traditional livelihood system has turned out to of peripheral importance in the emerging economy.

Still the economy of the village was on the growth path propelled by many other economic activities. The major activities are of services type important among them being, retail trade, hotels and restaurants, transport, health infrastructure, entertainmentactivitiws, printing and publishing. In the transformation process not only the organic growth witnessed in the past was lost as the development pushed the locals to the periphery. The factors identified for this trajectory of growth was the developments in the labour market, migration and remittance induced development pattern, development of good social and physical infrastructure, aversion to manual work and loss of entrepreneurial spirit among the new generations.

The paper is part of a broader study on 'Perspectives on rural development with reference to a Kerala village' undertaken by the author with a Senior Fellowship of the Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi. The fellowship was affiliated with the Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bengaluru. The financial assistance of the Council and the academic support provided by the Institute is gratefully acknowledged.

Notes

1. The Edakkad village and the Edakkad Panchayat areas correspond.
2. In the total looms of the state under cooperative fold in 1984 the share of Kannur district where concentration of looms was highest was only 9.18 per cent(See Director of Handloom 1986:8).
3. In terms of number of institutions and diversified courses the village is found as the most important educational hub of the district.

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Manuscript received 10/08/2022; Final version accepted 20/10/2022.

Plantation Capital and Appropriation of Commons in Global Peripheries

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Abstract

When colonial capital saw prospects of developing tea plantations in eastern Himalayan foothills, it turned the nature's jungles and rural commons to the botanical garden in present-day Northeast India first to fulfil the demand for tea in western markets. Nature was the lynchpin between the crop and colonial capital. By setting up indentured labour based plantation systems, a steady stream of the tropical primary consumption good was maintained. The agro-ecology that sustained tea plant growth also gave rise to blights and pests and diseases for humans and Plants. The commodity history of tea played a variety of roles in shaping the environment. Chemically synthesised pest, weed and growth management of the plant become overwhelming. But products only with low chemical residue products goes to developed importing nations. Others mostly dumped in domestic markets. Till the neoliberal era, the doctrine of foothills as terra nullius, without understanding the itinerant form of land use in highlands, become hegemonic and the result is more commercialisation of common land in hills replacing indigenous food system with plantations, exposing local land and labour to global capital. Along with tea, the new enthusiasm is for palm oil. Thus the fragile ecology of highland, biodiversity and food sovereignty of natives is being remoulded. Apart from that, there are additional aspects in NE highlands. As the state ally with capital, the sentiment for safeguarding commons and control over land is expressed as a struggle for federalism. Reflecting on discourses used for accumulation needs and how people and institutions have internalised them the paper concludes on necessity of intellectual self-reliance in global south.

Introduction

Labour is not only nature's life but also socially constructed. Any commodity needs labour to work in nature. Only labour can produce the use value of nature while at the same time having a social nature. Relation of a given society with Nature is also 'social', which in essence, reflects the spirit of existent production relations. Capital

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in the peripheries mapped Nature as a potential resource for furthering accumulation and cloaked suitable narratives and discourses.

The paper discusses the different discourses used to acquire 'common' natural resources for capitalist accumulation. The paper takes the case of tea plantations in the eastern Himalayan foothills. The tea estates at the foothills of the sub-mountain track, which more or less constitute present-day hill states in the Northeastern region of India, came to trigger changes that have far-reaching consequences. For the tea business, the first-time mountain land was commercialised, which paved the way for capitalist accumulation (Goswami, 2010). The plantation is one of the few areas of scholarship where fields developed in the global South have found resonance in other parts of the South in terms of the reinstitutionalisation of coercive labour and dimensions of the Agrarian question of it. But contemporary forms of primitive accumulation through plantation are rarely discussed.

A brief introspection into the history reveals the dual role of primitive accumulation and accumulation by dispossession of customary land in non-capitalist spheres from the colonial to the post-liberal times with different modus operandi. The present study will show how the encroachment over rural commons presupposes a process of privatisation of commons which started even in the dirigiste period of national liberation. The concept of private property as a single integral right and an over asset hardly existed in precapitalist spaces, particularly in highlands. Privatisation of commons excluded other members of the community to be used by a few members only. That is part of a process that Marx called Primitive Accumulation.

Tea became a national drink in England in the 16th century without a single tea plantation in its boundary. Then it was primarily dependent on imports from China. But after the Opium War with the Chinese emperor, British mercantilists started looking for alternative options, preferably a suitable location where they could produce tea. Thirteen years before that, in 1923, in the eastern Himalayan foothills of the British colony that is in present-day India's Assam Arunachal border, where a village head of Chingphow community called Bicha Gaam, showed Robert Bruce, a British Cornel, how their community people were using leaves of locally available tea tree as medicinal plants[2]. That opened a new door for to British tea trade. Though the Assam variety tea was discovered 13 years before the opium war, the sample was lying in a botanical laboratory for many years. The discovery of tea in the colony gave the colonisers an alternative environment to produce tea rather than remain solely dependent on China (J. Sarma, 2012). That point of contact affected the historiography of a much wider region that is referred to as Northeast India today (Fernandes and Barbora, 2009)

[2] The re-uttering colonial myth of "discovery" indicates the history of the Assam tea bush is attributed to Robert Bruce, who encountered it in 1823. Bruce found the plant growing "wild" in different forests of Assam. Maniram Dewan, then a service provider under British, directed him to the local Singpho chief Bessa Gam. Robert noticed the Singphos brewing tea from the leaves of the bushes and managed Bessa Gam to provide him the samples of the leaves and seeds (J. Sarma 2012).

Geographical and Political Overview of the Study Area

Politically Northeastern region is a peripheral part of India, surrounded by eastern Himalayan highlands and foothills. Assam and six other states, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and Meghalaya, constitute the Northeastern Region of India. Except for Manipur and Tripura, other parts were administratively under 'Assam province' for a significant period of colonial rule. During the 1970s, the region disintegrated after a prolonged and violent self-determination movement, and Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram came into existence. The Brahmaputra river and the valley mostly form the region's central part; there are foothills and sub-mountain tracks, and beyond that, the highlands. The sub-mountain way and highland constitute the six states of northeast India, with an overwhelming tribal population. At the same time, Assam is mostly the Brahmaputra river valley and Barak valley towards the south. Sanjib Baruah described the region as a 'resource frontier' of the Indian nation-state (S. Baruah 2020), the highlands of the region also come under the geographical categorisation of 'zomia' by James Scott (Scott 2010). In terms of area, the region is bigger than many countries like Ghana, Uganda and Senegal.

The Northeast region of India is a very diverse area of its ecological, economic, institutional and cultural aspects. Some of the regional differences include mountainous regions and uneven plains; a varied social composition concerning religion, caste, and languages, and ethnicity are present in the region. The presence of a large number of tribal groups with distinct cultural and institutional patterns and locally managed access to resources are essential features of this region. Although the term 'north-eastern region' is a gross oversimplification of the complexities and diversities, still its role as an overarching framework that has underpinned the policy interventions of the central and, to a lesser extent, state governments in the post-independence phase justifies the focus of the term (K.Mishra and Upadhyay, 2017)

Traditionally the economy of the indigenous communities in northeastern India depended on subsistence agriculture and foraging, with forest and land as the primary resources. It depended on community ownership, also known as collective management or co-ownership or common property resources (CPRs), in the modern language of governance. The CPRs include the common grazing ground, *jhum* (shifting) cultivation land, forests for non-timber forest produce such as edible fruits, leaves and vegetables, small timber and medicinal herbs, watersheds, rivulets, rivers, ponds and other community assets that give other protein foods like fish crab etc. (Fernandes, 2020). The tribal population in the hill states in this part of India got some protection under constitutional safeguard under the "sixth schedule" in the Indian constitution. Indian constitution provides special autonomy to tribal-dominated states in North-Eastern India under which rights over land and forest remain with the communities or local bodies. The same constitutional safeguard gives the native communities autonomy over land ownership and use (Chaudhury, 2013).

The presence of hundreds of other estates and millions of small growers in Northeast India and neighbouring Himalayan foothills makes this one of the most prolific of all tea regions in the world. However, the Brahmaputra valley and the surrounding sub-mountainous track was the leading site of tea estates by the British. Other States like Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, South District of Tripura, N. C Hills District of Assam and Karbi Anglong District of Assam has also embarked on tea cultivation in the recent past. The commodity of tea becomes the lynchpin between the global plantation capital and northeast India or eastern Himalayan foothills. The commodity history of tea played various roles in shaping the history of capitalist exploitation of non-human nature[3] in this part of the world.

Tea, Colonial Capital Discourse of 'Wasteland.'

In 1837 British exported 46 boxes of tea leaves to England From NEI for the first time. With the arrival in London of fine quality tea in 1938, the commercial circle of the city took a keen interest in tea plantations in Assam and a company known as the Assam Company was formed[4] in 1839 to take over the experimental holdings of the East India Company's administration over the tea gardens established in Assam till then. East India, the British merchant that colonised India, was willing to finance the Indian tea enterprises after it saw the tea monopsony over China going out of hand after the Opium war. Assam Company was the first company in India to undertake the commercial production of tea. It was, in fact, the direct successor of the East India Company in the tea business. Within two decades, many more British companies entered different parts of Assam. Between 1859 and 1866, the British Authorities cleared the hills of Assam for tea gardens and tried to attract enormous investments for the industry. That way British empire unleashed primitive accumulation in Asia. The colonial rule in India, like any other colony colonised by western empires, had a resource extraction and allocation system that determined not only who had access to natural resources but also the 'biotic system' (Tucker, 1988). The plantation estates in the highly biodiverse Brahmaputra valley and surrounding foothills were classic example.

The British East India Company offered incentives to prospective investors in a tea plantation in NEI by providing land at cheaper terms, minimum revenue and even

[3] Human being is also a part of the nature. So non-human nature means the natural world outside human being where human labour is deployed to produce things.

[4] A group of British merchants formed the Assam Company in London on February 12, 1839. The Assam Company was formed in a meeting of merchants in London with a capital of 5,00,000 pounds in 10,000 shares of 50 pounds each, of which 8000 were to be allotted in Great Britain and 2000 in India. It was also India's first joint-stock company in the non-banking sector to have the liability of its shareholders limited by an Act of Incorporation in 1845. The Assam Company initially dividing the operations into three divisions (Northern, Southern and Eastern) and headquartered at a place called Nazira. Yet a characteristic nature of the joint stock companies (like Assam Company), with a decisive control over operation and expenditure with the board of directors and shareholders, removed from the scene of production and often determined by profit and fluctuations of the markets, had a significant bearing in conditioning the nature of management and work on the plantations (Mishra U. , 2003).

as a grant (Guha, 2006) by introducing a series of new land lease rules. The colonial administrators saw the idea of land, land holding and ownership with its oriental gaze.

John Locke's theory of property influenced the colonial land policy in India. The category 'wasteland'—and its variants "dead," "idle," "vacant," "fallow," "and unutilised" land—facilitated state seizures of public commons for colonial capitalist exploitation in British India, Malay, Dutch East Indies, and imperial central Vietnam (Bhattacharya, 2020). The Lockean understanding of land created a binary opposition of "State of nature" and "State of Civilization" and considered that, to evolve from a state of nature to a state of civilisation, "individually enclosed" lands must be put under commercial cultivation. So common lands were termed as 'wastelands'. In other words, 'value' became the criterion for ordering land and the people associated with those land.

Here 'common land' means Land where people relished the fruits of the soil in "common"; the inhabitants had no proprietary rights over land. That means wastelands were not barren or infertile land but rather a social category where anything beyond the domain of private enclosures (as well as state-appropriated land) was categorised as the same (Chakraborty, 2018). The "wasteland category also defined who would and would not become most vulnerable to dispossession and enclosure" (Whitehead, 2010). People in hills and foothills played an essential role in creating these spaces, often resisting state formation. Such misunderstood categorisation of common land as 'wasteland' was not limited to India. Such notions were used to justify access and control of land use across the global south. In central Vietnam also, "Colonial engagements with land clearing and customary uses of "open" lands gave shape to the colonial discourse of "wasteland" and later spurred colonial environmentalist critiques, even calls for a new form of green colonialism via exotic tree plantations" (Biggs, 2018). In Myanmar, the livestock grazing common land that was not generating revenue was also declared a 'wasteland' (Ferguson, 2014). In Ghana, such notions were used to bring in laws to smoothen the way to acquire land for gold mining (Nti, 2013).

In India, colonisers transferred large tracks of rural common land, agricultural land and forests to tea plantations. It also put the colonisers in a far better position to extract surplus from the land than the original inhabitants. The pressure on cultivable fallow land increased immensely due to the grant of land leases for tea estates. But as applications were made seeking more significant blocks of land by foreign capital holders, vast tracts of the 'wastelands' in eastern Brahmaputra valley and Himalayan foothills were alienated from the marginal rural folk to the tea planters, which were once used for cultivation without holding the land permanently. The government also alienated large areas of forestlands for tea plantations (Brandis, 1879). Over time, the tea estate owners became the largest landowners in the region. That changed the land relations and altered the conditions under which land can be held, occupied and managed.

The handover of large tracts of so-called wastelands to European tea planters subverted the region's old economic and social networks and property regimes. There were frequent attacks on the plantations by "tribesmen" protesting their dispossession during the early years of tea plantations in Assam and surrounding foothills. Colonial writings portrayed them as marauding barbarians. The solution found by the British government was to introduce the Inner Line system in 1873 to fence off the plantations. At that time, an imaginary line was drawn along the northern and eastern foothills of Assam province (A. J. Saikia, 2011) to place a perceived boundary with 'unruly' hill tribes. The hills with tribal populations were considered inside the Inner Line. These regulations also prevented entrance into the hills except with special permission. That also restricted British tea planters from acquiring land in the Hills, which were later 1935 demarcated as excluded areas and remained outside the direct jurisdiction of the British administration[5]. That's how Inner Line served as a "territorial frame to capital" (Kar, 2009). The division between hills and plains assigned the valley as a world of capital, while the tribal population in hills were perceived as premodern and primitive. The primary aim of colonisers was to establish a clear and defensible property right in plantations. Though the Inner Line was redrawn repeatedly "to accommodate the expansive compulsions of plantation capital" (S. Baruah, 2020). But the plantation regime of the British more or less remained restricted to the valley and foothills in the colonial period.

After encroaching on rural commons and forests, British capital established monopoly control over the tea plantations in Northeast India and accumulated a high-profit margin. The Assam Company did not raise any additional capital from 1854 to 1901 but managed to treble its acreage more than while paying out Rs 9 million in dividends (Guha, Medieval and early Colonial Assam 2015). By the end of the nineteenth century, there were only a few tea enterprises in northeast India outside the control of British companies control. A. K. Bagchi, citing The Indian Industrial Year Book for 1911, shows that seven British Managing Agencies controlled 61% of the rupee tea companies and that the London correspondents of four of these controlled a further 34% of sterling tea companies (Bagchi 1972). That means there is only encroachment of resources by colonial capital and concentration of wealth within that. Tea Planters adopted the policy of indentured labour[6] and earned absolute surplus by suppressing the workers' wages by extra-economic measures. The rest produced by these workers was accumulated by Colonial capital and invested in Industrial development in Britain to subsidise the war. At the same time, the plight of indentured labourers in the tea estates created a new history of exploitation.

[5] With the exception of collecting revenue and controlling hill tribes, who were perceived as savages, the British administrators stayed away from the day-to-day functioning of the tribes and villages in hills.

[6] For detail see (Behal 2014) (Guha, Planter Raj to Swaraj 2006)

Political Liberation and Development of Agrarian Capitalism

After the political liberation and shift in the global balance of power after the second world war, the process of primitive accumulation was restricted for another four decades till the advent of neoliberalism. However, the operation of surplus extraction within the tea sector continued despite few pro-labour legislations by the newly independent nation-state.

In the post-independence period, in the tea industry (also mining and other initiatives developed by colonial power), the exploitative nature of the rule[7] engineered by the British continued in the North-eastern region with just a change in the stakeholders from British to Indian capitalists (Haokip, 2015). The tea estates were not nationalised, and the new sovereign government did any intervention in the ownership of tea estates or factories for a long time. The colonial capital remained dominant till the mid of 1960s. Till 1965 there were 60 sterling companies and 44 Rupee companies (Awasthi, 1975). During that time, the global trade of Indian tea grew significantly, and as late as 1967, tea remained India's largest export earner (Nayyar, 1977). But since colonial capital remained dominant in the industry, profits were sent back to British lead firms and little capital was left for reinvestment in India (Raman, 2009). The Central government of newly sovereign India first attempted to remedy this by creating the Tea Board of India in 1953. The Board established a tax system, leading to tighter control of the industry[8].

In 1973, further government interventions were done through the introduction of the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA). The FERA placed restrictions on the ability of foreign companies to maintain holdings, with all non-financial subsidiaries required to dilute foreign ownership to a maximum of 40 per cent or to close operations. These changes allowed Indian firms to acquire a greater share of tea production. However, Hindustan Lever, the largest domestic lead firm[9] in India and a subsidiary of global firm Unilever, was insulated from the FERA. The company retained a 51 per cent equity on the condition that 60 per cent of the subsidiary's output was in the core sector (a set of capital-intensive industries prioritised by the government at that time for investment) and at least 10 per cent of the company's output was exported (Pant and Ramachandran, 2017). These changing ownership structures were accompanied by increased domestic consumption of tea and increased export diversification. New Indian tea companies tried to capture a domestic market. But following Section 29

[7] A new law had been brought for minimum wage and social protection of tea estate workers in 1951, called Plantation Labour Act (PLA), but that also retained the provision of paying major part of wage in kind and services by estate owners as was in colonial period and left the issue of fixation of minimum wage collective bargaining to tripartite discussion of estate owners, workers union and government.

[8] Today, the Tea Board continues to be responsible for authorizing, registering and licensing all industrial activities pertaining to the industry.

[9] Having acquired Lipton tea brand in 1972, the firm subsequently acquired Brooke Bond in 1984 leading to the further expansion.

(2) (a) of the FERA Act,1973 Reserve Bank of India agreed to grant permission to carry on business to the Sterling Companies subject to the takeover of their Gardens by an Indian Company to be formed. After that, many amalgamations and mergers happened[10]. Direct and absolute ownership of gardens by sterling companies was almost abolished. Many new Indian companies came up. But big beverage companies continued their dominance, creating a near monopsony over procurement of semi-processed tea at Auction centres.

The plantation industry was flourishing but was not accompanied by any significant development in the agricultural sector within Assam to raise farm productivity and marketable surplus; neither the peasantry had any direct economic connection with the plantation industry nor the estates just near villages[11]. The land inequality created by colonial land revenue policies (Saikia and Das, 2011) continued after independence, despite a mild wave of land reform that touched upon the province of Assam, at least in legislation. Because the government failed to carry forward the land reform programmes to their logical end, the overall agrarian scenario of Assam remained in a situation of unusual backwardness. Gradually the peasantry became pauperised did not hinder the surplus extraction from tea plantation enclaves that continued to supply exports produced by the workers at a wage rate lower than other sectors. But new land reform acts restricted the expansion of tea plantations to new areas, and on the contrary, large tracts of land had been acquired from tea estates.

Another constitutional provision that restricted the expansion of big tea estates in tribal-dominated highlands (like Nagaland, Mizoram or Arunachal) was the special autonomy to such regions. After independence Indian constitution provided special autonomy to tribal-dominated highlands in Northeast India,[12] under which rights over land and forest remained with the communities or local bodies. The same constitutional safeguard gives the native communities autonomy over land ownership and use (Chaudhury, 2013). The special protective rights for the tribal people of the Northeast were, however, not palatable. It was the post-independence Constituent Assembly debates of 1949[13] that saw tribal leaders like Reverend J.J.M. Nichols-Roy, a Khasi from the hill areas of then Assam Province (now Meghalaya), and Jaipal Singh Munda from the Central Indian tribal belt, putting up a fierce argument in constituent assembly debate for special protective rights for the tribal people of India. It resulted in the

[10] For example, Eight sterling tea companies viz., The Assam-Doors Tea Co. Ltd., Hope Tea Co. Ltd., The Lebong Chulsa Tea Co. Ltd., The British Darjeeling Tea Co. Ltd., The Chulsa Tea Co. Ltd., The Leesh River Tea Co. Ltd., The Danguajhar Tea Co. Ltd., and The Meenglas Tea Co. Ltd., were amalgamated with Goodricks Good Ltd Company.

[11] Except 'haat', the local weekly markets emerged at the vicinity of tea estates where local peasants sell their meagre amounts of marketable surplus from own fields.

[12] Two more regions, Manipur and Tripura, which were princely states under British rule and Union Territory in Independent India were given statehood in 1971 and become constituent part of Northeast India.

[13] For more detail see "How the Tribal Leaders Defended Their Rights in Constituent Assembly", Raiot, 27 January, 2019. https://raiot.in/how-the-tribal-leaders-defended-their-rights-in-the-constituent-assembly/

incorporation of the 5th and 6th Schedules of the Constitution, applicable to the Central Indian tribals and the Northeast, respectively. The hard-earned Sixth schedule in the Indian constitution that gave autonomy to tribal states and regions continued the restriction on expanding large tea estates to the hills of Northeast India.

A New Form of Primitive Accumulation

By the late 1970s and 1980s, the structure of the tea supply chain and production organisation transformed in a new direction as tea production once again started expanding to fresh lands, even in restricted regions, with the introduction of the idea of Small Tea Growers. Until the early 1950s mighty tea estate format was thought to be the only way to produce tea commercially. The minimum acreage for tea plantations was fixed at 10.12 hectares in the Tea Act of India 1951; peasants could not venture into it. The concept of smallholding tea cultivation came into the limelight in the mid-1950s after a rigorous and successful experiment in Kenya[14]. This successful venture pushed tea production to make a steady shift from big plantations to small holdings. Today, small holding tea growers contribute to total tea production in most tea-producing countries like Kenya, India, Sri Lanka, Vietnam and Nepal. The definition of a Small Tea Grower (STG) is based on holding size, which varies across different countries[15]. However, the average holding sizes in most countries, irrespective of the upper limit, tend to be on the lower side. In India, a small grower who cultivates 10.12 hectares or less and not possessing a tea processing factory is considered STG.

The small holding tea plantations as a driver of another transformation of the tea plantation landscape in North-eastern India started in the late 1970s. In 1978, the then Agriculture Minister of Assam province took the initiative and encouraged the rural youths of the state to take up tea plantations in the homesteads and fallow land to "improve their economic conditions" (P. Baruah, 2015). Since then, plantations in the small sector have shown a considerable rise, particularly in Eastern and Northern Assam. By the 1980s it also started expanding to foothills in sub-mountain tracks surrounding the Brahmaputra valley in other states in Northeast India. The number of Small Tea Growers (STGs) in Assam is counted as 78,350 as per registration with the Tea Board, which shares almost 30% of the state's total tea production (Economic Survey of Assam, 2016). More than fifty per cent STGs of India is situated in North-East India. According to another report published by the All Assam Small Tea Growers Association th,e STGs of Assam have successfully utilised 20 million

[14] In Kenya too under colonial policies subsistence peasants become largely dependent on commercial maize production. But got disturbed by instability of Maize production farmers turned to more 'permanent' tea production. already existing tea gardens also influenced to make that move. For detail see, Sally Jemngietich Kosgei. "Commodity Production, Tea and Social Change in Kericho, Kenya. 1895-1963". A PhD Thesis submitted to Department of History, Stanford University. 1981.

[15] In Kenya, a grower cultivating tea in a small piece or piece of land who does not possess a tea processing factory is an STG. In Sri Lanka "small-holding" means the area of land less than 20.2 ha. In Indonesia, smallholders/small growers are those who grow tea on land size between 0.8 to 2.0 ha and sell tea without processing.

hectares of wasteland' (Borah and Das, 2015). In other words, the small tea growers brought in rural commons and forest land under the ambit of the export-oriented commercial plantation. That is nothing but the adverse integration of them and their land with the spiral of capital accumulation. This was the second phase of Primitive Accumulation in the region. The Tea Board of India promoted small tea growers since the 1980s primarily because STGs can provide better quality green leaves from 'fresh land' brought under tea plantations and additional quantities (P. Baruah, 2015). Since Assam is a century-old location of a big tea plantation, the old tea tree bushes gradually become less productive. Finding alternative sources from new fertile land was precedence then bearing the cost and gestation period of replantation[16].

The small tea growers' entry changed the rural scenario once again. Many people from a local agrarian society started tea plantations in the agricultural sector, where already the peasantry was destitute by income-deflationary macroeconomic policies. In practice, dispossessed people also kept some farming to compensate for the low wage or tried to adapt to the new condition by doing cash crops, however tiny scale possible. Section of wealthy farmers and the urban middle class also joined them (Sharma and Baruah, 2017). These new production relations demanded integration into global capital circuits, increasing competition and more unpaid labour.

The value chain is much broader in production level, with a vast number of small tea growers and workers. The hegemony of TNCs is orchestrated by intermediaries, Bought Leafe Factory (BLF) and Agents. The Bought Leaf Factories (BLF) are tea green leaf processing factories with their tea garden. Still, processed tea leaves are aggregated by agents from small tea growers Small local capitalists mostly own BLFs have to take the price decided at auction as dictum, and they accordingly pay to the small tea growers. A growing reserve labour force consisting of unemployed or seasonally employed 'plantation workers'[17] from big tea estates and pauperised peasantry keeps the wage in the STG sector low. That way, STGs can provide green leaves at a low price to BLFs. From BLF, semi-processed tea is sold in the international market through Auction centres[18]. Auction centres are harbingers of controlling the industry as everything from price to quality check is standardised in auctions. The semi-processed tea from factories (Tea Estate factories or Bought Leaf Factory, where

[16] In India 51% of the tea bushes in large tea gardens are more than 40 years old, which is one among the major reasons for stagnant productivity. Further, the re-plantation rate has never been more than 0.4 percent of the aggregate acreage in a year in recent years, though the prescribed annual norm is 2 percent (Barua, 2013).

[17] The labour relation in tea estate sector is casualised, undermining the PLA 1951. The process started in 1970s but actually got momentum in neo-liberal period when Tea Sector of India started facing immense pressure in domestic market also and lost a assured international market with the fall of USSR and east-European socialist block. India had a trade treaty with USSR. It was the biggest importer of tea from India. (White, Mishra and Upadhay 2009). The casualisation created pool of workers without in kind payment, seasonal unemployment and daily wage earners.

[18] The sophisticated techniques involved putting the tea arranged neatly in ceramic cups and smelling the aroma carefully to determine taste and quality.

small growers sell green leaves) is sold, usually through auction with the help of a broker or directly to big tea companies. At the auction, the large beverage TNCs are the biggest buyers and controls the selling price. The purchased tea is blended and packed by beverage TNCs for their tea labels. The international tea supply chain is characterised by a concentration of market power, with only a few companies controlling a significant share of the value chain and market share[19]. That is how the "Monopoly capital reaps super-profits—meaning over and above-average profits—by establishing and reproducing control both at the level of procurement and the market t" (Shivji, 2017). The monopsony buyer TNCs include Unilever- which controls the world's most popular brand Lipton Yelthe low Label, and it's subsidiary Brooke Bond, followed by Tata, which owns estates and packaging facilities in the Indian subcontinent and Kenya and the second biggest tea brand Tetley (Langford, 2021). (Bhashin, 2019). These TNCs blend, process and retail much more than they produce. They are leaving the plantation activities to small growers and other medium-range local or national companies, concentrating more on the stages above auction in the value chain, selling various brands of tea worldwide, and charging differential prices according to the market and quality of tea.

The global capital, represented by TNCs dealing beverage business, is on a spree to get high-quality and speciality tea from fresh land at a low cost of production. Expanding tea production by Small Tea Growers appropriating untapped land is suitable for such needs. STGs do not come under plantation labour law (applicable only to tea estates above 10.12 hectares with a residential labour force). The STG regime's most significant change was the expansion of plantations in the Northeast Highlands, where land ownership and management are constitutionally protected. People in hills doing biodiverse and sustainable shifting cultivation (Ramakrishnan, 1993) took plantation (along with coffee and rubber). Particularly highland provinces like Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura and Nagaland have shown a significant increase in the number of STGs. As per the Confederation of Indian Small Tea Growers Association, 210,225 STGs will have a tea plantation area of 215,886.40 hectares by 2019 in the NEI region.

The Discourse of 'Development'

Traditionally the economy of the tribal communities in NEI highlands depended on subsistence agriculture and foraging. In the customary practice of highland people, community ownership of resources is the nucleus of the society. These commons and collectively owned resources are also called Common Property Resources (CPR) in the modern language of governance. The CPRs include the common grazing ground,

[19] Three multinationals, namely Unilever, Tata Global Beverages (formerly Tata Tea) and Associated British Foods, which owns the Twinings brand, control one-fifth of the market. Unilever and Tata are the main tea packers globally, and therefore control the most profitable nodes of the supply chain apart from retail. McLeod Russel, another large multinational, focuses on the production and processing of tea (Langford 2021)

jhum[20] (shifting) cultivation land, forests for non-timber forest produce such as edible fruits, leaves and vegetables, small timber and medicinal herbs, watersheds, rivulets, rivers, ponds and other community assets that give other protein foods like fish crab etc. (Fernandes, 2020).

Almost all tribes of Northeast India highlands do shifting cultivation. The colonial state did not understand the itinerant form of land use in hills and imagined foothill forests as *terra nullius*. In the post-colonial period, the Indian nation-state demonised shifting cultivation. It is a historical fact that during the past centuries, the 'sedentarisation' of people has taken place in most nation-states leading to a transformation of various customary land tenure systems into a uniform modern property regime based on individual ownership (Scott, 2010). Nation states, including India, that took the path of capitalist development, introduced new land laws based on individual ownership, modern taxation and revenue system. For that, shifting cultivation was increasingly seen as antithetical. Policies and actions by the Indian nation-state were to make land and products from NEI highland taxable, assessable, commercial or, failing that, to replace that with a Cash crop, mono-cropping or plantation-style. Such land use has been encouraged in place of the more biodiverse form of production prevailing in the highland areas (Darlong, 2004).

From a capitalist perspective, highland tribal people were seen as poor, dispossessed, and landless. State governments in NE have also fallen prey to such hegemonic ideas. And the paternalist notion is that the tribal population should be 'rescued' from such poverty by 'developmental' activities like sedentarisation or cash crop plantations. This shift took place in two steps. The first was the commercialisation of their traditional crops. It was followed by introducing of modern cash crops and plantation crops like tea, coffee, rubber and palm oil (Behera, et al., 2016). The attempts to incorporate modern cash crop cultivation have been overrated as "development". Scholar Melville Pereira mentions how during a field trip to Churachandpur, Manipur, in 2012, he was surprised to hear a village elder appreciating the 'gesture' of the Coffee Board providing Rs 60,000 per acre as a subsidy to start a coffee plantation in the jhum land of the village. (Pereira 2016). In 2007, the Tea Board started a promotional subsidy scheme of Rs 76,000 per hectare for small growers in Northeast India.

To avail the benefits of the government schemes for plantation, an applicant must have registered land documents. For that, even the customary political institutions also started issuing No Objection Certificates, which became a major source of privatisation of rural commons. Thus, the cropping and land-use pattern changes towards export-oriented plantations proved perilous to the ordinary tribal population in this region. At

[20] Shifting cultivation or Jhum is a method of cultivation on temporary fields. The fields are abandoned after one or two years of cultivation generally, allowing shrubs and trees to grow back. People then cultivate another plot. The alternation between periods of 'cultivation' and 'fallow' ensures the continuation of a jungle cover that helps to maintain biodiversity (Maaker, Kikon and Barbora 2016). Cultivated land, and fallow land all are CPR and commonly managed by the community, the village or the clan.

the same time, the self-aggrandising individuals within communities, either through primitive accumulation or through accumulation by dispossession, amassed enormous land resources in their hands. When the elites of the tribal society became part of the power structure, they started mediating the process of primitive accumulation[21]. For example, powerful politicians and relatives control almost all tea and large horticultural estates in Arunachal Pradesh. They benefit from substantial state support in direct subsidies, marketing assistance, and indirect subsidies, such as the illicit use of workers on the government's payroll in private estates (White, Mishra and Upadhay, 2009). By 2014 Arunachal Pradesh had a handful of big growers and tea estates and had 4500 STGs [22]. These STGs failed to receive government subsidies since they could not get clearance from the Environmental ministry[23] since they had converted forest and fellow land into tea plantations. With the change in the political economy around and internalising the narratives of 'development', even small growers became mediators of primitive accumulation. They appropriated fresh land for plantation and integrated it into global capital.

In Nagaland, the state government and Tea Board officials pointed out tea plantations as a suitable alternative to jhum cultivation. The abandoned jhum land can be transformed into tea plantations (Konwar, 2017). In Nagaland,[24] the pace of shifting to tea plantations from mixed cropping has been increasing since 1995[25] (Konwar, 2017) Today, vast areas of the Nagaland-Assam foothill border are covered with tea plantations. As per statistics available with the state Agricultural Department, about 800 acres of land in Mon and 300 acres in Mokokchung district have been brought under tea cultivation, and per hectare production of tea in some areas of Nagaland is more than that in Assam. However, only one tea factory in the state is located in the Mokokchung district. The factory is fed by a plantation of small tea growers of neighbouring districts like Zunheboto and Wokha Mokokchung. While the significant bulk of green leaves is exported to Assam at a low price[26]. That way, the industry gets

[21] Archana Prasad also came to similar conclusion in the context of indigenous politics. She mentions, "….once the adivasi elites were incorporated into thepower structure, they became part of oppressive institutional structures" (Prasad 2022).

[22] https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/small-tea-growers-in-arunachal-unable-to-avail-tea-board-subsidy-44221

[23] In 2000, the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) made it mandatory for small growers (even those planting tea on less than four hectares of land) to obtain a clearance to ensure they are not violating the Forest Conservation Act, 1980, and a 1996 Supreme Court order to prevent deforestation in Tirap and Changlang districts. The clearance is necessary to register with the Tea Board of India. Though this has not prevented small growers from converting their croplands to tea, they are unable to avail subsidies from the Tea Board of India

[24] Apparently tea plants were already growing wild in the Naga Hills, in Manipur, in Lushai Hills and Burma (Konwar 2017) British discovered tea in Assam. The culture of growing tea was limited to home garden for domestic consumption. The monoculture tea plantation as a cash crop is a recent phenomenon

[25] WWW.One India.Com News: "Naga Tea Fetches Record Price", August 28, 2006.

[26] Livelihood and Employment Opportunities in Nagaland: Sectoral Issue: A thematic Report, A GoI UNDP project 2009, p-24.

high production, quality tea from fresh land at lower cost. As has been shown price of tea for producers is controlled by TNC through the near monopsony at auction level.

Conclusion

Global capital and its onslaught on land continues to destroy the fabric of rural society, be it communal or private, traditional or formal lands. Vast areas around colonial tea estates there is a change of attitude of people with (non-human) nature. In this form of primitive accumulation, land that were under customary rights of indigenous people, like common land, fallow forest land had been brought under the production of export oriented commodity production. In colonial period its was done in coercion by directly occupying land and creating enclaves. In neo liberal era it is happening through persuasion. The objective of promoting free trade by international financial institutions under the project of neo-liberalism is nothing but the further intensification of the international division of labour in Agriculture, where tropical countries are conditioned to produce the exotic primary product for rich advanced countries (Patnaik and Moyo , 2011). In country after country in the developing world, there has been a diversion of land under the paradigm of free trade, from food grain production to export crops.

The state, in support of the Capital, encourages individualization of land and challenged the historical process of collective ownership of land and other natural resources in the hills of NEI. Plantation has been encouraged in place of the biodiverse form of food production that prevailed in Northeast India's hill states. It is not only tea, various export-oriented crops are encouraged to produce in land which were earlier used for agricultural and livelihood practices that ensured food sovereignty. Land inequality is increasing and market dependency is increasing with change in land use. With the rise of commercial plantation production of essential food crops has declined.

British neither understood itinerant form of agriculture and rural Commons and non their intrinsic relation with natural resources like forest. in semi tribal and tribe societies and saw them with a view of revenue generation only subjected to Primitive accumulation. Liberalised nation state did not critique such notions. In fact once the nation state enters in a neoliberal age, it also creates dubious discourse of development to bring in constitutionally protected lands under the ambit of global capital by projecting export oriented commodity production as development. Same can be said about political institutions for local self-governance. Who failed to understand resist, in most of the cases, such onslaught of capita. After the shift from sustainable agriculture to commercial plantation a corresponding change occurred in the ways people understand land and its use. This shows why intellectual self-reliance in global south or former colonised countries is important. Which shows that without intellectual self-reliance, local self-governance and constitutional protection of customary rights over land and resources is a misnomer.

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Manuscript received 07/11/2022; Final version accepted 03/12/2022.

Horticulture Crops in Arunachal Pradesh: Growth, Contribution to State Economy and Decomposition Analysis

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Abstract

Based on secondary data, the paper examines the growth of horticulture crops cultivated in Arunachal Pradesh along with its contribution to the State economy and use decomposition analysis to identify the drivers of change of growth of such crops. Our study depicts negative growth of area, production and productivity of horticulture crops in the State. Moreover, during 2010-11 to 2020-21, there has been a decline in the percentage share area of the State to the total area and production of horticulture crops in the country. However, despite the declining trends in growth of horticulture sector in Arunachal Pradesh and in its share in country's total area and production, this sector has a significant contribution to State economy in terms of value addition. Decomposition analysis depicts that except in case of vegetables, the major driving force of production change in horticultural crops is the yield effect. For vegetable, area effect is playing the prime role in its production change. Further, it is found that there is instability in area, production and productivity of horticultural crops in the State.

Introduction

Being an important source of nutrition and alternative source of livelihood, horticulture is widely promoted. The diversification towards horticulture sector contributes to rural income and has great potential to generate revenue to the farmers, improves socio-economic status of the people and their living standard (Sony and Upreti, 2017; Gautam and Handa 2012; Gopalakrishnan, 1991; Devi & Kumar, 2020). Further, socio-economic development along with the preservation of nature is indeed a difficult task, at least for the economic interest. Considering the worst effects of human developmental activities, the world is very concerned and the goal set to achieve sustainable development. The

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target set is not easy to achieve but it is also not difficult to follow, if every stakeholder feels the necessity and embrace the sustainable goal as their basic duty. Horticulture can play an important role in achieving sustainable development as it has great potential to maintain the ecological balance. According to Ravichandra, (2018)[3] , increasing population, changes in global income, lifestyle and food habits resulted in the increase in demand for horticulture products worldwide which further provides the scope for extensive practice of horticulture and grab the economic opportunities in this sector. Thus, horticulture cultivation assumes importance not only from the economic point of view but also for preserving environment and in achieving sustainable development.

Arunachal Pradesh has dense natural resources, be it a forest, water, or other resources. Available resources are still not harnessed at its best and have high potential for development through the proper utilization of these resources. Development without considering the natural environment is very susceptible from the sustainable point of view. In Arunachal Pradesh, shifting cultivation is practiced and the burden on this type of cultivation is also increasing with increasing population. In fact, the gap between one shifting cycle and the fallow cycle has also been shortened (Governement of Arunachal Pradesh, 2004). Moreover, the practice of shifting cultivation is environmentally harmful. Under such circumstances, the practice of horticulture is one of the good options for the State to improve the socio-economic condition of the people as well as to improve the economic health of the State and to maintain the ecological balance (Gopalkrishnana, 1991). It is being warned that staple food may face the production challenges (Mayes et al., 2012) and the cultivation of horticulture crops may further contribute to the food security. Furthermore, plantation of horticulture crops is important for the State as it is difficult to cultivate the permanent staple crops in hilly areas. In the Arunachal Pradesh, growth of population is more than the growth of food production which may cause food insecurity. According to Barah (2006), the North East Region produces five million tons of food grains and there is excess demand of 6.7 million tons. In addressing the problem of food product deficiency, horticulture sector can play a significant role and thereby contribute to the supply of food product within the region. This also enlarges the scope for development of horticulture in the region.

The practice of horticulture was in existence in Arunachal Pradesh since long back but basically for self consumption. As there is potential and suitable climate for the promotion and cultivation of various horticulture crops in Arunachal Pradesh, State government of Arunachal Pradesh has been promoting horticulture crops cultivation. Arunachal Pradesh is the second highest producer of fruits in the North Eastern Region after Assam (Gautam and Handa, 2012). The development of horticulture in the State is, to a great extent, because of the concern posed by age old shifting agriculture practice. The practice of horticulture is an alternative activity to reduce the burden of shifting cultivation. According to Gopalakrishnan (1991), the emphasis on

[3] Ravichandra, N.G. (2018): "Horticultural Nematology", Springer India, ISBN 978-81-322-2962-9, DOI 10.1007/97881-322-1841-8, Springer New Delhi Heidelberg New York Dordrenched London.

eco balance agricultural practices have been promoted as other alternative practices and one among such practices are the development of horticulture and promotion of crops like coffee, tea, rubber etc.

According to Reddy et al., (2010), investment in horticulture crops, especially fruits are more remunerative than sericulture but in terms of investment, it needs higher amount of initial investment. The horticulture sector contributes to rural economy and innovation, and this provide sustainable wage and employment avenues. According to Gautam and Handa (2012), horticulture contributes about 30.4 per cent in agriculture and provides employment to about 19 per cent people of India. The authors in their study have further shown that the demand for horticulture crops, especially fruits was increasing at 3.34 per cent growth rate annually. Increase in the contribution of horticulture was mostly due to the expansion in the area under horticulture crops (Government of India, 2017). The contribution in growth is also because of the improvement in land productivity along with the area expansion (Singha et al., 2014). According to Singha et al. (2014), this high growth generates employment, enhances export, provides nutrition security and improves the economic status of people.

Presently many horticulture crops are cultivated in Arunachal Pradesh and its production is improving over the year but there are many challenges like poor transport and communication facilities, lack of adequate networking with consumers of other region etc. While, various horticulture crops are cultivated in Arunachal Pradesh and the sector has both advantages and disadvantages which can affect the extent and growth of the sector, it becomes important to see the extent and growth of the horticulture sector in Arunachal Pradesh in recent time. However, as there is no such study on the horticulture sector in Arunachal Pradesh in recent time, the present paper aims to see the growth of horticulture crops in Arunachal Pradesh and its contribution in the State economy. Further, an attempt has been made to carry out decomposition analysis to identify the major contributor to its output growth.

Data Source and Analytical Framework

The paper is based exclusively on secondary data. Secondary data for the country are collected from the website of Ministry of Agriculture, Department of Agriculture and Cooperation and National Horticulture Board, Ministry of Agriculture. For Arunachal Pradesh, secondary data are collected from Statistical Abstracts of Arunachal Pradesh, Department of Economics & Statistics, Government of Arunachal Pradesh. Data from various articles and reports available online have also been used in the study.

To ascertain the objective of the study, apart from calculating descriptive statistics, Compound Annual growth rate (CAGR) is calculated using MS excel as per the formula given below.

CAGR=)$^{1/n}$ -1

Where,

E_A= Ending Value

B_A= Beginning value

n= number of years

The growth trend of horticulture production can be decomposed into three effects, namely, yield effect, area effect and interaction effect as used by Afrin and Umesh (2021). Such decomposition helps in understanding the sources of growth of horticulture output. As per the decomposition model,

$P_0=A_0Y_0$ and $P_i=A_iY_i$ where P, Y and A represent production, yield and area respectively of base year (0) and i^{th} year.

Now,

Therefore, $P_i=A_iY_i$

Or P_0+ =(A_0+ (Y_0+

Or P_0+ =A_0Y_0+A_0+Y_0+

Or =A_0+Y_0+ as $P_0=A_0Y_0$

Or 1 = + +

Thus,

Changes in production= yield effect + area effect + interaction effect

In order to examine the variability in area, production and productivity of crops in the State, Coefficient of Variation (CV) was calculated by using formula **CV =** as used by Kumar et al., (2019). Moreover, correlation of coefficient is also calculated to examine the degree of relationship between area and production of the State's horticulture crops.

Results and Discussion

Area under Horticulture

During the period 2010-11 to 2020-21, the area under fruit crops was highest in Arunachal Pradesh followed by spices, vegetables and other crops respectively while area under vegetables is the highest for the country (Table 1).

Table 1: Area under Horticulture

Area in '000 Ha

Year	Fruits		Vegetables		Spices		Others		Total	
	AP	India	AP	India	AP	India	AP	India	AP	India
2010-11	72 (82.29)	6383 (29.25)	4.2 (4.80)	8495 (38.92)	10.1 (11.54)	2940 (13.47)	1.2 (1.37)	4007 (18.36)	87.5 (100)	21825 (100)
2011-12	85.1 (82.86)	6705 (28.85)	6.3 (6.13)	8989 (38.67)	10.1 (9.83)	3212 (13.82)	1.2 (1.17)	4337 (18.66)	102.7 (100)	23243 (100)
2012-13	86.9 (83.76)	6982 (29.47)	1.5 (1.45)	9205 (38.85)	10.2 (9.83)	3076 (12.98)	5.15 (4.96)	4431 (18.70)	103.75 (100)	23694 (100)
2013-14	89.09 (83.40)	7216 (29.82)	1.4 (1.31)	9396 (38.83)	10.17 (9.52)	3163 (13.07)	6.17 (5.77)	4423 (18.28)	106.83 (100)	24198 (100)
2014-15	90 (84.08)	6110 (26.10)	1.7 (1.59)	9542 (40.76)	10.17 (9.50)	3317 (14.17)	5.17 (4.83)	4442 (18.97)	107.04 (100)	23411 (100)
2015-16	66.21 (79.56)	6301 (25.75)	4 (4.81)	10106 (41.29)	11.44 (13.75)	3474 (14.2)	1.57 (1.89)	4592 (18.76)	83.22 (100)	24473 (100)
2016-17	48.71 (78.00)	6373 (25.65)	1.75 (2.80)	10238 (41.20)	11.44 (18.32)	3671 (14.77)	0.55 (0.88)	4568 (18.38)	62.45 (100)	24850 (100)
2017-18	48.13 (77.17)	6506 (25.58)	2.58 (4.14)	10259 (40.34)	11.4 (18.28)	3878 (15.25)	0.26 (0.42)	4788 (18.83)	62.37 (100)	25431 (100)
2018-19	48.14 (76.21)	6597.41 (25.63)	2.62 (4.15)	10072.91 (39.14)	12.1 (19.15)	4067.03 (15.80)	0.31 (0.49)	4999.36 (19.43)	63.17 (100)	25736.71 (100)
2019-20	48.14 (72.18)	6760.115 (25.61)	2.62 (3.93)	10239.71 (38.80)	15.62 (23.42)	4350.836 (16.49)	0.31 (0.46)	5041.67 (19.10)	66.69 (100)	26392.33 (100)
2020-21	48.14 (71.29)	6929.729 (25.22)	2.62 (3.88)	10859.42 (39.52)	13.86 (20.52)	4456.935 (16.22)	2.39 (4.31)	5230.016 (19.03)	67.53 (100)	27476.1 (100)
CAGR (%)	-3.59	0.075	-4.20	2.26	2.92	3.85	8.39	2.45	-2.33	2.12

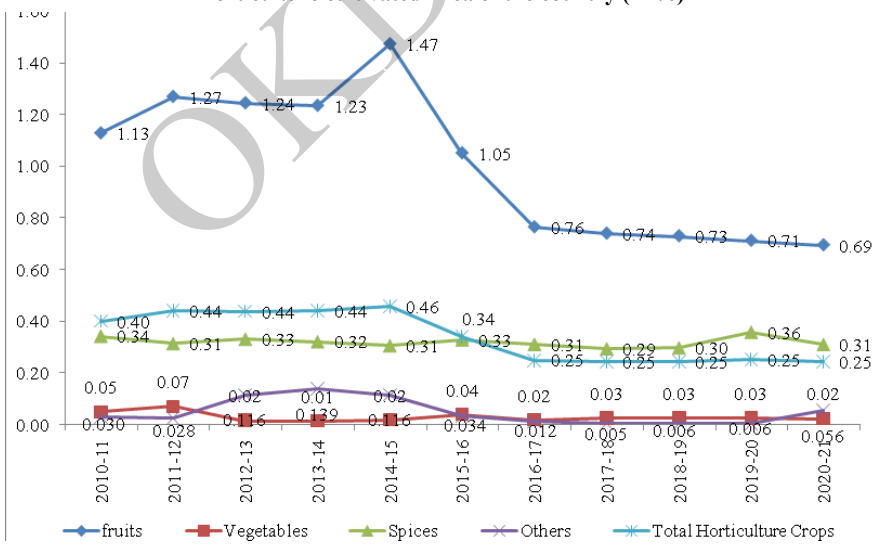
Source: Data for 2010-11 to 2012-13 are taken from Government of India (2013), for 2013-14 to 2017-18 taken from Government of India (2018) and for 2018-19 to 2020-21 taken from Ministry of Farmers Welfare Government of India(2022)

Figures in parenthesis are per cent value

Thus, the composition of horticulture crops in terms of area for Arunachal Pradesh is not same with that of the country as a whole. In the State, the area under horticulture crops has declined during 2010-11 to 2020-21 while it has increased for the country as a whole which is evident from the values of compounded annual growth rate (CAGR). Crop group-wise, during the study period it is found that for Arunachal Pradesh, CAGR of area under fruits and vegetables are negative while it is positive in case of spices and other crops. It reflects the compositional change in the basket of horticulture crops grown in the State. For the country as a whole, CAGR is positive for all the crops by their broad categories.

During 2010-11 to 2020-21, the State's share of total cultivated area for horticulture crops in the country has gone down from 0.40 per cent to 0.25 per cent (Figure 1). Crop group-wise the percentage share of Arunachal Pradesh in total area of the country has declined in case of fruits, vegetables and spices. The State's percentage share of area under fruits in the country's area has declined from 1.13 per cent in 2010-2011 to 0.69 in 2020-21. During the same period, the percentage of area under spices in Arunachal Pradesh in total area under spices of the country decreased from 0.34 per cent to 0.31 per cent. In case of vegetables, the percentage share of the State has declined from 0.05 per cent to 0.02 per cent in the reference period. However, the percentage of area under 'other crops' of the State in total area under it of the country has increased from 0.03 per cent in 2010-11 to 0.06 per cent in 2020-21.

Figure 1: Share of Area under Horticulture of Arunachal Pradesh in the Total Horticulture cultivated Area of the country (in %)



Source: Data for 2010-11 to 2012-13 are taken from Government of India (2013), for 2013-14 to 2017-18 taken from Government of India (2018) and for 2018-19 to 2020-21 taken from Ministry of Farmers Welfare Government of India (2022)

Production of Horticulture

Table-2: Total Production of Horticulture Crops

In 000 mt

Year	Fruits		Vegetables		Spices		Others		Total	
	AP	India	AP	India	AP	India	AP	India	AP	India
2010-11	107.9 (51.88)	74878 (31.22)	38.5 (18.51)	146554 (61.11)	61.6 (29.62)	5350 (2.23)	-	13643 (5.67)	208 (100)	239820 (100)
2011-12	308.9 (68.04)	76424 (29.77)	83.5 (18.39)	156325 (60.90)	61.6 (13.57)	5951 (2.32)	-	18577 (7.22)	454 (100)	256711 (100)
2012-13	312.2 (75.39)	81285 (30.34)	37.6 (9.08)	162187 (60.53)	64.3 (15.53)	5744 (2.14)	-	19632 (7.30)	414.1 (100)	267930 (100)
2013-14	321.26 (60.37)	88977 (31.40)	35 (6.58)	169897 (59.95)	64.24 (12.07)	5908 (2.08)	111.61 (20.97)	19493 (7.03)	532.11 (100)	283380 (100)
2014-15	331.4 (60.51)	86602 (30.94)	41 (7.49)	169478 (60.55)	64.27 (11.73)	6108 (2.18)	111.05 (20.27)	18718 (6.66)	547.72 (100)	279905.9 (100)
2015-16	306.27 (73.38)	90183 (31.63)	33.01 (7.91)	169064 (59.30)	68.72 (16.46)	6988 (2.45)	9.4 (2.25)	19864 (6.94)	417.39 (100)	285076.9 (100)
2016-17	124.38 (59.62)	92918 (30.09)	14.42 (6.91)	178172 (59.61)	68.72 (32.94)	8122 (2.72)	1.1 (0.53)	21336 (7.10)	208.62 (100)	298883.4 (100)
2017-18	125.7 (59.48)	97358 (31.41)	16.58 (7.85)	184394 (59.50)	68.7 (32.51)	8124 (2.62)	0.34 (0.16)	21733 (6.97)	211.24 (100)	309920 (100)
2018-19	125.84 (72.71)	97966.66 (31.57)	17.39 (10.05)	183169.6 (59.03)	29.47 (17.03)	9499.74 (3.06)	0.37 (0.16)	19649.75 (6.33)	173.07 (100)	310285.8 (100)
2019-20	125.84 (72.82)	102006.9 (31.96)	17.39 (10.06)	188132.1 (58.94)	29.21 (16.90)	10297.86 (3.23)	0.37 (0.21)	18736.12 (5.87)	172.81 (100)	319173 (100)
2020-21	125.84 (71.23)	102481.2 (30.72)	17.41 (9.86)	200445.2 (60.08)	21.49 (12.16)	11117.34 (3.33)	11.92 (0.21)	19605.88 (5.88)	176.66 (100)	333649.6 (100)
CAGR (%)	1.41	2.89	-6.96	2.89	-9.13	6.88	-24.39*	3.78	-1.47	3.05

Source: Data for 2010-11 to 2012-13 are taken from Government of India (2013), for 2013-14 to 2017-18 taken from Government of India (2018) and for 2018-19 to 2020-21 taken from Ministry of Farmers Welfare Government of India (2022)

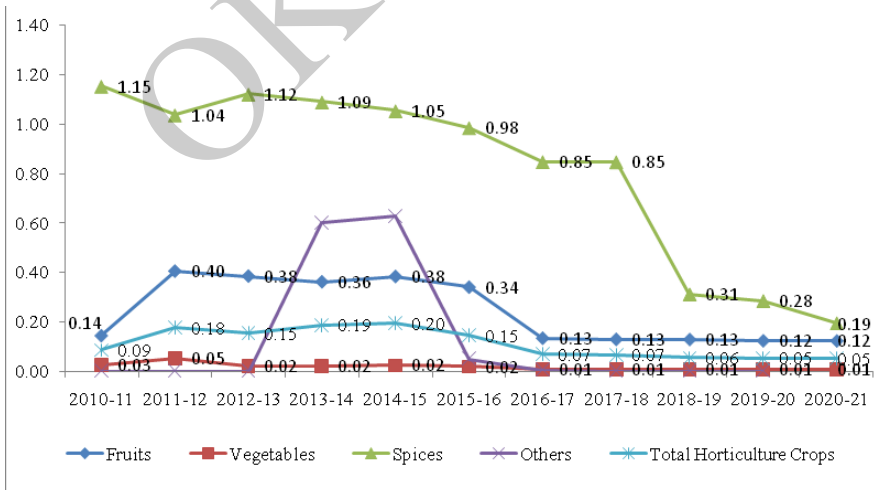
Note: *CAGR of other crops for A.P is calculated from 2013-14 to 2020-21 due to non availability of data from 2010-11*

Figures in parenthesis are per cent value

The pattern of production of horticulture crops in Arunachal Pradesh is similar with the area allocated to those crops. Table 2 shows that fruit crops constitute the highest among the horticultural crops produced in the State during the years 2010-11 to 2020-21. Spices production constitutes the second highest over these years, except for the year 2011-12, followed by vegetables except in 2013-14 and 2014-15. In India, vegetable production constitutes the highest during 2011-12 to 2020-21 followed by fruit crops (around 30 per cent during these years) as showed in Table 2. In the State, CAGR of horticultural production was -1.47 per cent for horticulture production depicting decline in production of such crops whereas it was positive for the country as a whole. Crop-wise, the CAGR of fruits production was positive but negative for vegetables and spices over the period from 2010-2011 to 2020-2021 in Arunachal Pradesh.

In area under horticulture crops, Arunachal Pradesh is experiencing a decline in the share of production of such crops in total production of the county. As per Figure 2, the share of total horticultural production of Arunachal Pradesh in the country's horticulture production has declined slightly from 0.09 per cent in 2010-11 to 0.05 percent in 2020-21. Of course, the decline in the share of production of horticulture crops of Arunachal Pradesh in the country's total production of such crops is due to both declines in State's production as well as of increase of country's production. It is interesting to note that the percentage of area under horticulture in Arunachal Pradesh to the total horticulture cultivated area in the country is more than that of production which shows the overall low productivity of the sector as compared to the country's average.

Figure 2: Share of Horticultural Output of Arunachal Pradesh in the Horticulture Production of the country (in %)



Source: Data for 2010-11 to 2012-13 are taken from Government of India (2013), for 2013-14 to 2017-18 taken from Government of India (2018) and for 2018-19 to 2020-21 taken from Ministry of Farmers Welfare Government of India (2022)

Productivity of Horticulture

Looking in to the productivity of horticulture crops in Arunachal Pradesh, it is found that except fruits, other types have experienced a decline in last few years. As per Table 3, the productivity of fruits has increased from 1.50 MT per hectare in 2010-11 to 2.61 MT per hectare in 2020-2021 with CAGR of 5.19 per cent. On the other hand, during 2010-11 to 2020-2021, the CAGR of productivity of vegetables and spices are found to be negative depicting a decline in their productivity. The productivity of vegetables and spices declined from 9.17 MT per hectare and 6.10 MT per hectare respectively in 2010-11 to 6.65 MT per hectare and 1.55 MT per hectare respectively in 2020-21. The productivity of other horticulture crops in Arunachal Pradesh declined from 18.10 MT per hectare in 2012-13 to 4.10 MT per hectare in 2020-2021 with CAGR of -16.94 per cent from the year 2012-13 to 2020-21. However, for the country as a whole, during 2010-11 to 2020-2021, there was improvement in the productivity of all types of horticulture crops. Further, as compared to country average, the productivity of fruits in Arunachal Pradesh was lower during 2010-11 to 2020-21 while it was reverse in case of spices except in 2019-20 and 2020-21.

Table 3: Productivity of Different Crops (MT/Hectare)

Area in 000ha, production in 000mt

Year	Fruit		Vegetables		Spices		Others	
	A.P	India	A.P	India	A.P	India	A.P	India
2010-11	1.50	11.73	9.17	17.25	6.10	1.82	-	3.25
2011-12	3.63	11.40	13.25	17.39	6.10	1.85	-	4.15
2012-13	3.59	11.64	25.07	17.62	6.30	1.87	-	4.22
2013-14	3.61	12.33	25.00	18.08	6.32	1.87	18.10	4.20
2014-15	3.68	14.17	24.12	17.76	6.32	1.84	21.48	3.99
2015-16	4.63	14.31	8.25	16.73	6.01	2.01	5.99	4.10
2016-17	2.55	14.58	8.24	17.40	6.01	2.21	2.00	4.31
2017-18	2.61	14.96	6.43	17.97	6.03	2.09	1.31	4.19
2018-19	2.61	14.85	6.64	18.18	2.44	2.34	1.19	3.93
2019-20	2.61	15.09	6.64	18.37	1.87	2.37	1.19	3.72
2020-21	2.61	14.79	6.65	18.46	1.55	2.49	4.10	3.75
CAGR (%)	5.19	2.13	-2.88	0.62	-11.71	2.91	-16.94*	1.30

Source: Data for 2010-11 to 2012-13 are taken from Government of India (2013), for 2013-14 to 2017-18 taken from Government of India (2018) and for 2018-19 to 2020-21 taken from Ministry of Farmers Welfare Government of India (2022)

**CAGR of other crops for A.P is started from 2013-14 to 2020-21 due to non availability of data from 2010-11.*

In case of vegetables and other horticultural crops, Arunachal Pradesh has experienced higher productivity than the country in some years but not throughout the period of study. By 2021, as compared to the country average, Arunachal Pradesh has higher productivity in other crops but lower productivity in vegetables.

Contribution of Horticulture Sector in Gross State Value Added (GSVA)

Table 4 represents the percentage contribution of total output value of horticulture in the total value of primary sector at 2011-12 constant prices and current prices respectively. From the table it is seen that over the period of 2011-12 to 2014-15, the percentage contribution in the total primary sector output was around 30 to 33 per cent at constant prices. However, in the year 2015-16, its contribution declined to around 26 per cent. Similarly, in terms of current prices, the trend in contribution of horticulture in the primary sector were similar over the same period but declined to around 24 per cent in the year 2015-16 as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Contribution of Horticulture in the Total Value of Primary Sector of the State at 2011-12 prices

Rs. In Lakhs

Year	Total Horticulture Value		Primary Sector Value	
	Constant	Current	Constant	Current
2011-12	151746 (31.71)	151746 (31.71)	478527 (100)	478527 (100)
2012-13	167235 (33.09)	191762 (33.04)	505409 (100)	580430 (100)
2013-14	170270 (32.21)	218646 (33.79)	528543 (100)	647114 (100)
2014-15	174032 (30.32)	234946 (30.69)	573926 (100)	765612 (100)
2015-16	142324 (25.85)	188345 (24.04)	550516 (100)	783550 (100)

Source: Government of Arunachal Pradesh (2019)

**Figures in bracket shows percentage to the total primary sector output*

The contribution of horticulture sector to the economy in terms of share in the GSVA of the State at 2011-12 prices was found to range from around 11 per cent to 15 per cent over the period of 2011-12 to 2015-16. Highest was during the year 2011-13 (14.97) and lowest was during the year 2015-16 (10.41) as depicted in Table 5. Similarly, the percentage contribution of horticulture sector at current prices, highest was in the year 2012-13 (15.46) and lowest in the year 2015-16 (10.49).

Table 5: Percentage Contribution of Horticulture in the total Value of GSVA of the State at 2011-12 prices

(Rs. In Lakhs)

Year	Total Horticulture Value		Total GSVA at basic price	
	Constant	Current	Constant	Current
2011-12	151746 (13.98)	151746 (13.98)	1085470 (100)	1085470 (100)
2012-13	167235 (14.97)	191762 (15.46)	1116835 (100)	1240357 (100)
2013-14	170270 (14.10)	218646 (15.31)	1207948 (100)	1427735 (100)
2014-15	174032 (12.41)	234946 (13.40)	1402885 (100)	1753815 (100)
2015-16	142324 (10.41)	188345 (10.49)	1366916 (100)	1795539 (100)

Source: Government of Arunachal Pradesh , 2019

**Figures in bracket shows percentage to the GSVA*

Table 6 shows the percentage contribution of State's horticulture output to the country's total horticulture output in terms of 2011-12 constant prices and current prices respectively. The table clearly shows that the State's contribution was less than one per cent over the period 2011-12 to 2015-16.

Table 6: Percentage Contribution of State's Horticulture Value in the Total Horticulture Value of India at 2011-12 prices

Rs. In Lakhs

Year	A.P.		India	
	Constant	Current	Constant	Current
2011-12	151746 (0.57)	151746 (0.57)	26622955 (100)	26622955 (100)
2012-13	167235 (0.53)	191762 (0.69)	31583752 (100)	27960119 (100)
2013-14	170270 (0.44)	218646 (0.75)	38802993 (100)	29319151 (100)
2014-15	174032 (0.39)	234946 (0.77)	45164889 (100)	30455140 (100)
2015-16	142324 (0.32)	188345 (0.60)	45169344 (100)	31209536 (100)

Source: Computed from 1.Government of Arunachal Pradesh-2019 2.Government of India (2018)

**Figures in bracket shows percentage of GSVA to the GVA*

Decomposition of Output Growth of Horticulture in Arunachal Pradesh

Table 7 presents the decomposition of output growth of horticulture crops in Arunachal Pradesh and India during 2010-2011 to 2020-2021[4]. In case of fruits in Arunachal Pradesh, yield effect is positive but area effect and interaction effect are negative. Yield effect is found to be major driving force of changes in production of fruits in the State. In case of vegetables in Arunachal Pradesh, both yield effect and area effect are positive

[4] In case of other crops for Arunachal Pradesh due to non-availability of data, the time period considered for decomposition analysis is 2012-13 to 2020-21.

but interaction effect is negative and among them area effect is dominant. Regarding Spices in Arunachal Pradesh, yield effect and interaction effect are positive but area effect is negative. Yield effect has the greatest role in the production change of spices in the State. In case of other horticultural crops, yield effect and area effect are positive but interaction effect is negative and yield effect is more influential among them.

For the country as a whole all the three effects are found to be positive. Further, in case of fruits yield effect is dominant among the three effects while area effect is dominant for vegetables, spices and other crops in the country as whole.

Table 7: Decomposition of Horticulture Output Growth (2010-11 to 2020-21)

Crops	Yield effect (%)		Area effect (%)		Interaction effect (%)	
	A.P.	India	A.P.	India	A.P.	India
Fruits	447.66	70.71	-199.31	23.23	-148.35	6.06
Vegetables	50.22	19.02	68.67	75.69	-18.89	5.29
Spices	114.53	34.39	-57.17	47.86	42.64	17.75
Others*	86.61	30.19	59.14	60.59	-45.75	9.22

Source: Data for 2010-11 to 2012-13 are taken from Government of India (2013), for 2013-14 to 2017-18 taken from Government of India (2018) and for 2018-19 to 2020-21 taken from Ministry of Farmers Welfare Government of India (2022)

The value of coefficient of variation (CV) has been calculated as a measure of instability in area, production and productivity of horticulture crops of Arunachal Pradesh. Table 8 shows that the value of CV of area, production and productivity of all horticultural crops are 23.27 per cent, 47.83 per cent and 28.80 per cent respectively. This shows that there are some amount of instability in area, production and productivity of horticulture crops in Arunachal Pradesh during the study period. The instability is found to be highest in production followed by productivity and area. Crop-wise, it is found that the value of CV of area, production and productivity of fruits are 28.25 per cent, 48.15 per cent and 27.82 per cent respectively. For vegetables, the value of CV of area, production and productivity are 51.83 per cent, 62.56 per cent and 62.94 per cent respectively. The value of CV of area, production and productivity of spices are 15.56 per cent, 33.42 per cent and 39.44 per cent respectively and 98.96 per cent, 197.39 per cent and 150.22 per cent respectively in case of others. Thus, it is found that there is instability in area under different horticulture crops and it is more in case of horticulture crops under the category 'others'.

Table 8: Coefficient of Variation over the period of 2010-11 to 2020-21

	Area	Production	Productivity
Fruit	28.25	48.15	27.82
Vegetables	51.83	62.56	62.94
Spices	15.56	33.42	39.44
Others	98.96	197.39	150.22
Arunachal Pradesh	23.27	47.83	28.80

Source: Data for 2010-11 to 2012-13 are taken from Government of India (2013), for 2013-14 to 2017-18 taken from Government of India (2018) and for 2018-19 to 2020-21 taken from Ministry of Farmers Welfare Government of India (2022)

The correlation coefficient has been estimated to examine the relation between area under horticulture crops and production. It is found that there is a positive and statistically significant correlation between area under horticulture crops and its production for the State as a whole (Table 9). Crop-wise too we have found a positive and statistically significant correlation coefficient between area and production in case of fruits, vegetables and others. However, in case of spices, the coefficient of correlation between area and production is found to be negative and statistically significant at one per cent.

Table 9: Relationship between area and production of horticulture crops (2010-11 to 2020-21 period)

Crop	Coefficient of correlation	P (t<1) 2 tail, type 2
Fruits	0.8629***	0.0006
Vegetables	0.6743**	0.0229
Spices	-0.7899***	0.0038
Others	0.7692***	0.0057
A.P	0.9042***	0.0001

Source: Data for 2010-11 to 2012-13 are taken from Government of India (2013), for 2013-14 to 2017-18 taken from Government of India (2018) and for 2018-19 to 2020-21 taken from Ministry of Farmers Welfare Government of India (2022)

*Note: *** and ** represent significant at 1 per cent and 5 per cent respectively*

Conclusion

The paper made an attempt to assess the growth of horticulture crops in Arunachal Pradesh and its contribution to the State economy. It is found that during the study period, the growth of area, production and productivity of horticulture crops in the State was negative while it was positive for the country as whole. In Arunachal Pradesh, fruits are the major horticultural crops. Crop-wise, there is a positive growth of area under spices and horticultural crops under others category but negative growth for rest of the horticultural crops. Regarding production and productivity, growth rate is

positive for fruits and negative for all other horticultural crops in the State. Moreover, Arunachal Pradesh has been experiencing a decline in the percentage share to total of area and production of horticultural crops in the country as a whole during 2010-11 to 2020-21. Despite the negative growth in area, production and productivity of horticultural sector, this sector is found to have a significant contribution to State economy in terms of value addition. Decomposition analysis depicts that except in case of vegetables, yield effect is the major driving force of production change in horticultural crops. In case of vegetable, area effect is the prime contributor to its production change. Our study also reveals the instability in area, production and productivity of horticultural crops.

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Manuscript received 29/08/2022; Final version accepted 16/11/2022.

Understanding the Dynamics of Self-Employment in Rural Assam: Productive or Precarious

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Abstract

Assam; primarily an agrarian state of North-Eastern region of India has undergone significant structural changes over the last two decades. As the agriculture sector is facing challenges in providing descent and stable earning as employment in the sector is largely limited to the peak season only and as a result workforce have to stay idol in major times of the year. Therefore, a large section of rural workforce has already started leaving agricultural activities or intends to leave the sector by being engaged in non-agricultural activities like manufacturing, transport and communications, petty trade etc. But, in most cases, such movement can be observed as an indication of survival strategy mostly in self-employed form rather than generation of quality self-employment as employment elasticity outside the agriculture sector is also not satisfactory.

This paper aims to understand the nature, trend and the pattern of self-employment and also tries to examine whether such self-employment can be seen as a productive choice of employment or a mere form of employment due to the lack of choice among rural households.

Introduction and Review of Literature

Employment plays a prominent role in ensuring well-being of human development and is crucial to overall economic growth and development. Productive employment opportunities are key determinants to examine the health of the labour market and overall economic performances of an economy. In recent decades, apart from few developed economies; most of the underdeveloped and developing economies are facing serious challenges in providing decent and productive employment opportunities to their large sections of workforce. In developing countries, where a dualistic nature of economic structure prevails; employment challenges may not be reflected in high unemployment but in the form of high incidence of underemployment in

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self-employment and casual wage employment outside the formal sector (Ghosh,et. al). In India too, where all basic forms of unemployment i.e. structural, frictional, disguised and significantly under employment have emerged as issues of concern among the policy makers and to the government as well. In recent times, the country is experiencing increase in in the size of the *Working Poor* as rapid economic growth is not coupled by decent work opportunities to a considerable size of its growing labour force. There is an inter-linkage between productive employment and human development. Poor and marginalized sections of the society have little or no assets to create capabilities. Only productive and quality employment can yield better income which further develops capabilities among them.

According to National Sample Survey (NSS), self-employed persons are those who operate their own farm or non-farm enterprises or are engaged independently in a profession or trade on own account or with one or a few partners (NSS, MoSPI). Again, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), self-employed workers include employers, own-account workers, and members of producer's co-operative and unpaid family labours. Self-Employment is considered as one of the vital key to economic growth among several countries and therefore many empirical studies and researches have also been carried out in recent times. A study by Sanchez et.al (2015) in their analytical panel data study based on few European countries have examined the inter relationships between skills and self-employment. In their study, they have examined that whether skill mismatches prevails before or after movement of salaried to self-employed activities.They have also found that self-employment is a way to escape from skill mismatches which requires more efficient skill distributions among the labourers and calls for careful policy observations. A study by Pussa et.al have stated workers co-operative is an option for self-employment as it fulfills the requirement of the members by offering them safe and low risk business and also protect them from personal financial loss. They have also visualized co-operative form of self-employment as potential and attractive employment opportunities for marginalized workforce with limited assets. Kundu and Mahanan (2009), has stated that during 1993-94 to 2004-05; there is a shift in the pattern of employment can be observed with the increase in self-employment and rise in casualisation both for rural males and females. Their study also highlights that during this period casual employment has declined whereas self-employment and regular works has gone up which potentially causes formalization of informal activities by employing people more on a regular basis. A working series on Economics by Asian Development Bank (ADB) shows that to generate good employment opportunity in rural areas of developing countries; infrastructure, credit market, human capital and technology are crucial. Dawson et.al(2009), in their study has examined the underlying factors behind individual's choice for self-employment. Their study has shown that there are two forces viz. ***Push*** and ***Pull*** behind such employment. They have identified that one sections has willingly chosen to be self-employed being attracted for job satisfactions, independence and also expectations of higher earnings. On the contrary, the other sections are taking up self-employment due to the lack of better opportunities.

Rationale of the Study

According to the NSSO Rounds (50th; 55th; 61st; 66th; 68th) and the recent Annual PLFS report (2018-19, 2019-20), it can be observed that rural labour market of Assam has undergone remarkable changes both qualitatively and quantitatively. An overwhelming share (79.4 percent) of female workers still depend on agriculture as their main source of employment, while only 20.6 percent depend on non-agricultural employment. The unorganized manufacturing sector though has got employment potential; data of recent years does not show an encouraging scenario.The rural male worker in manufacturing activities has risen to 5.94 percent in 2011-12 from 2.2 percent in 1993-94 whereas female workforce participation is 3.4 percent in 2011-12. In rural Assam construction activities has shown rapid increase over the last two decade and engaged 3.1 percent female workforce (NSS 2011-12). Data shows sharp decline of rural workforce in agricultural activities for both male and female over the last two decades i.e. 1991 to 2011. In Assam, rural male workforce in agriculture sector declined from 78.2 percent in 1993-94 to 58.6 percent in 2011-12 and the decline of female workforce in agriculture sector during that period was 83.2 percent to 79.4 percent. Unemployment rate (15-59) in Assam is 7.1 per cent hich is higher than national average i.e. 6 per cent. Labour force participation rate in the same category records 49.4 per cent which is again less than all-India average (53.6 per cent).

Given the falling rate of employment opportunities; the state has envisaged self-employment as a better employment opportunities for its workforce and therefore has initiated numerous self-employment policies to promote more independent works among the labour force. In the context of self-employment, two issues have been widely discussed by the researchers and policy makers i.e. pull or choice based and push or compulsion based self-employment. Though, self-employment can be a better choice of employment there is a need to careful observation of the underlying factors of self-employment as it can be outcome of both voluntary and forced employment. In India, recent Annual Periodic Labour Force survey report indicates rise in the percentage of self-employed persons among major Indian states which call for an urgent need to analyses the nature, trend, and emerging issues of self-employment.

Being primarily a rural agrarian state situated in the North-Eastern region of India with 86 per cent of its rural population, Assam has witnessed significant structural changes and sectorial transformation in recent decades. The changing structure of rural employment plays a vital role as the State's Gross Domestic Product depends significantly on this large rural workforce. Such kind of changes in the structure of rural employment needs to be analyzed and understood from a much wider socio-economic perspective incorporating the role of the state. It is also crucial to understand how the state has been utilizing and optimally distributing its growing labour force given such changes among rural workforce.

Objectives

The paper aims at-

- To examine the status of self-employment
- To understand the phenomenon of Self-employment from choice and compulsion perspective

Methodology

To examine the overall status of self-employment, the study extensively uses National Sample Survey (NSS) data on Operational Characteristics of Unincorporated Non-Agricultural Enterprises (Excluding Constructions). Moreover, Annual Periodic Labour Force Survey data of Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI) would give an understanding on the changed structure of rural self-employment in the state and will also give a comparative examination with All-India average in recent times. Besides, to acquire a more comprehensive scenario of the decadal changes in rural self –employment; the paper uses Census of India data as per its requirement. Apart from these broad database; the study uses secondary data from both central and state govts.' reports, non-government departments data to strengthen the qualitative part of the study as well.

Status of Self-Employment in Rural Assam- An Overview

Assam, being predominantly a rural agrarian state; a large percentage of rural population is engaged in the agriculture sector. Census 2011 data shows it clearly that about 50 percent of the total workforce (main +marginal) of Assam still depends on agriculture (Tamuli, 2021). The same study also stated that between the period of NSS 50th Round (1993-1994) and 2009-2010, there is an increase in self-employed persons in rural Assam from 53.1 percent to 69.4 percent. During this same period, regular employment has witnessed a significant decline from 16.6 percent to 9.9 percent where casual workers have also declined from 30.3 percent to 20.7 percent by the principal status. As regular employment has shown a declining trend and fall in casual labours mainly in the agriculture sector; there is a scope to assume that workforces in rural areas are being self-employed primarily in non-agricultural activities like manufacturing, trading and services etc. Several studies have also shown that a huge proportion of unorganized workforce have been found in rural areas of the state closely associated with rural non-agricultural economic activities. Rural unorganized manufacturing sector such as OAEs (Own-Account Enterprise) the household-based smallest enterprises has been occupying and contributing a considerable amount of employment and income opportunities to large sections of people in the state(Saikia, et.al, 2018) . The same study also indicates that although the real value added in this sector is found to be positive, the rate of growth decreased throughout the reform periods. Employment elasticity in those activities was also found to be negative

during these times. NSSO's 73rd National Sample Survey based on unincorporated Non-Agricultural Enterprises (excluding Construction) has found that Own Account Enterprises(OAEs) i.e. which don't include any hired workers had highest share in unincorporated non-agricultural enterprises in India which is 84.2 percent of total enterprises. At the all India level, rural areas shared 91.4 percent of total OAEs, whereas urban areas shared 76.6 percent . Rural Assam shared 86.96 percent of OAEs where trading was the major sector. Categorically, in Assam; trading shares 55.13 percent of total enterprises which is more than all-India average (Table 1).

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Enterprises by Broad Activity Category (Rural+Urban)

State	Percentage of Enterprises		
	Manufacturing	Trading	Others
Assam	16.74	55.13	28.13
All-India	31.02	36.34	32.63

Source: NSSO's 73rdReport on Operational Characteristics of Unincorporated Non-Agricultural Enterprises (Excluding Constructions).

While examining the pattern of employment, it is important to assess what kind of employment opportunities are being generated in rural sector in the state. Self-employment in rural sector is higher than national average in the state. Among those self-employed in rural Assam; male own account workers comprise 55.1 percent, whereas female workers are only 16.9 percent in that category. Apart from the regular salaried/wage earners, casual labours in self-employed category have shown higher percentage than all-India average for both male and female counterpart (Table 2). Higher percentage of casual labour may be an indication of less scope for gainful employment opportunities among self-employed workforce in rural areas of the state.

Table 2:Percentage Distribution of Rural Workers in Usual Status (PS+SS) by Broad Status in Employment for Assam and All India Average (Age Group 15-59)

Category	State	Self-Employed					
		Own Account Worker, Employer	Helper in Household Enterprise	All Self Employed	Regular Wage/ Salary	Casual Labor	All
Male	Assam	55.1	3.0	58.1	19.3	22.6	100.0
	All India	48.0	10.4	58.4	13.8	21.8	100.0
Female	Assam	16.9	12.6	29.5	48.8	21.8	100.0
	All India	34.6	4.1	38.7	47.2	14.1	100.0

Source: Annual Report 2019-20, PLFS; MOSPI

The nature of self-employment is considerably different in rural areas due to the existence of high seasonal and part time workers which are often more than regular

and salaried workers in both the agriculture and non-agriculture sectors. Most of the self-employed are found in household based manufacturing activities, small trade, business and services etc. in rural areas. Due to the seasonality of the agriculture sector; workers in rural areas often engaged themselves in household based entrepreneurial activities mostly in the forms of helpers. But, the quality of self-employment can yield more avenues only when they are productive and economically efficient in nature. For quality self-employment or job generation in rural sector, economic infrastructure is a pre-requisite. Otherwise, increasing or high rate of self-employment may also be generated by distress-push economic participation of rural workforce. In the context of rural employment it can be observed that although non-agriculture employment has increased, the sector is unable to absorb the additional workforce that comes from farm sector due to limited opportunities generated in the sector.

Therefore, the rural labour market requires expanding employment elasticity in the sector to absorb or provide employment opportunities to the rural workforce. Employability can be increased only when workforce acquires enough skills and knowledge. It is evident that in Assam, although a large proportion of workforce is self-employed especially in unorganized sector including agriculture; the wage and earnings are not much satisfactory. The proportion of self-employed persons in Assam is 481 persons per thousand persons and earns up to only Rs.5000/- as average monthly income (Economic Survey, 2017-18). Therefore, it is vital to understand whether the workforce is taking up self-employment as a choice or out of compulsion to mitigate income related risk and to ensure some sources of income. Although the proportion of self-employment is large including own-account enterprises; the economic viability and profitability of such activities needs a careful examination. Though, self-employment is a measure to induce employment; in many cases self-employment can be seen as an escape to reduce underemployment or unemployment situation if not led by appropriate policies. In many cases, self-employment reflects underemployment due to non-availability of gainful employment opportunities. So, there is a need to scrutinize the underlying factors of self-employment as it can be a result of both choice - led and distressed employment.

Self Employment among Female Workforce: Are there Enough Economic Opportunities

The economic participation of rural women has seen a decrease over recent years as there has been withdrawal of females from labour force and this poses a serious challenge both at the policy and the ground levels. As a primarily a rural agrarian state,the rural women workforce face difficulties in finding gainful employment due to the prevailing social norms and gender inequality in employment. According to the Time Use Survey Report 2019, in Assam; female in the age group of 15-59 spends 339 minutes on “Unpaid domestic services for household members” and 64 minutes on Unpaid care giving services for household members” which is more than national average i.e. 290 minutes and 45 minutes respectively and highest among all Indian

states (MoSPI,2020). Due to such burden of household and domestic works, women in rural areas often face challenges to engage themselves in full-time economic activities. Most of the women apart from the regular household activities, engage themselves primarily in agricultural activities. According to the Census Data 1991 and 2011, there is decline in both male and female agricultural workforce in Assam; but the decrease in male agricultural workforce is much higher than female counterpart which indicates more female workforce in the agriculture sector to sustain their previous family income. But, their activities often goes unnoticed due to the nature of their work as most of them works casually to supplement their family income. Data reveals that a large section of India's rural women are marginalized who own less capital assets and for many of them owing assets are still a distant dream due to patriarchal nature of society and rigid social norms. Annual PLFS (2019-20) reveals that in Assam, only 16.9 per cent women are self-employed in rural areas which are much lower than all-India average of 34.6 percent. Such a situation reflects women's economic participation in self-employment is not satisfactory which further raises questions on their financial independence and gender equality. Although, a large proportion of male agricultural workforces shift to non-agricultural household manufacturing activities; the absorption is less for women due to limited opportunities in those activities too. Higher share of women as casual labour in agriculture reflects limited work choices for women in non-agricultural and entrepreneurial activities. Household based manufacturing activities like small cottage industry, bamboo and cane work, pottery making, handloom and weaving etc. are prominent sources of rural livelihood in Assam where a considerable number of rural workforces engaged themselves. A large proportion of women workforce is also involved in those activities mostly as helpers and hired workers simply to supplement their family income. But, female owned proprietary enterprises in the state does not reflect a satisfactory position as all kind of enterprises including manufacturing, trading and other services are much lower than all India averages (Table 3). The situation reflects low female economic participation due to numerous challenges faced by the women and prevailing gender gap in the state.

Table 3:Share of Female Headed Proprietary Enterprise by Broad Activity Category

State	Percentage of Female Headed Proprietary Enterprises			
	Manufacturing	Trading	Others	All
Assam	14.9	3.5	3.8	5.5
All India	45.0	8.7	7.4	19.5

Source: NSSO's 73rdReport on Operational Characteristics of Unincorporated Non-Agricultural Enterprises (Excluding Constructions)

Although, there is a noticeable difference between male and female proprietors of enterprises at all India level; such variation is comparatively very high in Assam as small percentage of similar enterprises are owned by the female in the state (Table 4). The lopsided scenario reflects disparity of active economic participation between male and female which may be largely driven by lack of asset ownership and control

over resources.

Table 4:Percentage Distribution of Number of Enterprises by Type of Ownership

State	Percentage of Enterprises	
	Proprietary	
	Male	Female
Assam	92.9	5.5
All India	76.4	19.5

Source: NSSO's 73rd Report on Operational Characteristics of Unincorporated Non-Agricultural Enterprises (Excluding Constructions)

Employment Diversification throuh Self-Employment: Shrinking Space for Productive Employment?

The nature, composition and the pattern of employment in rural sector are undergoing major structural changes. There are several underlying factors behind such structural transformation which overall impacts the rural lives and livelihood. According to the latest available data in Situation Assessment Survey of Agricultural Households conducted by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), nearly half of the farmers' income comes from crop cultivation (Srivastava, 2017). Increasing cost of cultivation due to several underlying factors like rise in input cost, fragmentation of landholding among households, absence of proper market channelization etc. further leads to decline in profitability and making farming unviable in rural Assam.Cost of cultivation is one of the prime determinants of resource allocation which also determines investment and choices of crop production decision. Rural non-farm practices are not completely new in Assam. The rural non-farm activities of Assam are highly heterogeneous in nature comprising a wide range of diverse activities with small- scale household based manufacturing activities to other traditional non-farm practices. The increasing gap between population growth in rural areas and limited opportunities in agriculture sector has failed to generate enough employment in this sector. Moreover, seasonality in traditional agricultural activities bound people to stay idle in major part of the year which can be counted as an important reason for shifting for farm activities to non-farm activities in rural areas of the state. Importantly, space and time flexibility in non-farming practices makes these works comparatively convenient rather than agricultural activities. Especially for the female counterpart, those activities can be considered as time-saving which can provide optimal household management simultaneously with such works. As a result, people choose to diversify their income as well as employment to secure their livelihood. It has been found that due to the lower risks and higher returns, people want to get engaged with those practices rather than bearing risks and uncertainties in farming. Many Non-farm activities have been adopted as a self-employment coping strategy in many rural areas of Assam. Especially, non-farm economic opportunities can slow down or mitigate temporary out-migration in many parts of the state. Moreover, people who have lower or limited access to land and other

capital; are more likely to engage themselves as mostly in the form of hired workers and helpers in non-farm practices. Such employment can be considered as preferable coping strategies especially during the agricultural lean seasons where casual labours of agriculture sector involve themselves in entrepreneurial activities in the forms of helpers and hired workers . Local resource based enterprises and initiatives in small household based manufacturing activities like handloom and weaving, bamboo and cottage industries, clay and pottery making, bell-metal works etc. have been widely practiced and found in rural Assam which plays pivotal role in supplementing income to the rural household. But, these enterprises have not flourished as much in commercial sphere due to low value realization and improper market mechanism. A well- defined price mechanism with a proper market channelization is required in such cases.

An Analysis of Assuring Self- Employment and Role of the State

While in the short run, livelihood vulnerabilities caused due to lack of employment opportunities can be addressed with short-term measures like cash and material assistance under different schemes, the state should specifically focus on generating sustainable economic employment opportunities in the long run to improve a resilient livelihood. Therefore, apart from providing short-term assistance to the unemployed section, it is important to generate quality wage and self- employment to revive and sustain their lives more in a decent way. It is utmost important to analyse sector specific skill demand and skill gaps and more importantly it is vital to understand their potential future prospective as well. The state should put special emphasis on identifying sector specific skill requirements where potential employment is relatively high. As there is limited scope for generating formal sector employment, skill utilization through up gradation of knowledge can results in productive employment especially in self-employment activities.

To face the challenge of the mounting unemployment, in recent decades; both the central and the state government has initiated plethora of rural welfare schemes and targets in various forms as a path to rural development. Apart, from the poverty alleviation schemes and other social assistance programmes; in recent years, the state has initiated several skill development programmes and are putting more emphasis on skill creation among rural workforces. Schemes like National Rural Livelihood Missions, AJEEVIKA, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojna (PMKVY), etc. have drawn attentions among academicians and researchers. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 2.0 is one of the flagship program initiated by the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship which was launched under the scheme of 'Skill India'. In the state of Assam the program is implemented by Assam Skill Development Mission (ASDM). The objective of this program is to enable the youths to take up various industry relevant skills training which will help them secure a sustainable livelihood. Skill creation through vocational trainings is the first step to develop skill among workers (ASDM, Government of Assam). But, to utilize those skills and potentials; specific employment opportunities must be generated to yield income to those workforce.

Possessions of skills without ensuring quality employment are merely a problem of structural unemployment. Moreover, it can be seen that after acquiring skills too; many workers move out from their village to their nearby towns in search of low-paid job. Here, the issue of skill mismatches arises where the aim of sustainable rural development through local self-employment stays no longer fulfilling and relevant. So, while creating skills among the rural workforce; it is inevitable to develop and expand rural employment elasticity by generating labour intensive economic activities to absorb those skilled workforces for better economic well-being.

Conclusion

Productive and quality employment is an important determinant of human development as it improves livelihood by reducing social and economic inequality. Employment generation, promotion and protection are more challenging in rural areas as economic activities in rural areas are heterogeneous in nature and largely come under the unorganized sectors. As a result, rural workforce enjoys less social security benefits in comparison to those organized or formal sectors of the economy. In a predominantly rural state like Assam, besides agricultural practices there are numerous age-old traditional household based activities like Mulberry Rearing, Pottery Making, Bell-Metal works, Handloom and Weaving, Cottage Works etc.may have full potential to create productive self-employment opportunities to a large section of rural households. To facilitate gainful self-employment in such entrepreneurial activities in the state, rural infrastructure is a pre-requisite to provide the necessary support in this regard. Development of rural infrastructure like road, transport and communication, creation of high value market, trade and services etc. can play a pivotal role in generating employment opportunities and hence can reduce economic inequalities. A strong rural infrastructure can improve self-sufficiency of rural workforce by reducing seasonal, temporal and most importantly their occupational migration. Out-migration is a common phenomenon among a large section of male rural workforce in Assam. The magnitude of inter-state out-migration of rural workforce is alarming in Assam (Census, 2011). Many of them migrate to other states of India like Kerala, Tamilnadu, Karnataka etc. in search of informal and low-paid jobs where social security benefits are almost absent or minimal. They are bound to leave their native places due to the lack of descent income and employment. If the rural workforce get their employment locally, there is less pressure on them to go anywhere in search of jobs which are far less decent and secure. Overall, the quality of self-employment in rural sector is crucial to absorb these workforces as they look forward to secure their lives and livelihood by engaging themselves in productive way. Therefore, ensuring productive self- employment opportunities should be prioritized in rural areas in the state which is not only crucial to improve rural livelihood, but also has great significance from overall human development perspective.

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Manuscript received 26/06/2022; Final version accepted 11/11/2022.

Interrogating *Social Security:* Experiences of Labourers in the Closed Tea Gardens of Darjeeling Hills

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Abstract

The tea industry in India witnessed a setback in the five major tea-growing states of India, i.e., Assam, West Bengal, Tripura, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala, during 2003–04, when as many as 118 gardens were closed. The present research is an exploration of the vulnerabilities and sudden loss of social security of the labouring community engaged in three closed tea gardens in West Bengal, ensured under the provisions of the Plantation Labour Act. Three gardens are Dooteriah, Kalej Valley, and Peshok Tea Garden, situated in the Darjeeling hills. These gardens were abandoned in October, 2015 but it was officially declared as closed in January, 2018. The workers have receivable dues from the company, and provident fund contributions are not withdrawn in many cases. As evident from the field survey, labourers are engaged in different types of economic activities as per the demand of the local labour market, namely quarrying and extraction, agricultural labour, animal rearing, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) jobs, grocery and stationary shops, and daily wages in nearby urban centres and markets. They also out-migrate to distant cities to join urban informal services, such as the army slums, and are in constant search of jobs as they lost regular work after the closure of the gardens.

Introduction

"Social Security" is the protection that a society provides to individuals and households to ensure access to health care and to guarantee income security, particularly in cases of old age, unemployment, sickness, invalidity, work injury, maternity, or loss of a breadwinner (ILO, 2001). The Plantations Labour Act, 1951, regulates the conditions of work in plantations and provides for the welfare of plantation labour, which includes tea garden workers. The Act envisages employers to provide housing, medical facilities, sickness and maternity benefits and other forms of social security measures to the

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workers. There are provisions for educational facilities for the workers' children, drinking water, conservancy, canteens, crèches, and recreational facilities for the benefit of the tea plantation workers and their families in and around the work places in the tea estates. The Plantation Labour Act is implemented by the respective state governments, and labourers employed in the organised tea industry receive social security benefits (GOI, 2021). But the tea industry has witnessed a crisis in all the traditional five major tea-growing states of India, i.e., Assam, West Bengal, Tripura, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala during 2000–04, when as many as 118 gardens were closed (Tea Board of India, 2005; Hannan, 2020). This has impacted the social security of labourers in closed gardens across states. In fact, in a judgement of WP (C) No. 365 of 2006 (Contempt Petition (C) No. 16 of 2012), the Hon'ble Supreme Court on April 04, 2018 directed the State Governments of Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala to make an interim payment of Rs. 127 crores to tea garden workers who had not been paid for 15 years in Closed Tea Gardens. The central government has submitted that the dues of workmen were Rs. 249 crores in Assam, Rs. 27 crores in Kerala, Rs. 70 crores in Tamil Nadu, and Rs. 30 crores in West Bengal. The Hon'ble SC has directed further in its order dated 04.04.2018 to the state governments to comply within 60 days by way of interim relief to the suffering workers and their families (HRLN, 2018 & 2021; Hannan, 2020).

A crisis of similar nature existed in the 1970s and has been successfully managed by the Government of Tripura with the support of the Tea Board of India. The *Durgabari Co-operative* in Tripura is a successful model today for all. The *Durgabari Tea Estate* was a private tea garden and had a grant of 145 acres of tea plantation. The garden was passing through a deep crisis and was abandoned by the owners in the 1970s. Then the Government of Tripura cancelled the grant of the abandoned garden and formed *Durgabari Tea Estate Workers Cooperative Society Ltd.* in 1978 (Hannan, 2020). Similarly, the *Sanjukta Vikash Co-operative* (SVC) was formed in 1996 with the support of DLR Prerna (NGO Initiative) in the Darjeeling hills. The SVC is spread over *Harsing*, *Dabaipani,* and *Yankhoo* villages, with 448 members. These villages are part of the closed tea gardens of Harrison's and Mineral Spring in Darjeeling. The gardens had around 1200 acres, with 600 acres of tea plantation and the rest under reserve forests (DLR Prerna, 2005; Hannan, 2020). There are exceptional cases too, like the Goalgach Tea Garden, run by Duncan Tea Industries, situated in the Chopra block of district Uttar Dinajpur, which has been closed since 2013. It has 473.72 hectares of planted area and 1153 permanent workers with 88 staff (Field Survey, 2019). So far, no alternative plan has come up, and labourers have lost their provisions for social security. In this background, three closed tea gardens have been chosen to understand the impact of social security on labourers in the Darjeeling hills of West Bengal.

Study Area

In the Darjeeling hills, there are 87 tea gardens, which were recognised under the Geographical Indication status in 2004 (Datta et al., 2010). The total leased land area of the Darjeeling tea industry is 47460.56 hectares, of which only 20441.04 hectares of land is used for tea cultivation. It accounts for approximately 43 percent of the total leased area (DTA, 2019). In 2019, it produced 5565281 kg of made tea. The total number of labourers employed is 49915, with 5258 members of supervisory and support staff. The current daily wage rate in plantations is Rs. 202/-per day and supervisory staff are paid Rs. 15000/-per month (DTDPLU, 2019). The three closed gardens under the current study are *Dooteriah, Kallej Valley,* and *Peshok Tea Gardens,* situated in Sukhia-Pokhari Development Block and Rangli-Rangolit Development Block. They have been closed since October, 2015 (Himalayan Plantation Labour Union, 2015). But officially, it was declared as locked out in January, 2018 (Office of the Labour Commissioner, 2019). All the gardens were handed over to *Trident Agro Chemical Pvt. Ltd.* (2016) and later to *Fortune Chemicals Ltd.* (2018), as reported by Factory Babu and staff during the field survey (see the ownership pattern in Figure-1). During this period, the wage rate was Rs. 176/-per day. The leased land area of the three gardens together is 2748.49 hectares, and the tea area is 1056.20 hectares. They receive a provident fund, a yearly bonus, a ration, health care facilities, etc. under the provisions of the Plantation Labour Act. The number of labourers is 2568 persons and their dependents are 7740 persons collectively in three gardens together (Office of the Labour Commissioner, 2019). Besides, the participation of the female workforce is greater in all the three gardens compared to the male, i.e., 58.11 percent in Dooteriah, 60.90 percent in Kalej Valley and 82.46 percent in Peshok tea garden out of total labourers (refer table-1). The present research captures the narratives and experiences of the labour community after the closure of the gardens and the hardships encountered in their day-to-day life.

Table1 Employment Pattern in Closed Tea Gardens

Indicators No		Dooteriah		Kalej Valley		Peshok	
		(%)	No	(%)	No	(%)	
Gender	Male	568	41.89	251	39.10	100	17.54
	Female	788	58.11	391	60.90	470	82.46
	Sub-total	1356	100.00	642	100.00	570	100.00
Types of Labourers	Staff	24	1.77	13	2.02	18	3.16
	Sub-staff	100	7.37	58	9.03	35	6.14
	Factory Labour	41	3.02	12	1.87	0	0.00
	Field Labour	1191	87.83	559	87.07	517	90.70
	Sub-total	1356	100.00	642	100.00	570	100.00

Source: Based on Authors Field Survey, 2019-20

Objectives

The current research aims to encompass and comprehend the following objectives:

1. To investigate the dynamics of the local labour market and the loss of social security for labourersinthe closed tea gardens;

2. To evaluate and assess the impact of closure on the labour community's health, education and housing for their sustenance.

Methodology

The current study collected data using a combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques. Information gathered from the Land Reform and Labour Department, Darjeeling, Government of West Bengal, is used for the assessment of land resources and pattern of employment of labourers in the three closed tea gardens in Darjeeling. The field data is collected through both structured and open-ended questionnaires, in-depth personal and telephonic interviews. Frequent field visits by researchers and repeated interactions with the stakeholders validated the focus of the study during the period 2019-2020. The first round of fieldwork was carried out during November-December, 2019; the second round in February-March 2020; and the third round in October-December, 2020. The subjects who were included and interviewed in the present study were chosen by using purposive sampling methods. Informed consent was obtained and the objectives of our research were explained to them before the collection of data. Eight labourers, two office staff, and one health worker were interacted with and interviewed. The four key informants who interacted were: Special Revenue Officer (SRO), Land Reforms Department, Darjeeling; Headmaster, Dooteriah School; Labour Commissioner, Darjeeling; and Manager of a Closed Garden. Focus group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted in October, 2021, one each at three gardens: Peshok, Dooteriah, and Kalej Valley tea gardens, and discussions and results are analysed throughout the paper. The experiences and associations with the subjects and key informants gained by the authors during the fieldwork enriched the explanations and analysis of the present research study.

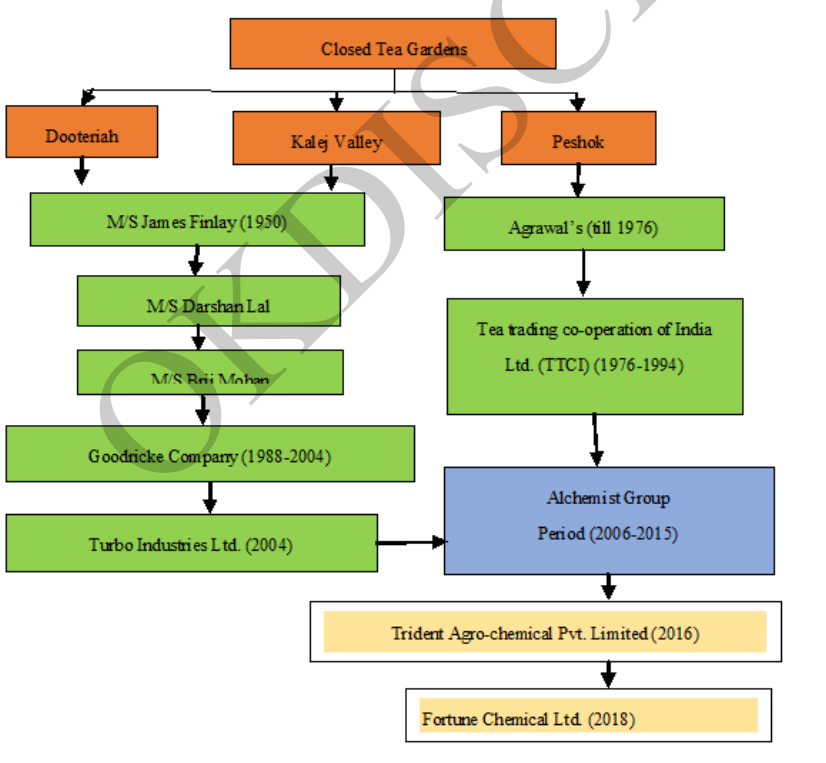
Results and Discussions

Ownership Pattern of the Closed Tea Gardens

Figure 1 below shows the changes in ownership patterns during both the pre-independence and post-independence periods of the closed tea garden. From 1897 to 1955, Dooteriah was managed by British personnel. From 1955 onwards, the Indians have been managing the garden. These three gardens were run by the Alchemist Group from 2006 till the time of closure in 2015. As per the interview with Factory Babu and other staffs of the garden, a number of protests were carried out by the labourers

against the company for their various grievances, unpaid dues etc., and the Alchemist Group handed the garden to the Trident Argo-chemical Private Limited in 2016. The Trident Company was not in a position to run these gardens because of the large overdue and handed the gardens to Fortune Chemical Limited in 2018. This company also could not run the gardens, and the gardens have remained closed till date. An unpublished report of all the three gardens was prepared by the Regional Labour Office Darjeeling on 26.09.2019 with a verbal communication dated 28.06.2019 from the District Magistrate District Court (DMDC), Darjeeling. As per the said report, all the three gardens are owned by Trident Agro-Chemicals Exports Pvt. Ltd., Bajaj Bhavan, 91 Nariman Point, 9th Floor, Mumbai, and they were declared abandoned or closed w.e.f. 10.01.2018 (Government of West Bengal, 2019). Hence, the field survey suggests that during the tenure of the Alchemist Group, all the gardens were closed and the Trident Agrocom and Fortune Chemicals might have tried to reopen the gardens, which was not successful.

Figure 1 Ownership Pattern of Closed Tea Gardens after Independence



Source: Based on Authors Field Survey, 2019-20

Household Assets, Job Loss and Available Alternatives

After the closure of the gardens, the labourers lost their regular employment and the management company was absent. All the labour households are deriving their means of living from alternative sources. Women have been facing difficulty balancing the demands of work and household responsibilities. There is also an increase in domestic violence due to the closure of the garden, as people are facing difficulties coping with the current situation, and women, the elderly, and children are the foremost victims. Interaction with the labourers revealed that the common household assets possessed by the labourers are cooking gas, mobile phones, televisions, and domestic animals. The majority of the labourers have simple mobile phones with no internet connections. During interaction with the labourers, it was found that some have bought mobile phones in recent past for their children's online classes during the pandemic. Labour households are dependent on firewood for cooking. Though they have an LPG connection, provided by the government under the scheme "Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana", they are not in a position to refill it due to their financial crisis. The electricity connection is available in almost all the households in all the closed tea gardens, but they have to take a Non-Objection Certificate(NOC) from the management for any new connection. The main assets of the labour households in these tea gardens are domestic animals. Labourers rear animals, mainly cows, goats, pigs, and hens. In times of need, they sell a cow for approximately Rs. 25,000-30,000/-, a goat for Rs. 6000-7000/-, a pig for Rs. 14000-15000/-, and hens for Rs. 200/-per kg. Besides, labourers also occupy a little additional land attached to their home stead where they cultivate some seasonal crops and vegetables like cardamom, maize, lentils, radish, peas, beans, etc., which is mainly for self-consumption.

During the period of closure, people relied heavily on the "Public Distribution System" (PDS) and "Financial Assistance to the Workers of Locked-Out Industry" (FAWLOI[3]), however, these two schemes do not provide them with optimal subsistence and survival for day-to-day household expenses (Anonymous, 2020). They look for alternatives within and outside their locality. The alternatives which fall broadly within localities are road construction under PMGSY, sand and stone quarrying on river bed economy in nearby plantation areas, building up of pucca houses within the village or adjacent villages, a hundred days of work under MGNREGA, and firewood collection for household energy and cooking. Some of them engage in green leaf plucking in the abandoned garden under the 'Joint Action Committee', (JAC[4]) or privately on individual basis.Younger people commute to nearby urban centres for to work as daily wage

[3] The 'Financial Assistance to the Workers of the Locked-Out Industrial Units' (FAWLOI) is a social protection scheme run by the Government of West Bengal that provides unemployed tea garden workers with Rs. 1500/- per month as an interim stipend.

[4] The 'Joint Action Committee' (JAC) is formed by the labourers, staff and union members in Dooteriah, Kalej Valley and Peshok tea gardens to support themselves and the needy workers. There are two committees: i) Sramik Samity/Workers' Committee and ii) Chaya Bagan Sangram Samity. Under the committee, they pluck leaves and sell them to nearby gardens like Lopchu, Ring tong, Takdah etc.

labour in places like *Rangbull*, *Sonada*, *Ghoom*, *Jorebunglow*, *Darjeeling* etc. with a travel distance of 15-20 kms. The local market wage is approximately Rs. 300 for a male and Rs. 250 for a female. Sometimes there is shortage of demand for wage work in the urban centres; when the labourers find work for a few days in a month ranging from 10–20 days. The labouers narrated that there is no social security available in the urban informal economy in comparison to the tea garden work, where in normal conditions they are protected by PF, bonus, health facilities, rations etc. However, elderly, sick, and female labourers are no longer capable of performing difficult physical labour, and their demand in the local labour market is also low. In the case of the leaf trade managed by JAC, only young people are encouraged and work is available during peak plucking season, unlike in an operational garden where labourers get work throughout the year. In some cases, labourers try to find work in gardens adjacent to their place of residence within a distance of 10–15 kms (approx.), namely, *Manju Tea Garden*, *Pussimbeng Tea Garden,* etc. In some cases, the labourers particularly youth, out-migrate to urban centres like Gangtok, Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Bangalore etc. Their monthly salary ranges from Rs. 5000–10000/-per month. Since the tea plantation area is located in the remote corners, the availability of alternative sources of livelihood is very limited for the labourers. The same situation also prevails in the closed tea gardens of Darjeeling Hills (Roy et al., 2018).

In addition, majority of labourers have a small patch of land near to their quarters, ranging from 0.02-0.05 hectares of cultivable land. Normally, crops and vegetables like maize, cardamom, beans, lentils, etc. were cultivated earlier but at present these cultivations have stopped due to menace of wild animals like monkeys, leopards, wild boars, deer, rabbits etc. When the gardens were open and functional, the attacks on crops by wild animals were a rare phenomenon.. But after closure, the tea bushes have grown to the size of big trees and there is an undergrowth of jungle, which causes frequent animal attacks. The labourers find it difficult to grow crops now, which was normal practise in labour households to compensate their food basket. The households also exchanged their harvests within the community, which is no longer prevalent now and interdependent coping strategies are missing. It is also known from field surveys that a number of are in - During dry seasons labourers engage quarrying in which they earn Rs. 200-250/-per day.

After the closure of the garden, the labourers were absorbed for work under MGNREGA for a period ranging from 40–60 days in a year, with an average earning of Rs.8000–12000/-approximately. The labourers who have job cards mostly do the construction of pony roads, protection walls, drains, water tanks, footpaths along the *jhoras* (rivulets), etc. As revealed, at times, even though no works are allotted, payments aremade to the job card holders on a 50:50 sharing basis between beneficiaries and panchayat representatives or supervisors. At times, the job cards are also given on rent of Rs. 50-100/-for a day without engaging in work. So, there are varieties of leakages of work and asset formation under MGNREGA job cards as reported during field survey.

Housing and Land Rights

As per the provisions of the Plantation Labour Act, the housing facilities for labourers are provided by the concerned company to the regular workers. The repairs and other petty expenses are also taken care of by the garden management. Since the garden management is absent after the closure, these facilities are not avilable to labour households of the garden. One of the labourers from Peshok Tea Garden, during interview revealed that her house is in a vulnerable condition and she had knocked every possible door for help but got no help from anywhere. The house is in very bad shape and during the rainy season water leakages from roof of the house is a common feature. She said, "I fear going to sleep at night, as I am afraid the house will collapse at any moment." The labourers live in the quarters which had been provided by the company and the local administration cannot provide them with a new housing facilities. The labourers in the closed tea gardens are not in a position to repair their existing quarters owing to their low earnings. They can neither avail benefits of housing schemes like Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) of the local administration as they have no land under their ownership within or near the garden area. Almost 82 per cent of the people in the hills of Darjeeling are landless as per the government records and only 18 per cent have their own land (DTDPLU, 2019). A Senior Revenue Officer (SRO) of the Land (Touzi) Reforms Department, Darjeeling, observed:

> *"There is no existing policy of the government regarding land rights in tea gardens." The Plantation Labour Act of 1951 has not given land rights, but instead lease land has been given. Though the tea garden workers have no legal right over the land, they are not deprived in terms of physical ownership. There is no law to control them at the moment; they carry things on their own. Possession is important and they have it, he said. Further FAWLOI, MGNREGA, and Self-Help Cooperatives are put forward by the various organisations so as notto displace people and to provide employment, rations, and other essential commodities.*

However, the fate of the labour households in these closed gardens continues to be vulnerable as availability of regular sources of income continues to be hugely challenging in the nearby towns.

Access to Health Care

In Dooteriah Tea Garden, there are four dispensaries in each of the four divisions, and in Kalej Valley, there are two dispensaries in each of the two divisions. There is no dispensary or health centre in the Peshok garden. The dispensaries were served by, a Compounder and a female attendant and basic medicines and injections were provided to the patients when they visited for any illness. However, the dispensaries have.There was no health camp or programmes organised in these gardens after closure. Paucity of income and regular employment has made it difficult for the

labour households to seek medical assistance in the event of sickness. At present, the health workers from the government of West Bengal have been managing these dispensaries in the garden and they provide basic health care with medicines and injectables. It has to be mentioned that the health facilities provided in the gardens are mostly in sufficient (Talwar et al., 2005). The dispensaries in the gardens do not have regular doctors and the hosipitals with doctors for any kind of medical emergency are located 20-25 kilometres away from the gardens. Commutation to the hospitals is also a challenge as the gardens have no ambulance service of their own unlike some big te estates which have an ambulance for emergency requirement of the garden labourers and other staffs of the garden. Under the Plantation Labour Act labourers in gardens which are functional enjoy health care facilities but due to closure the facilities have also beeen left defunct by garden management. When the gardens were functional, the mamnagement provided health care support to the labour households including cost of treatment and the households had minimal out of pocket expenditure. However, the situation has changed after closure and the out of pocket expenditures of labour households in the closed gardens have increased many folds. This has affected particularly the elderly, women, and children. Paucity of fuds for treatment has also led to death of labourers in Peshok Tea Garden and the families have not received any financial assistance from the management till date. The health care insecurity for labour households remain biggest challenge after closure.

Access to Educational Facilities

The interview with the teachers of the garden school revealed that the infrastructure of the school is in dilapitaed condition with absence of sanitation facilities, safe drinking water, and damaged roof over the class rooms. Though books have been supplied free of cost as per of the SSA programme, the management has not been very keen on providing basic minimum infrastructure for education of the children of the garden laboureres. Due to the closure of the garden, it has largely impacted the education and health care facilities of the children. An immediate fall out of the closure of the garden school is the increase in the number of school drop outs in the garden. In the closed tea gardens, the education of the children of the labourers has been adversely affected (Roy et al. 2018). The young boys who had dropped out of school have joined as workforce to support their parents in income earning so as to avoid starvation. Parents are forced to send their children to the nearby towns to work. The young girls have been sent to work as maids in hotels, shops, etc. in the nearby town and as domestic helps in other states. Some girls have found work contacts in countries like Singapore and Dubai. It was revealed by the labour households that when the garden was functioning and they received regular wages and other benefits, they could afford to send their children to nearby private schools where teaching was better and their children too learnt. However, once the gardens closed down and they lost their wage income, they have been forced to withdraw their children and some sent them to public schools in nearby town areas while majority children have joined the workforce. The closure of the gardens has directly impacted the quality of life of

the children in respecxt of access to education and health care facilities. One of the respondents shared that before the closure of the garden, he had sent his children to private school, but once the garden closed down he transferred them to a government school as he had no regular employment. For education of his two children, he had to spend an amount of Rs. 25,000–30,000 annually, which he could not afford after the closure of the garden.

The Government of West Bengal has few schemes like *Sikhashree* for ST and SC students who are studying in classes five to eight; *Akyashree* for students from minority communities; *Kanyashree* for unmarried girl students upto pre-matric level etc. But children from these closed tea gardens were not able to avail any of the schemes due to a lack of the documents fulfilling the criteria for such schemes like caste certificates, bank accounts, Aadhaar cards etc. Further parents of many of the children have migrated to other places in search of work and the children have been left under the care of old grandparents who often are incapable of taking adequate care due to their old age and sickness. The net result has been wasted childhood for these garden children and many have fallen victims of drug and substance abuse. Closure of gardens and the schools has not only led to dropout but has deprived these children their right to education and good life.

Absence of Social Security

The tea gardens are mandated to maintain the Provident Fund (PF)[5] account for labourers working in tea gardens. . The fund from PF was withdrawn to meet household expenses during marriages, festivals, health emergencies, etc. The PF contributions of the labourers have been stopped once the gardens closed down and the labourers have been facing problems in withdrawing from their PF account due absence of an authority to give consent for withdrawl. Many labourers have also fallen victims of brokers who promised to help them withdraw from their PF fund. As the labourers are unfamiliar with ways of withdrawal of funds, visits to the PF office has gone in vain and added to the cost liability due to transportation cost incurred for visiting the PF office. Further, the garden authorities are yet to deposit the due amount of contributions to the PF for a long time (DTDPLU, 2016). The overall liabilities and dues of the company stands at rupees 14.42 crores (Table: 2). Unpaid PF dues stand at Rs. 6843087/-of Dooteriah Tea Garden, Rs. 3005336/-of Kalej Valley Tea Garden and Rs. 6014766/-of Peshok Tea Garden labourers (Golay, 2021).

As per the provisions of the Plantation Labour Act, every tea gardenis mandated to provide weekly ration to the labour households Survey findings revealed that many households did not receive ration either from the company or the PDS as their ration cards had not been transferred to the PDS shops by the comapany management.

[5] PF dues are the funds that owners have deducted from labourers as PF but have not deposited with the PF Commissioner (Talwar et al., 2005)

These households sought support from loacl administration and local trade unions to redress their grievances. . It was found that labourers from the Samrik division of Dooteriah Tea Garden had not received ration from any source since the closure of the garden.. They sought help but failed to find any redressal, the situation worsened further during pandemic. Closure of gardens has kept the management away from fulfilling the basic minimum provision of weekly ration to the labour households. The labour households have thus been deprived of their basic minimum requirements for sustenance.

Table 2. Liabilities towards Labourers (Up to March 2016)

Name of the Garden	Gratuity Dues (₹)	Workers Dues (₹)	Statutory Dues (₹)	Other Dues (₹)	Total (₹)
Dooteriah Tea Garden	45340437	10981761	24398145	7355715	88076058
Kalej Valley Tea Garden	18881182	6623179	5365146	1826000	32695507
Peshok Tea Garden	8393307	5934471	8498129	641268	23467175
Total	72614926	23539411	38261420	9822983	144238740

Source: Computed from unpublished data collected from respective tea gardens in December 2020

The Government of West Bengal has been providing 35 kgs of free rice to labour households in the tea gardens. However, the provision of the same has stopped in some of the closed gardens where the ration cards of the labour households have not been transferred under the PDS. Although the Plantation Labour Act 1951 lays down the conditions and norms for social security and welfare measures for tea garden wokers/ labourers, yet after closure, the gardens have shied away from fulfilling the minimum social security and welfare measures for the labour households. The labour households which had basic minimum provisions from the gardens faced deprivation once the gardens closed down. The vulnerability of the households in terms of access to basic minimum food sufficiency, health care and eductaion of children, and provident fund benefits have increased manyfold with closure of the gardens. Further lack of skill and education also leaves these households with weak bargaining power in the labour market. While out-migration is often taken as one coping mechanism, the stress and vulnerability of migrant workers have been laid bare by the Covid-19. The plantation workers continue with vulnerabilities despite the provisions of welfare and social security measures as promised in the Plantation Labour Act 1951.

Conclusion

The labourers from the closed tea gardens remain vulnerable as they neither have regular employment nor any other seured alternatives. They survive on alternatives which are uncertain in so far wages and benefits associated. The absence of regular wage and other social welfare measures following closure of the garden has pushed these families into vulnerable situation where they face insecurity of income and basic sustennace

of life. Poultry, piggery and farm activities are some alternatives that have been taken recourse by the labour households to tide over the crisis, besides outmigration to other towns and cities where uncertainity and employment vulnerability continues. The land, water bodies, forest, and village commons, are owned by government and have been leased to the management of the tea company,the labour households do not have the right to use these common resources of the garden which further add to the vulnerability of the households. (Chamber,1995). The households have been engaging children to work as a coping mechanism to compensate for the loss of income.The closure health care facilities have adversely affected children and women who suffer from anaemia and other morbid conditions. Although work opportunities are sought to be created under MGNREGA, but lack of work and leakages prevent labourers from finding gainful employement under the scheme. Closure of schools has led to drop outs among children and the youths and majority of the youths have migrated to other places in search of employment. As social security and welfare measures ceased from the management following the closure of gardens, and as there are no government support for labour households in the closed gardens the families of the tea garden labourers have been pushed to a vulnerable situation with income and welfare loss. Although the Plantation Labour Act lays down the norms for welfare and protection of labour, however in practice the vulnerability of garden labourers remains unaddressed in the event of closure of the garden and labourers are left to their own fate. The declining employment opportunities and growing unemployment across the country adds further to the uncertainity for the tea garden labour households who also lack other skills to find any alternative gainful employment.

Acknowledgement

The authors are extremely thankful to the respondent labourers, key informants, trade unions, office staff, and Land and Labour Department, Darjeeling for their generous support during fieldwork and sharing of unpublished data, without which the study would not have been completed.

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Manuscript received 26/07/2022; Final version accepted 25/11/2022.

The Trajectory of Modern Education of the Bodos: A Historical Overview

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Abstract

Pointing out the educational scenario of the Bodos, known to be one of the earliest settlers in the northern side of the Brahmaputra Valley, during the period prior to colonial annexation, this paper has made an attempt to briefly analyse how has the scenario gradually changed in the subsequent period. It has been argued that the social reform movement that played a historical role in reconstructing the Bodo society during the colonial era, helped subsequent emergence, growth and consolidation of a distinct identity of the Bodos. Especially, the visible apathy of the power structure towards expansion of educational infrastructure and acceptance of Bodo as a medium of instruction not only restricted enrolment of the Bodo students in the school but also reinforced the identity movement launched by the Bodos. The primary concern of this paper, however, is to comprehend the historical processes associated with expansion of modern education among the Bodos.

Being a continuous process, education keeps influencing human progress and plays a crucial role in construction and reconstruction of subjectivity, both individual and collective. Especially for the weaker sections of a society, education is an input not only for their economic development but also for instilling in them self-confidence and inner strength, thereby enabling them to face the new and unforeseen challenges. The Bodos of Assam provides a unique example to comprehend how modern education helps invigorating a collective identity capable of politically asserting itself to pave the way for socio-cultural as well as economic development. Before beginning of the colonial era, the Bodos were on the verge of extinction. Being unaware of their pride, honor, and dignity, they got oriented to structural assimilation to Islam or Hinduism (Brahma, 2008). With gradual spread of modern education during the colonial era, the outlook of the community had, however, significantly changed and started asserting as a distinct community with self-respect. The movement for reassertion started with the Brahma Dharma movement, which appeared as a series of movements such

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as the movement for language, the movement for education, demand for political autonomy besides economic safety and security. This paper is essentially an attempt to comprehend the process historically.

Sociologically, the Bodos of the Brahmaputra Valley belong to the Tibeto-Burman family of Mongolid stock. Defined as a linguistic form, Brian Hodgson referred the Bodos to an ethnic community speaking the Sino-Tibetan Bodo language. Bodo was the name given to a race of Mongolid people who are inhabitants of the north Himalayas and west China. It is derived from the land of Bod (Bod- means the Homeland). It is one of the earliest and numerous Bodo[2]Tribes settled in the Brahmaputra Valley, and demographically, there are now around 1.3 million Bodos in Assam, recognized collectively as Scheduled Tribe. According to S.K Chatterjee, the Bodos are distributed among the Brahmaputra valley, North Bengal as well as East Bengal. He was of his opinion that the Bodos formed a solid block in the Northeast since the epic era. As he pointed out, they are one of the significant Indo-Mongoloid groups who came along in the Eastern area of India. The Bodos, first settled in the Brahmaputra Valley and extended towards the west to Rangpur, Dinajpur, and Koch Behar, and some of them must shifted over North Bihar (Chatterjee, 1974). However, majority of them settled on the Northern side of the Brahmaputra River of Assam constituting the present Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) (Brahma, 2006), which includes the present districts of Baksa, Udalguri, Chirang and Kokrajhar.

The Educational Scenario of the Bodos during the Pre-Colonial Period

The ancient rulers of Kamrupa, especially Bhaskar Barman (594-650 A.D.), supported education (Choudhury, 1959). In those early periods, Indo-Aryan system of education was already in trend and marked by the initiatives by the Hindu rulers of the Brahmaputra Valley. The Varnasrama Dharma[3] was prevalent and education was transmitted orally in the Tols, Pathsalas and Gurugrihas[4] (Choudhury, 1959). Even during the medieval period, Srimanta Sankardeva, the Vaisnavite saint of Assam first received his education from Mahendra Kandali, a Brahmin Guru (Sarma, 1989). It is, therefore, evident that the Ahom state, which made a beginning in the early 13th century, subsequently adopted the culture and language of the Assamese Hindus and continued the earlier form of education (Chakravarty, 1989). The education imparted through Pathsalas, Tols and Gurugrihas, however, remained confined to the upper-class categories such as the Brahmin, Kayastha and Kalita (Sarma, 1989). There

[2] The Bodos are the indigenous groups of about 18 different tribes viz. Lalung, Madani, Tippera, Mech, Dimasa, Bodo, Chutiya, Rajbanshi, Hajong, Dhimal, Mahalia, Solaimiya, Phulgariya, Garo, Rabha, Saeaniya, Moran living in Assam, West Bengal, Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Tripura, Nagaland,Meghalaya.

[3] It mentioned four stages of Hindu sastras in life. First is acquiring education under Guru in Gurugriha abstain from home for the whole period, second is family life, third is religious and fourth is asceticism.

[4] Tol was a Sanskrit teaching school, Pathsala was a school, Gurugriha was a Sanskrit residential school maintained at the house of the Guru. During the ancient times, these three terms were used as a Sanskrit oriented.

is no evidence to show that the non-Aryan indigenous people living in this region had any form of formal education (Barpujari, 1990). The spread of Ek Sharan Nam Dharma, propagated by Sankardeva through Namghars and Satras, had led to certain changes. Religious teachings were passed on to the disciples across the fossilized caste categories. Satras and Namghars became an important meeting ground for all the cultural and religious education (Sarma, 1989). Village temple became a centre of popular education by regular exposition and recitation of Puranas and epics (Barua, 2003). According to B.K. Kakati, "Namghars combined the functions of village parliaments, a village court, a village school and a village church" (Das, 1990).

Nevertheless, formal and professional learning was presumably not much familiar to the tribal people around. While discussing the tribals of Assam, Anil Boro observed, "Apart from the traditional village communities, Khels and Mels, there is no evidence of other traditional institutions, be it educational or economical" (Boro, 2000). Therefore, it is said that during ancient and medieval periods, formal education was unknown to the tribal society of Assam except to the few members of the royal families.

Half heated attempt of the Colonial State to Educate the Bodos

Evidently, the tribes of pre-colonial Assam remained beyond the horizon of the existing Hindu education system (Foreign Department, 1853). Nor did the colonial state had well planned policy for spreading modern education among them. In the beginning of the colonial era, most of the schools were located outside the Bodos areas, or they were far from their villages. Consequently, education remained beyond the reach of the common Bodos (Bengal Educational Proceedings, 1870).

It must, however, be mentioned that Francis Jenkins, who was the Commissioner of Assam, had taken some initiative for bringing Western education near to the Bodos. By 1835, three public and few private schools were functional in Darrang district. The number of primary schools rose to eight in 1847. The educational progress was slow, and in 1853, there were nine vernacular schools in the district. From 1854, the provincial government started granted a specific educational policy concerning the Bodos of Darrang district through the Christian missionary. At the end of the nineteenth century, there were around four high schools in the districts, which were situated at Gauripur, Abhayapuri, Dhubri, and Goalpara (Allen, 2005). The other categories of schools were Middle English schools at Dalgoma, Manikarchar, Bilasipara and Manikarchar, and Middle Vernacular schools at South Salmara, Bijni, Patamari, Goalpara, and Dhubri. By 1903-04, there were 192 lower and 16 upper primary schools in the district. A few Bodos from the north bank of the Brahmaputra got enrolled in those schools (Allen, 2005). Till the beginning of the 20th century, the Bodo groups

of people were not much allured with the new education system[5].The tribal parents thought that the timings of the school were too long, and therefore, regarded it as loss of time in managing the household activities. Therefore, the existing conditions had hardly changed the life of the community while absence of educational institutions in the Bodo inhabited areas added further to their educational backwardness.

Appearance of the Christian Missionaries

The role played by the Christian missionaries in spreading education, particularly among the tribes of north-eastern India, was undoubtedly crucial for reconstruction of collective subjectivity of the tribal communities (Sarmah, 2016). When the British officials were engaged with establishing schools in certain places to win the confidence of the Assamese gentry (Barpujari, 1990), the Christian missionaries took part for their educational activities along with the missionary works among the tribal people residing in North-East India. The Christian missionaries made efforts to serve the people with the primary objective of spreading Christianity among the people, who did not have access to formal education, as the government failed to provide them direct access to education[6]. Nevertheless, the contributions made by the missionaries in preservation of the languages as well as development of scripts have historical significance in shaping the collective identities of the tribes.

The American Baptist Missionaries were the first to reach the Bodo-Kacharis. After their establishment of a centre at Guwahati in 1843, they formed a boarding school in 1846 with a few Bodo students. One of them from the Jhargaon village of North Kamrup, namely Apentha, got baptized in 1849 at Guwahati Church. However, the American Baptist Church was mainly concentrated on the Garos, and in 1965, they handed over the responsibility to the Australian Baptist missionary to work among the Bodo community (Sabastian, 1997).

Mr. Hessel Mayor who came to Tezpur for the spread of gospel and for establishing S.P.G. society belongs to the Anglican Church. The S.P.G worked for the Boros or Kachirs in and around Tezpur. Rev. Sidney Endle, who was deputed by the society for the propagation of gospel, arrived in the year 1864 at Tezpur. By that time, some of the Boros got converted to Christianity. Rev. Endle was successful in establishing a full-fledged Church at Bengnabari near Harisinga (Sabastian, 1997) in 1841 when the mission was launched. “In 1881 Rev. J.P. Smitheman and S. Endle were the missionaries who were assisted by three preachers, ten Christian teachers, and ten

[5] As pointed out in the Report on the progress of education in Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1901-02 to 1906-07, a large number of primary schools of the district had no house of their own. Classes were held in any places available, like in the verandas of the private houses, in the village Namghars or even under trees or any other place where space were found. After the creation of Upper primary classes, some of the Upper primary schools had been furnished with buildings, but were in most cases unsuitable. They were situated in the vicinity of some dwelling house or in a market place.

[6] Letter No. 64, Jenkins to William Grey, Secretary to the Government of Bengal, 1st July 1855. (Capt. Jenkins mentions that the Government schools were little adapted to meet the wants of the Kachari).

non-Christian teachers. The native Christians numbered three in 1851: seventy in 1861, one hundred and thirty in 1871, and two hundred and ten in 1881. In the later years, there were thirty-five communicants and four adult baptisms and two congregations" (Assam Mission, 1886).

In Goalpara, the Lutheran Missionaries established a colony and contributed interesting work among the Santals groups. Rev. L. Skrefsruds arrived in India in the year 1863 and dedicated prosperous tasks among the Santals. An agricultural colony or Christian settlement in 1880 was formed in the Western Assam of the Dingdinga area by the group of Santal families. It was successful in containing several hundred Christians; and a church was built to make room for one thousand people, and schools were opened. The missionaries, however, came into contact with neighboring Boro villages. In 1887, and a good number of Bodos started attending church and reading the gospel. The number of converts among the Bodos got increased, and many centers were opened at Gaurang (near Kokrajhar), Bongaigaon, and Parkijuli in Kamrup in 1922 (Sabastian, 1997).

In 1870, the Scottish Presbyterian Church began to start its work among the Nepalis of Darjeeling, and gradually it extended its service to the Duar areas inhabited by the Bodos. After entering the Boros areas, they learnt the Bodo language to propagate the gospel. They established a missionary work centre to carry out their activities at Panbari. They did remarkable job among Boros of West Bengal in Jalpaiguri district and initiated many of them to their religion. "Ranglal Narzari and Rev. Jitnal Narzinarihad done a pioneering work among the Boros of Jalpaiguri district" (Sebastian, 1997).

The Roman Catholic Church**,** the last group who started working among the Bodo of Assam. They did not have any contact with the Bodo during the time in the nineteenth century when the Anglicans and Lutherans were busy with their work among the Bodo. Sisuram Saikia, who came under the Baptist mission from Borigaon, invited Fr. Piaseski to the Darrang district in 1928 for internal feuds among themselves. Fr. Piaeski baptized some Bodo people there and established Catholic Mission at Damarugaon (Sword and Burnhalm, 1946). There was hardly any kind of activity undertaken by the catholic mission from 1928-1933 on both the educational and evangelical lines. But, the arrival of Fr. Ravalico and Fr. Alessi had seen marked progress in the evangelical works in 1933. Later their work got expanded to Beha Basti of Kamrup, and a few Bodo families at Kumarikata came to the Catholic faith.

In I850, after reviewing the history of the education of the Bodos, the Anglican missionaries endeavoured to open mission schools to introduce formal education. At that time, the Bodo language was a scattered mother tongue that did not have any script or written literature (Risey, 1975). Therefore, it would imply that there was no existence of the Bodo language to be used in those new schools which were established by the missionaries. As a result, Assamese and Bengali were considered for teaching the Bodo students in the schools. Teaching and preaching among the Bodo, as realized by

the missionaries, would be much easier through Bodo language rather than Assamese. However, to use the Bodo language, the Christian missionaries adopted the Roman script. In addition to the schools, the Bodo language became the medium of explanation in the church in the Sunday deliberations (Home Education, 1879). Whatever it might be the motive, the fact cannot be denied that the Christian missionaries were responsible in creating the foundation of Bodo literature and language providing a basis for emergence of a collective subjectivity.

Brahma Movement as an Alternative to Christianity

Regarded as the father of the historic Brahma movement, Kalicharan Brahma's contribution in restructuring the Bodo identity is unequivocal. Prioritizing education for liberating the Bodos from the hitherto existing condition of underdevelopment, Kalicharan Brahma initiated a multitude of reforms which together constituted the core of the Brahma Dharma he propagated. In 1905, he visited Calcutta to interact with literate people there in order to strengthen the spread of education among the Bodos. He came into contact with Sivanaryan Paramahamsa at Calcutta [7] and in 1906 he performed the Yajnahuti to mark the beginning of a new faith and to preach it as the Brahma Dharma. He visited places outside to propagate the Brahma Dharma in village and district such as West Bengal, Kamrup, Nagaon, Darrang and Dibrugarh. The reforms he initiated brought a watermark development for the Bodos (Brahma, 2006). This made a successful movement in realizing the people on the making education important and developing identity and self-respect. As "The greatest contribution of the Brahma movement was in the field of education" (Chaudhuri, 2004).

As it has already been indicated, in the early part of the 20th Century, the progress and growth of education amongst the Bodos were extremely limited. It is reinforced by the submission Kalicharan Brahma before Simon Commission in 1929 (Brahma, 1992). They showed their impotence to assemble the memorandum themselves due to the inaccessibility of any educated people from within their rank (Brahma, 1992). The situation, however, started changing since the second decade of the twentieth century with a constant inflow of educated immigrants from Bengal and Nepal who came for employment. This had inspired the indigenous Bodos and Kalicharan Brahma took the lead along with the newly emerged tiny educated section. The perception was that growth of literature and preservation of culture, and hence, the status of the society could be uplifted only through education (Narzary, 2009). Kalicharan Brahma, as a timber merchant came into the contact of the enlightened Assamese

[7] Teachings of Sivanarayan Paramahamsa are: (i) Keep the world pure, so that no uncleanness may attach, within or outside, to the physical body, the sense, mind, food, raiment, dwellings, roads, bathing places and so forth. Prevent the adulteration of food in every form. (ii) Be "equal-sighted" to sons and daughters, and educate them equally; secure equal rights to man and woman. Looking on all individuals as God and your own soul, cherish them, so that want and suffering may come to none. (iii) Let each, to the extent of his power, lovingly, in God's name, make offerings in the fire of things fragrant and sweet, such as clarified butter, sugar, etc., and help and encourage others to do so. This purifies the air, secures timely rain and abundant crops. Such is God's law and others, cited from J. N. Farquhar, op. cit., p. 133.

and Bengalis, and also he closely observed the Christian missionaries. He initiated his reform movement among the Bodos of Assam by restructuring their religious faiths and spread of education to convince the Bodos that they would attain a social position equal to their neighbouring societies (Roy, 1995). Establishment of schools was demanded in the Bodo living districts. At the same time, they realized that the household atmosphere of every individual was a determining factor for progress, and therefore, emphasized on eradication of social evils. Similar emphasize was on the status of women and their education. This had inspired the people to work together for the community. Bodo Chatra Sanmilami (The Bodo student's association) was formed by Kalicharan Brahma in 1919 at Dhubri. This took up the activities on the issues of employment opportunities for the Bodos as well as the improvement of their culture, education, and language. This substantially contributed to the growing consciousness among the people for the advancement of their community and a platform to safeguard all-round development and interest (Farquhar, 1967).

Kalicharan Brahma, in 1911, went to the Deputy Commissioner of Goalpara, Mr. A.J Laine, and asked him to take initiative for expanding educational facilities to the areas dominated by the ignorant Bodos. Mr.Laine supported Kalicharan Brahma in appealing to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, Mr. Archdale Earle, who then visited the Dhubri district in the early year of 1912to encourage education among the Bodos. Kalicharan Brahma explained to the Chief Commissioner that due to the non-availability of school in Parbatzoar estate, Bodo children were deprived of education. Mainly due to lack of money, many people could not afford or go to other towns and Dhubri for their studies. Further, he explained to the Chief Commissioner that mere schooling would not improve their condition; instead, he apprised for opening one upper primary school with vocational courses of both weaving and carpentry since they were oriented toward getting a job (Brahma, 2001). Mr. Archdale Earle approved and endorsed a grant of thirty thousand rupees for building of three institutions namely one Middle English school, one carpentry center at Tipkai and one weaving center (Mushahary, 1992). The three institutions as a whole were named Technical school and Tipkai Middle English School. Kalicharan Brahma took part in constructing hostels for the students of this school (Sarma, 1983). Educational facilities got expanded in the Bodo inhabited areas, as Mr. Laine, the Deputy Commissioner, made provision for launching primary school from the local board. He advocated the cause for the extension of the number of middle schools with the required number of students from primary to high school at Kokrajhar (Brahma, 2006). The joint initiatives of Kalicharan Brahma and Mr. Laine had led to establishment of primary school in the Goalpara district. Around 36 primary schools were established in 1914 for the local people (Assam Secretariat, 1914), which had considerable impact on the development in the later periods. Besides expansion of the educational infrastructure, which now became available at least to some rural Bodo people, the colonial administration paid attention to quality of teaching. Deputy Commissioner Mr. Laine had shown his interest in Tipkai Middle School and Technical School, which became a centre

of attraction. According to the official records, he proposed to upgrade the pay of the school headmaster from the existing Rs. 50/- to Rs. 70/- per month to attract qualified person for the post (Assam Secretariat, 1915).

With the growing number of educational institutes in the Bodo dominated areas of the district of Goalpara, Kalicharan Brahma now had to work with the idea of compulsory education. Alongside motivating the children to attend schools, he imposed penalties on the parents who refused to send their children to school. To make school education attractive, he also made provisions for to awarding scholarships to meritorious students, mobilizing the required fund in the form of public donations (Sarma, 1983). Alongside, Kalicharan Brahma took initiatives for standardizing the Bodo language. To enrich the language, he also borrowed suitable words from Bengali or Assamese. His pioneering literary works was further reinforced by many others people such as Rupnath Brahma, Satish Chandra Basumatary, Ishan Mushahary, Promod Brahma, etc. However, Kalicharan Brahma became the symbol of inspiration for the Bodo community at the time when Bodo society is falling down, and the Bodo community recognised him as "Mech Gandhi" (Basumatary, 2004).

For reforming the Bodo society, Kalicharan Brahma took initiatives to organize the Bodo Mahasanmilanis with the help of prominent personalities. The Bodo Mahasanmilanis, for the first time, became a platform to discuss myriad social and economic issues that plagued the Bodo community. Aiming at social reforms by eradicating some of the persisting social evils, the First Bodo Mahasanmilani was held in 1921 at Gossaigaon in undivided Goalpara district. The convention emphasised on the development of education, nevertheless, in his presidential address, Jadav Chandra Khakhlary, General Secretary, Assam Kachari Juvak Sanmilani talked about the glorious past of the Bodo society and regretted the present situation of the Bodos. He appealed to the people to unite and marched toward the progress and growth of western education by discarding ignorance (Narzary, 2003). The First Mahasanmilani also passed the resolutions to publish magazine for the literary pursuits of the school and college students and to take initiatives for establishment of more primary and middle schools in the Bodo-dominated areas to ensure enrolment of both and girls and boys (Narzary, 2003). The Second Mahasanmilani was held at Rangia in 1925 and the session was taken over by Mahadev Sarma from Tezpur. This session also adopted some resolutions with regard to social elevation. The third Mahasanmilani which was held at Roumari near Bongaigaon in 1929, besides endorsing the resolutions passed by the previous two sessions, adopted some concrete steps. Though all the resolutions were not implemented, they had a positive impact on the common people inspiring them for modern education.

To fulfil educational, social, and political aspirations of the Bodo community. Kalicharan Brahma, along with Srdar Belbung Ram Kachari, Baburam Brahma, Jadav Chandra Khakhlari, Karendra Narayan Mandal, Md. Giasuddin Ahmed, under the banner of the Bodo Association approached the Simon Commission at Shillong

on 4 January 1929. They submitted a memorandum with the clauses related to socio-economic, and political demands of the Bodos. The Clause Eight of the memorandum mentioned that "we the undersigned beg to lay before you the community should receive special treatment at the hands of the govt. in matters of Appointments and Education. Our community is most backward in points of education… To remove this drawback there should be compulsory free primary education and special scholarships for giving facility to higher education of the Bodo students be provided for" (Narzary , 2003). Thus, the submission of the memorandum had marked a new approach in the history of the Bodo society. The collective efforts organized by tiny enlightened Bodos laid the foundation for emergence of an educated elite class which subsequently contributed to the development of Bodo literature and language alongside flourishing new socio-political organizations. This process resulted in bringing changes in the status and position of the Bodos, making them capable of drawing attention from the non-Bodo counterpart, especially of caste Hindu Assamese society (Brahma, 2006). But at the same time, the 'Brahmas' among the Bodos became educationally and culturally more advance than their unconverted" (Brahma, 2008).

Besides the Bodo Mahasanmilanis, the Bodo students, however small in number, also started mobilizing themselves under the banner of the Bodo Chatra Sanmilani. The first Annual Conference of the organization was held in 1919. Kalicharan Brahma, who was invited as the Chief Guest, made a strong appeal to the Bodo student community and the mass people to take a keen interest in education in his speech. The Bodo Chatra Sanmilani was also instrumental in making the modern Bodo society and exerting influence on the new generation of western-educated Bodo youths in the state. Many students from Kamrup, Goalpara, Lakhimpur, Nagaon, and West Bengal participated in the annual sessions of the Sanmilani. These sessions had brought unity among the scattered Bodo population to work together for the growth of the Bodo language and the development of literature by sharing their news thoughts.

As the Bodo Mahasanmilanisin 1921 emphasized on publishing a magazine, the Bodo Chatra Sanmilani started publishing "Bibar" in 1924, and the quarterly magazine continued till 1940. Making an epoch in the history of Bodo literary movement, the Bibar became a platform for the literate section to express their feelings through writing. This ultimately developed a healthy practice of writings on the one hand and enriched literature on the other. This magazine was only for a short period, but it significantly contributed in shaping the future literary works in Bodo society.

The reforms initiated by Kalicharan Brahma were enthusiastically responded by the new generation of educated Bodo youths. For instance, Rupnath Brahma's contributions in reshaping the Bodo society through expansion of the sphere of education is particularly worth considering. As he was elected to the Dhubri Local Board, he upgraded the Kokrajhar Upper Primary School to M.V. School and Kajigaon L.P.School to M.V. standard. At that time, Puthimary M.V. School was the only middle school in the eastern Duar region which was situated between Manas in the east and Sankosh in the west

(Basumatary, 2005). Along with Sarat Chandra Goswami, School Inspector, Assam Valley circle, Rupnath Brahma established many Middle English Schools and Primary Schools in Bodo villages, in kokrajhar and Dhubri Sub-divisions (Kachari, 1981). For a very longer period of time, he was appointed as the Cabinet Minister in the State Government, and as a strong leader, he engaged in the growth of education in tribal society and tried his best for the people. He mentioned in his speech "Education is the primary and principal ladder for development and prosperity" (Basumatary, 2004). Similarly, Madaram Brahma was also closely linked with the expansion of school education at the Kokrajhar sub-division. He brought a drastic change by establishing the Kokrajhar college in 1956 (Choudhury, 1993) and advocated the cause of women's education and having compulsory primary education (Mochahari , 2008). Satish Chandra Basumatary, who became the Vice-Chairman of the Dhubri Local Board in 1946 played an important role in establishing schools in the district. Emphasizing on vocational courses, he made provision for compulsory weaving classes in Ramfalbil M.E. School which was particularly for girl students (Basumatary, 2003). His thoughts and writings were great sources of motivation for the guardians and parents for the development of consciousness for education.

Educational Scenario of the Bodos after Independence

Despite several initiatives taken by the state government to make education free and compulsory in accordance with the constitutional provisions and influences of the reform movements discussed earlier, the overall educational scenario of the Bodos had remained far from satisfactory for decades after independence. Although the participation of people in educational development revealed a positive trend in the post-colonial era, it was seen that the growth was not up to the mark in many places. It needs to be mentioned here that the increasing number of educational institutions or students alone does not imply growth in education. Material conditions of life of the people influenced by a multitude of economic, social, and geographical factors prevented the common Bodo people from reaching the desired level of educational attainment even after independence. The leadership of the reform movement and many prominent people helped in establishing schools in the Bodo areas. But, most of the schools were primary schools (Boro, 1987). Besides a poor student-teacher ratio, the attendance rate was low because of the prevailing socio-economic conditions coupled with a general apathy for education. Consequently, the literacy rate remained low, and till the 1970's, the majority of the Bodo people were first-generation learners. Due to the non-availability of schools within their reach, particularly the Middle English and High English schools, and the lack of awareness of the significance of education among the parents were the contributing factors. In addition to the economic and geographical factors, the language barrier added to the conspicuously low level of education among the common Bodo people (Bordoloi, 1991). "The Bodo pupils could neither understand properly from the books (Assamese books) nor from the teachings (in the Assamese language) in the classes and they were subjected to punishment in the school every day and they had to leave school and abandon their study" (Mochahary, 1993). In the

case of the Bodo women, the situation was more pathetic. The female literacy rate was only 9.3 percent against the male literacy rate which was 29.88 percent in the year 1961 (Census of India, 1961). Perhaps, certain conservative attitudes towards the education of women till the end of the 20th century also contributed to the remarkably poor literacy rate of women. The popular perception was "Likha Parha janile Charitra Beya Hoi" (education destroys the morality of women). Therefore, the women were expected to have only the knowledge and skill for day-to-day household works.

After independence, some of the mission schools were taken over by the state government while many others got converted into different non-governmental educational boards. A section of the vernacular primary school lost its eminence when many schools were established with English as the medium of instruction (Brahma, 2006). Such efforts, however, remained confined to the basic purpose of religious conversion. The primary concern for making the Bodo language the medium of instruction, therefore, soon became a major issue that assumed a political character.

Demand for Introduction of Bodo as a Medium of Education

Unequivocally, the demand for the introduction of Bodo as a medium of instruction at the schools was intrinsically linked with the primary concern for the educational development of the Bodos. The Bodo Sahitya Sabha, which came into being in 1952 with its commitment to the development of Bodo literature and language, along with other organizations inspired the people to get an education in the mother tongue (Brahma, 2010). It was realized that the progress and growth of education cannot be achieved without introducing Bodo as the medium of instruction. Such a move, however, was opposed by a few leaders such as Rupnath Brahma (Cabinet Minister, Govt. of Assam), and Dharanidhar Basumatary (MLA, Assam) as they believed that the Bodo language was yet to get its maturity to be a medium of instruction. For them, such an issue would disturb the growth of literature as well as education. On the other hand, the Bodo Sahitya Sabha contested this position with the assertion that the literary achievements of the Bodo language since the era of the Bibar made the language strong enough to be a medium of instruction (Basumatary, 2008). A delegation of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha (Satish Chandra Basumatary, Dharanidhar Basumatary, Birendra Narayan Brahma, Modaran Brahma, and Jogendra Kumar Basumatary) visited Bishnu Ram Medhi, the Chief Minister of Assam, on 26 December 1952 when a conference of the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee was held in Dhubri. Through a memorandum, they placed a demand for the introduction of the Bodo medium of instruction in the primary schools in the Bodo living areas (Basumatary, 2008). In the memorandum, it was mentioned that the Bodo language was spoken in Kamrup, Goalpara, Naga hills, Cachar,Darrang, and Nagaon districts, and justified the introduction of the Bodo as a medium of instruction (Atreya, 2007).

However, a remarkable change occurred in 1960 when the Government of Assam decided to accept Assamese as the official language of the state. Inevitably, the non-

Assamese-speaking people, particularly those in the hills, sharply contested such a decision as they perceived it as a violation of their language right. The issue was resolved by accepting Assamese in the Brahmaputra Valley, Bengali in Barak Valley, and English in the hill districts (Basumatary, 2008). Though the Bodos did not oppose the official language movement, the Bodo Sahitya Sabha holds an executive meeting at Kajolgaon and decided that the Bodos would report the Bodo language instead of Assamese as their mother tongue in the next census enumeration. Similarly, in the column on religion, they would report Bathou (traditional religion) or Brahma or Christianity as their religion (Daimary, 2009). This essentially witnessed their resentment against the socio-cultural and religious domination of the caste-Hindu Assamese society and a renewed concern for the preservation of the racial identity of the Bodos.

For an understanding of the complex issue of medium of instruction, on 18 May 1963, Bimla Prasad Chaliha, Chief Minister of Assam instituted a one-man inquiry committee with Rupnath Brahma who was a cabinet minister. In broad agreement with the Bodo Sahitya Sabha, the committee recommends the introduction of the Bodo language in primary schools as the medium of instruction. Accordingly, the Bodo language became the medium of instruction in the academic year 1963 in primary schools and at Kokrajhar Government High school (Brahma, 2006). It was decided that the Bodo medium would be introduced in the Lower primary level up to class III in the Bodo-dominated areas of Kokrajhar Sub-division (Statement given by Chief Minister, 1968) and then Assamese medium from class IV onwards (Narzary, 1993). In 1963, out of 119 primary schools, Bodo medium was introduced in 75 schools under Kokrajhar Anchalic Panchayat (Annual report, 1962-1963). In the next year, it got extended to Sidli and Dotma Anchalic Panchayat too. Out of 164 and 84 primary schools, the medium was introduced in 90 and 60 schools, respectively. In the year 1964-1965, some of the selected schools from Kachugaon and GossaigaonAnchalic Panchayat were also undertaken as the Bodo medium (Assam Report, 1964-1965). Accordingly, teachers with the knowledge of Bodo language were appointed in the Bodo medium schools in Kokrajhar and other schools. This historical decision contributed to regaining the lost hopes of the Bodos. Enthusiasm among the people was reflected by the formation of Bodo Sahitya Sabha in different districts. This also inspired the student community to form a district student organization (Brahma, 2007). In the year 1962, the Goalpara District Bodo Students Union was formed. It is worth mentioning in this context that the merger of the All Assam Plains Tribal League in 1946 with All India National Congress, there was a political vacuum in the Bodo society in absence of any organised political party till the 1960's. The Goalpara District Bodo Student's Union took the form of the All Bodo Student's Union (ABSU) in February 1967 (Memorandum submitted by ABSU, 1991). The emergence of ABSU supplemented to the strength of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha, and the combined efforts helped in the development of socio-political and cultural consciousness among the common Bodo people.

The persistent demand of both ABSU and the Bodo Sahitya Sabha resulted in introduction of Bodo as the medium of instruction at the middle and the high school

level of education. It became the medium of instruction in 48 Middle English and High schools in the first phase (Minutes of the expert committee, 1971). Gradually from the late 1960's, education in the Bodo medium started spreading to different districts such as Darrang, Kamrup and Lakhimpur. By the year 1973, the medium was introduced in about 1500 primary schools, which covered almost ten educational sub-divisions in the plain districts of Assam, viz, Kokrajhar, Barpeta, Rangia, Tezpur, Dhubri, and in 87 middle schools in Kokrajhar and Mangaldai sub-divisions (Memorandum to the Vice-Chancellor, 1973). The venture was set out by District Bodo Sahitya Sabha of the respective districts. The Assam government accepted the Bodo language as the Modern Indian Language (MIL) on 27th June, 1973. The first batch of Bodo students educated in Bodo medium school appeared in the High School Leaving Certificate Examination (HSLC) in the year 1976.

The level of political consciousness of the Bodos boosted by the issue of the introduction of Bodo as the medium of instruction also culminated in their movement for a won script of their language. The Bodo Sahitya Sabha, on 30th August 1971, demanded for introducing the Roman script for the language in place of the existing Assamese script. The Chief Minister of Assam, Mr. Mahendra Mohan Choudhury, however, rejected their demand on the ground that the Roman script was a foreign script and would remove shortly from the country (Narzary, 1993). Replacing the Assamese script by the Roman script became quite a difficult issue for the political leadership of the state. Subsequently, when the Bodo leaders meet Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister, in 1971, she pointed out to the Bodo leaders and advised them to take any script other than the Roman script (Basumatary, 2008). The executive members of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha along with the presence of Bodo Students Union and other teachers' association held on 12th April, 1975 at Barama, accepted to embrace Devangari script for the Bodo language for national and wider cultural contacts and integration. Finally, Devanagiri script was adopted by the 16th Annual Conference of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha held at Dhing from 25th to 27th April, 1975.This was followed by a visible concern for getting Bodo language recognized as an official language. Accordingly, the Bodo Sahitya Sabha placed the demand to the State government for giving the status of official language. On 2nd May, 1985, the Bodo language was recognized as an associate official language and was operational in the Bodo inhabited area of Kokrajhar and Udalguri sub- division.

The linguistic nationalism of the Bodos, thus, began with a remarkable concern for education, considering it to be the effective instrument for socio-economic development of the community located at the fringe of a relatively developed society marked by the domination of a Hindu social system. Undoubtedly, the demands for introduction of Bodo as the medium of instruction and a separate script for the language assumed a sharp political character when such demands were rejected by the dominant political structures. A section of the consolidated linguistic identity, therefore, started a hitherto unknown form of political response resorting to separatism. This first appeared in the form of a demand for Udayachal, a Union Territory for the plain tribes of Assam and

then to a separate state for the Bodos in the form of Bodoland, horizontally dividing the present state of Assam. The separatist movement with its substantially strong popular support base finally culminated in a violent political movement creating space for armed militancy. The phase of militancy, however, came to an end with the signing of the Memorandum of settlement between Union Government, State Government, and one of the militant organizations, the Bodoland Liberation Tigers (BLT), on 10 February 2003. The peace negotiation resulted in formation of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) in 2003, an autonomous body under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution. As a part of the same peace negotiation, the Bodo language was included in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution by the Ninety-Second Amendment Act of 2003.The formation of the BTC was followed by establishment of the Central Institute of Technology (CIT) at Kokrajhar in 2006,Bineswar Brahma Engineering College in 2008 at Kokrajhar, and the Bodoland University, again at Kokrajhar, in 2009.All such institutions of technical and higher education were part of the peace negotiations between the leadership of the Bodo movement and the government, both at the centre and the state.

Conclusion

Bodo as a distinct social category and the identity movement launched by the community to contest prolonged socio-economic deprivation, especially the violent phase of the movement, has drawn substantial academic attention. However, their concern for education has generally been overshadowed by the analysis of other political factors responsible for the outbreak of what has commonly been perceived as "Bodo insurgency" leading to the peace negotiation followed by constitutional amendment to provide them autonomy. With the beginning of colonialism, the colonial administration made some faint efforts to provide education to the Bodos who were historically deprived of education. The pace of expansion was accelerated by the missionaries, nevertheless, the ethos was conversion of the Hinduised Bodos to Christianity. Pointing out the educational scenario of the Bodos during the pre-colonial era, and the efforts made by the colonial administration followed by the initiatives of the missionaries, this paper has emphasized the historical role played by the Brahma Movement propounded by Kalicharan Brahma. With the basic tenants of a historical social reformist movement, the Brahma Movement provided an alternative paradigm of socio-economic as well as educational development of the Bodos on the one hand, and contested the growing influences of Christianity in the Bodo society on the other. It was instrumental in the historical process of emergence, growth and consolidation of the Bodo as a distinct socio-political identity to assert itself refuting the peripheral position given to it by the caste Hindu Assamese society. In the entire complex sociological context, as it has been argued in the paper, expansion of education, though it remained extremely limited, played a historical role.

Irrefutable aspirations for modern education resulted in expansion of limited educational infrastructure, especially of schools, in the Bodo dominated areas during the post-

colonial phase. The medium of instruction in the schools, nevertheless, restricted enrolment of the common Bodo students. Consequently, the literacy rate, especially of the women, remained pathetic during the decades immediately after independence, as the caste Hindu Assamese hegemony on the power relations constrained the vision of the power elites. The Bodo identity movement, therefore, was consolidated with the demand for introduction of Bodo as the medium of instruction at the school level. Though the demand was considered favourably, the question of a separate script for Bodo language was a logical consequence of the process. Finally, this vital issue was resolved while the Bodo civil society decided to accept the Devangari script.

In the meantime, the linguistic nationalism of the Bodos, which emanated from the Brahma Movement inspired by a visible concern for modern education and reinforced by the questions of medium of instruction and script, assumed a discernible political character. The leadership of the reconstructed "Bodo Movement" now started contesting the prevailing political hegemony of the caste Hindu Assamese leadership. Thus, the movement adopted an agenda for a separate "Bodoland", and it soon assumed a violent character providing political space for insurgency. Finally, the peace negotiations initiated by the Indian state culminated in making provisions for accommodating the political aspirations of the Bodos, and accordingly, the Constitution was amended. The Bodo Land Territorial Council was formed under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution to fulfil the basic aspirations of the Bodos ensuring their socio-economic and educational development.

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Manuscript received 10/08/2022; Final version accepted 24/11/2022.

Book Review

Vikas Tripathi[1]

Administrative History of Undivided Assam (1826-1947): An Account of British Administration in Assam., Edited by Jatin Hazarika and Dhruba Pratim Sharma., Assam Regional Branch, Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) and Anwesha Publications,Guwahati. Distributors: Anwesha Publications, 44, Bhuban Road, Uzanbazar, Guwahati.

Revisiting the Colonial Administration of Undivided Assam

The volume entitled "Administrative History of Undivided Assam (1826-1947): An Account of British Administration in Assam" edited by Jatin Hazarika and DhrubaPratim Sharma and published in 2021 by the Assam Regional Branch of Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) jointly with Anwesha Publications, Guwahati is a noteworthy contribution to the study of Assam's colonial administrative history. This work of documentation of administrative history can be regarded as a major step towards helping the scholars pursuing research work in public administration in the North Eastern region.

Consisting of nine chapters and three appendices, the book covers in detail the initial decades of British rule from 1826 to 1874, period during which Assam was a Division of Bengal Province, followed by the period from 1874 to 1921 when Assam became a Chief Commissioner's Province, and subsequently the period from 1921 up to the end of British rule in 1947 during which Assam existed as a Governor's Province. Separate chapters in the book are devoted to British policy towards the hill tribes, municipal administration, land tenure system, development of Assam Secretariat, and aspects of society and economy in Assam under British rule, while the appendices include the text of the Treaty of Yandaboo, the provisions relating to Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas, and excerpts from the Reports of the Government of Assam. A select bibliography and a voluminous index at the end serve as useful aid for the reader.

The exhaustive Preface and the introductory chapter dwell upon the trajectory of British rule in the province which was initially necessitated by security concerns of the

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East India Company on the eastern borders of its empire. The gradual incorporation of territories under the ambit of British rule, the initial rumblings of anti-British sentiment among the Assamese ex-nobility and the hill tribes, and the administrative issues leading to establishment of a Chief Commissioner's province are described in detail in the second chapter entitled "The Initial Decades: Assam as a Division of Bengal Province". The third chapter "Assam as a Chief Commissioner's Province (1874-1921) dealing with the intricacies of establishing a provincial administrative set-up in the remote region characterised by difficult terrain and a vast area with diverse communities reveals the process of consolidation of empire on the eastern frontier and also covers the period of formation of the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam in the early twentieth century, which was annulled within a few years leading to re-establishment of Assam as Chief Commissioner's Province. The events resulting in the transformation into a Governor's Province and the laying out of an elaborate administrative machinery equipped to deal with the changing political realities are explained in the next chapter, "Assam as Governor's Province (1921-47)". It is noteworthy that along with the changes in administrative machinery, the changes on the socio-political front including the attempts of revolt against the British rule and the course of the movement for freedom from imperialism are covered in detail in these chapters.

The setting up of a separate system of administration for the hill areas of the Province is covered in detail in the fifth chapter "Policy towards the Hill Tribes", while the next chapter examines the development of Municipal Administration, followed by the one on Land Tenure System. The eighth chapter on "Development of Assam Secretariat" throws interesting insights into the process of formation of administrative machinery at the secretariat level within severe constraints of resources-financial and personnel. The final chapter on "Aspects of Society and Economy in Assam under British Rule" highlights the far-reaching changes taking place on the socio-economic front under the colonial regime including migration of populations from other parts of the country and their settlement in the sparsely populated province, and the development of tea industry as well as the emergence of new social classes. The educational policy and development of modern education is dealt in detail in this chapter. It may be noted here that a plethora of useful information is provided in the three Appendices at the end, and some of the material included in the final appendix entitled "Excerpts from Reports of the Government of Assam" could have been gainfully included in the main chapters. The authors could have enriched the book further with a concluding chapter summing up the trajectory of development outlined in the previous chapters with inferences into the overall course of development of administration in Assam under British rule. It is also noteworthy that the book contains in-depth information not only on the colonial history of Assam and its neighbouring states including the erstwhile princely state of Manipur, but also on Sylhet district in present-day Bangladesh which had been a part of Assam province between 1874 and 1947.

In case of Assam, the Treaty of Yandaboo of 1826 formally marks the beginning of British rule, which lasted till India's independence in 1947. Though the British colonial administration was guided by a set of goals and principles different from the present ethos of popular government and people-centric administration, it provided the basis for many of the later administrative structures and practices. "Administrative History of Undivided Assam (1826-1947)" focuses on those aspects that have a bearing on present-day politics and administration of the state. It also throws light on the political developments including the freedom struggle, and on socio-economic aspects of the erstwhile province. Brought out in an attractive hard-bound format and moderately priced, the book would serve as an interesting guide to administrators and academicians as well as to the general readers interested in learning about the transformation of the traditional pre-colonial polity into the administrative machinery of the modern state.

Manuscript received 09/11/2022; Final version accepted 09/12/2022.

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