

Human Rights

6th Semester

By

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Topic: Terrorism in North East India: Factors and Consequences.

Topologically, North East India lies in the eastern extension of the sub-Himalayan zone consisting of lofty mountainous terrains and moderately high hills, interspersed with plateaus and river-fed valleys. It thus has great diversity in terms of physical features, such as natural scenery, flora and fauna, soil quality, weather conditions, and so on, making for corresponding diversity in the material culture of the inhabitants.

Sharing international borders with Tibet, China and Bhutan to the north, Myanmar to the east, Bangladesh to the south and west, the region is strategically situated and hence it is geo-politically an extremely sensitive area.

This region was brought under the sway of the British later than the occupation of what may be called "Mainland India". The British came to Assam to free the land of the marauding Burmese and then stayed on and brought the six centuries old Ahom kingdom under the British rule in 1826. This region is ethnically, linguistically, culturally very distinct from the other parts of the country. This region is officially recognised as a special category of states. The region has been as it is today, an integral part of India, standing, as it were, as the country's sentinel in this part. Its culture similarly constitutes an essential ingredient of the composite Indian culture. But precisely due to its location, the region has served as a corridor for the movement of human groups as well as cultural stimuli both

from the Indian mainland to the west and the neighbouring lands in the north and east.

Before the advent of the British, the tribes living in the hills surrounding the valley lands mainly in Assam, Manipur and Tripura, had regular interactions with the people in the plains. The British, in expanding their territories, mainly sought valley lands that could support the growth and expansion of agriculture for yielding revenues. After tea was discovered in Assam, many tea plantations were set up and the areas became more valuable. However, the hill areas mainly inhabited by the tribes were not expected to yield adequate agricultural production to generate revenue and the expenses of administering these areas were sought to be kept at the minimum. Thus was born the concept of areas less administered than most of the country. The administrative structures in the hill areas were kept very lean. Following this philosophy, provisions were included in the Government of India Act of 1935, for designating some hill areas inhabited by tribes as "excluded" or "partially excluded" areas. The essential elements of these provisions were adopted in the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution with necessary modifications. These tribes were notified as Scheduled Tribe (Hills). There were, however, many tribes living in the plains areas of Assam who came to be known as plains tribes or Scheduled Tribe (Plains). The definition of tribal thus got linked to the location, i.e., whether they were living in the hill areas or in the plains.

Among the various factors causing disturbances in the region, issues of script and language, immigration of people from different parts of the country as well as from the neighbouring countries which caused assimilation; impacting on the ethnic, traditional and cultural originality, along with socio-economic backwardness, slow pace of infrastructural development, step-motherly treatment from the centre in case of grants

and aids, geo-political issues, imbalanced growth, have generally been considered as significant.

The question of the mother tongue and that of ethnicity, linked together, have been used for demanding separate political structures and dispensations. As against the trend of Sanskritization described by sociologists as a characteristic feature of development of Indian societies, the feature of re-tribalisation has been observed to gain strength in the last few decades, particularly in Assam. Communities which for a long time considered themselves and have been so considered by others as parts of the larger society now want to be identified as tribes. Adding complexity to this are the issues of the tea garden workers and ex-tea workers who were brought from many parts of then Bengal, Bihar and Orissa by the British to work in the tea plantations in Assam. Many of these communities are recognised as tribes in the places of their origin, but are not accorded that status in Assam.

The extortion drive initially was directed against the outsiders 'plain manuh' (people from plains of mainland India) in Nagaland or the 'Mayangs' (outsiders) in Manipur. In Assam, for instance, the initial 'anti-foreigner' agitation against influx of Bangladeshis got embroiled into 'Bengali kheda' (chase out Bengali) campaign turned against Beharis on the pretext that Biharis would take away the railway jobs which are meant for the local inhabitants of the region.

Henceforth, being the homeland of many ethnic groups, the region is facing the problem of identity crisis and self-preservation. David Ludden who wrote on the context of problems of collective identity for South Asia as a whole, also wrote about the 'historical invention and reinvention of group definitions, association and solidarities that have shaped people's experience, feelings and thinking about they live, where do they belong,

who belong to them, and who and what are foreign, separate and different.’

The urges of different ethnic groups of North east India for maintaining their distinct identities have been a living phenomenon in the politics of the region in particular and of the country in general. They have their own distinct cultural identity and they are not prepared to merge with the national mainstream population. As a means they are demanding for autonomy, separate states on the basis of their respective ethnic identity. More importantly, some sections of these groups have been carrying on underground movements demanding a sovereign independent states outside India union. In this regard, many foreign countries are giving their helping hand, financial support, import of arms and ammunition, providing training camps and shelter, and so on to the extremists groups in foreign land. Movements of this kind naturally involves the question on the integration of the region with the rest of the country.

The problems which the region is facing are different and unique from many other parts of the country. Different states have been facing different kinds of problem, which needs more ways of solving them. One common solution is not possible for the region.

In making efforts in finding the root cause of insurgency in the North East region of India, it may be necessary to trace certain historical developments relating to society, culture, tradition and custom, language/dialect, routes of migration, racial characteristics, etc. In the words of Ramesh Thakur, senior vice rector of the United Nations University in his paper titled “The Role of the United Nations in Defeating Terrorism by Promoting Tolerance”, the root causes of terrorism can be categorised into five groups. These are-

1. Lack of democratic institutions and practices.
2. Lack of political freedom and civil liberties;
3. Group grievances based on collective injustice;
4. Intractable conflicts; and
5. Inter-civilization suspicions.

The North East region of India has been suffering from long drawn- out violence for almost six decades with no end in sight. The problem of terrorism is a great stumbling block in the economic development. Peace and prosperity have been impeded by the black cloud of tension. The terrorist groups are active in almost all the states except Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim. If it is terrorism for one, it is nationalism and patriotism for another. They are armed and rebellious in order to free their nationality, protecting their ethnic identity, which is again considered as narrow nationalism or ethnocentrism taken birth within the bigger nationalism, i.e., nationalism within nationalism. Henceforth, even though the concept of pan Indianism is promoted in Indian society, trying to bring unity among differences, but accommodation of the differences is more important without trying to unify them under same umbrella, which cannot be denied. Forced assimilation is also one among the factors leading to the germination of ethnic identity assertion.

There are many insurgent groups in the region, engaged in active violence, demanding through various inhumane tactics, for which, the region is quite easily labelled as ' Hot Bed of Extremism or 'Sensitive'. For instance, the complexity involved in dealing with the ethnic aspirations of the Nagas is a case in point. The Naga National Council of the Phizo era and the more recent National Socialist Council of Nagalim, split into two factions NSCM (IM) and NSCN (K), are considered the spearhead of

Naga tribalism. While the NSCN declares that there is no question of compromise in respect of the core demand for sovereignty, the demand, raised at the same time, for Nagalim, might appear to be a softening of the rigidity involved in the question of sovereignty, allowing for a two-step process in resolving the issues. Nagalim is a territory comprising Nagaland and areas contiguous to it claimed to be inhabited by Naga people i.e., some parts of Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh. Similarly, Assam is also a burning ground where many insurgent groups and terrorist outfits are operating, like that of NDFB, ULFA, KNLF, NSCN, etc.

Major extremist groups (both active and inactive) in the region are mentioned below:

1. Achik Liberation Magrick Army (ALMA)
2. Achik National Volunteer Council (ANVC)
3. Adam Sena (AS)
4. Adivasi Cobra Force (ACF)
5. Adivasi Security Force (ASF)
6. All Adivasi National Liberation Army (AANLA)
7. All Assam Adivasi Suraksha Samiti (AAASS)
8. All Manipur Minority Islam Samaj (AMMIS)
9. All Tripura Bengali Regiment (ATBR)
10. All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF)
11. All Tripura Volunteer Force (ATVF)
12. Amra Bangali

13. Arunachal Dragon Force (ADF)
14. Bangla Mukti Sena (BMS)
15. Barak Valley Youth Liberation Front (BVYLF)
16. Bengali Tiger Force (BTF)
17. Boro Liberation Tiger (BLT)
18. Bru Liberation Front of Mizoram (BLFM)
19. Bru National Liberation Front (BNLF)
20. Dima Halim Daogah (DHD)
21. East India Liberation Front (EILF)
22. Gorkha Tiger Force (GTF)
23. Harkat-ul-Jehad (Huj)
24. Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM)
25. Hmar People's Convention-Democracy (HPC-D)
26. Hmar Revolutionary Force (HRF)
27. Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council (HNLC)
28. Islamic Liberation Army of Assam (ILAA)
29. Islamic Minority Army (IMA)
30. Islamic Revolutionary Front (IRF)
31. Islamic Sevak Sangh (ISS)
32. Islamic United Liberation Army (IULA)
33. Islamic United Reformation Protest of India (IURPI)
34. Kamatapur Liberation Organization (KLO)

35. Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL)
36. Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP)
37. Karbi Longri North Cachar Hills Liberation Front (KLNLFF)
38. Karbi National Volunteers (KNV)
39. Karbi People's Front (KPF)
40. Koch-Rajbongshi Liberation Organization (KRLO)
41. Kuki National Army (KNA)
42. Kuki National Front (KNF)
43. Meghalaya United Liberation Army (MULA)
44. Minority Revolutionary Army (MRA)
45. Muslim Liberation Army (MLA)
46. Muslim Liberation Front of Assam (MLFA)
47. Muslim Security Council of Assam (MSCA)
48. Muslim Security Force (MSF)
49. Muslim United Liberation Front of Assam (MULFA)
50. Muslim United Liberation Tiger Force of Assam (MULTFA)
51. Muslim Volunteer Force (MVF)
52. Naga Youth Liberation Front (NYLF)
53. National Democratic front of Bodoland (NDFB)
54. National Liberation Council of Taniland (NLCT)
55. National Liberation Front of Arunachal Pradesh (NLFA)
56. National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT)

57. National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Issac-Muivah (NSCN-IM)
58. National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang (NSCN-K)
59. North-Eastern Minority Revolution Army (NEMRA)
60. North-Eastern Muslim Front (NEMF)
61. People's Liberation Army (PLA)
62. People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK)
63. People's United Liberation Front (PULF)
64. Rabha National Security Force (RNSF)
65. Revolutionary Muslim Commandos (RMC)
66. Tiwa National Revolutionary Force (TNRf)
67. Tribal Commando Force (TCF)
68. Tripura Armed Tribal Commando Force (TATCF)
69. Tripura Defence Force (TDF)
70. Tripura Liberation Force (TLF)
71. Tripura Liberation Organization (TLO)
72. Tripura National Army (TNA)
73. Tripura National Volunteer (TNV)
74. Tripura Resurrection Army (TRA)
75. Tripura Tribal Democratic Force (TTDF)
76. Tripura Tribal Youth Force (TTYF)
77. Tripura Democratic People's Front (TTDF)
78. Tripura Tribal Volunteer Force (TTVF)

79. Tripura Young Rifle (TYR)
80. United Bengali Liberation Front (UBLF)
81. United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA)
82. United Liberation Front of Barak Valley (ULFBV)
83. United liberation Militia of Assam (ULMA)
84. United Liberation Movement of Arunachal Pradesh (ULMA)
85. United Liberation Volunteer of Arunachal Pradesh (ULVA)
86. United Muslim Liberation Front of Assam (UMLFA)
87. United National Liberation Front (UNLF)
88. United People's Democratic Solidarity (UPDS)
89. United people's Volunteers (UPV)
90. Zomi Reunification Organization (ZRO)
91. Zomi revolutionary Army (ZRA).