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CONTENTS

IN SEARCH OF NEW PASTURES: GURUNG PASTORALISTS IN THE MODERN WORLD

Karan Gurung

Abstract

The Gurung people settled in the Himalayas have traditionally relied upon sheep-herding as their primary source of livelihood. From its mythical origin to its practical everyday use in the form of food, clothing and shelter, the presence of the sheep is pervasive.

However, this free-moving transhumance nomadic way of life has come to an abrupt stop in the 21st century. With legal prohibition on mobile pastoralism today, a vast repository of knowledge systems growing around it will eventually die; a culture lost and nature stripped of its valuable diversity.

Keywords: Himalayas, Gurungs, Sheep, Pastoralism, Conservation, Nature.

Introduction

A voice descended in Suun Pokhari (a natural lake nestled in a deep crater thought to be near the Sunkoshi River in Tibet). It was here that the Gurungs[1] believe they first heard the voice of the creator. He asked the gathering to take the route west without turning or looking back. No one knows for how many years they were on the move. But whatever happened, they never looked back. Until that time when the sky erupted into a maelstrom of thunderbolts and the ground began to tremble. They remember turning back for the first time unable to hold back their terror. Some believe it is after this turbulent 'gur, gur…' roar of the storm that they got their name from- 'the Gurungs'. Three sheep met their gaze as they turned back – Black, White and Brown. "This should be enough for you", echoed the voice from the sky before it disappeared again.

Trans-Himalayan Pastoralism and the Gurungs

Pastoralism as a way of life is uniformly spread across diverse communities settled in the Himalayas. In India, transhumance pastoralism is commonly practiced by nomadic communities such as the Gaddis, Champas and Gujjars in the West along with the Sherpas, Magars, Gurunga and Brokpas in the middle and Eastern section of the Himalayas. Gurung pastoralism is mainly concentrated in the Lamjung district of western Nepal and the North-Eastern hill state of Sikkim.

Pastoralism up until recently had been the dominant mode of subsistence for the Gurungs living in the lower reaches of the Himalayas. Rearing of goats, cattle and buffalo is common but what the Gurungs are traditionally known for, is their role as sheep herders. In western Sikkim where the Gurungs are largely settled they are renowned for herding the breed of sheep known as the *'banpala'*. The Gurungs practice a form of seasonal migration strategy. In spring, they migrate up (umbole) to the high-altitude alpine pastures (4000-5000m) and descend down the temperate and sub-alpine forests (1000-1800m) to their villages during the onset of winter This nomadic migratory occupation is well complemented by a form of subsistence cultivation down in their permanent villages. The scarcity of fodder during the long winter season (lasting from November to March) forces the herders down the villages who in turn manure their fields left fallow during the winters. Thus devised in this way is a unique economic model based on mutual cooperation and symbiosis.

Diary, Wool and Meat are the three main products obtained from the rearing of sheep. Milking usually happens between mid-June to mid-September. But owing to its low production milk is generally processed into butter. Autumn is the season for lambing when the herders descend to the lower pastures *(undole).* Before the beginning of the nomadic forays up in spring male lambs and unproductive and aging sheep are sold off. It is also common for the Gurungs to sacrifice their sheep (commonly male sheep) in local religious rituals and select auspicious occasions such as marriages and festivities. For wool the sheep are sheared twice

before *'umbole'* and after *'undole'* respectively. The wool is further coiled and compressed into bales of standard size which is used in making items like mattresses *(burkhashan)*, blankets *(raari)* and waterproof jackets called *'lukuni'*. Thus from its mythical origin in oral narratives to its practical everyday use in the form of food, clothing and shelter the presence of the sheep is pervasive.

The introduction of literacy and modern education, dependence on an outside capital market, and massive migration to urban centres have meant that this free-moving transhumance nomadic way of life has unfortunately come to an abrupt stop leading to its near demise in the 21st century[2]. However, a more innocuous but dire threat to mobile pastoralism has come in the form of a systematic attack from the ideology of modern scientific forestry and conservation ecology which restricts the free movement of mobile pastoralists such as the Gurungs in Sikkim. This study is an attempt to deal with and come to terms with this contentious issue while realizing at the same time the causes for the decline are multidimensional and interrelated rather than isolated.

Just immediately after becoming a part of the Indian Union in 1975 a long spate of national parks, and reserved and protected areas were established in and around the state of Sikkim. In Sikkim the Kanchenjunga National Park (KNP) covering nearly ¼ of the total geographical area was created in 1977, followed by Barsey Rhododendron Sanctuary in 1988. Similarly, the Sagarmatha National Park (1976), the Kanchenjunga Conservation Area (1977) in Nepal, the Qomolangma National Natural Preserve in the Tibet Autonomous Region and the Singalila National Park (1992) in Darjeeling were formed in the adjoining areas surrounding the state. Not surprisingly Sikkim has the highest density of protected area cover in the country today. In 1998 the state government banned the practice of grazing on all reserve forests. In the following six years, the eviction would be nearly total. Remunerations and compensations in the form of jobs were promised instead of providing them with alternative arrangements. But even these promises were hardly met and most

of the herders ended up getting nothing. Correspondingly, these conservatory measures and policies have led to the rapid decline of overall livestock size and population (Tambe and Rawat, 2008, p. 77).

Ecological Conservation and Industrial Forestry: Contesting Claims and Representations

Before any efforts on conservation can begin one needs to clearly delineate what one means by terms such as ecology and forests. In India, the problem is exacerbated by the fact that there is no general agreement on such terms. As Karlsson in his work on the environmental history of Northeast India notes,

> "The Indian Supreme Court, in its order, added a novel dimension to the debate by stating that the word 'forest' must be understood according to its dictionary meaning without saying what this is" (Karlsson, 2011).

To remain with the context of Northeast India, the problem is further complicated by the fact that there is no clear-cut separation between land and forest. For an overwhelming majority of people in Northeast India the so-called 'forests' constitute both their land and resources they depend on for their livelihood (Nongbri, 1999, p. 25). Most external ecological interventions fail to consider this fact when framing their policies. The champions of ecological conservatory interventions further claim that long-term customary use of natural resources leads to an overall degradation of biodiversity and the environment manifested in phenomena like habitat loss and an increase in greenhouse gases. The interventionist rationale, according to the ecologist Vasant Saberwal (2005), forms part of the two principal assumptions underlying current conservatory policies worldwide. The other assumption, he contends, is that democratic governments can forcibly exclude and restrict human resource use within protected areas of conservation interest.

In Sikkim, the areas that have been incorporated into protected areas such as the KNP and the Barsey Rhododendron Sanctuary have been justified under similar pretexts. The forest

authorities often allege that the herders set fire to the forests, hunt wildlife, extract medicinal plants and use enormous amounts of firewood. Also, it is claimed that because of the makeup of the geographical terrain which includes steep slopes coupled with high rates of precipitation/snowfall, trampling by the livestock triggers phenomena like soil erosion and pollution of water bodies. However, there is a growing body of literature which challenges these assumptions and positions. Studies have shown that even with remote sensing and GIS there is little we know of disturbance and degradation of biodiversity, especially in terms of large historical time-scale. In fact, these works seem to claim the opposite. As Saberwal cogently demonstrates in the case of the Gaddis, herding practices need not lead to either the degradation or the decline in biological richness (ibid, p. 745). Joint Forest Management (JFM) and Social Forestry programs in India are in some ways a sign of such growing recognition and realization that the relationship between nature and people need not always be defined by antagonism and conflict that modern discourses on ecological conservation anticipate. However, it is important to tread the road here with caution and discretion.

It should be noted that both JFM and Social Forestry Program such as that under the Forest Rights Act 2006 have had only limited success. Concerning the JFM the forest department has been reluctant since it entails sharing of responsibilities and resources. Social Forestry Program on the other hand is rife with contention since a clear private ownership of property has to be first established in places where the forest- land inhabited by tribes/pastoral communities such as the Gurungs has been under collective customary control. Correspondingly, it is pertinent to remind ourselves here that given the increasing capitalist reorientation of tribal/hill societies, community-based resource management looks rather problematic. Add to this the complex maze of the increasing commercialization of nature and penetration of financial institutions and banks investing in conservation to derive profits does not augur well the future of our forests and us who depend on them.

Conclusion: In Search of New Pastures

With the Himalayas as the grazing ground, pastoralism had been the pivot around which Gurung culture and tradition revolved around. Pastoralism in this sense had been not merely an occupation but a way of life which distinguished them as economically self-sufficient and culturally distinct people (Messerschmidt, 1976, p. 11). The restriction and prohibition on Gurung mobile pastoralism are therefore tragic. What remains is a decreased and diminutive herd size which in turn has given room for modern phenomena like unemployment, crime, urban migration, etc. to creep in (Pettigrew, 2000, p. 35). From the perspective of ecological conservatism, it is indeed ironic to find that the local *'banpala'* breed of sheep reared by the Gurungs is today on the verge of extinction.

With the loss of the sheep and the subsistence economy based around it, a vast repository of knowledge systems covering subjects like astronomy, flora and fauna, medicine, and textiles among others will be irremediably lost. In response, government authorities both state and central agencies, conservatory officers and finance secretaries have regularly floated the idea of economic development as a panacea for the problems confronting the Gurung pastoralists. The former grazing lands have been brought under mono-cultural plantations to meet the ever-increasing demand for more revenue and justified in the name of economic development. Concomitantly, conservatory measures and interventions have derived their legitimacy from this very notion of restoring and developing nature and biodiversity from a state of degradation and poverty that marked free moving transhumance pastoral way of life.

In conclusion, given the massive rates of destruction of biodiversity and loss of habitats we are witnessing globally, we have reached a point where we have to question the basis and rationale of modern scientific forestry and conservation ecology. It is argued here that what we have in modern science today exemplified by scientific forestry is a kind of philosophical myopia and a view of the world in which man and nature exist apart from each other.

This view is based on the sharp separation between an objective empirical world and a subjective social environment marked by individual conflict and competition. Rediscovering oral narratives at the margins such as that of Suun Pokhari and others can help us not only in resisting such dominant narratives but also resolve such conflict of views inherent to them. Pastoralism informed by these oral narratives among the Gurung thus reveals a deep relationship and connection that people have with their sheep and by extension nature. It reminds us that our survival as a species is intricately embedded with the survival of nature. Man under this model is part of a complex ecological network where the whole universe is transformed into his living body.

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End Note

[1] The Gurungs, also known as 'Tamu' or 'Tamumai[1]', are one of the largest ethnic groups that inhabit mainly the Annapurna region in West-Central Nepal. The Gurungs in India are mainly concentrated in Sikkim state and Darjeeling district and its adjoining areas in West Bengal state. In Sikkim, the Gurung population number to about 41, 000 (Vandenhelsken, 2011, p. 4). The Gurungs are bilingual, i.e., they speak Nepali and the Gurung language called the 'Tamu Kyi'. However, majority of the Gurungs speak Nepali as

their first language and use Devanagari, Tibetan and the Roman script for writing.

[2] Responding to this unprecedented threat to both the conservation of biological resources and the livelihoods of many indigenous and traditional nomadic people, a group of concerned professionals met in Wadi Dana Nature Reserve, Jordan in 2002. This eventually led to the formulation of a comprehensive strategy that came to be described as the 'Dana Declaration on Mobile Peoples and Conservation' that endorses the rights of indigenous and nomadic people's access to traditional lands and resources endangered by dispossession and displacement in the 21st century.

IN THE LABYRINTH OF INDIGENOUS NAGA IDENTITY: HOW CIVIL SOCIETIES IN NAGALAND DETERMINE THE INDIGENEITY OF NAGA TRIBES

Vienna Awomi

Abstract

In 2012, on the eve of the 2013 assembly elections, when the Democratic Alliance of Nagaland Government notified Rongmei as an indigenous tribe of Nagaland, there was widespread resentment against the decision from the Naga tribes of Nagaland. In May 2013, despite stiff opposition from the Naga Hoho, the Nagaland Tribes Council (NTC), an organisation consisting of only the Naga tribes of Nagaland was formed to protect the interests of the Nagas of Nagaland. The contention for the need for a body like the NTC was that the Nagas from other states were exploiting the hospitality of Nagas of Nagaland and were trying to usurp the benefits due only to them, by claiming tribal recognition from the state government. The NTC spearheaded the movement to oppose the recognition of the Rongmeitribe in Nagaland and demanded abrogation of the Cabinet decision, which ultimately led to the de-recognition of the Rongmei as an indigenous tribe of Nagaland. The paper attempts to briefly examine the complexities of Naga identity and what it entails for those unrecognised Naga tribes in Nagaland, who seem to be stuck in a labyrinth. An effort has also been made to study the extent of the influence that civil societies in Nagaland have over political decisions because they are palpably, so important and influential that they can even override the decisions of the government. The memoranda and notifications issued by the Government of Nagaland as well as records from various organisations and print media have been referred to for the study. To substantiate the findings of the study interviews were also conducted with leaders of relevant organisations.

Keywords: Naga, indigenous, identity, civil societies.

Introduction

The Naga society was deeply divided tribe-wise long before the attainment of statehood but this division on tribal lines took a turn for the worse after the Government of India granted statehood to Nagaland in 1963. At present, the state of Nagaland consists of sixteen administrative districts, namely, Chumoukedima, Dimapur, Kiphire, Kohima, Longleng, Mokokchung, Mon, Niuland, Noklak, Peren, Phek, Shamator, Tuensang, Tseminyu, Wokha and Zunheboto, which are all inhabited by Naga tribes. The Nagas also inhabit the Tamenglong, Senapati, Chandel and Ukhrul districts of Manipur. In Arunachal Pradesh, the Nagas inhabit Changlang and Tirap districts and in Assam, the Naga inhabited districts are Haflong and Diphu. The areas inhabited by the Nagas in Myanmar are Lahe, Khamti, Layhshee and Nanyun. V.K. Nuh lists 65 Naga tribes out of which 50% of the tribes (subject to confirmation for a few) are from Myanmar, fourteen tribes are from Nagaland and the rest are either from Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh or Assam (Nuh & Lasuh, 2002, p.4-12).

In Nagaland, a distinction between Scheduled Tribes and Indigenous Scheduled Tribes was introduced wherein those tribes whose ancestral land was not within the state they were residing in, were not granted Scheduled Tribe status in the state even though they were recognized and included in the list of Scheduled Tribes of India in some other states. As a result, in Nagaland, only fourteen Naga tribes namely, Angami, Ao, Chakhesang, Sumi, Lotha, Konyak, Chang, Phom, Sangtam, Yimchunger, Pochury, Khiamniungan, Rengma and Zeliangare recognized as indigenous Naga tribes despite the fact that there are many other Naga tribes in Nagaland besides the recognized fourteen tribes. Kuki and the Kachari tribes are recognized as non-Naga tribes in Nagaland because they have definite territory in the state. Persons who were permanently settled in Nagaland prior to 1st December 1963 were given the status of 'indigenous inhabitants' of the state of Nagaland by the Nagaland State notification dated 28th April 1977, No. AR-8/8/76 (Government of Nagaland, 1977).

Although the creation of Nagaland was the fulfilment

of the long-cherished dream of the Naga tribes for a Homeland for the Nagas, many of the Naga tribes and their territories fell outside the boundaries of the newly created state. Consequently, the Government of Nagaland decided to recognize only those fourteen tribes who had ancestral land within the boundaries of the State as indigenous Naga tribes. This gave rise to discontentment among many Naga tribes -from Manipur in particular- who had a considerable population spread across various parts of the state of Nagaland but were not granted recognition.

The paper explores the complexities of Naga identity, and what it entails for those Naga tribes which are not recognised as indigenous Naga tribes of Nagaland and the challenges associated with it. It further examines the significant role of civil society organizations in Nagaland and their impact in shaping political discourse and policies. These organizations hold considerable influence and can contribute to constructive dialogue on crucial issues and in some cases even override the decisions of the State Government. Sources from print media, including opinions from tribal bodies and individuals on the Rongmei tribe issue have been referred for the study. Notifications and memoranda from the State Government have been analysed. In addition, interviews were conducted with leaders from opposing viewpoints to understand the basis of their perspectives revealing the influence of socio-economic and political factors on modern tribal identity formation.

Fragmentation of the Zeliangrong community and the struggle for recognition

A brief discussion on the Zelianrong is necessary to help us understand the Rongmei issue in Nagaland. Zeliangrong is derived from the prefixes of three individual tribal names - Zeme, Liangmai and Rongmei. These three groups claim to be descendants of three brothers of the same parents who migrated together (Yonuo, 1982, p. 5). In the first part of the 20th Century, efforts were made to form a united group of kindred tribes. The term Zeliangrong was coined on 15th February 1947 at the first Zeliangrong

conference when the Zeliangrong Council was established at Imphal (Neumei, 2012). Besides other reasons, the Zeliangrong Council was formed with a view to further the economic, social, educational and political advancement of the four tribes (Yonuo, 1982, p. 127). It has been claimed that this alliance was formed with a view to acquiring a recognized tribal status in the homeland of the Nagas. Thus, it appears that their interests were far beyond ethnicity. From the above, we can understand that a Naga tribe is not a closed ethnic group which can be identified on the basis of language, culture and political boundaries. Hokishe Sema held that the Naga tribes were distinctly different from one another in terms of language, cultural and social set-up, as well as physique and appearance (Sema, 1981, pp. 1-2). However, if this were true the question of tribal integration and disintegration which leads to the emergence of formally recognised tribes would not have arisen. But this is because the idea of a tribe has developed among the people and the mobilisation of people for a centripetal drive towards the formation of a tribe is determined by socio-economic and political reasons, rather than ethnicity (Pusa, 1996, p. 140).

The Zeliangrong could not acquire the status of Scheduled Tribe despite efforts by various leaders of the Zeliangrong community mainly because the three cognate tribes had been divided into different geographical territories under British rule in India. The demarcation of the boundary along the Dzuko River put many of the Zeliangrong villages south of it in Manipur and north of it in Naga Hills. This was the first step in the fragmentation of the Zeliangrong community. Most of the territories inhabited by Rongmei fell within the borders of Manipur while the territories of the Zeme and Liangmei fell in Nagaland. This was further complicated when the Scheduled Tribe and the Scheduled Caste Order 1956 issued by the Government of India gave separate recognition to Rongmei and Zeme & Liangmei (The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Orders (Amendment) Act, 1956). The Zeliangrong community at that point in time lacked strong leadership who could convince the commission to grant recognition to the Zeliangrong either as one community or as

separate tribes (Kamei, 2004, p. 16). In Nagaland, only the Zeme and Liangmei were together recognized as the Zeliang Naga tribe -one of the indigenous tribes of Nagaland while Rongmei was left out. If the concept of Zeliangrong had been recognised by the Government, the need for separate recognition of the Rongme as an indigenous tribe of Nagaland would not have arisen. The Rongmeis had been demanding recognition in the state for almost as long as the state has existed. However, their demands were not met until 2012 when the DAN government decided to recognise them as an indigenous tribe of Nagaland for which it suffered severe backlash from almost all the civil societies of Nagaland. The recognition of the Rongmei as an indigenous Naga tribe of Nagaland also led to the formation of the NTC which was formed with a view to protect the interest of the Nagas of Nagaland. The NTC spearheaded the movement to derecognise the Rongmei as an indigenous tribe of Nagaland and to prevent the Government from taking up any matters relating to the demand for recognition of Naga tribes who are recognised in Manipur, such as the Mao and Tangkhul Nagas who have also been harbouring the aspiration to get tribal recognition in Nagaland.

Why the need for Recognition as an indigenous Naga tribe of Nagaland?

One may question the necessity of seeking recognition for the status of Scheduled Tribe in Nagaland by the Rongmei when it is already recognised and included in the list of the Scheduled Tribes of India in Manipur and Assam and as a result enjoys the benefits and privileges provided under the Constitution of India. There are two main reasons for this: first, because there are government-established norms and modalities in respective states, Rongmeis of Manipur are recognized only in Manipur and Rongmeis of Assam are recognized only in Assam and after the President of India promulgated Scheduled Tribe (Nagaland) Order 1970, the indigenous Rongmeis of Nagaland could not claim the Scheduled Tribe status in states other than Nagaland. The indigenous Rongmei inhabitants said that they had suffered

for a very long time in Nagaland and because of the refusal of the Nagaland Government administration to issue Scheduled Tribe certificates or provide scholarships to the Rongmei students they are unable to get admission in good colleges or compete in Civil Service exams reserved for Scheduled Tribes. They, therefore, demanded that the competent authority of Nagaland take up the responsibility of correcting this injustice that had been done to the Rongmeis in Nagaland (Patrick & Kamei, 2014). Tribal recognition carries significant implications for identity, politics, and socio-economic status within Nagaland. It reinforces a sense of belonging and identity among recognized tribes, providing a basis for social cohesion, cultural preservation, and collective action. Exclusion from tribal recognition can lead to feelings of marginalization and identity crisis among unrecognised tribes, who may perceive themselves and are perceived as 'outsiders' in the state. Recognised tribes have better access to government resources, welfare schemes, and development projects, enhancing their socio-economic status and quality of life. Tribal recognition affects access to employment opportunities, education, and scholarships, as government policies prioritize indigenous tribes for affirmative action measures.

The Rongmeis admit that they do not occupy definite territory in Nagaland. However, they argue that they have every right to be treated at par with the rest of the Naga tribes of Nagaland because they had been residing in the state before 1963 and had contributed equally to the effort for the attainment of statehood of Nagaland. It appears that the lack of employment opportunities in the government sector along with the inability of the students to study in good educational institutions and get various scholarships provided by the central or state governments because they could not obtain the Scheduled Tribe certificate, were the primary reasons why the Rongmeis felt the need to demand the status of Indigenous Scheduled Tribe from the Government of Nagaland. The recognition would provide employment opportunities to the Rongmeis residing in Nagaland since at present almost all the posts in the state service are reserved for only the indigenous

inhabitants of Nagaland. There is very little doubt that in the earlier days, the idea of Zeliangrong as a single tribe was more or less accepted by all the cognate tribes. However, we see that with the growth of political consciousness and the realisation of the limitations of employment opportunities and land resources, the tribes under Zeliangrongstarted asserting separate identities, particularly in Nagaland. This impaired the close relationship shared by the Rongmei, Zeme and Liangmai tribes.

Nagaland organisations' opposition to the Rongmei tribe's status in Nagaland

The NTC spearheaded the movement to oppose the recognition of the Rongmei tribe in Nagaland and passed a resolution stating that Rongmei is not an indigenous tribe in Nagaland and demanded abrogation of the Cabinet decision dated 23rd July 2012 (Talukdar, 2017). The Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation (ENPO) consisting of six tribes of Nagaland i.e Konyak, Phom, Chang, Khiamniungans, Yimchungur and Sangtam also strongly opposed the recognition of the fellow Rongmei Nagas as indigenous Naga tribe of Nagaland (The Morung Express,2014). Various tribal organisations of Nagaland such as the Angami Public Organisation (APO), Chakhesang Public Organisation (CPO), and Zeliang People's Organization (ZPO) were also against the move from the very beginning. The Northern Zeme Council, (NZC) accused the government of not paying heed to the views of some NGOs who had submitted their objections on Rongmei tribe recognition, to the committee set up by the state government in 2010 (Nagaland Post, 2012). The ZPO even filed litigation against granting recognition to the Rongmei tribe as an indigenous tribe of Nagaland at the Gauhati High Court vide W.P.(C)No 4519/2012.

Almost right after the government issued the notification recognizing Rongmei as a Naga tribe of Nagaland the NTC and the ENPO sent representations against the cabinet decision (The Morung Express, 2014). The NTC and the ENPO also questioned the appointment of a committee by the government to study for

inclusion of Mao as a recognized tribe in the state of Nagaland. The various tribal organizations and the public of Nagaland held that population integration without land was unacceptable. While they aspire for "integration of all the contiguous areas of the Nagas under a single political umbrella it never means mere population integration without land integration" (Nagaland Post, 2013).

When Nagaland was declared the sixteenth state of the Indian Union, in order to identify the original inhabitants of the state, the Government of Nagaland issued several orders such as Memorandum No. APT-2/6/67/APB dated Kohima, the 25th Feb'1972, Notification Vide order No. AR-8/8/76 dated 28th April 1977 and Govt. Order No. LR/2-118/76 dated Kohima, Nov'79, classifying the indigenous inhabitants of the state. These notifications recognized those who were settled in Nagaland prior to the attainment of a state as indigenous people of Nagaland and not as recognized tribes. The recognized tribes were only those hill tribesmen who dwelled in the state from time immemorial with ancestral immovable property which was clearly defined in the Government Notification (The Morung Express, 2016). The NTC expressed that every inch of Nagaland belongs to the Nagas of Nagaland who are the aboriginals- the true sons of the soil; therefore, the question of granting recognition to any "floating population" did not arise. The main concern of the NTC was expressed in the following words, "the population here in Nagaland will grow, but the 16,000 square km of the State won't grow" (The Morung Express, 2014).

The NTC feared that the Rongmei tribe's recognition would open a floodgate and the Nagas of Nagaland would be overwhelmed and stampeded which had happened in the recruitment drive of Graduate Teachers in 2012 in Peren District of Nagaland as a consequence of recognition accorded to Rongmei tribe. The NTC argued that the Rongmei tribe recognition would create precedence and henceforth when any Naga tribe from outside Nagaland State applied for the same, they would have to be treated at par with the Rongmei lest it would amount to discrimination (The Assam Tribune, 2014). The fear of the NTC seemed to have

come true when the State Government appointed a committee to consider granting recognition to the Mao tribe and the Home Commissioner of Nagaland in his press communique informed that the Poumais and Tangkhuls of Manipur had also submitted a representation for including them in the recognized tribes of Nagaland (The Morung Express, 2014). The NTC believed that recognizing Naga tribes from the outside was a suicidal approach. The Nagaland government policymakers were warned not to make the decision to accommodate other tribes from outside the State blatantly as it could have far-reaching consequences for the people of Nagaland. The NTC foreshadowed the possibility of an uprising by the citizens of Nagaland if the government made decisions against the interest of the public.

The recognition of a tribe in the state of Nagaland is a very sensitive issue and the civil societies opined that such issues should be discussed on the floor of the assembly for consensus and the cabinet has no authority to take suo motu decision. The tribal organisations argued that the decision of a handful of Ministers could not be made a policy of the government and demanded the Cabinet review its decision to recognize the Rongmei tribe in Nagaland. The NTC even accused the Cabinet of taking a dictatorial approach in recognizing Rongmei as a tribe in Nagaland because despite the objections raised by the civil societies time and again through various representations the contentions of the civil societies were blatantly overlooked and ignored.

The NTC contended that recognition of Rongmei or any other tribe from outside Nagaland as the recognized tribe of Nagaland had been stalled by successive governments due to ground realities as well as safeguarding the interests of the tribes of Nagaland. The government was accused of hastily giving recognition to the Rongmie as a tribe in Nagaland due to 'political compulsions' (Yepthomi, 2017). They further argued that unless the "illegal recognition" of Rongmei as a tribe in Nagaland was withdrawn it would open the floodgates to all the tribes of Manipur and the tribes of other states to seek recognition as a tribe in Nagaland. Nagaland being a small state is already saturated in the

field of employment and therefore, aspirations of tribes from other states when accommodated in the state of Nagaland will severely affect the avenues for indigenous tribes of Nagaland (Nagaland Post, 2013). It was on these grounds that the civil societies demanded the State Government to revoke the notification that had accorded recognition to the Rongmei tribe as well as the one that constituted a committee to study and recommend the applications for recognition of tribes in Nagaland.

The principal argument against the recognition of other Naga tribes from outside Nagaland as indigenous Tribes was, why the Nagas of Manipur should be allowed to enjoy dual benefits from the Governments of Nagaland and Manipur. The contention of the Government of Nagaland was that the benefits would be entitled only to the original settlers of Nagaland and not to the Maos or Rongmeis of Manipur. However, it was argued that gradually everybody would become indigenous settlers as Indigenous Certificates could be bought at about a hundred rupees given the fact that even illegal immigrants acquire proper documents by shedding a few hundred. Some analysts believed that the move was a part of NPF's strategy to expand its presence in the Naga-dominated areas of Manipur (Naga Tribe Recognition in Nagaland, 2017). Others held the view that the reason why Nagas are living in different states is because of the failure of the Government of India (GOI) to fulfil its commitment made to the Naga people in 1947 and that if the Government of India were to grant the demand of the Nagas and all the Naga inhabited areas were to be integrated the question of recognition of tribes would not even arise (Eastern Mirror, 2016).

De-recognition of the Rongmei as a Scheduled Tribe of Nagaland

The Naga society in Nagaland is divided on tribal lines and as a result, the government recognizes tribes as political units. However, it should be noted that it was not the state government which was responsible for the formation of the various tribal organisations. It only came to acknowledge and adapt itself to

an existing tribal system which was already crystallised in the form of concrete organisations. It is a fact that there were already deep tribe-wise divisions in religious, political and student organisations, prior to statehood. This is why, when the state came into existence, it became more or less imperative for the state to organise itself on tribal lines. Tribal organizations in Nagaland are effective as pressure groups because they have political weightage. While they may not be directly involved in the functioning of the government they have some control over the legislators who remain loyal to the interest of their tribes. The legislators more often than not, would rather be on the side of their tribes than the government as was the case in 2017 when almost all the tribal bodies of Nagaland condemned the decision of the government to hold the ULB elections with 33% reservation for women and asked their legislators to withdraw their support from Chief Minister T. R. Zeliang and demanded that he resign from his post. The legislators sided with the tribal bodies and as a result, T. R. Zeliang resigned as Chief Minister on 22nd February 2017 (Zarir Hussain, 2017). This is why the Government cannot ignore civil societies when they take up issues of public interest.

Consequently, on 25th April 2017, a memorandum was issued, that withdrew the recognition granted to the Rongmei tribe as one of the indigenous Naga tribes of Nagaland. However, the memorandum stated that the 1313 indigenous Rongmei people who had been residents of Nagaland prior to 1st December 1963 along with their legitimate descendants would continue to enjoy the status, privileges and entitlement of indigenous Naga inhabitants of Nagaland (Government of Nagaland, Office Memorandum, No.CAB=2/2013,2017). This decision continues to keep the Rongmei population who are permanent residents of the state in a disadvantaged position as they remain unrecognised and unable to enjoy the privileges and entitlements of a Scheduled Tribe.

Conclusion

The derecognition of the Rongmei tribe as an indigenous tribe in Nagaland sparked significant concerns regarding Naga unity and its implications for the broader integration of Naga-inhabited territories. It also exacerbated existing divisions between Nagas residing within Nagaland and those outside its borders, particularly in Manipur. The controversy surrounding the Rongmei issue has not only diminished the relevance of the Zeliangrong concept but also undermined the authority of the Naga Hoho as the overarching body representing Naga tribes. The Naga tribes of Nagaland have all withdrawn their membership from the Naga Hoho and are represented instead by the NTC. This erosion of the Naga Hoho's authority poses a tangible threat to the cohesive Naga identity. Identity conflicts and recognition disputes such as this also pose significant challenges to Naga unity and aspirations for territorial integration as internal divisions weaken collective bargaining power and solidarity in negotiations with the Central authority. To preserve and protect Naga unity inclusive dialogue and equitable recognition processes are essential. These mechanisms should prioritize reconciliation, cooperation, and the collective well-being of the Naga people. Only through such efforts can a unified Naga identity be preserved, territorial aspirations realized, and peace and development pursued across Naga-inhabited areas.

State governments often classify and recognize certain tribal communities based on historical, demographic, or administrative criteria, designating them as Scheduled Tribes or indigenous groups. This classification determines access to affirmative action programmes, reservations in educational institutions and government jobs, and other socio-economic benefits, leading to competition and contention among tribal communities for official recognition and status. However, the criteria for classification may be arbitrary or exclusionary, leading to the marginalization or exclusion of certain tribes, as seen in the case of unrecognized or non Scheduled Tribes in Nagaland. The article also highlights the significant influence wielded by Nagaland's civil societies.

Their intervention led to the withdrawal of the Rongmei tribe's recognition which appears to have established a precedent, with the government refraining from entertaining subsequent recognition claims by other tribes.

The paper suggests that the pursuit of Scheduled Tribe status by the Rongmei is primarily driven by the potential for improved socio-economic mobility. Inclusion in the Scheduled Tribe category would grant access to affirmative action policies in areas like employment and education, representing a significant resource for the community. Likewise, the resistance to their recognition is also rooted in anxieties surrounding resource scarcity. The tribes of Nagaland perceive the expansion of Scheduled Tribe categorization as a threat to their access to limited opportunities, thus engendering intergroup competition. We, therefore, see that political and socio-economic considerations play a significant role in shaping both the motivations for the shifts and conflicts in and among tribal identities. In addition, the plight of Rongmei individuals who lack documented pre-1963 residency or ancestral electoral roll inclusion presents a complex challenge. These individuals, effectively rendered non-indigenous due to technicalities, may have resided in Nagaland for generations yet face exclusion from educational and employment opportunities reserved for Scheduled Tribes. Finding a solution requires a delicate balance. It must address the genuine hardships of these Rongmei residents while maintaining the stability and social cohesion of Nagaland's tribal communities.

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE DEMANDS OF THE PRO-TALK FACTION OF THE UNITED LIBERATION FRONT OF ASOM (ULFA-PTF)

Gitanjali Baruah

Abstract

ULFA-PTF is that branch of ULFA which have tried many times to initiate peace talks with the Government of India (GoI) and the state government. This paper will try to discuss the starting periods of ULFA and their demands. Again, the paper will emphasize the party's view on the current role played by the present Chief Minister of Assam, Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, in the peace talks. The paper will focus on the scenario after signing the treaty with the government. Furthermore, the paper will try to discuss ULFA's stand in the post-peace treaty in establishing peace. Significantly, the paper will recommend some suggestions regarding their demands in the present context.

Keywords: ULFA (PTF), ULFA, ULFA (I), Peace Talk, Post-Peace Talk Treaty.

Introduction

United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) is the outbreak of Assamese nationalism which is triggered by deep frustration and deprivation among the people of Assam's psyche. On 7th April 1979, some leaders who were not satisfied with the Assam movement gathered at 'Ranghar' for an informal meeting on the question of identity and the future of the people of Assam. In this informal gathering, the leaders were highly influenced by the question of illegal migration, stepmotherly treatment by the centre, reckless use of natural resources, and loss of opportunity for Assamese people in their land. Some of them were urged to struggle for independent Assam. They discussed such various issues for the entire night on the premises of historic Ranghar. In the discussion, they decided the sunrise would be a good sign for the birth of the organization and badge of the new effort. Rajib

Rajkonwar (Aurobinda Rajknowar) was declared as the chairman of the organization who would make the constitution of the organization. 'Unity, revolution, and liberation' is the main motto of ULFA (Mahanta, 2013, p. 56-57). The symbol of the rising Sun in a crescent shape with seven rays implies the seven states of the Northeast and ULFA's appeal towards establishing support and solidarity of all seven states of North-East India (Singh, 2018, p. 53-54).

United Liberation Front of Asom – Pro-talk faction (ULFA-PTF) is that branch of ULFA that wanted to negotiate and come for a discussion with the government. This group of ULFA is led by Arabinda Rajkhowa. After the formation of the People's Consultative Group (PCG), again, this group led by him, from 2008 onwards, tried to initiate peace talks and negotiations with the government. This group expelled one of their prominent leaders, Parush Baruah. As a result, in the year 2012, there was a sharp division within ULFA, one was ULFA (I) led by Paresh Baruah and the other was ULFA-PTF led by Arabinda Rajkhowa. Before the signing of the treaty, they were very disappointed and depressed because of delaying the peace talks. On 29th December 2023, they signed the trilateral peace treaty with the central and state governments. It is believed that the signed ULFA peace accord is paving the way for sustainable peace and development in Assam. Hence, 29th December 2023 is regarded as a historic day for Assam. However, the sovereignty issue of ULFA (I) remained unsolved till today. Lots of youths are still joining the ULFA (I). ULFA-PTF is the group that surrendered and relied on discussion and negotiation with the government.

This paper will highlight the demands of ULFA-PTF and their initiatives in peace talks. They are demanding various aspects for safeguarding the indigenous people of Assam but, they have left the issue of sovereignty. It is very controversial about their present stand and faction among the people. Here, it is discussed about the critical points of their tri-lateral treaty with the government. Thus, the objective of the paper is to discuss the demands of ULFA-PTF before the signing of the peace accord highlighting the present

status of ULFA-PTF.

Review of Literature

Biju Kumar Deka, in his book Guerrilla, stated the bihu celebration of the revolutionary organization, and their relation with KLO, NSCN. There is a close discussion with Anup Chetia and Paresh Baruah where the conditions of cadres of ULFA and NDFB, etc. are discussed. He also talked about the formation of ULFA(I). The ideological contradiction between ULFA(I) and ULFA-PTF, their relation with the other revolutionary groups, their meetings for restructuring of the organizations, etc. are discussed in the book (Deka, 2020).

Parag Kumar Das, in his book 'Rastradruhir Dinlipi', stated that, the causes responsible for the declined attention of people towards ULFA. The role of the government during that time is also criticized by the author. The letter written by ULFA to the secretary of the United Nations is also discussed. The book highlighted the diplomatic policies of the Saikia government, ULFA's activities during the Mahanta government etc. The social reformative activities of ULFA are discussed and the leading role of Arabinda Rajkhowa and ULFA's representative role in the UN is also discussed in the book (Das, 2014).

Dhirumoni Gogoi, in his book 'Nixidho Judha: The Hidden Chapters', stated the significant part of ULFA in modern Assamese history. He discussed the incidence of martyrs. The conflicts between the cadres with the government of Assam and the police etc are discussed here. The condition of the cadres' family after the death of the cadres is also discussed. The disgusting operations and killings of Assam police etc are focussed in the book. The eradication of ULFA has been serially identified in the book (Gogoi, 2021).

Dhirumoni Gogoi, in his book 'Lady Guerrilla Nixidho Judhar Ojana Gatha', stated about a lot of incidences of women who were directly and indirectly related to ULFA. Rani Doley, Niharika, Ritumoni Gogoi, Moni Hazarika, Debolata Baruah, etc who actively participated in the group, etc were discussed (Gogoi,

2023).

Munmi Pathak in her article 'Warrior Mothers: Narratives of Women from the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA)', mentioned that women's class became participants and perpetrators of war. The experiences of mothers are discussed who are concerned with the group's war to establish sovereignty and liberate Assam (Pathak, 2021).

Brigadier Sushil Kumar Sharma, in his article, 'Prospects of peace talk with United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) genesis, issues and recommendations', stated, the factors leading to insurgency and the creation of ULFA (Sharma, 2017).

Akhil Ranjan Dutta in his article, 'Civil Society's Engagement with ULFA in Assam: A Historical Exploration', stated, that the armed struggle launched by ULFA for Swadhin Asom (Independent Assam) and its critique in civil society is an interesting case. Civil society has been the domain of the manifestation of grievances against the state (Dutta, 2014).

Samir Kumar Das, in his article, 'Insurgency and disintegration of civil society', stated the decline of ULFA. ULFA faced unique political critique from civil society. There is a discussion about the actions of the government and the response to violent actions during that time. The military encounters during the '90s, etc are discussed. The psychology of the Army is criticized in the article (Das, 2011).

Rakhee Kalita Moral, in her article 'Scripting the Freedom Song: 'ULFA' and the Moment of Dissent in Assam', discussed the student protest and armed struggle started by ULFA to demand sovereignty in Assam. The revolutionary group struggle for freedom. They are also facing responses from civil society, writers and media (Moral, 2020).

Hiren Gohain, in his article, 'Chronicles of Violence and Terror', stated the doubts regarding ULFA among the minds of Assamese people. The article speaks about the conditions that initiated the emergence of ULFA. The peace attempts ULFA's immaturity and their worship of violence, etc are focused on (Gohain, 2007).

Nani Gopal Mahanta, in his book 'Confronting the State: ULFA's Quest for Sovereignty' stated the trajectory of ULFA during the Assam movement to the peace process. The role of civil society and the Indian state in the peace process is discussed. A sustainable peace process is also recommended (Mahanta, 2013).

Methodology of the Study

'Research methodology is a way to systematically solve the research problem. It may be understood as a science of studying how research is done scientifically. In it, we study the various steps that are generally adopted by a researcher in studying his research problem along with the logic behind them' (Kothari, 1985, p. 1). The study is based on primary and secondary sources. The primary sources are collected from archival, personal interviews, questionnaires, etc. The secondary sources include books, journal articles, newspapers, Governmental reports, debates, relevant reports, and other resources available on the internet. The methodology used for collecting data for this paper is content analysis and personal interviews.

Personal interview is taken as the method of primary data collection. The interviewer selected the interviewee based on their area of study and work. Two senior journalists and authors were selected because both of them have met ULFA's main leaders and cadres. It can be justified that, content analysis is another method of secondary data collection. Numerous books and articles were found that provided major secondary sources concerning the objective of the study. Again the personal interview method is important as the concerned problems can be discussed from a practical point of view. The interviewees have closely observed various phases of ULFA.

The primary data is collected through the interview method using open-ended questions. The interviewer approached interviewees in their offices and their responses were written down. The interviewer translated their responses from Assamese to English. Again, the secondary sources include books, articles, and newspapers. The articles are collected from Dibrugarh

University Central Library, books and newspapers.

ULFA's (Pro-talk group) views: protection of indigenous people and development of Assam

ULFA (Pro-talk Group) general secretary Anup Chetia argued that the central government's decision to allow CM to mediate with Paresh Baruah to bring the militant outfit to the negotiation table is a welcome development. The success of the peace process will heavily depend on the moves of the GoI. Chetia who is known to be close to Baruah said, Paresh Baruah is not rigid on the issue of talks with the government. Chetia argued that he had talked with Baruah over the phone when Baruah told him about the CM's initiative for the peace process. Chetia was very positive that from the day Dr. Sharma assumed office as CM, he has been trying to bring Paresh Baruah for talks and he never spoke any negative word in this regard. ULFA (I) reciprocated positively and declared a unilateral ceasefire for three months that was later extended by another three months. The actions of both sides have created the atmosphere for talks. Chetia said it was the right time for Baruah to come for peace talks. GoI should also show its positive initiative so that peace can be established. ULFA (Pro-talk group) has no objection to merging with ULFA (I) if Paresh Baruah wants to talk separately and ensure the protection of the rights of indigenous people and the development of Assam. But Chetia is positive regarding the instalment of signing agreements with both factions like the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) accord where all four factions of NDFB were signatories (Dutta, 2021, Assam Tribune, p. 1-2).

A top governmental official told to Assam Tribune that, the central government will sign a peace accord for absolute resolution of insurgency in Assam with the pro-talk faction if ULFA (I) chief Paresh Barua does not come forward for talks. The peace agreement with the pro-talk faction is in the final stage and the center is working out. The talk initiatives between ULFA (I) and the government have again been halted over the demand for sovereignty which was raised by Paresh Baruah. CM Sharma, on

many occasions, has said that he is working to find a middle path for the problem. In 2011, in a discussion with the government, the leaders of the pro-talk group submitted a 12-point charter of demands before the government on which the center has worked amicably for such demands. They sought the protection of land rights for the indigenous people and granting of schedule tribe status to six communities Moran, Motok, Chutia, Koch, Rajbongshi, Ahom, and Tea tribes. Among other points, the outfit has also asked for details of the whereabouts of 50 leaders and members of the organization who went missing from Bhutan during the flush-out operation carried out by the Royal Bhutan Army in 2005. The Central Government has constituted a high-powered committee to look into their demands (Dutta, 2021, Assam Tribune, p. 1-2).

The 12-point charter of demand of ULFA-PTF includes:

1. A discussion on 'the grounds for ULFA-PTF's struggle and their genuineness.
2. Status report on missing ULFA leaders and cadres.
3. Constitutional and political arrangements and reforms, protection of the identity and material resources of the local indigenous population of Assam.
4. Financial and economic arrangements.
5. Settlement of all royalties on mine/minerals including oil on a retrospective compensatory basis and rights of independent use for sustainable economic development in the future.
6. Illegal migration-its effect/impact and required remedies including sealing of international borders, river patrolling, and development of a native force to man the borders.
7. Ethnic issues- problems and constitutional restructuring including settlement of border disputes and removal of encroachment.
8. Education and health reforms as required to preserve the identity of the people of Assam and benefit, agricultural and rural development.
9. Land and natural resources rights of natives to the land, flood control and management, industrial growth, development

of infrastructure, removal of transport bottleneck, development of entrepreneurial skill and efficiency in labour, availability of credit, infusion of capital leading to industrial take off.

10. Right to engage in specific relationships with foreign countries for the promotion of mutual trade and commerce.
11. Cultural relationship, restoration, protection, preservation, and spread of the indigenous culture of Assam in all its variety.
12. Amnesty, reintegration, and rehabilitation of ULFA members and affected people (Times of India Report, 2011).

Tri-Lateral Treaty of Pro-Talks Group

On 29th of December, 2023, the pro-talk faction of ULFA signed a Peace Accord with the central government and state government and their group will be disintegrated within 10 to 15 days from 29th Dec 2023. Here, 16 members of the ULFA pro-talk faction led by Rajkhowa went to New Delhi to discuss with Shah with the condition that they surrender their weapons and join the democratic process in the mainstream. Amit Shah expressed, "Assam has suffered for a long due to the violence of ULFA and 10,000 people lost their lives in this violence since 1979." According to the center, every clause of the treaty will be implemented. CM Sharma stated that Paresh Baruah is also coming to join in the process and they are connected with him. Amit Shah stated violence has been minimized in Assam by 87%, deaths by 90%, and kidnappings by 84%. More than 9,000 cadres have been surrendered and the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) has been lifted from 85% area of Assam. He stated, that 29th December is a big day for Assam and is the beginning of a new era of peace.

ULFA leader Sashadhar Choudhury was optimistic that, the treaty would bring durable peace and stability to Assam. It is the result of 12 years of unconditional negotiations between the ULFA faction led by Rajkhowa and the government. The group submitted their demands covering issues like constitutional and

political arrangement, protection of the identity and material resources of the local indigenous population of Assam, financial and economic arrangements, a status report on missing ULFA leaders and cadres, amnesty, and reintegration and rehabilitation of ULFA members and affected people, among others. It is also added that, the right to engage in specific relationships with foreign countries for the promotion of mutual trade, commerce, and cultural relationships, and restoration, protection, preservation, and spread of the indigenous culture of Assam (Dutta, 2023, Assam Tribune, p. 1-2). Sashadhar Choudhury stated, "We have been demanding reservation in the state assembly. The recently notified delimitation process has ensured the guarantee. Now, of the total 126 seats, we will have at least 94 seats reserved in the Assembly for the local people." He again stated, "Some of these parameters are a rate of population growth, density of population, principles of historicity of areas and communities, geographical continuity, physical features, facilities of communication and public convenience." He said, there were political gains when they were arrested. The accord is not able to bring the demand for granting Scheduled Caste (ST) status to six communities (Dutta, 2023, Assam Tribune, p. 1-3).

In an interview, Monurom Gogoi stated that there are no economic, or character formation factors in the Assam movement and ULFA's revolutionary movement. The degradation of our society is evident in the way people's votes are influenced by money. The post-Cold War and post-COVID-19 situation depends on the economic base. The Delhi-centric economy of Assam was started after independence and the British tax system. The economic and natural resources should be innovated and the politics can be controlled. In any work, Assam is dependent on Delhi, especially in flood and budget making. The villages should get money and there should be changes. A working culture movement is necessary (Gogoi, 2022, Personal interview). In another interview, Biju Deka stated, that people's attitudes change with the change in time and generation. People think the major topics like traditional concepts, rights, and preservation of heritage, etc. without these

there will be no significance for the nation. ULFA is based on their principles and ideology but they should change themselves with the change of time and situation. Otherwise, they would not see any success. The situation has been changed with the Chief ministership of Dr. Sharma. The change of mindset can lead to the path of solution. Patience is important for both the party (Deka, 2021, Personal Interview).

Ex-ULFA's opinion regarding conflict

It was published in the newspaper Assam Tribune on 12th January 2022, (Dibrugarh) that, the former ULFA cadres have urged the state government to facilitate the formal surrender of all rebels who are behind bars in Assam and neighbouring states. All the cases against them should be withdrawn by the state. The government should provide a rehabilitation policy for them. An Ex-ULFA group under the nomenclature of 'Ex-ULFA Coordination Committee, Assam' submitted a memorandum to the CM through SP. Through the memorandum, they demanded an early solution to the ULFA-GoI conflict running for four decades. The committee also seeks intervention from the state government and to create a conducive environment to talk with ULFA leadership. Rohendra Moran Guli Asom who is the chief coordinator of the committee, argued, that the sincerity and honesty of the center and state will lead to a permanent solution to the conflict. He stated, 'If the government does not take the talk forward, the ULFA problem will always exist. To end the conflict, governments both at the center and Assam must pave the way for peace parleys in a healthy and conducive environment at the earliest.'

The state government ought to facilitate the formal surrender of all ULFA cadres put behind bars in the state and neighbouring states by withdrawing the pending cases against them. Sunit Chutia alias Taranga Asom who is also the joint coordinator of the committee stated that there is a pathetic condition of several Ex-ULFA cadres who surrendered a long time ago to get a normal life. Therefore, there is a strong chance to

get involved in those who have surrendered but are economically weak in the antisocial activities to survive their families. The government should take into account all these factors regarding the problems of ex-ULFA and government should adopt sufficient rehabilitation policies for them through various schemes of state government. He also stated that the government should allot unutilized land to them for agricultural purposes (Dutta, 2022, Assam Tribune, p. 1-2).

There is a sharp division between ULFA-PTF and ULFA (I), where the latter is demanding the sovereignty of Assam. The former had demanded various issues by giving importance to safeguarding the identity of the indigenous people of Assam. The effort to initiate peace talks has been made multiple times, but none of these attempts have been successful. They had waited for a long time and had finally signed the treaty with the government. However, it became clear that not all of their demands were included. It is hoped that the government will execute all such signed treaties as soon as possible. Such a stand of the government will be able to eliminate the tendency among the people in the society to move towards revolutionary and terrorist activities.

Conclusion

To establish durable peace, the government should play a vital role. The demands of ULFA-PTF are a minor part of their agenda. Their main agenda was to establish a sovereign Assam. This issue is compromised by them in signing the treaty. The government should execute all the points of the treaty as soon as possible. The newly developed ULFA Accord implementation body should work in a faster and more reasonable way. Based on the above discussion, it becomes clear that ULFA-PTF has compromised with the question of sovereignty. They achieved only 70% of their demands. The speedy execution of the treaty with the government is urgent to eliminate extremist problems from society.

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ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONING OF SELF-HELP GROUP: A STUDY CONDUCTED IN BOR-LENGRI BLOCK-I AND BLOCK-II UNDER THE BOKAJAN SUB-DIVISION OF KARBI ANGLONG, ASSAM.

N Mhonbeni Cecilia Humtsoe

Abstract

In the context of devising programmes for uplifting the 'Unreached Poor', microfinance is identified and accepted as one of the new and creative development models for alleviating poverty through social and economic empowerment of the poor with special emphasis on empowering women. Microfinance is emerging as a powerful tool for poverty reduction in the new economy. In India, the microfinance position is dominated by Self-Help Group (SHGs)-Bank Linkage Programme as a cost-effective mechanism for offering financial assistance to the 'Impoverished'.

Self-Help Groups are informal associations of people who come together to find ways to improve their living conditions. These groups are generally self-governed and peer-controlled, consisting of people with similar socio-economic backgrounds and a shared desire to work collectively towards a common purpose. They are a powerful agent for positive change in communities. Self-Help Group serves as a financial intermediary and focuses on mutual support and empowerment. They encourage savings, credit and income-generating activities. Members pool their resources, contribute to a common fund, and provide loans to each other. It also promotes skill development, livelihood enhancement and social awareness. The fast growth and progress in SHG are now turning into an empowerment movement among women in the country. This paper tries to explore the structure and functioning of Self-Help Group and how efficacious Self-Help Group-based microfinance has been in empowering rural women and whether it sways their role and status in society.

Keywords: Microfinance, Self Help Group, Collectively, Alleviation, Promotes.

Introduction

Self-Help Group refers to a homogenous, self-governed, peer-controlled, informal and voluntary group of people with the same socio-economic background and having a desire to collectively perform common purposes. Self-Help Groups are community-based organizations usually consisting of 15 to 20 members, which encourage women to come together and pool their resources to start businesses. The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) Task Force on Supportive Policy and Regulatory Framework for Microfinance 1999, defines microfinance as the provision of thrift, credit and other financial services and products of very small amounts to the poor in rural, semi-urban or urban areas for enabling them to raise their income levels and improve living standards. No specific limit for small amounts of financial services is envisaged (NABARD, 1999, p. 46). Microfinance is often considered one of the most effective and flexible strategies in the fight against global poverty. The idea of microfinance has emerged from the project of income-generating activities and in response to the failure of institutional measures of microcredit.   Microfinance programmes are important institutional devices for providing small credit to the rural poor in order to alleviate poverty (RBI, 2012, p. 46).

Microfinance - a major development success story of the 1990s - means offering small loans at reasonable rates to poor people, usually women who would not qualify for conventional loans, to help them start or improve small-scale businesses. Microfinance programmes are currently being promoted as a key strategy for women's empowerment. Many women's organizations have included credit and savings, both as a way of increasing women's income to bring women together to address wider gender issues. The empowerment of women through Self-Help Group-based microfinance would give benefits not only to the individual woman but also to the family and community as a whole through collective action for development.

An overview of Bokajan sub-division:

Bokajan is a sub-division under the Diphu District belonging to Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Assam. Bokajan is best known for its Cement factory (Cement Corporation of India, Bokajan). It is 15km away from Dimapur and partially borders Nagaland. Bokajan is located at an average elevation of 138 meters (452 feet).

As of the 2011 India Census, Bokajan has a population of 19,936. Males constitute 53% of the population and females constitute 47%. It has an average literacy rate of 86.77%, which is higher than the national average of 74.04%; with a male literacy rate of 80% and female literacy of 68%. Bengali is the most spoken language at 6,725 speakers, followed by Assamese at 4,541 and Hindi at 4,461, Karbi is spoken by 1,062 people and Nepali by 1,413.

The town is home to many indigenous communities and other communities from the rest of the country. Karbis, Assamese, Bengalis, Nepalese, Muslims and Adivasis are the major communities of the district. There are also a sizable number of Naga communities residing in the areas bordering Dimapur town. The town exhibits peaceful and harmonious coexistence among them.

Objectives of the study

Taking cognizance of the significant impact of Self-Help Group-based microfinance on uplifting the rural economy in general and empowering rural poor women in particular, the present study has been framed with the following objectives:

1. To identify the underlying motives or intentions of the members for joining Self-Help Group
2. To study the various income-generating activities initiated by the groups
3. To find out income-generating assets given to the groups through Bank Credit and Government Subsidy and other financial institutions
4. To examine the existing banking policies, systems and

procedures, deposit and loan products available

Data Collection

The present study was conducted in Bor-Lengri Block-I and Bor-Lengri Block-II which falls under the Bokajan sub-division of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Assam. The study is based both on primary and secondary data. There are 23 Self-Help Groups functioning in these two Blocks. Out of these, 19 SHGs have officially registered in the Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission Office, Bokajan, while the rest 4 are yet to receive registration numbers. A total of eight (8) SHGs were picked for the study purpose, wherein a well-structured interview schedule was used for collecting the relevant primary data and such exercise has been supplemented by personally interviewing the Presidents, Secretaries and other members. Secondary data have been gathered from relevant books and articles.

The surveyed Self-Help Groups are
1. Good Luck Self-Help Group
2. Sangam Women's Self-Help Group
3. Ealesa Women's Self-Help Group
4. Paithong Bi Women's Self-Help Group
5. Fellowship Self-help Group
6. Ematha Self-Help Group
7. Nursen Self-Help Group
8. Dorka Self-Help Group

Organizational Structure and Governance Practices of the Surveyed SHGs

Formation Stage and Size

Group formation is the first stage of Self-Help Group. The average member size of the surveyed SHGs is 10. It was learnt that the number of Self Help Groups in the area has increased significantly due to the effectiveness of the functioning of SHG in enhancing the economic status of the women over time. These Self-Help Groups are registered at Assam State Rural Livelihood

Mission located at Bokajan. As per the directive of Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission, the newly intending Self-Help Group should have 12 members compulsorily. It is mandatory for every Self-Help Group to register in the Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission in order to officially become a functional Self-Help Group. Upon registration in the Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission, Self-Help Group will get a registration code confirming their registration. These groups select Presidents, Secretaries, Treasurers and Bookkeepers for certain years. There is flexibility regarding the tenure of Office Bearers.

The regular savings contribution to the corpus fund is the eligibility criteria set by SHG to join the group. Every month each group member contributes Rs 100 as membership fees which are submitted on the day the meeting is called i.e. 15th of every month. Mutual trust is the spirit of the organization. Each group has its own set of rules and regulations. There is transparency and accountability in each group's transactions.

Source of motivation for joining SHG and its sustainability

Motivation is one of the major influencing factors for participation in Self-Help Group. Factors like motivation from husbands, family, friends and relatives are the influencing factors on women to a large extent to form and successfully operate SHGs. As per the study, married women have been found to be greatly influenced by their husbands to start their own Self-Help Group, while some of them have joined as a result of direct inspiration from other members of the SHGs who happen to be either family members or neighbours. The feeling of "Solidarity" among group members keeps Self-Help Group growing. Access to timely and adequate credit, transparency with simple procedures, elimination of middlemen and group empowerment have been the other motivating factors for group formation. "Transparency" in the operations and functioning of groups equal participation of all members and democracy in group functioning results in the sustainability of the groups.

Demographic Structure of the Surveyed SHGs

It was learnt from the study that the members belong to the age group from 18 to 60 years of age. It was also observed that the younger generations are more inclined of involved in SHG for their mutual interest and economic benefits. The changes in the societal mindset and educational level and the growing awareness are also the reasons that women are increasingly becoming ready to enrol in SHG and free to interact with government officials for the attainment of economic self-sustenance and holistic development. It was learnt that the majority of the members are married, while few of them are unmarried and widows.

Education Level of the Members

The education levels of the members are appreciable. It was observed that few of them have reached the school level, while few of them have attained formal education up to secondary and college level. The majority of the members can at least read and write. It was also observed that all the members are willing to provide and are providing the opportunity of basic as well as higher education to their children irrespective of gender. The majority of the members stated that they have sent their children for higher studies like graduation and post-graduation degrees in colleges and universities.

Meeting Procedure

Attendance in meetings is a major determining practice for the effective and smooth functioning of the Self-Help Group. Organizing a regular meeting provides an opportunity for SHG members to interact with each other. Conducting regular meetings also provides a forum for identifying, discussing and taking up community action. It provides scope for regular financial transactions, such as saving, lending loans and interest repayment. Conducting meetings is also very essential for strengthening the group members and inculcating discipline.

The start-up of every month's meeting is reviewing the previous meeting agendas. The group members ensure that the

previous meeting minutes are reviewed before deliberating on the upcoming activities. As per the directive of the Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission, meetings are held once a month and people make their own decisions, maintain a register, keep a proper record of their activities, have access to its funds and ensure repayment of loans on time through inter-lending funds that are given to them. Meeting minutes are recorded by the Secretary. It is learnt that 95 per cent of the members show a high level of attendance, i.e. 90 per cent out of 100 per cent. In the meetings, the group members discuss all issues on the agenda. The agendas and decisions of the meetings are determined by all the members through consensus and resolution. All the members sign in the Minute Book in the meeting itself.

Record Keeping

Proper record keeping and accounting are important components of SHG in order to promote accountability within the group and to the external world. Proper record keeping is also an essential practice for the effective functioning of Self-Help Group in order to avert any replication of the functions already initiated, to maintain a record of SHG linkage with other institutions like banks, maintain trust among the members, provide information about the attendance of the members in the meetings, know the status of the remittance of savings and repayment of loans and assess the financial conditions of SHG. It also ensures transparency in the functioning of the Self-Help Group.

These groups maintain different registers keep a proper record of their activities have access to their funds and ensure repayment of loans on time through inter-lending funds that are given to them. The attendance of the members, savings, and credit disbursed, repayments and minutes of the meeting are recorded by the bookkeeper in a ledger. The role of the bookkeeper is to maintain the accounts and activities that happen in each meeting and to keep an accurate record of all transactions and decisions taken in the group.

The following are the books maintained by SHGs:

1. Meeting Minute book issued by Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission Society (ASRLMS)
2. Attendance Register issued by Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission Society (ASRLMS)
3. Loan Ledger issued by Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission Society (ASRLMS)
4. Cash Book issued by Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission Society (ASRLMS)
5. Saving Ledger issued by Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission Society (ASRLMS)
6. Loan Ledger of Self-Help Group issued by NABARD
7. General Ledger of Self-Help Group issued by NABARD which contains the activity-wise cumulative balances

Leadership

Leadership of Self-Help Group is a determining factor in the sustainability of Self-Help Group. As per the information provided by the members, comparatively, the more educated women amongst them who are capable of managing the records and accounts properly are selected as the Secretaries and the bookkeepers. These Secretaries and Bookkeepers can communicate well with the Officials from the banks as well as with public leaders. Usually, these leaders keep the registers and perform the functions on a voluntary and honorary basis. The Secretaries and the Book Keepers have to perform a number of organizational and financial functions.

Organizations that assist, support and monitor the functioning of Self-Help Group

Village Organization

Village Organization is a component of the National Rural Livelihood Mission. Village Organization is a federation of Self-Help Group inhabitation to bring socio-economic changes among the members of the groups and the village at large. It is a village-level intermediary organization between Self-Help Group and

Government Offices and Banking. Besides taking up social and developmental issues, it plays a conspicuous role in systematizing SHGs by providing training, monitoring, guidance and facilitation support. Village Organization, further, traces the socio-economic problems in association with Self Help Group and brings them to the Cluster Level Federation, which is then further submitted to Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission for a solution, to ensure that Self-Help Group development takes place in reality.

The General Body of the Village Organization comprises Self-Help Group members in the Village Organization operational area and the Executive Committee (EC) comprises the Presidents and Secretaries from the SHGs. There are at least two (2) representatives chosen from each Self-Help Group, and amongst them are elected the President, Secretary, Treasurer and Executive Members. The Village Organization has a common Bank Account and the income which is jointly generated by the group is saved in this account.

All the monetary, as well as material assistance from Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission, is allocated through Cluster Level Federation to Village Organization and finally reaches Self-Help Group. The Village Organization has overall responsibility over all the groups. Village Organization conducts meetings at least once or twice a month depending on the urgency and necessity.

Cluster Level Federation (CLF)

In order to further strengthen Self-Help Groups and Village Organizations, a higher level of platform is required to address bigger issues. Cluster Level Federation is a platform for sharing of experiences of SHGs and to extend mutual support to improve the overall performance of SHGs. Cluster Level Federation constantly reviews and monitors the performances of Self-Help Group and community professionals like Bookkeepers, CRPs, Bank Mitras etc. It facilitates capacity building of the SHG leaders & members. It acts as a bridge between SHG and Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission.

CLF provides continuous support and guidance for

strengthening VOs and SHGs. Cluster Level Federation facilitates ensuring the entitlements and basic amenities reach the Self-Help Group. It facilitates the Funds – through bank linkage, convergence, member institutions and other sources.

Cluster Level Federation is formed at the village level with 5-15 SHGs as members. The villages having more than fifteen SHGs will have more than one CLF. The member SHGs will nominate their members to represent themselves at the CLF. Two representatives from each SHG, one leader and one general member will be nominated by each SHG to the CLF.

Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission Society (ASRLM)

Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission is an initiative by the Government of Assam for the promotion of sustainable livelihood and enhancing the social and economic empowerment of the rural areas of Assam. It is an independent and autonomous body under the Society Registration Act XXI of 1860 and established by the Panchayat & Rural Development Department, Government of Assam on 11th Nov '2011.

Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission has been effective in providing the group members access to finance by providing grants, promoting savings, and linking them to banks like Assam Gramin Vikash Bank, and Khatkhati Branch in order to obtain loans. The Mission empowers rural women's Self-Help Groups (SHGs) with capacity building, credit linkage and market support.

Bank Credit, Government Subsidies and other financial institutions

Community Investment Fund

Community Investment Funds are grants which are provided to Self-Help Groups. It is administered under the Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission to improve the quality of life and to provide other social needs to SHGs. It is intended to encourage innovative community enterprise and also to provide small amounts as loans or grants. The Community Investment Fund is

administered through the Cluster Level Federations. These funds are extended to the SHGs through CLF. It is usually provided in the form of loans by the federations under a nominal rate of interest. The federations enjoy the right to decide the interest rate of loans. According to the regulations, Self-Help Group is eligible for CIF between Rs. 50,000 and Rs. 100,000. This fund is given to the SHG phase-wise. The Group has to repay within one year.

In order to avail of the fund, the SHG should have an internal savings fund for at least 6 months that is being circulated among the members. The Self-Help Group should have a separate Bank Account opened for the Community Investment Fund. Perfect accounting and bookkeeping should be in place, and a person should be appointed for the same.

This fund is sanctioned after screening thoroughly the functioning and performances of the Self-Help Group in terms of income generation activities, proper maintenance of records, proceeding of agendas, monthly collection, inter-lending, collection deposit, loan deposit etc which are properly maintained in register and loan demand put up by SHG and is duly screened at the Village Organization and Cluster Level Federation and then forwarded to the funding agency i.e. Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission for final approval and sanctioning of the fund. The surveyed Self-Help Group has a Joint Account in Langpi Dehangi Rural Bank, Khatkhati Branch and Lahorijan Branch. The withdrawal of money from the bank can be initiated only through the President and the Secretary. Langpi Dehangi Rural Bank is now renamed Assam Gramin Vikash Bank.

SHG Bank Linkage Loan-Assam Gramin Vikash Bank

This loan is offered to encourage Self-Help Group to take up activities for the generation of income through Bank linkage (both deposit and credit). Groups can avail bank loans up to 4 times (Rs 20,000 to 50,000 to 75,000 to 1 lakh) of their corpus or even more. Self-Help Groups functioning satisfactorily for at least 6 months are eligible for credit linkage with the bank. All women SHGs will be eligible for interest subvention on credit up to 1 lakh

at 6 to 12 per cent per annum. Loans availed by the members must be paid on or before the 15th of every month. There is an imposition of Rs. 200/- as a fine for defaulters. From this Rs. 200/-, 100 will be retained at the group, while the remaining 100/- will go to the VO and CLF. This fine will be utilized for group purposes. As per the study, so far no members from any of the groups have failed repayment.

Besides, the surveyed SHGs have also received an amount of Rs. 20,000/- as a Relief Fund from Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission.

As per the study, it is learnt that these groups are maintaining the tradition of high-rate recovery of loans as there is too much peer pressure on the indebted members for repayment of loans since fresh loans will not be issued unless the earlier loans are fully recovered.

Activities undertaken by the surveyed Self-Help Group and participation and contribution to the society.

The primary purpose for the formation of SHG is to undertake social and development activities. Thrift, credit and income-generation activities were taken up later (NABARD 1992, P. 43). SHG tries to build the functional capacity of the members through engagement in a variety of income-generation activities. As per the study, the different livelihood activities undertaken by these SHGs are pig farming, poultry farming, horticulture, floriculture, food processing, pickle making, bag making, jewellery making, handlooms, chappal making, village crafts, homemade snack foods and private businesses such as catering provision etc. They also participate in Exhibition-Cum-Sale of products on important National occasions like Republic Day, and Independence Day as well as Night Carnival organized during festive seasons. These Exhibition-Cum-Sales are organized under the aegis of Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission. The products sold at the stalls include Pickles, Local Delicacies, Sticky Rice Roti, Weaving Products, handicrafts, doll-making, artificial flowers etc. Throughout the year, these groups are engaged in one

or more income-generation activities depending on the needs and necessities of the villagers.

Social Empowerment

The study revealed that about 95 per cent of the members have awareness about various programmes such as immunization programmes, the importance of education, water supply facilities, maintenance of proper sanitation, and legal rights. Around 50 per cent of the members have adopted certain health-related practices like regular medical checkups, regular physical exercise, supplementary nutrition to children and family planning. These Self-Help Groups are also empowered to combat issues like alcoholism, immoral acts, sale of liquor, substance abuse, theft, and even domestic violence occurring in the village etc.

Observation of important National events

Self-Help Group participates in various community services in commemoration of important National events. They initiated social services like Swachh Bharat marking the October 2nd birthday of Mahatma Gandhi, wherein the members along with the residents organized a 'Cleanliness Drive' in the locality. Besides, other National occasions like Independence Day, and Republic Day are observed in a solemn manner.

'Meri Mati Mera Desh' (My Clay, My Country) is an Independence Day Campaign announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to celebrate the 77th Independence Day in a unique way. Modi announced the 'Meri Mati Mera Desh' campaign during the Amrit Mahotsav celebration. The surveyed Self-Help Group participated in the nationwide campaign, which was held from August 9 to 15, 2023 honoring and appreciating the martyred brave hearts.

This Nationwide unique initiative announced by Modi provided an opportunity for these SHG women to promote traditional art forms and encouraged the use of eco-friendly and indigenous products. The urns containing the soil which was collected by the SHGs were submitted to the VO and then to the

CLF Office in Hidipi Bazar village, under the Diphu sub-division. The next day the urn was taken to Bokajan Block Development Office, where a grand program was organized in full cultural attire.

Agencies that impart training and its effectiveness

Self-Help Group is often engaged in skill-building activities in order to enhance livelihoods. For successful implementation of the different programmes and to empower the members of the Self-Help Group in the true sense, Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission organizes special technical training programmes in different areas such as chappal making, food processing etc. The respondents unanimously agreed that such kind of training programmes is really beneficial for them to get new insights. As per the respondents, organizing more such programmes at regular intervals is very necessary to overcome the inherent problems faced by the group. Seeing the performances and growth of these groups, NABARD in collaboration with Don Bosco Tech Society, Women's Working Centre, Assisi, located at Lake View Colony Dimapur has also imparted training on 'chappal making' with an idea of giving them hope to work and earn a living.

These SHGs have also attended training on Food Processing Training for Seed Capital SHG Beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises Scheme (PM FME Scheme) which was sponsored by the Ministry of Food Processing Industries, Government of India and Assam Industrial Development Corporation Ltd. Government of Assam. The said training was held at Sukhanjan, under the Bokajan sub-division.

Findings

Self-Help Group-based microfinance brings significant changes to the members. The following are some of the findings from the study

1. Self-Help Group-based Microfinance works effectively in empowering women by boosting their courage and self-esteem and also helps in networking with those other

women in their community. It also improves their decision-making capability at the household and community level.

2. It helps them build stronger confidence to stand and fight for their rights and entitlements which gradually brings significant changes in gender dynamics and roles in the household

3. SHG helps women by equipping them with the knowledge of financial literacy. It also encourages and motivates its members to save and act as a conduit for formal banking services to reach them.

4. Self-Help Group encourages collective efforts for combating issues like alcoholism, immoral acts, sale of liquor, substance abuse, theft etc.

5. Leaders and members of successful SHGs bear the potential to act as resource persons for different community developmental initiatives.

6. Self-Help Group women actively participate in any kind of income-generating activities

7. It offers collateral-free loans to the members to meet their productive and emergent needs

Conclusion

The study was undertaken to identify the functioning of different Self-Help Groups in the Bokajan sub-division bordering Dimapur, and how these groups help in women's empowerment. Through this study, it is learnt that SHG-based Microfinance as an institutional arrangement positively contributes to the economic and social empowerment of women, which benefits not only individual women and women groups but also the families and the community as a whole. Micro-finance provides credit access to women with no collateral obligation, encourages savings and promotes income-generating activities. Loans are provided at the market-driven rate of interest and peer pressure is used in repayment. These women's groups are also constantly supporting the village through different community services.

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KNOWLEDGE AND INNOVATIVE APPROACHES IN TEACHER EDUCATION

A. Krishnarathi & Merensangla Longkumer

Abstract

The progress of a nation depends upon the quality of teachers and for this reason, teaching is considered the noblest of all professions. It has a close correlation with the development of teacher education. The efficacy of teachers can be increased by knowledge and innovative approaches. Teaching is considered a knowledge and a skill, basically, it is an excellent art. It is the teacher, who shapes the personality of the children trusted to him. In the olden approach, a teacher transmits concepts and facts to students who passively listen and acquire information. Whereas in the modern approach, students are actively involved in their learning to construct new ideas. Educational curricula and teaching approaches are always changing. In the present era, there are many knowledge and innovative-based approaches which contribute to enhancing the professional capacity of Teachers. A student's achievement level is determined by the teacher's competence level. So teacher's competence is measured by which type of approach is incorporated into their teaching technique. This paper will focus on the constructivist approach, collaborative approach, techno-integrated approach and sense of humour approach in teacher education.

Keywords: Constructivism, Collaboration, Integration, Sense of humour, Teacher Education.

Introduction

Teachers are the society creators of our country; they are the providers of knowledge and skill. They are the basic source of education and play a dynamic role in nation-building because they largely influence the future of a nation. Cheng (2005) rightly said that to face the challenges and impacts of modernization, international collaboration and development of a country in

the new era, teacher training institutions should have abundant educational transformations. Then only teachers can be prepared to take up new roles and perform teaching effectively to meet the challenges and potentials.

Alcon and Kinder (1970) wrote in their book "Better Teaching in Secondary Schools" effectiveness of teaching in secondary school depends upon the quality and competence of the secondary school teachers. The teacher is a leader on the teaching level when dealing with students in the classroom. Knowledge and an innovative-based approach can strengthen skill acquisition and content knowledge among teacher trainees. So, teacher trainees themselves will have to make the final choices from among many alternatives. This can be accomplished through introducing knowledge and innovative ideas and approaches in teacher education (Das. 2015, p. 15).

Teachers and students are living in a technological era. It is growing rapidly impacting the daily activities of human life and the educational field is no exception. Even today also the teacher is a role model for the students in society. Teacher education aims to develop knowledge and technological competencies among the teacher trainees. Teachers should have the ability to design lesson plans which is suitable for the current teaching-learning situation which is helpful for students' growth, mental health, creativity, and set of values and fulfil their cognitive and psychological satisfaction. According to Bhatt (2013), teacher education should be based on the requirements of the society. Population of India has reached first place in the world, so there is a need to change the technique and methods for producing qualified and professionally trained teachers.

Knowledge and Innovative Approaches in Teacher Education

The word "Innovation" is derived from the Latin word "Innovare" which means to change something into something new. In other words, Innovativeness means the ability to think beyond the boundaries and create something different from that which already exists (Rahi & Puneet, 2012, p. 749). Innovation in

teacher education is usually the introduction of something novel and innovative, like new practices, approaches, techniques, new skills and services. Teacher education institutions can introduce innovative techniques and methods on the aspect of effective training of teachers to improve their efficiency and overcome hurdles and difficulties, they encounter on a daily basis. The teacher's effectiveness can be enhanced with knowledge and appropriate innovative teaching approaches (Selvam, 2010, p. 44).

Awareness or understanding of facts, information, description or skills, which is acquired through experience or perceiving, discovering or learning is known as Knowledge. It involves complex cognitive processes, logic and reasoning, which is related to the capacity of human beings. The knowledge base and innovative base approach include pedagogic knowledge, pedagogic content knowledge and technological knowledge.

The approach in teacher education is a pattern (or) plan, which can shape a curriculum (or) course to select instructional material and to guide a teacher's action. Nowadays a teacher ought to do multi-tasking like encouraging, supporting and providing teaching–learning material which enables the learners to explore their intellectual potential and explore their innate talents to the fullest. A teacher needs to cultivate anticipated social and human values as a responsible citizen.

Teacher education has become a responsible activity in terms of what is needed and designed in elementary, middle and secondary schools. For quality upgradation and management of teacher education institutions, teacher educators play a key role. The success of teacher education programs solely depends upon teacher educators.

Effective teacher education has become a core condition to ensure high proficiency and quality school education. Teachers should possess the knowledge of innovative methods and skillful teaching which has to begin from their teacher training. Innovations in teacher training include new techniques, methods, technological literacy, the application of innovative approaches like mind map technique, online collaboration, cognitive

constructivism, sense of humour etc.

Need of the Study

1. Education is a lifelong process. In this process, education must implement innovative approaches in teacher education.
2. To increase the variety of innovative educational approaches and to provide equal opportunity to obtain knowledge and skill.
3. To promote techno-integrated approaches among all student teachers in teacher education.
4. To develop enjoyable teaching and learning processes in teacher education.

These needs will be facilitated only by the implementation of the constructivism approach, Collaborative approach, techno-integrated approach and sense of humour approach in teacher education.

Teaching and Learning Goals

- Transfer of information (Knowledge)
- Skills development (training)
- Active Participation (deep learning)
- Higher level thinking (adapting learning)
- Analyse critically and solve problems
- Take decisions and communicate well
- Work effectively in a group

Some Knowledge and Innovative Approaches in Teacher Education

Teacher education is considered a very significant investment for bringing quality improvement in education. In the field of teacher education, many new trends and innovative techniques have emerged in recent times. There are various knowledge and innovative approaches available in the current era. These are paradigm shifts from conventional teaching methods to interactive teaching methods of classroom interaction.

The biggest challenge any teacher faces to capturing the

student's attention in the classroom. For this to happen, teachers should choose knowledge and innovative approaches that make teaching more effective. Following are some of the innovative approaches in Teacher Education.

1. Constructivism approach: The term Constructivism has evolved from cognitive psychology. Constructivism is a knowledge and innovative strategy based on scientific observation and research and explains how people learn.

Students construct their own concept and by understanding the new concept based on their prior knowledge and experience they apply it to a new situation. Vygotsky, Gardner, Piaget, Dewey, and Tolman are great contributors to the constructivism approach. In the Constructivist approach to learning students actively participate in solving their own problems. Here, the teacher is a facilitator who guides the student's logical and creative thinking, abilities of analysis and synthesis in the learning process. In a constructivist classroom, the main activity is developing concepts based on their own understanding and developing solutions to the problem through inquiry methods.

The constructivist approach exhibits several discernable qualities marked differently from a conventional or direct instructional approach in the classroom. A Constructivist approach is student-centered. In a constructivist approach, the role of a teacher shifts from being a source of knowledge to facilitating learning. Constructivism is based on the assumption that children learn best when they find themselves the specific knowledge that they need (Papert, 1993). According to Driscoll (1994), the constructivism approach provides a suitable learning environment that incorporates students' activity and social negotiation as an integral part of teaching and learning, access to multiple modes of representation, opportunities to nurture reflection and student interest-based instruction. In this approach, educators may follow experiments, field trips, discussions, and project work in their teaching.

2. Collaborative Approach: There are many approaches in the teaching and learning process and the collaborative approach is

one among them. It involves a joint effort by the students, or the students and teachers together. In this approach, teachers provide collaborative environments in which learners engage in a common task where each individual depends on the other. It is also called collective learning, cooperative learning, team teaching and peer teaching. In this approach, teachers do not simply present the contents. Here, teaching methods, techniques and teaching material are based on the student's interest. When teachers have to work with students under so many constraints, the approach of collaborative teaching is always a good option. A collaborative learning approach is a situation in which two or more people share knowledge or attempt to share something.

The collaborative approach in teacher training centres on the reputation of societies and not individuals. Subsequently, many new collaborative models and techniques have been developed and multiple challenges have emerged (Qualls & Czirr, 1988, p. 372). The National Curriculum Framework (2005) appreciated that the psychological impact of innovative approaches and the potential they often have for the global sharing of knowledge cannot be denied. Collaborative learning activities can include joint problem-solving, collaborative writing, debates, group projects, team study and other activities. Collaborative learning situation, in which students get an opportunity to exchange their ideas and diverse beliefs with peers. Due to the collaboration of tasks, students are actively engaged. There are various strategies in the collaborative approach such as think–pair–share, three-step interview, simple jigsaw, online collaboration, integrated process approach, numbered heads together and Peer teaching.

3. Techno-integrated Approach: Globalization and technological change processes that have accelerated in tandem over the past fifteen years have created a new global education 'powered by technology and driven by knowledge'. There is a technological revolution in Teacher Education. The easy availability of digital and network tools has drastically changed the teaching and learning process. This approach describes the kind of teachers' knowledge needed for incorporating technology and innovative

teaching techniques in the classroom. Teachers need a sound understanding of the interrelationship of technology knowledge, pedagogy knowledge and content knowledge (Mishra & Koehler, 2006, pp. 1017).

The reason to integrate technology in the classroom is for student engagement, development of 21st-century learning and life skills, challenging students intellectually and acquisition and refinement of analysis and problem-solving skills (Wang, 2015, p. 156). There are many strategies in techno- integrated approach such as Flipped learning, Multimedia presentation, Blended learning, Virtual technology, Multi-user virtual environment, Gaming approach, artificial intelligence approach, etc.

This approach is linked with school and college in which a new understanding of the contributing technology to learning has developed. This approach focuses on the technical functions. application of technology and the need for some knowledge and representation of the impacts of technological strategy in total. It comprises four categories viz., WebSupplemented, Web Dependent, Mixed Mode and Fully Online. Here teachers are developing their technology literacy and learning how to apply the technology in their profession (Harold, 2003, p. 78).

4. Sense of Humor Approach: Humour originally is a Latin word referring "person with a good balance, i.e. in good health, was said to be "in good humour". Every student loves a teacher who has a sense of humour. Using humour in teaching is an effective instructional approach for both teachers as well as students. A sense of humour can be an effective teaching tool to overcome monotony in the classroom. To implement this approach successfully in classroom interaction, teachers should try to use telling jokes, quotes about humour, funny videos and stories, and famous quotes to make a point. Sometimes fun demonstrations and experiments can also provide one of the simplest ways to introduce humor in the classroom. The students agree that they remember the concept when it is presented with humour (Deiter, 2000). The use of humour may stimulate the students to attend the class with curiosity (Sharma, 2016, p. 451).

Leung (2004, p. 1) defines humour as 'the ability to understand, enjoy, and express what is amusing'. Making the teaching and learning process effective is a challenge. Being humorous is a challenge. However, laughing is easy but making students laugh is a little tough job for teachers and educators in the classroom. However, using comedy in the classroom is a very effective method to teach any tough topic and complex concept which stimulates the learner's interest, reduces stress and enhances recall of concepts. Munoz (2005, p. 42) argues that 'humour is closely related to memory since it is easier to recall an experience that occurred in a humourous context'.

The psychological benefits of the humour approach in teacher education are reducing stress, anxiety, and tension, elevating mood, self-esteem, and hope, enhancing memory, creative thinking, problem-solving and improving interpersonal interactions. Benefits of the humour approach are strengthening relationships between students and teachers and attracting each other, encouraging teamwork, and promoting group bonding. Teachers with a good sense of humour may be more socially competent and able to reduce social tensions, which in turn may result in making the classroom more lively and improve retention of information among the students (Garner, 2006, p. 177).

Benefits of Knowledge and Innovative based Approaches

In many ways, applying knowledge and innovative teaching strategies in the classroom is a tacit understanding that our teaching competency can be improved. It accepts the need to grow and develop, which is exactly what we ask of our students. The main benefits of these approaches are encouraging research, improving problem-solving and critical thinking skills, avoiding receiving a lot of knowledge at once, adopting more soft skills, checking students' understanding, improving self-evaluation, creating new knowledge, enhancing retention, transferring and reducing conflict between changes and traditionalism.

Conclusion and Implementation

Innovation is the path of national development and the future of a nation is shaped inside the classrooms by the teacher. It is not necessary that every innovation should be structured and invented but should be useful for society. The national vision mission will nurture innovations, as evident through the emergence of National education policy (NEP, 2020). Teacher educators have to face the challenges of this modern era due to the shift from the industrial era to the information era. The government should give intensive training to all teachers and educators in various aspects related to new innovative approaches to teaching and learning. The above innovative approaches and methods support the teachers who can motivate and manage students and integrate suitable learning styles and the use of available technology to achieve the teaching and learning goals. It involves teachers able to integrate different methods, techniques and skills in the teaching and learning course of teacher education.

The government have to check whether the institution has adequate competent teachers in teacher education. Teacher education institutions and programs must provide leadership for pre-service and in-service teachers and must be models in new pedigrees and tools for learning.To conclude one can say that the application of knowledge and an innovative approach makes the teachers trainees become more confident and can make their teaching more effective and interesting. It develops reflection, collaboration and autonomy among teacher trainees.

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