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Aims and Objectives

As part of the celebration of the World Indigenous Peoples Day, Ethnic Community Development Organization (ECDO) has made an object to publish a journal entitled "Journal of Ethnic Affairs" annually. In order to accelerate and preserve research outcomes on indigenous peoples particularly in greater Sylhet region ECDO has taken this initiative. From now on every occasion of World Indigenous Peoples Day its issues will be published at regular basis. ECDO plans to make this publication as the leading academic exercise on ethnic peoples’ issues. Number of academic experts on indigenous issues from the Dhaka, Rajshahi and Shah Jalal University of Science and Technology have been included in editorial board of the Journal who will be supported and guided by an advisory board of renowned professors of the above three famous public universities in Bangladesh.

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Community Based Support and Services for the Older People: Present Status and Future Failure

A.S.M. Atiqur Rahman PhD and Md. Faisal Ahmed

Abstract
Old age is a critical stage of an individual's life. It is an inescapable reality of the cycle of life. Due to physical limitations and improper skills and knowledge, elderly people are not usually engaged in employment and face difficulties in involving themselves in economic activities at an old age. This situation makes an older person dependent upon others and both material and immaterial support is required for his or her survival. The traditional norms and values of Bangladesh society stress the importance of showing respect and providing care for the elderly population. The family still plays a key role in providing care for its older members. A section of the elderly who have no family or are very poor, are looked after by the community or religious organizations. Sometimes these older people live with little care from relatives, friends or neighbors. Although a non-contributory pension scheme has started for the poor rural older people of Bangladesh, the amount and coverage of the pension is not yet significant. Therefore, in reality older people are using traditional ways to ensure survival and relying mainly on community support. Unfortunately these traditional forms of support for older people in Bangladesh are weakening due to several causes including rapid urbanization and modernization, decrease in land availability, an increase in women's participation in the labor market, migration of children to urban centers, and the overall impact of pervasive poverty. This paper aims to explain the existing traditional support systems and its future in brief.

Introduction
Old age is a product of history, individual experiences and social forces (Morgan and Kunkel, 2001). It is an inescapable issue from social integration, gender advancement, economic stability and poverty. It has developed an increasing importance on many global agendas and will play a prominent role in how society interacts with economic and social welfare institutions, family and community life and the roles of women. It is crucial that societies adjust to this human paradigm as record numbers of people are living to a very old age, if we are to progress to a society for all ages (Scobie, et al, 2002). While this has been recognized for sometime in developed countries, it has only recently become a phenomenon that has been fully acknowledged. Demographers note that if the current trends of aging continue as predicted, a demographic revolution; where in the proportion of the young and the old will undergo a historic crossover, will be felt in just three generations (Scobie, et al, 2002). The increasing numbers of older people marks the beginning of a sustained movement towards modern economic growth in much the same way that globalization is today making an unprecedented and sustained movement toward a global culture.

During old age, people do not have an income or have only a marginal income yet the economic power goes to another persons hand (Kabir, 1994a). Livelihood strategies and access to resources change during old age. Due to physical limitations and improper skills and knowledge, elderly people are not usually engaged in employment and face difficulties in involving themselves in any economic activities at an old age. This reality creates dependency upon others and both material and immaterial support is required for his or her survival. Support systems for older people have developed in numerous forms that range from the formal to the informal; some are based upon local community membership and solidarity, some are cooperative ventures, some private, community-based schemes and some are provided by the state and through welfare programs. The sustainability of these systems to manage risk or provide support in both the developed and developing world is undergoing tremendous changes.

The growing aging population affects the ratio of state support for older person's, which is steadily decreasing in both developed and developing regions and has important implications for social and economic structures (UN, 2002). In developing countries it has become difficult for the Governments to provide all of its senior citizens with social security or safety networks due to lack of economic capacity. Given these circumstances informal and community based support systems can be treated as an important safety network especially for the disadvantaged and poor older people.

Existing Community based Support system for the Older People
Despite the rapid growth of the number of older people; changes in social behavior, family care systems and social institutions, the policy makers and planners who have to consider competing demands and limited resources, view older people as a minority, rendering them a low priority on the governments agenda. Like most developing countries, in Bangladesh aging is often viewed as welfare rather than a developmental issue and as such the design of welfare policies and program, groups older persons together with of poor, disabled and victims of disasters (UN, 1994). People working in the informal sector, staying in rural areas and engaged in subsistence activities are often not covered by adequate social protection or security (UN, 2002).

Although a non-contributory pension scheme has started for the poor rural older people of Bangladesh, the amount and coverage of the pension is not yet significant. Health, shelter, security, employment and training related activities are totally overlooked by the government. Non Government Organizations of Bangladesh are reluctant to initiate any programs related to the welfare of older persons. Therefore, in reality older people are surviving through traditional means which are manifested in community support especially for the poor older persons. As an Asian country Bangladesh has a long cultural and regional tradition of looking after older people and it is expected that families and communities will care for their own older members (Rahman, 2000). In Bangladesh, the predominant form of the family is the extended family where reciprocal obligations felt by family members for one another arise from strong kinship bonds. The kin function is an important resource for older persons, meeting health or financial needs with services, gifts and monetary contributions (UN, 1994). Within the traditional extended family, an older person enjoys high prestige as custodians of property and, as family heads, they enjoy honor and exercise some degree of authority over younger family members as well as in community affairs.

The traditional norms and values of Bangladesh society stress the importance of showing respect and providing care for the older population. Although traditions and norms are changing over the course of time, there still remains a section of the elderly who have no family or are very poor and are looked

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1 Most of the views described in this paper are based on firsthand data
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after by the community or religious organizations. Sometimes these older people live with little care from relatives, friends or neighbors (Kabir, 1994b). Therefore, prevailing community based support systems can be categorized into four broad areas:

a. Support from religious organizations

b. Support from community people and neighbors

c. Support from relatives and clan members

d. Support from village organizations

a. Support from religious organizations

In Bangladesh religious observance plays an important role in supporting the older persons through religious rituals and institutions. Bangladesh is a Muslim dominant country and Islam teaches its followers to be kind and respectful to older people, to take care of parents, to give Zakat and Fitra (a share of income of a solvent person determined by religious rule to be paid for the poor as charity) to poor older people to help older people receive services from the Muslim community. A few of the older people who have no particular place to live, can take shelter in religious institutions such as Mosques and Shrines. These institutions arrange food for them, which is occasionally supported by community people. In Islam alms giving is a tradition during special religious days and occasions like on Friday prayer, night of Shob-e-barat and throughout the Ramadan month which mainly helps the poor older people. In both rural and urban areas, widows in particular receive some community support such as food, clothing and money during special religious festivals e.g. Eid-ul-fitr and Eid-ul-Azha festival (Rahman, 2004)

b. Support from community people and neighbors

In addition to religion, the cultural traditions of the Indian sub-continent influence people to help dependent, poor and disadvantaged sections of society. Neighborhood relationships are observed as strong among village dominant Bangladesh culture. Such relationships play significant roles in existing mutual responsibilities among community people and people have a common drive to help each other. In addition to this, older people are treated with respect by community people and there is a ubiquitous sympathetic attitude towards older people. As a result of this, older people in difficult situations such as suffering from severe poverty, disability or having nobody to take care of them, usually receive support from their neighbors and/or community people. Receiving alms or mendicity has become one of the most important sources of survival for a large proportion of the poor older people in Bangladesh (Rahman and Ahmed, 2000). In special circumstances, community people support older people by giving food, clothing and shelter to ensure the persons survival. It is not unusual for neighbors to take care of older persons who have no family or close relatives. There are a few older people living alone, with some economic capacity, who receive support from neighbors and community people at the time of illness or any other difficulty.

Community feelings are also observed as very strong among Manipuri people and offer a strong system of support. Community support remains a very useful system that meets the needs of the disadvantaged. At the time of a critical situation, a network of people help each other, this is very apparent regarding elderly people. This feeling is so strong among the Manipuri people that they deem it an obligation that must be maintained. It is very common for the community take care of an older person who lives alone or in difficult circumstances. His/her neighbors and relatives keep a regular watch of the person so that he/she can mitigate all necessary problems and demands. A seventy year old woman of Manipuri community who was suffering from physical complications had lived alone for more than thirty five years. She was requested to describe her survival efforts. A clear trend of community support was evident from her story- "My husband left me before independence of Bangladesh. I am living alone in a house given by my brothers. I have a small piece of land that provides me food for three months. I don't get an old age allowance or widowhood allowance or any government and non government supports. I cannot walk due to my bad physical condition. One of my relatives helps me for my material needs. He arranges treatment, clothing and food for me. At the time of illness and emergency my neighbors help me by cooking food, cleaning my house, calling doctors and doing my grocery. I don't feel insecure because my relative and neighbors are very caring of me"

If someone of Manipuri community does not have any relatives or neighbors then society takes his/her responsibility for the duration of their life. After death, the funeral is arranged by the villagers.

c. Support from relatives and clan members

Relatives and clan member's supports are a major source of support for many older people in Bangladesh. If any older person is in trouble and needs support, his/her relatives and clan members usually help them both materially and immaterially according to their capacity. Although such support and relationships are fading among mainstream people, clan member's relationships are still strongly prevailing among different indigenous communities in Bangladesh. Clan members willingly support and take care of their older members; they view this as an obligatory responsibility of clan members. If any person goes outside of the clan to seek help it is treated as a dishonor for their respective clan. This is even more important in cases of older persons as older persons are treated as highly respectable. If relatives or close kin members fail to help and take care of their older member, community people sit together and compel them to serve the older person (Das, 1987). Denying support to helpless older relatives and kin members is treated as a crime and is looked down upon by the community people. These rules have ensured security for many of the elderly indigenous people's lives, enabling survival during their later life even if they are without property or children. An example of this is the livelihood strategies of the older people of Garo indigenous community who face severe poverty, disability and live alone without close relatives. The Kinship bond is well-built among the Garo community. If an older person is

b. Support from relatives and clan members

Support from relatives and clan members support was evident from her story-
affected by severe poverty and his/her survival is under threat, children's support is the first to expect. Children continue their support as long as possible. If the person does not have children, close relatives share the responsibilities. According to Garo custom, the mother's kin are obliged to take care of the older person who is alone and has no means of survival. It is a regular practice that when anyone is in trouble relations will arrive first with appropriate help. Relatives of a troubled person deem it an insult to their dignity if the person is forced to seek others' help while they are around. An elderly Garo member explained about the support system strongly practiced among their community,

"Older people without immediate family members are cared for by their relatives. It is the custom that relatives from the mother's side will take the responsibility. Usually relatives never allow an older person to live alone in a crisis. This is according to a Garo custom called "Mahari" system. Under the "Mahari" system if a kin denies taking the older person, it is a disgrace for the entire kin. Also there is a provision of punishment for those people. In this way a traditional security system secures helpless and lonely poor older people."

If the older person has children who deny taking responsibility for their older parents', the kin compels them to take responsibility. An older Garo's views can be presented here:

"Kin makes a network of support. When it is apparent that someone in the kin has denied taking care of older parents quick actions are taken against the person by relatives. If the problem is economic, all kin members will help. Someone either from children or close relatives will be obliged to take responsibility for the older person until death. None of the older people are allowed to live alone when they face critical physical condition. During this time "Mahari" kin will take entire control."

It is highly unlikely in Garo community that an older person will end his life without care and support from this network.

d. Support from village organizations

In a few indigenous communities in Bangladesh there are village councils and village welfare funds for their own development and safety. All villagers are obliged to be the members of such village organizations and all members have to contribute regularly to generate the fund. This fund is used in different community activities e.g. religious festivals, cultural events, helping disadvantaged members etc. Older persons with difficulties are supported by this fund. Along with material support, if an older person needs immaterial support such as care, arranging treatment, cooking food, or cleaning and revamping shelter the village councilor organization delegates responsibilities to the villagers so that the older person does not experience any difficulties. This provision is strongly observed among the Manipuri and Khasi indigenous communities in Bangladesh.

Future Challenges and Failures

The course of population aging is now worldwide and flows freely into social and economic support systems, which are directly influenced by the changing age context. In the context of Bangladesh, rapid socioeconomic and demographic transformations, mass poverty, declining social and religious values, the influence of western and 'modern culture', rapid urbanization and other similar factors are responsible for waning the traditional extended family and community based care system of the mainstream society (Rahman, 2000). Contemporary Social Disorganization theory has its roots in Durkheim (1933) who argued that the social system is weakened due to several factors, e.g. a decrease in land availability, an increase in women's participation in the labor market, migration of children to urban centers, and the overall impact of pervasive poverty (Ritchie and others, 2000). An expert group meeting of the International Institute on Aging identified a similar reason behind the erosion of community based support systems. The participants recognized that the traditional support system of older persons is severely challenged today. They projected that if such a trend is sustained, community based support system will die out in the future which will place many of the rural older people in careless unprotected situations at their later life (International Institute on Ageing, 1997).

On the other hand, religious trusts and charitable institutions are struggling to continue their welfare activities for the older people for want of financial support from the public, besides a change in their outlook and social behavior (Government of India, 1987). Such negative stereotypes and denigration of older individuals can translate into a lack of societal concern for older persons; risk of marginalization and denial of equal access to opportunities, resources and entitlements, cultural values regarding age and sex influences the degree of discrimination against older persons in social, economic, political and community life (UN, 2002). As community support and involvement toward older peoples concern is declining, it is automatically shifting to the governments. Such reality has created extra pressure on national economy in many developing countries and many of its older citizens may have died without care and support (UN, 2002).

Demographic projections show that the older population will look dramatically different over the next few decades. The press is constantly reminding us that a dramatic increase in the age of our population over the next 30 or so years will cause the health care system to collapse, economics to crumble under the strain of pension demands and the disintegrating family and community to buckle under increasing care 1 commitment. (Globalaging, 2004). A few of the developing countries have the economic development and infrastructures necessary to provide widespread public pensions and health care to these growing elderly population without relatives.

Policy responses to aging until now have tended to focus on provisions of care and income security for older persons, which remain important but inadequate to the scale and rate of aging now occurring and projected to intensify in the coming decades. Considering the decline of informal support and a negative outlook towards older people, governments have recently begun to expand their approaches to individual aging, complementing care and security measures for older persons with ones promoting active aging. Active or resourceful aging requires an enabling environment, principally; opportunities over the entire life course for strengthening capabilities, or capital and adjusting the family, community and country environments in keeping with the new demographic trends. The strengthening of human, social economic and environmental capital is important in all countries. The developing countries where 60 per cent of the world's elderly now live; rising to 70 per cent in 20 years provides a challenge to developing human and economic capital while strengthening the social capital of family and community support systems (UN, 1994). The challenges encountered by the older people, are in fact, not their own concern, this is the concern and challenge for the policy maker, planner, development worker, social worker, etc. Older persons with difficulties are supported by the process. In fact, it is a concern of the entire global population. All nations around the globe are under a tremendous pressure to tackle this unavoidable challenge.

Conclusion

As older people become more numerous and visible, stereotypical attitudes and discriminatory practices that disadvantaged older people are likely to be a challenge (Morgan and Kunkel, 2001) all over the world. The UN projected that by the twenty first century; it will become common for many older persons in many developing countries to have very few or even no children or relatives to care for them in old age (UN, 1994). Present trends of declining family ties and waning community obligations indicates the reality and applicability of the UN projection for the older people of Bangladesh. Some of the older
persons even leave their families to fend for themselves in the community owing to frustration due to neglect and hardship faced by them. Now it is not uncommon to frequently see older people begging on the street or door-to-door for survival. The alms giving attitude of the people is changing and all forms of community based support systems are declining over time. The United Nations has considered this as one of the important emerging concerns of population aging (UN, 2002)

Given these circumstances, an alternative mechanism should be taken for the older people both by the government and non-government agencies and there should be an effective cooperation and coordination among the agencies working with the older persons (UN, 2002). Correct assessments of needs and matching appropriate services are required for the older persons. In addition to this, steps should be taken so that traditional support systems do not disappear and always function for the safety of the older people. It is essential to recognize that community based support systems are useful as the best alternative to formal care systems and that it substantially reduces the pressure on the national development budget.

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The Santals in Bangladesh: Problems, Needs and Development Potentials

Dr. Muhammad Samad

Abstract

There are about 70 distinctly recognizable indigenous nationalities in Bangladesh. Among them, Santals are one of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable indigenous communities. Land-grabbing, threats, evictions and killings have marginalized them to such an extent that their existence in Bangladesh is currently at stake. Recently a study was conducted in order to assess the problems and needs of the Santals and to initiate development intervention for improving their life situation. This article presents the predicaments of Santal community and provides recommendations for the well being of this disadvantaged indigenous community based on the findings of the study conducted.

Introduction

The Santals are one of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable indigenous communities in Bangladesh. For hundreds of years, they have been facing serious violations of human rights and the pace has accelerated since the independence. Land-grabbing, threats, evictions and killings have marginalized them to such an extent that their existence in Bangladesh is currently at stake. Recently a study was conducted in order to assess the problems and needs of the Santals and to initiate development intervention for improving their life situation. This article presents the predicaments of Santal community and provides recommendations for the well being of this disadvantaged indigenous community based on the findings of the study conducted.

Methodology

Indigenous peoples themselves are the main source of information on their life and livelihood. But traditional development strategy does not hear their voices. Their cries haven't been heard by the policy makers and project planners. The activities implemented by the NGOs in the name of development for indigenous peoples, have failed to bear much fruit, because indigenous peoples had no access or involvement in the planning and policy formulation of the organizations. In some areas development activities have created adverse impact, where the plan was too far removed from the local social, cultural and natural situation. So, the right way to identify the issues concerning the Santals is to involve them at every level of any project undertaken. Research and Development Collective(RDC) and SMNB organized 4 Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) at the grass-root level (two in North Bengal and the other two in greater Sylhet) and today a Central Workshop is being held in Dhaka to understand further the issues tormenting the Santals, and to learn about their own thoughts on the redress. We also took a few in-depth interviews at the grass-root level.

Life Profile Santals : Problems and Needs

The main objective of the present study is to assess the problems and needs of the Santals and to initiate development intervention for improving their life situation. This section deals with the life profile i.e. the major problems and needs of the Santals particularly, the Santals living in North Bengal and greater Sylhet region of Bangladesh.

Santals in North Bengal

The two FGDs, a field-visit and several in-depth interviews were conducted in Phoolbari in order to understand the problems, needs and to determine probable development intervention for the Santals of North Bengal. The findings are as follows:

Land and Resource Grabbing

Needless to say, land is the vital resource of Santal community. Like other indigenous peoples, land and resource grabbing is the most tragic problem of the Santals in Bangladesh. The land peoples grabbing has been taking place mainly in two ways: firstly by the majority influential and secondly by Forest Department (FD) of the Government of Bangladesh (GDB). Land grabbing by majority influential


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It is important to mention that there is a provision of prior permission from District Commissioners (DC) for the Santals in selling their land. In this respect, at Thana level the Chairman of 11 members Adivasi Committee verifies the identity of land-sellers. Generally, the Chairman of this Committee is selected on the basis of consensus or, if necessary, election is held through hand-rising.

The FGDs and in-depth interviews reveal that in a number of cases, for monetary gain, being involved with the corrupt government officials the Chairman plays dubious roles in land-selling process which deprive the Santal people from just price of their land.

Land-grabbing by Forest Department of GOB

In the early 1980s, the forest Department of GOB illegally occupied about 1500 acres of land belonging to indigenous and non-indigenous peoples in Nawabgonj under Dinajpur district of northern Bangladesh. 90 percent of the owners of these lands are Santals and the rest are the majority people (mostly Bengali Muslims). The FGDs, field-visits and general discussions with the indigenous and non-indigenous peoples reveal that once there was a village named Oドラpar on these lands where now the forest is situated. Consquiring with the local influentially in order to force the. Santals to leave the village, they even set fire on some houses at that time. That is how the forest was created. Hence, the evicted Santals have been living in Amrakakhal, Joypur, GT Joypur, Pool banga, Dimlapara, Dhanerdanga etc. villages adjacent to the forest severe in economic hardship. But since 1980s, the Santals, legal owners of the forest, have been paying taxes on these lands.

Most of the participants of Phoolbari FGD, many of whom were from Nababganj, mentioned that at the time of forestation in early 1980s they were told that they would be given 50 percent share of the products of the forest in terms of cash or kind. But till today they have got nothing. Another significant face of the problem is that recently the majority people (mostly Bengali Muslims) have been given their lands back for farming after cutting the trees. On the contrary, the lands owned by indigenous peoples (i.e. Santals) are still occupied by Forest Department. At the time of field-visit, we observed that the Forest Department has been getting prepared for further plantation in Santal Lands. This discrimination is obviously a gross violation of human rights.

The participations of FGDs also mentioned that, even if the Santals go to the forest for collecting dried branches of trees or leaves, the forest department harasses them by filing false cases charging them of theft. Even, at present, some Santals are behind the bars.

Employment and Economic Condition

It is obvious from the FGDs and field-visits that the entire Santal community is mainly dependent on agriculture. But only a negligible portion cultivate their own land others are involved in a non-farm activities such as, non-agricultural labor, small trade, service etc. Average daily wage of Santal agri-laborer is Tk. 50.00 and 35.00 in peak and lean seasons respectively. With regard to wage, there is discrimination between male and female laborers. While the average daily wage of a male is Tk. 50.00, for female it is Tk. 40.00 only. At the time of FGDs with female groups, they raised the question about wage discrimination and urged for equal wage like their male counter-part.

It is important to mention that since the Santal people do no have alternative skill or scope for employment, sometimes they are compelled to sell their labor at a low rate. Besides, in lean season, they become unemployed and due to severe economic hardship many of them have to starve day after day. In that case, sometimes they have to sell their labor in advance at low rate. Thus the economic condition of the Santals is deteriorating day by day and they are now among the poorest groups of all indigenous communities.

It may be observed from the above situation that alternative non-farm employment should be provided by Government Agencies and NGOs for improving the socio-economic condition of the Santal community.

Education

All the participants of FGDs opined that lack of education is the main obstacle for advancement of the Santals. Literacy rate among Santal community is very low. It is observed that the new generations Santals are enthusiastic to be educated for improving their socio-economic condition. Education of Santal community suffers from various problems. However, the major impediments of education of the Santals are as follows:

Financial Inability

According to them financial inability is the main obstacle for education of Santal people. Due to severe poverty, they cannot provide teaching materials and incidental facilities (e.g., books, papers, fees, clothing etc.) for their children, which hinder the education of the community at large. FGD participants also mentioned that since it is unthinkable for Santal parents to provide private tutor for their children, most of the students cannot do well in examination majority of them come out with third division at S.S.C and H.S.C levels. Besides, many of them are to supplement their family income since childhood and dropout from the School at an early stage.

Language

As the children speak Santali language at home and in community, they cannot understand Bengali at School. Hence, Santali students cannot communicate with their teachers as well as with their schoolmates. Even they cannot seek permission to go to bathroom. Due to this communication gap, they become victim of mental and physical torture, lose their interest in study, and finally leave the School. Discrimination and Negligence

In classrooms, Santal students face discrimination and negligence by the mainstream schoolmates. In many cases, the mainstream schoolmates do not want to sit by the side of their Santal classmates. Even, in some cases, teachers also undermine the ability of Santal students instead of being sympathetic towards their helplessness. As a result, they feel insulted, neglected and tortured at this early age and lose their zeal to come to school. However, FGD participants opined that the situation is improving day by day.

Rights and Status of Women

Santal is a male dominated indigenous community. Yet almost every adult woman is involved in farm activities as well as in household ones. Most of them work as agricultural day-laborers. Besides, child rearing, cooking, livestock raising, taking care of husband and elderly people etc. are the responsibilities of women in Santal community. Thus, the quantity of work of women is more than double compared to those of men. Wives being beaten by their husbands on plea of negligence of duties are a very common scenario.

Both female and male participants of FGDs mentioned that the Santal women do not have hereditary rights on land. Only sons inherit rights on land and other resources. If a father does not have any son, only in that case daughter inherits lands and other resources of family. At the time of FGDs, women
participations opined that they should have equal rights on land and family resources. However, in this respect both male and female participants agreed that women's rights on land may be on the basis of 60:40 ratio. As mentioned earlier, women participants also urged to eliminate wage discrimination between male and female.

Organizational Association and Access to Services

It is observed from FGD and field-visits that association of Santals with government agencies and NGOs in terms of participation in development programs is very insignificant. Due to lack of information and awareness, they do not have considerable access to micro-credit, Medicare, family planning, maternity and nutritional services etc. On the other hand, at present only two NGOs namely CCDB and SA VERED are providing meager micro-credit and building awareness regarding health, family planning and sanitation.

The above-mentioned situation indicates that there is significant lack of understanding among both the Government agencies and NGOs about the needs and problems of the Santal Community.

Finally, apart form above-mentioned socio-economic issues FGD participants urged for preservation of cultural heritage, upholding human dignity and creating provision for Constitutional Recognition of the Santals and other Adivasis, which may ensure meaningful survival of the community.

Santal Tea workers and other Adivasis in greater Sylhet Region

Two FGDs were held mainly for understanding socio-economic condition of Santal tea workers of Chandpur and Surma tea gardens of Chunarughat and Madhabpur area under Hobigonj district in Bangladesh. Currently about 1600 and 2100 permanent workers are involved in producing tea at Chandpur and Surma garden respectively. They are born and brought up in tea gardens; most of them are hereditary workers whose forefathers migrated from Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal of the then India under British rule. However, findings revealed from FGDs and field-visits are as follows:

Job Condition and Wages

According to prevalent job condition, tea-workers work for eight hours (from 8.00 Am. to 4.00 Pm) and pluck 18-23 Kgs of tea-leaves daily. Quality of leaf varies from one garden to another. For example, a worker of Chandpur garden is required to pluck 18 Kgs, while the requirement for Surma garden is 23 Kgs. Normally they work six days in a week. They enjoy 20-24 days yearly leave for observing religious and cultural festivities.

Daily wage of a tea worker is only Tk. 28.00 in both the tea gardens. In addition, management provides them with 3.3 Kgs of flower (wheat) as daily family ration. Besides, they can earn only Tk. 0.50 for an extra kg. of plucked leaf in Chandpur garden on overtime basis, while it is Tk 0.40 in Surma garden. It is astonishing that tea workers do not get any wage for the weekly holiday. Hence, with very meager income, the Santal tea workers have been living in acute poverty generation after generation.

It is very significant to mention that there is a provision of 90 days maternity leave for female workers. In this respect, for example, if any one is compelled to use half of her leave before giving birth to child, she cannot extend her leave further. Rather she must carry her new born baby in the garden for breast-feeding. Even in some case, in saving maternity leave for after delivery period, pregnant workers had given to birth to their child in garden during the work which is a gross violation of UN Charter on Rights of Child as well as basic human rights.

Scope of Employment

Scope of employment is strictly limited in tea gardens. It is highly significant to mention that normally 'one person from one family' is eligible to get employment as a tea worker after the death or retirement of her/his parents. Sometimes management are reluctant to appoint unmarried girls which may prove ruinous for a family.

It is observed that some of the unemployed people work as casual laborer (Thika Samik) in peak season their number is several times higher than the number required in the garden. They are employed with lower wage and without facilities that are provided to the permanent workers of the tea garden. Hence, to get rid of this severe unemployment problem FGD participants suggested various income-earning activities such as, tailoring, poultry, fishery etc.

Housing

According to company rules, only the permanent workers are eligible for housing facility. In this regard every permanent worker is provided a fixed piece of land where she/he constructs mud wall and company supplies tin and wood for building a small house. It is revealed from field-visit and FGDs that in the Chandpur garden the company provides 10.5x24 feet and land with tin and wood for building a house in which a family lives together in a small house of this type. It is prohibited shortly for the workers to extend this house or build separate room on their own in the adjacent open plies this is what the inhuman housing condition of a tea garden in Bangladesh owned by Duncan Brothers, a British Tea Company. On the other hand, housing condition is trivially better in Surma Garden compared to that of Chandpur. The size of house is 12 r 24 feet and it necessary, they are eligible to extend or build separate room on their own. Moreover, they can use open places for vegetable garnering and plantation of fruit and wood-trees. It is important to mention that a retired worker can stay only 15 days in company's house from the date of her/his retirement. However, it is significant to mention that at the time of FGD, some of the participants asked for ownership on homestead land referring to the Indian Tea Garden Act in this regard.

Education

Regarding education, the Santal of tea garden face almost similar problems compared with Santals of North Bengal as discussed in the earlier section of this report. However, as the indigenous are the overwhelming majority in the gardens, the students do not face the problems of discrimination, indignation and physical torture here like North Bengal. Although the language problem is not considerable at the primary level in Chandpur area as the ethnic mix is very varied and they tend to use a broken Bengali, but the students of secondary and college education face similar problems that they face in North Bengal. On the other hand, the Santal students of Surma face a lot of problem. At primary level, SMNB started to run a school with Surma garden Santal teachers, which was really beneficial for the children of the community. That school is closed now. As a result the Santal children of Surma garden are facing acute language problem like that of North Bengal. Therefore, FGD participants strongly suggested establishing a school where children can learn education in their mother language up to class five. They believe that this initiative can help children to continue further study.

Health Facility

Health facility in terms of Medicare, family planning, water-supply and sanitation is very normal in both the areas. Twenty families are to share drinking water from tube well in both the gardens. They use open place or open pit-latrine for easing themselves. Most of the Santal families use well or fountain-water for meeting necessities.

Organizational Association and Access to Services
It is significantly observed that activities of non-government development organizations are strictly forbidden in Chandpur garden, while management of Surma garden is little bit liberal in this regard. Currently, only HEED Bangladesh, an NGO, is working with a few Santal families and providing them with micro-credit for cattle rearing, poultry and vegetable gardening. However, it is obvious that the Santals of the Surma garden, like other workers, almost do not have any access to development services of the NGOs.

Finally, it is observed that Santals are living in a mixed culture in terms of language, worship and religio-cultural festivities together with at least 30 indigenous groups working in tea gardens. Again, it is important to note that referring to their heroic role in the liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971; the FGD participants urge to acknowledge the contribution of freedom fighters and asked for constitutional recognition of the indigenous peoples in Bangladesh.

Suggestions and Recommendations for Development Intervention

At the time of FGDs, interviews and field-visits, the responding participants were asked what steps can be taken for improving the life situation of Santal community. In this connection, a good number of suggestions were offered. The suggestions are as follows:

**Employment and Income Generating Activities (EIGAS)**

In respect of Employment and Income Generating activities, the major suggestions are:

i) tailoring  
ii) poultry 
iii) small trade 
iv) livestock rearing 
v) pond fishery (especially for tea garden) etc.

Besides, cooperative farming, vegetable gardening and bamboo work are also suggested as EIGAs. Most of them suggested providing easy loan for the above-mentioned EIGAs and creating marketing outlets for the products.

**Land and Security**

For stopping land grabbing and security, the suggestions offered by the Santals are:

i) effective administrative measures by civil and law and order enforcing authorities. 
ii) enforcement of law  
iii) awareness building about land related rules and regulations 
iv) inclusion of area based representative in land-selling identification committee 
v) restoration of unity and harmony within the Santal community etc.

**Education**

For education, the Santals of both the areas suggested to establish sufficient number of schools to teach their children, at least unto class-V, in Santali language and to appoint one-third of the school teachers from among their own community. They also suggested to more provision for stipend for the Santal students after completion of fifth grade of their study.

**Development and Rights of Women**

About development activities of women suggestions are:

i) training on sewing and supply for sewing machine  
ii) training on poultry and crafts  
iii) easy loan for small trade  
iv) marketing facilities of products  
v) equal wage  
vi) awareness buildings etc.

On the other hand, as women do not inherit lands and resources, they suggested that women's rights on lands may be given on the basis of 60:40 ratio through enactment of law.

**Participation in Decision Making**

For raising their demands properly, the Santals suggest for inclusion of their representative in District and Thana development committees particularly for indigenous areas.

**Wage and other Services**

The Santals of tea gardens, in particular, suggested to provide wage for weekly holidays and to increase their wage and related facilities as a whole. Besides, they suggested to improve other services such as, medicate, family planning, water-supply, sanitation etc. by tea companies, while, for these services, Santals of North Bengal Santals Suggested for immediate intervention by GAs and NGOs.

**Homemade Wine**

Most of the Santal women, in particular suggested to stop the home made wine for reducing misuse of money and getting rid of physical harassment by addicted husbands. However, the Santals also suggested taking necessary measures for preserving their cultural heritage such as, dances, songs, festivals etc.

**Recommendations**

It is evident from the FGD findings that the life situation of the Santals is vulnerable in economic, social, cultural and human rights contexts. However, in view of needs, problems and suggestions of the Santals for development interventions the following recommendations may be offered:

a) Immediate development interventions by both Government agencies and NGOs are greatly needed for meaningful existence and upliftment of the Santal community.  
b) Initially some relief-oriented services such as low cost housing, primary health care, safe drinking water etc. may be provided by the government and non-government development agencies.  
c) Human resource development training, credit support for EIGAs and animation programs may be undertaken for making the Santals economically and socially viable and self-sustained. CCDB model may be followed in this regard.  
d) For making Santal women viable income earner, financial, technical and marketing support may be extended to tailoring and other home-based EIGAs. Besides, inheritance of lands and resources should be established through enactment of law for Santal women.  
e) Education program should contain non-formal primary education.
f) General-vocational-adult and social education should be initiated. In this respect, medium of instruction should be Santali language up to class -V, and in Santal inhabited areas, at least one-third of the school teachers should be appointed from among the Santal community.

g) Government Agencies and NGOs should introduce comprehensive health program including medicare, public health, facilities, family planning and reproductive health services in Santal inhabited areas.

h) Effective measures should be taken by the government functionaries, human rights agencies and civil society members for stopping land-grabbing, eviction, harassment, discrimination, human indignation etc.

i) For solving the problems relating to lands, a land Commission may be formed headed by the District Judge and consisting of representatives from GA, NGO and indigenous, for the Adivasi areas, in particular.

j) As most of the Santals are poor and unable to pay for legal support to face litigation. Assistance should be provided to them whenever necessary.

k) Awareness building among majority people for creating empathetic and harmonious outlook towards the Santals and other Adivasis should be initiated.

l) Through providing numerous musical instruments and financial support, preservation of Santal cultural heritage may be initiated.

m) Steps may be taken to ensure participation of the Santals in planning and policy making bodies of the development agencies.

References


Ageism and Indigenous Elderly in Bangladesh: Concepts and Its Applicability

Md. Hasan Reza

Abstract

Ageism is a relatively new concept and has emerged in a new, burgeoning global tradition that emphasizes on ‘rights-based’ social and political culture. The term was first referred by American gerontologist Robert Butler in 1969 who referred that aversion, hatred, and prejudice toward the aged and their manifestation in the form of discrimination is ageism (Butler, 1969). Minichiello, Browne and Kendig (2000) defined Ageism as "a set of social relations that discriminate against older people and set them apart as being different by defining and understanding them in an oversimplified, generalized way."

Ageism is a complex phenomenon affected by economic competitiveness, industrialization, changing family pattern, increased mobility, infrastructural development, demographic changes, increased life expectancy, and generational differences. All these factors have enormous impact on structure of the society and especially on age relations. Societies organize on the basis of age such that different age groups gain identities and power in relation to one another. Thus, membership in age categories shapes self-concepts and carries material consequences that influence life chances. This arrangement means that some age groups benefit from ageism at others' expense. Those who are "not old" escape stigma and feel included. They face less competition for valuable resources, such as jobs, wealth, or other sources of status (Calasanti, 2005).

Ageism is believed to contain three mechanisms: stereotypes I (the cognitive aspect), prejudice (the affective aspect) and discrimination (the behavioral aspect) (Cuddy and Fisky, 2002). Ageist beliefs are "contained" in mind, applied as a prejudice when to make an adverse judgment or have an adverse opinion about the elderly and when acted upon becomes discrimination.

There are two types of ageism- personal and institutional. Personal ageism is discrimination by individuals, while institutional ageism is a policy of an institution or a social structure that discriminate against elders. Expanding this notion, institutional ageism also includes the actions, policies or programs of the state that discriminate against the elderly or segment of the elderly (Palmore, 1990). From applied sense, ageism has two facets- explicit and implicit. Explicit ageism is conscious and strong discrimination and hatred for elderly which reflected through immediate behavior or action. Implicit ageism is feelings towards the elderly that exist and operate without conscious awareness, intention or control (Levy and Banaji, 2002).

Typically, ageism contends negative connotation when it is applied to the elderly. However, age stereotype is not uniformly negative towards older people (Rosen and Jerde, 1976). Even any younger person could be subject to ageism (Kalver, 2001) Moreover, ageism also could be positive towards the elderly. Palmore (1990) suggested many of the positive stereotypes such as kind, wise, free, happy etc. as the dispositions of positive ageism. However, old age is generally approached with apprehension, if not fear. It has been regarded as a time of ugliness, sadness and sorrow, at time uselessness, loneliness, boredom, poverty and burden. Therefore, as ageism has been reflected through negativity, it is important to address this dynamics.

Causes and Consequences of Ageism

Causes of ageism are diverse and have roots in individuals to society and culture to economy as well as in state policies. Based on its diversity, it could be grouped into three main categories: individual sources, socioeconomic influences and cultural sources (Palmore, 1990).

Individual Sources

Individualistic causes are based on a key argument that ageism is based on individual psychological process. The central premise of this argument is that individual's personality, modes of perception and thinking can influence ageism (Palmore, 1990). For instance, certain individuals who have authoritarian personalities tend to be excessively concerned with their status and more inclined to hold stereotypical belief against the elderly (Levin and Levin, 1980). Many of them also equate themselves with the elderly and feel more pessimistic about their own future and feel helpless in the face of powerful biological and social forces that shape the aging process. Such feelings are likely to result in negative views of aging and elders (Kogan, 1973).

Frustration often causes hostile impulses in individuals and when hostility can not be directed towards the cause, it is usually vented against some other sources. In many cases, the hostility is displaced against elderly groups. Therefore, the elderly become scapegoats for the hostility generated by the
Rationalization is another psychological process that supports prejudice and discrimination against elderly. It attributes one's actions to creditable motives without analysis of true intentions. For instance, forced retirement may be rationalized on the grounds that the older worker is no longer competent, or is slowing down when the primary reason is to hire a young worker with low payment (Palmore, 1990).

**Socio-economic Influences**

Socio-economic forces play important role in promoting ageism. These forces are mainly structural which affect the organization of the society by reordering them in favor of youth. For example, modernization or changes from pre-industrial to industrial society causes declines in the status and prestige of elders. Other factor such as urbanization, a spin-off of modernization, often leaves the elderly behind in rural areas in isolation reducing their status and prestige. Under a similar process, in a new economic order where competition for any job is high, the 'excess' of older workers competing for jobs tend to make younger workers hostile against them. Competition for jobs and concentrations of elders in rural areas tends to support prejudice against them (Barrow and Smith, 1979). The major demographic trend- the rapid increased number and proportion of elderly in society, especially the very old- also influences ageism. The net effect of these trends on ageism is still inconclusive. However, there is growing perception that increased number of elderly put pressure on scarce resources such as health care and state has to bear their burden in fiscal responsibilities (Schick, 1986).

Isolation, competition as well as living under a minority status create a condition of 'double jeopardy' for minority elderly. This concept characterizes the plight of minority elderly when they live as a separate ethnic group under a dominant culture. The concept suggests that in addition to disadvantages imposed by the minority group status, minority aged tend to experience the devaluation in status associated with old age. Hence, when one is in double jeopardy, one has associated with him/herself two statuses which are negatively valued by the society (Dowd and Bengtson, 1978). Further, two negative statuses have multiplicative interaction which worsens the situation of the status of incumbent.

**Cultural Sources**

There are many aspects of culture that support ageism. In fact, many cultures are so conditioned by the ageism that it is hard to even recognize. Yet, many cultures encourage ageism through 'blaming the victim' and value conflict, as well as through language, literature, and media.

The process of 'blaming the victim' is often used to justify discrimination against elder. 'Blaming the victim' is often an unconscious process. It is covered by well-meaning and many sincere people thing that discrimination against the victim is necessary 'for their own good' or for the 'good of the society'. There is cultural prescription that uses various mechanisms to discriminate elders and blame the victims for their oppression. For example, elders might not be employed because of the belief that they are less productive as well as they are sick, senile and incapable. Families may abuse and neglect older members because of the belief that they are senile, ugly demanding, noncontributory and difficult. There are differences between the values of older and younger people. The effects of aging might make older people emphasize different values. Moreover, because elders are perceived as more traditional, past-oriented and conservative, rather than rational and future-oriented, they appear to deviate from this value orientation. Different value sets between older and younger generations might trigger value conflict and might encourage ageism.

Language plays a pivotal role in advancing ageism. For instance, Macnicol (2006) found depiction of elderly in language is overwhelmingly negative in scope. He asserted that many ageist terms are doubly offensive because they contain both ageist and sexist references. Language tends to support ageism through negative connotations of 'old' and positive connotations of 'young'. Language often equates old age with negative characteristics, such as decline and deterioration; while young age is age is equated with positive characteristics such as health and beauty (Macnicol, 2006).

Literature in many cultures portrays elderly in negative terms and thus encourages ageism. With some exceptions, often older persons are seen as traditionalists and obstacle to progressive thought and action. Literature also tends to victimize older women as more conservative.

The world of aging portrayed in the mass media has not traditionally been an enjoyable or positive one. Falk and Falk (1997) stated that the elderly populations suffer from negative stereotyping more than any other identifiable social group. They argue that preconceived notions about cognition, physical ability, health, sociability, personality, and work capability perpetuate these negative stereotypes.

**Ageism- a Potential Threat to Indigenous Elderly?**

The steadfast growth of elderly population in Bangladesh is a growing concern. According the recent statistics, the country's present elderly population is approximately seven million with a rapid growth of the older population. It has been projected that the population is expected to exceed 17.5 million by 2025 (Kabir 1994). Despite a changing demographic scenario, the elderly population of Bangladesh is generally living under the settings of an extended family. Within the traditional extended family of Bangladesh, older persons enjoy relatively high prestige as custodians of property and, as family heads, they enjoy honor and exercise some degree of authority over younger family members. However, there is growing evidence that this arrangement is under threat from many socioeconomic forces. Especially, transformation from land-based economy to a semi-capitalist economy, decrease in land availability, migration of children to urban centers, and the overall impact of pervasive poverty have adverse impact on the traditional form of support for older people (Rahman, 2000).

Compare to mainstream elderly, most of the indigenous communities in Bangladesh live within strong familial and community bonds. In indigenous culture, the family and the community are the basic social, economic and cultural units. Moreover, the indigenous communities are organized around the principles of reciprocity, hierarchy and mutual assistance. A member of indigenous community is never viewed as an individual; rather, he is always a part of family. Being a member of an extended family, individuals enjoy the economic, social and emotional benefit. And all these are structured around age. Respect for aged is maintained thorough multiple kinship systems.

Despite the fact that indigenous communities have their own distinct culture and way of life but biological changes and the experience of death are similar with mainstream society. Although the young generations of ethnic groups still uphold positive attitudes towards the elders, the economic situation of ethnic older people is extremely vulnerable. This is mainly because many indigenous groups do not have an assured source of living. Thus, it is it is logical to conclude that socio-economic forces that are affecting the life-style of mainstream elderly are also playing critical role in having adverse affect on the life of indigenous elderly. It is expected that ethnic older people are encountering similar problems either in a comparable or an acute fashion.

Given the community settings, family pattern communal feeling, strong bond and kinship system, there is less potential for ageism to generate from individual level. As mentioned earlier that ageism at individual level generates from psychological processes where personal traits and psychological conditions of individuals play the pivotal role. Socialization also plays a central role in this manner. It is generally accepted that the basic social attitudes of
a society or culture are acquired in childhood as part of the process of socialization. Acquisition of social attitudes originated from significant others (Holmes, 1995). Parents provide a good deal of direct or implied instructions about values and attitudes that can be important in learning any stereotypes. Since indigenous community live within a strong community bond and which revere elderly for their wisdom, it is highly unlikely that ageism will be cultured among indigenous individuals through socialization or through individual psychological mechanism.

Socio-economic forces play an important role in ageism. The admixture of discrimination, materialism, autonomy and urbanization often creates pressure on new generation to practice ageism. There is strong possibility that indigenous communities in Bangladesh either encounter ageism through interplay of these forces or likely to be affected in near future. How these processes take place is yet to be researched but demographic changes, urbanization, aggression by mainstream socio-cultural practices and rural-urban migration remain as potential threats. For example, population growth putting intense pressure on indigenous livelihood and Increased poverty is pushing young generation to migrate into urban centers. When economic migration of young members takes place, the elderly are left behind in poverty and at the mercy of their other family members. Being in urban life, young members struggle to maintain themselves in a harsh economic environment and thus likely to acquire individualistic values which might lead to ageism. Indigenous elderly who migrate with their children in urban centers are subject to "double jeopardy" syndrome. Many of these elderly are first generation urban dwellers and they live in an alien culture which is often hostile to them. Similarly, many causes (such as government policy, exploitation by the mainstream member) are forcing indigenous community to be marginalized following dire economic crises. When a community is under constant pressure from poverty and its downward spirals, it creates enormous pressure on existing social relations and cultural practices. Under an increased poverty level and in a resource constraint environment, the relationship between generations widens and social relations are subject to be negatively affected.

Cultural forces are very important factors in promoting ageism among indigenous elderly. Cultural change can create a generation gap that contributes to ageism. Rapid social changes can cause values of younger generations to be somewhat different from their parents’ values and significantly different from the grandparents'. Those who grew up in a given time period may have different interpretations and orientations towards social issues than those who grew up earlier or later. When values clash, ageism can arise with each age group prejudiced against the elderly. Communicating and understanding across generations become difficult when values are different.

Perhaps, the most widespread ageism practiced against indigenous elderly is by the state itself. Ironically, the norms of a democratic state are mandated to protect the rights of all citizenry regardless of their ethnic identity. Unfortunately, this is not the case for indigenous elderly in Bangladesh. Government policies either ignore them deliberately encouraging implicit ageism or take discriminatory policies against them. Though such policies are directed against the indigenous groups in general, however, the older members, being the most vulnerable segment, are hurt most. For example, when it comes to implicit ageism, government land policies often evict indigenous elderly and their family from the land what they are cultivating for generations. When the head of the family and life-long earning member, the older people live in dire poverty for the rest of their life. Such dispute generates from the fact that indigenous elderly who possess the land do not own any legal document to substantiate their claim. The double spike of this arrangement is that in one account government doesn't offer educational/legal-awareness program for them, on the other, they are evicted from their land without any compensation. These repressive measures are unheard of for the elderly of mainstream society.

In the front of explicit ageism, government programs are often designed for the elderly of the mainstream society. The exclusionary mechanism is so normative in government's policy and practices that it would leave the impression that government itself is an ageist. For example, government's Old Age Allowance excludes any participation of indigenous elderly. Since its inception, the program hardly included any recipient from indigenous groups. Similarly, public health care system are designed for Bengali speakers where an indigenous elderly either does not have access to or deprived of service for his inability to communicate in Bengali. Even, in areas where indigenous communities are concentrated government does not provide any translator or any other way to resolve this problem. On the contrary, government offers special provisions for mainstream elderly. Geriatric Hospital (which receives government donation) and 'Old Home' for the elderly are few examples. Even though apparently every older person has access to these organization, however, the programs either discourage indigenous elderly or not supportive in having service.

Conclusion
Age-based discriminatory practices are described as ageism. Ageism is so closely bound up with strongly internalized and widely accepted notions of age-appropriate behaviors that establishing exactly at what point this notion become 'discriminatory' is difficult. However, there is substantial anecdotal evidence that implicit ageism is widespread in western societies. The western governments are increasingly active in protecting its elderly citizens from ageism through public policy, legal measures and mass-awareness. Unfortunately, this is not the scenario in Bangladesh. In a rapidly changing economic and social landscape, the ageist behavior is growing but government is still in the mindset that the elderly enjoy the same kind of "high" status as it was under an agrarian social order. Anecdotal evidences suggest that the social change is also taking place in those isolated communities and elderly are being affected most. Though, indigenous elderly are in relatively good shape than the mainstream elderly in terms of interpersonal ageism, they are subject to institutional ageism. It is ironic that where the state should come forward to protect its elderly citizens from any discrimination, instead, it promotes discrimination through its policies and practices. The best way to combat state-practiced ageism is to campaign continuously where and how these practices are taking place. Social scientists and civil society can play important role to correct these malpractices.

References


Ethnic Community and Occupational Mobility: A Sociological Baseline Study Among the Patra Community in Sylhet

Dr. Mohammad Abdul Ghani

Abstract
In the courses of time many indigenous communities of Bangladesh have changed their ancestral livelihood due to influence of different social, political, economical and cultural forces. On the other hand, modernization forces them to be assimilated with the dominant culture and ways of life that does not benefit them rather demolish their distinct ways of life. The patras are on of the indigenous communities who are found to be engaged in different earning activities other than their ancestral livelihood. It is observed that this process failed to change their predicaments; rather their situations are getting worse day by day. National policy initiatives never addressed their distinct needs; even this community has little exposure outside their community. There is nobody who will make their concern in public. The main objective of this paper is to explore the changes in occupational mobility patterns among the Patra community based on a study which follows the changes in the internal and external factors prevalent in the sociological discourses. The modalities used here are common in the conventional sociological criteria. It covers the changes in economic and cultural patterns following converging process. It specially focuses on the impact of changes in occupational mobility on the social solidarity of the community and the religious conversion for "Sanskritization" on economic life.

Introduction and Objectives
The Patra are one of the indigenous communities living exclusively in Sylhet area. There are very few historical evidences so far found regarding the ethnic formation of this community. They lived mainly in the plain land adjacent to the forest and hilly zones. This condition of living had influenced them to select their traditional mode of life and occupation. Within the context of social change in greater environment, the mode of life of the Patras has also been changed. In the courses of time, they are gradually accommodating and assimilating with the dominant Bangalee culture and livelihood as external factor. The change has mixed result in their life. The objective of this paper includes the exploration of changes in occupational mobility among the Patra community. It focuses on the changes in the internal and external factors prevalent in the sociological discourses. It covers the changes in economic and cultural patterns following converging process. It specially focuses on the impact of changes in occupational mobility on the social solidarity of the community and the religious conversion for "Sanskritization7" on economic life.

Theoretical Analysis and Literature Review
The research literature available regarding ethnic studies in Bangladesh is mostly comprised of the greater sized communities such as; the Chakma, Garo, and Santa etc. Ali (1990) has analyzed the relation of economic mobility and social change among the Santals in British India. He concluded that the economic diversification had brought certain changes in the Santals communities of British India but it did not result in the improvement in the standard of living. The San tal hunters and dwellers of forests were indifferently agriculturists. Agriculture failed to enrich their socio-economic life. At the same time, the Santals who were employed outside their vi Ilages received low wages. The avenues which make people rich, jobs in public and private offices, trade, smuggling, moneylending etc. were far away from their economic sphere. There are scanty of research literature found about small size indigenous communities. The present study aims to fulfill this gap by selecting a small sized community. Social mobility deals with the shift of the socio-economic position of an individual or group or communities from one condition to another. According to Sorokin (1964), "by social mobility is understood any transition of an individual or social object or value-anything that has been created or modified by human activity- from one social position to another." He has divided two principle types of social mobility, horizontal, and vertical. By horizontal social mobility or shifting, is meant the transition of an individual or social object from one social group to another situated on the same level. By vertical social mobility is meant the relation involved in a transition of an individual or a social object from one social stratum to another. According to the direction of the transition there are two types of vertical social mobility: ascending and descending or social climbing and social sinking. Giddens (1997) has argued that property, income, and social status etc. of an individual have much influence in determining mobility. For horizontal mobility the factors for determining are religion, politics, family and occupation etc., while, for vertical mobility, economy, occupation, and politics etc. are also influential determining factors. Mobility is no more reckoned without considering these basic elements.

Chakrabarty (1998) has conducted a survey among the Pattm community to explore the general features of Pattm life. He found that the crisis of dual identity was intense among the Parla community. Locally and institutionally the Partas are known as the believer of animistic Hindu religion, though they had tribal origin and their own language.

The research identified chronic displacement of land ownership as the major case of poverty among the Pattms. The process of displacement happened in two ways. Firstly, they were displaced in the 19th century following the establishment of tea garden occupying their land and, secondly, the gradual intrusion of the powerful Bangalee communities. However, getting no alternative the Pattms blame their fate for the economic distress. They inherit the traditional occupation which includes the production and selling of organic coal and hunting and gathering though they know that the production of organic coal was harmful to health and environment. The Patm community had a strong local government system called panchayt whose headman is known as Lar. The ownership of the nets and hunting weapons were treated as communal property controlled by the panchayt. The distribution of property and the solution of the economic and social problems were also dealt by the village panchayt. After the conversion into Hindu religion the traditional panchayt system has become inactive.

Saha (2002) has conducted a study on this community in order to observe the occupational mobility. He argued that nobody had dominated them in their past traditional occupation. But, the other people dominated them at present occupation. The vertical mobility was not found among them because of occupational change. The establishment of ceramic industry has destroyed their household industry. There found some similarities of Karl Marx's characteristics of primitive communism to their past occupation and mode of life.

5 The data used in this article were collected by one of my former students M. M. Kabir who did it to prepare his research monograph for his BSS (Hons) degree in the department of sociology, SUST
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7 M. N. Srinivas explained the purification of the Adivasis (tribal) by the concept of sanskritization. He describes, "sanskritization is the process by which 'Io_w' Hindu caste; or Tribal or other group, changes its customs, rituals, ideology, and way of life in the direction of a high, and frequently, 'twice-born' caste. Generally such changes are followed by a claim to a higher position in the caste hierarchy than that traditionally conceded to the claimant caste by the local community. The claim is usually made over a period of time, in fact, a generation or two. before the 'arrival' is conceded". Srinivas argued that in course of time the tribal would attain some status in the caste hierarchy. But this has never happened in history

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It is recurrent that the macro social changes through capitalistic intrusion and subsequent development of market economy has gradually penetrated into the traditional economy which has effaced the once ramified "anthropological identity" of the tribal people and their traditional occupational patterns among the Patra community. The occupational mobility also pertains with social mobility. It has brought changes in every sphere of life; such as, education, religion, residence, culture, health consciousness etc. If there could not have evidential change regarding occupational mobility among the Partas, then, the community could no more be called than a "caste society".

It is admissible that vertical mobility in a traditional society would be lesser and in the capitalist society higher. As the Parta is a traditional community-the division of labor and the introduction of mechanized mode of production rare- they would have lesser vertical mobility. The fact is that lesser mobility among the Parta community has dragged them at the point of disappearance. The occupational mobility also influences the political ideology. In this case, political consciousness could be ascending or sinking. For vertical division of labor and the introduction of mechanized mode of production rare- they would have lesser vertical mobility. The fact is that lesser mobility among the Parta community has dragged them at the point of disappearance.

The research was conducted in a village named Doloipara located near Sylhet-Jaffong highway about 10 km away from Sylhet city. The Patra community has been living there since a distant past. According to heresy that the village was named following the name of a prominent Parta leader named Doloipar Parta. After the liberation war in 1971, large number of Bangalee community started to migrate and settled into this village. As well as many Patra families migrated in India and did not come back again. Now about 40 Patra families are living in the village. Patras have become minority inside their own territory and many Muslims and Hindu families are living there. There is a mosque, a primary school, a madrasa, a dozen of tea-stalls are located inside this hill-surrounded village.

The village has become a piece where trees and forest lands are barely found. Wood businessmen destroyed the beauty of the village which was surrounded by forest and tree. Recently, a ceramic factory has been constructed inside this village where many of the Patra work mainly as low paid employees.

Case 1: Faki Parta; Age -95
Faki Patra has an extended household with having a sizeable cropland. The Faki family consists of 26 members including six sons and grandchildren. She informed that they had variety of occupation in the past such as hunting, gathering, selling of coals, and agriculture. They lived in a prosperous family. At present, they have to live on the daily earnings of the family members. They have almost no savings now. Two of her sons work in the ceramic factory and the others are engaged in day laboring. They have hunting materials and weapons; such as, nets, javelin, sticks etc. The ownership of these weapons is communal. The headman called the community members to hunting and they followed him. Even if someone fails to participate in hunting, he got the share of the hunts. The women are almost engaged in food gathering. She was also engaged in food gathering at her active life. In the past the women had active participation in fishing and food gathering. However, they were considered to be less apt in hunting; thus, did not participate. At present, hunting and fishing activities are almost rare because of lack of animals available in the forest and fishes in the wetland where they have access. The production and selling of wooden coals were the main traditional occupation of her family. Wooden coal production has a unique and traditional process. By digging a hole at the adjacent to the household or the forests, woods were piled up there and set fire. After burn, coal ware prepared through pouring water into the ignited woods. Then the wooden coals were made. About two/three days later, the coals were taken to the market to sell in the jewelry and hotel shops. Nowadays, the demand of coal has been decreased as well as the collection of wood from forests has become difficult because the ownership of woodlands have changed and it has gone to the majority population. She informed that a village leader of majority community has taken registered 240 decimal lands from the forest. The collection of wood has decreased as well as the collection of wood from forests has become difficult because the ownership of woodlands have changed and it has gone to the majority population. She informed that a village leader of majority community has taken registered 240 decimal lands from the forest. The collection of wood has decreased. The women are almost engaged in food gathering. She was also engaged in food gathering at her active life. In the past the women had active participation in fishing and food gathering. However, they were considered to be less apt in hunting; thus, did not participate. At present, hunting and fishing activities are almost rare because of lack of animals available in the forest and fishes in the wetland where they have access. The production and selling of wooden coals were the main traditional occupation of her family. Wooden coal production has a unique and traditional process. When the village was established by his father and still now it is known as Pratullah Patra Primary School. He has four members in family. Before working in the factory he gathered and sold woods from forests, made wooden coals, sharecrops on others' land and hunted "grazing animals" in groups. Hunting is now rare because of the unavailability of grazing animals and bound to change their occupation. They had freedom and unemployment persons were barely seen among them as their past occupations were community based and self motivated. At present, they are becoming unemployed. It is mainly because of less or no opportunity to be engaged independently due to lack of lands and other opportunities and resources that had the sources of their earning and livelihood. He has to work 8-10 hours daily with over time without honarium. He earns only TK. 1500.00 monthly. But in the past he earned TK. 70-80 daily. He believes in the animistic Sanatan Hindu religion. The conversion of religion has increased his social status and economic facilities, he observed.

Case 2: Sree Nanda Patra; Age-27; Religion-Hindu (Sanatan); Occupation-Ceramic Factory Labor.
Nanda Patra has been working in the ceramic factory for three years. He failed to continue education after class four due to poverty in the family. Surprisingly the only primary school in the village was established by his father and still now it is known as Pratullah Patra Primary School. He has four members in family. Before working in the factory he gathered and sold woods from forests, made wooden coals, sharecrops on others' land and hunted "grazing animals" in groups. Hunting is now rare because of the unavailability of grazing animals and bound to change their occupation. They had freedom and unemployment persons were barely seen among them as their past occupations were community based and self motivated. At present, they are becoming unemployed. It is mainly because of less or no opportunity to be engaged independently due to lack of lands and other opportunities and resources that had the sources of their earning and livelihood. He has to work 8-10 hours daily with over time without honarium. He earns only TK. 1500.00 monthly. But in the past he earned TK. 70-80 daily. He believes in the animistic Sanatan Hindu religion. The conversion of religion has increased his social status and economic facilities, he observed.

Case 3: Sree Jagai Patra; Age-25; Sex-Male; Religion-Sanatan Hindu; Occupation-Ceramic Factory Labor.
Jagai Patra has been working in the ceramic factory for two and half years. He has formal schooling up to class two. He lives in a joint family with five members. Before working in the factory, he was engaged in gathering and selling woods from forests, making wooden coals, sharecrops on others' land, and hunting. At present he works as day laborer in others land for survival. After establishing the factory, the grazing animals have fled away and many other sources of livelihood have been affected. Like many other people of his community members he is bound to work in the factory. He has to work for 8-10 hours daily with overtime having no paid for it. The salary is cut for absence even it happens due to illness. He has no freedom in the work. He argued that the intrusion of the Bangalee has harmful effect on the environment and the change in occupation has negative impact on the living standard.
Case 4: Haridhan Patra; Age-21; Religion-Hindu; OccupationCeramic Factory Labor.

Haridhan Patra has joined in this job three years back. He has completed primary level of education. He failed to continue education because of lack of financial support despite having strong willingness for higher education. His joint family comprised of eight members. Before his work here in the factory, he was engaged in their traditional occupation. Before the establishment of the ceramic factory, population density was not like today, there were enough forests and arable land for agriculture. At present the "Abadi" (those who migrated from other districts than Sylhet) people have occupied the arable land and settled here permanently. Thus, living on the traditional occupation is jeopardized and has become impossible. So, they are bound to work in other's factory. He argued that there were no Muslim people here before who have built many brick-built houses around the Patra community. Now he has to work eight hours a day, six days in a week and got TK. 1500.00 as monthly salary. He lost his land due to his failure in returning small amount of loan taken from an influential and corrupt Bangalee person. He forcefully occupied the land in return of money that was given as loan .

Case 5: Kironbala Patra; Age-20; Sex-Female; OccupationReceptionist (Jakaria Estate City).

Kironbala Patra is the woman in the community who received higher education. After passing see examination she joined as a receptionist in a private tourism industry located nearby her village. She gets TK. 3000.00 per month a salary and saves a certain amount of her salary. Though her family had traditional occupation but as they have a sizeable land property and business they were not hard up. She had the opportunity to receive higher education but could not avail because of external hindrance. She is working for four months. She is politically conscious and has been a voter though could not cast vote till now.

She opined that the Patras had lived in a calm and tranquil environment in their own culture in the past. But the intrusion of the Bangalees and the lahar tracts of the lakaria Estate City have changed the natural tranquility following the Patra culture getting lost. At the time of describing the influence of majority population in their community, she noticed that the Muslim community in this area wanted to change the name of the village into "lalalabād" instead of the it's old name "Dolopara which had been rooted out from the name of a influential Patra. She has also informed that the Muslim community wanted to change the name of the primary school in the village. They are very much eager to nationalize the school so that the original name can be deleted automatically. She considers it as a communal attitude, though no communal conflicts are existing there. She also thinks that she got the job because of her qualification and she is satisfied with it. The other members of the family have different occupations other than their traditional occupations.

Focus Group Discussion 1

Among the ten participants fur individuals noticed that they did not change their occupation in their lifetime. For informed that they have changed their occupation as the environment has changed which made their traditional occupation obsolete. Another two participants have been forced to change their traditional occupation due to industrialization and other factors like decreased demand of their home made products. The participants earn daily TK. 74.00 on an average at standard deviation 39.37 which implies no conclusive results because the highest earning of a person is TK. 175.00, whereas 4 persons have the lowest TK.40.00. They have least mentality of savings. About TK. 4.50 were saved on an average day at standard deviation 7.62 which is not actively conclusive. They have much interest in political parties and issues. Almost all of them are found to be politically conscious. Receiving higher education is not found among the group members. Three participants have converted religion. They noticed that this religious conversion did not bring any economic and social prosperity in their life. Displacement of land ownership was considered as the major threat for the community. Majority people entered into their territories, grabbed and snatched away their lands through various exploitative ways, the participants observed. Majority of the participants noticed that their social and economic status have decreased in the courses of time. However, according to participants, few still remain their previous status and surprisingly a very small section of Patras has raised their status.

Focus Group Discussion 2

Among the participants of this group 50 per cent are found to be engaged in ceramic factory adjacent to their village. Day laboring and hunting are found to be other occupation of the participants who are not involve in factory. Loss of traditional livelihood due to environmental change (70 per cent), establishment of industry inside their village (10 per cent), and Bangalee intrusion (20 per cent) were found to be major reasons to change their occupation. Their daily average income is TK. 75.00 which implies that the income is not sufficient enough to fulfill their basic needs. Income discrimination is highly affected this people. Majority (60 per cent) noticed that they live in joint family. Each of their families consists of 8 members on an average. However, very big size or very small size family is rarely found among them. Among the participants nobody was found whose family has not more than 9 members and the minimum number is 4. Among them 40 per cent were highly involved in political activities, 40 per cent can be treated as moderately involved as they support party norms and vote them but do not regular participants of political activities. Only 1 person among the participants of this group was found who received higher secondary education. Rest of the participants had 5 years of schooling on an average. 3 persons have changed the religion which did not facilitate them any economic opportunity. The average ownership of land was 80 decimal at standard deviation 78.16. Thus extreme value in distribution was pronounced. In this case, the highest holder of one person has 220 acres while the least one has only 10 decimal. The ownership of land is in transition now. About 50 per cent of the participants identified exploitation by the majority population as the major cause behind rapid landlessness among the Patras. Intrusion and voluntary selling are other reasons behind this.

Focus Group Discussion 3

Half of the participants of this group are found to be engaged in ceramic factory. Day laboring is another dominant occupation of about one third of the participants. Most of them think that environmental degradation and Bangalee intrusion have changed their traditional occupation. They earn TK. 61.00 on an average in a day at standard deviation 7.99 which imply that they have no significant difference in income. They have almost no saving as their scanty amount of income can not fulfill their basic needs. They have 8 members in a family on an average. 9 persons were highly and 1 person moderately politically conscious. They have less than 5 years of schooling and 2 persons have no institutional education. They have 34 decimal of cropland on an average at standard deviation 17. It was found that they have remarkable differences in the ownership of land. Half of the participants argued that the changes in occupation have not link in the changes of social status. However other half portions of the participants the observation. They think that their social status is decreasing due to the change in occupation.
Conclusion

The Patra community is now in transition. They are moving from their traditional occupation and culture towards modern capitalist and market oriented economic mode of life. The factors affecting this process are both internal and external. For internal process the conversion of religion is highly pronounced. For external process, factors like environmental change, intrusion of Bangalees and industrialization have changed their natural habitat and occupational patterns. Now the occupational patterns are highly dispersed and market economy oriented which qualifies mobility among them. Whereas horizontal mobility is observed in change in religion because it did not introduce Sanskritization inside their community, vertical mobility is observed with mixed results. The changes of occupation did not happened from the inner mode of life, rather, a situation exist where external pressure has bound them to cope with the situation. It is found in most cases that their status and economic condition has decreased for changing occupational patterns. In the other hand, most of them have lost their land property which led them to dire effaced condition. In very few cases the vertical mobility is sustained. Where it happens, education and accumulation of capital plays positive roles. In conclusion, we argue that many indigenous communities are coming out from rural environment and isolation which presenting a precarious social structure.

References

Assimilation: A Challenge for the Indigenous Culture and Customs
Md. Faisal Hammed

Abstract
Indigenous groups are unique in their cultural practices. Each group have their own customs and traditions that serve as guidelines for everyday societal interaction. These diverse cultures, languages and traditions strongly contribute to creating a culturally rich society in Bangladesh. It is expected that all members of a particular indigenous group will strictly follow their distinct customs during everyday life. Unfortunately their distinct customary laws and practices are under a constant threat. Different socio-cultural, political and economic factors are working as a force, propelling indigenous communities along the assimilation process. Among the younger generation of indigenous communities today, there is a considerable interest and fascination with majority culture which acts as a diversion from their own distinct culture. As a result, a countercultural attitude has developed which rejects their own societal norms and values and seeks alternative lifestyles. If this attitude continues, indigenous people's rich customs may disappear. Ultimately, this will undermine their distinct culture identity. This paper aims to understand the extent, cause and consequences of such a mainstreaming process among the indigenous communities in Bangladesh.

Introduction
The concept ‘Assimilation' has different connotations. It is widely explained in both positive and negative lights. Assimilation has become a contradictory phenomenon in development activities for those who are working with different indigenous communities. Some people suggest that it brings prosperity and wellbeing among those who are a neglected section of the population. On the contrary, it is treated as subversive for sustainable development and is a process of demoralization for the culture of a distinct ethnic group. This view suggests that assimilation demolishes rich indigenous customs and different cultural practices that ultimately destroy the distinct identity of a particular group of population. From this point of view, removing assimilation to maintain, protect and develop indigenous people's identities, languages, customs, way of life and religion has become a concern to the international community (ILO, 1999). In Bangladesh, there are more than 47 indigenous groups who have lived here from a time immemorial and who have distinct cultural practices, customs and languages. They are living within the same territory as other minority and majority groups but with an independent identity from people outside of their concentration.

Members of this community learn this culture and transmit it from one generation to the next (Schaefer and Lamm, 1995). In Bangladesh, indigenous people's language and culture has substantially contributed to enriching the language and cultural life of majority Bengali people. However, for many reasons, their cultural activities and traditional customs are practiced less and many indigenous people are becoming more familiar with majority people's culture and practices. This represents a natural progression of culture changing over a period of time. It is said that culture and traditional customs are historically bound yet dynamic over time (Timberlake and others, 2002). But cultural changes may have a powerful influence in destroying a distinct culture. Indigenous communities in Bangladesh fear that many of their communities will die out mainly due to this continuous assimilation process. Already there are many instances to show they have lost their identity and language which has severely affected their social, political and cultural life (Saha, 2005). Their culture and way of life have distinctive contributions to the cultural diversity and social and ecological harmony of humankind. So the assimilation process is not only a threat for the indigenous peoples, it is also a threat for civilization.

Defining Assimilation and Custom
In the process of assimilation, members of an ethnic group are expected to abandon traditional ways and customs and to adopt the new culture fully by completely changing their personal cultural identification, attitudes and beliefs, behaviours, language, marital expectations, parenting style and expectations and sense of social responsibility so that they are congruent with the dominant culture (Timberlake and others, 2002). Assimilation and mainstreaming are used interchangeably. Mainstreaming can be defined as a process by which a small section of the population imitate and practice majority people's ideas and beliefs and try to become connected with majority culture.

Customs and beliefs are representative of distinct cultures and daily living practices (Morales and Sheafor, 1998). Obligations and reciprocity work as positive inducement to customary behaviour. Custom is defined as an accepted way of behaving or of doing things in a society or a community (Baker and others, 2000). A person's ethnicity is derived from his or her family background. Families follow the custom and culture of the community in which it is located. Culture is the set of values, beliefs, and norms for socially acceptable language patterns, behaviours, and standards for ideal role types that represent the social structure of a given society (Timberlake and others, 2002).

Practical features of assimilation process
Ethnic divisions are divisions between groups based upon differences of culture and/or physical appearance which are frequently linked to profound social tension and conflicts. There are a few multi-cultural societies that have no history of antagonism between the members of their constituent ethnic communities. Lines of opposition and prejudices frequently centre upon racial differences between majority and indigenous communities in Bangladesh. Indigenous people's rights are not well protected under National law and National development policies discriminate against them, yet their human rights are frequently violated. There is no assimilation policy enacted to promote the integration of indigenous communities within the Bengali mainstream.

Although the mainstreaming or assimilation process is not directly forced by the government of Bangladesh, this process started when Bengali people illegally settled under government's patronization and Christian missionary organizations started to introduce their activities to different indigenous communities. Illegal settlement severely affected their socioeconomic life (Chakma, 1999). Their earning activities and way of regular living have been disturbed by the intervention of these settlers. As the government supports such illegal settlement and shows a highly cooperative attitude towards Bengali settlers, indigenous people cannot resist these devastating activities. In plain land indigenous inhabited areas, similar problems are occurring due to the government's so called 'development projects' and land grabbing by majority people. In Garo indigenous people concentrated areas a few greedy majority Muslim people are forcefully marrying indigenous girls and occupying their lands, this is destroying tradition, culture and religion converting Garo indigenous community into Muslim religion.

In Christian dominant indigenous peoples areas the Church is the sole authority in the community, family and personal affairs instead of the village organization. It is weakening many of the original tradition and customs of indigenous groups. Influenced by majority people most of the Khasi and Garo young men and women do not follow the husband of hire system (in this system the husband is required to stay at his father-in-laws house). It is commonly

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seen among educated Garos that the wife moves to her husband's house similar to majority culture. This new process is associated with pride and respect for the husband. In some cases it is even fully supported by the community. This process has also already started among the Khasis.

The younger generation of indigenous communities, in particular have a considerable interest in and fascination with majority culture. A countercultural attitude has developed and many are rejecting their own societal norms and values and seeking alternative lifestyles. This practice and attitude is strongly visible among the indigenous people who live in urban areas. This process has emerged due to very close proximity to majority people. Outside the home indigenous people are highly connected with majority people in their practical life (at workplace, schools, shopping centers etc). They have to speak Bangla, to eat Bengali food, maintain Bengali cultural practices. In this way, Bengali language and culture is automatically injecting into their regular practice. In a few cases, urban indigenous children cannot even speak their mother language. Living within the majority culture and system of life, quite naturally many indigenous children forget to speak their own language. Along with this, these children have little or no idea about their own rich distinct culture, and customary rules. Forcible incorporation of indigenous peoples into a stratified market economy affected their traditional economic systems. This process exploits indigenous peoples economically and has led to the destruction of the community as a whole (Mundu, 2002).

There is an Adivasical Academy located at Birshiri of Netrokona district where Garo (Mandi) indigenous people have been living for a long time. Although this organization is responsible for upholding, preserving and maintaining indigenous culture, language and customs, in reality it does not have any mentioning programs. Since its establishment, there has been very little achievement due to lack of proper initiatives by the appropriate people. Recently this author visited the Academy to observe this reality. The chief executive tends to be selected from the majority people. In many cases s/he may not have very different ideas and interests to an indigenous person.

Possible Causes

Indigenous groups tend to become a subordinate group whose members have significantly less control or power over their own lives than the members of a dominant or majority group have over theirs. This reality may work as a powerful force among the younger generation and encourage them to be integrated with majority people so that they can share the opportunities that majority people enjoy. This connection with majority people is easy for the younger generation due to such high physical close proximity. Educational institutions, resource centers, businesses, and work opportunities are mainly dominated by majority people. All of these institutions are highly influenced by majority culture and are majority language oriented which accelerates the rate of integration into majority community. Under the pressure of a larger population's culture, it often becomes difficult for indigenous people to maintain his/her distinct way of life. This process continuously keeps her/him away from her/his own culture and custom. At some point in the future, her/his own indigenous custom and practices will disappear from her/his everyday life or become only slightly practiced. Illegal settlement of Chittagong Hill Tracts is an important factor in the assimilation process among indigenous people of this region.

After the independence of Bangladesh, about 50,000 Bengalis settled in the Chittagong Hill Tracts areas. From 1979 to 1983 the Government of Bangladesh sponsored transmigration or 'Planned Population Transfer' of a large number of illegal plain settlers into the CHTs. In 1941 the Muslim population was only 2.94 per cent of the total population of CHTs and it has risen to 49 per cent in 1991(Chakma, 1999). Now more than half of the total population is Muslim and their number is increasing. Indigenous people are systematically becoming a minority inside their own territory. This process has had a devastating effect on the life of indigenous peoples which includes unprecedented land alienation, spread of poverty, displacement, deforestation and soil erosion, destruction of indigenous peoples' traditional governments, destruction of local traditional economy, forced assimilation of indigenous communities and systematic massacres of the indigenous Jumma peoples (Chakma, 1999: 20). As a majority, Muslim people are surrounding the indigenous peoples' territories, it becomes difficult for the indigenous peoples to maintain and practice their distinct customs and cultural practices freely. On the other hand different majority cultures are automatically assimilating themselves within indigenous culture due to very close physical proximity of the larger community which has different cultural practices. Such unexpected but deliberate socio-political integration translates into a forcible assimilation process.

Religion reinforces the social norms and order; it works as a source of identity and has integrative impact to any society (Schafer and Lamm, 1995). Different theories suggest that religion has a powerful influence in changing society. After introducing Christianity, many indigenous community's customary rules and indigenous cultural traditions of Church rule in the Chittagong Hill Tracts areas. The practice of Church rules and the influence of Church rule in the indigenous communities has converted to Christianity. This is commonly seen among the Garo and the Khasi indigenous communities, although they once had a strong village organization that could operate all types of social, cultural, personal or familial affairs following their own customs and traditional rules. Now it has been replaced by the Church committee. Church committees follow their own religious rules. Therefore, indigenous rules and customs are continuously disappearing. Although Christian missionary organizations offer education, health, employment and other utilities of standard living, it has disrupted many rich indigenous traditions and cultures. Burling (2005) observed that the Christianity has already become a symbol of their ethnic identity instead of their original one, a distinguishing trait in which many Mandis take considerable pride. He also observed that over time, the proportion of Samsarak (original religion of the Garos) will continue to decrease and all will be converted to Christianity.

Language is the foundation of every culture, though particular languages differ in striking ways (Schafer and Lamm, 1995). Language has an important role in unifying members of a society. Almost all of the indigenous groups in Bangladesh have their own languages. Many of these languages have alphabet and many literatures have been published in these languages. Unfortunately languages of many indigenous groups are under a tremendous threat. Although they speak their mother language at home, they have to speak and write Bangla in their practical life (Sikder, 2004). Due to close contact with Bangla, their languages are less practiced among the indigenous peoples and many Bangla words are frequently replacing words in their mother language. If this trend continues, Bangla will become the communicable language among indigenous communities. Among the indigenous people who have close contact with majority Bengali people 'and who are receiving education, their languages are especially under threat. Due to not having their own script it is difficult to introduce education to all indigenous groups in their own languages. Even if they have their own scripts, many indigenous children cannot receive education in their own language as there are no schools where indigenous people's language is used as medium of instruction. This lack of opportunity to learn education in their own language, means that many indigenous groups are already losing their own alphabet. However, children of a few indigenous groups are receiving non-formal education in their own languages that are provided by NGOs (Zaman, 2006). But higher education even up to lower secondary grade is not available for indigenous people using their own language as a medium of instruction. As a result indigenous groups are dominated by majority people's language. Leaders from indigenous people fear that this process may have demolished many of their rich languages. This in turn, might influence their distinct identity.

Fearing discrimination and injustice from both the majority people and government officials, many indigenous people who are living mainly outside their own territories are compelled to assimilate themselves. Although a good number of indigenous people from different ethnic groups are living in city areas, very few are still wearing their own dress or maintaining their own culture and customs even within the house. There is a fear that if they do not assimilate, they may be subject to degrading treatment, torture, humiliation or discrimination. These assumptions derive from their personal experiences. Despite having high qualifications, many people from different indigenous communities in Bangladesh are subject to humiliation, discrimination and injustice solely

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because of his/her indigenous status. As indigenous culture and customs are less practiced even inside the home in urban areas, children of urban indigenous parents are losing their own distinct rich cultural practices. In many cases their food habits, dresses, and living patterns are similar to the majority people. This process is creating a generation among the indigenous groups who will have a very poor idea about their indigenous customs and practices.

Then distinct character and national status of indigenous peoples is ignored by the laws of the government of Bangladesh. As a result, indigenous peoples cannot establish most of their customary rules and laws into the existing legal system of the country and many of their customary laws, rich systems of life and traditional judiciary system which is operated by indigenous village organizations are disappearing. Conversely, in article 9 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, it recognizes and encourages the local government institutions (Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 2000). Although government law approves the traditional headmanship system and many other local government systems of Chittagong Hill Tracts, plain land indigenous people's local traditional judiciary systems and village organizations are not legally acceptable. Additionally, the Church rules have weakened the power of such organizations. Older people were the leaders of these organizations and had a very high position within their community. The status of older persons has decreased due to the substantial decrease in their power as leaders.

The Government's so called development projects and hostile policies work as powerful forces of the systematic assimilating process. These projects tend to work as a negative force for the overall environment and biodiversity of the country. Captain dam, national park in Madhupur forest, Eko Park in Khadi indus peoples land in Sylhet division, pulwpood cultivation and the deforestation project in Chittagong area are few examples of the government's development projects. These projects have displaced thousands of indigenous peoples from their ancestral lands. Uprooted from their own lands, these people have changed their occupation, way of living and are rendered as homeless, shelter-less people. Many indigenous peoples of Kaptai dam area left the country and are now living in the Indian province of Arunachal with "stateless refugee" status (Roy, 2002). Therefore their distinctiveness as an indigenous group with cultural integrity has been demolished. Additionally, these projects have promoted conflict and exacerbated various problems for the community. On the other hand these projects have severely affected biodiversity and natural forest conservation of the country. But it is observed that traditional and indigenous knowledge systems are effective to preserve biodiversity (Lasimbang, 2004).

Consequences

A society is the largest form of human group. It consists of people who share a common heritage and culture. Sharing similar culture helps to define the group to which we belong (Schaefer and Lamm, 1995). Custom has a large influence in every indigenous community. Early training on custom teaches a member to an indigenous community to be responsible, oblige, duty bound and loyal to his/her own community. Assimilation or the mainstreaming process demolishes original culture of a particular community. Therefore, people lose their ethnic identity. Loosing and forgetting their own responsibilities, obligations and duties people become more self-oriented. And at last s/he becomes alienated from the original pattern of behavior that s/he inherited from ancestors. On the other hand it becomes difficult for them to become fully assimilated. For example, The United States of America created different assimilation policies to promote the integration of American Indians within the American mainstream. Several laws such as The Dawes Act or Land Allotment Act of 1887, Relocation or Employment Assistance policy of 1952 etc were promoted to assimilate Indian Americans within majority culture. But it has had little success and cultural survival emerged among tribal groups. Under the Employment assistance program, American Indians who participated in off-reservation employment received training and financial support for living expenses. Interestingly despite getting better ways of life, more than half of the Indian Americans left the opportunity and returned to their own territories and the rest encountered different cultural problems (Morales and Sheafor, 1998).

Among the Khasi and Garo community traditional family structure is under a tremendous threat due to the lack of respect and ists-interest towards the husband of hire system. For a husband to bring a wife is not always tolerable especially among the older family members. This fascination is creating a cultural fusion or a mixed type of culture which does not have any specific identity or a pattern that can be established as acceptable everywhere. Rather it is creating a haphazard situation in their inheritance custom. The Garo and Khasi custom gives all rights of property to the women. According to their custom, the husband will go to the wife's home and will work as a custodian of his wife's property. The custom does not allow men to own property and property is automatically inherited by the girls. Although many customs and traditions of indigenous people are not legally acceptable, Khasi and Garo inheritance custom is recognized by the law of the Government of Bangladesh (Khan, 2005). Unfortunately influenced by majority people, the Garo indigenous group especially themselves are destroying this rich custom where women could enjoy a high status, power and security. Though still now they have a good family environment, family violence, disorganization and tension may emerge if such attitude and practice continues. Total property management system in is a haphazard position now as the property owner (women) is living outside (at their husband's) their property areas.

Traditional reciprocal responsibility towards parents and dependents belongs to the girls as they own the inherited property. This rich security system is under threat due to such practices. Older parents and dependents are becoming vulnerable and unprotected due to the increase of this anti-custom trend. Violent behavior toward parents by children is not a rare occasion in Khasis and Garos. The custom of "women empowerment" is currently one of the hottest issues to the development activists, social scientists, and women activists all over the world. Surprisingly, women of the Khasi and Garo indigenous community are highly empowered, this is related to their inheritance customs. They have been practicing a women dominant culture since a time immemorial. This rich practice could be a great lesson for the majority people who are struggling to establish it artificially through different interventions. Indigenous people's traditional treatment methods (Kobiraji or Ayurvedic) are also disappearing with the increase of modern medicine. Butit is a rich property of the country and is a cheaper treatment method without side effects, easily accessible and organic. Ironically, it is the alternative that the modern world is searching for.

Although the assimilation process is easily accepted among the young members of indigenous communities, older members disapprove, viewing the difficulties from their perspectives dressed in experience and knowledge. So conflict between young and old and a generation gap has emerged. Difference of food habit, garbing and many other practices are not allowed among the older generation who still struggle to uphold and maintain their own tradition and custom. The assimilation process is demolishing the simplicity and peacefulness of their life. Complexity, tension and violence are emerging among the community people.

Due to such a massive assimilation process distinct languages, dresses, foods, different cultural practices and rituals of many indigenous communities may disappear in time and ultimately they will lose their ethnic identity. Alongside assimilation with majority people of Bangladesh, globalization, a free market economy, and a satellite culture of the new international order are the major forces that compel indigenous peoples to assimilate with the outside world (Islam, 2005).

What is to be done?

Culture and customs are the heart of a community, which enables them to be identified from others. Each culture is rich with its own distinctiveness. But an acculturation process may help any indigenous community in their socio-economic development. In the acculturation process, members of indigenous groups are expected to retain their original cultural heritage while learning about and adapting to new ways, education, beliefs and behavioral expectations. Therefore, the acculturation process may have positive impacts on the socio-economic development of indigenous communities. Mainstream education,
technology and modern life utilities can substantially improve indigenous people's life. So becoming integrated with these modern systems of life may benefit them. Though the average literacy rate of indigenous people is not outstandingly low, higher education is not widely spread due to different circumstances. A few development organizations and missionary organizations operate primary schools within many indigenous communities which has created opportunities for indigenous children to receive primary education in large number. But the majority of indigenous people cannot afford the high cost of higher education due to poverty.

Poverty also works as a powerful barrier, preventing them from arranging modern life utilities. Water and sanitation facilities are still traditional among most of the indigenous areas. Electricity is still untouched for most rural indigenous areas due to negligence of the Government. Capital water power has enlightened many people's houses, but indigenous people of this area are still living in dark, without electricity facility. Occupational diversification is essential for their economic development. Skill based training is essential in this regard. Traditional agriculture can be improved with assistance from modern technology. Indigenous people would greatly benefit if it is possible to uphold indigenous people socio-economic condition using modern technology from outside their community without loosing or hampering their own customs and cultural integrity. To prevent the current assimilation trends from continuing, forcible assimilation or assimilation which may disrupt their distinct systems of life must be stopped?

Different initiatives should be taken by the government involving indigenous people in their operations.

Firstly, the government should provide constitutional recognition of indigenous people's distinct culture, language and customs. Laws and provisions should be made to protect indigenous culture. A National language policy should be introduced to preserve, restore and protect different language of indigenous communities as well as Bangla. A separate language academy may be established to preserve, collect and patronize indigenous languages similar to a Bangla academy. The function and role of the existing Cultural Academy should be restored and it should be made more functional by ensuring indigenous leadership. The Government can introduce education in indigenous mother language medium of instruction. A project for creating reading scripts and books is essential before introducing such education. The current primary school text books contain false statements and incorrect orientation about indigenous peoples which is creating a negative attitude among majority children. The culture and life style of indigenous people should be presented accurately and positively in text books without any intention to degrade these rich ethnic groups who have enriched our cultural diversity. Indigenous intellectuals must be involved in making text books on indigenous people's issues. All policies should be rejected that demolish, or hamper indigenous people's ways of life, cultural practices and distinctiveness.

According to Roy (2005) the protection and promotion of indigenous peoples must be looked at in a holistic manner, because their culture will be threatened unless their basic rights and ways of living are protected from externally imposed development programs that are not acceptable to the people concerned. As a member state of the United Nations Bangladesh should follow the UNESCO and ILO provisions strictly that emphasize protection and preserving of indigenous customs, culture and languages. Involvement of NGOs is not mentioned in this field. They can initiate different programs in order to uphold, restore and preserve indigenous customs, cultural practices, and languages. Before taking any development activity they must ensure cultural awareness and hire indigenous people as employees. The integrity of values, practices and institutions of these peoples should be respected within the boundary of their activities.

Additionally, indigenous people themselves have a significant responsibility in this regard. They should mobilize young groups and should develop a sense of pride over their rich cultural practices in which they show a deep respect on it. Usefulness of their customs and culture should be explained to the young generation. All indigenous families can work as a unit in this regard. Indigenous educated peoples should come forward to create literatures such as novels, short stories, poetry etc in their own language that may protect their languages and culture (Kabir, 2006). In order to survive as distinct people with cultural integrity intact, the indigenous peoples will have to strive harder to unite themselves, and in friendship with progressive-minded sections of the majority people of the country- Roy (2002) observed. He also urged that the indigenous peoples have to realize that the protection of their rights will also depends upon how much attention they give social, educational and economic progress in today's technological world. Acculturation may be useful to introduce new technologies and ways of life for their socio-economic development. But they should always maintain a level of caution so as to not allow outside influence to demolish or weaken their original culture. Civil society men of majority people also have an important role to protect indigenous peoples from the threat of assimilation. They can work as a pressure group to push the government to initiate policies and programs so that indigenous people's customs, cultural practices and distinct ways of life are not under threat. Academics and researchers have an obligation to launch massive and extensive research work which is essential to identify root causes, the extent and nature of the assimilation process and its consequences as well as to identify how it may be protected.

Conclusion

The distinct characteristics of indigenous community are reflected in their distinct way of life. These distinct characteristics have been the major motivating factors in their struggle against outside intrusion (Mundu, 2002). In addition to ethnic culture, practices and customs are the heritage of a country. To establish a real multicultural society it is essential to preserve and protect indigenous customs. Under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (Adopted by General Assembly resolution 47/136 of 18 December 1992) as member state Bangladesh is obliged to protect the existence and the national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity of minorities within their respective territories and would encourage conditions for promotion of that identity (UNHCHR, 2004). Indigenous people must use modern technology, to benefit from innovation and modernization. But they must remember that their culture is their own valuable property and being a member of indigenous community is dishonour or loss of prestige, rather it is a reason to be proud. Their rich culture must be protected, practiced and upheld at any cost. Without it, cultural diversity as well as bio-diversity will be under a tremendous threat which will affect both indigenous and majority people.

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Ethnicity, Ethnic Conflict and Discrimination against Ethnic Minorities of Bangladesh

Md. Faridul Islam

Abstract
An ethnic group is a group that suffers discrimination and subordination within society. Members of minority groups share a sense of identity and are conscious of their subordinate status in society. As a minority group of population they have to fight against subordination and exclusion. They are frequently humiliated and discriminated by the majority people only because of their minority status. Indigenous peoples of Bangladesh are nothing special. Their human rights are frequently violated; they are discriminated both by the laws and practices. They have not remarkable representation in policy level. As a result most of their problems and sufferings remain unnoticed. Most of the majority population does not fill any responsibility to protect indigenous peoples. Therefore a conflicting environment always exists among indigenous communities. This paper tries to understand the root causes of such conflict and to describe the sufferings of the indigenous peoples in Bangladesh.

Introduction
Bangladesh is a multi-cultural country having large number of indigenous people who are associated with one another by their distinctive language, culture, customs and religion. This character separated them from the majority population and it always shape a separate community or group. Sometimes these social groups that are distinguished on the basis of race, religion or national origin (Gordon, 1964: 27) attains, physical contiguity, religion, affiliation, nationality, phonotypical features or any combinations of those. Ethnic groups have been broadly defined as and cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements diffident has the epitome of their people-hood. He identified the following symbolic elements: knish, on 'marginalized' and largely powerless groups who are racially constructed as distinct from others and are socially constructed as 'minorities'. Richard Schermerhorn (1967) described ethnicity as a collective within a large society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a share historical past that have no history of antagonism between the members of their consistent ethnic communities. Divisions between groups based upon differences of culture and/or physical appearances are frequently linked to profound social tension and conflict (Giddens, 1995). The idea of conflict is both individual and group action by concern. When an individual or nay particular group is oppressed and discriminated by race and ethnicity, language, culture, religion, customs etc is simply a multi-cultural or pluralistic society. Conflict within this pattern of society is nothing new at all. There are few multi-cultural societies that have no history of antagonism between the members of their consistent ethnic communities. Divisions between groups based upon differences of culture and/or physical appearances are frequently linked to profound social tension and conflict (Giddens, 1995). The idea of conflict is both individual and group action by concern. When an individual or nay particular group is oppressed and discriminated by race and ethnicity, language, culture, religion, customs, economies, or even politics, then conflict is a must. Any conflicting environment demolish peaceful environment of the society where it exists. Henderson (1982) compared the term 'ethnic conflict' with pornography considering its invisibly visible status. On the other hand Stave Hagen (1982) described ethnic conflict as confrontation in which the contending actors or parties identifying themselves or each other in ethnic terms as the criteria. Few sociologists identified it as dispute about important political, economic, social, cultural or territorial issues between two or more ethnic communities (Brown, 1999). Cases of ethnic conflict in Albania may be labelled as such type of confrontation.

Definitions of ethnicity or ethnic group
Defining ethnicity and ethnic group is really a difficult. One who is living inside her/his own country as majority member of the population, her/his status is changed when s/he is in abroad. For example all Chinese people are not member of ethnic group but when they stay in abroad with their distinct ways of life as Chinese, are identified as ethnic group and labelled as Chinese American, Chinese Canadian etc by the majority population of those particular countries. Ethnic group is probably rooted out from psychological attachment. It is an inter-connective sense felt by a group of people due to their fearfulness of being prejudiced and discriminated from the dominant majority, which consequently lead to that particular group to the aspiration to form a homogenous culture are extended by the sense of anti-majority struggles which scale-up the understanding of ethnic group. In practice ethnic studies forces on 'marginalized' and largely powerless groups who are racially constructed as distinct from others and are socially constructed as 'minorities'. Richard Schermerhorn (1967) described ethnicity as a collective within a large society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a share historical past and cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements diffident has the epitome of their people-hood. He identified the following symbolic elements: knish, attains, physical contiguity, religion, affiliation, nationality, phonotypical features or any combinations of those. Ethnic groups have been broadly defined as social groups that are distinguished on the basis of race, religion or national origin (Gordon, 1964: 27)

Actually it is a difficult task to draw-out specific distinction between racial and ethnic group. Because each ethnic group has biological distinct character which is the identification mark of race and they have racial similarity with many others group However, sociologists are re-enforcing the distinction between the groups. The term racial group is used to describe a group which is set a part from others because of obvious physical differences. Racism is therefore a kind of biological reductionism (Blakemore and Boneham, 2001). Unlike racial group, an ethnic group is set a part from others primarily because of its national origin or distinctive cultural pattern (Schaefer and Lam, 1995). Culture and ethnicity are sometimes used interchangeably, but it is preferable to use ethnicity as the broader concept which includes culture, as well as the other components of ethnic identity e.g. ideas of people hood, a language, religion, distinctive culture etc (Blakemore and Boneham, 2001)

From the above description it may be summarized that the group consisting on a strong sense of solidarity and cohesiveness of the same language, culture, religion and a host of other particular ties like common ancestry, shared ancestry, shared historical memories, custom, link with homeland, psychology of vulnerability etc consider themselves distinct from other groups may be described as an ethnic group. It should be noted that though religion has a profound factor for integration, few indigenous groups are found whose members practice more than one religion. Few have been converted into other religion but still practicing many customs and culture inherited from their original religion. Few did not convert and still practicing their indigenous religion. Therefore religion does not work as powerful factor always in order to be united and integrated as an ethnic group.

Ethnic Conflict
The present social trend practices multi-cultural or pluralistic social system. A society is divided by a variety of races, cultures, religions, languages; customs etc is simply a multi-cultural or pluralistic society. Conflict within this pattern of society is nothing new at all. There are few multi-cultural societies that have no history of antagonism between the members of their consistent ethnic communities. Divisions between groups based upon differences of culture and/or physical appearances are frequently linked to profound social tension and conflict (Giddens, 1995). The idea of conflict is both individual and group action by concern. When an individual or nay particular group is oppressed and discriminated by race and ethnicity, language, culture, religion, customs, economies, or even politics, then conflict is a must. Any conflicting environment demolish peaceful environment of the society where it exists. Henderson (1982) compared the term 'ethnic conflict' with pornography considering its invisibly visible status. On the other hand Stave Hagen (1982) described ethnic conflict as confrontation in which the contending actors or parties identifying themselves or each other in ethnic terms as the criteria. Few sociologists identified it as dispute about important political, economic, social, cultural or territorial issues between two or more ethnic communities (Brown, 1999). Cases of ethnic conflict in Albania may be labelled as such type of confrontation.

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Why ethnic conflicts emerge
Where there is an interest, inequality, humiliation exploitation or discrimination from powerful groups or bodies' conflict is must between the exploited and exploiter. There are so many issues that are directly or indirectly linked to ethnic conflict. Few of them are described below:

Unequal power structure
Power is the most important factor in building society and it is widely discussed in the study of politics. Corruption and power have a very close relationship. It is said that the power tend to corrupt. In politics power is used as a mechanism of states as well as parties development. Structurally ethnic and other minority groups are always kept in a subervient position, and very often power is imposed upon them to exploit and violate their rights. Their dominant-subordinate position often leads to bitter violent conflict. However, Gonzalez Casanova (1965) emphasized on the existence of some preconditions of such conflict to be occurred: a. socially mobilized population b. the existence of a pool to the community by the leadership and c. a reference group in relation to whom a sense of relative deprivation (real or imaginary) is aggravated, also the spatial and numerical components of ethnic group condition towards ethnic conflict.

Fear of the future
Ethnic conflicts also make emergence because of accumulated fears about the future and after long experiences in the past of various types. As Vesna Pestic, a professor at the University of Belgrade said, "ethnic conflicts is caused by the fear of the future lived through the past. On the whole, ethnic group use peaceful means to pursue their interest. Past history of conflicts between groups and fear about future ethnic group could adopt violent means ways to achieve their objectives.

Colonial and post colonial rule
Colonialism is the maintenance of political, social, economic and cultural domination over a people by a foreign power for an extended period of time. The world history witnessed the truth that the British Empire was stressed almost all over the world and people of south and south East Asia remained under the yoke of the British colonial rule for a long period of 250 years. This long period of colonial rule, the British ruled the region from various administrative principles and ideologies which have a deep rooted impact that affected people even after the end of the colonial rule.

The colonial masters introduced a system of "divide and rule policy". They divided the colonised people into various ethno-religious groups and used to fuel to the communal resentment against one group to another. Sometimes a certain section of people were specially privileged, they were give an entitled to higher professions and authorities which levelled them to an upper class status. They often shrugged off the no privileged and in advanced ethnic and suppressive groups, which matched the resentment and enmity towards privileged group; the stigma of majority verses minority and privileged against non privileged lies in human mind. This belligerent and stem attitude of discriminated ethnic group towards the privileged one could be suggested a cause of ethnic conflict.

In all the south Asian case there is a commonality. Sundeept Wasekar (1996) identifies their common factors in various ethnic conflicts in south Asia. The colonial legacy has created certain privileged special classes; Urdu lords in Pakistan, plantation owner' in Sri Lanka, royalty and aristocracy in Nepal, the westernized upper-middle class in urban India, who assumed the control over the state authority after independence.

Modernization and development
Modernization denotes that modern societies tend to be urban, literate and industrial. With the touch of modernization the traditional cultural forms breaks into more developed one, which brings social mobilization. Multifarious institutions and industries are building up here and there. Life becomes more dynamic as well as competitive. Modern transport system is introduced. The non-tribes have entered the tribal encapsulated areas for trading, doing developing works, mobilizing political ideology and a variety of other purposes (Doshi, 1990).

All these modernizing process have largely escalated the standard of life, but virtually it becomes threat to cultural existence and distinctive life style of the indigenous people. Their cultural distinctiveness and the legendary form of group solidarity are consequently being concealed with the touch of the un-even level of development that has spread in to cultural differentiation. Sometimes government takes initiatives for industrialization as a strategy of state development through removing indigenous peoples from their own ancestral land. All these processes make them more oppressed, and marginalized as government always shrugs off their crying need of accommodation and cultural assimilation.

Competition for scarce resources
Competition for scarce resources is another major cause for conflict between groups. Property rights, jobs, educational policy and other development allocations confer benefits on individuals and groups. When there are resources are distributed favorably towards certain section of the society, considering groups on the lines of religion, caste, class and other such types of divisions, then discrimination arises up. Where ethnicity is the main basis for social identification, there impartiality of distribution of resources is quite ambiguous.

Cultural and perceptual factors
In a pluralistic society, there exist numerical cultural perceptions. The cultural ideologies of one group are quite different from that of others. Each groups claims that their cultural ideology is superior and others are innate inferior. Each tribal group is a separate and an autonomous ethnic identity, the tribal group enjoys a distinct identity. Its society has shared values, style of life, and exclusive symbol of identity and consciousness of kind (Doshi, 1990). In most of the cases they find it very difficult to make an adjustment with others and often they are devaluated. Finally arrest and detention, killing, extrajudicial killing, rape and other human abuses, miss governance with dominating economic, cultural, social and political strategies, gradual decline of morality, all these issues are directly linked to conflicts.

Ethnic discrimination in Bangladesh
Bangladesh has a long history of ethnic discrimination. After the conclusion of British rule the process emerged astonishingly and its nature and extend is getting complex and horrific over time. The following description provides partial picture of discrimination that indigenous peoples encounter and experience at their everyday life.

Chittagong hill tracts (CHTs) peace accord and its implementation
The area of Chittagong Hill Tracts is estimated as 13, 295 square kilometres which constitutes only nine per cent of the total land area of Bangladesh. The Chittagong Hill Tracts is comprised of thee hill districts namely Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachari. It is the most prominent indigenous heritages in
The JS and the indigenous Jumma people had a long struggle for constitutional recognition of their distinct identity, regional autonomy with self-rights. In 1976, the indigenous peoples of hill districts formed an armed force organization under the Janoshanhoti Samity (IS) for securing their fundamental rights. In 1975 when military rule was declared, all sorts of democratic movements against government's policy came to defunct. So exploitation and discrimination from Pakistan period to till now. The exploitation of indigenous people was however in a slow motion and it geared up since the construction of Kaptai hydro electric project in 1960. The tribal heritage was inhabited by non-tribes. In some situations the non tribal out numbered the tribal. A large number of Jumma people were forced to migrate to Tripura (an eastern province of India) as refugees. No initiatives were taken to conclude this situation even after the independece of Bangladesh; rather in 1973 the government of Bangladesh was induced to setup military camp as state's oppressive policy. In 1975 when military rule was declared, then all sorts of democratic movements against government's policy came to defunct. So in 1976, the indigenous peoples of hill districts formed an armed force organization under the Janoshanhoti Samity (IS) for securing their fundamental rights.

The JS and the indigenous Jumma people had a long struggle for constitutional recognition of their distinct identity, regional autonomy with self-legislature, withdrawal of military forces, withdrawal of illegal plain settlers, and return of lands grabbed by security forces and illegal plain settlers to the original owners, the Jumma. On second December 1997 the government of Bangladesh signed much wanted Chittagong hill tracts (CHTs) peace treaty with the Janasanghhoti Samity. It facilitated subsequent return of 43 thousand Jumma refugees from Indian state of Tripura to the CHTs and return of about 2 thousands armed Shanti Bahini cadres into a normal life.

The treaty received a lot of plaudit from home and abroad. It was welcome to UN, EU, and to various national and international organizations. But the treaty could not bring peace in that region due to non-cooperation and unwillingness of the government. How far the treaty is implemented? To answer this question it is to say that the treaty in most of the cases failed to meet the demands of the Jumma people. Their salient demand for constitutional identity, regional autonomy, withdrawal of military forces, withdrawal of illegal plain settlers and return of lands to the original owners all have been remained unresolved.

The CHTs peace treaty had proposed for a land commission to settle the land disputes, in response of it the government plan to settle illegal plain settlers on Khaisi (indigenous peoples land grabbed by the government in the name of so-called land laws) lands. Even military force imposed by the government in order to burnt down the land records of the indigenous peoples of Khagrachari district in 1993. More than 50 per cent of illegal plain settlers in the region show the clear evidence of the treaty's inactiveness in uprooting the non-tribal settlers. This large scale of infiltration, in a word destroys the exclusiveness of the tribal heritage, and makes any regional autonomy meaningless. The returning Jumma refugees and internally displaced Jummas have not been rehabilitated. Their demand of withdrawal of military force is refused and the government deploys more military personnel in the region in the lame plea of maintaining peace and discipline. So it is needless to say that the treaty becomes paralyze due to the lack of its implementation by the government of Bangladesh.

Situation of the indigenous peoples in CHTs after Peace Treaty

The role of the treaty in handling peace in the region is quite questionable. Situation of indigenous peoples is still vulnerable. The indigenous peoples of the CHTs experience- untold sufferings of arrest, detention, killings, rape and many other serious human rights abuses seems the signing of the peace accord. Following headings describe the current sufferings of indigenous peoples:

a. Arrest and detentions

The shanty Bahini (an armed forced organization of the hilly indigenous peoples formed for securing demands and rights through armed struggle) got surrender after the signing of treaty. Since then the government and its security forces have perpetrated serious human rights abuses in the CHTs. A number of students have been arrested for their criticism of the peace agreement. The detainees are members of Hill peoples' council, hill students' council and hill women federation who are conscious of their rights, combat for their rights and who claim accountability for the human rights abuses committed the last five years (Chakma, 1999). The government of Bangladesh has carried out repression of the Jummas with the introduction of a new torturing group named Mukhosh Bahini, literary meaning masked force (Drawn from the Jummas, was created by army in 1990). The security forces in collaboration with the Jumma Students Council and Hill students council have arrested the Jumma people as a variety of unethical arrest, and detention in the name of false link with terrorist activity of the members of Hill People Council, Hill Students Council and Hill women federation.

b. Racial Discrimination against indigenous Jumma people

Integration has long been an alibi for many governments for forcible assimilation of the distinct ethnic racial, cultural or religious groups. Ethnic cleansing through transmigration, militarization, rape of women, massacres with impunity, land grabbing and other human rights abuses perpetrated by the government of Bangladesh and its agencies are not "essentially integrative nature" but "essentially segregative nature". The extreme Bengali Muslim nationalism does not want to accept anything different except "Bengali Nationalism".

c. Transmigration or Ethnic Cleansing

Bengali settlements in the CHTs have been increased substantially. The government directly encourages this process as it sponsor transmigration of thousands of illegal plain settlers into the Chittagong region. After the liberation war of Bangladesh 50 thousand Bangalis entered into Ramgar area and settled there. A census shows that in 1941 Muslim population was 2.94 per cent of the total population of the CHTs and it has risen to 6.29 per cent in 1951, 11.77 per cent in 1961, 22.83 per cent in 1974, 35.18 per cent in 1981 and 49 per cent in 1991 (BBS, 2001). This uneven number of Bengali infiltration establish Bengal domination over the indigenous people (CHTs Commission, 1997)

d. Land Grabbing

Land grabbing in CHTs is a common scene. The illegal plain settlers always tend to seize fertile and cultivable lands from the Jummas through direct help and back of the security forces. Government also grabs indigenous peoples land in the name of so-called development projects without any compensation. Government's forest department frequently expands their territories and force indigenous people to leave their own land.

e. Forestations Program

Although 26th article of the peace accord provides some restrictions on using, purchasing and controlling lands inside the districts where indigenous peoples are living since time immemorial, in reality government itself did not show any respect regarding land policy. The article says whatever exists in the currently prevailing laws, without prior permission of the Parishad (a recognized association of indigenous peoples) no lands, including lease Khali land in the districts can be leases out, sold, purchased or transferred. Unfortunately nothing is seen in practice. Still illegal settlement process is going on, so called forestation projects cutting down many valuable trees and vanishing ecological balance of the region. On 18th July the ministry of environment and forest issued notification concerning the occupation of 13 thousand acres of land in Rajashthali areas in Rangamati district in addition to 175 thousand acres of land occupied in 1992. Around 200 Khiyam families lost their ancestral lands. The landowner have not been given the opportunity to file complaining nor they were given compensation (Hill Watch Women Rights Forum, 1996).
f. Militarization and human rights abuse

The government has deployed large number of security personnel as well as military personnel in CHTs in the name of security and which makes this area like a military zone. According to military sources the total number of security forces deployed in CHTs is around 52 thousands. Among them 20 thousands are military forces. According to population census of 1991, the total number of hill population is 558 thousands. Therefore statistics says that every 11 hill people are watched by one security personnel. Nobody can find its justification to deeply huge number of military personnel in this region. Though military and other security personnel are responsible to secure and protect human rights and stop massacres, they frequently torture innocent indigenous peoples. Killing, rape, detention etc have become the part of everyday activities of security personnel. In the name of establishing peace and security they frequently kill many innocent hill people, torture them in detention home. ‘Operation Yarran’ a new invention by military force frequently operates extra judiciary killings, rape, abduction and rampage over indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples life has become insecure due to the so called operation of security personnel. As security personnel's are well protected by the government, their criminal activities do not come under justice. Innocent indigenous peoples do not complain to anybody fearing further torture.

Situation of plain land indigenous peoples

Plain land indigenous peoples are more vulnerable than hill indigenous peoples. They do not have any strong forum that will protect their rights. Their sufferings are still unnoticed and have gained less attention to the development agencies as well as the government. Indigenous peoples of plain land are suffering from severe humanity crisis. Most of their traditional customary systems, local government and judiciary system are still legally unacceptable. As its result they are dominated by local influential power holders. Their inhabited areas are encircled by the majority population of Bangladesh. This reality restricts them to be integrated within a forum that may protect their rights.

Local government bodies are captured by majority people. It is very unusual to find an indigenous person who has been selected as a member of local government body. Therefore living in the same territory indigenous peoples are always discriminated. Land grabbing, humiliation and torture by the majority people, discrimination, insecurity etc are the major problems that they have to encounter regularly. Having very close proximity with majority peoples concentrated areas, assimilation process seriously affecting plain land indigenous peoples life. Even in many cases their rich distinct cultures and practices have been disappearing by the influence of dominant majority culture. Indigenous people fear that this process will kill their distinct ways of life as well as their ethnic identity.

Plain land indigenous peoples are not well organized to protect their rights. Development organizations who are working with indigenous peoples have little attention on plain land indigenous peoples problems. Though government has formed a separate ministry on Chittagong Hill Tracts affairs for the well being of the indigenous peoples of CHTs areas, this ministry has no contribution in solving plain land indigenous peoples issues. A special division under prime minister's office deals with plain land indigenous peoples issues which has a very little budget and capacity to deal with indigenous peoples issues. Therefore, plain land indigenous peoples are more disadvantaged than the indigenous peoples of Chittagong hill districts.

Conclusion

Bangladesh is a multi-cultural country. Indigenous peoples have remarkable contribution in nation building activities. They are the original inhabitants of this country. Despite these, indigenous peoples are always discriminated by the majority people and systems only because of their minority status. They have right to enjoy secured and discrimination free life as citizens of the country. Unfortunately sometimes they are not treated as human being. Their distinct way of life is under threat due to different activities of government and majority people. As a member state of United Nations Bangladesh is oblige to protect indigenous people's rights following International Labor Organizations provisions. As well as civil society and political parties have responsibility to force government to initiate policy and programs that may uphold and protect indigenous peoples rights.

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The Adaptation and Immersion of Minority Cultures to a Predominately Mono-Cultural Nation

Louise Elizabeth Saunderson

Introduction

Bangladesh society is predominately mono-cultural; however there are a diverse number of different ethnic minority communities living within it. Of the total 140 million people inhabiting Bangladesh, approximately one percent is comprised of indigenous communities scattered throughout the country. Although there are discrepancies and contradictions regarding the exact number and type of indigenous communities, an approximate number stands at 47 different indigenous communities living in Bangladesh.

Despite the statistics demonstrating cultural diversity in this country, there is a distinct lack of evidence to show that these minority communities are living in a truly socially inclusive cultural environment.

Article 27 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh states that all citizens are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection of law. The National Constitution also outlaws discrimination on grounds of race, religion and place of birth in Article 28 (1). However, the document does not officially recognize the distinctive identities of ethnic minority communities and there is no formal policy to protect and develop indigenous people. In many ways the Government seems to view the indigenous population as a 'non-existent' category, which is illustrated by the failure to include a separate count of the indigenous populations in the National Census of 2001. On the other hand, the Government has recently recognized the situation of indigenous peoples as shown by the recent draft of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) in Chapter 5.4 it includes that 'tribal people' are steadily losing their language, culture, customs and music and are unable to influence National decisions that affect them. Despite such failures at the National Policy level to recognize Indigenous communities, Bangladesh ratified the ILO Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, 1957 (No 169). It states in Article 5 that "In applying the provisions of this Convention: (a) The Social, cultural, religious and spiritual values and practices of these people shall be recognized and protected, and due account shall be taken of the nature of the problems which face them both as groups and as individuals.". This place an onus on the Government to create policies and strategies specifically aimed at the protection and recognition of different cultures.

Additionally, global attention and awareness has been raised and focused on indigenous issues as the UN declared the second decade for the world Indigenous peoples in 2004. A major objective of the decade is the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples and their empowerment to make choices which enable them to retain their cultural identity while participating in political, economic and social life with full respect for their cultural values, languages, traditions and forms of social origin.

The international and National frameworks aimed at protecting cultural diversity have been ratified by the Bangladesh Government and it aims to uphold this global image as a culturally inclusive nation. However there are two distinct trends occurring within indigenous communities which suggest that their culture is not being protected or promoted, rather it is being destroyed.

The importance of culture as an identity

The term 'culture' harbors wide meanings and can be subject to different interpretations as to its scope. George M Foster approaches the determination of the meaning of culture: "More specifically, culture can be thought of as the common learned way of life shared by the members of a society, consisting of the totality of tools, techniques, social institutions, attitudes, beliefs, motivations and systems of value known to the group, or, to put the distinction in a different way, society means people and culture means behaviors of people." This definition sets the parameters of a conceptual framework which assumes that firstly a group of people are organized territorially through the bond of ethnicity or language; secondly the ethnic group or nationality should have an ethnic or national psyche which keeps them mentally and spiritually distinct from other nationalities. Thirdly those tools of material culture have been developed and forthrightly that the ethos should not remain stagnant and should adapt and progress its material and intellectual culture to survive. Culture is thus a defining feature of an individual's identity and is pivotal for both self and group identification.

The role of culture in indigenous communities

The main indigenous communities living in Sylhet region include Khasi, Garo, Manipuri, Patro and Tea Labor. These indigenous communities follow distinct cultural practices but the focus of this article will be on Manipuri and Khasi communities.

The Manipuri community is an ethnic community living mainly in Sylhet and Moulvibazar districts of Bangladesh, having migrated from the Manipur state of India. They are dispersed in small pockets of settlements that are surrounded by areas inhabited by Bengali-speaking people (Roy, 2002).

The traditional livelihood for Manipuri's is agriculture but they have also been engaged in other traditional and specialized crafts including carpentry and gold making. Distinctive from mainstream women, Manipuri women are active income earners for the family, and traditionally are involved in handloom production. Historically ‘every girl, was taught weaving from a very tender age of 7 or 8 and the parents would take pride in the excellence of the craft.” Manipuri people view handloom as their tradition and it has a special artistic value which originates from Manipuri craft art.

The joint family system is strongly practiced among Manipuri people; it is viewed as the preferred family arrangement as it is believed to benefit the traditional agro farming system as it provides greater support in the form of joint efforts. Traditionally Manipuri people build their home out of bamboo, wood, mud and straw.

Manipuri community food habit is distinct from the mainstream Bangladeshi population. Their staple food consists of rice, vegetables and fish and traditionally, they refrain from eating eggs, meat and onions due to their religious beliefs. They cook their own specialist dishes and use different vegetables such as yam  and toninhokh.

Traditional dress of the Manipuri women is 'Phanek' (a lungi shaped skirt wrapped around the waist) and 'inifi' (a piece of cloth, made of cotton or silk, wrapped around the body, over a blouse.) For special occasions, Manipuri women wear Leifanek which is afanek embroidered with flower designs at the top and bottom and striped with different colors. The traditional dress for males is Gumchha (a long piece of towel wrapped around the loins.)

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Manipur community is ethno linguistic, ‘Meitei Lon’ or Manipuri language belongs to the Kukichin group of the Tibeto Burman sub family of the Mongolian family of languages. In inter-group interaction they speak their own language. Manipuris have their own rich language which has its own alphabet consisting of 27 letters, however, Manipuri script was substituted for Bengali script in eighteenth century AD.

Manipur community is renowned for their rich and colorful culture with particularly unique contributions in the field of handicrafts and dance. Manipuri dance or ‘Jagoi’ is classified into classical and folk dances. It is circular in nature, it is elegant and delicate and has apparent absence of movement from outside but a subtle motion flows within.

Many religious festivals including Rash Purnima, Laiharaoba are held throughout the year. The marriage ceremony has a unique pattern of rituals and systems. During the actual ceremony, the bride circles the groom 7 times, which is symbolic of the earth circling the sun, she then pours a cup of flowers over the groom, before garlands are placed around both the bride and groom's neck and then their hands are bound to symbolize the marriage of the couple.

The Khaki community tends to live in more remote, hilly areas of Sylhet, bordering India. The Khaki community is matrilinear. The children take the mother's clan/title and daughters inherit the property of the family. The youngest daughter is chosen for the house and she is given the property. Marriage is arranged at the bridegroom's house and groom stays at wife's house. Females are the owners of the property but the head of the family is always male. The main economic activity of the Khaki is cultivating pan (betel leaf), supari (betel nut), lemons, and other fruits which is their main cash crop in the hills and forests. Their culture is fundamentally integrated with the land they inhabit.

The folk dances are an expression of nature, creativity and aestheticism, the Tiger dance is an expression of traditional hunting. Different festivals are held including the Hokdoi Festival which is specific to Jaintapur. The Khaki's food habit is heavily dominated by meat dishes. Khaki community converted to Christianity and so follows Christian rites and rituals. Linguistically, Khaki people speak their own language; in Sylhet the dialect is specific to Jainta region. The traditional dress for women is the Kyrcha, a piece of cloth tied over one shoulder, for males, Gammicha is traditionally worn.

**Trends that are showing degradation of culture**

The definition of culture maintains that culture should not remain stagnant, that it should evolve along the continuum of time and manifest in societal change. The proposition of this article is that the lack of cultural protection for minority communities has accelerated the rate of cultural degradation to a pace that is faster than its natural evolution. There are two specific trends which symbolize this accelerated pace:

### 1. Cultural assimilation

Manipuri community is undergoing a process of cultural assimilation. "The Meeteis in Bangladesh are closely related with the Bengalis socially, religiously, educationally, linguistically, professionally and culturally - in a word, in almost all spheres of life." However, this trend is a relatively new phenomenon, "But this practice was not so widely prevalent in the remote past as it is found at the present. In the distant past, as we had heard, the Meeteis, who would return home from outside ... had to change all of their clothes and leave them in a corner of their house." This was perhaps due to Manipuri orthodoxy and religious and social superstitions. This change in attitude demonstrates the assimilation of a culture and changing attitudes over time. Epitomizing this assimilation is the trend of rural to urban migration in Sylhet District among Manipuris, a relatively recent process which started approximately 20 years ago. The process is mainly involving the younger generation, or young adults who are migrating for schooling, or employment opportunities. The elderly Manipuri community tends to stay in the village area.

There are many reasons causing this movement of cultural assimilation.

Land encroachment into rural Manipuri territories is occurring at an alarming rate. This is due to such a high rate of population growth forcing mainstream people to encroach on indigenous territories. Additionally, many people fled from Bangladesh during the Liberation war, resulting in greater infiltration of mainstream society. As a result, many villages are extinct, such as Brojonath Tilla, near to Shibgonj, in Sylhet. Living in such close proximity to mainstream community has had a great impact on particularly the younger generations of Manipuri community who are adapting to the mainstream culture. Manipuris are among the most educated of indigenous communities, although this is mainly limited to lower levels of education, and the rate receiving higher education is still below 1%.

This education has contributed in two different ways to cultural assimilation. Firstly, the National curriculum has a lack of cultural inclusiveness; children are following the school system in Bangla medium and have no scope to learn about their own culture in their own language. Therefore the younger generation is increasingly reliant on elders to disseminate information about Manipuri history and culture. Secondly, the increasing rate of educated Manipuris has resulted in a movement to urban centers for income generation other than traditional agriculture and for services that they are predominately lacking access to in rural areas. Families are moving to urban centers and becoming habituated with urban life. The younger generations are following more and more mainstream habits, they are mirroring their dress, culture and food habits.

Manipuri people in Bangladesh are striving to maintain and protect their cultural heritage. Women, particularly elderly women are still wearing the traditional Phanek and Innaft, and religious and cultural festivals are still held with great support. "The Manipuri dance which is famous throughout the world has enriched the domain of art of dance and culture of the Bangla nation as a whole." A 15 Minute weekly Manipuri program has been aired on Sylhet radio station since 1976 which explores Manipuri culture and the views of the Manipuri people living in Sylhet.

Having spent the past 10 months attending festivals such as Ras Purnima and events such as weddings and religious festivals, the sheer determination and strength of Manipuri people who are committed to promotion of their culture and community is glaringly apparent.

However, despite these efforts, there are undeniable signs of cultural loss, resulting from assimilation into the majority cultural scene. Firstly, the urban migratory process is reducing the emphasis on joint families. The heavily practiced joint family system is now adapting to the slow emergence of the smaller family unit, a product of urbanization. The number of nuclear families has increased in Sylhet. Now rural elders are reliant on the sons/daughters income from the towns. The movement doesn't seem to have affected the incredibly strong bond and family ties that are inherent in the Manipuri values system.

Younger generations are becoming more habituated with speaking Bangla, and the traditional Manipuri language is reliant on parents teaching children within the home. Some of the Meetei vocabulary has itself become assimilated with Bengali, and many younger generations are unable to understand the more traditional and original Manipuri. Different folk tales, songs, instruments and arts are being forgotten and lost. Although Manipuri women are still wearing the traditional dress, this tends to be the elder women, while the younger generations wear Salwar Kameez's and sal's outside the home. The men are predominately wearing mainstream clothing such as shirts, punjabe, lungi or trousers. The food habit is adapting to mainstream habits and people are eating eggs, onions, and meat, additionally, many traditional items are being lost. A diversification in occupation of Manipuri's has occurred as a direct result of the urbanization process. People who have completed higher education are now engaged in more mainstream jobs ranging from service holders, to Governmental positions, NGG workers, salesmen and mechanics.
The more traditional occupation in handicraft has witnessed a sharp decrease in the number of people involved in it commercially; currently women are predominately engaged in handloom for home based production. This is mainly due to lack of proper training, budget or patronization from the self Government, this rich handicraft product is loosing a market. Additionally, it has become difficult to compete with markets where similar products are being mass- reproduced at a lower rate or imported from Neighboring countries. In 1977, a handloom training institute 'Manipuri training and Development Centre' was set up with Governmental assistance, for the preservation and promotion of traditional handloom, the centre lies unused.

Assimilation is perhaps a mixture of a survival system and the natural progression of a community receiving an increased amount of education. However, this assimilation does not necessarily place them on an equal footing with the majority population, and they are still left behind in terms of development activities. The Government is also failing to accompany this assimilation process with promotion and protection of Manipuri cultural traditions. Their circumstances and needs are still largely unnoticed and are not systematically explored since the issues have not been under the focus of in-depth research.

2. Cultural migration

Khadi community, unlike Manipuri community, are not assimilating themselves within the Mainstream dominant culture. Instead, Khadi community is currently witnessing a high migratory rate from bordering areas. Approximately 200-300 people are migrating to Shillong, Meghalaya per year for higher education, or economic opportunities. Many people have strong ties such as family and property in Meghalaya. This process is typically taking place among the younger, more literate generation. Therefore the Khadi's remaining in Bangladesh tend to be less literate and aware about cultural traditions.

The causes of such high migratory rates include loss of land rights, poor socio economic conditions, discrimination and lack of inclusion in terms of development activities, culture and National identity. Land rights are crucial to indigenous people's survival, particularly as their culture and identity are interdependent with land resources. Physical displacement from their ancestral territories has led to cultural dislocation, demonstrated by the construction of the Eco Park in Modhupur, Moulvibazar, and Sylhet. Another instance of imminent land dispossession is being faced by the Khadi community, living in Jaflong, along the Pyain River. The river erosion is the result of both monsoonal rain but is accelerated by the stone collecting industry.

The Government has failed to take any initiative to prevent the industry operating and such high rates of erosion which is predicted to destroy the adjacent Khadi villages within the next 5 years if erosion continues at the present rate. About 80 per cent families of community Khadi inhabit state owned land in the north-eastern part of the country where they earn their livelihood mainly by growing of betel-leaf (pan in Bangla) betel nut, jackfruit, lemon, pineapple and other horticultural crops. However, approximately 70 per cent of the community do not have land entitlement or permanent settlement documents and are not aware or educated about there importance. This creates extreme insecurity as their livelihoods are inherently based on land resources. Lack of land entitlement documents has resulted in many cases of land grabbing and encroaching from mainstream people who are more aware of the relevant legal procedures.

Due to lack of assimilation into mainstream community, Khadi people have a low awareness of market prices and are thus in a low bargaining position when selling their agricultural products to the market. Lack of access to Mainstream services and development initiatives increases their vulnerability and sense of isolation in the National framework.

This sense of isolation is heightened by exclusion and discrimination from development initiatives and resources. The education system does not include provisions for indigenous speaking teachers to help indigenous children learn the National language, nor does the National curriculum reflect on cultural diversity; which further hampers the educational development of Khadi community in Bangladesh.

I witnessed an extreme juxtaposition in the cultural environment of Khadi's in Meghalaya compared to the cultural environment they are living in within Bangladesh. There was a real sense of freedom about the punjees in Meghalaya and a far stronger cultural presence. This fact has been recognized by Khadi community, as there has been a recent emphasis on raising Khadi cultural awareness in Bangladesh and Teachers from Shillong have visited Bangladesh for religious conferences, and taught the community aspects of the slowly deteriorating culture. Physical manifestations of this cultural loss are evident in handicrafts such as Kycha or Chat (a basket weaved of bamboo and cane) as the majority of Khadi's in Bangladesh do no longer know how to make these products. Traditional instruments and folk dances and songs are gradually being lost, and the many males are assimilating themselves with mainstream dress styles.

Future predictions

When considering the indigenous communities of Bangladesh, the communities living in the Chittagong Hill Tracts are usually at the forefront of any discussion. However, it is apparent that plain land people are facing extreme difficulties in terms of cultural degradation and loss of rights. "There situation is in many ways worse than that of the Chittagong Hill Tracts peoples, as most of their communities are now islands in the midst of Bengali settlements.” A self Government System is not recognized for plain land people (apart from personal laws, and laws of inheritance), there is no representation of plain land people at national levels, and there are in many cases more serious instances of land disposition on the plain lands. Sylhet Region harbors indigenous communities that are scattered geographically, isolated and not united in fighting for cultural preservation.

If the aforementioned trends of migration and cultural assimilation occur at their present rate, future predictions look bleak, and Bangladesh will become by definition a mono-cultural state. Manipuri people have a strong sense of culture, but the process of cultural assimilation is ongoing and erosive. In contrast, Khadi community is migrating to India and the culture of the Khadi community in Bangladesh is being taken with them.

Recommendations

Indigenous people tend to be located on the periphery, at a distance from the centre of power. Therefore policy initiatives and development activities undertaken by the non-indigenous policy makers and planners usually cannot address their real needs. The Government should take action to ensure the protection and promotion of diverse cultures.

Some key recommendations in this area are patronization of culture and support of community based industries, so that they are protected, strengthened and promoted. In both Manipuri and Khadi community, traditional handicraft is in need of training and financial help to support the handicraft. Different cultural institutions should be set up to ensure cultural knowledge is continuously passed down to younger generations and those traditional dances, songs and folk tales are preserved. International Cultural tours from Bangladesh should recognize other cultures as part of the National identity and include minority communities in the touring team.

International and National Non Governmental Organizations should incorporate cultural activities into development initiatives but ensure that the initiatives are taken in participation with the community and that the organizations employees genuinely understand the situation of indigenous communities and are sensitized to their needs and cultural problems. Governmental protection, in the form of Legislation and policies aimed at protecting and promoting culture
should be drafted. More importantly, these laws and policies should be actively adhered to and all citizens of Bangladesh should take steps to embrace diversity of culture and promote and strengthen it.

Conclusion

The current trends of cultural assimilation and migration and the affect this is having on minority communities, shows the need for a change in the extent of cultural diversity currently practiced in Bangladesh. It should be practicing a more culturally inclusive environment as: "Most societies in the world today include more than one culture, one community or one tradition .... It is in the interests of all to work together to build a society beneficial to all its members.”

Personal experiences of living in a different culture have only confirmed the importance of diversity and learning from other cultures. Living in a predominately Muslim culture and working with Manipuri and Khasi communities, I have gained invaluable exposure to different system of values, beliefs, traditions and culture. This has in turn shaped an understanding of my own culture and people and a greater understanding of the importance of culture in creating diversity. Bangladesh should recognize its own socio cultural responsibility and take action to mediate the affects of assimilation and migration to ensure that indigenous culture is promoted, strengthened and practiced.

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Working with Indigenous Community: Social Work Perspective

Shumonna Islam

Abstract

More than 45 tribal communities have inhabited different parts of Bangladesh for a long period of time. But the indigenous groups are both socio-culturally and economically facing many challenges and difficulties. Massive socioeconomic and cultural problems persist among indigenous communities; their human rights are consistently being deprived. They are physically and structurally always away from the centre of power. Although a few important human services are provided under the auspices of indigenous customary system and religious organizations, indigenous peoples face numerous problems.

Indigenous people of Bangladesh tend to be excluded from the development activities of the government and development agencies pay little attention towards these disadvantaged peoples. Indigenous peoples are still struggling for their constitutional rights. Given this reality international awareness is growing about the situation of the world's indigenous peoples and different initiatives have been taken for the welfare of the indigenous peoples. Social workers can contribute to this development process substantially. As a comprehensive profession to help others, Social work always intends to respond to human needs through social welfare programs. The purposes and goals for these programs are remediation of social problems, enhancement of social functioning and prevention of social problems. This paper explains how social workers can offer help and cooperation for the wellbeing of indigenous peoples in Bangladesh.

Introduction

Tribal people of Bangladesh are descendants of the original inhabitants of their land and areas and strikingly diverse in their culture, religion and patterns of social and economic organization (Drong, 2001). They have enriched the cultural heritage of Bangladesh by their exotic traditions, literatures, languages, arts, and crafts (Roy, 2001). They identify themselves as ‘indigenous people’ in the global landscape and are referred to as ‘adivasi’ in Bangla (Roy, 2003).

More than 45 tribal communities have lived in different parts of Bangladesh from a time immemorial. Over time, an influx of migrants invaded from different regions of the subcontinent compelling indigenous people to live in a few concentrations. Presently, tribal people are congregated mainly in the districts of Rangpur, Dinajpur, Rajshahi, Mymensingh, Sylhet and the Chittagong Hill Tracts comprised of Khagrachari, Rangamati and Bandarban district. Indigenous people are the disadvantaged group of population in Bangladesh. Racism and discrimination towards indigenous peoples has been expressed in the lack of comprehensive, progressive national policy over a period of years after independence. This omission has severely hampered their ability to progress as 'part of the National identity of Bangladesh. Their health is very poor, educational achievements are dismal, and most of them live in extreme poverty. Although a few important human services are provided under the auspices of indigenous customary systems and religious organizations, indigenous peoples have many problems to solve. As social work aims to create a society where all people can enjoy their lives with dignity and human diversity, it is an obligation for Social Workers to identify indigenous people's needs and problems and communicate them to development agencies and government and to help organizations in making a sustainable development program through the direct participation of indigenous peoples.

Situation of Indigenous Peoples

Indigenous communities are in a disadvantaged position both socio-culturally and economically. Massive socio-economic problems persist among indigenous communities. Human rights are consistently violated, yet there is limited awareness to voice such violations. Despite physically living within the same territory, indigenous people experience different problems to majority people of the country. Inequality, discrimination, injustice and humiliation is commonly endured. Indigenous communities in Bangladesh are subject to systematic discrimination in every possible sphere including education, employment, development activities and social relations. On various occasions they are viewed as second-class citizens (Odihkar, 2001). Law and order service providing agencies of the government tend to discriminate, harass and humiliate these people due to their indigenous status. In addition to such hardship, the people are affected by forced settlement, displacement and armed conflicts creating insecurity (Chowdhury, 2004).

Land grabbing is a grave problem faced by the indigenous people all over the country. Influential majority people snatch indigenous people's lands through various exploitative ways. In plain land areas, fake documents, intimidations and harassment are the major ways that majority people encroach and occupy indigenous people's land. In the Chittagong Hill Tracts, forced settlement of majority people under the auspices of the government is the fundamental cause of landlessness among indigenous peoples. The government's forest department and district administration are other powerful agencies who have occupied huge amount of indigenous peoples land in the name of supposed development project such as deforestation, eco-parks, and reserve forests. The construction of Kaptai Dam alone displaced more than 100,000 indigenous peoples (Roy, 2002).

Landlessness has created massive poverty among indigenous groups. Murder, kidnapping, rape and other forms of violence against indigenous peoples by majority people has become commonplace. The Government attitude is highly discriminatory towards indigenous people despite their status as the original inhabitants of this soil. Almost all of the concentrations inhabited by indigenous people are the most neglected areas with a large proportion of people living inherently vulnerable lives. The overwhelming majority of indigenous communities are living below the poverty line and many have to struggle every day to arrive at least one meal a day. They are exploited in every possible sphere from the majority people of Bangladesh. Their health and simplicity negates their ability to compete with the external environment which is dominated by the majority population. Among the indigenous people who work under the majority people's ownership, they tend to be low paid and frequently exploited.

Tea garden workers of Sylhet region are the best example of exploitation and povety against a minority community. They have also become the victims of modernization and the benefits of economic growth have not percolated through to them. They remain as the poorest of the poor in terms of income and opportunities in both the social and economic spectrum. This is largely because policy initiatives have not addressed the specific needs of this group. Though the rate of receiving primary education is satisfactory among some indigenous communities, the rate of receiving education especially higher education is very low among them. The opportunity to receive skill based training is very limited for the indigenous peoples. Therefore most of these populations are still dependent upon traditional agriculture for their survival. Yet landlessness inherently restricts them from maximizing their livelihood which is interconnected with land resources.

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Modernization and urbanization has created a further insecurity for the traditional lives of the indigenous people. Their life supporting environments and land have become developed due to the demands of civilization in terms of extraction of forest wealth, laying road and rail tract, mining, illegal settlements, construction of tourism industries etc. (Reddy et al, 2002). The extent of this is beyond a replenishing capacity, which has brought uncertainty, misery and poverty to the tribal peoples psyche. These historical developments together with the sporadic enactment of forest and land revenue laws has triggered the denial of access to their traditional resources, led to the cultural, and identity crisis of tribal peoples (Reddy, et al, 2002). Cultural assimilation is creating tension among indigenous communities, and 'poses a real threat to their ethnic identity. From the above discussion, we can identify a few major problems faced by indigenous people that require immediate attention:

- Massive Poverty
- Landlessness and land grabbing
- Lack of development addressing their distinct needs d. Violation of human rights
- No representation in policy making and other important decision making bodies.
- No institutional recognition of indigenous people's rights, ethnic identity and languages.

Social work and social worker

Social work is an indispensable profession in our increasingly complex and ever-changing society. As a comprehensive helping profession, social work aims to respond to human needs through social welfare programs. The purpose and goals of these programs are remediation of social problems, enhancement of social functioning and prevention of social problems. Social work has maintained idealism about the ability and responsibility of a society to provide opportunities and resources that allows each person to lead a full and rewarding life (Moraes and Sheafor, 1998).

Its fundamental mission is directly serving people in need and, at the same time, making social institutions more responsive to people. Thus, National Association of Social Workers defines Social Work as the professional activity of helping individuals, families, groups or communities enhance or restore their capacity for social functioning or creating societal conditions favorable to that goal (NASW, 1973: 4-5). Similarly the Social Work Dictionary (Barker, 1999) defines social work profession as "the applied science of helping people achieve an effective level of psychological functioning and affecting social change to enhance the well-being of all people". As stated in the Code of Ethics (NASW, 1996: 1):

The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable and oppressed, and living in poverty. A historical and defining feature of social work is the profession's focus on individual well-being in a social context and the well-being of society. Fundamental to social work is attention to the environmental forces that create, contribute to, and address problems in living.

To achieve this mission social work has specific methods of activity. As described in the classic definition of the social work profession, the five elements of purpose, sanction, values, knowledge, and methods that are rooted in the identity of all social workers from the common base for their practice within the holistic perspective of person in environment (Timberlake and others, 2002).

The purpose of social work is to enable individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities to function more effectively within their various environments. Authority and permission is required from different sources (government and non-government) for social work to be widely practiced for the well-being of people in need. As a profession, social work is guided by explicit values, a moral commitment, and a written code of ethics. Social worker's are rooted in the fundamental ideals of beliefs in the inherent dignity and worth of every human being and recognition of the need for a democratic and caring society (Timberlake and others, 2002). This ideological base is identifiable in social welfare policies, programs and practices. To carry their value commitment forward into professional action, social workers need to have experience and theoretical knowledge of persons, environments, their interdependence and their rejections. Theorically framed knowledge helps social work to function professionally. Additionally, professional skill based theoretical knowledge is treated as a base for work as a social worker. Guided by purpose, sanction, values and knowledge, social workers execute a series of activities within the framework of specific methods to achieve identified goals with client, target and action systems.

Meeting human needs is the top priority of social workers. Throughout history, social workers have sought to improve the quality of life for the most vulnerable group of the population (Morales and Sheafor, 1998:33). Various social welfare programs are developed by them to help people function more satisfactorily. They also work to improve environmental conditions for vulnerable populations. Social workers engage in a broad range of activities within many types of settings and with many different people (Sheafor and Horejsi, 2003). Social workers engage in direct practice in roles such as counselor, enabler, broker of services, and case manager and indirect practice with environments in roles such as researchers, analyst, planner, programmer, and fund-raiser. On the other hand, they work to prevent, remEDIATE, or minimize human problems and risk factors while enhancing human strengths, resources, and protective factors (Timberlake and others, 2002).

How social worker can work with indigenous peoples

Social workers view diversity as positive. Culture, language, and traditions of various ethnic, racial and cultural groups are recognized as an asset for any community. Social workers are culturally sensitive in selecting a service for an individual, a particular group or community. Cultural influence plays a significant role in human behavior. Cultural influences include goals and aspirations, patterns of resource utilization or help seeking behaviors, self-concept or identity, pattern of communication and emotional control, and ways of perceiving life events and social situations (Timberlake and others, 2002). Indigenous groups have distinct cultural practices within a majority culture. Indigenous group members share common values, religious beliefs and practices, language, historical continuity and a place of origin or common ancestry. Indigenous people are a particularly vulnerable sector of society. Already indigenous people's issues have been recognized as an international concern. The United Nations and its allied agencies have adopted various policies and measures to protect the rights of indigenous peoples. Initiatives have been taken for the well being of this section of the population. Here in Bangladesh a few steps have already been taken mainly by NGO's, receiving support from international development agencies. Social workers have an opportunity to take part in these activities and can show the credibility of their profession in protecting and upholding people's right who are oppressed. Additionally, they can initiate policies and programs independently following their own methods and tools of development.

Although social work is concerned with the social functioning of all people, it has traditionally given priority to addressing the needs of the most vulnerable members of society. Typically these vulnerable populations have been victims of neglect, social injustice, discrimination and oppression (Sheafor and Horejsi, 2003). The indigenous people of Bangladesh are placed in this category. Creating social justice is one of the most important fundamental values for the social workers. Social justice refers to fairness and moral rightness in how social institutions such as government, corporations and powerful groups recognize and support the basic human rights. Social workers believe that social and economic policies of a country must recognize that all people have basic human rights. Sheafor and Horejsi (2003: 7) identified some basic human rights that must be fulfilled if we want to establish social justice:

- The right to have the food and shelter, basic medical care, and essential social services necessary to maintain one's life

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Community resources, prevention and treatment services for HIV/AIDS etc (Morales and Sheafor, 1998). Most of the indigenous children cannot adjust to development, family issues including violence, employment, alcohol and drugs, concerns regarding care of children and elders, development and use of communication skill, behavioral management skill, emotional crisis, peer counseling and leadership skills, personal growth and development, family issues including violence, employment, alcohol and drugs, concerns regarding care of children and elders, development and use of community resources, prevention and treatment services for HIV/AIDS etc (Morales and Sheafor, 1998). Most of the indigenous children cannot adjust to the national school environment due to language barriers. At home they speak their mother language which is different from the language taught in the national curriculum and in the classroom. This reality restricts their achievements in education and they also encounter problems when communicating outside their community especially at an early age. In the Governance sphere, indigenous people are frequently abused and discriminated by majority people and by different government agencies.

Although indigenous people enjoy a very peaceful family life, the current trend of assimilation with majority culture may affect their family life in the future which may require special attention. As family and community feelings and traditional customs are under risk from this assimilation process, traditional care systems for the dependent may be severely affected which is likely to create insecurity among the dependent members (children, older people, physically and mentally disable people) of the family. Drugs especially are widely used among many indigenous communities and it is observed that a few people spend the majority of their income for this purpose.

Indigenous people living in different border areas have a close contact with the neighboring country as they have many relatives living there. Due to such high rates of inter migration they are in high risk zone for HIV/AIDS. Given this reality, social workers can apply the case work method intensively. The group work method is also helpful for many of the problems identified and mentioned above.

Social workers can organize prevention and treatment groups to provide services for children, youth adults and elders. Self-esteem enhancement groups, cultural skill development groups, drug and alcohol education and prevention groups, community development groups, subsistence and survival skill groups, gang protection groups, school refusal groups, native language skill development groups, traditional culture practice and protection groups, prejudice awareness groups, abuse perpetrator protection groups (Morales and Sheafor, 1998) may be formed and social work can work effectively with these groups to achieve their goals. Macro-level practice involves working with an organization, community, state, or even society as a whole. The community organization method of social work can be used widely as a macro level intervention.

The community is an important concept for most of the indigenous groups. The cycles and traditions of their life are organized by the community and distinctive in character and style. In order to activate all potential resources of the community, different programs should be implemented. Currently the community is becoming less and less interconnected due to different adverse circumstances and problems. Problem resolution can be achieved through organizing and motivating the communities. There are different organizations working inside the indigenous community. Social workers may work within the organization as an employee, advisor or researcher and can maintain the quality of the service provided by organizations, by creating best policies and good practices for organizations to address the basic needs of indigenous people.

The social worker can do community based work independently to increase consciousness, mobilize community people towards accessing their rights and help people to independently use their own resources. Social workers can also identify needs and problems of the community. These identified needs can be used to encourage policy making authorities of the country to include indigenous peoples' issues within the national development policy. Additionally, they can influence development agencies to initiate sustainable programs for the well being of the indigenous communities providing accurate information regarding the adverse situation of indigenous peoples.

The role of the social worker can extend to influencing government agencies by providing authentic information to stop 'development projects’ that severely affect indigenous people's lives and the national bio-diversity. Legal assistance may be offered by the social workers to protect indigenous people's lands from grabbers and to fight torture and violence against indigenous peoples. A massive social movement may be initiated by the social workers against the human right violations of indigenous people of the country. They can serve as a voice for the indigenous peoples whose rights are ignored and abused by calling on others to recognize the basic rights of all people to act responsibly, with fairness. At the time of intervention, social workers must be respectful towards cultural distinctiveness and the different problems that are creating tension among indigenous people.

Each indigenous group has different customs that influence the building working relationship between the social worker and the community and will determine the acceptance of the social worker inside the community. This working relationship and acceptance are important for both micro and macro level intervention. The social worker must exercise culturally sensitivity to ensure acceptance skillfully.

Conclusion

Working in different social agencies, private practice, courts, clients, hospitals, schools and businesses, social workers deliver a wide variety of services directly to clients while they also work toward positive community and social change. The whole of society benefits from the social worker's activities because they are working towards improving the quality of life for an individual, a family, or the people of a community. Social workers have

- The right to be protected from abuse and exploitation
- The right to work and earn a sufficient wage to secure basic resources and live with dignity
- The right to marry, to have a family and to be with one's family.
- The right to a basic education
- The right to own property
- The right to be protected from avoidable harm and injury in the work place
- The right to worship as one chooses or not at all, if one chooses.
- The right to privacy
- The right to travel and associate with those one chooses
- The right to information about one's community and government
- The right to participate in and influence the decision of one's government.

All of the aforementioned rights have witnessed violations among indigenous groups in some shape or form within Bangladesh. Therefore, social workers can work towards establishing human rights for the indigenous peoples of Bangladesh. In principle social workers are obliged to challenge social injustice and by respecting human diversity and human dignity they can provide services through both macro and micro level interventions.
commitment to improve the situation all people living in the community. The social worker will focus on the more vulnerable groups of society and provide services to achieve a discrimination free society where all people can live with dignity. As an adverse group of the population, naturally indigenous peoples are an important target group for the social workers. Social workers can exercise Their skill based education and field based training to develop strategies to empower this vulnerable group. Different development agencies can seek cooperation from social workers which will help interventions to be more receptive to indigenous peoples needs and work towards creating a society where indigenous people can enjoy a discrimination free life with dignity.

References

The indigenous people are living in Bangladesh with their distinctive languages, culture, heritages, religions, diverse traditions and customs as well as with their own life-style harmoniously for a long time. There is an unsegregated and inborn deep relationship with forest, rivers, hills and valleys, land and nature in their daily life-style of indigenous people.

By the course of the history and heavy burden of modern civilization, the indigenous people who have been generated under the amiable and generous lap of nature in their daily life-style of indigenous people.

It has been stated in the holy constitution of Bangladesh in section 27 and 28 (1) that “all citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law” and “The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race caste, sex or place of birth”. In the present context of Bangladesh, the legal rights on social, political, economical, cultural and religious freedom are the most attributed rights of indigenous people. But, the consecutive ambivalence of the state and different types of maltreatment and neglect by the powerful influential, the illiterate and poor indigenous people are the prime victims of deprivation, constitutional rights, and violation of human rights.

The existence of Adivasi, enriched culture, languages, traditional heritages, their own social values and spirituality and the total way of life cannot be sustained lively without the ownership and rights on land. In those present days, the process of evicting indigenous people from their lands is unending in the name of searching oil, gas and mineral resources, construction of dam, eco-tourism park as well as through forcibly illegal occupation by the state and influential people all around the country. In this regard, some of the crucial events occurred in the past precisely prove that the existence of the indigenous people is in a profound crisis.

The rights on land and the existence of the Adivasi of North-Bengal

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Article 15 (1) the rights of the peoples concerned to the natural resources pertaining to their lands shall be specially safeguarded. These rights include the right of these peoples to participate in the use, management and conservation of these resources.

Article 17 (1) procedures established by the peoples concerned for the transmission of land rights among members of these peoples shall be respected.

According to the customs and culture of Indigenous people, the lands on which they have been living for a long time is their property. In this regard, having or not having land document is a minor point to them. Under this circumstance, the occupation of Indigenous lands by government and influential people is the violation of International convention and Human rights.

The bottom line is that the land is the central point of existence of indigenous people. In other word, land is the fundamental medium of livelihood with respect in this motherland. The entire comprehensive life cycle of Adivasi is related to the land. It is to be mentioned that from cradle to grave land, forest, hills and valleys, rivers and nature is un separated in the life of indigenous people. Now, it is the right time if the government and NGOs do not step forward with helping hand to protect and safeguard the land of indigenous people; they will live vulnerable and unsecured life being homeless and landless.

Naturally, the question comes up how long the natives of this fertile soil will live inhumane life being homeless and landless in this independent country? Today let this be our timeless expectation and aspiration of our future activities that the indigenous people may live in this land with their social, political and economical life with full respect as well as with their meaningful social values, languages, traditions and diverse culture in peace and harmony with due rights on land.

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