Case Study

Impact of Psychological Problems in Manipur (India): A Case Study in the Northeast

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ABSTRACT

Manipur, a lush, hilly state that borders Myanmar, has a long history of civil conflict since modern India's creation. The state is home to an ethnically diverse group of Sino-Tibetan communities, each with its unique language, culture, and religion. Like Kashmir in the north, it was once a princely state under British rule. It was only incorporated into India in 1949 – two years after the country gained independence from its former colonizers. Many within the state disagreed with that move, feeling it was hurried and completed without a proper consensus. The region has grappled with violent insurgencies as well as ethnic conflict ever since, resulting in hundreds of deaths and injuries over the decades. The Northeast is one of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse regions in India. The numerous fairs and festivals celebrated by these communities and their friendly nature are irresistible attractions for visitors. The problem of insurgency in the Northeast has reached an all-time high. Almost all of Northeast is under Armed forces under the Special Powers Act. Their presence is due to unrest or ethnic uprising, which is due to unemployment, intolerance, frustration, and alienation among the people in general, and youths in particular. There are many reasons behind the problem of insurgency/ terrorism. Some of which is a lack of political power and determination to make the people of this region feel oneness and a sense of belonging to the country. Due to not having any industrial growth, the States have a lack of employment opportunities, lack of proper facilities, planning, etc. The other reason is the geographical isolation/location of the states of the Northeast from the rest of the country. Due to this, there is a lack of communication, poor transportation, no opportunity for sending agriculture and other produces outside the state, etc. All these adversely affect to economic development. Many studies showed that deprivation, unemployment, racial discrimination, ethnicity, minority status, and so on show altogether different impacts on identity development. Ethnic minorities who form sub-segments in society have low self-esteem and find themselves in a complex situation (Taifel, 1978, and Morris).

Keywords: Insurgency/Terrorism, Racial discrimination, Identity

The Northeast India of the seven sister states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. They form part of the East Himalayan region which, extends from Sikkim eastwards and embraces the Darjeeling Hills of

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the West Bengal. The location of the region is strategically important as it has international borders with Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Myanmar, and Tibet. The area is characterized by rich bio-diversity, heavy precipitation, and high seism city. It is endowed with forest wealth and is ideally suited to produce a whole range of plantation crops, spices, fruits and vegetables and flowers and herbs as well. The rich natural beauty, serenity and exotic flora and fauna of the area are invaluable resources for the development of eco-tourism. The total area of the region is about 2, 55,168 sq. km. All the seven states are members of the Northeast Council, organized on 1st August 1972 and within the jurisdiction of Guwahati High Court.

The region has a high concentration of tribal population. The states of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland are mostly inhabited by several native tribes. Each tribe has its own distinct tradition of art, culture, dance, music and lifestyle. The Northeast is one of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse regions in India. The numerous fairs and festivals celebrated by these communities and their friendly nature are irresistible attractions for visitors. Each of the seven parts of India has its own culture and tradition. According to the 1971 census, about 220 languages are belonging mainly to three language families, namely Indo-Aryan, Sino-Tibetan and Austric. The Indo –Arya by Asamiya and Bangle, Austro-Asiatic represented mainly by Khasi and the Sino-Tibetan family of langue the Tibeto-Burman and Siamese Chinese sub families also there are languages of the Tea-Tribes. Ho language spoken here belongs to the former and the latter is represented by a few Thai languages like Aiton, Phakyal and Turung.

However, the maximum concentration of Tibeto-Burman speakers is found in the Northeast: in comparison to any part of the Country. The north-eastern part of India is bounded by Bhutan, Bangladesh and Burma. It comprises seven states Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Nagaland, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, and Tripura.

Insurgency in the Northeast
Today, the northeast of India is in a state of flux. The problem of insurgency in the Northeast has reached an all-time high. Almost all of Northeast is under Armed forces under special powers.

Act. Their presence is due to unrest or ethnic uprising, which is due to unemployment, intolerance, frustration, and alienation among the people in general, and youths in particular. What strikes an outsider at the very outset of the Northeast are insurgency, ethnic clashes, inter-religious conflicts and so on. Anyone who has to live with terrorism and protect himself against it also needs to understand the motive and character of the terrorists. Needless to say, terrorists are intelligent, fit, usually well-trained, and highly motivated individuals. The geographical location of the northeast being very strategic due to India's international boundary, this region ought to receive the utmost attention from the much-needed infrastructure for a peaceful and tranquil society. The entire Northeast region of the country has a very common problem. That is insurgency, transport system underdevelopment, communication, education, health care, negligence, and so forth.

There are many reasons behind the problem of insurgency/ terrorism. Some of which is a lack of political will and determination to make the people of this region feel oneness and a sense of belonging to the country. Due to not having any industrial growth, the States have a lack of employment opportunities, lack of proper facilities, planning etc.

The other reason is the geographical isolation/location of the states of Northeast from rest of the country. Due to this, there is a lack of communication, poor transportation, no opportunity for sending agriculture and other produces outside the state etc. All these adversely affect the economic development.

Moreover, the area has been brought under control to some extent by providing opportunities to youths, giving political autonomy and granting special economic packages and deploying reconciliatory measures with insurgent and separatist groups. Still, the states of Assam, Tripura, Manipur and Nagaland face different kind of uprisings, insurgency and terrorism of complex nature. These are both intra-group (among tribes) and inter group fighting. In other words, the fight is between different ethnic groups and against the Government or for a separate homeland and anti-national activity.

Terrorism

Terrorism is an act of frustration, revenge, despair; inability to achieve desired (both realistic and unrealistic) goals and motivated behavior of committed ideology. Terrorists follow certain ideologies and strategies to achieve their objectives in the society. A true believer is often more than willing to sacrifice his life for the cause. Terrorism is the destruction of property by people not acting on behalf of an established government to redress a government and aimed directly or indirectly at an established government. Most official definitions of terrorism also contain the word 'unlawful' or 'criminal'—as part of the definition. This is because the purpose of such definitions is to make the activity defined as 'terrorism' a crime in the country where it is being defined. 'Lawfulness or Criminality 'however, are not part of the activity itself, but depends on whether such activity is considered lawful or unlawful in a particular society state or country.

Unable to achieve, unrealistic goals by conventional means, national terrorists attempt to send an ideological or religious message by terrorizing the public. Through the choice of their targets, which are often symbolic or representative of the targeted nation, terrorists attempt to create a high-profile impact on the public of their targeted enemy or enemies with their act of violence, despite the limited material resources that are usually at their disposal. Thus, they might send a message to the people or Government against whom they act.

Definitions of terrorism vary widely and are usually inadequate. Even terrorism researchers State (1998) often neglect to define the term other than by citing the basic U.S. Department of definition of terrorism as "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience." Although an act of violence that is generally regarded in the United States, as an act of terrorism may not be viewed so in another country, the type of violence that distinguishes terrorism from other types of violence, such as ordinary crime or a wartime military action can still be defined in terms that might qualify as reasonably objective. Moreover, those who suffer at the hands of aggressors, exploiters and are victims of injustice and prejudice perceive terrorism differently. For them it might be an act of achieving justice and goal.

The social sciences researcher defines a terrorist action as the calculated use of unexpected, shocking, and unlawful violence against non-combatants (including, in addition to civilians, off-duty military and security personnel in peaceful situations) and other symbolic targets perpetrated by a clandestine member(s) of a sub-national group or a clandestine agent(s) for the psychological purpose of publicizing a political or religious cause and/or intimidating or

coercing a government(s) or civilian population into accepting demands on behalf of the cause.

Paul Wilkinson (1977) mentions the causes of revolution and political violence in general are also the causes of terrorism. These include ethnic conflicts, religious and ideological differences, poverty, modernization stresses, political inequities, lack of peaceful communication channels, traditions of violence, the existence of a revolutionary group, governmental weakness and ineptness, erosion of confidence in a regime, and deep divisions within governing elites and leadership groups.

Terrorism is an important issue in the contemporary world. It is interpreted differently and there are several approaches for the explanation of Terrorism. According to Husain (2000) terrorism is a relative term perceived and interpreted differently by different groups and persons. Some of them are given below.

Crenshaw (1990), in her view, feels that an individual does not commit terrorism. Rather, she contended that "Acts of terrorism are committed by groups who reach collective decisions based on commonly held beliefs, although the level of individual commitment to the group and its beliefs varies."

Crenshaw has not substantiated her contention with case studies that show how decisions are supposedly reached collectively in terrorist groups. That kind of inside information, to be sure, would be quite difficult to obtain without a former decision-maker within a terrorist group providing it in the form of a published autobiography or an interview, or even as a paid police informer. Crenshaw may be partly right, but her organizational approach would seem to be more relevant to guerrilla organizations that are organized along traditional Marxist-Leninist lines, with a general secretariat headed by a secretary general, than to terrorist groups per se.

Ted Robert Gurr (1970, 1996), an expert on violent behaviours and movements; and reformulated by J.C. Davies 1973) include a gap between rising expectations and need satisfaction. Another proponent of this hypothesis, Joseph Margolin (1977), argues, "much terrorist behaviour is a response to the frustration of various political, economic, and personal needs or objectives." Other scholar, however, have dismissed the frustration-aggression hypothesis as simplistic, based as it is on the erroneous assumption that aggression is always a consequence of frustration.

Pearlstein (1991) held narcissistic personality responsible for terrorism. Such Terrorist act for collective goals with political motivation, which deliberately sacrificed them in the act, had narcissistic personality.

Terrorists' Motivation
Wilkinson pointed out that the psychology and beliefs of terrorists have been inadequate. Explored. Most psychological analyses of terrorists and terrorism, according to Taylor (1988), have attempted to address what motivates terrorists or to describe the personal characteristics of terrorists, on the assumption that these can identify terrorists' attributes. However, it is important to know the psychology of terrorism and the psychological characteristics of terrorists.

Human behavior more or less is influenced by his needs, motivations, and other desires for achieving a goal, leading to frustration if not attained. However, the magnitude of an individual's frustration determines his future course of action for the attainment of these goals. According to the frustration--Aggression paradigm inability to tolerate the effects of frustration becomes the potential cause of violent behaviour. Human goals are multifaceted including political motives, regional aspirations, religious superiority, cultural dominance, etc. Violence, terrorism, militancy and insurgency are the real expression of non-containment of human aggressive behavior (Husain, 2000, Ghosh, 1994). These are relative terms perceived differently by different people. One may consider an act as 'terrorism' whereas others perceive the same act as 'freedom fighting/ struggle for survival/demand for justice and so on. The possible reason that leads to terrorism lies in different psycho-social factors such as frustration in life, suppression by others, deprivation, poverty, lack of equal opportunities, religion, culture, prejudice, discrimination, feelings of insecurity, alienation, ethnic identity etc. In fact, these are the real root causes of such behaviour (Terrorism).

To reduce the impetus for terrorism and separatism, there have to be real safety and guarantee of life and property for minority groups and deprived sections. They should also have political freedom and economic participation in the national scene. The safety nets could be to improve inter-ethnic co-existence, protection of the effective rights of minority groups, and promotion of intra-regional and economic cooperation and inter-dependence. The objective is to ensure that the various social groups who live in the territory develop a sense of belongingness to the political system and they in turn agree to have their public lives regulated by the political system. Indian society is largely attempting to assimilate these groups in the mainstream and is to a great extent successful. This is why people in various regions/states be it Northeast, Punjab or Kashmir do not support terrorism. However, the disgruntled and misguided elements resort to different form of Terrorism and/or insurgency.

The problem of terrorism, which is a major issue before the world in general and nation must in particular be dealt with rationally and all proper care should be taken because a kick-in-back approach can never resolve the problems rather it may pose a danger to the nation's integration. In fact, unrealistic and harsh military action in dealing with insurgency may lead to alienation, weak identity and strong feelings of prejudice. Such actions cause frustration and humiliating feelings, which in turn lead to violent reactions.

Ethnicity
The problem of ethnic strife and uprising is a global issue of the contemporary World, which needs serious attention. As a matter of fact, the real root causes of casteism; regionalism and ethnic uprising are needed to be dealt with effectively. The social psychologists have the opinion that ethnicity and ethnic identity, prejudice, ethnocentrism, social tension, terrorism, and communalism as obstacles in the way of development of national integration. To the social processes of ethnic uprising have posed varied challenges to different states in the variety of ways. Ethnicity in true sense is a social problem, a social product primarily used in a broader context with cultural, racial, regional and social pattern leading to social consciousness or ethnic identity. Both ethnicity and ethnic identity are synonyms in literature. Ethnic identity begins to emerge very early in childhood and is crystallized by early adolescence in every culture and society (Singh, A.K., 1992, Husain, 1996).

Ethnicity is a sense of ethnic identity, which has been derived from latine word 'Ethnikos' consisting of the subjective, symbolic use by a group of people to differentiate themselves

from other groups. In order words, an ethnic group is any social category of people who have a common culture that sets them apart from others in society. Ethnicity gives birth to ethnic identity based on religion, culture, race, caste, etc. Ethnic groups are inherently ethnocentric regarding their own cultural traits as natural, correct, and superior to those of other ethnic groups who are perceived as odd, amusing inferior, and immoral. Once the ethnic groups are perceived, the ethnic groups begin to compete against each other. Hence, the most important variable is the differential power of one group in comparison to other. These basic differences appear in terms of the perception of people belonging to different regions, cultures, linguistic groups and castes.

Closely related to the structural dimensions of identity formation, compression and persistence of the ethnic group is the ethnicity. Providing the group, a quality and a character, ethnicity is the summation of its impulse and motivation for power and recognition. It is determined by a complex interaction of social force. Thus, ethnicity may be viewed as a device as much as a focus for group mobilization by its leadership through the select use of ethnic symbol for socio- cultural and political economic purposes. In the process, it has been the driving force in the emergence of ethnic movements.

Harding et. al. (1968) defines an ethnic group as a collection of people considered both by themselves and by other people to have in common one or more of the characteristics as religion, racial origin, national origin, language and cultural tradition. Thus, ethic group is any social category of people who have a common culture that sets them apart from others in society. As a matter of fact, it is a human group bound together by ties of cultural homogeneity, (Berry and Trischler, 1948).

Identity

Identity development is a natural process. Every individual has a tendency possess or being possessed (Husain, 1997). This tendency provides him not only some sort of satisfaction but also sense of belongingness and feeling of being important. These feelings of being a part of some organization or faith are his identity. By identifying with someone, an individual feels part of a larger group of which he is a component. Thus, collective or individual success or failure, important or unimportant, achievement or non-achievement, are considered as that of his own (Husain, 1992).

The term identity originates from the clinical context where a patient was described as having identity disturbance also called identity crisis. This gave realization to the fact that it was because of break in his sense of affiliation with some groups, organizations, institutions etc. and identification with another group is his identity. Erikson (1959), the pioneer in the field of identity, gave large understands of various dimensions of identity through his clinical and theoretical contributions as well as through biological illustrations. In his view, identity carries many meanings including sense of sameness and continuity with time and space.

However, collective sense of identity characterizes individuals' social groups such as religion, caste, culture and ethnicity. Tajfel (1972) introduced the concept of social identity and defined it as the 'individual knowledge' that he belongs to certain groups together with some emotional values and significance to him or his group.

Any threat or challenge to identity brings changes in the individual identification or changes in identity. Social psychological factors such as security of life and property, challenges,

threat, ego, become one of the causes of strong or weak identity (Husain, 1997). Deprivation, socio-economic status and caste system too are the dimensions of ones' identity development. Identity formation passes through the processes of socialization, interaction and meeting day-to-day challenges in life. Phinney and Rosenthal (1992) observed that the establishment of ethnic identity progresses through a sequence of stages parallel to those proposed by Marcia for general identity development. One of the most important aspects of an individual's identity is his ethnic identity formed due to his group, environment, culture, and race. Besides ethnic identity, he also develops sub-identities because of his various commitments, relationships, affiliations etc. Among these are cultural, linguistic, religious, and national identities. Today the World is witnessing the greatest ever challenges of ethnic uprising, disorganization/reorganization, economic disparity and political dominance, leadership crises (in some countries only), religious and regional polarization, social and communal tension and so on. The Indian scenario is not different from rest of the World. All the factors alone greatly mentioned influence ethnic identity. Among all these religio-cultural and ethnic factors concern us much. Socio-cultural conditions, ethnicity, deprivation, caste, religion, etc. influence identity development. Several studies showed that deprivation, unemployment, racial discrimination, ethnicity, minority status, and so on show altogether different impact on identity development. Ethnic minorities who form sub-segments in the society have low self-esteem and find themselves in a complex situation (Taifel, 1978, and Morris, 1968).

CONCLUSION

There are many reasons behind the problem of insurgency/ terrorism. Some of which is lack of political will and determination to make the people of this region feel oneness and sense of belonging to the country. Due to not having any industrial growth, the States have lack of employment opportunity, lack of proper facilities, planning etc.

The other reason is the geographical isolation/location of the states of Northeast from rest of the country. Due to this, there is a lack of communication, poor transportation, no opportunity for sending agriculture and other produces outside the state etc. All these adversely affect the economic development.

Due to these reasons, the entire north-eastern people felt isolated, negligence, economic disparity, feel deprived of opportunities, and perceive denial of right and racial discrimination. And at the same time, they feel alienated from the rest of the other states of India. The main reason behind is that these States had been neglected or never been under the control of the Government. For example, in a conflict between two groups i.e., Kuki and Naga in Manipur, the Government has never taken a serious step. From 1992-98, many violent clashes broke out between two tribal groups i.e. the Nagas, and the Kukis, those inhabited in valley areas were Mieties (Hindu) and Meities Pangal (Manipur Muslim) in the north-eastern Indian state of Manipur. This is the longest and bloodiest ethnic clash in the history of Manipur. They should look into this matter why and for what purpose the bloodshed is of one another. If the Government do not look into the matter seriously then this will a be never-ending conflict. This situation is enough for any group or community to strive for a separate and distinct identity.

In fact, unrealistic and harsh military action in the north-eastern region, lead to alienation, weak identity and strong feelings of prejudice. Such actions cause frustration and humiliation, which in turn lead to violent reactions such as terrorism and insurgency in the states of the Northeast.

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