Cultural Diversity and Their Integration: A study of households in Itanagar Town, Arunachal Pradesh

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Abstract—India is not only known as a subcontinent due to geophysical assemblage of diverse geographical features but also due collage and mosaic of diverse culture intertwined with a fabric of homophily and influence. F J Richards’ cultural regions of (pre independent) India are based on administrative, linguistic, religious and social criteria including migration that explains the diversity of culture in India. Arunachal Pradesh belongs to Himalayan Border of Frontier Cultural Zone of India, where ‘Intercourse between India and Tibet is difficult, Tibet owes much to India but has given little in return’. This has continued since historic time till date and the cultural interaction and economic dependency has increased over time leading to higher degree of cultural assimilation and transformation in Arunachal Pradesh. Itanagar the capital of Arunachal Pradesh has a high mix of cultural groups who have come from various parts of India. A sample study of 158 households shows that there are people who have come from 19 cultural regions of India, besides native Arunachalees for a variety of purposes that can be broadly categorized into government or private sector jobs and entrepreneurial ventures. Itanagar became the state capital in 1974 and the native inhabitants were very less that time. Out of the total households surveyed 22% of them were there before 1970, by 1980, 13% households settled in the town; during next two decades 50% of the present households resided in the town forming maximum proportion of migration. Since 2000, there is decrease in net addition of households in the town, which amounts to 14 percent of total households surveyed. The town has a multi religious identity with Hindu (49%), Christian (21%), Donyi Polo, the natives (14%), Islam (10%) and followers of Bahai and more than one religious practice. Economically these culturally diverse groups are gainfully engaged and have a median income of INR16000 per month with 9 household having no assured income up to INR1500 per month. Hindi language is currently the dominant spoken language (92 percent households) and has replaced Assamese language due to spread of mass communication; through TV and radio programmes. Even Hindi has become the language of conversation among the natives; as there are as many languages as the number of tribes in Arunachal, and variation among languages and dialects is very high. Cultural diversity and identity is retained in their private life as explained by the respondents: food habits remain unchanged at home even if they eat food of other cultural groups at food joints and public ceremony and functions; dress codes are retained by the elders where as young generation have similar dress preferences cutting across the cultural groups. The natives of Arunachal Pradesh celebrate their own traditional festivals irrespective of religion presently they follow and also participate and patronage the festivals of others. The non natives, belonging to other cultural regions participate in the local traditional festivals as invited guests. Even though there are distinct difference in cultural traits among the inhabitants of the town; there is a sense of complementarity and symbiotic relation among them and that form the prime governing rule for coexistence of all.

Keywords—Arunachal Pradesh, Cultural diversity, cultural integration, Cultural region, Cultural trait.

I. INTRODUCTION

India as it has been known through historical time, is a vast stretch of land without a definite or permanent bounding limit, is being inhabited as long as 75000 years. From Indus valley civilization to current socio-cultural composition, India has been citadel of a wide spectrum of ethnic and cultural groups living in its territory. India’s administrative or political regions are based on its ethnic foundations. Linguistic, religious and social criteria have been guiding principle of cultural regions of India. Migration in India was basically driven for wealth by the highlander (immigration) and to avoid overcrowd and aggression (emigration) [1]. Northeastern part of India has been a stage of conflict and social unrest due to cross cultural differences and aspiration. However Arunachal Pradesh has been a peaceful state because of due to strong physiographical setup of Himalayas.

Arunachal Pradesh earlier known as North Eastern Frontier Agency (NEFA) attained statehood on 20th February 1987 with its capital at Itanagar. Arunachal Pradesh is divided into three cultural zones to on the basis of socio-religious affinities: viz. i) Buddhism Mahayana in the western part and Buddhism Hinayana in the eastern part; ii) worshiper of Sun and Moon God namely Donyi Polo widely spread across the state; and iii) vaishnavism in the extreme eastern part [2].

II. ECONOMY

Economy of Arunachal Pradesh is mainly dependant on agriculture, mostly jhum cultivation and limited area under wet rice cultivation. Besides agriculture forestry and logging, fishing, mining and quarrying, construction and few services form the main contributors towards Net State Domestic Product (NSDP). Between 1990-2000 and 2008-2009 agriculture and allied activities contributed almost 30 percent of NSDP whereas 41.27 percent of NSDP was contributed by service sector. It has grown from a completely subsistence agriculture driven society to a society with all modern

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economic functions and amenities. Growth of economy started with dawn of 21\textsuperscript{st} century when there was a sudden drop in percentage of contribution from primary sector due to increase in activities in tertiary sector. Along with the changes in sectoral contributions to NSDP, sectoral distribution of workforce also went through important changes. Share of primary workers got reduced from 80.40 to 62.27 percent within a time frame of 1971 to 2001. Over all urban work participation rate was 36.39 and 34.16 percent for 1991 and 2001 respectively. The present study area belonging to Papum Pare District had 35.64 and 36.12 percent of urban work participation rate [3].

A. Composition of Employment
For this purpose two significant social groups can be distinguished in Arunachal Pradesh; i) ST social group belonging to the state; i.e. mainly the natives and ii) Non-ST social group, constituting the migrant population living in the state for various purposes. Employment category is broadly divided into three categories viz: self-employed, regular employed and casual labor. In 1993-94 among ST social group 91.73 percent were self employed 6.00 percent were regular employed and rest 2.27 were casual labor whereas it was 75.52, 18.79 and 5.69 respectively for non-ST social groups, i.e. persons coming from other states of India. During 2004-2005 proportion of non-ST social groups increases in the regular employed (26.7 percent) and in casual labor (14.1 percent).

B. Workers across industries.
The share of agriculture in 2004-05 among all workers was 76 percent, which is mainly carried out by the native people and few migrant laborers. The next important activities in the state are public administration, education and community services. This sector being a historically a recent phenomena in Arunachal employs a great number of non-ST social group belonging to rest of India.

In urban areas immigration of non Arunachalee ethnic groups were mostly for service sector (both state and central government services (48.4 percent), trade, hotel and restaurants (28.3 percent) and unskilled workers in the construction sector (7.8 percent).

III. DEMOGRAPHY
Relationship between demographic attributes and socioeconomic variables are strong and influence as well as respond to change in the other. Size and density of population, population composition, population growth and migration are main determinants of social and economic structure of a region. Arunachal Pradesh had a population density of 4 per km\textsuperscript{2} in 1961, 13 and 17 person per km\textsuperscript{2} in 2001 and 2011 respectively.

As per 2011 census, total population of Arunachal Pradesh was 1383727. Out of it 951821 or 68.79 percent belong to ST social group. As there are only 27 towns in Arunachal Pradesh number of persons from ST social group is very less i.e. 161975[4]. Urbanization is relatively new in this mountainous state. Till 1961 there was not a single urban settlement in Arunachal Pradesh. During 1971 census four administrative headquarters having population above 2500 were treated as census towns. At present there are 27 towns in Arunachal Pradesh with a 22.6 percent of total population. Towns have population from both the social groups and have a high degree of cultural interaction.

IV. STUDY AREA
The study area Itanagar town of Papum Pare District, Arunachal Pradesh, India (Fig.1) is located in the north eastern part of Arunachal Pradesh India with the town centre at 27°05’ 54” N and 93°37’ 19” E covering an area about 10 km\textsuperscript{2}. The town has no limiting boundary as there is no municipality jurisdiction. However recent municipality election may lead to delineation of its territorial jurisdiction. Itanagar is a small Class III town in the District of Papum Pare with a population of 34940 persons (2001). As per 2011 census, out of the total population of Papum Pare district, 54.91 percent lives in urban area. In total 96,963 people lives in urban areas of which males are 49,247 and females are 47,716. Sex Ratio in urban region of Papum Pare district is 969 as per 2011 census data.

V. DATABASE AND METHODOLOGY
For the present study of understanding the cultural diversity and their significance in cultural integration and transformation, 158 households have been taken sample from various parts of the town. Questionnaire was prepared to collect information about place of birth or origin, mother tongue, other language known, religion, educational attainment, number of children, purpose of migration, year of coming to Itanagar, occupation type, income generated, following own cultural traits, adapting to other cultural traits.

Data has been tabulate using MS-Excel and pivot table is generated for variables like cultural region v/s religion; place of origin v/s religion; house type v/s religion; occupation v/s religion; occupation type versus religion; income versus cultural group; income versus cultural region; mother tongue versus other language known; to understand the characteristics, composition of cultural groups residing in the town.
 VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Year and purpose of migration

Migration to the capital town of Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar is from the state itself for various purposes like job, government service, studies / education, to settle whereas those who have come from other parts of India are mainly for various jobs and government service.

Out of total about 22 percent are native to this place and were residing before 1970 (Table I). Besides natives, there were few from Assam, Bihar, Meghalaya and West Bengal. There was increase in immigrants during 1970 to 2000 due to need of skilled workforce and government servants to run the states affairs. With increase in literacy and higher education the ST-social groups i.e. the native population got the opportunity to serve the state. However, in certain areas like education, central services and business non-ST social groups are still coming to the state to serve. The whole migration scenario in the state has benefited the natives as it is observed elsewhere [5].

There is no restriction on migration to this territorial part of India, but entry for persons other than the state is documented with Inner Line Permit (ILP). Once the person retires or completes his work tenure returns to their own place.

B. Cultural Groups versus Educational Attainment

Educational attainment is linked to cultural roots as well as secures the future of the individual and its cultural group. It also helps in increasing efficiency through competitiveness.

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Education as a human capital also leads to occupational attainment [6]. During survey it is found that 13.3 percent have no formal education and most of them are from ST-social group of Arunachal; 17.1 percent are 10th pass; 17.7 percent are 12th pass; 22.2 percent are graduates and 4.4 percent are post graduates and rest are dropouts at different level.

C. Cultural Groups versus Occupation

Interdependency has promoted migration and currently emigration from the state is mainly for educational purpose, where as immigration is mainly for occupations. The survey conducted for 158 household shows there are people from 19 cultural groups of India. Within the Arunachl cultural groups almost all tribes and sub-tribes are found in the town however during survey Adi, Apatani, Bangni, Galo, Hills Miri, Miji, Nyishi and Tagin have been reported. As there is no discrimination in choice of occupation and adaptation process all these cultural groups have existed with a sense of complimentarity.

Occupational structure of the population surveyed highlights its distribution across cultural groups (Table II). There are 41 types of occupations reported and two students and four house hold without a dependable source of income are living in the town. As seen from the occupation structure there are people belonging to creative class [8] who have contributed to the Arunachal society in terms of education, administration and management.

D. Cultural Groups and Income

Ethnicity and workforce characteristics among migrants are to an extent linked in the case of Arunachal Pradesh as
E. Cultural group and Language

All are conditioned by their mother tongue and the language of instruction at educational institutions. When one migrates to another area in a country like India the first barrier is language in communicating at public place or with others. However the same linguistic affinity is used cohesive strength to maintain their cultural identity and differentiate from 'other' [9].

In Itanagar town there are 22 linguistic cultural groups including those from Arunachal found during survey. Hindi is the dominant spoken language in the state and has replaced Assamese, which had wider acceptance as a medium of communication. This is basically due to spread of audio-video programs in Hindi and English as medium of instruction in the educational system. The linguistic cultural groups are very small in number and have no influence on other linguistic groups. The second language is remarkably Hindi for 90.5 percent of population excluding those have mother tongue as Hindi. There is hardly any selection of language of ST-social group as second language.

F. Cultural groups and Traditional preferences

Food is an integral part in defining culture. The cultural and social significance of food and eating in India is multifaceted and rich in meaning[10]. Preferences varies at micro regional scale i.e. even within a cultural region as well as among caste and religion groups. Parents coming from various parts of India to this town have retained their traditional food consumption style and choices in the town. Children are influenced by larger social context [11] of the area and peer groups for food preferences. Children born and brought up here in the town however have shown interest for a variety of food preferences, but clearly compartmentalized between home and outside. At home they eat their traditional food while they have no hesitation in enjoying other type of food.

Clothing style is linked to traditional attire. However, modern societal status has transcended across cultural groups and there is almost a uniform pattern of dress across different age group. Younger generations prefer jeans where as elders prefer pan Indian dress style. Among the ST social groups traditional dress is used during their festivals.

Festivals signify the cultural bondage with their roots. Arunachal Pradesh has 26 major tribes and more than 100 sub-tribes with their own festivals and rituals. Festivals are observed in open space with invited guests from other communities and non-ST social groups. Rituals are performed in closed space and observed by their family or clan groups. Festivals of non-ST social groups are observed in open space and people from ST social groups participate wholeheartedly.

VII. Conclusions

Cultural diversity in the town of Itanagar is a recent phenomenon due to establishment capital of the state. Population immigrated to the township from within and outside the state has led to cultural diversity of this small town. Employment opportunity is the strongest pull factor for immigration. Educational attainment among the non-ST migrants is higher and they have acclimatized themselves to the native cultural plurality. The relationship among various cultural groups is cordial and interwoven into the fabric of acceptance and mutual respect for each other.

REFERENCES