
EXAMINING ASPECTS OF THE GORKHA IDENTITY IN MIZORAM: A STUDY
OF SELECTED WRITINGS

SHRADDHA SUBBA

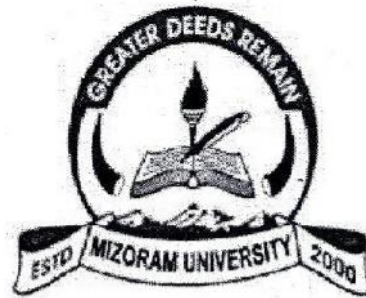
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Writings*

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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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of Master of Philosophy in English of Mizoram University, Aizawl.*

DECLARATION

Mizoram University

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I, Shraddha Subba, hereby declare that the subject matter of this dissertation is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this dissertation did not form the basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the dissertation has not been submitted by me for any other University or Institute.

This is being submitted to Mizoram University for the degree of Master of Philosophy in English.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that *Examining Aspects of the Gorkha Identity in Mizoram: A Study of Selected Writings* written by Shraddha Subba has been written under my supervision.

She has fulfilled all the required norms laid down within the M.Phil. regulations of Mizoram University. The dissertation is the result of her own investigation. Neither the dissertation as a whole nor any part of it was ever submitted by any other University for any research degree.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

India, a land of various ethnic and tribal groups, each with their distinct culture, language, and economy, presents and preserves a set of values and norms that are self-evidently real. Strategically important and physically isolated, the North-Eastern region, comprising the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura evokes a spectrum of emotions among the general population of India. The claim of peoples belonging to the ethnic and cultural settings of the North-East, and a consequent national identity has generated considerable debate and controversy among intellectuals, social activists, and others.

Prasenjit Biswas and Chandan Suklabaidya in their book *Ethnic Life-Worlds in North-East India*, write, “Ethnic identity remains ridden with a split at its heart. The resultant dilemma is whether to maintain roots in consonance with the tradition or whether to maintain an identity, despite the ongoing changes augured by modernity” (51). The need for protecting one’s identity became an abiding concern of various groups of citizens in the North-East after Independence. As such, most of the identities in India’s North-East assume a space of difference for realization of their own aspirations, cultural, and political, with all other economic and social ramifications. Hence the phenomenal rise and growth of various identities in North-East India presents a picture of the possibilities of multiple emergences of identities with many distinct claims.

North-East India, covering seven states, provides a cultural panorama found nowhere else in India. The magnitude of the cultural diversity of the North-East almost defies the imagination. Perhaps there is no comparable geographical area in the world which is home to cultural diversity of this magnitude. The slogan, “Incredible North-East” beckons tourists to

explore and experience the rich biodiversity and scenic beauty and the profusion of customs and traditions of the myriad ethnic communities of this region. However, reports of violence and conflict often deter them from visiting it and from investing in its rich social, political and economic capital. Perceptions about the region are largely based on the information that trickles down either from experiences of people who served there or from media reports. Thus, the voices of the local denizens largely go unheard.

Ethnically and linguistically diverse and an ecological treasure-trove with mineral and forest wealth, the region is the least developed in the country. Dispensing the pall of gloom, however, are the peace processes initiated and sustained by the people. Apart from its natural beauty, the area is the homeland of a large number of indigenous and immigrant tribes each with their distinct language and culture. Prior to Independence these groups were vaguely known to the outsiders. But during the last few decades, better communication networks, administrative changes, formation of democratic governments, spread of modern education and missionary activities have given a new face to the erstwhile tribal societies of the region. But with the rapidly changing natural scenario of the area, the traditional cultural elements of indigenous groups still persist.

Further, the North-East part of the country is a sensitive place from a strategic point of view. The tribal inhabitants of this region are bewildering in their socio-cultural variety and ethnicity. They differ greatly in their economy, society, and culture. Though the history of tribal studies of this part of India is quite old, yet the empirical studies on the social dynamics of contemporary tribal life of this place remain very scanty.

Ethnicity, a concept probably first used by David Reisman in 1953 in his *The Interpretation of Cultures* is not a new concept but it was merely labelled differently. It is generally understood as a construct which is produced within a specific historical and

institutional site by using building materials from history, geography, collective memories, power relations, and so on. It has objective as well as subjective connotations. Objectively, it is seen as “primordial affinities and attachments” and subjectively, as an “activated primordial consciousness”, says Clifford Geertz in his book entitled *The Interpretation of Cultures* (75). Ethnicity therefore refers to a common tradition, a system of shared values and culture by a group of people who identify themselves as a distinct entity different from other cultures. Besides this element of self-conceived identification, the group demanding a place under the sun may have a number of other characteristics that define its distinctiveness and maintain a social distance from other groups. These attributes may roughly include a distinct language, or social customs, traditions, dress patterns, food habits and other modes of life. Close on the heels of ethnicity comes the concept of ethnic minorities who consider themselves distinguished from the larger societies by showing certain traits already mentioned above. Subjected to discrimination and outright repression by the dominant group in their society, they may respond by seeking to blur distinctions between themselves demanding recognition and better tolerance for their group. The terms ‘ethnic group’, ‘ethnicity’, and ‘ethnic conflict’ have become current topics of interest because of the challenges they pose before the nation-state. It is now being increasingly used to identify groups of people who have evolved from their primitive stages of tribe and clan identity into a more cohesive group looking for coherent political identity. For social anthropologists, ethnicity and ethnic identity have been subjects of intense study since the 1960s and they continue to be focal themes for research in the twentieth century. Today there is a greater need to understand the underpinnings of ethnicity because the competition for political and economic space between ethnic groups has resulted in ethnic conflicts across the globe. Nowhere is this more visible than in the Indian subcontinent. The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India in which the Constitution of India makes special provisions for the

administration of the tribal dominated areas is a good example of state intervention and is not just the conservation of a group's cultural identity but also in its promotion. Ethnic movements in North-East India involve the assertion of identity around certain social problems, historic-cultural legacies and political exigencies by way of organising themselves into an ethnic body to concretise their identity. First of all, they raise a demand for a separate administrative unit comprising the areas where a distinct ethno-cultural group forms a majority. In *Citizenship and National Identity: From Colonialism and Globalism*, Anthony Smith asserts:

An ethnie is a cultural collectivity which lives outside its ancestral territory- actual or imagined. The settlers of the New World who nurse a sojourner attitude also constitute an ethnie. When they adopt the territory into which they have immigrated as their homeland, they become a nation. However, to become nationals in a territory into which a group immigrates is not simply a matter of that group's choice, but also its acceptance by the earlier inhabitants. (20)

Smith further thinks that nationalism emerges from “common bonds of religion, language, customs, shared history, and common myths of origin... in a word, from common ethnicity and common culture” (20). In that matter, nations often grow out of and are constructed from ethnic materials.

The modern scheme of representation of the ethnic identity and nation-state has been incorporated in Indian literature since the beginning of the colonial rule in British India. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the representation of the marginalized tribal people in elite literature and in popular visual mode became a standard colonial practice in British Raj. Further the progressive age in Indian literature produces a considerable amount of fictional and non-fictional writings on socially excluded categories. Indigenous

communities, peasants, women, the poor, and untouchables are represented as the social 'other' in national literature. And the mutilated ethnic identities of the tribes have been casted as consumable cultural objects. The social and political novel, travelogue, memoir, poetry, autobiography, diary, journalistic writing, and critical essays appeared in prominent Indian languages and English, and depicted the ethnic identity of the tribal people and portrayed poverty, social exclusion, issues of land and land holding, the struggle for continuation of the extended indigenous system against the newly emerged colonial modernity and the ideology of the age-old Hindu caste system.

A nation is the product of a concrete historical process. It inevitably results in either the existing psychology of a people or their fixed, permanent, unchanging ethnicity becoming the determinants of nationhood. In case of India, both the Indian nation and nationalism were products of history. As the leaders of the Indian National Movement realized that Indian nation had to be built on a broad foundation in order to bring common nationhood- India could be unified and its segmentation overcomes only by recognizing and accepting its immense diversity. The Indian leaders did not counterpoise the process of nation in the making to the diverse regional, linguistic, ethnic identities, and loyalties in India. On the contrary, the emergence of a strong national identity and the flowering of other narrower identities were seen as processes deriving strength from each other. The differences in language, culture, and religion were to be seen not as obstacles to be overcome but as positive features that were sources of strength to Indian culture, civilization, and nation. They were therefore, to be integrated with the emerging common nationhood.

Mizoram, a state situated in the corner of the North-East India, is flanked on the east and south by Myanmar and Chittagong; on the north by Cachar district of Assam and Manipur and on the west by Tripura and Bangladesh. The major British contact with Mizoram was with the Lushai Expeditions of 1871 to 1872 and 1866 to 1889. The expeditions

thus resulted in the annexation of the Lushai Hills. In the beginning the area was divided into two parts, namely the Northern Lushai Hills under the administrative control of the Chief Commissioner of Assam and the Southern Lushai Hills under the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. With an area of 21,090 sqkms, Mizoram according to 2011 census had a total population of 1,091,014. Thus the demographic features of the population shows that the density of population is 40.8 individuals per sq.kms. The latest literacy survey of India indicated Mizoram as the second highest among the Indian states. It also shows that there are eighteen communities, fourteen scheduled castes, nine scheduled tribes, and two other communities. The 'Gorkhas' or 'Gurkhas' have been classified as one of the eighteen communities of this region. Very little is known of the Gorkhas as a nation, or of the dynasty that ruled over them. The term 'Gorkha' is originally derived from a place named Gorkha in Nepal, whose descendants of the region were called Gorkhas. During the eighteenth century, Prithvi Narayan Shah, began expanding the Gorkha kingdom and conquered many small domains and became powerful. After invading the Kathmandu valley, he moved his capital from Gorkha to Kathmandu and called his dynasty the Shah dynasty, when there was no such term like Nepal or Nepali. Lionel Caplan writes, "The term 'Gurkha', I should point out, derives from the place name of Gorkha, which was a small principality to the west of Kathmandu, whose king, around 1765, sent an army against the Newar rulers of the Valley of Kathmandu, and, after his victory, made it the capital of his newly constituted kingdom" (571). Many people till now do not know the difference between the Gorkhas of India and the Nepalese of Nepal. Both are the descendants of the same ancestor, only separated by the geographical dimensions and differences in citizenship. The Gorkhas are both the product of Indo-Aryan and Tibeto-Burman beginnings. In fact the Gorkhas consist of both the Indo-Aryan and Mongoloid racial groups, who have been residing in India for almost two centuries now and are legitimate citizens of the country. Their history of courage in battle is evident

from the gallantry awards won and battle honours awarded both before and after joining the Indian Army. Among those brave Gorkha soldiers, who fought and died for the great cause were Maj. Durga Malla, Capt. Dal Bahadur Thapa, Bikram Rai, Capt. Bhim Singh Thapa, and many more. The Anglo-Nepal war of 1814-16 is a critical reference point, since it was during this war that the British officially discovered the Gorkhas. “There is no printed work on the Gurkhas which does not refer to their toughness, strength, ferocity, courage and bravery. Their presence is said to have played a significant part in decision of the Argentinians to surrender during the Falklands war” (Caplan 585-586).

The Gorkhas, a race of people who are originally the inhabitants of the Himalayan Ranges possess a distinct culture, language, customs, and traditions. There are different sub-tribes among the Gorkhas, such as: Rai, Limbu, Gurung, Magar, Chhettri, Sarki and many others who have their distinct dialects like Limbukura, Magarkura, Raikura and so on. As the different sub-tribes engaged in various social intercourse, they took ‘Nepali’ or ‘Gorkhali’ language for communication. “This syncretic development of the language served as a foundation for the emergence of Gorkha ethnicity. The trend was consolidated through the formation of the *Nepali Sahitya Sammelan* in 1924 which became the forum of the emergent Gorkha intelligentsia” says Anjan Ghosh (11). The major pull factor of the Gorkhas settlement in the North-East India was the recruitment of the Gorkha soldiers into the British Indian army. This began during, or shortly after, the Anglo-Nepalese wars of 1814-16, when over 45,000 Nepalese were enlisted. The Gorkhas long record of battlefield heroics “provide one of the more colourful chapters of modern military history” says Omar Khalidi (538).

The history of the Gorkhas as settlers in Mizoram began in the year 1891, though they had set foot on the soil much earlier. As mentioned by Nirmal Pun in *The Gorkhas of Mizoram Volume-I*, “ever since the Kuki and Chin-Lushai tribes moved towards south and south-west from the Haka area of Myanmar, and towards eastern Mizoram from the Tiddim

Falam area in the 18th. Century... the relation with their neighbours in the plains had been turbulent” (Sunar 9). The settlement of the Gorkhas of Mizoram as recorded officially by the British is much different from the actual dates due to the framing of the Lushai Hills. So, if the boundary of the present Bangladesh border and Mizoram border were not framed, the entry of the Gorkhas in this region would be recorded as first settlers, as the Gorkhas were amongst the first to settled in that particular region. Col. T. H. Lewin writes:

These Gurkha colonies were established on the Myani River, a northern affluent of the Karnaphuli. So if the boundary between Chittagong Hill Tracts and Lushai Hills were not framed on 12th. September 1876 (Mizoram State Archive Record No. Pol. 10-18 of 1891-92), the year of the settlement of the Gorkhas in Mizoram would have been 1865, which some of us tend to believe. It was neither immediately after the expedition of 1871-72...this expedition was carried out to recover Mary Winchester. All the members of the expedition returned back after recovering her (qtd. in Sunar 13).

One may wonder the reason behind why Col. Lewin wanted to colonize the Gorkhas in his frontier wastes. He wanted “to establish a number of villages along the frontier between the plains and the hills so that a well-defined boundary between them and the British territory could be established” (qtd. in Sunar 13) and the Gorkhas perfectly fitted into the bill. The Indian army is one of the largest in the world with a history going back several years. Various historical works about the army have been written by many writers. Among them, the Gorkhas, who are of Nepalese origin, have fought as contingents in the British Army since the early nineteenth century and for the Indian Army since its formation in 1947. The majority of the Gorkhas were descendants of the discharged military policemen of long service who were originally recruited in the Lushai Hills. They also enjoyed satisfactory socio-political status in the state right from the beginning of their settlement. Some of the

personnel of the Surma Valley Military Police Battalion and the Frontier Police Battalion with exemplary services were awarded with considerable pieces of land, “some of them even with chieftainship with powers and privileges at par with Mizo chiefs, with hereditary right of succession. For instance, Dhojbir Rai was awarded the whole area of Survey Tilla (now Dinthar-II); Sriman Rai, the whole area of Sriman Tilla, the place that was named after him (now Zotlang); Jamadar Singbir Rai was awarded with holdings in Chawnehhim (Champhai) and so on”. (Sunar 19-20). Other localities like Gairi Gaon (now Tuikual ‘D’), Kaashi Bhanjyang (now Vaivakawn), Pathar Khaani (now Hunthar), Khagdiya (now Rangvamual), Bhaisi Goth (now Lawipu), Labour Ghari (now Chawlhmun), Debithan (now Chhangurkawn), Bar Bhanjyang (now Bazaar Bungkawn), and Gurung Tol (now Upper Dawrpui Vengthar) “were known by its Gorkha names by virtue of their majority and being founders of the *vengs* (localities) which were later changed into Mizo names (Sunar 99). Changes like the names of various localities inside Aizawl city denotes the formation of a new one. In India, most place names were Anglicized, so much so that the original names were hardly in use, both in officials as well as in public memory.

In the past, the Gorkhas of Mizoram had enjoyed satisfactory socio-political status in the state right from the beginning of their settlement. In *The Gorkhas of Mizoram Volume-I*, the Gorkhas, “after the settlement in their adopted land never became a burden to the society but rather prove to be a cynosure and worthy sons of the land. They earned good names and laurels for themselves as well as the State” (Sunar 21). It is historically clear that the Gorkhas of Mizoram initially came from Nepal and later from other parts of India like Darjeeling and Sikkim. The reasons behind their movements have been varied in nature from time to time. It may be due to the lack of employment, shortage of food, political persecution or the urge for military adventures. As a concept, migration is applicable to various forms of human movement which may be voluntary or forced, brought about either by socio-political or

ecological reasons. It is therefore presumed that the main reason for their coming to the North-East states of India was the allurements of military adventure. One of the important migratory movements that took place in the South Asian subcontinent during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was from Nepal to India.

In an essay “Migration and Settlement of Nepalis in North-East India”, Tejimala Gurung says, till 1815 there was no clearly demarcated Indo-Nepal border. It was only after the Treaty of Sugauli (1815-1816) “the British not only formally demarcated the boundaries and effectively curtailed the southwards territorial expansion of Nepal... it also virtually annexed all its foothill territory of about 105,000 sqkms which included Darjeeling, then a small settlement of 100 people in the east” (204). The Treaty also paved the way for the recruitment of the Nepalese into the British Force as Gorkha soldiers. The history of the development of Gorkha ranks in the Indian army is the story of the avowed recognition of their worth as soldiers and of the fulfilment of the hopes which lay behind their first enlistment. Gorkhas of several tribes such as Magars, Gurungs, Chhettris, Thakur, Khas, Limbus, Rais and so on were recruited into the Indian army. Their hardihood, love of enterprise, tenacity in adversity and contempt for caste prejudice have justly earned them worldwide reputation. Chandra B. Khanduri in *Re-Discovered History of Gorkhas* says, to the British that the Gorkhas had become:

...the most prized troops of the Indian Army, and great friends and comrades as Field Marshals Roberts of Khandhar and William Slim called them. That very reputation became heritage for the Indian Army as well... Some Gorkhas from the Assam Rifles have also settled down in large numbers in Assam and the North Eastern States. A fairly large population of the Gorkhas is also found in Sikkim and Southern tracks of Bhutan, some 90,000 of whom are under threat of being called as refugees. The

Gorkhas remained a special preserve of the British during their Raj. They were officered exclusively by high grade British officers. (280)

The period from early 1920s to early 1950s is crucial in Indian history due to the fact that it is during this time that the political, economic, and social framework of present day India as a nation evolved. As the struggle for freedom was fought and independence realised, the process of Constitution-framing hence began, which ultimately led to the 1935 Act and the new Constitution. During this period, the question of minority was at its peak, an issue which ultimately led to the partition of India and also to the state re-organization. Thus, a powerful political and social movement of depressed classes emerged which had a significant influence on the character of the Indian state. As such, the role and commitment of minorities and ethnicities in nation-building is a matter of great sociological significance. And the mainsprings of their participation in this process rest largely upon their cultural construction of social reality and self-identity. The problem of minorities in India has recently taken a complex turn. On the face of it, the struggles of minority communities that are either regionally concentrated or dispersed relate to questions of preserving cultural autonomy and communal identity. At the same time, however, the manner in which these issues figure in the contemporary political process and, particularly, the way the bases of communal identity give rise to group mobilisation requires careful analysis. Hence, minority consciousness grows first from within the community, and then later it is recognized as such by those outside of it. Therefore, any particular constitution of minority consciousness may have several historical or sociological causes behind it. There is no common factor that defines the making of different minority groups other than the issue of numbers. And of these the most effective minority is always the largest minority, or a minority of sizable numbers. The acceptance of such communities as minorities is premised on the existence of majority and majority consciousness. Therefore, democracy is often played out in such cases as a game of numbers,

and community representatives on all sides are fairly comfortable with this, as it assures them of a stable political constituency. In *The Gorkhas of Mizoram Vol-I* it is seen that:

Prior to the Anglo-Gorkha War of 1st Nov.1814, the boundary of the former Nepal extended to the Sutlej river in the West, Teesta river in the East, Ganga to the South and to the Himalayan ranges to the North. The war ended with the Treaty of Sugauli on 2nd Dec.1815 which resulted with the loss of approximately one-third (40,000 sq.km) of the former land area of Nepal to the East India company. Shimla, Kumaon, Garhwal, Terailand, Darjeeling, Kurseong, Doars, Siliguri, Nainital, and Dehradun areas became part of British India. Subsequently, the Gorkhas living in these areas became Indian by virtue of annexation of their lands... In Mizoram, the population of the Gorkhas in 1951 was 3464 (Assam Govt census, 1951) which after nearly 50 years now, has reached approximately 4500, just 0.72% of the total population of Mizoram. For this reason, the Gorkhas of Mizoram can be termed not only as minority but as a micro-minority. (Sunar 4-5)

Ethnically the state comprises of mainly three to four ethnic groups aside from the dominant Mizo group, viz., Burmese, Bangladeshi, Khasis, Manipuris, Nagas and so on. Apart from this, there are also some migrant or other ethnic groups. An ethnic group is a distinct category of the population in a larger society, whose culture is usually different from its own. Members of such a group are, or feel themselves as, or are thought to be bound together by common ties of race or nationality or culture. The nature of an ethnic group's relationship with the society as a whole, and other groups in it, constitutes one of the main problems in describing and analysing such societies.

In *Human Development*, it provides a much more comprehensive concept of ethnic groups and states that the term connotes to a group which:

- i.) “is largely biologically self-perpetuating;
 - ii.) shares fundamental cultural values realized in overt unity in cultural forms;
 - iii.) makes up a field of communication and interaction;
 - iv.) Has a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category, distinguishable from other categories of the same order”.
- (Sengupta 2)

Ethnicity therefore refers to the shared social, cultural, and historical experiences by the members of the group. It is based exclusively on primordial attributes or presupposed community identity which binds individuals together. To the extent that “actors use ethnic identities to categorize themselves and others for the purpose of interactions, they form ethnic groups” (Sengupta 2).

The Gorkhas are best known by their traditional heavy bladed knife, ‘Khukri’ and their motto- “Kaphar Hunu Bhandu Marnu Ramro” (Better to die than be a coward) and the battle cry- “Ayo Gorkhali”. Shri Sat Mahajan, Ex- Transport Minister, Himachal Pradesh writes: “Whatever their origins, Gorkhas are proud, self-respecting and martial people... they idealize valour and victory in battle. Their ability to adapt themselves to rough, pathless mountains is admirable. Dignity of labour is the hallmark of the Gorkhas” (Sunar 3). When everyone else uses rifles and more sophisticated weapons, the Gorkhas generally draw only their ‘Khukris’- the short curved knife- which is a general utility instrument in the Nepalese hills, but is represented in the discourse as the national weapon. According to Pradip Sunar, et.al, in *The Gorkhas of Mizoram Volume-I*, Col. T.H. Lewin records that, “the country where the villages were located had previously been uninhabited, through fear of marauding Lushais, and my idea had been to establish there good stockade villages of courageous, stiff-necked people like the Gurkhas, who would serve as the buffer between the Mong Raja’s territory and the Independent Lushais to the East” (Sunar 13). While these perceptions of the

Gorkha community are true to a certain extent they have also been instrumental in promoting a set of stereotypes, which fails to comprehensively bring out the true essence of the Gorkha identity.

The Gorkhas, like any other ethnic group in North-East India have their own unique culture which sets them apart from others, for culture is a crucial component of a community's unique identity. It is their culture which binds them together as a group, a culture which is manifested through various activities, patterns of behaviour, habits, world views, language, and value system. It is culture that allows man to adapt himself to his natural setting which is manifested in institutions, thought patterns, and material objects. E. B. Tylor described culture as, "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (17). Thus, culture includes all the elements in man's mature endowment that he has acquired from his group by conscious learning or, on a level by a conditioning process, social institutions, beliefs, and patterned modes of conduct. It is simply obvious that culture can never be a static one rather it is a process of change with which every society adapts itself. The Gorkha community are hence, in the process of setting the community on its threshold. The Gorkhas therefore, are observing the socio-politico-economic dimensions of independent India in which various kinds of conflicts and rights of an individual have been realised by the Gorkhas. In North-East India, politics has generally followed the ethnic path. Ethnic-cultural mobilization and ethnic movements launched by various ethnic groups in the region remain an ongoing process. Thus, differences among different ethnic groups arose where smaller communities tended to merge and form bigger identities, making it convenient to raise political demands.

Many cultural theorists have pointed out how difficult it is to study cultures and identities that are in a state of constant change. Practices and politics of cultural identities

nowadays occur in a world that has been said to be increasingly globalising, localising, and hybridising. One needs to keep in mind that the cultural identities of individuals also contain a political aspect. When an individual identifies with a collective, this identification is often, at least potentially, politically significant. A culture, roughly, is the web of meanings that shapes the collective as well as the individual awareness of the members of a community-awareness of the significance that the world and things in it have for them. The collective mobilisation of people often requires a successful identity politics. Before people are ready to act together, a feeling of togetherness or a sense of common interests must, in many cases, have arisen between them. That is the reason why people's cultural identifications and their feelings of loyalty have always interested those in power. As far as cultural identities are concerned, the concept of identity politics refers to different endeavours to arouse and maintain feelings of togetherness within a group or within a society. Thus, the concept of identity politics includes attempts to affect people's cultural identifications. Usually, there is a strong sense of mutual solidarity between the members of collectives or communities like these. In short, one can characterise identity politics as a particular branch of cultural politics. It should be borne in mind that people's identities are not determined solely by their daily practices and by the identity politics of different groups and institutions. These determining factors belong to the conditions of identities, but people's identities are also shaped by economic, social and, political structures, which are largely independent of individuals and which cannot be entirely controlled by means of consciously practised identity politics.

Most communities of North-East India were not conscious about their ethnic identities in the pre-colonial period and their ethnic world view was confined to their families and societies. The subsequent colonial administration brought about an awareness of their ethno-cultural identity. Talking about the background of the Gorkhas of Mizoram, it is the different

Gorkha organizations and Gorkha schools, temples and cemeteries, which probe into the question of what comprises Gorkha identity.

In *The Gorkhas of Mizoram Volume-I*, it is seen that under the Societies Act XXI of 1860 S.R.9 of 1981 during the time of the District Council, with the initiation of Shri P. L. Adhikari and Shri Debi Dutt, the Gorkha pensioners, who were the permanent settlers of Mizoram formed the Gorkha Sangh. Its goal and aim is to work for the overall welfare and the socio-political problems of the Gorkhas of Mizoram and their grievances are brought to the notice of the government of Mizoram by this Sangh. Before Mizoram became a Union Territory, the Mizoram Rajya Gorkha Panchayat under Registration. No. S. R. 6 of 1984 was formed. At the village level, it is called Gorkha Gaon Panchayat and is run by the President and members. Disputes and violations of customary laws are solved at the village level by the Gaon Panchayat. Likewise, on 18th August 1976, in order to look after the Gorkha youths in particular and the Gorkha community in general the Mizoram Gorkha Youth Association under Registration. No. S. R.41 of 1978 was formed. It is the apex body and has control over thirteen branches, one in each Gorkha village of Mizoram. Its function is to provide selfless service to families in the community. It plays an important role in bringing the Gorkha youth together and “the then existing organizations, viz., Nava Nepali Sangh (Srimantilla/Zotlang), Jagriti Sangh (Sarvestilla/Dinthar), Tarun Dal (Bawngkawn) and Gorkha Young Association (Kolasib), which emerged with the M.G.Y.A in 1979. Later in every locality in Aizawl and other towns of Mizoram, branches of the Central M.G.Y.A were set up” (Sunar 35).

For the welfare of the Gorkha women, Naari Samaaj, an organization founded by Smt. Phulmati Lama during the District Council times was formed. Their duty is to train the unemployed Gorkha women in weaving, knitting, tailoring and cooking, and to conduct adult education programmes. The organization is functioning with its branches in all the localities of Aizawl, Kolasib, Vairengte, Lunglei, Saiha and some other parts of Mizoram.

Additionally, an organization named the Mizoram Gorkha Students' Union was formed on 14th September 1971 by the young Gorkha students. They worked hard towards the functioning and upliftment of the organization with a view to awaken the Gorkhas of the North-East region of their fundamental rights and duties, national integration, brotherhood and so on. Some scholars state that well-educated societies have a lower rate of violence and crime, and societies that emphasize accessible, effective education see their economies improve as well. Schools, therefore play an important role in developing important social skills. For the Gorkhas of Mizoram, the urge to build an institution to impart education has become the main goal among some educated scholars and social organizations. In an article, "Gorkha High School: The Apex Education Institution of the Community" Nirmal Kumar Pun says:

The need to establish a High School for the community was felt much earlier, but the dream came true only in 1989... A meeting was called to decide as to what should be done with the surplus money on 4th Feb. 1989 at B.S Chhettri's residence... After lengthy deliberations the proposal to use the money to establish the much needed high school was unanimously endorsed by the members present. Consequently, the next meetings formed a Management Committee...Twelve committee members from various localities of Mizoram and five Advisors were also nominated by the elected O.B. later. (3)

As seen in *Tabula Rasa Volume-I*, after various meetings Nirmal Kumar Pun who was nominated as the Acting Headmaster, inaugurated the school with forty-seven students as Morning Coaching Class for the High School Leaving Certificate (H.S.L.C) candidates. Through the Management Committee, who raised funds through fete and carol during Dussera and Diwali, variety shows, tambola and donations in 1989, they started the construction of the school building in 1990 and it was formally inaugurated by the then

Hon'ble Minister of Education, Dr. H. Thansanga on 31st March 1990. The former Headmaster Nirmal Kumar Pun mentions that “the school got permission from the Directorate of Education and the Mizoram Board of School Education on 27th June and 19th July 1990 respectively, and was upgraded to Deficit Grand-In Aid status on 4th November 1991. A proposal for provincialisation from the Government received on 8th January 1993 and was turned down for several reasons, the teachers being the main, who were willing to sacrifice the pension and other benefits for the sake of the school” (Pun 3). Purna Prasad, in an article, “The History of Nepali School” wrote that:

Nepali Schools of Mizoram can be said to be the apex of an institution where education, language, traditions, and an all round development of an individual are taught... Today, our Nepali schools are not only known for an institute where education is imparted. But also known as the place for the platform for various organisations and programmes, where dance, music and other important meetings are held. (19)

Religion, an institutionalized system of beliefs, symbols and value has a social aspect and social role to play in every community. It has been a powerful agency in society and performs many important social functions. A majority of the Gorkhas of Mizoram follows Hinduism, while a few profess Buddhism and Christianity. The history and inauguration of the Gorkha temples are as old as any other institute within Mizoram. The Kali Temple at Sairang which is believed to be the first temple built in Mizoram has a tale behind its construction. It is believed that a Subedar has narrated his encounter to his other troops about a deity's presence in the abode of a Bel tree root which became his guide and protector throughout his journey without any resistance from the tribals. Shri C. Nag, I.A.S, in an article “Kali Temple at Sairang”, writes a story narrated to him by Late Shri Nagendra Ch. Bhattacharjee, who acted as priest of the temple for a very long period. He writes:

...a young lady dressed in red Bordered Sari was standing near the river bed... At that time the Subedar narrated their sufferings in the hands of the tribal warriors and the difficulty they faced in identifying the correct route they were to follow in achieving their mission. The young lady then asked the Subedar to follow her, saying that she would show him route they should follow to achieve their success and guided him upto Sairang following the river route... Thus, on his return to the Base Camp the Subedar narrated the entire episode to his colleagues'...To their utter surprise they found a stone of a different shape half buried in the earth. All of them were convinced that this is the image of Goddess Kali and there after they started worshipping her and gradually a temple was constructed there... the temple has undergone many renovations from time to time. The present structure was constructed during 1970-72. The temple is still standing there.” (43)

The maintenance of Kali Temple at Sairang passed on to the inhabitants of Sairang who belonged to this faith. Thus, the temple is almost contemporary to the extension of British Administration in Lushai Hills, the name by which this area was known at that time according to C. Nag. Being the backbone of every society, in the history of the Gorkhas, religion too plays a pivotal role. S S. Datta in an article, “Shakti Mandir, Aizawl” says:

It all started with worshipping of Goddess Durga at Aizawl with the setting up of the office of the Assam Rifles at Aizawl when few civilian employees got posted at Aizawl... As back as in 1904 a few civilian employees of Assam Rifles started the Durga Puja in one of the Quarters. Since performance of Durga Puja is an annual feature it continued for a few years like this. The believers of the Hindu faith were also very limited. After a few years they set up a club in this hillock under the name “Bengalee Club”... To embrace all sections of the Hindu population the management

of the club took a decision to remain the club as “Hindustan Club” and this was done in 1950. (46)

Hence, with all these various institutions, organisations and programmes, some of the aspects of the cultural and social identity of the Gorkhas of Mizoram have evolved. These represent the glory and achievements of the Gorkha community within the state and promoted Gorkha culture in terms of education, government recruitment, sports, music, and other areas. A consciousness of traditional Gorkha culture is therefore encouraged through these organizations as well as other Non-Governmental Organizations. Through the social customs, which are based on very strong ethical principles of self-help and co-operation, the identity of the Gorkha community is based on this code of life. In this manner the identity of the Gorkhas centres on the tradition and customs which provide a foundational structure and building materials.

The question of identity has puzzled philosophers for a long time, and to define identity as sameness or preservation of some essential quality of a person, then, seemed counter-intuitive. Yet the very meaning of the term ‘identity’ is predicated on constancy, on the absence of change. To escape this dilemma, some philosophers attempted to define identity as continuity of situations. As such an inquiry into the issue of identity presupposes the notion of other. Hence one should not ignore the most important factor which is necessary for the construction of identity; that is, the notion of ‘others’ as differentiated from ‘us’ since identity is meaningful only in relation to others. It cannot be defined without reference to what stands outside of it or what is different from it. In other words, identity is formed basically on the basis of difference.

Homi Bhabha raised a critical debate on third space in this age of globalisation, where inter and trans-cultural communication has become a norm rather than an exception. He links

the ‘third space’ as a melting point, not of similarities but of difference, and it moves beyond communication to create an ambivalence of interpretation. His writing emphasizes the hybridity of cultures, which on one level simply refers to the fact that cultures are not discrete phenomena, instead, they are always in contact with one another, and this contact leads to cultural mixedness. Postcolonial studies have been preoccupied with issues of hybridity- with the in-betweenness, diasporas and identities generated by colonialism. It is Homi Bhabha’s usage of the concept of hybridity that has been both the most influential and the most controversial in postcolonial studies. Antony Easthope, on Bhabha’s idea of hybridity, writes:

Hybridity can have at least three meanings- in term of biology, ethnicity and culture... In fact, Bhabha develops his notion of hybridity from Mikhail Bakhtin, who uses it to discriminate texts with a “single voice” (lyrical poems) from those with a “double voice” (such as novels, whose narrator cites characters speaking in their own voice- those texts are hybridic). (146)

Bhabha’s writing emphasizes the hybridity of cultures, which on one level simply refers to the mixedness or even impurity of cultures. He challenged the idea that an individual’s identity is simply the results of fixed factors such as education, gender or race. George Handley says that Bhabha’s stress on national identity in *Nation and Narration* is “always hybrid, unstable and ambivalent, negotiating between private interests and the public significance given to those interests” (148). It is observed that, the Gorkhas of Mizoram along with other ethnic groups even after various differences in their lifestyles co-operate and depend on each other. Various organisations and associations, and even different NGO’s within the Gorkha community somehow projects similarities with the native Mizos’ organisations. The organisations of both the Gorkhas and Mizos are indeed formed and based on the same ideology. To paraphrase Bhabha, this kind of bond between different communities of one’s own space, ideology, culture, language and so on, sums up this

relationship as, “the difference of the same” (101). Apparently it is the coming together of two entities initially located in different origins.

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CHAPTER 2

CHALLENGING THE GORKHA STEREOTYPE

Nationalism, like all social phenomena is a historical category. It emerged in the social world at a certain stage of evolution of the life of the community when certain socio-historical conditions, both objective and subjective, matured. Before national communities, national societies, national states, and national cultures came into existence, communities in various parts of the world generally lived through tribal, slave, and feudal phases of social existence. At a certain stage of social, economic, and cultural development, nations came into being.

The development of nationalism in different countries followed lines determined by its respective social and cultural history, political, economic, and social structures. Every nation was thus born and forged in a unique way. The history of the rise of national sentiment in India is closely bound up with the growth of a unified national economy. This unification took place as a result of the destruction of former pre-capitalist forms of production prevailing in India and the substitution, in their place, of the modern capitalist economic forms. A self-sufficient village, based on agriculture carried on with the primitive plough and bullock-power and handicrafts by means of simple instruments, was a basic feature of pre-British Indian society. In consequence, the self-sufficient village as the basic economic unit had existed for some minor modifications had survived till the advent of the British rule, in spite of all political convulsions, religious upheavals and devastating wars.

Though social philosophers say that all human beings are born equal, the social reality is that not all human beings are born equal. There are inequalities expressed in terms of age, sex, colour, and so on. Humankind lives in groups among groups we also find differences of origin, structure, development, and others. Based on such differences societies have been stratified and low and high statuses accorded to them. Class, estate and caste are the

important types of stratification found in societies, though one may also find stratification based on race, religion or language. From time immemorial the weaker sections continue to be marginalized in terms of opportunities as well as benefits that accrue to the common man. Interventions undertaken both by the Government as well as non-governmental agencies, some changes have been brought about, but in a majority of cases their condition remains unsatisfactory. In view of this a platform is needed where representatives from academics, practitioners, government officials as well as the genuine representatives of the marginalized groups like women, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes and others sit across the table, take stock of the issues involved and suggest measures that would make a crucial difference in the conditions of the weaker sections in future.

Central to the changes in the intellectual domain in colonial India were the cultural ideological struggles occurring simultaneously at two planes, against the ideological basis of traditional order on the one hand, and against colonial hegemonization on the other. All colonial regimes, whether Spanish or Portuguese, Mughal or British have created racially mixed communities in their country of settlement. But the manner of their creation, the social range involved, the attitudes displayed- from positive encouragement to strong disapproval- have been specific. Prasenjit Biswas and Chandan Suklabaidya in their book *Ethnic Life-Worlds in North-East India*, writes:

In the British strategy of pitting one tribe against another, one side would be treated as offenders and the other as victims, and the British administration would come as the saviour of the situation...This exhibits the politics of playing the perceived 'Others' against each other and then negotiating from a distance through necessary means". (68)

It was the British who ultimately spread political and economic dominance on the subcontinent. The colonial conquest underlined the weakness of the traditional order and the need for reform and regeneration of its institutions. The past figured prominently in the quest for modernization in colonial India, be it of the colonizer or of the indigenous elite. What constituted the past or how it would influence the modernizing process was difficult to determine, yet the need to confront the past was compelling. For without being sensitive to the past, no effective social intervention was possible in a society that was heir to a long cultural tradition. Although articulated differently at different points of time, introspection into the essence of tradition was common feature. The context in which Indian intellectuals interrogated the past was created by colonial intervention and the path of progress that it charted for Indian society. There is an innate psychological urge among men and women- and also in races- to dominate the others. The British, with their colonial endeavours consolidated their powers all across the globe. In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha writes, the colonial discourse is “a form of discourse crucial to the binding of a range of differences and discriminations that inform the discursive and political practices of racial and cultural hierarchization” (67). In *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, Second Edition, Ania Loomba writes:

The word colonialism, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*, comes from the Roman ‘colonia’ which meant ‘farm’ or ‘settlement’, and referred to Romans who settled in other lands but still retained their citizenship. Accordingly, the *OED* describes it as: a settlement in a new country... a body of people who settle in a new locality, forming a community subject to or connected with their parent state; the community so formed, consisting of the original settlers and their descendants and successors, as long as the connection with the parent state is kept up. (7)

The colonized populations usually exist within the geographical borders of the colonizing nation. The interesting fact to learn through the present study is that the subjugation of the

Gorkhas as a whole is analogous to colonial subjugation. A. C. Sinha writes, “The Gorkhas who were historically subjected to the Orientalist gaze of colonial humanist anthropology continues to remain the subject of discourse. From such a standpoint, the academic discourses on the problem of Gorkha identity, emerging both from within and without appears skewed and stifled by the disciplinary contours of traditional methods of social enquiry” (Subba 75).

The Gorkhas, who were powerful and sustenance were needed for such trade and prosperity by the British from the very beginning. What added to the British belief that the Gorkhas were ‘conquerable’? was the bigger question of the war. Confronted by one of the oldest civilizations in human history, the colonial rulers could hardly ignore its past. Intellectual curiosity apart, the sheer compulsions of rule dictated the need to contend with the past. The colonial concern with the past however was not merely an exercise in knowing, it was an effort in constructing it anew as well. “The British had also studied that the Gorkha made as good a peasant in peace-time as he made a soldier in war” says Lal Bahadur Basnet in his book entitled *Sikkim: A Short Political History* (42). Regarding the Gorkhas, not only of Mizoram but the Gorkhas as a whole, the British constructed, terms such as, ‘Bir Gurkha’, ‘Bahadur’, ‘Chowkidaar’ to the Gorkhas which when translated, mean ‘brave gorkha’, ‘martial race’ and ‘gatekeeper’ or ‘keeper’ respectively. This portrayal of the Gorkhas, however, emerged when the British as well as the government and other ethnic groups started generalizing the attributes they associated with the Gorkhas. In *The Gorkhas of Mizoram Volume-I*, it is seen that, “The reason behind this was political as well as the infiltration of Nepalis as cow-herds, lumber-jacks, labourers... created confusion among the government authorities. Since there was no critical criteria laid down to ascertain as to who is a permanent settler and who is a new entrant, the authorities found it safe to brand each and every Gorkha as a foreigner” (Sunar 22). In their Western world, the British as well as in every corner of the world, this representation of the Gorkhas being a ‘keeper’ or ‘brave gorkha’ became

widespread through reports, media sources and some literary works. It was a commonplace belief that the Gorkhas could realize their enormous potential only under the tutelage, supervision and leadership of British officers. Colonialism aestheticised the Gorkhas in a typically Orientalist image, who squatting next to the white man would add charm of a simple and unsophisticated native to his prepossessing presence. Scientific racism had led the British into believing that an ethnic group could be martial only in one's own territory.

According to Lionel Caplan, "The Gorkhas are identified... as above all a martial race... The notion that some people will make good soldiers and others will not is not an idea original to the British in India, but in the course of the nineteenth century they formulated and codified the principle... into a dogma" (580). The Gorkhas have inspired a considerable literature about their character, quality and exploits under British command. Some British officers have written various autobiographies or biographies others war diaries, or simply accounts of their experiences in the Gorkha regiments. In which the first written reference to Gorkhas can be found in the writings of Col. T. H. Lewin's *Fly on the Wheel*, Maj. Anthony G. McCall's *Lushai Chrysalis*, R.G. Woodthorppe's *The Lushai Expedition* and numerous others. In the post-colonial era, various books and articles regarding Gorkhas flourished especially after Indian independence. The Gorkhas have been mentioned in writings of one sort or another for over decades, there are some minor points of disagreement among some authors themselves. Reading various literature and writings, one gets a very strong sense of consensus and continuity, it comes across as monolithic and timeless, relying heavily on stereotype, and with little political or historical context. British officers have projected onto the Gorkhas the qualities they wanted to possess themselves. The best example is the martial-race theory, which was developed from the 1880s as part of a wider discourse of biological determinism. According to this idea, only a few Indian groups possessed martial qualities and the rest were castigated as effeminate or coward. The Gorkhas were hence constructed as

gentlemen, possessing qualities which reflected their officers' self-image- chivalrous, and with a relaxed attitude. Allegedly without the higher, cerebral, military virtues, they could only realise their martial potential when British-led. Today, the portrayal of the Gorkhas as martially inclined is still a dominant feature of British writings, though the Gorkha themselves glossed 'bravery' very differently. Turner, one of the British officer represent the Gorkhas as "invincible, 'the bravest of the brave', a phrase which first appeared in the Preface of Turner's splendid *Nepali Dictionary* (1931), and is quoted in many subsequent writings" (Caplan 586). True, the Gorkhas being constituted as a martial race is all demonstrated by their long historical bravery and there is no printed work on the Gorkhas which does not refer to their toughness, courage, bravery, strength, and ferocity.

The Gorkha identity as a 'martial race' is therefore largely the discovery of the ethnographical knowledge of the colonial state. This discovery marks off the colonial state's shifts in its emphasis from the brutal modes of conquest to cultural technologies of rule- the production of colonial knowledge. A lot has been written about the 'short', 'broad chested', 'flat faced', 'snub nosed' men with their khukris. In one of the ironies of history, it was the defeat of the Gorkha soldiers under Amar Singh Thapa that led to the discovery of the Gorkhas. Numerous reasons range from the run of reverses and deaths of veteran English generals in the war inspiring awe for the Gorkha soldiers. Lionel Caplan says, writers like Northey and Morris suggest the discovery of the Gorkha fighting quality as, "an eye opener to our army in India to find another race which could meet them and beat them on equal terms" (578). The imperatives of Empire building had prompted the British into thinking that it would be better and cheaper to dominate the world if the natives could be induced to shoulder much of the White men's military burden.

The Gorkhas of Mizoram even after residing within the state from the British reign still felt liminal and alienated through such generalisations. Despite the great sacrifices made

by the forefathers of the Gorkhas, the British policy of 'divide and rule' which erected a communal rift still exists somewhere deep in the recesses of every individual mind. In history, this policy did not prevent the Gorkhas from becoming martyrs in the freedom struggle and also preserving independence, whether it was in the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, the Non-cooperation Movement, Dandi March, Quit India Movement or to join hands with Indian National Army to drive out the British from Indian soil. David Omissi writes, "Colonial power meant that Gurkhas could be accepted as warrior gentlemen, but not as equals. They were infantilized and belittled in colonial writing, implicitly compared to the public schoolboys their officers once dominated as prefects" (909). The Gorkhas nowadays, with the changing world become globally intellectual; they not only fought with brawn 'Khukri' but also with brain and pen. It is therefore not same in every individual, a change in one's perspectives and globalisation have led people to think different today. James Clifford writes, "On every continent, survivors of colonial invasions and forced assimilations renew their cultural heritage... they struggle within dominant regimes that continue to belittle and misunderstand them" (13). While drawing generalizations, for example terms like, 'Bir Gurkha' or 'Bahadur', 'Foreigner' by the British as well as other ethnic groups within and outside the state actively promoted the stereotyping of the Gorkha identity which in turn changed and shaped the perspectives of other ethnic group's perception of the Gorkha community. Again when this was invoked as an explaining tool they rightly crafted history.

Social inequality is the fact of social life. In every society, based on the possession of social, economic and political advantages, and physical and psychological capacities and attributes, individuals and groups of individuals are conceived as higher or lower and superior and inferior. Although the social group experienced isolation causing deprivation and stereotypical comments from other ethnic groups, there are differences in sources and process of deprivation. The source of poverty and isolation among this group is rooted not only in the

economic structure but in the process of social exclusion as well. The exploitation of agricultural labourers and the rigid assignment of demeaning occupations in some areas on the basis of race keep the Gorkhas of Mizoram in a position of economic and physical vulnerability. Only with the honest implementation of laws designed to protect agricultural labourers, can the process of attaining economic and physical security begin. On account of it, the colonial policy of stereotyping the Gorkhas was mainly to be blamed. Bhabha, in *The Location of Culture* describes stereotyping as the “setting up of a false image which becomes the scapegoat of discriminatory practices” (81).

The Gorkhas were not immigrants who came to India looking for greener pastures as most people think them to be. Particularly with reference to North-East India, much of the immigration was due to the political, social as well as economic history of the region. Within the region, all the Gorkhas residing in India are suspected of being Nepalese (citizens of Nepal) and looked upon as ‘foreigners’. Tejimala Gurung in an essay entitled, “Migration and Settlement of Nepalis in North-East India” writes, the presence and settlement of the Gorkhas in India “is the outcome of a historical process... whether it is in Assam, Manipur or Meghalaya, the small community of the Indian Nepalis have off and on become targets of hostile attacks from the dominant local population” (219). In *The Zozam Times*, H. Zosangliana writes:

Gurkhas, coming from a foreign country (Nepal), have not been recognized in India as a religious or caste community. However, calling them foreigners would be a big mistake because North Bengal, especially the Darjeeling and Kalimpong sectors, have been Gurkha lands even before India’s independence and were annexed to India by the British when India was granted its independence. As such, the Gurkhas that we now find in India are as much as Mizos or Nagas are. Such is the Indianness of these Gurkhas that they are now currently demanding a statehood in North Bengal. (5)

The Indian society is a complex society and is characterized by a high degree of social stratification and inequality based on caste, religion, colour, region, and social origin. When India became an independent nation, among several other problems, it confronted the problem of social and economic backwardness of some sections of the people. Though the British government tried to develop the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, it was the Indian government which provided them with constitutional safeguards for social, economic and political purposes. Considerable attention has been devoted to theorizing the rights of minority cultures in recent years. Political theorists have developed accounts of the normative questions raised by issues of race, immigration, nationalism, indigenous peoples, and religion. One of the Directive Principles of State Policy of the Indian Constitution (Article 46) states, “the State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and in particular of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes and shall protect them from social injustices and all forms of exploitation” (Faizi 127).

The Indian Constitution speaks of secularism, socialism, casteless, and classless society. As a nation, one has moved miles away from every one of these enshrined in one’s Constitution. Post-independent India has given birth to more communal and caste organizations than under colonial rule to various degree. Instead of moving towards socialism, coupled with classlessness, one has endeavoured to create class cleavages and today a few tycoons can hold the country to ransom. The rich have become richer, and the poor remains the same. A large number has been marginalized and pushed below the poverty line. Most of the policies evolved and programmes implemented by the government to alleviate the poor have been misused, abused, thrown out of gear, thwarted and circumvented by the vested interests in the country.

Minority implies a group of citizens of a state, numerically a minority and not dominant in that state with ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics, different from those

of the majority population, bound up with one another, animated if only implicitly by a collective will. Hence a minority may be any group- ethnic, religious or linguistic. Its identification is mainly derived from the dominant-subordinate relationship-characterized by discrimination, prejudice and exclusion, practised by the former and self segregation by the latter. However, such demarcation is possible only when in terms of specific relationship of social groups with other groups, and the nature of such relationships is largely determined by the prevailing pattern of economy and polity in that society.

In an ethnically pluralistic society, the Gorkha community of Mizoram is one of the minority groups of Mizoram. Contextually, one can remember the relatively good communal harmony in Mizoram. The situation might be better than some other multicultural nations. Some can say that the subjugation over the minority communities is also a minor issue that could be negligible. One should remember that even a small example of this subjugation is abominable, as having a peaceful living situation in one's motherland is a matter of human rights. The Gorkhas of Mizoram remained in the past and still remain to some extent as distinct entities in relation to the dominant groups. In spite of being small in size, the Gorkha community has achieved a unique position in the annals of the history of India. They have made a concerted effort to follow their own values, traditions, and culture. Some facts and history regarding the Gorkhas of Mizoram, certain historiography rests on various dominant categories, which were often drawn on the basis of hasty and misconceived generalizations from facts culled from the official documents of the British period. Any kind of identity assertion today claims rightful spaces not only in polity, socio-economy, and culture but also in the mainstream episteme. If certain standpoints from which identity is narrated become essentialised or too homogenised, the resulting identities are forced to conform to stereotypes, be they racial, gendered, or ethnic.

In an interview with various senior citizens, writers and public figures from the Gorkha community of Mizoram dated 7th to 11th June 2016, it has been noted that many Gorkha soldiers of the East India Company who served in India's North-East settled in the region after retirement. Most early migrants of the North-East region adopted cattle rearing and farming for their livelihood, but not for business (Subba 214). The Gorkha community whose society and its past accordingly constructed by colonial rule and its ideologies were substantially different from what the Gorkhas of Mizoram knew about themselves. This construction not only provided the rationale for colonial social engineering, but also laid the ground for a colonial perception of the self by the other ethnic groups within the state.

For Homi Bhabha the discourse of colonialism is the discourse of stereotypes. He discusses a number of mechanisms which threaten colonial domination. An important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of fixity in the ideological construction of otherness. Fixity, as the sign of racial or cultural difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation. As it sometimes connotes unchanging order, rigidity as well as disorder. Likewise, stereotypes can be seen as that particular fixated form of the colonial subject. It sets up a discursive form of racial and cultural opposition in terms of which colonial power is exercised. Bhabha writes, "Postcolonial criticism bears witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority within the modern world order. Postcolonial perspectives emerge from the colonial testimony of Third World countries and the discourses of 'minorities' within the geopolitical divisions of East and West, North and South" (245).

Colonial power for Bhabha, worked to divide the world into self and other, in order to justify the material inequalities central to colonial rule. When Bhabha comes to study colonial power, he argues that it is necessary to do something different. In other words, to continue thinking in terms of self and other so that the colonizer becomes morally inferior, is not a

productive approach and in fact does not offer any real change. For example to challenge the oppression of women by merely turning the tables and oppressing men instead is not going to offer any long-term solutions for anyone. This is just as true of the legacies of colonialism and racism. Bhabha's approach highlights the ways colonialism has been much more than the simple domination of one group by another. He stresses the unexpected forms of resistance that can be found in the history of the colonized and the equally unexpected anxieties that plague the colonizer despite his apparent mastery. Through racist jokes, cinematic images and other forms of representation, the colonizers circulate stereotypes about the laziness or stupidity of the colonized population. These stereotypes therefore seems to be a stable if false foundation upon which colonialism bases its power; the stereotype is a form of anxious colonial knowledge and Bhabha's writings on this anxiety revise traditional studies of colonialism. In an essay, "The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism", Homi Bhabha highlights Fanon's words:

The stereotype is not a simplification because it is a false representation of a given reality. It is a simplification because it is an arrested, fixated form of representation that, in denying the play of difference (which the negation through the other permits), constitutes a problem for the representation of the subject in significations of psychic and social relations. (107)

The concept of minority is dynamic and in some cases overlapping; for example, the same people could belong to religious, economic, and ethnic minorities. The minority groups are often found as victims in society. This phenomenon is often seen in literature, especially in fiction, since literature acts as a mirror of the society. It involves the kind of creativity where it ensures its standard form and aesthetic value. The fate of minority people repressed by their influential 'others' in social reality and political context is almost the same everywhere. They have to face having their wealth looted, the sexual harassment of their women and children,

murder, or exile. In contemporary political usage the definition of minority groups still remains a debatable issue. Post-colonial thinkers like Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri C. Spivak have made use of the concept of the 'other' to suggest the immediate political sense, by placing the colonizing master in a binary relationship to the colonized subject, who is the other to the master. Spivak uses the term "othering" to designate a process by which "the imperialist discourse creates its 'others' (Ashcroft 171-172). Accordingly, the central authorities of power observe maintenance of this unequal relationship, which wholly depends on the subordination, exploitation, and alienation of an 'other' group. In *Understanding Nepal: Muslims in a plural society*, it is seen that:

A group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a state, in a non-dominant position, whose members- being nationals of the State- possess ethnic religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, tradition, religion or language. (Dastider 27)

Richard Jenkins in *Social Identity* says, "... identity is the human capacity- rooted in language- to know 'who's who' (and hence 'what's what'). This involves knowing who we are, knowing who others are, them knowing who we are, us knowing who they think we are, and so on" (5). The basic question however is, what is their episteme itself and what should be the right modality of appropriating their past. To study the history of any ethnic groups or any communities not only within the North-Eastern region of India, some examples of subjugation still prevail in this modern age. Social changes in terms of civilizations and other development issues have some certain height, but minorities are still subject to the tyranny of an influential majority. Members of a devout minority, in most cases, tend to be second-class citizens; this is either mentally or forcefully executed by the majority. The generalization of the Gorkhas of Mizoram from other ethnic groups and communities was highlighted by the

British geographically. It was remarked that nature had designed hill and jungle for the ‘Cowherds’, who were lively, physically strong and so on. The community was known by various names in different periods in history. A few stereotypes, however, stand out and the whole community is seen the same irrespective of considering the characteristics of individuals within that minority. This may be an example of an extreme case, but other slightly restrained authors too have shown a stereotypical approach when dealing with such subjects. Anju Khosla observes, “Stereotypes reflect certain basic perceptual categories, which are in turn projections of internalised, often repressed models of the self and the other” (70).

The evolution and progress of a society depends on how there is a peaceful co-existence and brotherhood within and outside the society. To use Edward Said’s phrase, part of their technology of power, the relationship between the Occident and the Orient was therefore, a relationship of domination, more accurately, of a complex hegemony. In an environment of repression where the community’s right to survive is trampled upon, and its healthy development sought to be threatened, the society languishes and becomes morbid. It is seen that earlier in Mizoram as well as in other parts of the country, the Gorkhas for their livelihood practised animal husbandry and farming. T B. Subba in *Indian Nepalis- Issues and Perspectives* writes, “Presently, nearly ninety percent of total milk production of the state is contributed by those Nepalis who are exclusively engaged on the job and who entered the state much later” (221).

Throughout the years as various immigrants from various regions enters the state in search of better livelihood. No society can ever exist without economic activity. It must carry on the production process even with a view to maintaining the bare physical existence of its members. To be able to produce, that is to transform elements of nature into forms suitable for meeting the needs of men, it must gather an understanding of Nature i.e. it must achieve

scientific knowledge. The human mind has invented such marvellous means of production, such as machinery driven by steam, electricity and even by atomic energy. Thus, every society, however backward, therefore, always possessed some scientific knowledge and technology. It always possessed a philosophy or a world outlook, however crude it might be. The Gorkhas residing within Mizoram also practice agriculture and farming. On the disparities in the magnitude of economic and financial matters a lot of differences can be seen among the Gorkha household, as some household belongs to daily wage earner while some with government jobs. Based on the enquiry and survey within various localities in Aizawl and Kolasib Districts dated 7th to 10th November 2016 among the Gorkha daily wage earners comprising of those without land and those with land, a lots of generalizations and discriminations from other communities are heard. The major reason behind this is the economic background marginalizing them from other groups. It thus clearly indicates that still, some Gorkha households depend on daily wage employment as their main source of income while other Gorkhas residing within Mizoram owe well-established status and position in various fields and institutions. In comparison with other ethnic groups within the state as well, the employment rate and wages are also low, leading to disparities in various spheres. Cattle farming and various other businesses flourished throughout the state especially in the capital, Aizawl, in which Durtlang, Thuampui, Zemabawk and Ramrikawn, there are several people engaged on the job as a business. In an interview dated 12th, 13th, 15th and 16th September 2016 with various milkmen and farmers from various localities within Aizawl and Kolasib District, due to poverty and their business, they are still looked down and generalized as being the “other”. In Tanhril, Aizawl, Mr. Parshuram Chhetri, a senior Gorkha citizen of Mizoram, aged eighty, in an interview highlights the locality as “Vaiveng”, the term “Vai” which literally means an outsider or non-Mizos somehow highlights alienation or separation. Unfortunately, they have faced various stereotyping by various natives of the

state as well as other ethnic groups within and outside the state. He mentions, “abuses both direct and indirect in the form of speech or conversation which are often inflicted upon them in their everyday life like in city buses, taxi and other public area and so on” (13 Sept. 2016). Such are the facts of the Gorkhas’ conditions as well as other minorities within the state. Not only a milkmen is looked as a ‘Vai’ or ‘other’ by the natives within the state but every other ethnic groups such as the native Indians too are termed as a ‘Vai’. India, a country who enjoys unity in diversity, in reality does not. In “The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism”, Bhabha says, “The stereotype, then, as the primary point of subjectification in colonial discourse, for both colonizer and colonized, is the scene of a similar fantasy and defence- the desire for an originality which is again threatened by the differences of race, colour and culture... in Fanon’s title *Black Skin, White Masks*, where the disavowal of difference turns the colonial subject into a misfit... The stereotype is not a simplification because it is a false representation of a given reality” (107).

A feeling of liminality and otherness is always heard and felt by the minorities within every corner, such is the unfortunate fact regarding the nation. In one of the interviews with Mr. K. K. Pradhan, an immigrant from Nepal who sells milk for a living, he says that in order to get better jobs and security for future “many loans and jobs are offered to us by the natives Mizos”, which has improved their lives. He further says, such change and development in the financial sphere makes their life better but the fact about “converting their religious beliefs by some natives by force makes their life miserable” (15 Sept. 2016). The interference of people in other’s personal matters or beliefs makes them bewildered, which makes it hard to survive. Thus, a feeling of home or establishing good bond cannot be created. He further says, “Jatti ramro thauma goye pani, afnai desh ani afnai thau pyaaro” (Wherever we live or wherever we go, one’s own land is much better than any other place) (15 Sept. 2016). In some cases, assertion of an individual identity of some of the Gorkha households due to conversion of

religion have caused further imbalance in the social structure. A slow process of hybridization hence took place within the society. An intense sense of awareness of the cultural loss and recovery came with the negotiation with other cultures. Religion, language, and traditions are the main blocks of a strong and rooted identity if these main blocks are removed or changed a new branch will be born, or in other words, hybridization with other cultures will take place.

In *Minorities within Minorities*, Rob Reich writes:

The first kind of diversity within the minority region, or in the area where the minority exercises authority over its culture, is primarily directed at people who do not share the same culture, language, or religion as the right-holding group, but who live within region dominated by the minority who possess the right... indeed this concern has been raised by some political sociologists and comparative political scientists...the main problem, it is alleged, with most forms of territorial arrangements to protect minority cultural groups is that territories are not homogenous and that minority cultures within the jurisdictional area controlled by the local majority will be disadvantaged and marginalized. (Eisenberg and Halev 273)

The concept of social exclusion characterizes contemporary forms of social disadvantages. The concept relates to the processes wherein entire communities are systematically blocked from rights, opportunities, resources and necessities as housing, employment, health care, civic engagement, democratic participation, and others that are available to an average citizen, and which are important for social integration. The concept of social exclusion has been defined as the process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society within which they live. In this sense, it is the opposite of social integration. The concept is also related to the concepts of alienation,

separation, deprivation, and even refers to disenfranchisement of certain people within a society. Social exclusion is often related to a person's social class, educational status and living standards and the access to various opportunities. It is sometimes perceived as the inability of the society to provide the individuals and groups the rewards or to realize their full potential. The evolution and conceptualisation of marginalisation of the society into various groups is not a new phenomenon. It has been in existence and practiced in varied degrees since time immemorial. It is a practice that refers to the overt or covert tendencies and practices developed within several groups of societies. Marginalised persons can also be described as a group of the level or degree of marginalisation, which varies from state to state and from community to community. It is clear that a marginalised person belongs to distinctive social groups and have their own characteristic features and then they are singled out or victimised by the more numerically dominant members of the society. This act by the members of the society leads to social discrimination and is followed by social ostracism of the individual or the entire community.

Marginalisation, according to Dr. Amir Faizi is a “mode of creating and maintaining social identities and individual self-definitions affecting individuals at all levels of society, which involves constructing a dominant social identity against the background of excluded individuals and social groups” (11). Within the developing world, racial or ethnic minority groups, stand out as being the most marginalised social groups. In the Indian context, it also includes the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, the poor, the elderly, the minorities, the women, the sick, and the disabled. All these groups tend to suffer from some forms of marginalisation and a typical host of social ills like poverty, unemployment, poor education and poor health. They each tend to be ostracised and so suffer various forms of social exclusion. On that account, the Gorkhas of Mizoram do face such forms of alienation and marginalisation in some way or other. Dr. Amir Faizi further says, “Marginalisation is a

process and not a condition. An individual can be marginalised during some periods of his life and not in others. The concept of exclusion, in contrast, denotes a situation in the absolute periphery of society's function systems" (28).

The marginal situation is highly conducive to internal strain because of the lack of clarity regarding two vital matters; first the status of the individual in the society, and second, his expected role performance. The marginal man is always uncertain in his relationships with the members of other ethnic groups of the society to which he belongs. This kind of ambivalence is highly disturbing and confusing to the psyche. It inevitably leads to problems of identity. The contemporary identity of the Gorkhas of Mizoram due to certain level of hybridization is protested and highlighted by various Gorkha as well as some Mizo writers through their works. Such tensions and the state of being liminal and the exposure to other cultures result in a different Gorkha sensibility and in some cases a crisis of sorts. A well-known Gorkha poet and writer Laxmi Meenu in one of her poem, "Chahiyeko Chha" (A Necessity) writes:

Hamilai ti dui haathharuko

Awashshykta chha,

Jasle kalambir bani

Unnatiko pathma

Aghadi badna sakos.

Hamilai yasto hridai

Chahiyeko chha,

Jasle ektako

Maala gasna jaanos.

(It is a necessity to have two hands, in order to become mightier by writing our good deeds. It is a necessity to have a heart, so that we can learn how to unite) (10).

Viewing such writings, writers among the Gorkhas through their works portray the gamut of their daily life, in which it shows the importance of knowing who they actually are. To be socially excluded is to be deprived from social recognition and social value. In the sphere of politics, social recognition is obtained by full citizenship; in the economic sphere, it means being paid enough to be able to participate fully in the life of the community. Social exclusion is therefore, the result of lack of social integration of some sections of society due to poverty, professional exclusion, or marginalization, and so on. Hence, it is not possible to provide a simple answer to the question of who are economically or socially marginalised. Marginalisation can be viewed as a social construction, i.e., there are social definition processes which define what it means to be marginalised and what consequences this ought to have. Any groups or communities within or outside any country have an interest in having their identity respected, and moves from recognition of this interest to justify jurisdictional control or authority over the collective conditions of their existence. At the heart of this type of argument is the claim that “there is value in having one’s culture and one’s practice recognized, or having the culture or identity with which one identifies” says Moore in *Minorities within Minorities* (Eisenberg and Halev 279).

Over the last decade, estimation of poverty has been a fashionable exercise for economists and social scientists all over the world. Poverty as a concept is closely related to income inequality. The major thrust of all developmental policies in India, since the early fifties, has been the alleviation of poverty and raising the standard of living of the masses. This is in view of the fact that poverty gives rise to illiteracy and illiteracy in turn acts as an obstacle to stability of population growth. The effective poverty reduction is not possible without empowerment of the poor. The most fundamental way in which empowerment

occurs is through the introduction of the concept of rights itself. Freedom of an individual, which is the postulate of human rights, can have no meaning so long as the poor in the country do not have their economic conditions improved. In an article, *Indian Gorkhas: A Time For Retrospection*, published by the Mizoram Gorkha Students' Union, the issue of granting basic human rights has been addressed, "... constant discrimination towards genuine Gorkha citizens of India in jobs, trade, and commerce and higher education resulting the community had been rendered economically, socially, educationally and politically backward when compared with the other natives of the country" [sic] (Mizoram Gorkha Students' Union n.pag).

Considerable attention has been devoted to theorizing the rights of minority cultures in recent years. Political theorists have developed accounts of the normative questions raised by issues of race, immigration, nationalism, indigenous peoples and religion. On a more practical level, recently, promotion of self-help groups of the Gorkhas in Mizoram like the Gorkha Sangh, Naari Samaj, Mizoram Gorkha Youth Association, Mizoram Gorkha Students' Union and others have undoubtedly created confidence amongst them. The emergence and rapid multiplication of Gorkha Non-Governmental Organizations based on micro credit is a phenomenon that is gaining increasing importance in the development scenario. Today, in Mizoram there are various Gorkha self-help groups in every district. They are being viewed today by the state as a strategy for both tools for empowerment of the Gorkha community as well as poverty eradication and have emerged as powerful bodies in influencing their bureaucracy and its policies. Under the garb of good governance and protection of public space, these NGOs have been active in leading to greater insecurity and poverty among the marginalized.

Enforced by compulsions of international development agendas and the increasing pressure of non-governmental agencies and activists, the Indian state has sought to provide

universal and compulsory elementary education. Education, one of the important means of reducing ignorance and inequality in society helps the individual to raise his social status in various ways. Schools have sprung up in most areas of the nation and there is a demand for schooling among a large proportion of households. Along with the establishment of schools, incentive schemes such as free uniforms, midday meals, textbooks and grains, the enrolment drives and the new campaigns to enhance literacy have contributed to promoting awareness of the rights of all to be educated. A result of this is that, children from groups and societies that were typically denied the rights to formal education are now attending school. The 2015 census revealed that a majority of the Gorkhas of Mizoram are literate, while in some areas low literacy rates occurred whose parental background has been a daily wage earner. Poor accessibility of schools and racial prejudiced against some household (milkmen and farmers) is one of the factors for low literacy among the Gorkhas of Mizoram.

From a survey conducted during December 2016, minority or marginalised groups mainly avail of government schooling. Many of these schools are plagued by various problems such as lack of basic infrastructure, classrooms, teaching aids, teachers, dilapidated buildings and mud floors and provide a depressing atmosphere for children. The discrimination by teachers as well as other pupils towards minority students is commonly found in many schools. Biased attitudes towards other races or communities can be heard often during the school days of many students' experience. In one of the surveys with the local, a Gorkha farmer in Ramrikawn, Aizawl, Sherbahadur Chhettri, a father says that, "though prejudices and discrimination were not practised very openly in the classroom, the peer group appeared friendly in school, but outside the school, attitudes changed" (12 Sept. 2016). In this manner, it can be concluded that these practice of segregation in schools and discrimination serve to discourage and alienate the minority students, contributing to their high dropout rates. In fact, such practices serve to instil and reinforce minority children's

sense of inferiority erode their sense of personal dignity and force them to internalized class and race distinction. The point here is not a mere abuse of an individual by another individual but it signifies a much larger issue that needs to be seriously discussed. In *Minorities within Minorities: Equality, Rights and Diversity* it is seen that:

It is easy to understand why in culturally diverse states control over education is so important. First and most obvious, schools are a central vehicle of cultural transmission, perhaps the most important vehicle next to the family. Beyond socialization within the home, schools plays a crucial role in initiating children into the norms, beliefs and rites of the larger group, forming and deepening in their cultural identities in the process... second, when children of ethno-cultural, religio-cultural, or national minority groups attend common schools, they have often been discriminated against or within the curriculum, both as an explicit aim of state policy... And third, control over schooling also means that those in charge can decide who gets an education at all. (Eisenburg and Halev 210)

The terms 'minority' and 'minorities' have come to form part of India's popular political and, therefore, media vocabulary. Very often, the media is accused of displaying rather crude prejudices while reporting on minorities or minority issues. The term 'minorities' in the Indian context is indeed narrowly defined and, therefore, requires a careful approach. Broadly, the term in India denotes religious communities whose members project themselves as being different from the majority community. As minorities cannot be based on religious difference, they are based on social disadvantage and deprivation. There is, therefore, need to see the concept of minorities in a vastly broadened perspective. Indian society is therefore, a segmentary society wherein every social community unites itself against others and at the same time becomes segmented into small social communities. The media in India has been both extremely biased as well as supportive towards the minorities. But, among the biggest

shortcomings of the media in this country, as almost everywhere else, is its role as stereotype. One sees increasing instances of the media, or a big section of it, trying to stereotype every minority group as homogenous entity. This is far from the truth. For example, usage of term like 'bahadur' has always been highly resented by the Gorkha community. Some Gorkha scholars and writers of Mizoram have raised questions on a number of occasions that the media has been highly insensitive in coining the term, as it seeks to give an expression that the entire community seems to be a *chowkidar*, or a *bahadur*. There is a strong tendency to form a negative impression based on the primary effect. Moreover people tend to believe assertions made in the media. In *Media Violence and Crime* 2008, Anju Khosla writes:

Once a stereotype is activated, it can be reactivated by something as simple as a disagreement with someone in the stereotyped group, and if brought to mind frequently enough, can become chronically accessible. Thus, even though media-based stereotypes may seem harmless when considered individually, their cumulative effect over time can be substantial. Once stereotypes are learned- whether from the media, family members, direct experience, or elsewhere- they sometimes take on a life of their own and become "self-perpetuating stereotypes". (68)

Media as a system of propaganda has a tremendous impact. The image becomes interwoven into the fabric of society and culture, serving as instruments of moulding opinion and public discourse. The questions arise as to whether the media is genuinely interested in the cause of minorities or whether it is actually exploiting them as a subject for a good print copy or a spicy story. The more time viewers spend on television, the more likely their conceptions about the world and its people will reflect what they see there. Hence, prejudice can also arise from ignorance and journalists too. From time to time, the media in India stereotype not only the Gorkhas of Mizoram but the Gorkhas as a whole, a way the Gorkha themselves does not want to be introduced.

To take a cue from Bhabha this minoritized indigenous or migrant culture is defined by post imperial and western national culture as ‘behind’ or belated in time, still to catch up and conform itself with progress of the dominant culture. As Dastider says, “... it is imperative to draw the attention to the enunciated histories of minoritization for making one aware that minority is not only a minority sector of the nation-people, but also a certain kind of ethical attribution in theory of cultural debate” (179). Even if stereotype can be seen as that particular fixated formed, the Gorkha identity can neither be confined nor limited to such stereotypes. The Gorkhas in their culture, tradition, and contemporary writings depict certain enduring truths about their daily life in the midst of some conflicts, they defy all stereotypical constructions on their identity and cultural history.

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CHAPTER 3

INTERRELATIONSHIP AMONG THE GORKHAS AND OTHER GROUPS

For tens of thousands of years, humans lived in isolated communities. Cultures developed largely independently and many were unaware of others' existence. The initiation of contact among previously separate cultures has been the major world event of the past centuries. As time went on, new contacts were made in which people geographically and historically separated came into contact with each other and thus established ongoing relations. The demographic compositions characterised by heterogeneity and cultural diversity make the nation multicultural.

India is a country in which diverse peoples, languages, cultures, and religions co-exist. Since time immemorial, these varied people, languages, and cultures have lived together harmoniously. When traversing the length and breadth of India, one can notice that the transition from one culture to another and one language to another is not abrupt, but smooth and gradual. Numerous processes of change are therefore occurring. For example: change in the process of population, occupation, communication, and lifestyles have led to a considerable amount of inter-relations among different communities within a society.

In India, the colonial rule ushered and transformed every ethnic group in various ways. It prepared them to be conscious of their civil rights through the establishment of Village Council administration through a democratic process. Social formations in this part of the country are hence marked by pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial transformations. In the colonial as well as post-colonial period, ethnic relations in the North-East India have changed enormously. "Culture is the instrument whereby the individual adjusts to his total setting, and gains the means for creative expression", says Melville J. Herskovits. (640) He further says:

Change is constant in human culture. It is, however, always to be studied against a background of cultural stability... Change, that is, must always be considered in relation to resistance to change. People who accept new ways of doing some things are reluctant to agree to innovations where other facets of their way of life are concerned. (635)

Social beings, men, express their nature by creating and re-creating organizations which guide and control their behaviour in myriad ways. These organizations or in other words, society, liberates and limits the activities of men. It sets up standards for men to follow and maintain whatever the imperfections and tyrannies it has exhibited in human history. Society therefore, is a system of authority and mutual aid, of many groupings and divisions. It is a web of social relationships and is always changing. During different historical periods North-East India served the purpose of a gateway for various hordes of migrants between East-Asia and the rest of India. By virtue of such a location, the fusion of culture and race has taken place. The racial and linguistic diversities of the population in the North-Eastern region show that they came from distant places in search of employment and virgin lands. The North-East India is therefore, a unique and strategic geographic situation, which is the meeting place of different races and ethnic groups. It presents an ethnic diversity which is a part of India's plural society. Homi Bhabha in *Nation and Narration*, says, "Cultural difference must not be understood as the free play of polarities and pluralities... it addresses the jarring of meanings and values generated in-between the variety and diversity associated with cultural plenitude" (312). Diversity is therefore, a special feature of the ethnic composition of the racial movements into and across the eastern Himalayas and the surrounding during different periods of history. Though the diversities appear to be of continental dimensions, they basically reflect different shades of a significant common cultural heritage and ethos. Different, but equal is therefore the leitmotif of multiculturalism, while living with

differences is a fact of our social existence. In *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory*, Bhikhu Parekh writes, "Human beings share a common nature, common conditions of existence, life experiences, predicament, and so on. They also, however, conceptualize and respond to these in quite different ways and give rise to different cultures. Their identity is a product of a dialectical interplay between the universal and the particular, between what they all share and what is culturally specific" (124).

Multiculturalism reflects upon the status of different cultural communities within a polity. It sees individuals not simply as citizens or rational, autonomous and self-directing persons, but also as members of communities. In the words of Jeff Lewis, multiculturalism "attempts to create a postmodernist ethos which forms a cultural assemblage around the notion of 'unity in diversity'" (298). Indeed, it emphasises the importance of collective community identities in individual life. Such is the interrelation among the Gorkhas of Mizoram and other ethnic groups within the state. Their relationship in the region is associated with its social, cultural, economic, political, and historical experiences. In an essay, "Migration and Settlement in Mizoram", the Gorkhas "those days, used to have many *thians* (Mizo friends) from outside surcharge areas because they required sponsorship of their visit to Aizawl town to purchase basic necessities like salts, cloths, etc. The Gorkhas used to sponsor *thians* while the *thians* used to bring them fowls and eggs as a token of appreciation when they visited Aizawl" (Sunar 17). The Gorkhas, as spokespersons or representatives of the British in those days, were the only means through whom any other ethnic group within the state could visit or enter the surcharge areas (restricted areas). Such areas were restricted for any other ethnic groups for security reasons, and so, the Mizo from outside the surcharge areas had to seek sponsorship from the Gorkha soldiers to enter such restricted areas, similar to the Inner Line Permit (ILP) of the present times. It shows that the Gorkhas of Mizoram in the past had enjoyed satisfactory socio-political status right from the beginning. It says:

Pampered as they were by the Britishers, and also their adaptability in any kind of situation, climate and topography, they found the terrains, streams, flora and fauna so akin to their country's that they left behind, they felt at home here right from the beginning. (sic) The natives, too, physically resembled them as most of the Gorkhas also belonged to Mongoloid stock. The hospitable, carefree... straightforward nature of the natives won their heart. These were the main factors which helped in establishing good rapport in the beginning which later cemented the bond of friendship and brotherhood. (Sunar 15)

Mizoram, situated in the eastern corner of the Indian Union full of hill ranges was a clan-lineage based politics in which the centralisation of political authority rested with the class of chiefs. Thus the acquisition of the right of chieftainship was, in fact, the main concern in the indigenous Mizo politics. Rev.V. S. Lalrinawma, in his book *Mizo Ethos: Changes and Challenges*, describes, "In the early life of Mizo communities, the institution of chieftainship governed the appropriation of resources... the most important social institutions under the Sailo rule were those of chieftainship and Zawlbuk" (4). The Gorkhas during earlier times had an institution known as *Rodhi Ghar*, whose principles were same as the Mizos' *Zawlbuk* pattern, which is still practised in some parts of Nepal. It is a place where young men and even young women unlike the Mizos, are trained and educated. The importance of *Zawlbuk* to the Mizos and *Rodhi Ghar* to the Gorkhas were the same. Both maintain peace and harmony within their respective societies. Prior to the British colonialism in Mizoram, the Mizo's mode of living and the Gorkhas of Mizoram were purely traditional in character. As seen in *The Gorkhas of Mizoram Volume-I*, the traditional belief between the Gorkhas of Mizoram and the native Mizos were found to be similar in various ways. It is said that, "Rih Dil was revered equally by the Gorkhas as the Mizos did. They used to visit it annually,

pigeons were flown in the name of their relatives' departed souls and god as well. They believed that some holy spirits dwelt there" (Sunar 33).

From the very beginning both the Mizos and the Gorkhas had kinship and lineage based social systems. Though different in various spheres, there are still some traits and fields where similarities can be seen. Social difference as Bhabha writes in his book *The Location of Culture* "are the signs of the emergence of community envisaged as a project" (4). For instance, rice beer which is called 'Zu' or 'Zufang' (in Mizo) and 'Jaad' (in Nepali language) was important in every offering and festival, without which no good deeds can be performed within the communities. It was valued in various merriments and used as offerings in both Mizo and Gorkha communities. Rev. V.S. Lalrinawma says, "Zu was claimed to be part and parcel of Mizo culture before the arrival of the Gospel. Since in all social and religious ceremonies, festivals and sacrifices Zu was an essential element..." (153).

Though having various superstitious beliefs and traditional practices connected with rice beer, there has been a change of views and ideas generated within the society as a result of various factors. Hence, the ban of alcohol and other intoxicating substances took place because it is seen as a social evil by various communities. Before the change in people's views and beliefs the use of such things were seen as the purifier of every ailment and suffering for the community. The prohibition of any alcoholic things among Mizo society was an influence of the missionaries within the state who taught that Christianity and alcohol were incompatible. Rev.V. S Lalrinawma further says, "Christianity gave a new hope for living to the Mizo society. The missionaries had a negative attitude towards Zu. This negative attitude after a few years brought the churches in Mizoram to prohibit the traditional Zu in 1984" (275). The Mizoram Gorkha Youth Association, in order to maintain peace and harmony within their community also adopted the issue against it. Awareness against substances of intoxication within the Gorkha community is implemented by various leaders

and organisations within their respective localities. Through various programmes, cultural meet or any other social gatherings, leaders as well as elders of the Gorkha community impart knowledge and motivate their youth through their inspirational speech and lectures. Therefore, the earlier traditions and customs among both communities have been transformed, while a bond between them generates a team work gradually by the patterns of their working together within a society. Whether in Aizawl district, Kolasib district or any other district within Mizoram, the Gorkhas and the Mizos through their different mode of maintaining their respective communities work hand in hand in some way or the other. “If any kind of help or suggestions are needed within any of the community the other is always there for support”, says Mr. Ram Kumar Thapa, former President of the Mizoram Gorkha Youth Association, Zotlang, Aizawl in an interview (1 Feb. 2017).

In the course of every great civilization the old tradition has been in various degrees and in different modes subjected to a process of differentiation. Various contrasts between the old ways of living and new lifestyles in a society can be seen. The force of modernisation is bringing about rapid changes in the social structures. Not only are people becoming more aware of their social, cultural, and religious heritage, but due to economic forces their mobility is also increasing. Having one’s own beliefs, traditions, religion, and culture, the Gorkhas, despite the enormous advances in understanding the evolution of life, do have their own cultural identity. The extent to which their culture influences them is quite extraordinary, permeating every aspect of their lives. Everything they construct is a cultural artefact, marked with significance. For example: the temples built in every locality inside Mizoram and various Gorkha schools are not simply an institution of the present generations. It tells the story of the society that built it long ago. It has a history of its own that is tied in with the lives of the people who have lived here. George Handley writes, “For Bhabha, ... history may be half-made because it is in the process of being made” (294). It stands as a mark of the

culture of society at the time it was built, and has gained resonances through the time that has elapsed since it was built. S. S Datta in an essay, “Shakti Mandir, Aizawl” highlighted how the office of the Assam Rifles at Aizawl became the place of worshipping of Goddess Durga. “The temple part of the club premises goes by the name “Shakti Mandir” in which the annual performances of Durga Puja, Lakshmi Puja and Kalipuja are done” (Datta 46).

The Mizos, in every locality have their own churches, schools, cemeteries and other organizational institutions within the state gradually. Likewise, the Gorkhas have also adopted this pattern established by the Mizos. The co-dependence and interrelation among the groups have affected the Gorkha sensibility in a way or the other. In this manner, any cultural construction is therefore, a part of the autobiography of those within it. One’s life participates in the universal unfolding that constitutes culture. Cultural programmes and activities like upliftment of one’s own language, traditional dress, different monthly festivals, and other activities are implemented by the Gorkha Youth Association. Purna Prasad in one of his essays, “Mizoram Gorkha Yuwa Sangh: Kehi Vivechna” writes, “The establishment of various Gorkha cultural, educational and religious institutions can be said to be the hard work of the Gorkha Youth Associations” (53).

Humans are therefore largely defined by exceptions of culture within societies. Today, social scientists understand culture as a society’s norms, values, and beliefs; as well as its objects and symbols. It is therefore what differentiates one group or society from the next. Paul Kelly says, “Culture involves richly textured practices that provide the context for practical deliberation in a common form of life. They provide the language, symbols and rules within which we navigate, whatever the common purpose is that connects us within a culture” (66).

The history of the human race has been transmitted over millions of years through the use of symbols, paintings and oral communication. Research and excavations continue to unearth regularly. As new facts and facets of human history- the life and times of one's ancestors- how they lived, evolved and preserved in the face of nature's fury, migration, and rituals to appease the unfathomable force around them. One can even see today in different parts of the world, communities living in isolation, far removed from what one considers one's civilized way of life but preserving one's own identity. Basically, our folk culture determines our identity, the sum total of our beliefs, attitudes and habits, our historical and existential memories, oral traditions, tales, and songs constitute the folk knowledge system. The Gorkhas of Mizoram have preserved traditional music, culture, and worship rituals over time through oral communication including folklore and songs, and have passed them on from generation to generation. Even after the evolution of modern amenities and gadgets, the prevalence of traditional art and culture in all its grandeur, and the importance that continues to be attached to them is evident. Various classical and traditional dances like, Maruni, Tamang Selo, Jhyaure, Sorathi, and many other forms of dances are still practiced and performed by youths and even adults in different occasions. The different dance forms being one of the major representatives component of the Gorkha identity is thus the key component of culture of the Gorkhas too. L. B. Chhettri in an essay, "Hamro Reeti-Riwaaz", highlights the importance of customs and traditions, which is thus a part of identity formation of the Gorkhas of Mizoram. He says:

We Gorkhas have been practicing many folk elements and narratives like rituals, songs, dance, customs, and rites from our ancestor's time just as in every corner of the world every group has its own practice. Such elements of past beliefs were the part of identity formation and the ability to negotiate difference with the other community. (32)

It proves that the age old bonds between their ancestors and their culture have continued to flourish among the Gorkhas. Various festivals and rituals like Dashain, Tihar, Maghe Sakranti, Lhosar, and others have therefore acquired unique colours in Mizoram. They are therefore promoted and presented by such cultural and social organizations and institutions. Such presentations and unique practices among various ethnic groups in Mizoram unite and strengthen the gap between them. Culture, which is the essence of civilization, stands for a complex and composite notion. It includes a number of factors, forces and ideas including among others, art, artefact, way of life, behaviour pattern, dress pattern, beliefs, values, habits, attitudes, and norms. Through the collections of ideas and habits between two communities within a society, one can learn, share and transmit from one generation to another. Human beings tend to personalize institutions, including society. In our everyday talk we hear statements about society's needs, prescriptions, states of crises, and so on. Such talk is authored by human beings, yet pertains to the abstractions called society. One seems to know what one's society is and what it wants, but the society is actually an abstraction. It is a collectively created, and shared, myth story that functions as a sign. In fact, humans are involved in constructing and reconstructing that web. The notions of society therefore, act as a mediator in human communication processes, both between persons and institutions. It is thus a meaning at the intersection of the private and the public domains of human existence.

In the recent past, the Gorkha community, as a whole has witnessed changes in various fields due to the positive link between them and other groups within the society. The Gorkhas of Mizoram have also witnessed changes in the governance of local authorities. Various people from the Gorkha community are elected and given opportunities in the local as well as national level in various areas. Some are given various titles and ranks in the society welfare while some are elected in various posts for the maintenance of their locality. According to Dhruva Thapa, the present President of Mizoram Gorkha Youth Association of

Kolasib, till today, the bond between the Gorkhas of Mizoram and native Mizo brothers is strong and supportive of each other. Even in their organizational programmes and activities, he said, “We are welcomed and supported by them in various activities. Some of our senior Gorkha citizens are even elected within the Mizo organization as body members” (11 Feb. 2017).

In the community domain, neighbourhood organizations encourage their involvement and participation in such policy and decision making. In various interviews with different members and individuals of both the Gorkhas and Mizo Organizations on date 10th to 13th February 2017 within Kolasib district, Aizawl district, and some areas of Lunglei district, positive remarks were heard and collected, in which different body members like Village Councils, President and Vice Presidents, Secretaries of both Gorkhas and Mizo organizations throw light on the good relation between both groups. Pu. H. Lalkhawhluna, the Village Council of Hmar Veng, Kolasib, in an interview states that, “As unity and equality is every organization’s motto and goal, so also we, Mizos in respect to our Gorkha brothers, are proud of being their neighbours who in times help and support each other in various situations” (12 Feb.2017). In various localities within Aizawl district and Kolasib district the relationship between the Gorkhas and the Mizos is projected to be so strong and friendly, that even the members of each community have established Joint Committees. Likewise, the senior citizens of the Gorkha community are also enlisted within the Mizo Upa Pawl (MUP). Through a telephone interview with Madhav Kumar Thapa, the present General Secretary of the Gorkha Youth Association in Lunglei, it was confirmed that the Gorkhas residing in Lunglei are “enrolled as members of both the Gorkhas as well as the Mizos associations” (13 Feb. 2017).

Hence, the Gorkhas have gained increasing influence. Even if the Gorkha belongs to a non-Mizo community, they are enlisted and participate in every social work and other

community-based programmes within their localities. Such is the bond between the two communities in the region. The Gorkha organizations in that matter have played an important role in improving services and increasing their effectiveness to their native brothers too. In a democratic state, the role of civil society assumes significance as it acts as a pressure group to exert pressure on the state and its machinery. The constituents of civil society, i.e., voluntary organizations, media and autonomous bodies contribute towards the well-being of the people. The voluntary organizations or non-governmental organizations could be seen as one of the key constituents of civil society that work towards the strengthening of the society through its people-oriented and people-centered approaches and which in turn bring about change and development in the society.

In Mizoram, within the Gorkha community, a consciousness of traditional Gorkha culture is encouraged through various organisations and other Non-Governmental Organizations who promote them through various activities. Non-Governmental Organizations of different sizes, nature and scope have emerged and grown within the Gorkha community till now. Such organizations include: Mizoram Gorkha Youth Association, Mizoram Rajya Gorkha, Gorkha Sangh, Mizoram Gorkha Student's Union, Mizoram Gorkha Nari Samaj and others. Apart from their heterogeneous nature, a conceptual ambiguity continues to persist as synonymous terms such as voluntary organization, action group, voluntary development organization, and others are used to describe them. Their main motive is to promote and preserve their cultural heritage and customs for the society and for the future generations. The participatory modes of intervention, social activism- the awareness-building measures and networking are some of the initiatives that the organizations undertake to achieve their objectives. They seek help and support from the government to effectively carry out their programmes. In the process the different Gorkha organizations like Mizoram Gorkha Youth Association, Mizoram Rajya Gorkha, Gorkha

Sangh and others ensure people's active participation in the development programmes. With their basic aim to bring about integrated development in the society, their strength lies in public support. Besides, their ability to mobilize the masses for the cause they fight for an added advantage for them. In the field of activism and collective action, they mobilize the people and generate awareness among them and thus provide platforms to raise their voice. While people's overwhelming support is the key, the resource generation, particularly financial resources, becomes necessary for an organisation to survive and sustain itself.

Apart from voluntary contributions from the members and the public, the Gorkha organizations raise funds through co-curricular activities like: sports, variety shows, carols and others. In consequence, modernity with its agenda has brought about all kinds of changes to the community and its culture. Along with modernity comes globalisation which has wider implications on the life and culture of the Gorkhas. The impact of globalisation on the culture and identity of the Gorkhas is of great concern to Gorkha writers. Sangeeta Jaisi in an article, "Identity Crisis?" writes:

Going down memory lane, in the 70's various local organizations viz: Mizoram Gorkha Youth Association, Nari Samaj, Bhasa Samiti, Nebhas Pariwar to name a few did their talent hunting... Their most commendable effort in searching hidden talents and highlighting them, and viz-a-viz the foray in preserving and keeping alive our cultural heritage by forming cultural troops and sending them to perform in the other states such as Sikkim, and Darjeeling are indeed notable and praiseworthy. (3)

History provides many examples of different communities and cultures living side by side within the same society, co-existing peacefully, and sometimes, even amicably. In India, similarly, people of diverse religions and languages have lived together for several centuries. In some pre-modern societies, differences in religion were even legally recognised and

accommodated. The co-presence of different communities within the same polity is, therefore, not a new occurrence. It has been a hallmark of many societies for a very long time. It is concerned with the issue of equality, asking whether the different communities, living peacefully together, co-exist as equals in the public arena. Urban areas, specially the capital city of Mizoram, Aizawl, offers avenues for the establishment of ethnic or community neighbourhood, enabling different ethnic groups or communities to co-exists. Within the framework of plurality, the major concern is peaceful co-existence and amity. As long as people have some degree of freedom to live by their own religious and cultural practices within a society, there is a positive environment in the public arena. Pluralism, in other words, indicates the presence of differences and marks a departure from policies aimed at annihilating the other. It remains silent about the public status of these communities. Instead, in most pre-modern societies, pluralism prevailed against the backdrop of a widely accepted hierarchy of cultures and communities. The Gorkhas through their activities and other welfare programmes within the society projects the bonds of friendship and brotherhood with their Mizo brothers as well as with other ethnic groups.

The Gorkhas, like any other ethnic groups around the North-East India practise farming, cattle rearing, though they were not the Gorkhas' main occupation, as most of them practice for their livelihood. As years rolled by, major attention was given to education and careers mainly due to the rapid rise and influence of Non-Governmental Organizations among the Gorkha households; so does modernization, which accelerates the pace of change. Therefore, the change is both the characteristic and goal of social change.

As an intermediary between the state and the people, various Gorkha Organizations are poised to bridge the gap between the people, the state as well as with other ethnic groups. They also influence the decision-making authorities to influence their policies, programmes, orientations, and attitudes. Through their effective vertical and horizontal networking, they

muster support and obtain people's support in the areas of their operation. Such is the change evaluated in terms of how it affects the culture. They may be seen as an agent of change that strives to bring about social change in the society. As a result of these changes, the shaping of the Gorkha identity occurs. The establishment of these organizations have proved to be a boon for the community as a whole. It would not be wrong to say that what distinguishes man is his social identity. He lives in a shared world with the other fellow members. He cannot imagine his existence without taking into account the behaviour of others. Therefore, his consciousness, thinking, feeling, and acting are situated in the matrix of social relationships he is engaged in.

Human society perpetuates itself through the process of socialization. The on-going culture of the society is maintained throughout the generations by the said process. The intermingling with other ethnic groups within a society hence creates political socialization. It inculcates political attitudes and values in man through which the political culture is sustained. An individual is oriented towards the political object because of the political socialization process. In fact, it promotes attachment, partisan attitude and participation processes and institutions among the individuals. Such is the motto of various Mizoram Gorkha associations. David Michael Orenstein in *Press and Political Socialization* says, "Social processes can be tentatively defined as patterns of interaction and mutual influence that take place among individuals" (35).

The basic issues in social development today are equality and empowerment. Equality, which is both an end in itself as a fundamental basis of all human rights is a means for achieving social and economic development. The Gorkhas have been enjoying satisfactory socio-political status in the state right from the beginning of the settlement. In a country of India's diversity and vastness, equality is the only basis for holding the society together. This reality was clearly perceived and grasped by the leaders of India's independent

movement. After independence, they proceeded swiftly and firmly to enshrine in the Indian Constitution the principles as well as the basic operational policy content of equality. The Constitution guarantees to all its citizens, irrespective of sex, religion, caste or creed, social, economic and political justice and equality of status and opportunity. Various Gorkha organizations of Mizoram, who emerged as a social force in the domain of development for the Gorkha community “follows directly or indirectly the principles of the Mizo organization”, says Pu. Lalhluna, the present Village Council of Zotlang, Aizawl (10 Feb. 2017).

Much of our lives is inextricably bound to organizations. We work in organizations, belong to numerous social organizations, attend universities and are governed by organizations. One often thinks of an organization as a separate, tangible entity that exists apart from the individuals. However, organizations do not exist separately from their individual members. It is not just a container in which humans interact. An organization is defined by the interaction between its members. Humans organize to complete activities. Therefore, communication organizes and coordinates these activities to allow us to achieve common goals. The goal of the various Gorkha organizations and the Mizo organizations is thus, to work for the welfare of the people. They have demonstrated their ability in mobilizing masses for the cause they fight for and projecting themselves as intermediaries to establish the link between the amorphous mass of people and the state. Though perceived as different communities the Gorkha and the Mizo organizations complement each other in various spheres. It is through the development and actions taken by such organizations in every society or community, a sense of oneness and brotherhood among one another is generated.

In order to bring about a change and oneness between different communities, a healthy bond between them is important. For a good interrelationship, interaction is a must.

In this, language plays an important role in the social, economic, and educational development of a nation. It has a special role for a multilingual and multiethnic country like India. Since the dawn of history, multilingualism has been the most important characteristic of Indian society. Communication is an essential quality of life so to say. If it is to survive in a material world, any life form must be able to communicate both with the world of matter and with other life forms. Communication is at once a primary condition of social relations and a basis of nearly all other forms of technological advance. Interaction or communication among people of diverse cultures increased interest in knowing more about each other. Individuals, in order to understand and communicate with one another one must therefore understand how people think and behave. Fred E. Jandt explains, “Intercultural communication generally refers to interactions among people of diverse cultures” (35). He further says that the main personal traits that affect intercultural communication include: self-concept, self-disclosure, self-monitoring and social relaxation and says:

Self-concept refers to the way in which a person views the self. Self-disclosure refers to the willingness of individuals to openly and appropriately reveal information about themselves to their counterparts. Self-monitoring refers to using social comparison information to control and modify one’s self-presentation and expressive behaviour.

Social relaxation is the ability to reveal little anxiety in communication. (35-36)

The course of civilization has been marked by a constant development of the means of communication, especially in the present times, for example, when electricity is not only being adopted as motive power in place of steam, not only does it make the motion picture a vast commercial enterprise and television a promising adventure, but also, becomes in the radio a voice that is heard simultaneously by millions over the face of the earth. The impact of these changes on society is enormous and multifarious. Technology, hence brings development and make a better understanding of nature and a reduction of superstition to

social progress. Being educated, an individual in his or her interaction becomes better equipped to reap the fruits of development. As the role of education lies beyond a welfare framework, its potential for promoting development has been recognised the world over. When scientific and technological knowledge inexorably moves forward, societies therefore progress or either deteriorates. Through a positive view, globalisation brings out various developments for man to survive. For example- rapid advances in information technology have made it possible to have instantaneous audio-visual communication around the globe. Both production of technology and control over broadcasting have become increasingly centralised over the past few decades. It brings interconnection between one group or community with the other. For example social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Skype and other new means of communication have strengthened the cultural and emotional bonds between different groups. The Gorkhas as well as other ethnic groups in every community are inspired by such social linkages. In a way, modernity gives one the confidence to question the most cherished or established beliefs, and propose new ideas. Man and technology are therefore, continually co-evolving. In today's technology driven world, people expect to have the means to communicate with others at any given moment. The ability to create relationships based solely on mutual understandings and shared common interests have fed the social media phenomena. Without a doubt, technology has brought a social change in which, different people can contact and come together. By interacting and bonding with others, one can simply benefits in various ways. Such co-dependence and intermingling between the Gorkhas and the Mizos not only become gainful to the Gorkhas but to the native Mizos too. Through this, both communities bridged the gap between them.

In order to communicate and interact with other communities one must understand the social system of the other. The way one understand how they think and behave results in an effective communication. As such, the Gorkhas of Mizoram whose mother tongue is Nepali

interact effectively and appropriately with the other ethnic groups within the state. Most Gorkhas of the first generations till the third generations speak fluent Mizo, Hindi, as well as English. Through the establishment of various social activities and institutions of the Gorkhas of Mizoram in relation with other groups, it has caused the shaping of Gorkha identity. Such functioning of the Gorkha institutions like various Gorkha schools and Gorkha organizations led to the maintenance of their identity being firm and rooted. As identity maintenance is the ability to maintain a counterpart's identity. Through communicating back an accurate understanding of the other person's identity one can maintain one's identity. In order to participate in society, one must be able to deal with diverse people in different situations. Language in contact can thus generate or bridge a gap between two different individuals. For example, at Bara Bazar in Aizawl one can find food, clothing, electronics, and more. The experienced bargainers (like those who are not Mizos) with effective use of spoken language and nonverbal communication can purchase items for half the original price. Such interactions and communications among different ethnic groups within a society strengthen their bonds as well as widen their horizons. What one can say with certainty about language is that, it provides one with a powerful tool for expression. In this respect, language is as crucial to human existence as is culture. Difference therefore add colour to the world, make it exciting, and challenging. It is important to accept that, despite having differences, one can work together, and constitute a shared public sphere. "Difference is taken as a starting point, not as end product" (Gupta and Ferguson 16). The spirit of working together transcends identity barriers and creates an institutional ethos that is humane and universal, not limiting to specific identities. Without this open character of public institutions, no shared culture is possible. None is denying the need for, say, specific cultural traditions and languages. But a mature society is one that steadily moves towards more open public institutions. It strives for

a public space that experiences unity in multiplicity, and reconciles multiculturalism with shared humanism.

A lot of development and changes can be traced through histories and works written by various Gorkha writers of Mizoram. Through the interaction between one or more communities, changes and developments have increased its pace considerably in the modern times. Globalisation has reduced the distance between the Gorkhas and other ethnic groups in a number of ways. Through development and various shared experiences with the other community, the Gorkhas within the state build their identity in a very strong frame. By forming various organizations in every locality within the state, their ideas and concepts have been changed. With the acceleration in the speed of change, the status of individuals and families undergoes change. Such change has brought about revolutionary change in the thinking and aspirations of youths within the Gorkha community. “On the 18th August, 1976 some of the Gorkha youths of Khatla gathered together and discussed the need for the formation of an organization to look after the needs of the Gorkha youths in particular and the Gorkha community in general”, says the writers of *The Gorkhas of Mizoram* (Sunar 35). Such movements, of course, can be seen all over the world. This is an important characteristic of modernization and the pace of modernization gets accelerated by these movements.

Today, the Gorkha Youth Organization, following the Young Mizo Association (YMA) pattern is given a particular priority in almost every locality in the state. “From time to time the Gorkha associations present and perform various cultural programmes in which the importance of traditional dress and mother tongue is highlighted for the upliftment of the community”, says Mr. Purna Prasad, a well known Gorkha writer of Mizoram in his essay, *Mizoram Gorkha Yuwa Sangh: Kehi Vivechna* (52). This encourages and forms the basis for the building up of the future.

Development can also be equated with economic development, i.e., enhancement of the economic well-being of individuals, households, access to primary education, and access to primary health care. Changes taking place both at the level of social institutions, organisations, social groups and at the level of culture demand equal attention. Changes, leading to development or modernity can be either contradictory or conflicting experiences. There can be both positive experiences relating to the spirit of freedom, changes and development, and even an experience relating to existential and cultural anguish. As modernity itself is invariably related to freedom, a change in one's views and ideas can also occur, similarly, culture is also changeable. This aspect of variability makes culture distinct from one society to another; from one polity another, and from one generation to next, and so on. This is amply clear in case of old generations who favour conservatism in contrast to younger generations who normally adhere to radicalism. This feature of variability is also found in the Gorkha culture which is mainly due to historical, environmental as well as scientific factors. P. Biswas and Chandan Suklabaidya in his *Ethnic Life-World in Northeast India (2007)* states, "The furniture of such identities is culturally and contextually constructed by certain social and historical forces" (43). Identity is contextualized to the land, artefacts, language, existential conditions, and experiences which in turn draw on history, culture, socio-economic, and political conditions. Identity therefore is formed in the context of a culture where culture provides a framework or foundational structure for its formation. In this manner the identity of the Gorkhas centres on the tradition and customs which provide a foundational structure and building materials. As such an inquiry into the issue of identity presupposes the notion of other. Hence one should not ignore the most important factor which is necessary for the construction of identity; that is, the notion of 'others' as differentiated from 'us' since identity is meaningful only in relation to others. We are conscious of our identity because of others. It cannot be defined without reference to what

stands outside of it or what is different from it. In other words, identity is formed basically on the basis of difference. Accordingly, globalisation and modernisation led to a shift in culture, as also inventions and discoveries, which have led to variability in culture. Such development transmits culture through mass communication and intermingling of a community with the other community. With the advancement of civilization, various means of communication also have been developed by means of which the culture is spread. As a result of post-colonial developments, communication has crossed the bar from print to non-print, from the broadcast television to computerisation and from traditional tools to sophisticated technologies.

To consider the impact of technology on culture is therefore to go to its heart, for without technological development, the development of culture itself is severely circumscribed. Technological advancement has certainly been one of the motors that have historically transformed society in radical ways. It is arguable that it has been technology, rather than the direct strivings of humans, that has caused the revolutionary changes in society resulting in the modern world. It may be said to be the main determining feature in the evolution of forms of society. Therefore, the swift transitions of our industrial mechanized civilization have not only been followed by far-reaching social changes. But, very many of these changes are such as appear either necessary accommodations or congenial responses to the world of the machine. Hence, one should be wary of concluding the fact that social relations are in all important respects predominantly determined by somehow technological changes.

By change or development it means many different things to many people at different times. The phenomenon of social change has been theorized variously. Different theoretical traditions have emerged at different points of time and sought to engage themselves with an interrogation of the nature and processes of social changes taking place in the societies. The

idea of development emerges variously. As the histories of suffering peoples everywhere and the constantly growing literature fully illustrate. Social change is an inevitable consequence of the pursuit of development and modification. It widens one's horizon, and makes one familiar with the larger world, its diversity and multiple colours. No society is therefore static, it is in a state of constant flux. Social change in both developed and developing countries has been noticed either in revolutionary and evolutionary process. Another associated gain of change is that it opens up the world. It brings intense dynamism and horizontal mobility. In pursuit of development and modernization, social change is inevitable. In a way, there is nothing called constant except the change itself. Nothing remains static and stable. No wonder, with modernization it becomes exceedingly difficult to retain a small, closed, homogenous and well-insulated community. To such a degree, individuals can rediscover themselves, unfold their potential, and evolve their own life-projects.

Therefore, human history is marked by constant efforts to bring about a change in the desired and progressive directions which affect societies at large. Social change, as a field of enquiry has attracted attention among various thinkers in various fields of education. It may be understood as a universal phenomenon as there is no society whether primitive or modern that remains unaffected by the process of change. The negotiation and continual interface between different communities therefore, produce a mutual and mutable recognition of cultural difference. Though the intermingling and interrelation somehow promotes friendship and a strong bond within the two communities, a feeling of liminality can be seen and heard from various Gorkha writers and also from some Mizo writers, such is the under current issues within the state which is politically dominating and a neglected discourse. Zodinsanga in *Seven Sisters Post* writes:

What does it take to be treated as a “migrant” in one's home state? Ask any Gorkha in Mizoram, and you will get the answer... The Gorkhas in Mizoram, who do not have

any home state other than this tiny Northeastern state, have long been denied their constitutional rights as the political parties' promises to grant them OBC status are yet to materialise... The non-inclusion in the OBC list has prevented the Mizoram's Gorkha community, which has high literacy rate and large number of educated youths, from entering Central and state services. (3)

One of the Gorkha leaders and the President of Mizoram Gorkha Sangh, Mr. H. B. Thapa pointed out with regard to this issue that, by granting such status to the Gorkhas of Mizoram would not encroach on Mizos' quota as the Mizo NGOs feared. He says, "Inclusion of Gorkhas in the OBC list is only a fulfillment of the Mandal Commission. If Mizoram government gives us OBC status, we will be able to enjoy certain rights and privileges without encroaching on the Mizoram's quota" (3). The Gorkhas as a whole, whose identity has been constructed in such a way that they are looked down as outsiders and are refused to acknowledgement by the state as well as the central government, even their rights and freedoms are suppressed in various spheres. One example is the statehood demand of Gorkhaland for more than a hundred years by the Gorkhas of India, which has once again ignited in order to protect their identity. The recent turn of events following the proposed Bengali language imposition plans in Darjeeling Hills, Terai and Dooars region by the West Bengal government has led to the resurgence of the demand for a separate state of Gorkhaland within India. The demand is therefore not confined to the problem of development alone but the creation of a separate state directly linked with the identity issues of the Gorkhas residing in India. In Mizoram, the discriminating attitude of the government as well as the natives towards the Gorkhas manifest through the antithetical issue regarding the demand of OBC (Other Backward Class) status in the state. The state's Gorkha community has been demanding OBC status for about two decades, soon after the Mandal Commission's recommendation for reservations for OBC's in government services was

implemented in 1993. However, there are certain groups who have raised their opposition against the proposal. Shri. R. Lalzirliana, present State Home Minister of Mizoram says:

Some non-governmental organizations and Student Unions of Mizoram have opposed OBC status for the Gorkhas of Mizoram... A permanent body set up to consider the Gorkha's demand for OBC status has recommended the status for them. And the Home Department has submitted an agenda to the State's Council of Ministers for consideration based on this recommendation... the Gorkhas were OBCs during the time present-day Mizoram was under a District Council as part of Assam, but that the list of OBCs was not adopted once Mizoram became a Union Territory in 1972. The UT government of Mizoram never issued an order to adopt the OBC's list from Assam. (The Indian Express n.pag)

The Gorkhas of Mizoram even after demanding their rights are still unheard and politically suppressed by both state as well as central authorities. In a Bureau Report, Aizawl on 13th. March. 2012, it is seen that:

The Gorkha community has high hopes on the Lalthanhawla- led Congress government which had set up a permanent body, as per the Supreme Court's directives, and has given a nod to grant the long-awaited OBC status. The move however, has face stiffed opposition from most influential NGOs in Mizoram like the Young Mizo Association (YMA), Mizo Zirlai Pawl (Mizo Students' association) and Mizo Students' Union... the government of Mizoram, without giving any reasons, has stopped the issuance of OBC certificates to Gorkhas when Mizoram attained statehood in 1987 causing big problems to the community. (3)

The Gorkhas, who are one of the largest minorities in the state for over a century lived in harmony with the other ethnic groups within the state, shares the joys and jublations of the

Peace Accord in the state. In that period of over twenty years (1966-1986) of insurgency that enveloped the state, the Gorkha community did suffer the same pain and angst as their Mizo brothers. Countless Gorkhas of Mizoram have helped and served in the army as well as civilians supported the causes of Pu. Laldenga and helped the MNF in different ways during and after the 1966 uprising in Mizoram. Some of the Gorkhas who contributed in the freedom struggle of Mizoram are as follows: Subedar Akal Singh Gurung, Man Bahadur Karki, Bal Bahadur Limbu, Prem Bahadur Tamang, Ex-Naik Bhim Singh Ale, Hav. Bir Bahadur Lohar , and many more. “Many other Gorkhas from all corners of Mizoram... also made some contribution. Some of them are still alive while others cannot be traced and many have died” (Sunar 45). Even though the Gorkhas are part of the state, the under current issues are different than how it appears at the surface. The less published works among the Gorkha writers somehow is the reason behind their suppressed nature over years. Freedom of speech and expression is thus a natural right, which a human being acquires on birth. It is therefore, a basic right, but in the context of the Gorkhas of Mizoram such expressions and opinions are limited, and have less access to remedies to tackle their problems, face discrimination, and have less power. Minorities therefore struggle to realise all types of human rights, whether civil or political, economic, social or culture, whether as individual or as groups. Mala Devi in her poem, “Hami, Gorkhali” (We, the Gorkhas) states that:

Yug yug dekhi janmabhumi bhani,
 Ladeka thiyo swatantrata sanggramma pani,
 Afnei deshma ramrajya hunchha ki bhani,
 Ustei chha hamro gati aja pani,
 Afnei deshma helako paatra bani.

(Decades and decades we exclaimed this is our land. We also fought inside the battlefield thinking this is our true place. Still we are in-between, even in our land we are looked down upon) (89). James Clifford in *Returns: Becoming Indigenous in the Twenty-First Century* says, “To deny human beings the sense of a homeland is to deny them a deep spot on earth to anchor their roots” (63). India, being a democratic nation, the constitution ensures justice, rights, social, economic, and political to all citizens. Such rights can be better exercised only by the use of freedom rather than by mere artificial insulation by the state. Today, the impacts of development, modernization, and globalisation on the Gorkha community have assumed great significance. Protection against effacement of identity is made possible more by an active assertion of their distinct characteristics through the use of freedom and various rights. All these situations have therefore made the Gorkha community more dynamic and burgeon in various spheres.

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CHAPTER 4

IMPACT OF HYBRIDIZATION

Modernity, with its agenda has brought about all kinds of changes to the community and its culture. It has broadened the outlook of individuals through education, who have started talking of rights and freedoms. Along with modernity comes globalisation which has wider implications on the life and culture of the Gorkhas. Thus, the impact of globalisation on the culture and identity of the Gorkhas is of great concern to the Gorkha writers.

In *The Gorkhas of Mizoram Volume-I*, it is seen that, right from the beginning the Gorkhas within the state in any kind of situation, topography and climate could adapt themselves easily and were given various rights by the British. They remained loyal to their roots while establishing a good bond of brotherhood with the other ethnic groups. “Capt. J. Shakespeare has recorded in his diary that ‘the hills were not a desirable place to be stationed for long’. But the Gorkhas felt at home right from the beginning as Col. Lewin hoped” (Sunar 15). The Gorkhas, even though they came from another place have the kind of attachment and love towards the state started right from the very beginning. The attachment hence brought them close with the other ethnic groups within the society, which resulted in the co-dependence and co-relations between them. To some degree, their relationship with other communities generated a hybrid form of nature which has changed the lifestyles of the Gorkhas in various fields.

The Gorkha community, despite the fact of being globalised and socially interrelated with other ethnic groups, remains relatively pure and rooted in their beliefs, traditions, language, and culture, although some changes can be seen through the years, whereby the Gorkha sensibility has been affected in one way or another. Through a period of contact and interaction, cultural hybridization has speeded up tremendously. First, due to modernisation,

every Gorkha household has gone through some changes in their everyday life, in terms of religion, marriage, organizations, and various lifestyles. Modernity and globalisation leads to changes and development in every community. Talking about modernization or being globalised, one can see a clear line of progression from the very first tools to the invention of the computer. The technological advancements have thus impacted the Gorkhas in such a way that it widened their own boundaries and integrated new thoughts and perspectives. Social media for example has transformed them by making them adopting different viewpoints, interests and norms. With the advent of social media, it has become easier to disseminate culture across the globe transforming the world into one global society. For example the adoption of western culture in terms of fashion, cuisine and lifestyles as well as cultures of other ethnic communities within the region have cultivated a distinctive Gorkha culture. It is therefore, the result of the emergence of technology which has broadened the views and ideas, not only of the Gorkhas but every community throughout the globe. However, technological development is not driven to maximize all of society's goals, although it has improved the lifestyles of mankind in some spheres. It is true to some extent that hybridization among different cultures has brought in different thought process and ideologies. The Gorkhas in that manner have learnt to exist within the setting created by such processes. Opportunities for Gorkhas are therefore increased by such hybridization which gives the Gorkhas the ability to communicate across boundaries and participate in a global structure.

The Gorkhas have transformed their livelihood from food gathering and settled plough cultivation to various professions like, teaching, academics and even politics. Globalisation has therefore improved the mode of life in every community by bringing every individual closer to one another via electronic media like radios, televisions, and other social media which in turn impacted and modified the individual's identity. It has in some point

changed the ethnic composition, ethnic balance and power structure of the Gorkhas on the one hand, while on the other, one can see modernity within the Gorkha community in spheres of education, beliefs system and technological advancement. Through the transmission of ideas and values around the society, all groups in society extend and intensify their social relations. Such changes within the Gorkha community can be said to be due to the interrelation between other ethnic groups. The negotiation of cultural identity involves the continual interface and exchange of cultural performances that in turn produce a mutual and mutable recognition of cultural difference. The contemporary Gorkhas somehow maintain some elements of their traditional customs and practices, but due to the social correlation among their Mizo brethren and other ethnic groups, the interplay between cultures gives rise to a hybridized identity. Hybridization has become one way to re-create and re-vision a local community, while incorporating elements of outside groups, such as the global culture.

The Gorkhas have been developing and adopting hybrid identities since colonialism, which in turn impacted them in various domains. It has brought in different ideologies, and thought process amongst the Gorkhas of different generations. Adopting popular culture in spheres of language, fashion, cuisine, music or lifestyles is in a sense, an important contributor to the formation and growth of a healthy society, when an expression of a society is shared. It also gives an individual a sense of shared identity, meaning and purpose that transcends differences in geography, race, ethnicity, religion or politics. Through surveys within two districts such as Aizawl district and Kolasib district, it became clear that, differences in perspectives among the older generations and the present generations do bring about clashes in the Gorkha, as well as other communities. In some cases, the views and perspectives of the older generations, those with higher and lower educational qualifications do clash. Some view this hybridization as a mark of society's progress while others as cultural deterioration. Most of the younger generations of every community other than the

Gorkhas are exposed to the vision of the new millennium which has opened up its doors to the West and other regions of the globe. L. B. Chhetri states that due to modernization and intermingling with the other ethnic groups “our way of dressing and maintaining our customs nowadays is changed” (33). For instance, the traditional dress code of the Gorkhas has been replaced by western fashion, though they still practise wearing them occasionally. Hence, the western culture is cultivating a distinctive fashion not only in the Gorkha community but in every community. Now, people like to dress in a style which is accepted globally and has become an aspect of one’s identity and personality. The nature of the Gorkha lifestyles is however, constantly changing. They are indeed focusing on newness, or illusion, which can be defined as a commentary on the excess of postmodern culture.

As the process of globalisation in a society occurred, hybridization in the sphere of marriage too, took place. Marriage is a socially recognized union between spouses which is viewed as having a key role to the preservation of morals and civilization. Marriage among different ethnic groups in any society is often seen as a social taboo while there have been structural changes in institutions like marriage, family and caste, creating new forms of relations in social life, and religion nowadays. In the Gorkha community within the state, such change regarding marriage is not common, but a small amount of such cases can be seen where intermarriage between Gorkha and other communities have taken place. In a way, it has been impossible to remain pure and rooted within a society. Even though some changes occur now and then, it would not be a mistake to say that regarding marriage, the Gorkhas remain relatively pure and continue to marry within their community. Such decisions and unshakeable views make the Gorkhas who they actually are. After all, it is the institutions, beliefs, and traditions which make a person who he/she really is.

Hybridization, as a concept has various impacts and effects which brought about huge changes in the society. Acquiring new cultural forms and practices is by no means a new

development, in fact, every cultural form or experience is hybrid since people have interacted and cultural forms have become hybridized all along. Another example is the field of music. It is sometimes termed as the driving force of every society. In a way or another, music has constantly changed and focused the Gorkhas' perspectives in a wider sense. A social activist and recipient of several national awards, and the first recipient of an International Award amongst the Gorkhas of Mizoram, Dr. Gunu Gharti has been called "the Idol among the Gorkhas" (Ramdinmawia 2017). In an article, "Social activist Dr. Gunu Gharti: The 'Idol' of Mizoram Gorkhas," James Ramdinmawia wrote,

Dr. Gharti has helped in cementing and promoting brotherhood among the Mizos and Gorkhalis and that he has made Mizoram proud through his contribution in music. He founded the 'Bairagi Sangeet Parivaar' on 26th July 1988... made the first ever Hindi music video album 'Lovely Mizoram' which would showcase Mizoram, its people and its natural beauty not only to the other parts of India but to the entire world. Gharti said that he hoped that the album will help strengthen the relationship between the Mizos and the Gorkhalis besides bringing different communities closer. (Ramdinmawia 2017)

Along with modernity comes globalisation which has wider implications on the life and culture of the Gorkhas. In this manner, the impacts of globalisation in sphere of music have changed the whole perspectives of the Gorkha community of Mizoram. Dr. Gunu Gharti in one of his poem, "Paschataap" writes:

Kavita haina euta ghatna bhanchhu

Mero jeewanko thulo bhul

Sochera ma aaja rudaichhu

Dherai padhena kina skul...

Angrezima maatra u bolna thalio

Herdai thiye chheu-chheuma basekaharule

Angrezima uttar dinasakina

Khissikka haasi herna thaale.

(Not a poem, I would say, an incident, or the biggest mistake of my life. I am weeping today. Why I did not study much. They only prefer English and teased me as I could not answer in English. Some were even laughing at me) (46). From these lines it is seen that an individual is regretful of not knowing English more fluently and wonders why he/she did not study properly in his/her school days. Due to that, a feeling of insecurity and alienation can be seen and the privileged position of the English language among them is perceptible. Towards the end of the poem, a change in the perspective of the individual is highlighted, and says:

Hami ho yaadi bharatiya

Hindima bole ramro hunchha

Hami hunchho yodeshko

Balla po yo desh hamro hunchha.

(If we are Indian, speaking in Hindi will be better. If we are of this country, then only, it will be our country) (46). A post-colonial perspective through the change in views and ideas can be seen at the end of the poem. This poem shows Dr. Gunu Gharti as a committed poet or writer who advocates for the fundamental values for the improvement of human life and to know the importance of one's own nation and language through an aesthetic forum in his writings and works. The Gorkhas are therefore transcending their views and ideas with the advent of popular culture, in terms of music, technological advancement and other lifestyles. Another example which can be traced back is the introduction of the singing competition

broadcasted by every channel of Mizoram, titled 'The Hunt', in which the Mizos as well as other ethnic groups participated. Gorkha singers like Tini Mohini Thapa, Ravi Tamang, Sudan Thapa and others from Mizoram were seen performing Mizo songs as well. The reality show itself opened up mutual understandings and widen the boundaries between the Gorkhas and Mizos. The Gorkhas therefore maintain the integrity of their own culture while learning to exist within the setting created by the others. In that manner, those who occupy hybrid spaces benefit from having an understanding of both local knowledge and global cosmopolitanism. In his book entitled *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* Bhikhu Parekh writes, "a society's culture is closely tied up with its economic, political, and other institutions. No society first develops culture and then these institutions or vice versa. They are all equally vital to its survival, emerge and develop together" (151).

Virtual localities have replaced the social localities and influencing social, cultural as well as political life. If change would benefit the life of a community without threatening the society as a whole, it may be gradually adopted into their life. As such the Gorkhas are also experiencing and accepting various changes within their community. In an essay, "Trends of Urbanisation in Mizoram: Its Impacts", B. I. Laskar highlights:

Lushai Hills, the erstwhile district of Assam after being bestowed union territory status as Mizoram in 1972 and statehood in 1987, has been experiencing rapid socio-economic growth... Consequently behavioural and structural changes took place which has been manifested in the fast changing consumption pattern, social values and decreasing importance of traditional institution of the state. (256)

Even after such hybridization, a consciousness of traditional Gorkha culture is still encouraged through various organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations who

promote Gorkha culture through dance, song, and many other activities. The Khasi community, like the Gorkhas of Mizoram are also minority groups within Mizoram, who are an indigenous tribe. Majority of them live in the state of Meghalaya in the North-Eastern part of India, with a significant population in the border areas of the neighbouring state of Assam, and in certain parts of Bangladesh and Mizoram. The Khasi community living in Vairengte, Venghlun area of Mizoram, whose population is about eighty to ninety houses, intermingle with their other ethnic neighbours. In an interview with one of the senior committee members of the Khasi Welfare, Romila Sutong, due to the co-dependence and interactions with their Mizo and Gorkha brothers, “a lot of changes can be seen in their Khasi lifestyles” (21 April 2017). Like the Gorkhas, the pattern in which their organization i.e. Khasi Welfare was established in the year 2000. The aims and motives of their welfare or associations are similar with other ethnic groups within Mizoram. She further said, due to various changes in their day to day life, “most Khasi households in Vairengte changed their religion from Hinduism to Christianity, while some households still continue their previous religious beliefs i.e. Hinduism” (21 April 2017). From various interviews with other Khasi residing in Vairengte, it becomes clear that the reason behind their settlement is mainly regarding their jobs and career, and a shift in their belief system occurred as a result of being hybridized with their Mizo brethren, and being a micro-minority within the state. “We were Hindu when we were in Cachar and Shillong around the 1930’s. Even my parents were married according to Hindu customs”, said Romila Sutong (21 April 2017). Like the Khasis in Mizoram, the Gorkhas, being rooted in their culture somehow changed in the course of time. Such changes have not erased the Gorkha identity, but it has bridged the gap between them and other ethnic groups.

From the beginning, while a majority of Gorkhas practised Hinduism and Buddhism, in the course of time a small amount of them followed Christianity. Only a small number of Gorkhas can be seen to be converted into other religions while most of them are immigrants

from Nepal, Darjeeling, Sikkim, Assam and the other neighbouring states who have retained their traditional religions. Throughout the years, a shift in various modes of lifestyle can be seen- a change in one's beliefs, language, and so on. Mr. K. K. Pradhan, an immigrant from Nepal in an interview says that in order to convert from Hinduism to Christianity, "many loans and jobs are offered to us by the native Mizos" (15 Sept. 2016). It seems apparent that quite a lot of conversions took place due to force and as well as other dubious methods while some conversions occurred out of their own choice. Contrary to that, in an interview with Mr. Bishnu Kumar Subba, one of the Gorkha writers and former President of Mizoram Gorkha Youth Association, Zotlang, Aizawl and Vairengte, he talks about the rooted identity of the Gorkhas over a period of time. He says:

the Gorkhas before and after coming to the North-East India along with the British were resolute in their culture, beliefs, language, and tradition, which makes the British more confident towards their rooted determination. In order not to lose them, the British permitted to open Mission School (now Gorkha High School, Khatla) for the upliftment of the Gorkha language, culture, and traditions. Since then, they continue to stay within the region peacefully reviving their old beliefs, traditions and language. (23 April 2017)

Hence over a period of time, the conversion of religion by some immigrants from Nepal as well as the Gorkhas settled in Mizoram has caused imbalance in the social structure of the Gorkha household, even though the Gorkha organizations welcome them as their own people. As heard from some interviews, the Gorkha Christians are not discriminated or looked down within the Gorkha community even if their religious beliefs are different. In today's world, where electronic media can shape intellectual worldviews, transformations and changes in one's belief can occur too. One of the aims and objectives of the Gorkha association is to uplift one's traditions and moral code, in which opinions regarding new ideas are respected.

In an interview with Mr. I. K Subba, he says if any household or an individual converts to another religion, “they are not totally boycotted from the Gorkha community, but are still welcome in every organisational work. They are even elected as committee members in different programmes in every locality within the state” (21 March 2017). The Gorkha associations whose views are liberal treat every individual equally without any discrimination. A freedom of choice and rights are hence given to every individual within the community.

Today, man lives with cultural values that promote freedom. Few people would even make an attempt to argue against freedom as being inherently to be desired. It can also be said that freedom becomes an issue in society only when it is threatened or lost. ‘Man was born free yet everywhere is in chains’, Rousseau famously proclaimed. It may be one of the most significant in history, for in a sense it open up the whole modern debate about freedom. Thus a change in a community occurs when an individual interrelate and share their views and ideas with the others. Mr. Bishnu Kumar Subba, in an interview says:

A change can be inevitable or paradoxical it depends on the will and the actions of ordinary individuals. Due to the close inter and trans-cultural communication with other ethnic groups within the state, hybridity occupies a central place and thus the impact of it is clear that a shift in one’s ideas and beliefs is possible in a global world. The Gorkha identity is necessarily impacted and modified by such interactions with and exposure to other cultures. (23 April 2017)

The contemporary Gorkha identity somehow maintains various elements of its traditional customs and practices, but this interplay between cultures also gives rise to a hybridized identity. A feeling of liminality or being an alien in the state still can be heard from many senior citizens through the interviews, while education and globalisation have changed many

ideas among the Gorkhas too. Articles and journals regarding their love, oneness and change in their perspectives can be seen through various Gorkha writers. The contemporary identity of the Gorkhas of Mizoram, resulting from a certain level of hybridization, is protested against and highlighted by some writers through poems, essays, and articles. Such tensions and exposure to other cultures result in a different Gorkha sensibility, and in some cases, a crisis of sorts. As identity centres around traditions, values, and customs which provide a foundational structure and building material, considerable controversy and debate among some Gorkha writers is perhaps not surprising and an immense enthusiasm and patriotism can be heard and seen in some of their writings. A plausibility of cultural loss and fear can be observed by various Gorkha writers in their works. Mr. Prakash Thapa, a senior social Gorkha activist, in an article, 'Samaaj Prati Hamro Dayitwa' writes:

Society is like a body, in which we are its part... Men have responsibilities towards society just as every part of the body has towards the body. In case, if any of the body parts malfunction it can cause serious problems to the body to work... Any individual who calls himself a Gorkha should respect and work hard for his/her society. As the success of the society therefore is the success of himself and his identity. (32)

An impact of hybridization among the Gorkhas has been an outcry mainly in a societal level, in which social workers lament for a culture that is feared to be moribund, prompted by the sea of change: not just in religious institutions, political institutions, social gatherings, but also in the household economy, and in the very heart of the family. For example: the simplest things, whether the food on the shelves of supermarkets in town or the satellite dishes that put one in internet contact with the rest of the world seem to carry the seeds of radical cultural change. Thus the carriers of change are everywhere. An anxiety regarding shifting to or mixing with other ethnic groups can be seen through some works of Gorkha writers. Such apprehensions are not unfounded since, for instance, every ten out of eight

persons of the Gorkhas of Mizoram can speak fluent Mizo and Hindi, a percentage higher than any other ethnic group within the society. Purna Prasad in an article, “History of Mizoram Nepali Schools”, states that one must “value and praise one’s own culture and language. In order to know who we are and what our identity is, every child should learn his/her own mother-tongue only, through sending them in Gorkha schools and institutions” (19). A change in a community itself is not so much the problem, only if it may lead to the death of the culture. In the minds of many, as well as among the older Gorkha generation, cultural extinction can occur either through the cumulative effect of culture or through the debilitating effect key changes may have upon the basic institutions of their society. Either way, the eventual outcome of intensive cultural change could be the demise of the culture. As a result, the intercultural exchanges and hybridization with other ethnic groups have changed the sensibility of the Gorkhas in contemporary times.

Cultural hybridization, a universal process, has created new ideas and adopted traits from foreign cultures. The Gorkhas, despite being in contact with different cultures within the state give importance to their language, i.e Nepali. Various Gorkha writers have highlighted the importance of one’s language; other than that Shri C. Kamlova, one of the National Awardees in Excellent Hindi Service Award has also written various articles in the Nepali language, in which he talks about the goodness of the Gorkhas, who are strong and pure in their beliefs, customs, language and culture. Language therefore impacts the daily lives of members of any race, creed, and region of the world. It helps express the feelings, desires, and queries to the world around. In the evolution of civilization and human culture, language has played a pivotal role. Not only is it a means of communicating thoughts and ideas, but it forges economic relations, cultural ties, and friendships. In short, language helps to maintain feelings of cultural kinship. Through cultural hybridization, language too can be hybridized in such a way that the pronunciation and the form of writing can be changed too. For example:

when one ethnic group imitates or speaks any foreign language often, the tendency to lose their pure form of language becomes high. When surveying most of the localities of the Gorkhas of Mizoram, one can find them fluent in their mother-tongue as well as the native's language, i.e Mizo. "The Gorkhas residing in Mizoram speak more fluent Nepali than any other Gorkhas residing in India, the language spoken as well as the written form i.e. the Devanagari script is pure and uniform in composition", says Mr. Bishnu Kumar Subba in an interview (23 April 2017). It is therefore to be noted that, as a reference, the accent of the Gorkhas of Cachar seems to be mixed with the Bangla accent, which makes it difficult to understand. In case of the Gorkhas of Mizoram, till today, language is preserved and used appropriately, for which credit largely goes to social institutions like, the Gorkha schools, temples, and various other social organizations which uplift and edify the importance. However a small group of Gorkha households living in the outskirts and outlying districts where social institutions like, temples or community welfare are absent cannot speak fluent Nepali language and even are culturally innocent. In such cases, language becomes despoiled, words become empty shells deprived of any definite meaning. Such changes might lead to cultural loss, and therefore impacts identity. The Gorkhas living in Sairang, Bairabi, Thenzawl, Khawzawl, and others "cannot be traced... Many have died heirless and heirs of others have become Mizos" (Sunar 100). It is, however, true that the individual cannot be seen in isolation. But the maximum amount of intermingling with other culture or society might lead to loss of one's identity. While on the other hand, cultural diffusion which is implicit in the globalizing process can lead to a more mature cross-cultural understanding.

One may often feel tempted to generate stereotypes about other cultures, and stereotypes have by no means elevated one's conscience. Globalization succeeds in fighting these stereotypes through more sustained interaction among cultures. It is likely to consolidate the ethos of true inter-culturalism. A close look at the emerging popular culture-

television serials, dress pattern, music and others does indicate the process of widespread cultural diffusion and hybridity. In fact, in these cultural products one can see how territorial boundaries become obsolete, and a new notion of aesthetics emerges. There is no denying the fact that, this entire process has created immense enthusiasm, particularly among the younger generation. The success stories of television programmes like American Idol and Indian Idol suggest how young talents are overcoming all barriers, and making their presence felt in the domain of popular culture. Everywhere around us we are noticing tremendous enthusiasm with hybridity. Furthermore, it technologizes every sphere of cultural creation.

It is true that, globalisation has a big role to play in every sphere of life. It has resulted in a major transformation of the lifestyle and living standard of people globally. Mark J. Smith in his book, *Culture: Reinventing the Social Sciences* writes that social identities are “fluid and open to continual transformation and they are never complete but unfinished business” (79-80). Social change, as a field of enquiry has attracted attention among various thinkers in various fields of education. It may be understood as a universal phenomenon as there is no society whether primitive or modern that remains unaffected by the process of change. Such changes usually took place when it is viewed as socially desirable and useful. All changes might not be equally important, while some changes are introduced as they are considered necessary for human survival. Bhikhu Parekh in an essay “Barry and the Dangers of Liberalism” says, “Cultures do change, but over a long period of time, and in the meantime they retain a measure of coherence, continuity and identity... [Culture] shapes its members, structures their forms of thought and views of the world, organizes their lives, provides a system of meaning” (140).

Culture is an important explanatory concept to understand and study society or community. It is defined by the fact that it is not biologically given but is constituted by social action. Transmitted through individuals and collectives, it takes shape from the social

nature of human development. One's existence in the world relies on the existence of other beings to a far greater extent than other animals, which are largely self-sufficient. To perceive the world, it is necessary to engage with it. To cope with the resultant conflict of interests, one needs to negotiate one's relations with others. Thus culture becomes what emerges from such negotiation, mediating one's social reality and being an essential feature by which one established one's own sense of identity. In the words of Ross Abbinnett, culture is "sustained through a process of 'gathering', of giving itself a 'presence', which calls together its internal differentiations and constitutes a boundary between itself and its 'outside'" (129).

Humans are largely defined by exceptions of culture within societies. In particular, culture is shaped by the form of whatever we create in the course of our social lives to serve or respond to the purposes of social communication. For example, the way we build our houses, the way we eat our food, the way we establish work patterns, practice religion or create art are all elements of culture. Almost all human activity serves culture in one way or another and results in the production of cultural evidence. Hence, everything we construct is a cultural artefact, marked with significance. William Blake in an essay "Culture and the Status of Reality" says, "Culture is thus a web of significances made up from symbols. The meaning of a symbol is therefore not an object, having no existence in itself. It only exists in relation to other symbols. It is a construction that can only be understood through its use, and it is from this that social and cultural formations take their characteristic pattern" (148).

Socialization is a lifelong process for individuals in any given society. Human society therefore perpetuates itself through acculturation or the process of cultural borrowing. And it is through the process of socialization that the ongoing culture is maintained and thereby the existence of society is stabilised. Societies are not naturally destined to survive rather they survive only if this code is inculcated in each individual. As such, through intermingling with other ethnic groups and the changes brought about by globalisation, the Gorkha identity has

been shaped. Through this, both communities bridged the gaps between them. Globalisation itself has introduced various changes, which in turn cause the disappearance of cultural traits, values, beliefs, and institutions, perhaps not wholly, but in some way or another, a change can be seen. Hence, it creates socialization within a society by promoting attachment and participation among the individuals.

Homi Bhabha raised a critical debate on third space in this age of globalisation, where inter and trans-cultural communication has become a norm rather than an exception. As Bhabha's theory of cultural difference provides a conceptual vocabulary of hybridity and third space, he creates a series of concepts that work to undermine the simple polarization of the world into self and other. His writing emphasizes the hybridity of cultures, which on one level simply refers to the fact that cultures are not discrete phenomena, instead, they are always in contact with one another, and this contact leads to cultural mixedness. In *Nation and Narration* (1990) he writes, "... cultural difference articulates the difference between representations of social life without surmounting the space of incommensurable meanings and judgements that are produced within the process of trans-cultural negotiation" (312). Hybridization, according to Bhabha, refers to the state of being at the border of two cultures, marked by the sense of double consciousness and in-betweenness. Hybridity therefore is a subversion of single, unified, pursuit of notions of identity, in favour of multiple cultural binarism of 'us/them'. It is thus celebrated and privileged as a kind of superior and cultural intelligence owing to the advantage of inbetweenness. It is the straddling of two cultures and the consequent ability to negotiate the difference. This is particularly so in Bhabha's discussion of cultural hybridity. Accordingly, the Gorkhas of Mizoram along with other ethnic groups even after various differences in their everyday life co-operate and depend on each other which affect the Gorkha image. By blending various elements through the process of hybridization, any culture can change in a way or other. Such is the case with the Gorkhas

when coming to terms with the globalised culture. Hybridization among the Gorkhas and the Mizos not only impacted the Gorkhas only but the Mizos too have been impacted by such cultural hybridization. Both communities therefore encounter such transformations, in terms of lifestyles, cuisine, language and others. Bethan Benwell and Elizabeth Stokoe in their book *Discourse and Identity* writes that identity “arises through participation in social life. An individual’s self-consciousness never exists in isolation... it always exists in relationship to an ‘other’ or ‘others’ who serve to validate its existence” (24). The introduction of new values, equality, individualism, and justice assumed great importance. However, in spite of a constant change in some spheres, the social structure of the Gorkhas remained static and quite unchanged. It is clear that the efforts towards revitalising and maintaining the community through various organisations have made the Gorkha identity relatively stable.

Human beings were born within and profoundly shaped by their cultural communities and different cultures differently reconstituted the shared human nature who were at once both similar and different. In consequence, it creates socialization within a society by promoting attachment and participation among the individuals. The acceptance of scientific innovations heightened the aspirations for raising the standard of living and providing material welfare for the people.

In *The Location of Culture* Bhabha says, the notion that any culture or identity is pure or essential is disputable. As such, one must be aware of the dangers of fixity and fetishism of identities since, “all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity” (211). The Gorkhas after coming in contact and sharing ideas with the British and other ethnic groups within the state, have been affected in various ways. On that account, no culture remains pure after an encounter with one another. A change and shift in their views and lifestyle inculcate automatically, and after coming in terms with the issue of being generalised in some way or the other by the British as well as other ethnic groups, the Gorkhas do have gain knowledge

through education. However this does not mean that the Gorkhas now have a completely different culture. Instead, to understand the culture of the Gorkhas, one must avoid looking in terms of polar opposites and instead think in terms of hybridity. Society as a whole is to be understood not by just one mode of production but by an articulation of several.

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CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Postcolonialism signifies an attempt by the formerly colonized to re-evaluate, re-discover, and re-construct their own cultures. It is also an act of rethinking the history of the world against the inadequacy of the terms and conceptual frames invented by the West. On that account, the need for protecting one's identity became an abiding concern of various groups of citizens in every region of the world and for the North-East India, after Independence, the importance of it became a pivotal concern.

North-East India is socio-politically important for its strategic geographical position as well as its cultural background which has direct affinity with the social and cultural life of the neighbouring regions across the international border. Although the political and international boundary divides these societies, there remains continuity of waves of social and cultural relations beyond the nation. Cultural diversity is the unique feature of the North-East, exhibited by a large number of ethnic communities. Most of the identities in India's North-East assume a space of difference for realization of their own aspirations, cultural, and political, with all other economic and social ramifications. Hence the phenomenal rise and growth of various identities in North-East India presents a picture of the possibilities of multiple emergences of identities with many distinct claims. Prasenjit Biswas and Chandan Suklabaidya in their book *Ethnic Life-Worlds in North-East India* write, "In the context of North-East India, it is an imperative to trace the construction of identities to map out the process of 'politics of culture' and 'cultural politics'. 'Identities' were constructed by the colonizers as 'subjects' of ethnographic disciplines and later brought under their rule as a set of (dis)obedient subjects" (52).

Indra Bahadur Rai says India is the home of many nations, and the Gorkhas are “ethnically and linguistically a distinctive community of people who are of Nepali origin and are Indian citizens” (149). It is historically clear that the Gorkhas of Mizoram initially came from Nepal and later from other parts of India like Darjeeling, and Sikkim. The reasons behind their movements have been varied in nature from time to time. As a concept, migration is applicable to various forms of human movement which may be voluntary or forced, brought about either by socio-political or ecological reasons. It is therefore presumed that the main reason for their coming to the North-East states of India was the allurements of military adventure. The British therefore did everything to lure the Gorkhas to new and pioneering areas of development in the region. Lionel Caplan writes, “Enloe has called a ‘Gorkha Syndrome’... the perfect martial race is an ethnic group that produces men who are both martial and loyal” (587). The history of the development of Gorkha ranks in the Indian army is the story of the avowed recognition of their worth as soldiers and of the fulfilment of the hopes which lay behind their first enlistment. The Gorkhas remained a special preserve of the British during their reign and were officered exclusively by high grade British officers.

Subsequently, the Gorkhas living in these areas became Indian by virtue of annexation of their lands but an under-current political issues have deteriorated their rights and freedom in various fields. Though different organizations and associations in both the Gorkha and Mizo communities some way or the other work in the same principle, there is always a difference in terms of being the native and being a minority. At many points, the fear of being assimilated by one another is a pivotal issue among any community, and so also with the Mizos and Gorkhas too. In today’s rapidly changing world, people from rich nations and poor nations worry about their traditional culture or identity. Everywhere one can find signs of changes either positive change or negative change, such changes are therefore due to globalisation which leads to modernization. In terms of Mizoram, the Gorkhas as well as

other ethnic groups of the regions are marginalised and politically dominated by the government as well as the natives. One of the examples is the delay of the Gorkha status as Other Backward Classes (OBC) opposed by some organisations within the state. The Gorkhas of Mizoram, mainly the permanent settlers since the British rule, have all along been demanding OBC status so they can avail reservations in jobs and other sectors in the state. However, some of the Mizo association's stance remains unchanged, due to the fear of demographic invasion. Hence, such opposition of a minority rights have impacted in a slow development process, in terms of economic, education and various other fields, causing the state as well as the nation backward. Such is the under-current issues which are still suppressed and neglected.

The indigenous Gorkhas were not immigrants who came to India looking for greener pastures as most people think them to be. Particularly with reference to the North-East part of India, much of the immigration was due to political, social, as well as economic history of the region. Various changes and corresponding reshuffling boundaries forced the Gorkhas to be ruled by different authorities at different times or at the same time by different authorities at different places. It is the different Gorkha Organizations, Gorkha schools, temples and cemetery, which probe into the question of what comprises Gorkha identity. Schools, on that account play an important role in developing important social skills. For the Gorkhas, the urge to build an institution to impart education has become the main goal among some educated scholars and social organizations. Religion, an institutionalized system of beliefs, symbols and value has a social aspect and social role to play in every community. It has been a powerful agency in society and performs many important social functions. Being the backbone of every society, in the history of the Gorkhas religion plays a pivotal role. Various institutions, organizations, and programmes of the Gorkhas have promoted Gorkha culture in terms of education, government recruitment, sports, music, and other areas. To some degree,

under these institutions some aspects of the cultural and social identity of the Gorkhas of Mizoram have evolved. Through the social customs, which are based on very strong ethical principles of self-help and co-operation of one with another, the identity of the Gorkha community is based on this code of life. Identity, on that account is not the result of a single process. Numerous internal and external factors shape its character depending upon time and space. Naturally it assumes a design of complex process. While primordial attributes such as race, language, religion, and cultural symbols provide institutional elements, the objective factors like perception of the concerned communities is articulated to give a shape to the identity. Historical experiences and structural changes in the inter group relationship determine and lead to crystallization of identity. As a result of this process no universal pattern is witnessed in the formation of identity. That being the case, it is not difficult to suggest that identity formation is a historical processes, its character is determined by time and place.

There is indeed a spirit of self-sacrifice and selflessness that has been infused in the minds of the Gorkhas through the intermingling and trans-cultural communication with the other ethnic groups. Also, hybridity occupied a central place due to the exposure and interactions with other cultures. As an intermediary between the state and the people, various Gorkha Organizations are poised to bridge the gap between the people, the state, as well as with other ethnic groups. They also influence the decision-making authorities to influence their policies, programmes, orientations, and attitudes. These changes brought by the establishment of various organisations and the intermingling with other ethnic groups have shaped the Gorkhas in different spheres. The establishment of these organizations have proved to be a boon for the community as a whole. In an essay entitled, "Equality in a Multicultural Society", Bhikhu Parekh writes, "Human beings are at once both natural and cultural beings, sharing a common human identity but in a culturally mediated manner. They

are similar and different, their similarities and differences do not passively coexist but interpenetrate, and neither is ontologically prior or morally more important” (239).

Culture, a unique human reality is manifested in the technology, mental, moral, social, aesthetic, and spiritual achievements of humankind. It gives meaning to one’s relationship with the other as it also forms one’s subjective identity. Culture, therefore, enters into the processes of social change in many forms and at various levels. For the Gorkhas, it is their culture which binds them together as a group, a culture which is manifested through various activities, patterns of behaviour, habits, world views, language, and value system. It is culture which allows man to adapt himself to his natural setting which is manifested in institutions, thought patterns, and material objects. It should be borne in mind that people’s identities are not determined solely by their daily practices and by the identity politics of different groups and institutions. These determining factors belong to the conditions of identities, but people’s identities are also shaped by economic, social and, political structures, which are largely independent of individuals and which cannot be entirely controlled by means of consciously practised identity politics.

Issues of collective identity today do seem to take on a special character, when more and more of us live in a generalized condition of homelessness. Migrants, refugees, stateless, and displaced peoples are perhaps the first to live out these realities in their most complete form, but the problem is more general. In a diasporic world where trans-national cultures flow, and homeland are bewildered, a thousand similar cultural dreams are played out in urban and rural settings all across the globe; the Gorkhas of Mizoram in this context experienced a natural and essential connection between the place and their social identity. Along with the idioms of friendship, ethnicity, and faith, place or community is one way of talking about the everyday reality that the human world is, collectively, more than the sum of its individual parts. Such a community is a powerful everyday notion in terms of which

people organise their lives and understand the place and settlements in which they live and the quality of their relationships. In consequence, it expresses a fundamental set of human needs. The Gorkhas, to some degree fit into that kind of space, where the inter-relationship and brotherhood between them with the other ethnic groups exists. Karl Marx in an essay entitled, “The Priority of Society” writes, “Human beings are essentially producers who must work in and on their natural environment in order to survive... People are social animals and societies cannot be understood simply as an aggregate of individuals. Membership in a society means that individuals’ characters are shaped and moulded by its culture” (45).

Stereotypes, which are conventional representations or standardised images or conceptions, in particular, play an important part in media’s role as an agent of socialisation. Meaning that, the more time viewers spend on television, the more likely their conceptions about the world and its people will reflect what they see there. “Non-recognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being” says Charles Taylor in *Multiculturalism: Examining The Politics of Recognition* (25). To take a cue from Bhabha this minoritized indigenous or migrant culture is defined by post imperial and western national culture as behind or belated in time, still trying to catch up and conform itself with the progress of the dominant culture. For Bhabha, the colonial discourse is a form of discourse crucial to the binding of a range of differences and discriminations. Stereotypes are widely accepted, culturally shared beliefs describing personal traits and characteristics of groups of individuals. They are descriptive in nature and can be either positively or negatively valence. Much of prior research on racial media stereotypes, and colonial domination has focussed the Gorkhas on negative stereotypes, which therefore fails to comprehensively bring out the true essence of the Gorkha identity. For such reasons, the identity of the Gorkhas had stabilised the social world

for so long and is still continuously reproduced through a discursive practice. Stereotypes, as Martin J. Gannon puts it:

There is some confusion surrounding the definition of a stereotype, but at a minimum, it represents a distorted view or mental picture of groups and their supposed characteristics, on the basis of which we tend to evaluate individuals from each group. Stereotypes can be erroneous and can lead to unwarranted conclusions, particularly if no exceptions are allowed. (19)

While the apprehension of minority groups about loss of their cultural identity is usually fuelled by the concept of hegemony of the dominant culture- which at times questions the so called privileges and rights of the minority and attempt to impose its own religious or cultural values on the whole society. This kind of cultural deprivation also manifests in the policies of modern states which equate the state with the nation. And in some cases, states even refuse to recognize the limited traditional rights of minorities to religion, language, and culture. This not only affects the interethnic relationship but in fact polarises the religious or ethnic minority against the dominant group accusing them of practising cultural as well as economic and political deprivation.

The Gorkhas identified, as a legendary have inspired a considerable corpus literature about their character, quality, and exploits under the British command. The relation between the British and Gorkhas, from the beginning exhibited the natural devotion of the men of both races for each other. But this connection is represented in two somewhat different ways. On the one hand, the Gorkhas are portrayed as an ethnic category whose natural qualities render them dependent on, and hence inferior to their western officers. On the other hand, they are seen as endowed with the essential characteristics of those very officers. That aspect of the discourse which depicts the Gorkha as simple, brave, and loyal, accords with the hierarchical

relations existing between them and their British officers. B.B Kumar writes, “The Britishers sowed the seeds of separateness and secessionism in the region...The colonial theories/myths- the myth of race, core-fringe conflict, isolation- colonial misinterpretation of history and culture further deepened the impact (18). Accordingly, it depicts the hierarchical gulf separating superiors from subordinates between the Gorkhas and the British. Even so, it reveals the inequalities and domination. Bhabha’s approach have highlights the way colonialism has been much more than the simple domination of one group by another but his point is that one need a postcolonial perspective on modernity, which have therefore uncover the repressed colonial origins.

In consequence, the usage of terms like ‘bahadur’ has always been highly resented by the Gorkha community. Some Gorkha scholars and writers of Mizoram have raised questions on a number of occasions that the media has been highly insensitive in coining the term, as it seeks to give an expression that the entire community seems to comprise of chowkidaars, guards or gatekeepers. Television and media provides not only specific responses but the strategies and rules viewers may apply to copy or judge what they observe. It is clear that the Gorkha identity can neither be confined nor limited to such stereotypes. Bhabha’s works develop challenging concepts like hybridity, stereotypes and the concept of the Other, which describes ways in which colonised peoples have resisted the power of the colonizer- a power that is never as secure as it seems to be. This emphasis illuminates our present situation, in a world marked by a paradoxical combination of violently proclaimed cultural difference and the complexly interconnected networks of globalisation. Instead of seeing colonialism as something locked in the past, Bhabha shows how its histories and cultures constantly intrude on the present. He writes:

The borderline work of culture demands an encounter with ‘newness’ that is not part of the continuum of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act

of cultural translation. Such art does not merely recall the past as social cause or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent ‘in-between’ space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. The ‘past-present’ becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia, of living. (10)

Differing from other postcolonial critics, Bhabha shifts focus from the colonized/colonizer confrontation to a third space beyond the binary structure, and says to dwell in a “beyond” that is neither the indigenous past nor the colonized present. From various interviews and meetings with the Gorkhas within the state, some members are more vulnerable to its negative consequences than others. Stereotypes, to a degree can lead to self handicapping strategies and reduced sense of belonging upon the stereotyped domain. There is a strong tendency to form a negative impression based on the primary effect. Moreover people tend to believe assertions made in the media. From time to time, the media in India projected not only the Gorkhas of Mizoram but the Gorkhas as a whole, in a way that is undesirable to the Gorkha themselves. Media as a system of propaganda has a tremendous impact. Such an impact is often subtle and oblique but this very unobtrusiveness transforms the media into a powerful agent of domination and control.

Many literary writers have taken an interest in expressing hybrid cultural identities and using hybrid cultural forms, and their writings undermine any claims to pure or authentic cultural identities or forms. But Bhabha insists less on hybridity than on hybridization; in other words, he insists on hybridity’s ongoing process. In fact, for him there are no cultures that come together leading to hybrid forms; instead, cultures are the consequences of attempts to still the flux of cultural hybridities. Contemporary culture is therefore hybrid, just like colonial culture. The idea of hybridity usefully characterizes the mechanisms of the colonial psychic economy. In the same way as the structures of colonial identity can also be found in contemporary cultures, as cultures are found to be retrospective constructions to Bhabha, they

are, so to say, consequences of historical processes and he contend that hybridization is not just everyday banality.

To a large degree, no culture remains pure after an encounter with another. A change and shift in views and lifestyles inculcate automatically. Cultural changes begin with changes first in instrument values, such as economy, technology, patterns of consumption and living styles, and so on. But changes in the core values of the culture which belong to the independent or categorical structure of values of a society, and constitute cultural identities of its people, do not undergo total transformation. It changes slowly as it adapts itself to new values. Identity therefore is contextualized to the land, artefacts, language, existential conditions, and experiences which in turn draw on history, culture, socio-economic and political conditions. It is formed not in isolation, but in the context of a culture. In this manner the identity of the Gorkhas centres around the tradition and customs which provide a foundational structure and building materials. It has brought considerable transformation in the social structure by bringing some changes in the society at the interpersonal level, family level and at the wider socio-cultural level. Similar changes in the lifestyle of people have been seen in several other regions in the country. Such interactions and co-dependence have affected the Gorkha sensibility, which in turn plays a significant role in the shaping of their identity. "Identity is a matter not only of self-description but also of social ascription" says Chris Barker in *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice* (218). It would not be wrong to say that what distinguishes man is his social identity. He lives in a shared world with his fellow members. He cannot imagine his existence without taking into account the behaviour of others. Therefore, his consciousness, thinking, feeling, and acting are situated in the matrix of social relationships he is engaged in. In *Community Development: A Critical Approach*, Margaret Ledwith observes:

Community groups form the initial collective stage of the process where trust and cooperation create the context for reflection. The group is the basis of cultural belonging where a collective identity is formed, and from which a commitment to the process of change is much more likely to be sustained. It is a place where problematising teaches people to question their reality, to open their minds to altered perspectives on what is impacting on their lives. (94)

Social change, as a field of enquiry has attracted attention among diverse thinkers in various fields of education. It may be understood as a universal phenomenon as there is no society whether primitive or modern that remains unaffected by the process of change. Thus, through education, not only the Gorkhas have gain knowledge but every community have also attained and acquire their rights and freedom. In the course of hybridization, the identity of the Gorkhas, posits both a self with the freedom to create itself and a self shaped in relation to collective identities. An identity is therefore established in relation to a series of differences that have become socially recognised. These differences are essential to its being. If they did not co-exist as differences, it would not exist in its distinctness and solidity. As fixed identity are likely insensitive to changes and therefore confined. Accordingly, a change as well as a rootedness in one's identity is formed within the Gorkha community through the process of differences, as identity formation is always simultaneously intervening through the process of difference formation. And this means that identity will always be ontologically indebted to difference. Identity therefore is formed not in isolation, but in the context of a culture where a culture provides a framework or foundational structure for its formation. Accordingly, Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* argues that individuals can only be described through cultural hybridity. Such interactions and co-dependence refers to the mixture of cultural influences which shaped the Gorkha sensibility, which plays a significant role in the shaping of the Gorkha identity in the context of Mizoram.

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APPENDICES

NAME OF CANDIDATE	: Shraddha Subba
DEGREE	: M.Phil.
DEPARTMENT	: English
TITLE OF DISSERTATION	:Examining Aspects of the Gorkha Identity in Mizoram: A Study of Selected Writings
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 - a) North-Eastern Hill University Central Library (Mawlai Umshing Mawkyntroh, Shillong)

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- b) The State Central Library (Secretariat Hills, Shillong)
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ABSTRACT

Examining Aspects of the Gorkha Identity in Mizoram: A Study of Selected Writings

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The study focuses on aspects of the cultural and social identity of the Gorkhas of Mizoram through selected writings. The study confines itself to selected writings of writers such as Pradip Sunar, Jeevan Kawar, I. K. Subba, Prakash Thapa and others based in Mizoram, which offer an insight into the sensibility of the contemporary Gorkha community. These writings highlight the protestation against the historical and literary representation of the Gorkha image in Mizoram.

North-East India, covering seven states, provides a cultural panorama found nowhere else in India. The magnitude of the cultural diversity of the North-East almost defies the imagination. The ‘Gorkhas’ or ‘*Gurkhas*’ have been classified as one of the eighteen communities of this region, a race of people who originally inhabited the Himalayan Ranges and possess a distinct culture, language, customs, and traditions. Humans are largely defined by conceptions of culture within societies. In consequence, culture is constituted by social action, transmitted through individuals and collectives, and it takes shape from the social nature of human development. In the words of William Blake, culture is “a web of significances made up from symbols. The meaning of a symbol is therefore not an object, having no existence in itself. It only exists in relation to other symbols. It is a construction that can only be understood through its use, and it is from this that social and cultural formations take their characteristic pattern” (148).

The Gorkhas of Mizoram Volume-I, presents facts about the history of the Gorkhas settling in Mizoram, in which the authors have mentioned that it is their attempt to present the history of the Gorkhas of Mizoram, with the aim of strengthening the bonds of friendship and brotherhood with other ethnic groups. In this context, the question of who a Gorkha is and what constitutes the Gorkha identity is a seminal issue. The identity of the Gorkha centres on the tradition and customs which provide a foundational structure and building materials.

In *Nation and Narration* (1990) Homi Bhabha writes, “Cultural difference must not be understood as the free play of polarities and pluralities... it addresses the jarring of meanings and values generated in between the variety and diversity associated with cultural plenitude” (312). He argues against the tendency to essentialize the Third World Countries into a homogenous identity. Instead he claims that all sense of nationhood is narrativized. He has also made a major contribution to postcolonial studies by pointing out how there is always ambivalence at the site of colonial dominance. As such, an inquiry into the issue of identity presupposes the notion of “other”. George Handley says that Bhabha’s stress on national identity in *Nation and Narration* is “always hybrid, unstable and ambivalent, negotiating between private interests and the public significance given to those interests” (148). It is observed that the Gorkhas of Mizoram along with other ethnic groups, even after various differences in their lifestyles, co-operate and depend on each other. To paraphrase Bhabha, this kind of bond between different communities of one’s own space, ideology, culture, language and so on, sums up this relationship as, “the difference of the same” (101).

In *Prakash: Visheshank 2005*, the Mizoram Gorkha Youth Association has played an important role in highlighting various writers’ views and protestations regarding the Gorkha image. It highlights how the co-dependence, intermingling, and interaction between the Mizos and the Gorkhas of Mizoram have affected the Gorkha sensibility, which in turn plays a pivotal role in the shaping of the Gorkha identity. The need for protecting one’s identity became an abiding concern for various groups of citizens in the North-East after Independence. To some degree, most of the identities in India’s North-East assume a space of difference for realization of their own aspirations, cultural and political, with all other economic and social ramifications. Hence, the phenomenal rise and growth of various identities in North-East India presents a picture of the possibilities of multiple emergences of identities with many distinct claims.

I. K. Subba's *Tabula Rasa Volume-I (1996-1997)* offers an insight into the sensibility of the contemporary Gorkha community. It is a collection of writings which highlights the protestation against the historical and literary representation of the Gorkha image in Mizoram. It also represents the glory and achievements of the Gorkha community within the state in terms of education, government recruitment, sports, music, dance, and other areas. Sangeeta Jaisi in an article, "Identity Crisis?" writes:

Going down memory lane, in the 70's various local organizations viz; Mizoram Gorkha Youth Association, Nari Samaj, Bhasa Samiti, Nebhas Pariwar to name a few did their talent hunting... Their most commendable effort in searching hidden talents and highlighting them, and vis-a-vis the foray in preserving and keeping alive our cultural heritage by forming cultural troops and sending them to perform in the other states such as Sikkim, and Darjeeling are indeed notable and praiseworthy. (3)

The subjugation of the Gorkhas as a whole is analogous to colonial subjugation and stereotyping. The Gorkhas were hence constructed as gentlemen, possessing qualities which reflected their officers' self-image like- chivalrous, and with a relaxed attitude. Allegedly without the higher, cerebral, military virtues, they were thought to realise their martial potential when British-led. A. C. Sinha writes, "The Gorkhas who were historically subjected to the Orientalist gaze of colonial humanist anthropology continues to remain the subject of discourse. From such a standpoint, the academic discourses on the problem of Gorkha identity, emerging both from within and without appears skewed and stifled by the disciplinary contours of traditional methods of social enquiry" (Subba 75). In *The Location of Culture* (1994) Bhabha highlights several instances of agency, in which he defines and naturalizes Third World nations by means of the supposedly homogenous, holistic, and historically continuous traditions that falsely define and ensure their subordinate status. For Bhabha, a stereotype is dangerous not because it mischaracterizes the other, but because it

assumes a totalized fixity of the image, while factors like globalisation, modernity, and hybridity have led to the evolution of the identity to something beyond their stereotypes. Bhabha also states that one should not see colonialism as straightforward oppression, domination, violence only but also as a period of complex and varied cultural contact and interaction. The impact of globalisation on the culture and identity of the Gorkhas is of great concern to Gorkha writers. Social change is an inevitable consequence of the pursuit of development and modernity. Many literary writers have taken an interest in expressing hybrid cultural identities and using hybrid cultural forms and their writings undermine any claims to pure or authentic cultural identities or forms. But Bhabha insists less on hybridity than on hybridization; in other words, he insists on hybridity's ongoing process. In fact, for him there are no cultures that come together leading to hybrid forms; instead, cultures are the consequences of attempts to still the flux of cultural hybridities. Society as a whole is to be understood not by just one mode of production but by an articulation of several.

Chapter 1: Introduction:

This chapter gives an overview of the historical and social context of the Gorkhas residing in Mizoram. It explores the construction of identity and probes into the question of what comprises Gorkha identity as reflected in selected works of Gorkha writers. It also introduces the theoretical concepts through which these issues are examined.

The Gorkhas, like any other ethnic group in North-East India have their own unique culture which marks them off from others, for culture is a crucial component of a community's unique identity. It is culture which allows man to adapt himself to his natural setting which is manifested in institutions, thought patterns, and material objects. The history of the Gorkha as settlers in Mizoram began in the year 1891, though they had set foot on the soil much earlier. The settlement of the Gorkhas of Mizoram as recorded officially by the British is much different from the actual dates due to the framing of the Lushai Hills. So, if

the boundary of the present Bangladesh border and Mizoram border were not framed, the entry of the Gorkhas in this region would be recorded as first settlers, as the Gorkhas were amongst the first to have settled in that particular region. Col. T. H. Lewin mentions that Gorkha colonies “were established on the Myani River, a northern affluent of the Karnaphuli. So if the boundary between Chittagong Hill Tracts and Lushai Hills were not framed on 12th September 1876 (Mizoram State Archive Record No. Pol. 10-18 of 1891-92), the year of the settlement of the Gorkhas in Mizoram would have been 1865” (qtd. in Sunar 13). The Gorkhas, a race who are originally the inhabitants of the Himalayan Ranges possess a distinct culture, language, customs, and traditions. Their long record of battlefield heroics “provide one of the more colourful chapters of modern military history” says Omar Khalidi (538).

Lionel Caplan writes, the term “Gorkha” derives from “the place name of Gorkha, which was a small principality to the west of Kathmandu, whose king, around 1765...after his victory, made it the capital of his newly constituted kingdom” (571). The majority of the Gorkhas were descendants of the discharged military policemen of long service who were originally recruited in the Lushai Hills. They also enjoyed satisfactory socio-political status in the state right from the beginning of their settlement. Some of the personnel of the Surma Valley Military Police Battalion and the Frontier Police Battalion with exemplary services were awarded with considerable pieces of land, “some of them even with chieftainship with powers and privileges at par with Mizo chiefs, with hereditary right of succession. For instance, Dhojbir Rai was awarded the whole area of Survey Tilla (now Dinthar-II); Sriman Rai, the whole area of Sriman Tilla, the place that was named after him (now Zotlang); Jamadar Singbir Rai was awarded with holdings in Chawnchhim (Champhai) and so on” (Sunar 20). The above statement shows that, the Gorkhas in the past had enjoyed satisfactory socio-political status in the state right from the beginning of the settlement. In *The Gorkhas of Mizoram Volume-I*, it is seen that, the Gorkhas “after the settlement in their adopted land

never became a burden to the society but rather proved to be a cynosure and worthy sons of the land. They earned good names and laurels for themselves as well as the State” (Sunar 21).

Chapter 2: Challenging the Gorkha Stereotype:

This chapter examines how the act of stereotyping assumes a totalized fixity of an image. Stereotypes therefore seem to be a stable, if false, foundation upon which colonialism bases its power. The chapter explores how these stereotypes have been formed and how Gorkha identity can neither be confined nor limited to such stereotypes.

The British constructed terms like, ‘Bir Gurkha’, ‘Bahadur’, ‘Chowkidaar’ to the Gorkhas which when translated, means ‘brave gurkha’, ‘martial race’ and ‘gatekeeper’ or ‘keeper’ respectively. This portrayal of the Gorkhas, however, emerged when the British started generalizing the attributes they associated with the Gorkhas. A lot has been written about the ‘short’, ‘broad chested’, ‘flat faced’, ‘snub nosed’ men with their *khukris*. Lionel Caplan writes, “The Gorkhas are identified... as above all a martial race... The notion that some people will make good soldiers and others will not is not an idea original to the British in India, but in the course of the nineteenth century they formulated and codified the principle... into a dogma” (580).

The Gorkhas were not immigrants who came to India looking for greener pastures as most people think them to be. Particularly with reference to North-East India, much of the immigration was due to the political and social as well as economic history of the region. The British actively promoted the stereotyping of the Gorkha identity which in turn changed and shaped the perspectives of other ethnic groups’ perception of the Gorkha community, confirming Bhabha’s stance that stereotyping is the “setting up of a false image which becomes the scapegoat of discriminatory practices” (81).

Despite the great sacrifices made by the forefathers of the Gorkhas, the British policy of ‘divide and rule’ which erected a communal rift still exists somewhere deep in the recesses of many people’s minds. In an article, “Indian Gorkhas: A Time For Retrospection”, published by the Mizoram Gorkha Students’ Union, the issue of granting basic human rights has been addressed, “...constant discrimination towards genuine Gorkha citizens of India in jobs, trade, and commerce and higher education resulting the community has been rendered economically, socially, educationally and politically backward when compared with the other natives of the country” [sic] (Mizoram Gorkha Student Union n.pag). Mala Devi in her poem, “Hami, Gorkhali” (We, the Gorkhas) writes:

Yug yug dekhi janmabhumi bhani,

Ladeka thiyo swatantrata sanggramma pani,

Afnei deshma ramrajya hunchha ki bhani,

Ustei chha hamro gati aja pani,

Afnei deshma helako paatra bani.

(Decades and decades we exclaimed this is our land. We also fought inside the battlefield thinking this is our true place. Still we are in-between, even in our land we are looked down upon.) (89). To be socially excluded is to be deprived from social recognition and social value. The relation between the British and the Gorkhas, from the beginning exhibited the natural devotion of the men of both races to each other. But this connection is represented in two somewhat different ways. On the one hand, the Gorkhas are portrayed as an ethnic category whose natural qualities render them dependent on, and hence inferior to their western officers. On the other hand, they are seen as endowed with the essential characteristics of those very officers. David Omissi writes, “Colonial power meant that

Gurkhas could be accepted as warrior gentlemen, but not as equals” (909). That aspect of the discourse which depicts the Gorkha as simple, brave, and loyal, accords with the hierarchical relations existing between them and their British officers.

Prasenjit Biswas and Chandan Suklabaidya in their book *Ethnic Life-Worlds in North-East India*, writes, “In the British strategy of pitting one tribe against another, one side would be treated as offenders and the other as victims, and the British administration would come as the saviour of the situation...This exhibits the politics of playing the perceived ‘Others’ against each other and then negotiating from a distance through necessary means” (68). Accordingly, it depicts the hierarchical gulf separating superiors from subordinates between the Gorkhas and the British.

Chapter 3: Interrelationship Among the Gorkhas and Other Groups:

This chapter has attempted to examine the nature of the relationship between the Gorkhas and other ethnic groups within Mizoram especially the British colonizers and the Mizo community. It explores how the intermingling, co-dependence, and interaction between these groups have affected the Gorkha sensibility, which in turn plays a significant role in the shaping of Gorkha identity. It lays focus on how certain social activities and associations have been formed as a result of these interactions.

For tens of thousands of years, humans lived in isolated communities. Cultures developed largely independently and many were unaware of others’ existence. As time went on, new contacts were made in which people who were once geographically and historically separated came into contact with each other and thus established ongoing relations. The Gorkhas during earlier times had an institution known as *Rodhi Ghar*, whose principles were similar to the Mizos’ *Zawlbuk* pattern, and is still practised in some parts of Nepal. The importance of *Zawlbuk* to the Mizos and *Rodhi Ghar* to the Gorkhas were the same. From the

very beginning, both the Mizos and the Gorkhas had kinship and lineage based social systems. As seen in *The Gorkhas of Mizoram Volume-I*, the traditional belief between the Gorkhas of Mizoram and the native Mizos were found to be similar in various ways. It is said that, “Rih Dil was revered equally by the Gorkhas as the Mizos did. They used to visit it annually, pigeons were flown in the name of their relatives’ departed souls and god as well. They believed that some holy spirits dwelt there” (Sunar 33).

Though different in various spheres, there are still some traits and fields where similarities can be seen. Such similarities somehow cement their views and ideas in some way or another. “If any kind of help or suggestions are needed within any of the community the other is always in support”, says Mr. Ram Kumar Thapa, former President of the Mizoram Gorkha Youth Association, Zotlang, Aizawl in an interview (1 Feb. 2017). Despite the enormous advances in understanding the evolution of life, the Gorkhas do have their own cultural identity. Everything they construct is a cultural artefact, marked with significance and has a history of its own that is tied in with the lives of the people who have lived here. Traditional dances like, Maruni, Tamang Selo, Jhyaure, Sorathi, and others are promoted and presented by such cultural and social organizations and institutions of the Gorkhas as well as the native Mizos in various Mizo Festivals like Anthurium Festivals, The Thal Favang Kut and other cultural programmes. Such presentations and unique practices among various ethnic groups in Mizoram unite and strengthen the gap between them. Bhikhu Parekh writes, “Human beings share a common nature, common conditions of existence, life experiences, predicament, and so on. They also, however, conceptualize and respond to these in quite different ways and give rise to different cultures. Their identity is a product of a dialectical interplay between the universal and the particular, between what they all share and what is culturally specific” (124).

In the recent past, various Gorkhas have been given titles and ranks in the society welfare and some were even elected in different posts for the maintenance of their locality. Positive remarks were heard and collected in various surveys, in which different body members like Village Councils, Presidents and Vice Presidents, Secretaries of both Gorkhas and Mizo organizations throw light on the good relation between both groups. Pu. H. Lalkhawhluna, the Village Council of Hmar Veng, Kolasib, states that, “As unity and equality is every organizations’ motto and goal, so also we Mizos in respect to our Gorkha brothers, are proud of being their neighbours who in times help and support each other in various situations” (12 Feb. 2017). Their relationship is projected to be so strong and friendly that even the members of each community have established joint committees. Likewise, the senior citizens of the Gorkha community are also enlisted within the Mizo Upa Pawl (MUP). Through a telephone interview with Madhav Kumar Thapa, the present General Secretary of the Gorkha Youth Association in Lunglei, it was confirmed that the Gorkhas residing in Lunglei are “enrolled as members of both the Gorkha as well as the Mizo associations” (13 Feb. 2017). Hence, the Gorkhas have gained increasing influence. Even though the Gorkha belong to a non-Mizo community, they are enlisted and participate in every social work and other community-based programmes within their localities. History provides many examples of different communities and cultures living side by side within the same society, co-existing peacefully. It has been a hallmark of many societies for a very long time. The establishment of these organizations have proved to be a boon for the community as a whole. In fact, it promotes attachment, partisan attitude and participation processes and institutions among the individuals. The negotiation and continual interface between different communities therefore, produce a mutual and mutable recognition of cultural differences. Though the intermingling and interrelation somehow promotes friendship and a strong bond within the two communities, a feeling of liminality can be seen and heard from various Gorkha writers and

also from some Mizo writers, such is the under-current issues within the state which is politically dominating and a neglected discourse. Zodinsanga in *Seven Sisters Post* writes:

What does it take to be treated as a “migrant” in one’s home state? Ask any Gorkha in Mizoram, and you will get the answer... The Gorkhas in Mizoram, who do not have any home state other than this tiny Northeastern state, have long been denied their constitutional rights as the political parties’ promises to grant them OBC status are yet to materialise... The non-inclusion in the OBC list has prevented the Mizoram’s Gorkha community, which has high literacy rate and large number of educated youths, from entering Central and state services. (3)

Today, the impact of development, modernization, and globalisation on the Gorkha community has assumed great significance. Protection against effacement of identity is made possible more by an active assertion of their distinct characteristics through the use of freedom and various rights.

Chapter 4: Impact of Hybridization:

This chapter studies the effect and outcome of hybridization between the Gorkhas of Mizoram and other groups within the state. It focuses on the attempt to analyse how under the Mizos and as well as the British, the traditions and culture of the community of the Gorkhas are affected. In postcolonial discourse, the notion that any culture or identity is pure or essential is disputable. As such, one must be aware of the dangers of fixity and fetishism of identities since, “all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity” says Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* (211).

According to Pradip Sunar, et.al in *The Gorkhas of Mizoram Volume-I*, it is seen that, “Capt. J. Shakespeare has recorded in his diary that ‘the hills were not a desirable place to be stationed for long’. But the Gorkhas felt at home right from the beginning as Col. Lewin

hoped” (Sunar 15). The attachment hence brought them close with the other ethnic groups within the society and their relationships with other communities generate a hybrid nature which changed the lifestyles of the Gorkhas in various ways. Through surveys within some parts of Aizawl district and Kolasib district, it has been noted that the differences in perspectives of adopting the popular culture or accepting new ideas in a society among the older generations and the present generations do bring about clashes. Most of the younger generations of every community other than the Gorkhas are exposed to the vision of the new millennium which has opened up its doors to the West and other regions of the globe. Some view it as a mark of society’s progression while some as cultural deterioration. L. B. Chhettri states that due to modernization and intermingling with the other ethnic groups “our way of dressing and maintaining our customs nowadays is changed” (33). Hence, for instance, the traditional dress code of the Gorkhas have been replaced by western fashion, though, they still practise wearing it occasionally.

As globalisation and continued intermingling took place within the society, hybridization in the sphere of marriage gradually occurred to some extent. Such change in a Gorkha household is not common and not often heard, but a small amount of such cases are seen nowadays, where intermarriage between Gorkha and other communities have taken place. In a way, it has been impossible to remain pure and rooted within a society. Hybridization, as a concept has various impacts and effects which brought about huge changes in the society. Acquiring new cultural forms and practices is by no means a new development, in fact, every cultural form or experience is hybrid since people have interacted and cultural forms have become hybridized all along. Another example is the field of music. A social activist and recipient of several national awards, and the first recipient of an International Award amongst the Gorkhas of Mizoram, Dr. Gunu Gharti has been called “the Idol among the Gorkhas”, (Ramdinmawia 2017); he has introduced the Gorkhas as well as

the State to the world through his music video album, “Lovely Mizoram”. The Gorkhas are in a way transcending their views and ideas with the advent of popular culture, in terms of music, technological advancement and other lifestyles. From the beginning, while a majority of Gorkhas practise Hinduism and Buddhism, in the course of time a small amount of them have followed Christianity. Among them, only a small number of Gorkhas of Mizoram can be seen to be converted into other religions as most of them are immigrants from Nepal, Darjeeling, Sikkim, Assam and the other neighbouring states who have retained their traditional religions. As identity centres on traditions, values, and customs which provide a foundational structure and building material, a plausibility of cultural loss and fear can be observed through the works of various Gorkha writers of Mizoram. Mr. Prakash Thapa, a senior social Gorkha activist, in an article, ‘Samaaj Prati Hamro Dayitwa’ writes:

Society is like a body, in which we are its part... Men have responsibilities towards society just as every part of the body has towards the body. In case, if any of the body parts malfunction it can cause serious problems to the body to work... Any individual who calls himself a Gorkha should respect and work hard for his/her society. As the success of the society itself is the success of himself and his identity. (32)

An anxiety regarding shifting to or mixing with other ethnic groups can be seen through some works of Gorkha writers. Purna Prasad in an article, “History of Mizoram Nepali Schools”, also states that one must “value and praise one’s own culture and language. In order to know who we are and what our identity is, every child should learn his/her own mother-tongue, through sending them in Gorkha schools and institutions” (19). Through cultural hybridization, language too can be hybridized. The Gorkhas living in Sairang, Bairabi, Thenzawl, Khawzawl, and others “cannot be traced... Many have died heirless and heirs of others have become Mizos” (Sunar 100). Such changes might lead to cultural loss, and this in turn, naturally has an impact on the identity that emerges. Mr. Bishnu Kumar Subba, one of

the Gorkha writers and former President of Mizoram Gorkha Youth Association, Zotlang, Aizawl and Vairengte, in an interview says, “A change can be inevitable or paradoxical, it depends on the will and the actions of ordinary individuals. The Gorkha identity is necessarily impacted and modified by such interactions with an exposure to other cultures” (23 April 2017). The Gorkhas are hence, affected in certain ways after coming in contact and sharing ideas with the British and other ethnic groups within the state. However, this does not mean that the Gorkhas now have a completely different culture. Instead, to understand the culture of the Gorkhas, one must avoid looking in terms of polar opposites and instead think in terms of hybridity. Hybridization among the Gorkhas and the Mizos not only impacted the Gorkhas but the Mizos too have been impacted by such cultural hybridization. Both communities therefore encounter such transformations, in terms of lifestyles, cuisine, language and others.

Chapter 5: Conclusion:

This chapter analyzes and summarizes the preceding chapters and evaluates the earlier assessments.

It is historically clear that the Gorkhas of Mizoram initially came from Nepal and later from other parts of India. The reasons behind their movements have been varied in nature from time to time. As a concept, migration is applicable to various forms of human movement which may be voluntary or forced, brought about either by socio-political or ecological reasons. It is therefore presumed that the main reason for their coming to the North-East states of India was the allurements of military adventure. They remained a special preserve of the British during their reign and were officered exclusively by high grade British officers. Lionel Caplan writes, “Enloe has called a ‘Gorkha Syndrome’... the perfect martial race is an ethnic group that produces men who are both martial and loyal” (587). The history

of the development of the Gorkha ranks in the Indian army is the story of the avowed recognition of their worth as soldiers and of the fulfilment of the hopes which lay behind their first enlistment.

The Gorkhas as a whole became Indian by virtue of annexation of their lands. Political change and corresponding reshuffling boundaries forced the Gorkhas to be ruled by different authorities at different times or at the same time by different authorities at different places. Various institutions, organizations, and programmes of the Gorkhas have promoted Gorkha culture in terms of education, government recruitment, sports, music, and other areas. To some degree, under these institutions, some aspects of the cultural and social identity of the Gorkhas of Mizoram have evolved. Culture gives meaning to one's relationship with the other as it also forms one's subjective identity. In *Community Development: A Critical Approach*, Margaret Ledwith observes:

Community groups form the initial collective stage of the process where trust and cooperation create the context for reflection. The group is the basis of cultural belonging where a collective identity is formed, and from which a commitment to the process of change is much more likely to be sustained. It is a place where problematising teaches people to question their reality, to open their minds to altered perspectives on what is impacting on their lives. (94)

Social change, as a field of enquiry has attracted attention among diverse thinkers in various fields of education. It may be understood as a universal phenomenon as there is no society whether primitive or modern that remains unaffected by the process of change. In the course of hybridization, the identity of the Gorkhas, posits both a self with the freedom to create itself and a self shaped in relation to collective identities. An identity is therefore established in relation to a series of differences that have become socially recognised. These differences are essential to its being. If they did not co-exist as differences, it would not exist in its

distinctness and solidity. Fixed identities are likely insensitive to changes and therefore confined. Accordingly, a change as well as a rootedness in one's identity is formed within the Gorkha community through the process of differences, as identity formation is always simultaneously intervening through the process of difference formation. And this means that identity will always be ontologically indebted to difference. Identity therefore is formed not in isolation, but in the context of a culture where a culture provides a framework or foundational structure for its formation. Such interactions and co-dependence have affected the Gorkha sensibility, which plays a significant role in the shaping of the Gorkha identity in the context of Mizoram.

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