CHAPTER I
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Our land, India populated by 1,027,015,247* persons including 531,277,078* males and 495,738,169* females had experienced communal flare-ups in the recent past.

This large population from 35 states and union territories with male literacy of 75.85%; female literacy of 54.16%; and general literacy of 65.38%* had witnessed a number of ethnic and communal violence in the past decades.

North east India which harboured a population of about 38,495,089* persons including 19,874,535* males and 18,620,554* females became the most volatile zone of India.

North east India which is often called a mosaic of ethnic groups having a number of ethnic enclaves has 12 universities and about 564\footnote{Universities Handbook, AIU, New Delhi, 2002.} colleges to educate its people. However, it had experienced a number of social conflicts in the current decade also.

India had spent a huge amount of expenditure in maintaining internal peace and security over and above the expenditure for defence from external aggression.

North east India also had spent more expenditure than before in maintaining internal peace and security in spite of having a good number of higher educational institutions to educate its people.

Social environment was not good. Different communities did not have healthy relationship between and among them despite having a high literacy percentage.

Similarly there was not healthy relationship between and among ethnic groups of North east India despite having a good number of universities and colleges to educate its people.

In such a scenario everybody seemed ethnocentric. It was not an idiosyncratic assertion because everybody belongs to a group, either primary or secondary.

This was also apparent not only in the case of racial groups but in the case of social groups also. W. Graham Sumner, an
American Anthropologist was of the opinion that every group, past or present, small or large, was ethnocentric.

It is a universal fact that everybody wants to be appreciated and the corollary of that is that every group wants to be admired. In the myths and legends of many racial and social groups ethnocentrism was lurking. Each and every group wanted to maintain it.

Around 1400 BC the Hitites in Mesopotamia kept in secret the method of iron making developed by them but unknown to other people so as to maintain or not to diminish their superiority complex. "For a long time, the Hitites kept their method of making iron a secret. They would not trade iron goods with other people because they were afraid their methods of iron production would be discovered." The same thing happened even in the contemporary world. Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty was a ploy of the nuclear haves, as pleaded by India and other countries, to maintain their superiority complex in the nuclear technology.

In ancient Egypt in about 1730 BC the Hyksos leaders became Pharaohs of Egypt and they tried to perpetuate their ethnocentrism against the will of the then Egyptians. "They tried to

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force their ideas and customs on the Egyptians. But the Egyptians hated these foreigners and resisted their ways.\(^2\)

During Chou dynastic rule in China from about 1028 BC to 256 BC, Chinese exposed ethnocentric attitudes. “These cultural advances under the Chou developed a sense of pride among the Chinese. They considered themselves part of a superior civilization. They looked down on foreigners and referred to them as “barbarians” or people without culture.”\(^3\)

During the Persian Empire of about 500 BC - 330 BC modern South African Apartheid type system was in Mesopotamia. Persians established superiority complex among the Mesopotamians who had, at the same time, counter claims of superiority. “But native Persians were given special rights within the empire. For example, they were usually taxed less than other peoples and received the best posts in the imperial government.”\(^4\)

About the time the Greeks also expressed their ethnocentric attitudes when they ridiculed the activities of Xerxes, the Persian emperor and his soldiers. “All went well for Xerxes. When he came to Dardanelles the waves were rather rough at first, and there is a story that the king ordered his men to put the sea in chains and flog it until it behaved better. That is a story which the Greeks told.

\(^2\) Ibid. Page – 36.
\(^3\) Ibid. Page – 76.
\(^4\) Ibid. Page – 18.
They would have thought it just the sort of madness which would come over a barbarian king who believed everything in the world must obey him.”

Similarly, the contemporary Spartans also expressed their ethnocentric attitudes when they conquered the Helots who had lived in Sparta before them. “They (Helots) were kept down by the Spartans, treated as if they were not much better than beasts.”

Middle ages also witnessed the manifestation of ethnocentric attitudes by different peoples. By 500 AD the western parts of the Roman Empire had fallen to the Germanic Tribes. Even then ethnocentric attitudes of the Romans did not die. “The Romans considered their Germanic conquerors to be “Barbarians” because they had no written language and no system of science, philosophy, and law.”

In the far east also the Yamato rulers of Japan in about 400 – 500 AD exposed their ethnocentric attitudes. “Yamato rulers considered themselves superior to the other clans.” In the mid 1400s Chinese also expressed their ethnocentric attitudes. “They

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6 Ibid. Page – 79.
8 Ibid. Page – 98.
refused to learn from other foreign peoples. They increased their sense of cultural superiority.\(^9\)

In the American continent during Spanish colonization in 1500s claims and counterclaims of ethnocentrism of the new comers and aboriginal people were witnessed. “Missions were built because the Spaniards believed that their civilization and their Roman Catholic religion were superior to those of the Indians.”\(^10\)

On the other hand, the Cherokee Indians of the Great Smoky Mountains of the North America exposed the same attitude. “The creator fashioned man by first making and firing an oven and then, from dough he had prepared, shaping three figures in human form. He placed the figures in the oven and waited for them to get done. But his impatience to see the result of this, his crowning experiment in the work of creation, was so great that he removed the first figure too soon. It was sadly undone – pale, an unlovely colour, and from it descended the white people. His second figure had fared well. The timing was accurate, the form richly browned, that was to be the ancestor of the Indians, pleased him in every way. He so admired it, indeed, that he neglected to take out of the oven the third form, until he smelled it burning. He threw open the door, only to find this last one charred and black. It was regrettable,

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\(^9\) Ibid. Page – 90.
but there was nothing to be done; and this was the first Negro."\textsuperscript{11} It was the myth of the Cherokee Indians that exposed the attitude.

Even Bush Negro exposed their ethnocentric attitudes as reported by M.J. Herskovits. "When the Suriname Bush Negro shown a flash light, admires it and then quotes the proverb: ‘white man’s magic isn’t black man’s magic’, he is merely reaffirming his faith in his own culture. He is pointing out that the stranger, for all his mechanical devices, would be lost in the Guinea jungle without the aid of his Bush Negro friends."\textsuperscript{12}

Early ages of modern period had experienced claims and counter claims of ethnocentrism in Asia. In 1800s the Chinese manifested their ethnocentrism when they came into contact with the western people. "The Chinese regarded themselves as people who shared a superior civilization. Thus people who were not Chinese were thought of as barbarians."\textsuperscript{13} In Japan also from the early 1600s Europeans were permitted to visit only the city of Nagasaki in fear of likely defilement of their religion and culture by the Europeans. The Shoguns succeeded in stamping out Christianity as a revival to the older religions of Japan.

In Europe also manifestations of ethnocentrism could be experienced. "Hitler and his followers claimed that the German


\textsuperscript{12} Ibid. Page – 356.

people were a master-race, and under a dictatorship would someday rule the world." He (Hitler) spoke of the glory of war and the 'racial superiority' of the fair skinned people of the Northern Europe. "He repeatedly referred to the Germans as the 'master-race'. He warned them not to mix with races he regarded as mentally and physically inferior, such as the Jews and the Slavs." The Jews were treated to be a "sub-human race". "Signs declaring 'No Jews Allowed' were posted outside villages and towns and in stores and restaurants everywhere."

In the two great epics of India clear expression of ethnocentrism could be found. It was exposed even among the castes of Hindu society. Kshetriyas had group pride for having superiority in the use of weapons and in gallantry. On the other hand, Brahmins had a pride in their superiority in spiritual purity and power. In the Mahabharata the five sons of Pandu had their pride in being the Pandavas and the hundred sons of Dhristarastra had also their pride of the same kind. In the Mahabharata there were many instances of hurting the ethnocentric sentiment of the Pandavas by the Kauravas and vice-versa and which ultimately led to the Mahabharata War. In the Ramayana too Ravana and his people hurt the individual ego and group ego of Rama and his people respectively and vice-versa that led to the Ramayana War.

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14 Ibid. Page – 484.
16 Ibid. Page – 485.
“During and after their conquest of India, the nomadic Aryans looked down on the settled way of life of the Indians. The Aryans had no respect for the Indian culture and treated the natives as slaves.” On the other hand, Indians of the time also looked down upon the Aryans. This persists even in contemporary India resulting to the unhealthy relationship between the mostly Dravidian southern and mostly Aryan northern peoples of India.

Indians of the time regarded foreign countries and peoples of the time something inferior and unholy. “Garga, an astronomer of the first century BC, calls the Greeks barbarians.”

“Manu has excluded all Brahmans who had lived in foreign lands from being invited to saradha ceremonies. Almost all the ancient Law-givers of India have prescribed certain penances (Prayashchitta) for the purification of all Hindus who would return home after living in foreign countries for some years.”

During the Muslim period of Indian history also such claims and counter claims of superiority were experienced. “The Muslim conquerors considered themselves superior to the Indians and looked down on Hinduism.”

\[17\] Ibid. Page – 57.
\[19\] Ibid. Page – 189.
During the British period again the Britishers looked down upon the Indians who had superiority complexes of being Hindus and Muslims. ‘Dogs and Indians are not allowed’ was a popular signboard sentence of the European conquerors for the exclusively European areas or places like hotels, restaurants and residences. Several reforms were introduced by the Britishers. This hurt ethnocentric sentiment of the Indians. “Many of the Indian people resented this interference in their way of life and felt that this British were treating them as inferiors.”

In modern India states were organized on ethnic and linguistic lines. Even then ethnic and communal crises were not extinct but dormant. They got a new and very popular term in modern India – ‘Identity Crisis’ or ‘Freedom Movement’ which invited attention from all quarters.

In Jammu and Kashmir Muslims exposed their ethnocentrism in the name of struggle for freedom from the Indian domination or for preservation of their alleged diminishing identity. Creation of Gorkha Land, Chatisgarh State, Jarkhand State and Uttaranchal State were the outcomes of maintaining ethnocentrism of ethnic groups of the respective regions. Telanganis, Vidharvanis, Bodos, Nagas, Khasis, Dimas, Hmars and Karbis began crying for the same kind of demand. Over and above these, Hindu – Sikh riot of 1984 and Hindu – Muslim crises

\[21\] Ibid. Page – 453.
during the reigns of V.P. Singh and P.V. Narasimha Rao, former Prime Ministers as well as Godhra and Jammu and Kashmir carnage during the reign of A.B. Bajpayee were signs of exposure of ethnocentric attitudes.

Northeast India (excluding Sikkim), the home of about 38495089 people, has a number of ethnocentric groups. Majority of the population are Assamese, Arunachalese, Bengalis, Nagas, Mizos, Khasis, Meiteis, etcetera. However, a number of sub-tribes or groups are under the macro communities. Here Hinduism, Buddhism, Islamism and Christianity have a good number of followers over and above the comparatively smaller number of Sikhs, Jains and animists. Evidently enough, Aryans, Dravidians, and Austro-Asians live in the Northeast together with the majority Mongolians.

North East India (excluding Sikkim) the erstwhile greater Assam, presently the land of seven sister states is located between Latitude 20° and 22° North and Longitude 89°.46′ and 97°.5′ East. It has an area of 2,55,082 square kilometres having a hilly and wild topography. This area is surrounded by countries like China, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Myanmar. This region is connected with the rest of India by a narrow corridor between Nepal and Bangladesh. It is also a fact that this region having average literacy rate of 68.64% is the most volatile zone of all the other zones India has. The struggle of the indigenous Northeast people against
alleged domination of the outsiders could be considered as nothing but the manifestation of ethnocentric attitudes of the autochthons.

In Arunachal Pradesh which had male literacy of 64.07%; female literacy of 44.24%; and general literacy of 54.74%; movement against outsiders got underway. It has a university and 9 colleges to impart higher education. Interestingly students became apprehensive of the encroachment of the outsiders to their rights and privileges. Militant outfits were also reported to have held sway very recently.

Assam has 5 universities and more than 343 colleges to educate its people. It had male literacy of 71.93%; female literacy of 56.03%; and general literacy of 64.28%. However, it witnessed students’ agitation against foreigners or outsiders. And ULFA has been fighting against outsiders rule or Indian rule. Over and above, it has the burning problems of Bodos, Karbis and Dimasas.

Manipur has 2 universities and 71 colleges to educated its people. It had male literacy of 77.87%; female literacy of 59.70%; and general literacy of 68.87%. However, it experienced students’ ‘Go Back Foreigners’ agitation. Several armed organizations have been fighting against outsiders’ rule or Indian rule. It also witnessed conflicts between Muslims and Meiteis;

Kukis and Nagas; and Paite and Nagas. In addition, it felt the menace of NSCN(IM)'s demand for unification of Naga inhabited areas of Manipur to Nagaland.

Meghalaya has a university and more than 53 colleges to impart higher education to its people. It had male literacy of 66.14%; female literacy of 60.41%; and general literacy of 63.31%. Interestingly, it had experienced agitation against foreigners or outsiders as an impact of the Assam Agitation. ANV and GNLF are fighting against outsiders' domination or Indian domination. Khasis and Garos are at loggerheads in the state.

With one university and 32 colleges Mizoram had male literacy of 90.69%; female literacy of 86.13%; and general literacy of 88.49%. However, it had MNF's movement against Indian rule or outsiders' rule. It is having Reangs Movement against Mizos and also problem of Chakmas.

With one university and more than 34 colleges Nagaland had male literacy of 71.77%; female literacy of 65.41%; and general literacy of 73.66%. However, it has been experiencing long staggering freedom movement spearheaded by Mr. Phizo formerly and latter by the Khaplang and Muivah factions of NSCN. Over and above, the Nagas are at loggerheads with the neighbouring states because of their demand for Greater Nagalim.

Tripura has one university and more than 21 colleges. It had male literacy of 81.47*; female literacy of 65.41*; and general literacy of 73.66*. However, it has been experiencing the armed struggle of the indigenous people against outsiders' domination or Indian domination. The Bengalis, the late settlers also have an armed organization to counter the violence meted out to them.

In the north east India there has been a remarkable improvement in transport and communication system than it had before 25 years. All the state capitals are easily accessible. Nevertheless, the peoples of the states seem to have less intimacy.

Number of daily newspapers published in the seven state capitals is considerably large. There is easy reach of information to literate peoples of the states. Unfortunately, they seem to have less understanding between and among them.

North east India could be considered as the confluence of two streams of culture of the east and of the west. But peoples seem not to understand the beauty of such a variety.

In short two groups of people – indigenous and outsiders are at loggerheads in the whole of north-eastern states of India though there are some exceptions. This was not so rampant during the first two decades of independence except that of Nagaland. And it was

not so widespread as of today. In this connection the researcher considered otherwise contrary to the general notion that education broadens man's outlook. "The more the people become educated (getting formal education) the more the problem becomes acute in this region". In this connection a statement of Prof. S.K. Sharma - "The biggest challenge, thus faced by the human society today is the rising ethnocentrism, ethnic consciousness and identity assertion (through coercive means) by the majority wielding economic and political power on the one hand and the relentless efforts of the ethnic, social and immigrant minorities to resist the onslaught of majority voicing their demand for autonomy and right to self-determination on the other"\textsuperscript{22} came to the recollection of the investigator.

Notwithstanding the positive aspects of ethnocentrism, the researcher discerned negative hands of ethnocentrism in the more literate or educated north-eastern people of India. Consequently, the researcher wanted to find out the vulnerability by surveying and putting to a scale the ethnocentric attitudes of university students of the states. Mention may be here made that only educated people pioneered movement in connection with identity assertion. Illiterate people are unaware of such phenomena in general. In this context the investigator recalled a statement of P.C. Rosenblatt, "Sensing the advantage of ethnocentrism or nationalism for themselves and for the group, militarily, administratively, and otherwise, group

leaders frequently act to increase group ethnocentrism and nationalism, often through opportune exploitation of fear or hate of some outgroup. Purposiveness of Indian education towards the achievement of aim for national integration was, to the researcher, doubtful. And the speculation for a study came to the mind of the researcher.

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