CHAPTER II
FORMULATION AND DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM
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EMERGENCE OF THE PROBLEM:

In the previous chapter historical glimpses of ethnocentric behaviour of man were presented. As well, a lot of ramifications of ethnocentric behaviour in the present day world were seen and many more are yet to come in the present day world. Multi-dimensional exposures of such ethnocentric behaviour had become even more glaring in the contemporary world. Their negative impacts spared hardly few countries. Harry, M. Johnson said, "The subordination of some ethnic groups to others is by no means confined to the United States. It is not too much to say that it
occurs, with varying intensity, on every continent and in virtually every country of any great size.\textsuperscript{1}

Bloodshed in the course of balkanisation of Europe, the most advanced continent, on ethnic or racial lines; homicide between the Hutus and Tutsis of Africa; bloodshed in West Asia and Afghanistan; homicide between the Shinhaleese and Tamils of Sri Lanka; and many other racial, religious, communal and ethnic violences hurt the researcher very much. It appeared that internationalism and humanism were at stake.

More specifically in India, which was considered to have composite culture or unity in diversity, such ramifications and their negative impacts were alarming. Distrust between and among racial, ethnic and cultural groups is rampant.

Bloodshed, past or present in almost all the states of North Eastern India caused by the so called independence movements or go back foreigners movements or movements against outsiders’ dominance or movements for inter-ethnic dominance and reprisals for them were also alarming. Northeastern zone had become the most volatile of the six zones of India. It seemed that unity in diversity phenomenon of India was in jeopardy. As such, ethnocentrism had been appeared as the embryo of such a lot of ramifications. The researcher’s plea was supported by P. C.

Rosenblatt and said, “Nationalism and ethnocentrism would appear to be of twofold importance. First, they appear so often during the formation and continued existence of relatively stable social collectivities (from informal small group to societies) that understanding of them may well provide some insight into the nature of social collectivities. Second, they are frequently cited as the cause of serious problems in the world; an examination of them may lead to an increase in the ability to cope with these problems.”

“Wherever different ethnic groups come in contact, there seems to be a tendency for one of them to establish dominance over the other. In fact, as far as ethnic groups are concerned, the distinction between dominant group and subordinate groups is probably more important sociologically than the distinction between majority and minority.”

H. M. Johnson also said. Again the author said “Groups bearing different subcultures are likely to discriminate against one another to some extent and to develop distorted ideas of one another.”

Hence, this study was taken up to scale the ethnocentric attitudes of highly educated university students of the north eastern region of India who had been capable of exerting a great amount of influence in bringing about social change because of high education they attained.

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OBJECTIVES:

Objectives of the present study were categorised into two –
i) Primary objectives, and ii) Secondary objectives. Each category consisted of the following:

i) Primary Objectives:

a. To construct and standardize an attitude scale to scale the ethnocentric attitudes of university students of northeastern region universities of India.

b. Determination of effectiveness of the present system of education in the sublimation of ethnocentric behaviour of postgraduate students of different ethnic or racial backgrounds on the basis of scale values to be derived.

c. Comparison of ethnocentric attitudes of different institutional, ethnic, gender and religious groups of students on the basis of group scale values to be derived.

d. Determination of vulnerable and nonvulnerable institutional, ethnic, gender and religious groups of students on the basis of the scale values.
ii) Secondary Objectives:

a. Attempt to develop mutual understanding and respect between and among different ethnic or racial as well as religious or cultural groups.

b. An effort to instil futility of developing superiority and inferiority complexes in the minds of individuals of different groups thereby establishing a sense of mutual help and peaceful coexistence.

c. Endeavours for development of internationalism, nationalism and humanism as well as interdependence of one another.

d. Suggestion for construction of curriculum in view of the above considerations.

e. Suggestion for the organisation of cocurricular and extracurricular activities keeping in mind the above considerations.

f. To make people conscious of the negative and positive aspects of ethnocentrism and motivate people to harness the positive aspects of this.

g. Suggestion for further research to materialise the objectives.
STATEMENT AND DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM:

The problem was entitled as ETHNOCENTRIC ATTITUDES OF POST GRADUATE STUDENTS OF NORTH EASTERN REGION UNIVERSITIES OF INDIA.

In order to make a convenient study of the problem meanings of different terms used in the title were presented with special reference to the context with the help of meanings and interpretations given by many writers and dictionaries.

ETHNO — , In the Random House Dictionary of the English Language it was interpreted as “a learned borrowing from Greek meaning ‘race’, ‘culture’, ‘people’, used in the formation of compound words”\(^5\).

CENTRIC — , In the same dictionary it was taken as an adjective term and meant as “pertaining to or situated at the center; central”\(^6\).

ETHNOCENTRISM — , The editor of the dictionary treated it as a sociological noun term and interpreted as “1. the belief in the inherent superiority of one’s own group and culture. 2. a tendency to view alien groups or cultures in terms of one’s own”\(^7\). Again

\(^6\) Ibid
Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language with Seven Language Dictionary treated the same as a noun term and defined as “1. a habitual disposition to judge foreign peoples or groups by the standards and practices of one's own culture or ethnic group. 2. a tendency toward viewing alien cultures with disfavor and a resulting sense of inherent superiority”\(^8\). William P. Scott said, “An attitude of regarding one's own culture or group as inherently superior. The ethnocentric attitude judges the worth of other cultures in terms of its own cultural standards, and, since other cultures are, of course, different, they are held to be inferior. Ethnocentrism reflects an inability to appreciate the viewpoints of others whose cultures have, for example, a different morality, religion, or language. It expresses an unwillingness or inability to see a common humanity, condition, and problem facing all men in all societies beneath the variations in social and cultural traditions.”\(^9\)

P. Gisbert said, “Ethnocentrism is the exaggerated esteem that people have of themselves whereby they despise foreigners or feel superior to them. In one way or another every group shares in this inasmuch as it is a spontaneous growth or intensification of the ‘we feeling’, which unites the members of the same group. When this feeling grows to exaggerated proportions, we have real chauvinism even among preliterate peoples, who sometimes called

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themselves 'we the men'."\(^{10}\) M. J. Herskovits said, "The primary mechanism that directs the evaluation of culture is ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism is the point of view that one's own way of life is to be preferred to all others. Flowing logically from the process of early enculturation, it characterizes the way most individuals feel about their own culture, whether or not they verbalize their feeling."\(^{11}\) "Ethnocentrism is the partly conscious but largely unconscious tendency, when one comes in contact with "foreigners" (bearers of any strange cultural patterns), to take the culture of one's own group as the basis of one's emotional reactions, cognitive assessments, and aesthetic and moral judgments,"\(^{12}\) Johnson said.

The term was introduced by W. G. Sumner in his Folkways. In his book he said, "Ethnocentrism is the technical name for this view of things in which one's own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it."\(^{13}\) "More specifically, ethnocentrism is regarded as an ideological system regarding groups and group relations. In this system the distinction between ingroups (those groups with which the individual identifies himself) and outgroups (with which he does not have a sense of belonging and which are regarded as antithetical to the ingroups) is of paramount importance. Outgroups

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are the objects of negative opinions and hostile attitudes; ingroups are the objects of positive opinions and uncritically supportive attitudes; and outgroups are regarded as properly subordinate to ingroups.”

D.J. Levinson said. M.B. Brewer and D.T. Campbell said, “Ethnocentrism, as defined by Sumner (1906), is not a unitary concept. As discussed in the introductory chapter, it involves at least four different aspects of group behavior – ingroup integration, self-regard or hyperevaluation of the ingroup, hostile relations between ingroup and outgroup, and derogatory stereotyping of outgroup characteristics.”

Roy Preiswerk said, “The definition of ethnocentrism presupposes an examination of the more general phenomenon of sociocentrism, of which it is only a form, equivalent to the valorization of nation (nationalism) and of social class (class sociocentrism).” Again he said, “In an initial approximation of the term, ethnocentrism could be defined as the attitude of a group which consists of attributing to itself a central position compared to other groups, valuing positively its achievements and particular characteristics, adopting a projective type of behavior toward outgroups and interpreting the out-group through the ingroup’s mode of thinking.” He pleaded the having of three levels of ethnocentrism – micro-ethnocentrism, regional ethnocentrism, and

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macro-ethnocentrism along with three degrees — manifest ethnocentrism, concealed ethnocentrism and ethnocentrism in the form of an apparent eulogy of the out-group. As Jr. Robin M. Williams advocated ethnocentric groups had the following attitudes towards themselves:

i) A belief in the unique value of one’s own group (Oog).

ii) Satisfaction with membership in Oog.

iii) Solidarity, loyalty, or cooperation with regard to Oog.

iv) Preference for association with members of Oog.

v) Belief in the rightness of Oog’s relationships with other groups.

The attitudes toward other groups that often accompanied the above five sentiments, according to him, were:

i) Judging other groups by Oog’s standards.

ii) Belief that Oog is superior to other groups, in all ways or in some ways.

iii) Ignorance of other groups.

iv) Lack of interest in other groups.
v) Hostility toward other groups.  

Sigmund Freud regarded ethnocentrism as a form of narcissism at the group level. In the two books – the Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego and the Civilization and its Discontents his views were pleaded.

A phenomenon called Negative Ethnocentrism could not be neglected. There were cases in which an ingroup had admission of specific points of inferiority in the ingroup's culture in comparison with that of the outgroups. This was termed as Negative Ethnocentrism by Marc J. Swartz. He said, “This negative ethnocentrism has precisely the same structure as the more usual "positive" ethnocentrism. In both cases a specific, not a general, difference is perceived between one group and outsiders. This difference is then referred to the values held in own group and is reacted to in terms of those values. Very often the reaction is one in which own group comes out superior to the other group because in general, as Plato pointed out, “What is honored in a country is cultivated there”, but as I have tried to show, the process is the same even if own group comes out as inferior.”

The same thing was supported by Jr. Robin M. Williams and said, “For instance a

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tribe that prides itself upon its skill in the building of boats can recognize that the products of another tribe represent superior craftsmanship. This admission need not result in a general devaluation of Oog; it is negative ethnocentrism in its admission of specific points of inferiority." In the article "Ethnocentrism" in International Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences, David Bidney viewed ethnocentrism as a fallacy.

An analogy between egocentrism and ethnocentrism could be drawn since ethnocentrism is to the groups as egocentrism is to the individuals.

Thus ethnocentrism could be interpreted as a psycho-socio-cultural cognitive and evaluative concept which could be referred to a set of positive attitudes of a group member toward its own group or culture on the one hand and negative attitudes toward other groups or cultures on the other. It was a belief in the inherent superiority of his own group or culture and inferiority of the outgroups or alien cultures. And it was also a notion that his group or culture must be preferred to outgroups also by virtue of its having superior qualities. It was a cognitive concept because it belonged to the consciousness domain of mind. In addition to this it had innate basis. Therefore, it could be assumed psychological. On the other hand it was social because ethnocentrism presupposed existence of at least two unanalogous groups. It was also cultural.

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because it emerged as a cultural factor. It was a product of culture. Enculturation produced it. Further it was evaluative because it was a primary mechanism of value judgement. Superior or inferior categorization was a product of evaluation.

ETHNOCENTRIC — Adj. term of ethnocentrism.

ATTITUDE — Different interpretations were given on the meaning of ‘Attitude’. Laurence Urdang (Ed.) interpreted it as “manner, disposition, feeling, position, etc., toward a person or thing”23. J. Atkinson, *et al.* interpreted it as “— a relatively stable and enduring predisposition to behave or react in a certain way toward persons, objects, institutions, or issues. Looked at from a slightly different point of view, attitudes are tendencies to respond to people, institutions or events either positively or negatively.”24

G. W. Allport defined an attitude as “a mental or neural state of readiness, organised through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual’s response to all objects and situations with which it is related.”25 F. S. Freeman said, “An attitude is a dispositional readiness to respond to certain situations,
persons, or objects in a consistent manner which has been learned and has become one's typical mode of response.”

According to New Encyclopaedia Britannica attitudes are “predispositions to classify objects and events and to react to them with evaluative consistency”\(^{27}\). Again attitude was interpreted in the said Encyclopaedia as “An orientation toward certain objects (including persons – others or oneself) or situations that is emotionally toned and relatively persistent. An attitude is learned, and may be regarded as a more specific expression of a VALUE or BELIEF in that an attitude results from the application of a general value to concrete objects or situations. An attitude involves a positive or negative evaluation and a readiness to respond to related objects or situations in a characteristic and predictable manner.”\(^{28}\)

Philip B. Gove (Ed.) interpreted it as “1. behaviour representative of feeling or conviction, 2. a disposition that is primarily grounded in affect and emotion and is expressive of opinions rather than belief, 3. an organismic state of readiness to act that is often accompanied by considerable affect and that maybe activated by an appropriate stimulus into significant or meaningful behaviour, 4. a persistent disposition to act either positively or negatively toward a person, group, object, situation, or value.”\(^{29}\)

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\(^{27}\) The New Encyclopaedia Britannica (Micropaedia) (Vol.1) 15\(^{th}\) Edn. 1980.

\(^{28}\) The New Encyclopaedia Britannica (Micropaedia) (Vol.1) 15\(^{th}\) Edn. 1980.

POST — Laurence Urdang (Ed.) indicated it as “an element, meaning “behind”, “after”, “later”, “subsequent to”, “posterior to”, occurring originally in loan words from Latin (post-script), but now used freely in the formation of compound words (postfix; postgraduate; postorbital).”

GRADUATE — A.S. Hornby defined it as “person who holds a degree (esp. the first or bachelor’s) from a university or polytechnic.” Again Laurence Urdang interpreted it as “1. a person who has received a degree or diploma on completing a course of study, as in a university, college, or school. 2. a student who holds the first or bachelor’s degree and is studying for an advanced degree.” Further Philip B. Gove interpreted it as “1. one that has received an academic degree, a diploma, or a certificate, 2. one who has qualified in a particular field or for a particular position, 3. one who has passed through a significant or unusual and specially powerful experience often associated with an institution.”

STUDENT — Laurence Urdang (Ed.) defined it as “1. a person formally engaged in learning, esp. one enrolled in an institution of secondary or higher education. 2. any person who

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studies, investigates, or carefully examines a subject.”

Again Philip B. Gove defined it as “a person engaged in study: one devoted to learning: as a: one enrolled in a class or course in a school, college, or university; b: one who independently carries on a systematic study or detailed observation of a subject.”

POST GRADUATE STUDENTS –, Here referred to the students studying in the 10 universities of north eastern states of India by enrolling themselves as regular students after graduation.

UNIVERSITY –, A.S. Hornby interpreted it as “(college, buildings, etc. of an) institution that teaches and examines students in many branches of advanced learning, awarding degrees and providing facilities for academic research.” Laurence Urdang (Ed.) interpreted it as “an institution of learning of the highest level, comprising a college of liberal arts, a programme of graduate studies, and several professional schools, and authorised to confer both undergraduate and graduate degrees.”

Again Phillip B. Gove defined it as “a: archaic: a body of persons gathered at a particular place for the disseminating and assimilating of knowledge in advanced fields of study, b: an institution of higher learning.

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providing facilities for teaching and research and authorised to
grant academic degrees"38

UNIVERSITIES –, By universities here included the
Arunachal Pradesh University, Assam University, Dibrugarh
University, Gauhati University, Manipur University, Mizoram
University, Nagaland University, North Eastern Hills University,
Tezpur University and Tripura University.

NORTH EASTERN REGION –, By NE region here referred
to the region spread over by the north eastern states of Arunachal
Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland,
Tripura and Sikkim. But for the present study Sikkim was
excluded.

FORMULATION OF HYPOTHESES:

It was certain that attitudes were acquired mental
dispositions. When a self was identified with other selves in a
group and was aware of their togetherness in the poly-ethnic
context ethnocentrism was being conceived. It was not inborn as
instinct. But it seemed as strong as instinct, natural disposition
because it appeared that education which endeavoured to broaden
man’s outlook could not affect this mental horizon. Education was

38 Philip, B. Gove (Ed.) Webster’s Third New International Dictionary of the English
Language unabridged with Seven Language Dictionary, Vol.III, Encyclopaedia Britanica,
INC. Chicago, 1993: page.2502
meant for the modification of behaviour for the goodness of the society in particular and for humanity in general. In a sense, the majority of world population was educated and it was corollary that the world had to have minimal social problems. But, on the contrary, it had experienced a lot of social problems leading to the birth of general contention that the more people educated, the more problems they had. Taking the cue the hypotheses of the present study were put forward into two –

I. Education could not make man free from ethnocentrism.

II. Even postgraduate students of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds of north eastern region universities of India were all equally ethnocentric.

Hypothesis I could be treated as minor because Hypothesis II had to be tested first since main thrust of the study lied here.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

1. Determination of attitude to be measured was the first and foremost thing to be taken up.
2. Determination of attributes of the specific attitude to be scaled was also within the scope of this study.

3. Close examination of the attitude scales constructed earlier and also to find out appropriate techniques of scale construction were to be done.

4. Determination of the type of scale to be constructed was also included in the scope of the study.

5. Conversant with the techniques of attitude scale construction was to be ensured.

6. Preparation of statements to be included in the questionnaire.

7. Determination and selection of the subjects.

8. Try out and selection of items.

9. Determination of internal consistency of the items.

10. Determination of reliability of the test and establishment of validity of the test.

11. Standardisation of the scale with the application of Likert Techniques.

12. Application of standardised scale to the sample population either directly or through mail.
13. Collection of the questionnaires applied to the sample population.


15. Determination of scale values of each and every respondent.

16. Determination of scale values of each and every institutional, ethnic, gender and religious groups.

17. Comparison of groups on the basis of scale values derived.

18. Test of major hypothesis on the basis of scale values.

19. Test of minor hypothesis on the basis of individual scale values vis-à-vis testing of major hypothesis.

20. Determination of vulnerable and nonvulnerable group or groups, if any, on the basis of scale values of the respective groups.

21. Suggest measures to minimise negative results or impacts of blind ethnocentrism.

22. Suggest measures to harness ethnocentrism for positive gains.

23. Suggest curriculum to bring about mutual respect and understanding as well as consciousness of the necessity of
interdependence and coexistence between and among groups.

24. Suggest further research to promote social harmony.

DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY:

It was hard to delimit or demarcate a field of study in social science. Even then a make-shift fence was to be erected. With this view the succeeding paragraph were presented in an attempt to demarcate and delimit the study.

1. It was clear from the title of the study that the study excluded other attitudes than ethnocentrism from the scope of its study.

2. This study also did not embrace other shades of ethnocentric attitudes expressed in other situations than those expressed in the forms of responses to the statements of the prescribed opinionnaire schedule.

3. It was also clear from the title of the study that post graduate students of north eastern region universities of India were the universe or population of the study. However, it could be mentioned here that only those postgraduate students who were undergoing a course of study as regular students at the time of the application of the opinionnaire schedule would be the population of the present study.
4. Not all the students would be covered as subjects of study since cluster sampling method was to be necessarily employed in the selection of subject.

5. Students unwilling to become the subjects of the study would also be undeniably outside the study.

6. Cooperative and willing students would, of course, be the subjects so as to guarantee reliability of the study.

7. Only the students who were more or less permanent residents of the seven (excluding Sikkim) sister states would be the concern of the study though there was a likelihood of inclusion of temporary residents in the selection of sampling subjects.

8. Part-time students would also be outside the purview of the study.

9. Students of only one academic session would be taken as the universe.

10. Students of different university centres, if any, would be excluded from the study.

11. Equal number of sampling subjects would be selected from each and every university.
12. The Students of Assam Agricultural University and Manipur Agricultural University were excluded because they are scattered in centres located in far off places of the same state as well as in far off places of different states which made survey of opinions a task next to impossible.

With the problem at hand and conceptual clarity researcher attempted to achieve the objectives of the study.