CHAPTER X
EVALUATION
In the pre-colonial period most of the communities of North East India, were not conscious about their ethnic identities and their world was confined to their families, clans and villages. The first sociological process has been to develop an ethno-tribal identity which was acquired in the phase of colonial administration. Different cultural linguistic communities want to retain their traditions and relative prestige while desiring to improve their social economic and political status. All these issues involved competition, conflicts and power struggle.

When we study the ethnic movements in NEIL, we find that at the first stage of these movements, there is an assertion of the identity around certain social problems; at the second stage to strengthen identity movement, formal ethnic association or organisation are formed. At the third stage a demand is part forward for a separate administrative arrangement, so that the group concerned can preserve their cultural heritage, language etc. At the final stage there is the demand for separate administrative unit comprising the areas where the ethno-cultural group forms a majority. The agitated ethnic groups have become more conscious of the rising political aspirations.

1* (Nationality ethnicity and cultural identity in NEIL edited by Pakem B. Page - 1)
They are becoming conscious of the fact that in order to acquire the benefits of the modern civilization, they need to be viable in human resources. As a consequence, small and distinct local groups have combined even at a formal level, through the creation of a socio-political organization, to form a larger group and adopt a common appealation such redefinition and expansion of identity may be viewed as an adoptive mechanism in the changed social, political and cultural circumstances. In fact it may be argued that such widening of identity is a development having positive potentials for effective integration of the separate tribal groups in a composite nation state like India.

The tribal movements in NEI stand in a category by themselves, because its unique geographical situation and historical background. Considering the geographical fact, the relative isolation from the cultural influences and from the rest of the country, the dominant form of tribal movements has been political seeking goals of autonomy and freedom through means ranging from constitutional agitation and insurrection, Political processes becoming active on the eve of transfer of power to accommodate tribal aspiration. The Christians played on an important role in the formation of social and political organisation and in the spread of education in Northeast India.

During the time of independence in 1947, two political trends were visible. The first was in favour of asserting more tribal autonomy within the Indian union and the second was motivated by the ideas of independence for tribal areas. The impact of second world war, the policy of colonial administration, the possibilities of freedom in near future, the national movement and communal riots, a growing sense of ethnic identity among different communities in NE and the fear of losing identity all these factors combined together contributed to the growth of ethno political movements in NE.

The tribal movement in North East India is the manifestation of fight for identity although based on ethnic considerations.

The tribal unrest has been contributed by numbers factors. The main factors are -

i) Sympathy from administrators and bureaucrats in dealing with tribal grievances.

ii) Negligence of the government to prevent the passing of tribal lands to the non-tribals.

iii) Lack of credit facilities.

iv) Lack of interest among political elites to solve the tribal problems.

v) The policy of the government for not taking the proper step to rehabilitate tribal people after eviction from the forest land.

Indebtendness is one of the acute issues.
problems. A good portion of tribal land has gone to the hands of the non-tribals. The tribals have demanded that the land should be returned to them. The developmental schemes undertaken by the government have not helped the tribals in improving their economic status. The tribals have been further exploited by the village Mahajans Money-lenders, and landlords. The Banking facilities in the tribal areas are also very limited. They have no alternative then to fall victims to the money-lenders. Unless the government adopts the Agricultural Indebtedness Relief Acts, the tribals have no hope of getting back their mortgaged land. For the over intensified problems have given rise to the tribal unrest and movements. Though there are number of causes of tribal movements we may emphasize upon three: (1) cultural exploitation by outsiders (2) economic deprivation and (3) Political domination. So, the tribal movements have been organised.

i) to gain political autonomy, and

ii) to preserve the socio-economic cultural rights.

All tribal movements have been struggling against all variants of oppression and discrimination, negligence, backwardness, poverty, unemployment and exploitation. In frustration some extremist groups have also emerged. They have resorted to violence against the non-tribals.
The most important factors for the analysis of the tribal movement is unequal development of economy in tribal societies and this uneven growth brought the problems of tribal identity in the lime light. For this reason the tribal movement lies in the conflict for controlling political power and economic resources by the elite of tribal societies and other societies. The rising tribal aspirations are expressed through movements on cultural identity crisis the basis of which is economic. As aspirations rise and economic development is painfully slow and uneven nillocity is bound to grow. The rising middle class and petty bourgeoisie in tribal society are bound to take up arms against their counterparts.

The British was mainly responsible for haptoed to assimilation between plain tribes of Brahmaputra Valley, and all the hill tribes in NEI. The British ruler immediately started their policy of separating the hill tribes from the plains. The "inner line regulation" "excluded area policy" persued by the British, restricted the movement of hills and the plains people, halted the natural spontaneous contact between them, created barriers and prevented the socio-economic and cultural integration. After independence, there is no basic change of the problems. The congress who have ruled India for long years did not try to safeguard the tribals in all over India not only NEI. The congress who
following the British policy in case of tribals.

Political development in NEi since 1952 had been immense with the attainment of Independence. India became conscious of her responsibility towards the tribe. The tribal problems became an integral part of the development of the people as a whole and the constitution expressed this in Art. 46 as follows "the state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interest of the weaker sections of the people and in particular of the schedule caste and schedule tribe and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitations". Art. 44 empowered the president to declare any area as tribal areas under the sixth schedule of the constitution.

Accordingly after independence the tribes organised themselves for their self identity and formed a movement for protection of their constitutional rights. The identity movement turns into a political movement during cultural phase. The organisation of political movement is more complicated than that of social and cultural movement. The main question in the political movement is the leadership ideology. Difficult groups wanted to gain leadership by various means. The political movement does not remain isolated for long from socio-cultural currents. The sixth schedule to the constitution of India has been given legal sanctity to identity movement by providing political mechanism. The
central government appointed the Dhebar commission to recommend the improvement measure of the tribal. The Dhebar commission recommended the establishment of tribal belts and blocks for the protection of tribals.

The birth of united Mikir Hills (now called Anglong) in 1951 as the autonomous district of Assam was the responsible factor of the political movement by Tiwa people. Their policy and the programme aims at the preservation of tribal customs and culture also. The interest of the Tiwas are not confined only to political gains but also to revitalization of their social and cultural life. The fear of domination by the Assamese and the consequent threat of detribalisation hunted the minds of the Tiwa people. That is why, in 1991 census they identified themselves as tribal, not the Assamese. It is also one of the factors of political movement of Bodos, Mishings, Tiwas and Rabhas. It is important to understand that some of their neighbours (non-tribals) getting more facilities and have benefited but their tribal problems remained. So, these tribals of Assam motivated elite of tribals to launch a struggle against the Assamese (non-tribals).

The Lalungs have not succeeded in getting their aspirations fulfilled, the movement stimulated political consciousness and the spirit of ordent nationalism. This consciousness urged the inclusion of the sixth schedule in the constitution and formation of an autonomous council for them. Their movement strengthened their political consciousness.
the one hand and maintained the unity and integrity to build the nationalism on the other hand.

Throughout the whole period of movement, they observing their movement peacefully, democratically, accepting the constitutional path launching "non-violent" and also through able negotiation. This movement helped the leaders in convincing the Assam Government that the main motive behind their demand for an autonomy to retain their tribal identity.

The character of the movement always being maintained and preserve their cultural identity. They observed cultural rally in several times. The leaders themselves repeatedly argued that since the nature of the movement had been political and their aspirations are based on political and economic principles. They wanted to prevent the exploitation and political domination by non-Assamese, part from conserving and developing their language, culture, customs and traditions.

The tribal of NEI are facing serious socio-economic problem. The Assam tribal league which is converted to socio-economic organisation called "Assam tribal league" Co-operated with the govt. of Assam. They also participated in the tribal advisory council also. They realised later on, that their expectations could not be fulfilled. In their disappointment they felt that "beneath all the loudly proclaimed policy there is something else..."
minds of the conditions of their land and law which is responsible for their measurable plight".\(^4\)

The greatest problem of plains tribal is the question of giving adequate protection of their land and to maintain their economic stability. They think that they have been robbed of the constitutional protection contained in the provision for tribal belts and blocks. (Assam Land Revenue Manual 1970). The Bordoloi sub-committee of the Advisory Committee of the constituent Assembly recommended that the plain tribals of NEJ should be treated as a minority and the question of their representation and protection of their land should be considered by the minority sub-committee.\(^5\)

The tribal land was sought to be protected through the application of Assam Land Revenue Regulation 1869, as amended in 1893. But this also not very effective. The tribals desired the recommendations of Dhebar committee concerning the prevention of alienation of land belonging to the tribals should be made effective with retrospective effect from 1950. So, the lalungs demanded autonomy. Before submission the memorandum in 1967, they arrived at the conclusion for demanding autonomy for self-determination. From that time the leaders of the movements moved all most of all the villages of the inhabited area for accepting the public opinion on...

\(^4\) (Tribal movement in NEJ, by Singh, K.S. page-282).

\(^5\) (The tribal movement NEJ, by Singh, K.S. page-256)
mobilization. In several meetings the lalung Darbar, ALMSS and ATSU adopted the principle of non-violence of their struggle for the autonomy. They lead their movement systematically. This systematic movement can be viewed as a socio-cultural process in the evolution of political consciousness among the lalung like Bodos and the other tribals. The movement of the tribals have been demanding (a) amendment of the Indian constitution to provide for the creation of an autonomous state, region, and district for the tribals through the application of the sixth or the fifth schedule (b) stopping the eviction of landless tribals (c) constitution of a separate directorate for tribal education.

The tribal movement forced the central government & the State Government to reformulate its internal policy towards the plain tribals of Assam. The constitutional provisions for the creation of an autonomous state, district council and regional council still exist in our constitution. Therefore, there is definitely a constitutional, a legal basis for demanding the autonomy in Assam. Though the high caste Assamese people do not give much importance but this autonomous movement gradually touched the ordinary tribal areas and its impacts on various ethnic groups of Assam. The leaders of this movement are very young, educated and most of them are below 30 years.

The root of this movement for autonomy
economically backwardness of the tribal areas. The tribals of Assam economically most backward. The Inlangs are not excluded from it. The movement for an autonomy reflects their economic and political frustration. One of the greatest problems of the tribals is land problem. It is also the economic problem. The land has been alienated from the tribals in NFT. Most of the land alienation cases originate due to indebtedness. Generally non-tribals who settled in the scheduled areas advance petty loans to tribals with the motives of grabbing the lands. In the process of money-lending, the sowers do not change interest but they cultivate the lands in lieu of interest generally the poor tribals give mortgage their land for a very petty amount. This method of getting land is prevalent in Jaimala and Sonapur areas.

The lalung is one of the major groups of the plains tribals of Assam. According to the census report of 1971, the plains tribal population was 13,44,020 where the lalung alone 95,609, and according to 1991, plains tribal population is 24,33,899. Although the tribal population has not been published the ratio of tribal and non-tribal population it will not be less than 2,000,00 (lakhs). All the tribals are agriculturists and so, land is their need for them. But they have no sufficient land to meet their requirement.

Unemployment of youths is also one of the
economic problems of the halting Society. Although the constitution of India has provided job reservation for tribal people, the provision has not been implemented. It has been said in statistical data made by Directorate of economics and statistics, Assam that only 5488 plain tribal people have been employed in the government jobs inclusive all the categories out of 100660 jobs in Assam as on 31st March 1975.\(^6\)

The tribal people believe and depend on the goodwill of the government. But the congress government of India and the government of Assam did not take any positive step for the economic development of the tribals. Generally the tribals are simple by nature. Such simplicity of them is capitalized by the shrewd non-tribals. Money-lenders and the money-lenders easily exploit them by various unfair means. The money-lending policy is very harmful to the borrowers but profitable to the money-lenders. The borrowers do not pay interest but made a verbal agreement that money would be returned not in cash but in kind normally paddy.

The problem of alienation of tribal land emerges out of the growing economic depression of tribal families and cultural conflicts. Under the provision of Chapter X of Assam Land Revenue and Regulation act 1886, 38 belts/blocks were constituted by the congress ministry of India, but did not take any measures to protect them for the interest of the tribals.

\(^6\) (Directorate of economics and statistics, Assam)
Again due to various reasons, even the special provisions for bolts and blocks have not been effectively implemented. As a result large scale alienation of tribal land within the TSP area has taken place. The government of Assam armed with the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation (amendment) act 1947 tried to protect the tribals halfheartedly from the clutches of the land hungry outsiders. But still the problem could not solved. Again the amendment of the said act had to be brought in the year 1964, wherein it was specifically mentioned that "notwithstanding anything contrary in any law, usage, contract, agreement, no person shall acquire or possess by transfer, exchange, lease, agreement or settlement of any land in any area or areas constituted in belts and blocks in contravention of the provision of sub-section -(i) from the enactment of the Assam Land Revenue Regulation (amendment) act 1964, no documents as evidence of transaction for acquisition or possession of any land by way of transfer, exchange, lease, agreement or settlement shall be registered under the Indian Regulation act 1908, if it appears to the registraring authority that the transaction has been effected in contravention of the provision of the sub-section-(i)."

But inspite of such benovolent measures from the Govt. side, alienation of tribal lands falling under the tribal belt and block continued. The problem and alienation has pushed the tribals deeper in to society.

* (Alienation of tribal land and indebtedness, edited by Bordolo - B.N. - page - 104)
unemployment and the debt trap. The government admits that the planning and the land policies adopted under the constitutional provisions to safeguard the tribes socio-economic and cultural life have been either neglected or implemented indifferently due to resistance from the vested interests. The same has been the case of autonomy provided through the sixth schedule. It is also failed to provide the much needed protection to the tribals in the absence of political will on the part of caste Hindu Assamese. 

By the establishment of big industry, number of tribal families have been displaced. In Jagiroad area, by the establishment of H.P.C. (Hindusthan Paper Corpn.) Nawgiran more than sixty tribal families have been displaced though the government paid some compensation, which was not sufficient. On the other hand the authority appointed a few men from the displaced tribal families but only in the semi-skilled tribe, others are deprived.

The tribal inhabitants contented that development of certain areas has brought misery, exploitation and destitution to the people. Even Nehru warned nearly fifty and officers for development of tribals should approach tribal people with affection and friendliness and go to liberating force. But in reality all these did not happen to the satisfaction of the tribal people.

8* (Understanding Society and Politics, edited by Hussain G.U. - page 79)

9* (Regionalism and politics of separatism in India, edited by Singh, Rhabani, - page 37)
In Assam there are both hills and plains tribes. At present there are also two hills district in Assam—Karbi Anglong and North Cachar, inhabited by the Karbis and Timjan Kacharis respectively. These two districts have their own autonomous district councils under provisions of the sixth schedule of the Indian constitution providing the tribals with some autonomous powers in managing their own tribal society. However this privilege was not extended to the plains tribes. This had happened because the hills tribals "were acknowledged to be entirely separate from the non-tribals in the Assam, the plains tribes were seen as yet another sub-nationality of the nationality of the Assamese". Therefore the major tribes of plains— the Bodos, the Mishings, Rabhas, Saimas and Deuris did not get autonomy as provided to the hills tribals under the provision of the sixth schedule. Though some of the plains tribals have become very conscious about their distinct identity, it must be admitted that all of them have been contributing very significantly to enrich the composite Asomiya culture, language, literature, art and nationality.

We have studied the social, economic and political development from the very beginning of the tribal movement. At present all the plains tribals have aligned like the hills tribals by the cultural exploitation of the Assamese ruling class. The AGP, too, failed in the tribal movements in Assam. The AGP government failed
P.K. Mahanta and the party did not follow a positive tribal policy. Lack of such a policy of the AGP, many supporters of the tribals left the AGP party and joined in the tribal movement of Bodos, Mishings, Tiwas and the Rabhas.

The socio-political movement of the Tiwas as an aspect of the process of the Tiwas political consciousness for their self-development, has asserted their ethnic identity also. The economic backwardness of the tribal areas and its awareness have helped in the development of political consciousness of the Tiwas. They are feeling that non-tribal areas are more advanced than the tribal areas. The government allotted more money to implement the various schemes for the welfare of the tribals. But the Government officers are always neglecting to properly implement these schemes. The tribal people alleged that they have been deprived of the benefits of the schemes by the corrupt officials.

In the eight five year plan during 1991 - 92 to 1994 - 95 the state government allotted the following amounts to the plains tribes development corporation -

- 1991 - 92 Rs. 540 lakhs
- 1992 - 93 Rs. 530 lakhs
- 1993 - 94 Rs. 552 lakhs
- 1994 - 95 Rs. 607.55 lakhs

out of these amounts in 1994 - 95 Morigaon was allocated
lakhs out of proposed 24 lakhs Nawyaon was given ₹1.5 lakhs against 18 lakhs. 10

After independence, the constituent Assembly appointed a sub-committee under the chairmanship of A.V. Thakkar, on whose recommendations the development of tribal areas become an integral part of development of the Indian people as a whole. Tribal development has been based on a two-pronged approach (a) development activities to raise the level of living of the scheduled tribes (b) protection of their interests through legal and administrative support. The tribal sub-plans evolved for the tribal development programmes.

The amount allocated for the tribal sub-plan in the fifth five year plan (1974-79) was ₹1,100 crore, in the sixth plan (1980-85) was ₹5,535 crore in the seventh plan (1985-90) was ₹10,500 crore. During the seventh plan, the specified objectives set forth under the tribal sub-plan strategy were (i) raising production in the field of agriculture and industries (ii) elimination of exploitation of tribals in money-lending bondage etc. (iii) Development of education, (iv) development of tribal areas, (v) upgrading of environment of tribal areas. But all these schemes were not properly implemented.

The Tiwa people alleged that all the money was not properly utilised by the government and corrupt.

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10* (Annual plan for 1994-95 of plains tribes development corpn., Dispur, Assam)
officials. So, no significant development has been promoted by
the government. On the other hand the officers of the plains
tribes development corporation and the officers of TSI have
complained that all the allotted money has not been released
due to financial crisis of the government. Whatever little
money was released it was not released in time.

The Assam movement has recently become a powerful
factor in causing the movements of plains tribals. These
movements have asserted ethnic identity and autonomy. Yet
there are numbers of tribal communities and their development
has still remained a vital problem. The tribal people were
legally declared the weaker section and the scheduled tribes
to receive all the benefits granted to them. For overall
development of the tribal group, inflow of government money is
there but the administrative machinery and the representatives
of the people should work for the welfare of the tribal.

The only administrative measure is to safeguard
the economic and cultural interests of the tribal communities
and also preserve communal harmony and law and order within
the state. Because the economic deprivation, cultural invasion
and consequent insecurity often manifest themselves in a
form of armed revolution. Unless basic protection is given to
the tribals, all other attempts to bring them to the main
stream of the society would be a futile exercise. To safeguard
their cultural (identity) autonomy the sixth schedule was
incorporated in the constitution with the tribal leaders and their political parties. The government has adopted some policies of economic development of the tribal areas, opening new roads, schools, hospitals, reservation of seats for ST, special safeguard for their land, reservation of jobs in the government services, equal partnership for federal political system for the good will and confidence among the tribals. But all these have proved to be inadequate and unsatisfactory.

However, if we evaluate the Tiwa movement like all other tribal movements of NEI, it appears that the Tiwa community also needs to be developed socially, economically, and politically by introducing new system of administration. Their leaders say "our community can only be developed politically by granting the real autonomy, because political, economic and social developments are inter-related to each other".

For all round development of Tiwa community, the implementation of the sixth schedule is quite essential. For the social and political development of the Tiwa people, as they have distinctive culture and tradition, all should be preserved, and it can be possible only by the protection of tribal belts and blocks.

The contemporary Tiwa movement of Assam, has articulated their grievances at the political level. The impact of their movement is the attention drawn towards the
economic, cultural, and political problems of them. The greatest achievement of the movement is that the government has been compelled to think seriously about the tribal problem. It resulted in granting some sort of autonomy with a new political structure.

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