Contemporary Indian Society

Issues and Challenges with Special Reference to North-East India

Volume–I

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Edited By
Dr. Anga Padu
Assistant Professor, Dept. of Education
Rajiv Gandhi University, Rono- Hills, Doimukh (A.P.)
Mr. Narender Singh
Assistant Professor, Dept. of Education
Rajiv Gandhi University, Rono- Hills, Doimukh (A.P.)

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Preface

Change is the law of nature. Change does occur due to several reasons. It may be evolutionary in nature or forced by circumstances**.** It brings with it many positive and negative impacts. Sometimes it makes one to lead to a path of glory and fame and sometimes to the path of destruction. India too as a nation has passed through both upper mentioned stages it its past. India was known as "Golden Sparrow" because of its wealth and prosperity. It attracted the attention of so many invaders who destroyed its cultural, social, moral and educational fabric. These invasions have impacted India both in positive and negative terms. The huge loss it suffered in its cultural and moral degradation while it gained in world connectivity, language and knowledge expansion.

Contemporary India is a developing country. This transitional stage has its own culture – the culture of confusion. Indecisiveness is its most important symptom. A group of learned people if want to bring change of improvement then others are here to oppose and try to restore the old tradition. They not only support old virtues and beliefs but also go to such an extent that system as a whole is made hostage and leave no space for logic and arguments. Diversity of ideas leads to creativity that paves the path of progress and improvement. It is very heartening to see that "diversity" a unique characteristic of Indian society, which is

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considered as one of the main reason for global recognition, now-a-days seems becoming one of the major cause of various socio-cultural, economic, political and other issues hindering the country's development.

Contemporary India, it seems, is at crossroad. Confusion, indecisiveness and uncertainty are creating chaos. Though continuous collaborative and individual efforts have been made since long to combat various socio-cultural, political and other crisis through reforms and development in the society still casteism, communalism, regionalism, human right violation, violence against women and child, sexual abuse of women and child, drug addiction, alcoholism, corruption, insurgencies, cyber crime and many other kinds of issues are the harsh reality of Indian society in 21st century. Further, being second most populous country in the world, unemployment, poverty, hunger, malnutrition, inflation, inadequate transportation, housing, water, electricity, road, sanitation, health facilities, lack of quality education and environmental issues are posing grave challenges to Indian society.

Northeast India has a unique position in India. Its location and attitude of centre government towards it manifolds its issues and problems. The structure of society in northeast is of tribal and multicultural nature. Connectivity is poor due to its geographical structure that itself is an issue and poses various challenges against reforms. Society slowly has started adopting a modern views but pace is slow. Indigenous tribal values and beliefs are eroding and society is crumbling. Diversity a unique selling point of the northeast is at stake. Extremely diversified structure of society is slowly moving towards common culture which is the biggest challenge of contemporary northeast Indian society. Various tribes are losing their identity in the name of modernization. This change has brought

disorder in educational, health and happiness index of the northeastern society of India. Various issues have cropped up due to change in society's pattern of living and earning while some others issues have their roots in non changing attitude of the society.

Present edited book is the outcome of the national seminar organized by department of education and sponsored by ICSSR-NERC and Rajiv Gandhi University. A total of 35 papers are selected to be published in the form of books. Eight subthemes were identified to be discussed under the main theme-Contemporary Indian Society: Issues and Challenges with special reference to north east India. Volume –I contains eighteen papers encompassing social issues in north east, governance system, women contribution their problems and issues, domestic dilemma, problems of tribal adults, educational standard in north east and attitude of tribal youths towards higher education, health issues and problems of being a writer in tribal states and their contribution for preserving indigenous knowledge intact.

Anga Padu
Narender Singh

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List of Contributors

1. **Dr. Anjali Sharma**, Associate Professor, Department of Education,Tezpur University, Assam, India.
2. **Aman Paron**, Former Research Scholar, Dept. Of Education, RGU, Itanagar.
3. **Dr. Johny Tabing,** Assistant Professor, Dept. Of Education, JN College Pasighat.
4. **Chalak Lowang**, M. Phil. Scholar, AITS, Rajiv Gandhi University, Doimukh.
5. **Dr. Doyir Bagra**, Assistant Professor, Hills College of Teacher Education, Naharlagun, Arunachal Pradesh
6. **Jumter Loya**, Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Political Science, Rajiv Gandhi University, Rono Hills, Doimukh, Arunachal Pradesh.
7. **Kasimang Moyong**, Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, Tezpur University, Assam, India
8. **Kemo Padu**, Lecturer, Political Science, Central Institute of Himalayan Culture Studies (CIHS) Dahung, West Kameng District, Arunachal Pradesh.
9. **Kipa Roni,** Former Ph.D. Research Scholar, Dept. of Education, Rajiv Gandhi University, Rono Hills, Doimukh, Itanagar, Papumpare, Arunachal Pradesh.

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10. **Lama Zangmu**, Ph.D. Research Scholar, Dept. Of Education, RGU, Rono Hills, Doimukh, Arunachal Pradesh.
11. **Professor K. Degi**, Dept. Of Education, RGU, Rono Hills, Doimukh, Arunachal Pradesh.
12. **Mary Pertin**, Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Government College Doimukh, Papumpare, Arunachal Pradesh.
13. **Rigam Kaye**, Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Education, RGU, Rono Hills, Doimukh, Papumpare, Arunachal Pradesh.
14. **M. Mossang**, Assistant Professor in Commerce, J.N. College Pasighat, East Siang Dist., Arunachal Pradesh.
15. **Minam Yomso**, Assistant Professor in Commerce, J.N. College Pasighat, East Siang Dist., Arunachal Pradesh.
16. **Dr. Ashok Sharma,** Post Doc Fellow, Dept. of Commerce, Rajiv Gandhi University, Rono Hills, Doimukh, Arunachal Pradesh.
17. **Dr. Nisanth.P.M**, Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Rajiv Gandhi University, Rono Hills, Doimukh, Itanagar, Papumpare, Arunachal Pradesh.
18. **Dr. Punyo Yarang,** Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Rajiv Gandhi University. Rono Hills, Doimukh, Itanagar, Papumpare, Arunachal Pradesh.
19. **Ramesh Krishna Boruah**, Former Ph.D. scholar, Department of Education, Rajiv Gandhi University, Rono Hills, Doimukh, Itanagar, Papumpare, Arunachal Pradesh.
20. **Sony Dupak**, Research Scholar, Dept. of Education, Rajiv Gandhi University, Rono Hills, Doimukh, Itanagar, Papum Pare, Arunachal Pradesh.

SAMPLE

21. **Dr. B. Reena Tok**, Associate Professor, Dept. of Education, Rajiv Gandhi University, Rono Hills, Doimukh, Itanagar, Papum Pare, Arunachal Pradesh.

22. **Yater Nyokir**, Research Scholar, Dept. Of Tribal Studies, RGU.

23. **Amar Miso**, Assistant Professor, SFS College Aalo, West Siang, Aruanchal Pradesh.

24. **Yonmin Tayeng**, Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of Education, Rajiv Gandhi University, Rono Hills, Doimukh, Itanagar, Papumpare, Arunachal Pradesh.

25. **Mithun Mondal**, Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of Education, Rajiv Gandhi University, Rono Hills, Doimukh, Itanagar, Papumpare, Arunachal Pradesh.

26. **Ms. Yapi Maling,** Research Scholar, Department of Political Science, Rajiv Gandhi University, Rono Hills, Doimukh, Itanagar, Papumpare, Arunachal Pradesh.

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Contemporary Indian Society: Issues and Challenges

Anjali Sharma

Introduction

The paper is themed to raise the issues and challenges of contemporary Indian society. This topic is so vast that it is very difficult to address all the issues. However the author tries to address two most important issues faced by Indian Society nationally and in reference of North east also We know that Indian society is diverse society in terms of culture, language, religion , caste etc. we can visualized the variety within one issue and dialect in languages also. There are ethnic issues and challenges apart from these diversities, contemporary Indian society also facing challenges and global forces and pressure of technology. Now each town and city is converting in metropolitan city day by days. The accelerating pace of globalization and economic growth is having a profound influence on culture and society in contemporary India. The forces of globalization and economic growth reinforce poverty and socio-economic disparities in the country, communal divide, gender and caste violence.

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Due to overall changes coming across the world, Indian society is also stepping to adopt those changes. Now a day's contemporary Indian society has a complex composition. That is diversity in terms of culture, language, religions, regions, communities, rituals, beliefs, multiple interests that may be conflicting with each other. Let's say, on one side it is conscientiously holding the flag of Indian spiritualism in the form of Indian values, festivals, yogic sciences and traditions, and on the other side, it is blindly chasing materialistic pleasures in the form of mall culture, social networking and western lifestyle and enjoying technological advancement in terms of increasing e-governance. So, today's Indian society has complex mix of social demands which is an amalgam of Indian idealism and western pragmatism. In view of these conflicting expectations and these contradictory realities of the contemporary, this paper engages with enduring and emerging issues related to Indian society, before starting the discussion author would like to highlight that to cover this topic need to see from different point of view like anthropological, sociological and economic.

Firstly, from anthropological aspect, we know that three component of the society need more protection and care, If we want to develop the healthy society. They are children, women and elderly people, let us discuss in detail.

- Issues Related to Women
- Issues Related to Children
- Issues Related to Elderly People

Issues related to Woman

Gender discrimination is a challenge exists not only in Indian society but also globally. To initiate discussion we will proceed first through worldwide and then national data.

In 2016, No country had found near less than 50% of their overall gender gap. Global Gender Gap Index 2016, the highest possible score is one (equality) and lowest possible scores is 0(inequality). India ranked at 87 with 0.683 in respect of GGI2016. (World Economic Forum, 2016)

At the same time as a whole, the India ranks 127 thon gender inequality index out of 142 countries. (The Times of India, Nov. 12, 2015).

As per GGI 2016, India stepped up 21 point to secure 87th rank in comparison to 108 positions achieved in2015.On education attainment India has moved up from 125th rank in 2015 to 113th in 2016. On economic participation and opportunity India has moved up to 136 th rank in 2016 from 139th in 2015. On health and survival, it has moved up one rank from last year rank of142nd. India has 9th rank on political empowerment in the world. (Press Information Bureau, Government of India, Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2016).

In North east region the gender wise literacy rate gap in Census 2011 is recorded that Arunachal Pradesh , Assam Manipur and Sikkim has 14.12,11.52, 13.32 and 10.93 however other four states have less than 10 the gender wise gap in literacy rates. (Source: Provisional Population Paper 1 & 2 - Census 2011 ,Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region, North East India):

These reports showed that although the scenario is changing positively yet we have to travel long journey. In Indian families the girl child is not welcoming as male child. The need of girls for food clothing, shelter, healthcare, education, nurture, and time to play often goes unmet. Their rights to safety, freedom from harassment and exploitation, as also their rights to grow, develop and blossom, are denied. Females are discriminated in various fields like health, education

and jobs. Many female babies are aborted, abandoned, deliberately neglected and underfed simply as they are girls. Prejudice against the girl child becomes clearer and sharper from the data in sex ratio in the age group 0-6 years. In the Census, 2011 this ratio has been recorded as 914, down from 927 in the Census, 2001. The child sex ratio has steadily declined from 976 in 1961 to 914 in 2011.

In many communities, this is still reality that women and girls get less food or poor quality food compared to men and boys. When they are ill, they get less attention or receive some attention only when the disease becomes extremely serious. There is ample evidence of disparity in health status between men and women and their access to medical services.

Even though there are growing instances of girls excelling in education, tradition, custom, and social practices place greater value on sons than on daughters, who are often viewed as an economic burden. This attitude of the society also stands in the way of the girl child being able to achieve her full potential. A recent report on the girl child makes the following observations: "Girls are the world's most squandered gift. They are precious human beings with enormous potential, but across the world, they are generally the last to have their basic needs met and first to have their basic rights denied."

In tackling the millennium goal 3: Reducing gender disparity till 2005 at primary and secondary level not later than2015 at all level, government has taken out many schemes to promote education of girls. Reservation of jobs for women and even six months maternity leave is provided to them besides many others. Till now country is not able to achieve this goal, need to do more that the efforts are going on.

Issues related to The Elderly People

Let us start with this statistics that the world population is ageing. Globally, the aged were 8% in 1950, 10% in 2000 and estimated to increase to 21% in 2050. In India, the number of elder persons was 5.6% (25.5 million) in 1961. In 1991 this figure increased to 6.7% (56.6 million). In 2011, it is estimated to increase to 8.1% (96 million) that is expected to grow to 137 million in 2021. The size of the Indian elderly (60 years and above) is expected to triple in the next few decades.

According to Population Census 2011, there are nearly 104 million elderly persons (aged 60 years or above) in India in which 53 million females and 51million males. Both size and share of elderly people is increasing with time from5.6% in 1961 to 8.6% in 2011. Elderly aged males are lower while females were 9.0%. In respect to rural and urban data 71% resides in rural and 29% in urban areas (Population Census, 2011). The old aged dependency ratio climbed from 10.9% in 1961 to 14.2 % in 2011 for India as a whole. For male and female the value was 14.9% and 13.6 % in 2011.(elderly in India, Report,2016).

From this statistical data it is clear that the demographic trend declares that the countries are experiencing ageing of population with elapsed time. The proportion of older people in population of a country is increased. This leads to profound influence on social, economic and political spheres of the country.

Appropriate care and providing support to them is a priority. Therefore the providing social, economic, and psychological support to the aged people is emerging as a fundamental concern of social development.

The economic forces pull out people from their houses and home town to metropolitan and abroad. This led to breaking down the joint family especially in the

urban areas, where nuclear families are the trend; hence the elderly people are out of family picture. The elderly people are facing a lot of problem due to assured and insufficient funds to take care their health and social securities. Apart from this loss of social role and recognition, non-availability of opportunities for creative and effective use of free time and their experiences due to generation gap.

All above discussion reveals that ageing will emerge a serious social challenge in coming future and require vast resources to support them. Contemporary Indian society should have to address this issue. Community support base to the aged is assuming greater importance. Our culture to respect elders should be again imbibed in young generation so that the aged can maintain their self-respect. Remember, the elderly people should be respected. They have looked after you when they were younger and now it is your turn to pay back. You must look after and serve your old grandparents.

Issues related to Children

No country can progress unless it pays adequate attention to the development of children. A child is the future citizen of the country. Only those children who grow in a healthy atmosphere can contribute to the development and strength of their country. Our country has a large population of children. There are 444 million children in India under the age of 18 years. This constitutes 37% of the total population in the country (Census 2011). It is our duty to make sure that they are provided with the opportunities for good health and education.

A large number of children, because of poverty, do not go to school or are withdrawn from schools before they complete their elementary education and are forced to start working at a young and tender age in factories,

brick-kilns, restaurants, hotels, shops etc. There are 10.13 million child labourers (/issues-views/child-labour/) between 5-14 years in India (Census 2011) • India has 33 million working children between the ages of 5-18 years. In parts of the country, more than half the child population is engaged in labour (Census 2011) This hampers their growth physically, mentally, and emotionally. They grow with hatred and agony and fail to become worthy citizens of the nation.

A child in the age group of 6-14 years is supposed to be in the school. But unfortunately, of the 200 million Indian children in this age group, about 11.3 million are laborers. The estimate by NGOs puts it at 60 million, of which 2, 00,000 work as domestic help and almost an equal number as bonded laborers. These children become vulnerable to physical and mental exploitation, they are starved, beaten and even sexually exploited. This is a serious problem and is generally known as 'child abuse'.

There is serious concern that accessibility of education is still awaited. Look this data, 1 in 4 children of school-going age is out of school in our country – 99 million children in total have dropped out of school (Census 2011) • Out of every 100 children, only 32 children finish their school education age-appropriately (District Information System for Education (DISE) 2014-15). Only 2% of the schools offer complete school education from Class 1 to Class 12 (District Information System for Education (DISE) 2014-15. Right to Education Act, 2009 provides for education of all children between the ages of 6-14 years of age. Once this cherished goal of education for all is achieved, the state of our children will be much better.

Secondly, from sociological issue, we need to address social problems due to that society can't grow in healthy manner.