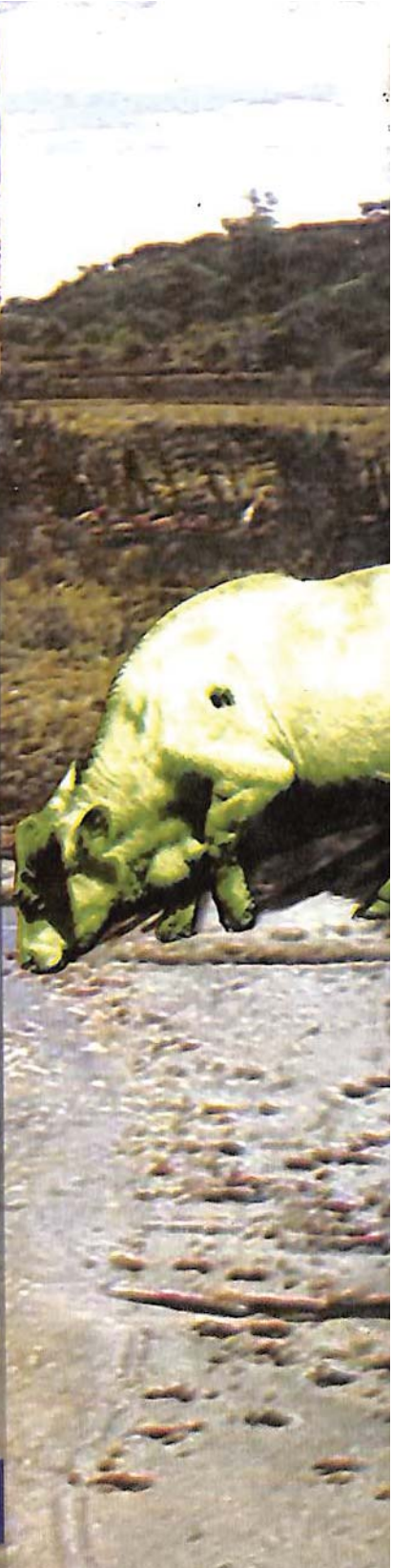




# CULTURAL IDENTITY OF TRIBES OF NORTH-EAST INDIA



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**Jagdish Lal Dawar** : M.A. (English)  
Delhi University, M.A. (History)  
Rajasthan University, M. Phil, Ph.D.  
Centre for Historical Studies, School  
of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru  
University, New Delhi.

Presently Reader, Department of  
History, Arunachal University,  
Itanagar.

His doctoral work was on Premchand  
and he has authored several articles  
on the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh.  
Presently he has been taking, keen  
interest in the area of 'cultural  
studies'.

# Cultural Identity of Tribes

of

## North-East India

(Movement for Cultural Identity Among the Adis of Arunachal Pradesh)



Jagdish Lal Dawar

*Head,*

Dept. of History & Ethnography,  
Mizoram Central University,  
Aizawl



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## Preface

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This book is the slightly revised version of the Project Report titled *Movements for Cultural Identity among the Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh since 1950's : A Case study of Aids*, submitted to the Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi. I am highly obliged to the authorities of ICHR for granting me the project.

Recalling the names of all who helped and assisted me in the preparation of this book is an almost impossible task; some are likely to be missed. The individuals and institutions I acknowledge below are just those that readily come to my mind; I beg the indulgence of others.

I am highly indebted to Prof. K.N. Panikkar who had supervised my Ph.D. work in Jawaharlal Nehru University and taught me the methods of historical research during 1981 - 1990. I am grateful to Prof. Bipan Chandra who provided me not only encouragement to pursue research but also valuable suggestions from time to time. I am grateful to Mr. Joram Begi, the former Registrar, Arunachal University and Prof. A.C. Bhagabati, the former Vice-Chancellor, Arunachal University for rendering me help whenever I approached them.

In fact, Prof. A.C. Bhagabati's name deserves special mention here since he provided me the anthropological tools for conducting field work and also clarifying and correcting many of my pre-conceived notions about tribal societies in general and of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh in particular. I also acknowledge my thanks to Prof. Dwivedi, the Vice-

(vi)

Chancellor of Arunachal University for reminding me all the time to finish the work in hand as soon as possible. I derive a sense of inspiration from his spirit in encouraging all the faculty members to engage in research activities. But I would be failing in my duties if I don't thank Prof. Tamo Mibang who initiated me into tribal studies. It is he who first of all advised me to do some research on the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. I also thank Dr. Tai Nyori, the controller of Examinations, Arunachal University who is a prominent intellectual of the Adis and a eminent scholar and who has always been helping me in terms of providing the information not only on Adis but also on the other tribes of Arunachal Pradesh.

Besides I am indebted to large number of my friends and colleagues who had been source of inspiration in terms of discussion on various aspects of society. Some of these are : Bhagwan Josh, Manjit, S.V. Srinivas, N.C. Roy, P.K. Kuri, M.C. Behra, Deepak Mishra, A. Mitra, Sarit Chaudhury, Sucheta Sen Chaudhury, Tana Showren, Ashan Riddi, N.T. Rikam, Deepak Singh and Amarender Senger. I am specifically grateful to M.C. Behra who advised me to get the book published from Commonwealth Publishers.

I also thank the non-teaching staff of Arunachal University, particularly the Library Staff for providing me all types of assistance. I am also indebted to the staff of Nehru Memorial Centre for Contemporary Studies, Teen Murti House, New Delhi for rendering all types of help.

I am very grateful to my brothers Shri Roshan Lal Dawar, Shri O.P. Dawar and Mrs. Sneh Dawar (my sister-in-law) for helping me with secretarial work. Lastly, the entire credit of this book goes to my wife Smt. Usha Dawar, my daughters Shivali and Bhoomika who had to suffer a lot for not providing them sufficient time in domestic chores.

Whatever, the shortcoming left in this book the blame entirely goes to me.

Jagdish Lal Dawar

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## Glossary of Indigeneous Terms

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1. Abang : The sacred lores of the Adis.
2. Apong : Adis' Rice beer.
3. Bango Kebang : A Bango Kebang is one which all constituted with more than one village Kebang. Hence it is powerful.
4. Bogum Bokang : It consists of more than one Bango.
5. Dere : It is an Adi Community Hall in which all kinds of meetings are held, the young boys sleep at night and guests are received.
6. Gangin : Temple.
7. Gam : The village headman. In a village there are more than one gam, a social title for administration and social purposes. The most influential one is known as head gam.
8. Kebang : The village council.
9. Kadens : Friends.
10. Miri : Traditional priest.
11. Ponung : Dance.
12. Mithun : An animal which was used by Adis as an exchange and also for sacrifice during festivals and other poojas.
13. Nyibu Agoms : Sacred lores.
14. Yaba : The Adi elderly people use 'Ya' in place of the first syllable of a girl's name to make it a pet name.



## Chapter – 1

# Introduction

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Arunachal Pradesh is bounded by Bhutan on the West, Tibet and China on the North. On its South-East lies Burma whereas Assam stands on the southern boundary. Arunachal lies between 26° 28' N and 29° 30' N latitude and the longitude 91° 30' E and 97° 30' E. It covers an area of roughly 83,578 sq.kms. In 1961, its total population was 2,97,573. In 1971, 1981 and 1991 it was 4.68 lacs, 6.32 lacs and 8.65 lacs respectively.<sup>1</sup> It consists approximately of 26 major tribes and 110 sub-tribes and about 100 dialects (roughly).<sup>2</sup>

### Historical Background - A Brief Outline

Before the British annexation of Assam in 1826, the Ahom rulers had followed a policy of appeasement to prevent the tribesmen from raiding the villages in the plains. The ahom rulers arranged some sort of subsidy called *Posa* to be paid by some peasant families in cash or kind or both to the tribesmen. And if this policy failed to conciliate them punitive expeditions to punish the guilty hillmen were sent by the Ahom rulers.<sup>3</sup>

The British continued with the Ahom policy to frontier tribes with certain modifications in the payment of *Posa*. During Ahom rule the tribesmen collected their subsidies directly from the villages while the British officials made an agreement with the different tribes to collect *Posa* directly from the government. British also continued the policy of using military power in case of failure of the policy of conciliation.<sup>4</sup>

By the end of 1860's the British had evolved this policy

towards the frontier tribes of the North-East India which was essentially a policy of non-interference.<sup>5</sup> The introduction of Inner-line in the Lakhimpur and Darrang in September 1875 and March 1876 was basically an extension of the policy of non-interference.<sup>6</sup> However, as a result of developments in Lhasa in August, 1910, Chinese activities on the frontier and murder of Williamson, Assistant political officer, Sadiya in March 1911 at the hands of Abors, the British policy of non-interference was "replaced by a policy of loose political control."<sup>7</sup> According to D. P. Choudhury :

The new policy had two distinct but inseparable aspects. On the one hand, the tribes were to be properly controlled, while on the other, the frontier was to be protected from any Chinese penetration or invasion. One without the other was impossible.<sup>8</sup>

The most important step in this regard was 'definition of Indo-Tibetan boundary.' And therefore, the Indo-Tibetan boundary took a final shape in 1914. It is known as Mac Mohan Line.<sup>9</sup>

In 1921, the Governor-General, acting under the Provisions of the Government of India Act of 1919, designated all the tribal areas of Assam as 'backward tracts.'<sup>10</sup> This regulation, "in effect, barred both the central Indian legislature and the Legislative Council of Assam from enacting legislation for the tribal areas without the express consent of the Governor-General or the Provincial Governor."<sup>11</sup> Thus while the north-east frontier tribal areas "were constitutionally a part of assam, the Government of Assam was denied a direct voice in the administration and governance of the area."<sup>12</sup> The Government of India Act of 1935, based on the recommendations of the Simon Commission, had done away with the terminology of Backward Tract and rechristened these areas as "Excluded Areas' and 'Partially excluded Areas."<sup>13</sup> The Balipara, Sadiya and Lakhimpur-Frontier tracts of NEFA were all designated as 'excluded areas.'<sup>14</sup> These were to be administered by the Governor of Assam under the general control of the Governor-General and with the assistance of an Adviser of Tribal areas and states.<sup>15</sup>



The question whether the Governor of Assam should be "allowed to retain his discretionary powers with regard to the tribal areas of the north-east India continued to be hotly debated in the Constituent Assembly which formulated and approved the Constitution of Independently India."<sup>16</sup> The Constituent Assembly of India had set up an Advisory committee on Fundamental rights, Minorities, Tribal and Excluded Areas under the chairmanship of Sardar Ballavbhai Patel.<sup>17</sup> For the North-East Frontier Tribal Areas and Assam Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas a sub-committee with five members was set up under the chairmanship of Gopinath Bordoloi, the then Chief Minister of Assam. (called Premiers at that time).<sup>18</sup> This sub-committee had submitted its report on July 28, 1947. Since the drafting of the constitution had already begun, the recommendations of the sub-committee were directly incorporated in the Draft Constitution.<sup>19</sup> Its recommendations were :

We recommend that when the Central Government which now administers these areas (and which we consider it should continue to do with the Government of Assam as its agent) is of the view that the administration has been satisfactorily established over a sufficiently wide area, the Government of Assam should take over that area by the strength of a notification.<sup>20</sup>

The recommendation thus had two parts, namely : (1) Immediate replacement of the 'Governor' of Assam by the 'Government' of Assam as Agent to the Central Government'; (2) Full merger of the Frontier Tracts with Assam at a future date after administration had been fully installed over the whole area.<sup>21</sup> The first was realised by the India Provisional Constitution order of 1947, and remained effective until the position was reversed.<sup>22</sup> The second part was "never to come about as the political fortune and circumstances rapidly changed in the post-independently period."<sup>23</sup>

The 1950 Constitution virtually re-enacted the provisions of the Government of India Act 1935 as they applied to the excluded areas.<sup>24</sup> The other most important factor which possibly influenced the decision against direct extension of

the Government of Assam to the Frontier Tracts was the emergence of Communist Government in China in 1949.<sup>25</sup> India's recognition of Tibet as an autonomous region of China had greatly changed the geo-political perspective of the international border in the north of the region.<sup>26</sup> The authority of the Governor of Assam acting in his discretion over the North-East Frontier Tracts as Agent to the Central Government was restored under the Constitution. A new and significant development was appointment of the external Affairs Ministry to act as the administrative agency for the President, and was, therefore, granted ultimate responsibility for the administration of this sensitive area.<sup>27</sup> On January 26, 1950, the adviser to the Governor of Assam assumed direct charge of the administration of the North-East Frontier Tracts, though his Secretariat was not separated from the Secretariat of the Tribal Affairs Department of the Government of Assam until June 1950.<sup>28</sup> After the separation, the civil servants of the Assam cadre were gradually replaced.<sup>29</sup>

The promulgation of the North-East Frontier (Administration) regulation, 1954, inaugurated a full-scale and integrated administration for the entire area under the designation of the North-East Frontier Agency-NEFA for short - for the first time.<sup>30</sup>

The constitutional separation of NEFA from Assam was finally brought about by the North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act of 1971 which converted it into a Union Territory under a Chief Commissioner.<sup>31</sup> Early in 1971, "the Agency Council recommended a change of name in favour of 'Arunachal Pradesh' for NEFA against minor opposition from a section of NEFA students."<sup>32</sup> So NEFA came to be known as Arunachal Pradesh now-on-wards. It was declared a State in 1987.<sup>33</sup>

### **Cultural Zones of Arunachal Pradesh**

Verrier Elwin divided the NEFA into three main cultural areas :<sup>34</sup> (a) People of western Kameng, namely Monpas and Sherdukpanis who are inspired by Buddhist ideas.<sup>35</sup> They are to a "great extent under the influence of lamasery of Tawang."<sup>36</sup>



Both these tribes "combine in their religion and mythology traditional tribal ideas with the Buddhist theology."<sup>37</sup> In fairly close "geographical proximity live the Buguns (Khowas), Hrussos (Akas) and Dhammais (Mijis) who, although not Buddhists, share some aspects of their neighbours' cultures."<sup>38</sup> The Membas and other tribes living along the northern frontier may be conveniently grouped with them and so may be the Buddhist Khamptis and Singhphos.<sup>39</sup> (b) The central area is populated by a large number of tribal groups : Nishing (Daflas), Tagins, Hill Miris, Apa Tanis, Adis (Abors), Mishmis (Idu, Digaru and Miju). (c) The third group inhabiting the eastern Arunachal Pradesh is comprised of : Wanchos, Noctes and Tangsas. Noctes have "adopted a very elementary form of Vaishnavism."<sup>40</sup>

However, Parul Dutta and Syed Ishteaque Ahmad, the editors of volume XIV *Arunachal Pradesh* of the People of India Project have divided the cultural fabric of Arunachal Pradesh broadly into five cultural zones. These are : "(a) The Mon cultural zone, which covers the Tawang and Sherdukpens. The Akas, Mijis and Khowas also belong to this zone. (b) To the east of the first zone lies the Nishi cultural zone encompassing the Bangnis of the East Kameng district, the Nishis of the Lower and Upper Subansiri districts and two unique communities—the Sulungs and Apatanis. Other groups living in the zone include the Nas, Tagins, Mikirs and Hill Miris. (c) The Adi cultural zone extends from the eastern part of the Upper Subansiri district to the western boundary of the Dibang Valley district, covering all the Adi sub-groups as well as the Khambas, Membas and Mishings/Miris. (d) The Mishmi cultural zone, covering the districts of the Dibang Valley and Lohit, is predominated by the three groups of the Mishmi community, and among them lives a small community—the Zakhrings/ Meyors. Other communities in this zone are the Khamptis, Khamiyangs, Deories, Chakmas and Tibetans who are settled in the plains bordering Assam. In the past, the Khamptis and Khamiyangs have functioned as liaison between the Mishmis and people of Assam. (e) The nocte-Tangsa cultural zone is spread over the Tirap and Changlang

districts. The major communities of this zone are the Noctes' Wanchos and Tangsas, with the Singhpos, Sonowal Kacharis, Lisus and Nepalis being the small groups inhabiting the area."<sup>41</sup>

Why is this difference between the two approaches, that is between Elwin and the editors of People of India series? Firstly, the two works were written during different periods, the former in 1958 and the later one in 1995. The Na tribe mentioned in the second cultural zone by the editors of people of India series was discovered in recent times. The Chakmas were settled in Arunachal Pradesh in 1964 and are given the status of refugees till today, so is true of Tibetans. The Nepalis were settled after Indo-China war and they are the descendants of the ex-soldiers and are not considered as the indigeneous group. The Lisus have not been recognized as the tribe by the Arunachal State Assembly. The Mikirs, Sonowal Kocharis and Deories are regarded as the tribes of Assam. Secondly, Verrier Elwin divided NEFA into three broader cultural areas on the basis of indigeneous beliefs and practices while the editors of the People of India series have not taken this into consideration and that seems to me the basis of discrepancy between the two authors.

### **The Adis**

The tribes belonging to the central areas of Arunachal Pradesh : The Nishis, Tagins, Hill-Miris, Apatanis, Adis and Mishings (also in Assam) are grouped into Tani group of tribes. All of these tribes claim themselves as the direct descendants of their great legendary Human Father, called ABO TANI. The people of these tribes "are the ardent believers of a faith, called Donyi-Polo. By Donyi, they literally mean the Sun and Polo stands for the Moon. The conjugation of DONYI and the POLO becomes a strong channel of socio-cultural aspiration of the Tanis."<sup>42</sup>

The Adis, the subject of this study, constitute one of the major tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. They are found in the three Siang districts, *i.e.* East Siang, West Siang and Upper Siang, the eastern fringe of the Upper Subansiri and the South-



western part of the Dibang valley districts. These areas lie, roughly speaking, between the subansiri river on the west and the Dibang valley on the east, Tibet on the north and parts of the districts of Lakhimpur and Dibrugarh of Assam in the South.<sup>43</sup> The Census of India, 1971 puts the number of Adis at 93,496 out of the total population of 4,69,511 of Arunachal Pradesh and thus they formed about 20% of the total population of the State.<sup>44</sup>

"The word Adi" says Elwin "covers a large number of tribal groups, united by a language that inspite of dialectical variations is fundamentally everywhere the same, and by a similar culture and temperament."<sup>45</sup> The Adis are divided into two broad groups : (a) Padam-Minyong group consisting of ten sub-tribes : the Minyongs, Padams, Pasis, Panggis, Milangs, Karkos, Shimongs, Tangams, Ashings and Boris;<sup>46</sup> (b) The Galo group comprised of four sub-tribes : Galos, Pailibos, Ramos and Bokars.<sup>47</sup> The two groups occupy almost two equal halves of the total area of the Adis. The rivers Sido and Siyom, roughly speaking, form the dividing line between the two groups, leaving the first group on the eastern and the second on the western halves.<sup>48</sup>

The Adis were known by the word 'Abors' earlier. The origin of the word 'Abor' has been interpreted variously.<sup>49</sup> According to one interpretation, it is Assamese in origin meaning savage, independent or hostile.<sup>50</sup> A second explanation is that "the name is an Assamese adaptation of an original Adi word which has since fallen into disuse."<sup>51</sup> A third interpretation is that it may have "some connection with Abo, the first man, according to Adi mythology, to whom they trace their origin."<sup>52</sup> The Assamese used the word in two senses. In the wider sense it meant independent, unruly, savage and so on, and as such it applied indefinitely to almost all the hill tribes on both sides of the Brahmaputra valley.<sup>53</sup> In its narrower sense it meant particularly the hillmen living between the Subansiri and the Dibang. Today it is used only in the second sense.<sup>54</sup>

The Adis have dropped this nomenclature 'Abor' and prefer to be called as 'Adi' which in their own language,

literally means 'hill' and thus in its extended and final sense 'the people living in the hills' or briefly hillmen'. Elwin says "they themselves have suggested and the administration has accepted, that they should be called Adis or hill men."<sup>55</sup> Its history goes back to the first Bogum Bokang Kebang held on 21st and 22nd March 1949 at Pangin village.<sup>56</sup> The leaders who organised this Kebang were : late Kuttik Moyong, retired political Assistant, late Kep Taying Ex. Agriculture Inspector and late Tamik Dabi Ex Area base Superintendent.<sup>57</sup> In that "Bogum Bokang the issue of the use of the derogatory word Abor was discussed and a resolution was adopted to supplement the tribe name Abor with Adi which means the Hill-men."<sup>58</sup>

All the sub-groups, namely : Minyongs, Gallongs, Pasis, Padams, Milangs, Karkos, Simmongs, Boris, Bokars, Komkar, Ramo, Railipos, Ashings, Panggis, Tangams were "included in the general Adi banner."<sup>59</sup> The matter was referred to Administration of NEFA and was approved.<sup>60</sup> Since then, they have been mentioned as Adis in various records and research monographs.<sup>61</sup> In a way it was the first important step towards forging of larger identity as well as cultural identity *vis-a-vis* the nomenclature provided by the 'other'.

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## Chapter – 2

# Nationalist Discourse and Cultural Hegemony in NEFA

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### I

During the 1950's the policy-makers of the Indian State had to grapple with the question of integration of NEFA with the Indian 'mainstream'.<sup>1</sup> The most important exponents of the formulation of this policy towards NEFA were : Sir Akbar Hydari and Jairamdas Daulatram (both of whom were Governors of Assam), N.K. Rustomji and K.L. Mehta (the two advisers to the Governor of Assam), Jawaharlal Nehru (the then Prime Minister of India) and Verrier Elwin, the adviser, Tribal Affairs to the Governor of Assam. However, Elwin played the key role since 1953 and largely moulded the Government's policy towards NEFA. The policy pursued in NEFA during this period is generally known as Nehru-Elwin policy. The cultural movement in Arunachal Pradesh will have to be understood in the light of discourse<sup>2</sup> provided by these policy makers. Movement for cultural identity is an important aspect of this cultural movement. The tenor of this discourse may be summed up in Elwin's words :

*Our policy is to develop the tribe along the lines of their own tradition and genius. The whole stress of NEFA policy is on change. We are all aware that very great changes, which we hope will be enriching rather than impoverishing, will come,*



but we would like to see these come, *not as imposed break with the past*, but by a natural evolution from it... There should be *no forcible imposition of another culture and... the old culture should be helped to grow and develop into the new.*<sup>3</sup>

In this respect the "minds of the people" must be diverted from "political issues to cultural pursuits."<sup>4</sup> It was believed to have "a political value." It was to "impress upon the people that we are not strangers, but can fit into the patterns of their own life."<sup>5</sup> The main purpose was to create a sense of legitimacy by filling the gap between "us" and "they." It would help "the local people and ourselves in one family with as little difference between us as possible."<sup>6</sup> In a nutshell the most effective method of integration was by way of exercising cultural hegemony.

The concept of cultural hegemony is associated with the work of Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, who developed his thoughts on this subject in *Prison Note Books* written between 1929 and 1935 during his incarceration in a fascist prison at Turi in Southern Italy.<sup>7</sup> The concept is related to the question of dominance and subordination in modern capitalist societies. A condition of hegemony exists when a 'fundamental social class' in 'the decisive nucleus of economic activity' exerts 'moral' and 'intellectual' leadership over both allied and subordinate social groups through the creation and perpetuation of legitimate symbols. The ruling group must also seek to win the consent of subordinate groups to the existing social order.<sup>8</sup> Hegemony simply requires that the subordinate be accomplices in perpetuating the symbolic structures that uphold existing inequalities.<sup>9</sup> In Arunachal Pradesh, the attempt to elicit the consent was made initially (especially upto 1962) by appropriating the tribal cultural practices.<sup>10</sup>

Culture is the site where the Indian State attempted to construct popular legitimacy and consent in NEFA. I am here, subscribing to Gramscian definition of the state :

State is the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance but manages to win the active consent over whom it rules.<sup>11</sup>

The defining characteristic of the modern democratic State, according to Gramsci, is its educative and formative role. The State organises society on a broad front through practical, moral and intellectual 'leadership' :

Every state is ethical in as much as one of its most important functions is to raise the great mass of the population to a particular cultural and moral level; a level (or type) which corresponds to the needs of the productive forces for development, and hence to the interests of the ruling classes. The school as a positive educative function, and the court as a repressive and negative educative function, are the most important state activities in this sense; but in reality, a multitude of other so-called private initiatives and activities tend to the same end—initiatives and activities which form the apparatus of the political and cultural hegemony of the ruling classes.<sup>12</sup>

## II

The 'communist occupation of Tibet' and penetration of Christian missionaries from Assam to NEFA created a feeling among some of the political leaders that some strong steps would have to be taken to bring about "cultural and emotional integration of this area with the rest of the country."<sup>13</sup> After the Indian debacle in the Sino-Indian border conflict in 1962, and the demise of Nehru and Elwin in 1964, the so-called Nehru-Elwin policy was gradually abandoned. The exercise of cultural hegemony now takes a different direction. Now-on-wards the developmental programmes began to be introduced rapidly. In 1967 the North-East Frontier Agency Panchayat Raj Regulation was promulgated by the President of India. It was passed to be implemented in 1969.<sup>14</sup> Thus there was super-imposition of 'mainstream' political structure over her traditional autonomous socio-political institutions. It brought about series of changes in tribal polity.<sup>15</sup> Now-on-wards less attention was paid to the appropriation of tribal culture and more on exercising the 'mainstream' cultural hegemony.<sup>16</sup>



### III, STRATEGIES OF EXERCISING CULTURAL HEGEMONY

Though various strategies were adopted to exercise cultural hegemony I would be taking three aspects in detail. These are : (a) Education, (b) Architectural designs and (c) Popular culture.

#### III (a)

##### *Education*

Education is one of the important institutions through which the Indian State organized popular consent. Schooling was made as a means of moulding popular consciousness.

Prior to 1947 only two lower primary schools had been established in NEFA and both of these were located at the foot of the hills.<sup>17</sup> There are no census figures on literacy for NEFA earlier than 1961; "the best guess is that, as of 1950, there were only a few hundred literate tribesmen and that of these only a handful had been more than a primary education."<sup>18</sup> By 1961, literacy rate as shown in the Census of 1961 was only 2.3 percent among the tribal population of NEFA. A rapid expansion of education became one of the primary objectives of administration after 1950.<sup>19</sup>

The emphasis in the overall content of education was on national integration. Some illustrations from the policy document related to *Border Area Schools* would bring this point more clearly.<sup>20</sup> Stating the aims in Border Area schools, it was directed :

It is proposed to rejuvenate the schools in the Border Areas and afford the children an opportunity for integrated education, thus bringing out all that is best in them. The other aims are to build up a feeling of self-respect and self-reliance, enlighten them as to what is great and good in our constitution, our history, our people, inculcate love for democratic living and develop in them the keenness to learn about the variety and sublimity of our culture, arts, philosophy, dress and languages.<sup>21</sup>



In the 'rejuvenation programme' the Time-table proposed for the Border Area Schools included :

The classes will begin every day with a common gathering of the staff and the students, where the following will be done after roll-call :

- (i) A prayer in the local dialect (if such a prayer is in existence).
- (ii) The pledge given below will be taken by all (this will be translated in the local language).

### *Pledge*

'India is my country, all Indians in the hills or in the Plains, in the north or in the south, are my brothers and sisters.

'I love my country, and I am proud of its rich and varied heritage. I shall always strive to be worthy of it.

'I shall give my parents, teachers and all elders, respect and treat everyone with courtesy. I shall be kind to animals.

'I hereby take this solemn pledge that I will do everything possible to help to live in unity and shall consider all people of India as my own kith and kin; I shall be prepared to make any sacrifice and even lay down my life for the security and honour of my beloved country.<sup>22</sup>

Another important aspect of this Time-Table was :

'Before the dispersal of the students to their classes, they will sing full-throated, the National-Anthem which will be played and the students will be required to catch the correct tune. The meaning of the national Anthem shall be told in very simple language so as to drive home into their minds the value of the National Anthem. Emphasis should be laid on 'Himachala' clearly bringing out that the hills of NEFA are branches of the greater Himalayan range. The rivers of NEFA also merge in other great rivers of India and so the people of NEFA are included among the people of the areas mentioned in the National Anthem.<sup>23</sup>

One of the 'Extra-curricular activities was the conducted Tours :

The students from the Border Areas must be taken on 'Bharat Darshan' tours, twice each year. One such occasion could be the Republic day celebrations. These tours afford the students an opportunity of freely mixing with the students of other states, as also seeing for themselves the progress that India is making, and will inculcate a feeling of oneness.<sup>24</sup>

One of the Duties and Responsibility of a teacher in the Border Schools was "not only" to "instill in the child love for what is good and beautiful in his society but also for India and all people residing in it."<sup>25</sup> "Above all things," the teacher of the Border Area schools "should be patriotic in speech, thought and action."<sup>26</sup> He was supposed to be "thoroughly imbued with patriotic fervour so that he can inspire the students with the same spirit."<sup>27</sup>

The above discussion clearly brings out that education was utilised as a potent instrument for exercising nationalist hegemony over the people of NEFA.

### III (b) (i)

#### *Architectural Designs*<sup>28</sup>

Architectural designs to be followed in the construction of public buildings (Government buildings, schools, hospitals, museums etc.) formed part of the exercising of cultural hegemony. It was agreed upon by the policy-makers to adapt "some of the attractive features of the local tribal constructions"<sup>29</sup> in the design of the public buildings. In the senior officers conference held in 1954 it was recommended :

The architecture of the Educational Institutions should be adapted to the local pattern and some representation of the structural art of the local people should be made to fuse with the construction plan of our buildings, particularly, the school buildings.<sup>30</sup>

It was accepted in principle that building should "grow out of the landscape."<sup>31</sup> As Prime Minister himself pointed out "a building has to fit in with the surroundings and with the purpose in view."<sup>32</sup> The use of "brick and mortar" buildings was cautioned against because firstly, it was costlier and



secondly these "do not fit in at all with their surroundings."<sup>33</sup> Moreover, it was believed that the cement houses and CIG roofs in villages would "create a gulf between our officers and the people."<sup>34</sup>

Before utilising the traditional architectural designs it was kept in mind the pattern was not to be uniform throughout NEFA. Since this region constitutes of heterogeneous cultures it was suggested that the designs were to be adapted taking into consideration the specificity of the cultural traditions of the tribe concerned. For example at Tezu it was decided to "use some Khamti temple design for the roof."<sup>35</sup> In the Siang district it was suggested to construct buildings along the lines of the *dere*, *moshup* or *bango* :

Long buildings with hearths down the centre, raised on platforms, with a sitting platform at each end, and a small veranda all around.<sup>36</sup>

It was suggested by Elwin that "all school buildings" and also all other official buildings, "the floor will be raised off the ground and will be made of bamboo in a style designed by official architects."<sup>37</sup>

Another important feature of the traditional houses is the sitting platform, "which is a very useful adjunct to any building as it enables the people to sit and warm themselves in the sun."<sup>38</sup> It was emphasised to incorporate this feature in the official buildings. It would be useful even in front of a P.O's or A.P.O's bungalows.<sup>39</sup> It would serve a practical purpose besides adapting the traditional practice : "The tribal visitors would be quite happy to sit smoking or talking on it while waiting for an interview."<sup>40</sup> It was considered very essential for schools, hostels or staging-huts.<sup>41</sup>

Another important features of traditional architectural design is the practice of keeping a central fire-place. It was suggested to follow this pattern in the buildings to be constructed. As Superintendent Engineer in his note dated 30-6-60 to Elwin wrote :

The existing policy is to provide central fire-places in buildings which will normally be used by tribal people, as they are accustomed to such type of fire-places.<sup>42</sup>



The introduction of central-hearths (fire-places) was given very importance. The policy-makers were aware that after having acquired modern education which is alien to the tribal traditions, the students may well become misfits in them :

Students, whether in our schools or CITPC's, who live in hostels that are totally different from their own, will be less likely to return to their villages and may well become misfits in them.<sup>43</sup>

Therefore, in order to create the some environment as it exists in their homes, it was suggested to create central hearths in the school buildings, especially in the hostels, so that "the boys would feel at home" and "would be healthier."<sup>44</sup> It was tried in some of the inter-village schools.

### III (b) (ii)

However, it was found that many of the tribal architectural adaptations which were utilised in *Bash type* buildings were not suitable in H. T. type buildings. Thus in a note dated 18-5-60 it is indicated :

If we are going to have chairs, tables and beds in a room there is not much point in having the central hearth which does not fit in very well with the furniture.<sup>45</sup>

The note further clarifies how it was not possible from practical point of view :

The buildings designed on the general plan of a Mishmi house do not work out very successfully in a HT building. The Mishmi house, with its low roof and six or eight small rooms, opening out of a corridor, is a very different thing from a building containing two rooms and a small veranda which is shut in by a low or high walls which does not come up to the roof.<sup>46</sup>

Therefore, the corridor was dropped from the plan.

Therefore, a process of selection, rejection and modification of the forms was involved to suit the altered conditions. Here the question of hygiene was given the utmost importance :

The tribal houses themselves require some modifications because they do have a number of un-hygienic disadvantages which in the interest of health must be removed. We, therefore, must give attention to housing and here again evolve designs which would certainly retain the *existing attractive features* of the tribal Houses *but also suitably modify them to ensure that the layout lends itself to health.*<sup>47</sup>

The concern with modern conceptions of hygiene seems to be responsible for rejecting a few other elements too :

The sitting platforms attached to schools and other buildings are most important, but the walls or railings surrounding them are not popular. In Tezu the boys hardly use the sitting platform and use walls or railings to hang up their linen to dry.<sup>48</sup>

Therefore it was suggested to give up any idea of surrounding these sitting platforms with walls or railings. In fact, the people were persuaded to "recondition their houses under hygienic conditions."<sup>49</sup>

The policy-makers' emphasis on the question of sanitation and health was governed by the modernist view of city. In this Dipesh Chakravarty's comments relating to the question of 'health' in pre-modern societies, seem to be relevant. He points out that when it comes to questions relating to 'health' the "pre-modern is always already condemned in our social science, however sympathetic the stance of our ethnography. As social scientists, we align ourselves with those who want to build citizen-cultures."<sup>50</sup>

While emphasizing on the importance of 'self-help' basis for creating a sense of legitimacy, it was also realized that it should be under the direction of administration :

A school building constructed by the villages and maintained by them as their own, would make the people proud of their institution and also *help to wipe out the wrong impression that prevails in that Administration is forcing education on the people.* It was, therefore, decided as an experimental measure that the village schools will continue to be constructed either by the villagers on self-help basis or initially by NEFA Administration



as OB type tribal constructions and that the future maintenance and renewal be left solely to the villagers.<sup>51</sup>

However, it was also realized at the same time that :

There is a tendency among the tribal people when asked to put up buildings on self-help to make them of very inferior specification with badly woven tarza walling, thin layers of thatching and on kutcha ground.<sup>52</sup>

The policy-makers attitude to buildings constructed by the tribals on self-help basis, evokes, at least, implicitly the image of modernity confronting a backward, static, and traditional society. This is implied in the following passage :

The general quality of the buildings in the interior is deplorable and there must be a fantastic waste of public money in erecting at the cost of thousand of rupees these *miserable hovels in which our men are condemned to live...* Moreover, the tribal people are *having to build in a style they do not understand and accordingly do it badly.*<sup>53</sup>

It was, therefore, felt that if a teacher had to be provided in a village the following specifications were to be adhered to by the tribal people while carrying out the work on self-help:

- (a) Strong change floor to be provided, raised 4 above ground.
- (b) Tarza walls to be constructed according to their best and not their worst tradition.
- (c) There should be *adequate light and ventilation.*
- (d) Thatching should be properly done and tied down with bamboo jiffries. Thickness should not be less than 9.
- (e) School compound should be of reasonable size and properly fenced.

“For the experiment to become a success, it will be necessary for the political officers and their staff to convince the villagers by intensive effort, of the psychological advantage of this new arrangement.”<sup>54</sup>



## III (b) (iii)

The improvement of the existing architectural designs was the hallmark of the policy. For this certain models of 'attractive houses' incorporating various tribal elements were designed by the architects.<sup>55</sup>

In fact improvement is the general policy in all aspects of the tribal economy and society. There was emphasis on the improvement of taste of the native public as regards beauty of form and finish in the articles of daily use among them. Their aesthetic judgement was of course wholly derived from Indian and European conceptions of beauty. Architectural designs formed part of this larger discourse of improvement, betterment or in other words, of overall developmental process. The categories of 'improvement', 'progress', 'inspiration', 'inducement' formed leitmotif of their writings. These words mean more than their literal meaning. It reveals attitudinal biases which were shaped by the 'modernisation' model.

Thus ATA (Adviser Tribal Affairs) felt that "the tribal people themselves should be made to improve their houses under the guidance of NEFA officers."<sup>56</sup> The remarks made by The Development Commissioner, NEFA, Shillong Colonel P. N. Luthra, as back as 1-3-57 are very revealing. He suggested more effective methods of exercising hegemony :

We make some posters illustrating how houses can be improved. For example, we could show somebody falling through a bamboo floor and side by side a nice plank floor with the housewife cleaning it with a broom. We could similarly show the interior of a house pitch-dark with children rubbing their eyes as result of the smoke and everyone looking very dirty and beside it in another interior showing a house with good windows and a chimney with everybody clean and bright-eyed children and so on. I suggest that this might be more effective method of achieving what we want.<sup>57</sup>

A note in Elwin papers states :

It is important that when the NEFA people erect Basha type buildings on a self-help basis and of course always when they

work on contract they should be induced to follow not what they have come to imagine to be appropriate for an official buildings, but the new specifications that we are now making.<sup>58</sup>

It was suggested to give "great importance to improve the technique of thatching throughout NEFA" and "every attempt" was "made to induce the people to improve the roofs."<sup>59</sup> It was also recommended to create the double roof system.<sup>60</sup> In case of use of CIG sheets it was advised to paint these in "a suitable green or dark red colour."<sup>61</sup> Because paint "preserves the sheet" and "adds enormously to the aesthetic appearance of administrative centres."<sup>62</sup> In case if the people buy CIG sheets at their own expense, "it might be made a rule that these should not be permitted unless they undertake to paint their roofs."<sup>63</sup>

The Adviser to the Governor put forward a point that "knowledge and experience gained in experimentation of new ideas must be utilised" in effecting changes in the construction of tribal houses by providing double roof, additional ventilation, separation of latrine blocks by passages etc." for future developments.<sup>64</sup>

In fact hegemony was also exercised in the sense of creating the model villages. Thus it was discussed at length that the CITPC (Cottage Industries Training cum Production Centre) might be planned as a model village.<sup>65</sup> The local style would have to be incorporated in these model villages but "the whole settlement planned in such a way that it would inspire not only the trainees but all tribal visitors with ideas about building and planned their own and villages."<sup>66</sup>

At another place, in a note dated 23-7-58 it is stated :

The whole point of this is that the CITPC should be a model village and that the buildings should not be of the ordinary OB type put up by our own tribal contractors but that they should be real model tribal houses which would be an inspiration to the local people and to the trainees themselves.<sup>67</sup>

### III (b) (iv)

What was the response of the tribal elites to these architectural designs? In fact, were not simply the passive



recipient of these ideas. Thus Oshong Ering did not agree with Elwin's proposal to construct hearths (fire-places) in inter-village schools. In a D. O. Letter No. Do-1/60-61/dated 29th. September 1960 to Verrier Elwin he expressed his disagreement and dissatisfaction over this proposal. He wrote this letter after his visit to the Inter-village school, Sile in Pasighat division. He was shocked to see some hearths inside the hostel building of the institution. He protested against this decision on the grounds of (a) aesthetics, (b) Hygiene, (c) Tribal traditional practice, and (d) Discipline. According to him the construction of hearths violated all the above-mentioned norms. Moreover, he advocated that this was a new element :

So far we know, hearths have not been constructed in Pasighat and Along High Schools. If small boys and girls can study in these high schools without having hearths, why boys and girls in inter-village school will not be able do the same.<sup>68</sup>

These grounds reveal how the elites had been hegemonised by means of education. What the letter speaks is the language of modernity, or civic consciousness, of health. It speaks of certain ideas of beauty, an order of aesthetics from which the ideals of public health and hygiene cannot be separated.<sup>69</sup> It is also the language of modernist nationalist. It speaks of liberal democratic construction of reality and it may also be the product of a particular kind of domination.<sup>70</sup> It reveals how effectively the culture of liberal democracy has been inculcated among the subjects.

To conclude this section : While conceiving themselves as participants in the on going traditions of tribal Architecture, the policy makers made an effort to hegemonise those traditions with the values of modernity and thus creating a space for national integration.

### III (c)

#### *Popular Culture*

Another important site of exercising cultural hegemony was popular-culture. By the category 'popular-culture' we mean : the Press, film, radio and television. It is variously



known as 'mass-culture', 'popular-culture', 'commercial-culture', 'culture-industry', 'popular-culture.'<sup>71</sup>

Writing on the impact of electronic media on the minds of the people R. K. Chatterjee points out :

The electronic media such as radio, television and films affect the minds of the people so intimately that through them the people almost sense, as it were, a feeling of actual participation in national affairs.<sup>72</sup>

He further states :

The activities of the mass-media follow closely the developments in various fields, informing people, reacting to policies and creating the social climate in which development and nation-building programmes can take place.<sup>73</sup>

We would take up for discussion radio, television, films (video-parlour houses) and press.

### III (c) (i)

#### *Radio*

The radio had been an important instrument of exercising hegemony. Long back the Frankfurt School had stated it as part of 'an ideological state apparatus'. The medium of radio, Max Horkheimer and Theodore Adorno asserted in the 1940's, "turns all participants into listeners and authoritatively subjects them to broadcast programmes which are all exactly the same", resulting in "the stunting of the mass-media consumer's power of imagination and spontaneity. The might of industrial society is lodged in men's minds."<sup>74</sup>

In 1948, speaking in the Constituent Assembly, Jawaharlal Nehru had said that his "own view" of the AIR (All India Radio) set up was that it should "approximate as far as possible to the British model, the BBC." He visualised it to be semi-autonomous corporation under the Government. However, he then thought that it was not immediately feasible.<sup>75</sup>

The Vidyalkar committee had visualised the objectives of radio development in the post-colonial India :

To inform, persuade and inspire, to make people's minds receptive, to familiarise them with social and material changes that planned development brings in its wake and to develop local initiative for decision-making.<sup>76</sup>

In fifties, radio for "promoting emotional understanding and integration of the country," was being visualised as a potent instrument. Therefore more attention was laid on the Rural educational programmes. In the fifties The All India Radio both its headquarters and its 31 stations aimed at providing education to the tribal and rural populations.<sup>77</sup>

The Ranchi station situated in the heart of Chota Nagpur tribal area in the Bihar state, was inaugurated in 1957 mainly for programmes intended for these tribal groups and the nearby industrial labour. Likewise, at the Gauhati's station of All India Radio, there is a separate service meant for tribal and rural populations, which broadcast programmes in no less than 28 tribal languages practically all devoted to adult education in a broad sense.<sup>78</sup>

In 1957 there were 200,000 (2 lacs) radio sets in Indian villages and out of which 90,000 (ninety thousand) were of the 'community listening type.'<sup>79</sup> By 1971 the total number of "broadcasting stations in the country was 69 and the number of transmitters in operation 138. This is a considerable improvement over the position in 1947 when there were only half a dozen radio stations in the country and about a dozen transmitters with about 275,000 radio sets for the then population of 320 million people. At that time, less than 10 percent of the country was covered by radio facilities and less than 25 percent of the population as far as medium-wave broadcasting was concerned."<sup>80</sup>

In 1971 in Arunachal Pradesh there were two radio stations, that is, at Tezu and Pasighat. Besides, from the Dibrugarh station in Assam the programmes in tribal dialects Tangsa, Nocte, Idu-Mishmi, Wanchoo, Nishi, Adi, Apatani were being broadcasted.<sup>81</sup>

According to Subir Ghosh,

The Government of India down to 1970, tended to set the electronic media as an instrument of Planning Commission,



the agency with the highest responsibility for implementing national development based on industrialisation.<sup>82</sup>

### *Radio and Tribal Development in NEFA*

Arunachal (formerly known as NEFA) was being administered from its headquarters at Shillong. Most of the District headquarters till late fifties had not yet been linked by roads. In order to maintain links with the staff serving in distant frontiers a programme of a 'series of broadcast talks' was inaugurated by N.K. Rustomji, Advisor to the Governor of Assam, on 15th August, 1959. It became a weekly newsletter and was broadcast on every Sunday afternoon. Stating the objective of this broadcast N.K. Rustomji remarked :

Our idea has been that as one large family and united family, we should keep our various members scattered in far-distant outposts, continually in touch with each other.<sup>83</sup>

He further stated :

I have mentioned on many occasions that these broadcasts are not intended to be as "sermons from the Mount," but rather in the nature of talks to our family members, as we might talk together over a cup of tea or a *chunga* of zu.<sup>84</sup>

Ostensibly these weekly broadcasts were meant for the officials of NEFA but planners sitting at Shillong were very well aware of the fact these were also being listened to by the indigenous leaders. Especially when the concept of 'community listeners' was being floated and radios for communities were being provided in rural areas, these broadcasts must have been leaving some impact on the indigenous population. The officials were concerned to disseminate their developmental programmes to the tribals. Thus in a broadcast on October 16, 1960, the focus was on the report of speech delivered by the Adviser N. K. Rustomji on the occasion of inauguration of first Census Conference of Division Statistical officers on October 12, 1960 :

Speaking on the occasion the Adviser stressed the importance of collecting accurate and complete information regarding NEFA population, as it will be vitally important for our development plans and other administrative policies. He

stressed that this could be achieved only if there is full and active cooperation of both officials and the people. He struck a note of caution against spreading rumours as to our purpose. In fact we should make the people quite certain as to what we are after. This will alone enlist active and positive support of the people instead of just their allowing us to count them.<sup>85</sup>

One of these broadcasts was in the form of a radio-talk (2 ½ minutes) on the question and answer form. K.L. Mehta, adviser to the Governor of Assam replies on the question regarding the progress in extending and consolidating administration in North-East Frontier Agency :

...All the same we have opened several administrative centres right up on our borders, where officers stay on a permanent basis and help the tribal people to increase their production, to take better care of their health and to derive the benefits of education.<sup>86</sup>

And then to the question 'what progress has been achieved in the development of these areas'? Mehta replies :

We have no law and order problem to speak of and development of the region is taking place along the lines of local traditions and genius.<sup>87</sup>

To Elwin the question was put "what has been the impact of the new administration on the people in the interior and how are they reacting to it"? Elwin replied :

It has been unexpectedly favourable. Until fairly recently, there were great areas where you couldn't go without a military escort; sometimes the people would hide in the jungle; they had no idea what India was.

Now all that is changed. I myself have toured in some of the remotest areas, always without escort, and everywhere I have found friendliness, hospitality and a growing love of India. The people specially appreciate three things : the first is the peaceful life introduced among them; the second is the removal of certain forms of exploitation of weaker by stronger groups; and the third is the attitude of the officers who come to them as friends and brothers, imposing nothing on them, regarding their way of life while trying to save them from the bad.



The result has been that the people have responded enthusiastically : they are coming to our hospitals, sending their children to school, taking to wet-rice cultivation and so on. At the same time, there are signs of a revival of tribal culture. Where weaving had died, the women are returning to the loom; they dance and sing more, not less than they did. There is much more happiness in these frontier hills than there had ever been before.

The thing may be summed up in what an old slave woman said to me when she was liberated. "For years I travelled below the ground in darkness, but now I have come into the light of the sun."<sup>88</sup>

### *III (c) (ii)*

#### *Post Indo-China War and Mass Media*

The Mass-media faced a new challenge in the post Indo-China war period. The planners had to take new steps to check the hostile propaganda on the part of the Chinese, especially in the border areas. R.K. Chatterjee in his book *Mass Communication* throws some light on this aspect :

...the biggest problem of mass communication was posed in the Himalayan border areas of the country where for centuries people had lived in isolation from the plains of India and had had traditional intercourse with the people of China. Thus, along with the helping in the arrangements for creating a popular front in the border areas, mass communication had to take the task of integration of the border people in the national stream. The present-day China and India represent two different schools of political thought. People in the border areas were the direct victims of hostile propaganda. The free and democratic way of life obtaining in India had to be presented to them.<sup>89</sup>

### *III (c) (iii)*

#### *Television*

The television in India was introduced on 15 September, 1959 on an experimental basis in the form of a UNESCO's pilot project.<sup>90</sup> Its object was "to study the use of TV as a

medium of education, rural upliftment and community development".<sup>91</sup> Another project of school TV programme was undertaken in 1961.<sup>92</sup> From Independent Day of 1965, "commenced" a regular TV service in India for one hour duration. Since that day TV has come to stay in India.<sup>93</sup> Enumerating the growth of TV since 1970 Ronald Inden in a recent article writes :

"There were only 22,000 (Twenty two thousand) T.V.'s in India in 1970, all imported : There are now estimated to be around 65 million TV households in India (more than in France and Germany combined), three-fourths of which are in small towns and villages."<sup>94</sup>

Citing Keval Kumar Inden asserts.

The number of people watching TV has gone up dramatically. By 1991-92 some 175 million people (140 million urban, 35 million rural) were watching in 35 million television sets on a daily basis.<sup>95</sup>

Therefore, he concluded "India now does have something like a modern, mass society."<sup>96</sup>

Forging of National integration has been one of the foremost objective of Television from the very beginning. In a seminar organised by All India Radio in 1973 objectives of T.V. spelt out were :

- (1) Television must be utilised as aid in the developmental process and as an instrument of social change and national cohesion.
- (2) Special emphasis is being laid on using cultural programmes to foster national pride and national integration instead of providing merely popular commercial or revenue earning programmes.<sup>97</sup>

Long after the proliferation of private - satellite channels it was still stated by the Minister of Information and Broadcasting in 1995-96 that D.D's "main aim is national integration, inculcating a sense of unity and making people proud that they are Indians."<sup>98</sup>



During my fieldwork conducted in the areas of my study I made a survey of the nature of impact of Television viewing on the indigeneous people. I found that Hindi films were very popular among the people. Till late DD I and Metro were the only channels telecast on TV in Arunachal Pradesh. The private channels got entry very recently. Therefore people had no option but to watch only D.D's programmes.

III (c) (iv)

*V.C.R. Technology*

Another technology which really popularised the Hindi Cinema was the diffusion of video technology. V. C. R's started to "diffuse rapidly after the Asian Games in 1982 when Doordarshan's black-&-white television broadcasting went coloured, and when the Indian Government liberalized import duties on T. V. sets."<sup>99</sup>

III (c) (v)

*Video-Houses & Films*<sup>100</sup>

A few cinema-houses had been opened in Arunachal Pradesh in late 60's and early 70's but the Video-Cinema was introduced in 1983. Since then it became very popular and large number of video-licences have been issued by the Directorate of Information and Publicity, Government of Arunachal Pradesh. Thus the figure upto 21-5-96 is :

(a) Video-Licences : 717.

(b) Cinema-Hall Licences : 63.

A survey conducted during my field work brings out the fact that the video-houses were very popular in the different parts of Siang valley. Even the proliferation of private channels telecasting large number of Hindi films has not decreased the popularity of Video-houses. One of the reasons being the experience of watching films in the video-house where large number of viewers sit together and watching the film creates a sort of community. In a way it is an important aspect of leisure activity. Secondly, in most of the small towns power-supply is erratic and that too for a very limited period. The

video-houses have their own small scale power generators. This makes the popularity of video-houses in small urban centres. I conducted interview of cross-sections of viewers of different age groups, gender, social, educational and economic backgrounds. An analysis of these interviews has brought out an important fact to me that Hindi Cinema has played an important part in exercising nationalist hegemony in terms of law, language and taste among the people of Arunachal Pradesh. It is therefore, worthwhile to discuss it in a bit detail.

### *III (c) (vi)*

In order to define problems of the film industry and to suggest means of removing them, the Government of India set up The Film Enquiry Committee in 1950. One of the three aims stated by the committee was to examine what measures should be adopted to 'enable films in India to develop into an effective instrument for the promotion of national culture, education and healthy environment.'<sup>101</sup> "Representatives of the Government," says Sumita Chakravarty, "stressed the socially useful role that the cinema could play, its importance as an educational and uniting force in the nation, and its ability to project India's economic development before its audience."<sup>102</sup>

Therefore, the two differing aims of 'entertainment' and 'education' were simultaneously stressed. In a way these two differing aims performed the same function, that of exercising hegemony. The central thrust of entertainment is 'utopianism'; that is, it projects imaginary solutions to real problems as the only available ones. As Richard Dyer point out :

Entertainment offers the image of 'something better' to escape into, or something we want deeply that our day-to-day lives don't provide. Alternatives, hopes, wishes – these are the stuff of utopia, the sense that things could be better, that something other than what it can be imagined and may be realized.<sup>103</sup>

The creation of utopia among the film-goers is evident the way two of our respondents replied to the questions 'what constitutes a good film? or 'what type of films you like most'? A good film is one which represents stupendous efforts of a



person to achieve 'greatness'. By 'greatness' he meant a rich person who saves lot of money and constructs a big house. A desire to own big houses similar to the ones represented in the Hindi films was expressed by another respondent also. These are real needs created by the capitalist society. That is, while entertainment "is responding to needs that are real, at the same time it is also defining and delimiting what constitutes the legitimate needs of people in this society."<sup>104</sup>

One of the important institutions that symbolises State power, especially in the popular consciousness, is the law. Here 'popular consent' is organised as a social and political force. Cinema has been an important site to build consensus on the issue of law-and-order. It is an hegemonic project. This is explicit in the way our respondents reacted to the question of representation of terrorism in films and also their liking for films invoking patriotism. The popularity of the film "Hakikat" representing war between China and India and the way it had been able to 'interpellate' most of our respondents is a good example of Cinema as an ideological form. Althusser calls the process by which ideology 'grabs' people 'interpellation'. "All ideology hails or interpellate concrete individuals as concrete subjects."<sup>105</sup> Interpellation is like someone calling out, "Hey, you there" in the street. When the hailed individual turns round, "by this mere one-hundred and eighty - degree - physical conversion, he becomes a subject."<sup>106</sup> The person imagines the call is directed to him/her personally, and by reacting, becomes subject to it and to the person calling out. Interpellation explains how the lure of film narrative unconsciously gathers viewers into the value-system, beliefs and ideology of the narrator. Therefore, entertainment/pleasure is not just a private and personal affair but inextricably bound up with questions of social order. The identification of our respondents with the heroic battle of Indian army consisting of a few solidiers with huge Chinese army was able to engender empathy. Thus pleasure and identification play strategic roles in the reproduction of certain values,<sup>107</sup> here the values of patriotism. Pleasure, therefore, is a key political and ideological issue.

This film 'Hakikat' created a desire in one of our respondents to 'serve the nation.' Another respondent averred "It is natural to shed tears for the nation after seeing 'patriotic' films like 'Hakikat.'" Such films, would 'foster national integration' asserted a respondent. He believes "Arunachalis are more patriotic than any Indian elsewhere." For another respondent, patriotism meant : (a) 'The whole of Hindustan is one'; (b) 'terrorism is bad.' He believes terrorism is abetted and supported by Pakistan. He gave the example of terrorism in Punjab and Kashmir. In fact he abhors terrorism. He developed "these views after watching Hindi films."

The Bombay Cinema thus has been an important site of creating an awareness of the 'imaginary' unity of Indians and the Indian nation state. Here Benedict Anderson's statement about the 'nation' as 'an imagined political community' may be cited :

Nation is an imagined political community...because members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.<sup>108</sup>

The 'nation' as 'imagined community' is also implicit in the views expressed by most of our respondents on an important aspect of 'educative role' of Bombay Cinema, that is 'learning' about the various places in India, (say *Mumbai, Delhi, Khandala, Madras, Bangalore* etc.). That is, one forms ideas about the geography of India. "The Hindi Cinema" from its earliest days" Sumita Chakravarty tells us, "used the image of map in interpellating viewers in all their diversity as unified national subjects."<sup>109</sup> Foucault has drawn our attention to the idea of history-geography as 'constitutive of' a 'national discourse' and also of 'implanting and inculcating the civic and patriotic spirit.'<sup>110</sup> He also traces the history of "map as instrument of power/knowledge" in western society.

The building of the consensus on the issue of law and order is further extended in the symbolic order of the father. Here Sumita Chakravarty's observation is significant :



In order to give a concrete shape and presence to 'the nation', in order, that is, to make it a myth, the Bombay film invested the law, representative of the nation, with the moral authority that inheres in a parent.<sup>111</sup>

Our respondents asserted that Hindi films are good because these teach obedience to father and the elders. A wife can learn how to pay respects to her husband.

### III (c) (vii)

Another important site of exercising of cultural hegemony is the realm of taste. It is a site of 'contestation and cultural domination'.<sup>112</sup> Raymond Williams has surveyed the historical trajectory of the meanings of the word 'taste' in the English language.<sup>113</sup> He notes that, in the physical sense, the word 'taste' has been operative in the English language since the thirteenth century.<sup>114</sup> In the fifteenth century it was understood in the wider sense of good taste meaning 'good understanding'.<sup>115</sup> In the seventeenth century and early eighteenth the word 'taste' became equivalent to discrimination.<sup>116</sup> Taste has become, in other words, a 'power of the mind' identifiable to and acknowledged by a *community of taste* which recognizes certain criteria for the establishment of 'good' and 'bad' taste. Concluding his survey Raymond Williams notes :

the idea of taste cannot now be separated from the idea of the *consumer*;...The two ideas, in their modern form have developed together and responses to *Art* and *Literature*...have been profoundly affected...by the assumption that the *viewer*, *spectator* and *reader* is a *consumer*, exercising and subsequently showing his taste.<sup>117</sup>

That the Bombay Cinema has been instrumental in promoting new tastes in terms of food, conversation, etiquettes, table manners, morals, dress, fashions etc, was corroborated by most of our respondents. One of our respondent perceives attitudinal changes among the Cinema-goers, especially the girls, who want to be now more 'sophisticated.' A student of Class XII of Hr. Secondary School, Pasihat informed us that the students generally, discuss

about the moral message of the films over dining tables in the mess.

The ideas of 'cleanliness', 'hygiene', 'moral and physical improvement' etc. are related to the civilising discourse.<sup>118</sup> Pierre Bourdieu has argued that the apparently superficial reformation of manners is in fact one of the most powerful ways in which a culture inculcates its metaphysical, moral and physical scheme of things.<sup>119</sup> Thus the Bombay Cinema has created a new cultural 'commonsense'.<sup>120</sup>

### III (c) (viii)

Language is one of the principal symbolic systems through which cultural hegemony is constructed. It is one of the codes of securing ideological domination.<sup>121</sup> Language, as Roland Barthes has observed :

Fights for hegemony; if power is on its side, it spreads everywhere in the general and daily occurrences of social life, it becomes doxa, nature.<sup>122</sup>

It is an arena of class struggle, a struggle to win or resist hegemony.<sup>123</sup>

The Mumbai Cinema has been playing a very important role in popularising Hindi as the national language, especially in Arunachal Pradesh. One of our respondents stated that he learnt Hindi language mainly through watching Hindi films and now he enjoys watching films only in the Hindi language.

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1. The category 'Mainstream' recurs in the official papers that I consulted. However it is not defined. We can provide its definition from the perspective of an intellectual from the North-East India which at least would reflect the vernacular voice. Pradip Phanjoubam, an intellectual from Manipur in a seminar on 'Dynamics of Identity and inter-group relations in North-East India' held at The Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla from 12 November to 14 November, 1996 states that 'various attempts have been made to define what constitutes the Indian mainstream' but "no conscretised definition has so far been forwarded." Pradip puts forward his definition as follows :



"The Indian mainstream is a stream that has its source in the obscure proto-historical period, a stream that began taking shape about 5000 years ago in and around the Indus Valley and flowed down the open Gangetic plains and emptied into the Bay of Bengal. Its influence however reached far and beyond just its basins, covering the entire sub-continent. The consciousness of being part of this historical stream is what is broadly the 'mainstream', in the Indian context. The mainstream history text books prescribed for schools and colleges will bear testimony to this."

—see Kailash S. Aggarwal, ed., *Dynamics of Identity and Intergroup Relations in North-East India*. Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, 1999, p. 139.

2. My use of concept of discourse is influenced by Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse : Essays in Cultural Criticism*, Baltimore, 1978, p. 4.
3. Elwin Papers, File No. ATA/G/55, Secret, serialised as (listed as) File No. 96, p. 2. In manuscript section of the Nehru Memorial Centre for Contemporary Studies, Teen Murti House, New Delhi. (Now-on-wards it would be mentioned as only File No.) *Emphasis mine*; also see Nehru's Note on His Tour of the North-Eastern Frontier Areas in October, 1952, p. 5.
4. Elwin's note dated 28-12-58 in Elwin's papers, File No. ATA/G/4, listed as file No. 47, p. 72.
5. Elwin papers, File No. ATA/G/4, listed as file no. 47, p. 72.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections From The Prison Note Books*, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (International Publishers, New York, 1971), pp. 12-13, 53, 55-60, 238-39, 261-64; Antonio Gramsci, *Selections From Cultural Writings*, ed. David Forges and Geoffrey Nowel Smith, translated by William Boel Hower (Harvard University Press, Massachusetts, 1985), pp. 164-65, 172-73, 220-21, 342-43.
8. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections From The Prison Note Books*, pp. 55-60; Walter L. Adamson, *Hegemony and Revolution : A Study of Antonio Gramsci's Political and Cultural Theory* Berkeley and Los Angeles; 1980), Ch. 6, pp. especially 170, 173; and Perry

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14. Regulation 3 of 1967 in P. N. Luthra, *Constitutional and Administrative Growth of the North-East Frontier Agency*, Shillong, 1971, Appendices, p. 123.
15. See Atul Chandra Talukdar, *Political Transition in the Grass roots in Tribal India*, Delhi, 1987, pp. 91-159.
16. See Jagdish Lal Dawar, 'Movement for Cultural Identity since 1950 among the Mishmis of Arunachal Pradesh', *Proceedings of North-East India History Association*, Silchar, 1995, pp. 322-23.
17. Leo E. Rose and Margaret W. Fisher, *The North-East Frontier Agency of India*, Institute of International Studies, University of California, Berkeley, California, 1967, p. 43.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 44; also see *Techno-Economic Survey of NEFA*, National Council of Applied Economic Research, New Delhi, December, 1967, pp. 112-122.
20. See Directive No. Ed. 3/113/61 in Verrier Elwin, B. Shastri and I. Simon, eds., *Important Directives on Administration of NEFA*, North-East Frontier Agency Administration, Shillong, 1967, pp. 164-169.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 164.



22. *Ibid.*, p. 166.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 167.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 168.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 169.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 169.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 169.
28. This section is a thoroughly revised version of the paper presented at the Fourteenth session of the North-East India History Association held at Jorhat in 1993 and published in its Proceedings, pp. 248-258. However, I have included more material in this section which I collected as a part of the grant given by I.C.H.R. for this study.
29. Note dated 19-7-55 by Colonel P. N. Luthra, Development Commissioner, NEFA, Shillong, in Elwin papers, File No. 47, p. 2.
30. P. N. Luthra to Superintendent Engineer, NEFA Letter No. Ed. 12/54/47, 12th July 1955 in Elwin Papers, *ibid.*, p. 2.
31. Elwin papers, File No. ATA/G/42, p. 18.
32. Prime Minister of India to the Chief Minister of Assam, copy of letter No. 496-PMO/59 dated 1st August, 1959, in Elwin Papers, File No. ATA/G/42 serialised as File No. 73, p. 14.
33. Copy of the Prime Minister's Note dated 25-5-55 in Elwin Papers, *ibid.*, p. 16
34. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
35. *Ibid.*, File No. ATA/G/4, p. 94.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
37. Note dated 15-3-58, File No. ATA/G/4, p. 33.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
39. *Ibid.*
40. *Ibid.*
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Ibid.*, p. 96.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
46. *Ibid.*
47. P.N. Luthra's comments dated 19-7-55 on the various paragraphs of the note by ATA. File No. ATA/G/4, p. 2. Emphasis mine.
48. File No. *ibid.*, p. 91.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
50. Dipesh Chakravarty, 'Of Garbage, modernity and the Citizen's Gaze', *Economic and Political Weekly*, March 7-14, 1992, p. 542.
51. Minutes of the Meeting held in A. G's (Adviser to Governor) Room on the 22nd April 1960 in Elwin Papers, File No. *Ibid.*, p. 89, emphasis mine.
52. *Ibid.*
53. File No. *ibid.*, p. 19. Emphasis mine.
54. *Ibid.*
55. *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.
56. See minutes of the Meeting Held in A.G's Room on the 22nd April 1960, *op. cit.*, p. 90.
57. File No. ATA/G/4.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 29.  

In the Elwin Papers I came across a note titled 'Architecture in Tirap' but it has not been signed any one. The date on this noting is not indicated. But it must be before 15th May 1958, because the note in question is paginated as No. 19 while a letter on p. 32 of this file is dated 15th May, 1958. In this note (p. 19) the writer is shocked to find "the deplorable" quality of the buildings in the interior areas. He seems to be doubtful whether the tribals would be able to construct buildings meant for the use of others, *unless they are trained.* (emphasis mine).
59. Elwin Papers, File No. ATA/G/4, p. 28.
60. Elwin's note dated 4-5-60, File No. ATA/G/42, p. 53.
61. File No. ATA/G/4, p. 28.
62. File No. ATA/G/42, p. 53.
63. File No. ATA/G/4, p. 28.



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91. P.N. Malhan, *op. cit.*, p. 139.
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94. Ronald Inden, Transnational class, erotic Arcadia and Commercial Utopia in Hindi Films' in Christiane Brosius and Melissa Butcher, eds, *Image Journeys : Audio-visual Media and cultural change in India*, Sage Publication, New Delhi, Thousand Oaks, London, 1999, p. 48.
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