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# Reconsidering Ethnic-Based-Autonomy Movements in Meghalaya: An Analysis

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## Abstract

*To the unfamiliar, communities living in Meghalaya appear to be homogenous ones. In reality, however, they are socially, politically and culturally not only heterogeneous but are also defined by distinct tribal and clan markers. Three major tribes– the Khasi, the Garo, and the Jaintia, dominate the state. Each of them had their own kingdoms until they were brought under the British colonial administration in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Consequently, after independence, these tribes and their territories were merged with undivided Assam, and then carved out as a full-fledged state of Meghalaya in 1972. Soon after attaining statehood, tensions cropped up between the indigenous communities and migrants mainly over the issue of economic opportunity. However, these days, it has slowly shifted towards the internal feuds among the indigenous tribes and separate demand for states within the state. With this background, the paper attempts to analyse the causes and consequences of autonomy demands asserted by different communities/tribes within the state.*

**Key Words:** Autonomy, Conflict, Garo, Identity, Khasi, Meghalaya

## **1. Introduction**

‘Meghalaya’ meaning the ‘abode of clouds’ is one of the sister states of India’s North Eastern Region (NER hereafter)<sup>1</sup>, dominated mainly by three major tribes– the Khasi, the Garo, and the Jaintia. Each of them had their own kingdoms until they were annexed by the British administration one after another in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Das, 2007), Khasi Hills in 1833, Jaintia Hills in 1835 and Garo Hills in 1872–73 (Haokip, 2013). Consequently, after the country’s independence, these tribes and their territories were merged with undivided Assam in 1835, and then carved out as a full-fledged state of Meghalaya in 1972. Other smaller tribes, claimed to be the aboriginals of the state like the Kochs, the Hajongs, the Rabhas, the Mikirs, etc., have also been living for years along with the above three major tribes. In terms of demographic equation, as per population Census 2011, the Khasis constitute the largest community with 45 percent of the state’s population, followed by the Garos with

32.5 percent, and the remaining 22.5 percent composed of different communities, including the Jaintia, the Bengali, the Assamese, the Nepali/Gurkha and the Hindi speaking population (Census of India, 2011). Geographically, the state covers a total area of 22,429 sq. km., and is surrounded by Assam in the East and North; and in the West and South by Bangladesh. Of the total geographical area, about 37 percent of it is covered by forest, which is notable for its biodiversity. Much of the forest area of the state is privately managed. The state government controls only the areas declared as reserved forest, which is about 4 percent of the total area.

To the unfamiliar, communities living in Meghalaya appear to be homogenous ones. In reality, however, they are socially, politically and culturally not only heterogeneous but are also defined by the distinct tribal and clan markers. Of the major communities, though the Khasis and the Jaintias speak a similar language, they all have their own dialects, different from one another. However, the Garos do speak a very different language and have different customs than any other communities in the state. Though the principal languages of the state are the Khasi and Garo, English is used as an official language. They (tribes of Meghalaya) follow *matrilineal system*<sup>2</sup>.

Soon after attaining statehood in 1972, tensions cropped up between the indigenous communities (locals/natives) and the migrants (outsiders), mainly over the issue of economic opportunities. Major business establishments and job markets came to be dominated by the migrants. Consequently, the state witnessed three major riots between the indigenous communities and migrants. With the introduction of state policies to protect native communities (especially through the inner line permit, land holding policy, trade licensing policy, job reservation, protection of indigenous identity, etc.), the very tensions subsided in the 2000s. However, it has now slowly shifted to the indigenous tribes. Following a perceived development disparity, different indigenous ethnic schisms developed in the state. On the other hand, community leaders and politicians often use the ethnic card primarily for economic and political benefits (Baruah, 1989), and in the process, alliance and re-alliance of different ethnic communities have also intensified for the same purposes. This very process of grouping communities on ethnic lines caused internal feuds, and consequently led to the movements for separate arrangement or for greater autonomy within the state. With this background, using secondary data, historical antecedents and observed facts, the present paper attempts to analyse the processes, causes and

consequences of autonomy demands asserted by different tribes within the state in the recent past.

## **2. State and Ethnic Identity Formation**

In Meghalaya, the term ‘Khasi’ is often used in a generic sense and encompasses five sub-tribes– the Khasi, Jaintia, Bhoi, Lyngngams and the War. They are mainly found in the four districts of east Meghalaya, namely– East Khasi Hills, West Khasi Hills, Ri–Bhoi and Jaintia Hills districts. The Jaintias are also known as ‘Pnars’ and are settled in eastern part of the state. The Khasis who occupy the state’s northern lowlands and the foothills are generally called the ‘Bhoi’, those settled in the southern hill tracts are termed as ‘Wars’, and the ‘Lyngams’ tribe inhabit the north-western part of the state. All the five sub-tribes are believed to have descended from the *Ki-Hynniew-Trep*<sup>3</sup> and also known by the generic name– the Khasi–Pnars or simply ‘Khasi’ or ‘*Hynniewtrep*’. On the western part of the state, the four Garo Hills, is predominantly inhabited by the Garos. The Garos belong to the *Bodo* family of the Tibeto-Burman race, believed to have migrated from Tibet (Autonomous Region of China). The Garos are also known as the *Achiks* and the land they occupy is termed as the *Achik* land (Census of India, 2011).

In 1960, the All Party Hills Leaders’ Conference (APHLC) of the then undivided Assam was formed and the leaders of the present North Cachar Hills (presently the Dima Hasao district) and Mikir Hills (presently the Karbi Anglong district) too joined in it. With the growth of tacit assertion of Assamese ethnic identity, discontent and antagonistic reaction among the tribal leaders against the ruling Assamese community escalated. As a result, the Meghalaya state was created on 21<sup>st</sup> January, 1972, following a concerted effort made by the combined tribal leadership of the Khasis, the Garos and the Jaintias under the flagship of the APHLC party (Upadhyaya, Upadhyaya & Yadav, 2013). The people of North Cachar Hills and Mikir Hills of Assam who were living closely with the Khasis and Garos decided not to join the new state– Meghalaya, albeit an option was given to them (Hussain, 1987; Assam Tribune, 2013; Gohain, 2014).

Historically, under the Government of India Act 1935, the hill areas of the then undivided Assam was grouped into two categories– (1) the Lushai (Mizo) and North Cachar Hills (NC Hills) which were classified as ‘excluded areas’; (2) the united Khasi and Jaintia hills districts with partial exception of Shillong town, which was the capital of Assam at that time, the Garo hills, Naga hills (present Nagaland) and Mikir (Karbi) hills of present Assam were classified as ‘partially excluded areas’. The government of Assam had

no jurisdiction over the excluded areas, which were administered under the special power of the Governor. After the independence, the Constitution of India accepted broadly the spirit of the Government of India Act 1935, by providing each hill district an Autonomous District Council with a fairly large autonomous power under the Sixth Schedule (Hussain, 1987). This led to the then hill districts of Assam, namely the Naga Hills, the Khasi-Jaintia Hills, the Garo Hills, and the Lushai Hills for the creation of new states, one after another. In this process, in 1972, the united Khasi-Jaintia Hills and Garo Hills formed the Meghalaya State.

### **3. Ethnic and Insurgency Movement**

Before the statehood of Meghalaya, the Assamese community developed substantial holdings in Shillong (present state capital), which was also the capital of the then British Assam. The Assamese people, mainly the Bengali Assamese, hailed from Upper Assam and the Bengalis of Bangladesh (mainly the Hindus, after communal riots in Bangladesh) got employment opportunities in major government sectors and controlled business establishments. The steady rise of non-local migrants, mainly the Bengalis from Bangladesh, the Nepalese from Nepal and the Hindi speaking communities from the other parts of the country resulted in loss of economic opportunities for the indigenous communities. These migrants continued to dominate business establishments, labour force and other employment opportunities, until recently. As a result, the state witnessed three ethnic riots between the indigenous communities and the migrant non-tribal communities. The first riot took place in 1979, when the Bengalis were identified as the principal adversaries, followed by the conflict with the Nepalese who were viewed as the new adversaries in 1987 and then the clashes with the Biharis (from Bihar) and Marwaris (from Rajasthan) in 1992 (Haokip, 2013). In the 1980s, the Bengalis remained the prime target of the ethnic violence. As a result of which, in the early 1980s, approximately 25,000 to 35,000 Bengalis permanently left Meghalaya. To be very precise, in 1981, there were 119,571 Bengalis lived in Meghalaya, estimated at 8.13 percent of the state's population. Ten years later, in 1991, it got reduced to 5.97 percent of population (Baruah, 2004; Phukan, 2013).

Further, with the predicated cultural superiority of two tribal communities– the Khasis and the Garos over the non-tribal population, and politically motivated ethno-centrism led to the commission of many dreadful acts against non-tribal population of Meghalaya. This trend was more conspicuous in the Khasi Hills where the Khasis took a

dominant political position in the newly created state. This led them to challenge the hitherto ascendancy of the non-tribal population (especially the Bengali speaking) who were often branded as ‘Bangladeshis’, nationals of Bangladesh (Upadhyaya, *et al.*, 2013). Of the various causes of conflicts, economic disparity emerged as the most prominent one in the post-statehood period of Meghalaya. More or less similar situations prevailed in many other parts of the nation and in the world (Irobi, 2005; Singha, 2012). In Meghalaya, the state’s community-based agrarian economy lost much of its verve as a result of the unchecked privatisation of the community land, while the decline of agrarian resources made it extremely difficult for the members of the tribal population to maintain their livelihoods (Upadhyaya, *et al.*, 2013).

#### **4. Internal Conflicts and Autonomy Movement**

Most of the modern ethnic conflict models say that the perceived deprivation of economic and political opportunities of the smaller communities, and the fear of loss of ethnic identity of these communities primarily caused internal feuds in the society (Irobi, 2005; Singha, 2012). Following the rise in differences among the indigenous tribes, Meghalaya witnessed first insurgent activities in the early 1980s with the birth of the *Hynniewtrep Achik Liberation Council* (HALC), representing all indigenous communities of Khasi-Jaintia and Garo, which was formed to fight against the outsiders/Dkhars (Rammohan, 2007). It took on a virulent situation in the 1990s when HALC was bifurcated into two groups– the *Achik Liberation Matgrik Army* (ALMA) in the Garo Hills, and the *Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council* (HNLC) in the Khasi Hills (Upadhyaya, *et al.*, 2013; Rahman, 2011). Later on, the AMLA was replaced by the Achik National Volunteers Council (ANVC). When the HNLC aimed at converting Meghalaya “as a province exclusively for the Khasi tribe and tried to free it from ‘domination’ by the Garo tribe”, the ANVC purportedly tries to carve out a homeland called ‘Achik Land’ exclusively for the Garos in Garo Hills.

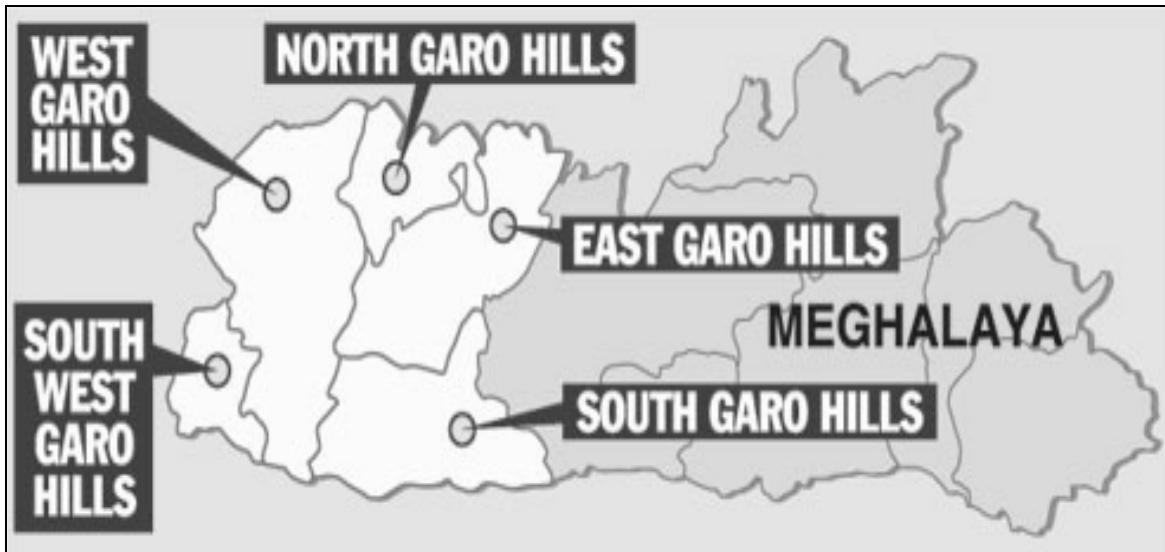
As it is understood, the HNLC is a product of 1992, split from the HALC, the first militant tribal outfit in Meghalaya. An important objective of the HNLC is to transform Meghalaya as a province exclusively for the Khasi tribe. The second objective is to fight against the presence of ‘outsiders’, as they feel that the Khasi youths are deprived off the fruits of development in the state. The HNLC was proscribed on November 16, 2000, and signed a ceasefire agreement with the Government of India (GoI) on July 23, 2004. The ANVC, which was formed in December 1995, aimed to carve out a homeland called ‘Achik

Land' in the areas of Garo Hills. The proposed 'Achik Land' comprises the present districts of Garo Hills in Meghalaya and a large chunk of Kamrup and Goalpara districts of Assam, where majority of the inhabitants are Garos<sup>4</sup>.

Since the mid-1990s, there has been a considerable improvement in the nature of ethnic relations following concerted efforts made by the Government and the community leaders of the state. Although the relation between the tribes (indigenous communities) and non-tribes (migrants from outside) improved in the post statehood period, ethnic tensions in Meghalaya shifted to the so called indigenous tribes, causing internal conflicts in the recent past (Haokip, 2013).

The Garos living in the western part of the state claimed that their region continues to remain 'backward' and there has been economic 'disparity' ever since the state was carved out of Assam in 1972. The situation in this area is all the more disconcerting for its inhabitants as compared to those in the relatively developed region of the Khasi Hills. The Garo Hills' meagre infrastructure and essential services, scanty health and education facilities, and poor connectivity to the rest of Meghalaya accentuated the sense of relative deprivation in the state (Upadhyaya, *et al.*, 2013). This perceived deprivation, disparity and exclusivity led to the demand for a separate state exclusively for the Garos, comprising five Garo hills districts reflected in Figure 1, by carving out from the Khasis. In this context, the Garo National Council (GNC) legislator Clifford R. Marak officially put up this issue in the 60 member Meghalaya legislative assembly on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2014 (The Hindu, 2014a). Former parliamentarian and speaker of Lok Sabha, Mr. P.A. Sangma justified the demand for 'Garoland', citing the reason for development disparity in the state (Haokip, 2013). However, their claim was rejected by the ruling Congress-led Meghalaya United Alliance (UMA) government, stating that further division of the state would crop up more constraints on the resources and increase social and economic vulnerability (News, 2014). Besides, the proscribed HNLC has not only been working for the Khasi land exclusively, but also striving to drive out the outsiders from the Khasi and the Jaintia regions, especially those in the disputed border areas of the state (Understanding Meghalaya, 2010).

**Fig. 1: Separate state Demand Sought by the Garos in Meghalaya**



Source: The Telegraph (August 2, 2013)

People's Liberation Front of Meghalaya (PLF-M) is a relatively new terrorist group, backed by the Garos and operating in the Garo Hills of Meghalaya. The outfit has been rechristened as the Achik National Council (ANC). Most of the ALMA terrorists surrendered in 1994, but a few formed the ANVC in 1995. The PLF-M consists of some of the "surrendered rebels" of the erstwhile ALMA who returned underground after their rehabilitation scheme failed. The main objective of the PLF-M has been to achieve faster economic development of the Garo Hills, as well as better educational opportunities for the Garo tribes in the state. Of course, the ultimate demand of the group is for a separate state for the Garos. In this regard, in March 2001, Chengku Momin, the Minister for Information and Publicity of the PLF-M had warned all the non-Garos, not to contest the state Assembly and district council elections that was held in 2003<sup>5</sup>.

Mushrooming militant groups in the state has become a cause of concern. Fractional groups have added oil to the fire, and no two groups have meeting ground. Within Garo community, the ANVC differs from the other Garo separatist organisations. The Garo National Council (GNC) aims for a Garo state comprising present districts of the Garo hills, while, the ANVC demands the present districts of the Garo Hills in Meghalaya and large chunks of Kamrup and Goalpara districts of Assam (Understanding Meghalaya, 2010). When the ANVC and its splinter group, ANVC-B are officially under ceasefire with the GoI, the United Achik Liberation Army (UALA) and the Achik National Liberation Army (ANLA) formed in October 2013, are active in the interior areas of the Garo Hills and in its adjoining areas of Assam and the West Khasi Hills. The Garo National Liberation Army



(GNLA) was subsequently formed in 2009, under the leadership of a former Deputy Superintendent of Police of Meghalaya, Pakchara R. Sangma alias Champion R. Sangma, after deserting the Police Force. Mr. Sohan D. Shira, former ANVC 'area commander' for the East Garo Hills is the 'Commander-in-Chief' of the outfit (GNLA). The cadre base of the outfit is mainly formed by deserters from ANVC, Liberation of Achik Elite Force (LAEF) and National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB). Since its formation, the GNLA has been involved in killing, abduction, extortion, bomb blasts and attacks on Security Forces (SFs). The law and order situation in the Garo-dominated areas has deteriorated after the outfit was formed<sup>6</sup>. Meanwhile, ANVC suffered a further split in mid-November 2013 when seven of its members deserted the designated camp where they had been living since the truce and formed a new outfit, adding to the murky scene (Das, 2013).

To be very precise, the cause of disagreement between the Khasis and the Garos is mainly the perceived uneven distribution of economic and political powers, especially the implementation of the 1971 Reservation Bill<sup>7</sup>. The hegemony of the Khasis was felt during 2005 when the Meghalaya Board of School Education (MBSE), which had its head office in Tura (in West Garo Hills), agreed to reorganise itself in Shillong (Khasi area) along the lines demanded by the Khasi Students Union. Undoubtedly, these episodes shaped the embittered situation between the Khasis and the Garos, which further led to violence. The subsequent massive outcry was due to demand by the Garos for a separate state (Upadhyaya, *et al.*, 2013). The demonstrations and agitations were intensified in the state by the Garo Hills State Movement Committee (GHSMC), a conglomeration of various pressure groups and political groups of the Garo community in the state. Their ultimate demand is that the GoI should consider creation of separate Garos and Khasi-Jaintia states in Meghalaya based on linguistic lines as envisaged in the states Re-organisation Act, 1956. The Garo National Council (GNC) and the Garo Students' Union (GSU) are demanding a separate state for the Garos on linguistic lines, while the Hill State People's Democratic Party (HSPDP) is demanding a Khasi-Jaintia state. These differences among them in terms of their demands have further caused unrest in the state.

## **5. Discussion of the Study**

Though the insurgency in the state of Meghalaya is not as precarious as its neighbouring states like, Manipur, Assam and Nagaland (Haokip, 2013), it is facing constant internal conflicts and getting worse day-by-day. It started from the late 1970s, right after the

statehood (Upadhyaya, *et al.*, 2013). Recently, as a part of its effort to regulate alienation of indigenous land, the state Government's proposal for deleting certain Scheduled Tribe (STs)<sup>8</sup> from the existing list of STs led to an agitation of the indigenous minorities living in the state (Haokip, 2013). Key questions raised in this context are– who is being relatively deprived of and by whom? Which district or tribe is deprived of– is apparent from the Tables 1 to 5.

To begin with, Table 1 depicts district-wise literacy rate, density of population and decadal population growth rate, while Table 2 shows the percentage change in Below Poverty Line<sup>9</sup> (BPL) families in different districts over the years. Considering a lesser growth rate of population and higher literacy rate as better development indicators, East Khasi hills being an administrative district and a state capital (Shillong), performed well in both aspects. While the other districts, whether the Garo Hills or Khasi Hills, were found to be performing more or less the same. Of course, the percentage change in rural BPL households in Khasi districts have improved considerably compared to that of the Garo hills over the years from 1990s to 2000s. In terms of annual average sectoral growth rates across the districts (Table 3), as expected, the East Khasi hills district registered higher growth in all the three sectors– primary, secondary and tertiary sectors, from 1999-2000 to 2007-2008. Ri-Bhoi district (Khasi region) also performed equally well. South Garo hills district performed slightly better than that of any other Garo hills districts in this regard, but lesser than that of the Khasi hills districts.

While referring to the physical infrastructure (Table 4), barring West Khasi hills district, the rest of the Khasi districts performed much better as compared to the state average in terms of percentage of villages connected by Pucca road and electricity connection in 1991 and 2001 respectively. Ironically, in totality, the socio-economic indices depicted in Table 5 (using F. Bourignon index),<sup>10</sup> consisting of economic, health, education and Human Development Index (HDI) highlighted a different picture. Overall, the socio-economic indices of the South Garo Hills district reveals relatively better performances bypassing East Khasi hills district, which was considered to be the most developed district in the state. These findings convoluted to draw a conclusion that the Garo region is deprived of socio-economic indicators. Conversely, one cannot infer that the Khasi region is better off in every socio-economic indicator.

Literally, the state of Meghalaya is not comparable to some other states of NER like– Manipur, Nagaland and Mizoram, in terms of historical, social, political and

demographic equation. Shillong, the capital of Meghalaya was a British outpost and later the capital of undivided Assam which included almost all the hill states of present NER (Mizoram, Nagaland, Meghalaya), barring Sikkim. As a result, Shillong (the East Khasi Hills district) or the Meghalaya in general had received a sizeable non-tribal population before the statehood was conferred. The major portions of the Khasi region (including Jaintias and Ri-Bhoi) in its eastern and northern boundary share border with Assam's four districts— Kamrup, Karbi-Anglong, NC Hills and Cachar. Similarly, the Garo Hills districts share border with Assam's Goalpara and Dhubri districts. Besides, the state shares almost 450 km long border along its southern and western boundary with Bangladesh. Therefore, the people of Meghalaya cannot just isolate themselves from the history and pretend to write on a clean slate that they are the lone indigenous community in the state (Mukhim, 2013). Violence against the outsiders or migrants cannot solve the predicaments that they perceive. The indigenous communities become outsider when they move out of their respective homes. If outsiders are to be targeted, the same may be expected when they move out of the state (Meghalaya). One should consider the limitations of the others and respect other communities' difficulties (Singha, 2012). In this context, seeing the new ethnic movements in Meghalaya, Mukhim (2013) further raised few questions— “[w]hen we need a good doctor, do we check his tribe, caste, class or do we repose our faith on his expertise and his credentials? The same is the case with a good teacher or lawyer. So, if we are inter-dependent then is it not fair to share a slice of the cake with those who strive to build Meghalaya as much as the tribes of Meghalaya do?”

In the case of internal feuds in Meghalaya, in reality, the fiasco over the transfer of MBSE office from Tura to Shillong (as argued by Haokip, 2013) is not the genesis of autonomy demand (separate states) in Meghalaya. Economic and political factors have more influence on this. Therefore, the issues of economic development, employment creation, poverty alleviation and inequality reduction should be addressed by different communities in unison. Autonomy movements asserted by different communities within the state may not be the panacea for the crisis. As analysed above, one can argue that the Garos belong to the Bodo family, who are concentrated in the present Assam and spearheading separatist movement for their homeland in Assam. At the same time, a sizable number of Garo populations are also found in Assam. Now the major question raised in this context is— which portion are they demanding for?

The GNC is fighting for the portion of the Garo dominated areas (Garo hill districts) of the present Meghalaya, while the ANVC is quite optimistic and ambitious to incorporate Garo hill districts of Meghalaya and some of the adjoining districts of the present Assam. Even the state ministers (e.g. Social Welfare Minister Ms. D. C. Marak) support and involve in the outfit (The Hindu, 2014b). This type of demand for territorial integration and bifurcation of the states, based on the linguistic, ethnic or geographical lines have been the order of the day, not only in Meghalaya, but also in the entire NER. If one thinks and analyses logically, there is no guarantee that the Garos will not demand for the integration of the Garos of Meghalaya with the Garos living in Assam or even with the *Bodo* community of Assam in the near future (as the Garo is a Bodo family), and also the GNLA cadres consisting of Bodo militant splinters of Assam. On the other side of the coin, there is also no guarantee that the Jaintias will not fight for their identity or separation from Khasis in the near future, as they are also a major constituent group of the larger Khasi ethnic identity. The same holds good for the communities like, the *Bhois*, the *Wars* or any other sub-tribes of the larger Khasi ethnic or linguistic group.

Secondly, had *the Karbis* and *the Mikirs* of the present Assam joined Meghalaya at the time when they were given a chance to be part of the state in 1972, there could have been a different situation. If the demand for a separate state of the Garos or the Khasis is considered, one can easily expect another demand or re-alignment of the present state boundary by amalgamating other smaller communities like, the Kochs, the Hajongs, the Rabhas, the Mikirs, etc. who have been living for years along with the three major tribes in the state of Meghalaya. Having thought of these consequences, in response to the Garos' demand for a separate state raised by GNC legislator C. R. Marak in the Meghalaya legislative assembly, the Deputy Chief Minister in-charge Mr. R.C. Laloo replied that "there was economic disparity among the people of the state and overall economic condition of the people of the state especially in rural areas was almost the same everywhere. It is our duty to take necessary steps to ameliorate the economic hardship of our people and bring about all round economic improvement in the state and not to divide it" (The Hindu, 2014a).

## **6. Concluding Remarks**

As we have discussed above, though Meghalaya is relatively better off in terms of conflict and violence than its NER counterparts, one cannot completely ignore the tensions that have escalated in the post-statehood periods. In addition, the state has experienced a series

of communal riots between the outsiders and insiders since the late 1970s. However, in the recent past, the ethnic tensions in the state which was heightened between the tribes (indigenous groups) and non-tribes (migrants) have now slowly shifted towards the indigenous tribes. This ultimately has led to the demand for creation of separate states, both by the Khasis and the Garos for their own. Perceived economic and political discrimination among the major communities, especially the Khasis and Garos has caused tensions between them. The Khasis blamed the Garos and vice-versa.

As the bone of contention between the two communities in the state is identified as the economic and political ones, demand for separate states by these communities for their own cannot be the panacea for the problem. As development is a composite and multi-dimensional aspect of a society, it cannot be shared or distributed equally by (to) all communities, individuals or even all the areas spatially. It is not like some amount of money that can be distributed equally among the people. Complete equality is not possible in a multi-ethnic society; we can only reduce the inequality level. Therefore, politicising and polarising communities by the politicians or community leaders, for economic or personal vote stunt opportunities would only aggravate the present crisis of Meghalaya. Rather, the state should strive to further uplift her economy with due emphasis on equitable distribution of resources and fruits of development. Otherwise, the ethnic conflict will definitely ransom and slow down development initiatives in the state. The more we stress on ethnic-based identity, the sharper will be the contours for conflict in the society. Meghalaya being a state of multi-tribes and communities, one should learn to live in coexistence and accommodative spirit. Inter community relation can further be improved by improving inter-district connectivity, particularly road network between two geographically isolated areas, Tura (main town of Garos) and Shillong (main town of Khasis). Otherwise, it makes very limited interaction between the two major communities in Meghalaya and consequently develops distrust between them.

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### Annexure Tables

**Table 1: District-wise Literacy and Population Growth Rate (in %)**

Districts	Literacy Rate		Population Growth Rate		Density of Population
	2001	2011	1991-01	2001-11	
East Garo Hills	62	76	33	26	122
West Garo Hills	51	68	29	27	173
South Garo Hills	64	72	31	29	77
Jaintia Hills	53	63	36	31	103
Ri-Bhoi	55	77	51	34	109
East Khasi Hills	75	85	23	25	292
West Khasi Hills	66	79	34	30	73
<b>Meghalaya</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>132</b>

Source: Census (2011 provisional); MHDR (2008); Meghalaya Handbook (2006)

**Table 2: District-wise Rural BPL Households in Meghalaya (in %)**

Districts	1991	1998	2002
East Garo Hills	68.5	34.2	55.9
West Garo Hills	66.2	63	53.7
South Garo Hills	—	70.6	45.3
Jaintia Hills	56.1	44.2	39.5
Ri-Bhoi	—	41.8	49.9
East Khasi Hills	33.2	55.2	46.7
West Khasi Hills	29.2	64.9	47.7
<b>Meghalaya</b>	<b>48.9</b>	<b>54.5</b>	<b>48.9</b>

Source: Saxena (2002)

**Table 3: District-wise Sectoral Average Annual Gr. Rate (1999-00 to 2007-08) at 1999-00 Constant Prices**

Sector	Agriculture	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	NSDP
Jaintia Hills	2.65	7.32	8.98	5.68	6.97
East Khasi Hills	10.37	10.09	12.05	6.86	8.07
West Khasi Hills	4.64	5.49	7.53	4.76	5.51
Ri-Bhoi	6.41	6.35	27.03	6.36	9.25
East Garo Hills	1.71	2.21	19.15	5.07	5.8
West Garo Hills	4.11	4.23	10.69	6.18	6.1
South Garo Hills	6.91	8.15	11.61	5.17	7.51
<b>Meghalaya</b>	<b>5.52</b>	<b>6.53</b>	<b>12.42</b>	<b>6.27</b>	<b>7.19</b>

Source: MHDR (2008)

**Table 4: District-wise Road and Electricity Connectivity**

Districts	% of Village Connected by Pucca Road (in 1991)	% of Electrified Villages (in 2001)
East Garo Hills	12.7	33.22
West Garo Hills	12.7	36.49
South Garo Hills	10.1	19.66
Jaintia Hills	27.1	62.31
Ri-Bhoi	19.3	66.11
East Khasi Hills	26.2	74.13
West Khasi Hills	11.9	35.28
<b>Meghalaya</b>	<b>16.4</b>	<b>44.93</b>

Source: MHDR (2008)

**Table 5: District-wise Bourguignon\* Socio-economic Indices (In order of Rank)**

Districts	Economic	Education	Health	HDI
East Garo Hills	5	3	5	5
West Garo Hills	4	2	7	3
South Garo Hills	1	1	3	1
Jaintia Hills	7	7	1	6
Ri-Bhoi	3	4	4	4
East Khasi Hills	2	6	2	2
West Khasi Hills	6	5	6	7

Source: Nayak and Ray (2010)

\*Bourguignon Index is an inequality index, measured as:

$$S(X) = \left( \sum_{i=1}^k w_i x_{iR}^{\beta} \right)^{\alpha/\beta}$$

where  $\alpha$  is related to the degree of aversion of the society with respect to inequality and the degree of substitution is normally set to be  $\beta \leq 1$ .

**End Note:**

<sup>1</sup> India's NER consists of seven states- Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. Later on, the state of Sikkim joined in the region's fabric in 2002. At present, including Sikkim, NER consists of eight states.

<sup>2</sup> A matrilineal society is a society in which lineage, birthright and social classification are traced through the mother's ancestry. A key detail of the society is the favoritism of daughters over sons. This is related to the idea that the mother's familial line determines position within society, rather than the father's.

<sup>3</sup> 'Ki-Hynniew-Trep' refers to 'Seven Huts' or 'Seven Families', the first settlers on earth according to their (Khasis) legend

<sup>4</sup> This section is excerpted from Understanding Meghalaya (2010).

<sup>5</sup> Excerpted from SATP: [[http://www.satp.org/satporgrp/countries/india/states/meghalaya/terrorist\\_outfits/plf\\_m.htm](http://www.satp.org/satporgrp/countries/india/states/meghalaya/terrorist_outfits/plf_m.htm)]

<sup>6</sup> Retrieved on 10 Nov. 2014 [http://www.satp.org/satporgrp/countries/india/states/Meghalaya/terrorist\\_outfits/GNLA.htm](http://www.satp.org/satporgrp/countries/india/states/Meghalaya/terrorist_outfits/GNLA.htm)



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<sup>7</sup> The 1971 Reservation Bill specified quotas of 40% for the Khasis and the Jaintias, 50% for the Garos, and 10% for the minorities in government jobs and educational institutions. The Garos were politically a dominant community in the State.

<sup>8</sup> The Constitution of India defines Scheduled Tribes as those communities who are scheduled in accordance with Article 342 of the Constitution. According to Article 342 of the Constitution, the Scheduled Tribes are the tribes or tribal communities or part of or groups within these tribes and tribal communities which have been declared as such by the President through a public notification.

<sup>9</sup> Below Poverty Line is an economic benchmark and poverty threshold used by the government of India to indicate economic disadvantage and to identify individuals and households in need of government assistance and aid. According to Dandekar and Rath Committee, "an average calorie norm of 2,250 calories per capita per day for both rural and urban areas", are defined as the poverty line.

<sup>10</sup> Refer: Nayak and Ray (2010)