

SAFETY AND PROTECTION STRATEGIES OF THE NORTHEAST WOMEN IN DELHI

Written by Dr. Temsukala

*ICSSR Post-Doctoral Fellow, Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research, Jamia
Millia Islamia, New Delhi*

ABSTRACT

Delhi, the capital of India is meant for all communities, as it is not under the control of a particular race or tribe. Every race, tribe, castes have its own cultural heritage, cultural identity and there exists cultural commonalities among each other. Richness of cultural magnificence of Northeast India in arts, culture, music, literature, games and sports received good recognition in the mainland India. In a cultured society, one race is expected to honour the culture of another race without any discrimination to attain a common culture or goal. There had been numerous cases of sexual harassment against Northeastern people in Delhi neighborhood, public places, institutions and working places. Gender-based violence and racial discrimination has intensified against the Northeast women during the Covid-19 Coronavirus pandemic.

Many experienced discrimination, verbal abuse and harassment, some women traumatised from such incidents consequently had to lost their profession and livelihood. They face discrimination on the bases of racial outlook and lifestyle. Cultured society should have equal opportunity to participate in the social, political and economic spaces. This article highlights the core issues and concerns facing the Northeast women by addressing gender, racial discrimination and exclusion. Identify strategies and make recommendations towards possible solutions to this problem, re-examined the relevant protective measures towards safety and security of the women of Northeast India.

Keywords: Constitution, Rights, Discrimination, Prohibition, Protection, Strategies, Delhi, Northeast, Women, Migrants, Gender, Sexual, Harassment, Bezbaruah, SPUNER, Education, Pandemic.

INTRODUCTION

Northeastern people come to Delhi for education, job, study professional courses in universities and other institutions. Again, search for employment opportunities in government sectors have attracted educated youth from the Northeast. Hundreds of civil servant aspirants are undergoing coaching classes both physical and in online mode for competitive examination. Globalization has unwrapped manifold opportunities for jobs in multinational companies, the opportunity to work from home are available at different service sectors in the post-covid-19 era, the only option to both continue working and minimise the risk of virus exposure an obvious better option for women employees.

Challenges faced by Northeast women living in Indian metropolitan cities are innumerable. Considered to be the crime capital of India, the safety of Northeast women is vulnerable in Delhi. The city exhibits the melting pot of cultural heterogeneity reflecting the idea of a complex urban society with problems of acceptance of cultural diversity.ⁱ However, such environment often leads to contest for space and exclusion of the ethnic minorities especially women from Northeast region. Whereas, the constitution India granted equality before law for every citizen.ⁱⁱ The increase in migration rate among the Northeast women to the city might have caused the upsurge in gender-based violence and racial discrimination facing Northeast women.

Gender-based violence and racial discrimination intensifies since the Covid-19 first wave lockdown, thousands of women suddenly lost their jobs and livelihoods forcing thousands to return to their home state. Corona virus brought economic turmoil has deteriorated what little safety grid women of Northeast could rely on. This dire situation is made doubly harsh particularly for the remaining women need secured job, safety, security and protection in Delhi.

“A majority of these women migrants from North-East region do not want to return to their native places for the fear that they would not be able to come back to their workplaces if the situation improves. Moreover, when the spas or hotels open, given the state of the economy, limited opportunities will be up for grabs.”ⁱⁱⁱ

A working paper from the Azim Premji University, “Down and Out? The Gendered Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on India’s Labour Market” finds that “conditional on being in the workforce prior to the pandemic, women were seven times more likely to lose work during the nationwide lockdown, and conditional on losing work, eleven times more likely to not return to work subsequently, compared to men.”^{iv} The second wave of Covid-19 in 2021 again resurfaced those challenges that affect the status of the women, the imminent factors being the gender and racial abuse and harassment. A study carried out by the “Centre for Criminology and Victimology at the National Law University (NLU) Delhi” found that around 78% of the people interviewed believed that physical appearance was the most important reason for the prejudice, offensive and abusive language were reported to be most common with Delhi (64%). The “northeast India seamlessly fits [an] Indian’s imagination of a Chinese person. They were harassed, abused, traumatised and allegedly called ‘coronavirus.’”^v This experience opens up opportunities for law enforcement agencies, support groups, civilian authorities and academia to explore safeguarding measures to protect the women. Involving the stakeholders in this venture could develop guiding principles for possible opportunities and solutions. Analytical and descriptive approaches employed in this focuses on the racial and gender component within the context of the Northeast tribal women in the city. While experiences of women from diverse backgrounds of selected tribes provides authentic primary and secondary sources. Besides participatory observations and interactions with the stalk holders, interviews and life experience stories served as principal data collection method, substantiated by the survey sampling collected from the tribal group - Aos, Lotha, Semas, Mao, Garos, Khasis, etc.

WOMEN’S PROTECTION AGAINST GENDER DISCRIMINATION

Race and gender are interconnected in different ways for the Northeastern women especially from tribal communities. Delhi has the worst record of meting out daily discriminations with 81% followed by Bangalore at 60%. Despite being the most preferred destination since 2005. This was found out by the survey conducted by Centre for North Studies and Policy Research, Jamia Millia Islamia, and commissioned by National Commission for Women on the challenges lying before women from the North-eastern region who are living and working in metropolises.^{vi}

Northeast women are vulnerable to violation of rights and life while hanging out on the street and in parks, in the city they face multifarious challenges. Even at home- states prior to their

migration they suffered as the victims of ethnic conflict since the entire region had experienced unabated conflict. Many have experienced physical and mental torture and other forms of violence committed during the armed conflict. Having sustained such atrocities, they have come to city looking for new opportunities with high aspiration. Northeast migrant women suffer due to socio-cultural prejudices even as racial disparities persist due to lack of awareness about Northeast by the majority of the mainland city dwellers. There are intensifying reports on- violation of rights, sexual abuses, discrimination and violence against the Northeast women. Recently, a woman alleged that she was on her way to buy groceries when a man came on a two-wheeler and spat on her. He called her ‘corona’ before fleeing the spot, according to India Today.^{vii}

Although many researchers have investigated discrimination in different fields, there has been little effort to coordinate and expand such research in ways that could help to better understand and measure various kinds of racial and ethnic discrimination. Sexual harassment is one of the most mischievous that can be broadly define as ‘an unwelcomed sexual advance that leads to the creation of a hostile and offensive work environment for a person’. The laws of different countries have attempted to define it in different ways. However, analyzing the phenomenon of sexual harassment through the narrow prism of ‘unwanted sexual behavior’ would highly limit our understanding of the concept.

“Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal Act, 2013,” was notified and enforced in India. An Act to provide protection against sexual harassment of women at workplace and for the prevention and redressal of complaints of sexual harassment.^{viii}It affirmed that sexual harassment results in violation of the fundamental rights of a woman to equality under articles 14 and 15 of the Constitution of India. In addition, women’s right to live with dignity enshrined under Article 21 of the Constitution and right to practice any profession or to carry on any occupation, trade or business which includes a right to a safe environment free from sexual harassment. This clause provides protection of women against sexual harassment at workplace. The protection against sexual harassment and the right to work with dignity are universally recognized human rights by international conventions and instruments such as “Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women,” which had been ratified by the Government of India.^{ix}

Gender equality cannot be realized without giving women their share in the decision-making process. Women, who traditionally denied joining the formal economic sectors, had to take up responsibility of earning bread for their families. In some extreme cases, women were forced to resort to low profile profession at the cost of their personal dignity and identity even physical health and security. It calls to raise the level of consciousness that violence against women is violating human rights. Violence in the metro city of Delhi and the NCR has been intensifying rapidly in the last few years. Several local and regional level organizations have been voicing these issues and have been mobilizing community members to build public opinion against such instances of violence.

Strategies to safeguard women's right at national and local level is very poor, it requires a systematic and empirical investigation to deal with the concerning core issues. It includes women empowerment, factors of violence, employment opportunities and security. The study on "Measuring Racial Discrimination Panel on Methods for Assessing Discrimination", by Rebecca M. Blank, Marilyn Dabady and Constance F. Citro, suggests new methods for assessing discrimination to define racial discrimination, measure such discrimination and identify new approaches. According to this research, Discrimination has four types and the various mechanisms that may lead to such discrimination- which involve behaviours of "individuals and organizations; subtle discrimination, intentional discrimination, and statistical profiling." It involves discriminatory practices entrenched in an organizational culture.^x

Differences among racial and ethnic groups characterize many areas of social, economic and political life, including such domains as the criminal justice system, education, health care, and housing. There are many possible explanations for such differences; one explanation may be the persistence of behaviours and processes of discrimination against minorities. Discriminatory behaviours and practices might operate within the domains of education, employment, housing, criminal justice, and health. The concepts of how cumulative discrimination might operate across domains and over time to produce lasting consequences for disadvantaged racial groups.^{xi}

This approach is not concerned with identifying the relative importance of the various types of discrimination; rather, it is designed to present a set of conceptual possibilities that can motivate and shape appropriate research study designs. Most people's concept of racial discrimination

involves explicit, direct hostility expressed by the dominant groups (e.g. whites or mainland Indians) toward members of a disadvantaged racial group. Yet discrimination can include more than just direct behaviour (such as the denial of employment or rental opportunities); it can also be subtle and unconscious (such as nonverbal hostility in posture or tone of voice).

Furthermore, discrimination against an individual may be on the bases of overall assumptions about members of a disadvantaged racial group that are assumed to apply to that individual (i.e., statistical discrimination or profiling). Discrimination may also occur as the result of institutional procedures rather than individual behaviours.

There are studies carried out by several researchers who have emphasised on issues of exploitation, racism and violence against the Northeast people in general. Some researchers have made attempt to address the issues of sexual harassment meted out by the women in work places. Nandita Haksar in her study on “The Exodus is Not Over: Migrations from the Ruptured Homelands of Northeast India” observed that the North-eastern people find working in five-star hotels, casinos and cruises. Yet, many of their jobs in Delhi make them targets of racism, sexual harassment and class exploitation in an unfriendly environment.^{xii}

Duncan McDuie-Ra opined that limited employment prospects, changing social aspirations and sporadic armed conflicts push Northeast migrants out of the region. The migrants, who leave the Northeast every year for job, study and find refuge in Delhi and had to navigate and create their own space.

“Delhi is seen as the best destination for higher and tertiary education. Delhi has India’s Delhi is the site where the tools of the Indian state can be learned; tools that can be used to acquire the highly valued Indian Administrative Services (IAS) posts back in the Northeast.”^{xiii}

According to Tacoli and Satterthwaite, “Urbanisation is often associated with the greater independence of women and the erosion of patriarchal power relations and values Migrants also move because they are looking for better educational opportunities for themselves and their offspring. As migrant women work at the lower rung of the occupational hierarchy, they are extremely vulnerable”.^{xiv} Mala Mukherjee & Chandrani Dutta accept that name calling, and

denial of services, especially rental accommodation on the ground of food habits are the most common forms of discrimination. Women migrants often face physical abuses in forms of unwanted touching, especially in the crowded places like local markets and public buses. North-East Helpline (1093) helps in lodging complains; however, the problem sustains.

Even the campus of central universities is not even free from these discriminatory practices. Thus, the authors endorse the idea of ethnic sensitization and establishing special units in various institutions for tackling these problems separately.^{xv} Delhi Commission for Women Chief Swati Maliwal said,

“Northeast students studying in Delhi University have given a complaint that they are being pressurised to vacate the hostel. Due to the lockdown, they have no choice but to stay in the hostel.” “The students have also complained to the Commission about the racist comments made against them. This is a very serious matter and in view of this we have issued a notice to the university and asked them to immediately take action in the matter. Any such discrimination won't be tolerated at all.”^{xvi}

MIGRATION OF NORTHEAST TRIBALS

The Northeast migrants include those who have come only to study and those who came directly from the Northeast to work in public and private employment. There is a small but growing number of migrants who have partners and children with them (some of the latter born in Delhi), though the majority leave their families back home. The Northeast Tribal migrants would categorically exclude some migrants from Manipur, some from Sikkim, and some from Assam and Tripura. Although in Delhi, all migrants from these states are subject to much of the same harassment, discrimination, and violence. The Northeast migrants or the term ‘Northeasterners’ consists of Ahoms, ‘tribals, Meiteis and non-scheduled Sikkimese. However, the term ‘tribal migrants’ are generally used for Northeast migrants, to enables a separation to be made between tribals from the Northeast and nontribal ‘Indians’. Tribal is the commonly used word by the communities designated as such in the Indian Constitution and used by the state and central governments in India to describe the same communities. However, word

‘chinky’, is a collective derogatory name for this group of people ‘a term used in racial abuse and not claimed by Northeasterners.

In the context of racism and discrimination experienced by Northeast migrants these tribal have distinct differences in physical appearance. However, Northeast region as a whole in general consist of different racial communities. Most of the ethnic tribal in the Northeast lives in hilly regions of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Mizoram. While most of the non-tribal communities lives in the valleys be it in Manipur, Assam or in Tripura. The Northeast migrants comes to Delhi from the entire region and they all faces racism and discrimination based on their ethnicity. Although migrants from the hill states of Northeast also live-in towns and cities in the valleys.

The non-tribal of Northeastern migrants are mostly from Assam, and plain of Manipur and Tripura, within the non-tribal category are Thai-Ahoms, and Meiteis are not considered as tribals legally nor would they self-identify as such. Nonetheless, many Meiteis or the Thai-Ahoms would be very uncomfortable about being included as tribals though they both as Mongoloids racially along with the ethnic tribal group. Nonetheless, the Northeast community in Delhi is inclusive of the Meiteis, the Assamese and the Tripuris. Darjeeling Hills, the territory immediately south of Sikkim is not however, included as part of the Northeast, a movement for an independent Gorkhaland state has revived in the last decade.

FACTORS OF MIGRATION TO DELHI

There are number of reasons for leaving the Northeast. Some migrants from the conflict prone states such as Manipur and Nagaland might have come to Delhi due to the protracted conflict characterised with violence and insecurity. While people from more peaceful states like Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh migrate for different reasons mostly in search of economic livelihood. However, people from the same location might have very different reasons for migrating such as refuge from conflict, poor education options at home, and better connectivity between the frontier and metros. Nevertheless, increased wave of migration happened in view of the availability of work in retail, hospitality and call centres, job opportunities. The availability of work means that migrants from the Northeast can support themselves while studying or support

family members to study. According to Thongkholal Hoakip, many Northeast Indians, particularly women are preferred in jobs such as beauty, hospitality and healthcare sectors. Many nursing professionals from the Northeast who are not absorbed in the government hospitals are now coming to Delhi.^{xvii}

Meanwhile, owing to insurgency problem and by a number of associated difficulties such as corruption, low levels of investment, and the proliferation of illegal and semi-legal economies and the opportunity to study outside the region is a major push for migration.

Migration of students from the region to the city gained momentum in the recent decade with the bulks of students going outside every academic session. There is an estimated 50, 000 students from Northeast are presently studying in colleges and other educational institutions in Delhi, with their parents spending hundreds of crores annually for these students. Every year large number of students community migrate to Delhi in search for quality education better facilitates refuted institutions, colleges and universities. At the high school level parents who are well off sends their children to cities, to be educated in the refuted schools. Most of the universities in the region does not offer many of the subjects preferred by aspired students. Parents do not hesitate sending their children to get quality education outside the state, no matter if the schools or colleges are reputed or not. This is an emerging trend, which has been mounting prominently since the unfolding of the new millennium. Consequently, it caused great concern to the policy makers, parents and conscientious citizens over certain issues.

Parent's send-off girls to cities for education mostly after graduation for obvious compelling reasons such as: non-availability of courses and quality educational institutions in the state: Technical and vocational studies, medical colleges, business management studies in search of higher education, research facilities, coaching classes for civil services, better job avenues-faster development of faculties and utilization of skills. Having receiving formative education in their respective states, students move to Delhi to pursue higher education. The initial cultural shock with the hassle bustle life style in the metro city made them hard-pressed to adjust with people from diverse backgrounds (race, culture, religion, region, caste class, and tribes). In Delhi, neighbours and landlords often harass them for coming back late at night, assuming they are sex workers.^{xviii}

CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS

Delhi is a centre of educational pursuit and an important career destination. People of Northeast India though belonging to different ethnic groups have been a part of the Delhi crowd, but many of them still feel like aliens in the country's capital. The problems included; cultural barriers, language problems, accommodation, local prejudices and misconception. There is a huge cultural barrier exists between the people of Delhi and those from people from the North East. In general, the Northeast tribal believe in a more open society where men and women are being treated equally, this cultural problem spreading into almost every sphere of life. Language barrier often creates problems, except for the top 10 or 15 colleges in Delhi University; most of the other colleges often use Hindi as the medium of instruction. This leaves the students from the Northeast utterly confused. Property owners too are taking advantage of this language problems and charge exorbitant rents from them. A lot more effort of adjustment and understanding on both the mainland and Northeast societies is required.

Following the nationwide lockdown imposed in the first wave of the Corona pandemic on 25 March 2020, racial discrimination intensified against the Northeast women. Since all means of transportations suspended to combat coronavirus, the women were among the stranded in the city without any means of sustenance especially for job aspirants and migrant workers in the unorganized sectors find themselves out of work. During covid-19 pandemic there have been many reports of harassment meted out by Northeast girls because of their physical appearance, denial of groceries items, medicine and verbal abuses calling them as Chinese corona virus carriers. They were in tire need of immediate financial support and other essential support for the ensuing months. With no other source of income, they faced uncertainty regarding their ability to pay for daily essentials, rent and other bills.

In a racist attack unfolded on the streets of New Delhi in 2021, a girl from Manipur was humiliated when a middle-aged man riding a scooter spat *paan* (betel juice) on her and called her “corona”.

Reema Ramchiary from Guwahati narrated to the “The Leaflet” a shocking incident she experienced: “As a tribal from the north-east, I have seen numerous incidents when people walk up to me and ask me what my price is. I remember being in a club in Delhi when two guys approached me and

said ‘you look like a Thai girl who is known to give massages in Bangkok. I felt numb and helpless. The media has played a big part in building such attitudes and prejudices. Our Bollywood films are no better. For example, Even Mary Kom was played by an actress who was not from the north-east.’^{xix}

The problem continued during the second wave lockdown in April 2021. Northeastern people come under attack amid coronavirus panic; many women shared their experiences of discrimination, verbal abuse and harassment. The challenges have not subsided even after the lockdown lifted since the fear of third wave was looming. Many women from the region in Delhi have lost jobs and income sources during the waves of pandemic and suddenly had to face a severe economic crisis without a regular income source. Many of the workers were among the returnees to home state due to the pandemic. Quite a number of women working in private companies such as MNCs, Aviation, Hotels, Tourism industries and BPOs have been searching for new placement opportunities. Many had to sustain through the pandemic with ration provided by several NGOs and other social agencies. They reached out to the needy individuals with meager relief via privately sourced donations. However, with perpetual pandemic situation and with limited resources increased numbers of women were in need of essential commodities.

MEASURES TOWARDS PROTECTION OF NORTHEAST WOMEN

A person can seek protection under the following laws if he/she is discriminated against on the grounds of racial features, place of origin, customs, culture.

“Article 14 of the Indian Constitution ensures Equality before law.”

“Article 15 of the Indian Constitution, which prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.”

“IPC Section 153A penalizes the promotion of enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language,”

“The Criminal law (Removal of Racial Discrimination Act, 1949)”

“Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955”

“Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989”

“Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993.”^{xx}

With the incidents of hate crime against people hailing from the Northeast triggered strong protests and crime against Northeast women intensified, the Central government felt the pressure from various corners to address the matter in a strategical manner. In recent recruitment drive the Government inducted over 530 constables, there were 355 men and 175 women from the 8 sister states into the Delhi police force. Until the year 2020, there were only 37 men and women from the Northeast in Delhi's 80,000 strong police force. With induction of 530 constables, Delhi Police now has 1,090 personnel hailing from Northeast India at various levels.^{xxi}

“Robin Hibu, Joint commissioner of police (training) and nodal officer Delhi Police's Northeast unit said the young constables are smart, fluent in English and will be posted across police stations where there is a sizeable population of the youth from the Northeast.”^{xxii} The “National Commission for Women” (NCW) constituted a “North East Cell” to address problems being faced by North East women and to take special steps for their development and empowerment. In addition, North East Cell has been created to enhance the focus on the women of Northeast and their special problems and challenges, and to intervene with State and Central Governments whenever required.^{xxiii} The NCW is implementing a special project with Delhi Police and Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) to work on the issue of violence against women. The scope of this programme includes rebuilding violated woman's self-esteem, self-worth and dignity; offering the violated woman immediate services based on her needs, such as:

“Carrying out counselling, arranging for shelter or medical aid, providing information on laws and her rights, harnessing police support. Creating awareness in the community on the issue of violence against women. Trained social workers/ counsellors in the Crime against Women Cell (CAW Cell) help women and children facing violence by providing them with emotional support, assisting them in negotiations to stop violence, linkages to livelihood opportunities and providing them with legal knowledge. The processes are aimed towards achieving a violence free life for the woman.”^{xxiv}

A major step was the establishment of Special Police Unit for North Eastern Region (SPUNER) under Delhi Police. The Delhi Police is the only Police in the country which has a special unit for North East people.^{xxv}The Unit is rendering services to northeast people in Delhi in several ways besides working day and night for safety and security of NE people including students in everyday problems faced by them. People from North-eastern region residing in the national capital felt the enhanced safety and security with the increased in patrolling, especially in the areas where they are in good numbers. This is an innovative initiative to sensitise the public and responsiveness of the Government of India towards the most critical issue of Northeast people in Delhi.

The M.P. Bezbaruah committee formed after the murder of Nido Tania, a 19-year-old from Arunachal Pradesh in Delhi in 2014, recommended^{xxvi} adding relevant provisions in the IPC by creating new offences under Section 153C and 509A to deal with comments, gestures and acts intended to insult a member of a particular racial group. The Criminal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2019, introduced in the Rajya Sabha in the Indian Parliament on 7 February 2020, 6 years after the death of Nido Tania. The bill seeks to introduce section 153 C and 505A in the Indian Penal Code (IPC). It reads:

In the Indian Penal Code, (hereinafter referred to as the Penal Code), after section 153B, the following new section shall be inserted, namely:— “153C. Whoever on grounds of religion, race, caste or community, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, place of birth, residence, language disability or tribe— (a) uses gravely threatening words either spoken or written, signs, visible representations within the hearing or sight of a person with the intention to cause or knowledge that it is likely to cause, fear or alarm; or (b) advocates hatred by words either spoken or written, signs, visible representations, that causes or is likely to cause incitement to violence; shall be punishable with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years, or with fine, or with both.”

In the Penal Code, after section 505 the following new section shall be inserted, namely: – “505 A. Whoever on grounds of religion, race, caste or community,

sex, gender, sexual orientation, place of birth, residence, language, disability or tribe, intentionally or knowingly uses, in public, words, statements containing rumour or alarming news or displays any writing, sign, or other visible representation which is or is likely to be gravely threatening, or derogatory; (i) within the hearing or sight of a person, causing fear or alarm; or (ii) with the intent to provoke or knowledge that it is likely to provoke the use of violence, against that person or another, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years or with fine, or with both”.^{xxvii}

The M.P. Bezbaruah Committee had recommended inclusion of history and culture of Northeast in NCERT books and facilities for legal assistance with the following steps: Panel of lawyers for legal assistance and consultation through –mobile phone, e-mail, WhatsApps etc., legal awareness training for the Northeast representatives from eight Northeast States. Lecture on legal rights during freshers meet at various universities in Delhi. Dissemination of information on legal rights to NE youths through pamphlets, brochures, and electronic media. Towards strengthening law enforcement agencies, it recommended one nodal officer of the rank of IGP should be placed in Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to constantly monitor and follow up the number of initiatives taken up. The North East Police Unit should have the power of a police station having jurisdiction for whole Delhi for investigation, arrest instead of routing it through various officers who have jurisdictions over those police stations.

The Committee also recommended setting up of Fast Tract Courts for handling the cases relating to the Northeast people particularly those that are racially motivated and heinous crimes against Northeast women and children. Northeast Special Police cell should have, on the pattern of Special Police Unit for Women and Children (SPUWC) Unit, the requisite logistics/infrastructure having jurisdiction all over Delhi. It should have Northeast officers in visible positions. Other officers should be specially trained or sensitised on Northeast issues. During webinar on “Issues and Challenges faced by Women from North Eastern Region” organised by National Commission for Women (NCW) in 29 July 2020, Robin Hibu IPS, Joint Commissioner Delhi Police pointed out that the problem with the accommodation for the Northeast working women created by Ministry of DoNER at Jasola (South Delhi). The rules and procedures of the hostel prescribed three women were to share a small hostel room.

Along with all the legal steps that can be taken, the Bezbaruah Committee feels that sensitising the law enforcing agencies about the people and the culture of the Northeast will go a long way in creating a suitable atmosphere. Towards educating the people about the Northeast, Indian universities outside Northeast could make projects on Northeast as mandatory part of course curricula. Even in schools, project work on Northeast related themes should be built into the system. The rich culture of the Northeast as a means of integration; Ministry of Culture can evolve some mechanism of monitoring and coordination. To create positive perception about the Northeast, festivals, and cultural programmes should be also target the metro dwellers. Promoting tourism as a means of creating awareness and understanding the Northeast region. Ministry of Tourism may take up such schemes for promotion of Northeast. Information & Broadcasting and media to focus on the Northeast, it can assist community radio station across country as they are useful media for creating awareness, other media agencies.^{xxviii}

The Delhi-NCR region has about ten lakh people from the Northeast. Majority of them had to live in deplorable conditions; even renting small rooms becomes high, since rent is soaring every season in the city. Accommodation is a major concern for people coming from the Northeast. Some of the major steps taken were the construction of Hostels for Northeast in Jawaharlal Nehru University and Delhi University. Central ministries and state governments need to create sufficient number of hostels for the students and working women of the Northeast region. Allocation of welfare funds for security of women from Northeast living in the city at times of natural calamity and disaster. Establishment of counseling and monitoring centers for the women with special focus on their grievances and all-round safety Fast track Courts – for speedy trial for cases in regards to crime against women. Model of SPUNER in Delhi Police can be replicated across major Indian cities. Provision of job security and social benefits in terms of accommodation and payment for employees in unorganized sector and by creating awareness on implementation of laws related to women in unorganized sectors.

CONCLUSION

There is a huge cultural barrier that exists between the people of this region and those from the Northeast. People from the Northeast were allegedly criticised for their free style living; however, they come from culturally disciplined society. Delhi is a centre of educational pursuit

but even in primary educational institution like Delhi University has become particularly unsafe for women. The derogatory treatments, imposition of dress codes, sexual discriminations, harassments and molestations, callous attitudes meted out to them in Delhi. Gender equality cannot be realized without giving women their share in the decision-making process. Gender-based violence and racial discrimination persist due to lack of awareness about Northeast people and their diverse culture and ethnicity. Due to numerous cases of sexual attacks, most of them feels insecure in the neighborhood, public places, institutions and working places. There are cases of victims move to another secured localities or use more expensive transportation services. A lot more effort of adjustment and understanding on both the mainland and Northeast societies is required.

REFERENCES

- Abraham, Rosa and Amit Basole, and Surbhi Kesar (2021), “Down and Out? The Gendered Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on India’s Labour Market”, CSE Working Paper No. 40 February, Azim Premji University, p.3. https://cse.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Abraham_Basole_Kesar_Gender_Covid_Feb_2021.pdf.
- Banerji, Annie, Reuters June 19, 2020, “Spat on and abused: Coronavirus fuels racism against India's northeasterners”. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-india-discriminati-idUSKBN23Q2JS>.
- Blank, Rebecca M. Marilyn Dabady, and Constance F. Citro, (Eds) (2004), Measuring Racial Discrimination, National Research Council. Measuring Racial Discrimination, The National Academies Press: Washington, D.C. www.nap.edu.
- Changsan, Carolyn (2020), “COVID-19 Impact On Women Migrants From North-East India: Caught In Uncertainty,” Intersectional Feminism- Desi Style, September 9, <https://feminisminindia.com/2020/09/09/women-migrants-from-north-east-covid-19/>

Constitution of India Article 14 (The state not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India. Protection prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, Caste, sex, or place of birth).

Delhi Police, SPECIAL POLICE UNIT FOR NORTH EAST REGION (SPUNER), <http://spuner.delhipolice.gov.in/>, Cadets from the Northeast fight stereotypes, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/static/groundglass/delhi-police-cadets-from-the-northeast-fight-stereotypes/>

Dutta, Anuradha, RatnaBhuyan,(2008),*Women and Peace: Chapters from Northeast India*, New Dekhi: Akansha Publishing House.

Gangte, Priyadarshini M. (2011),*Women of North East in present context*, New Delhi: Maxford.

Gohain, ManashPratim, Times of India 24 January 2014, “ 81% of northeast women harassed in in Delhi: Survey” .<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/81-of-northeast-women-harassed-in-delhi-survey/articleshow/29270244.cms>.

Goswami, Roshmi M.G. Sreekala and MeghnaGoswami(2005), “Women in armed conflict situations (a study” North East Network, Guwahati: The Network.

Haksar, Nandita(2016),*The Exodus is Not Over: Migrations from the Ruptured Homelands of Northeast India*. New Delhi: Speaking Tiger Books.

Haokip, Thongkhohal, “Nationalism and Identities in Times of Covid-19: From ‘Chinky’ to ‘Coronavirus’: racism against Northeast Indians during the Covid-19 pandemic,” see link in <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14631369.2020.1763161>.

India Today News, March 23, 2020, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/verbally-abused-spat-at-harassed-northeastern-citizens-come-under-attack-amid-coronavirus-panic-1658826-2020-03-23>.

Lyndem, Biloris, UtpalKumar(2004),*DeEducation in North East India: Experience and Challenge*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.

Kolb, Eva (2009), *The Evolution of New York City's Multiculturalism: Melting Pot or Salad Bowl: Immigrants in New York from the 19th Century until the End of the Gilded Age*, BoD Books, pp.2-5.

Mazumdar, Indrani, Indu Agnihotri and N Neetha (2012), "Gender and Migration: Negotiating Rights." *Centre for Women's Development Studies*: New Delhi.

McDuie-Ra. Duncan (2012), *Northeast Migrants in Delhi: Race, Refuge and Retail*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, Netherlands, pp.32-33.

Mukherjee, Mala "Contested Urban Spaces in Delhi: Experiences of Discrimination of Women from Northeast India," *Journal of Social Inclusion Studies* 4(2) 2018, Indian Institute of Dalit Studies SAGE Publications, pp. 1–23.

National Commission for Women, "Violence Free Home- A Women's Right," A joint programme of the NCW, Delhi Police and Tata Institute of Social Sciences, (TISS) Mumbai. <http://ncwapps.nic.in/PDFFiles/CAWCellcontactdetails.pdf>.

Parliament of India, Bill No. LIII of 2019, "THE CRIMINAL LAWS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2019," As Introduced In The Rajya Sabha On The 7th February, 2020. <http://164.100.47.4/BillsTexts/RSBillTexts/asintroduced/crim%20laws-E-7%202%2020.pdf>.

Rebecca M. Blank, Marilyn Dabady, and Constance F. Citro, (Eds) (2004). *Measuring Racial Discrimination*, National Research Council. *Measuring Racial Discrimination*. The National Academies Press: Washington, D.C. www.nap.edu.

Report of the Committee under the Chairmanship of Shri M.P. Bezbaruah to look into the concerns of the People of the North East Living in other Parts of the Country, pp. 58-69, https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/filefield_paths/ReportOfMPBezbaruahCommittee.PDF.

Salle, Vangamla K S, EastMojo July 8, 2020, "63 Manipur youths among 530 from NE to join Delhi Police as constable." <https://www.eastmojo.com/news/2020/07/08/63-manipur-youths-among-530-from-ne-to-join-delhi-police-as-constables/>

Sharma, Puneet Kumar, May 12, 2020 , India Today, “Northeast students being forced out of Delhi University hostels, DCW pulls up varsity”.
<https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/northeast-students-being-forced-out-of-delhi-university-hostels-dcw-pulls-up-varsity-1676963-2020-05-12>.

Singh, Satakshi “The Unending Plight of Northeast Indians: From ‘Chinese’ to ‘Chinki’ to ‘Coronavirus’,
<https://medium.com/the-%C3%B3pinion/the-unending-plight-of-northeast-indians-from-chinese-to-chinki-to-coronavirus-b4dc86cb5b72>.

Singha, Anand, The leaflet 19 June 2021, “Racism against Northeasterners: How Covid-19 pandemic propelled the existent social evil into an extreme”
<https://www.theleaflet.in/racism-against-northeasterners-how-covid-19-pandemic-propelled-the-existent-social-evil-into-an-extreme/>

Singh, Vijaita (2021), “Northeast citizens faced racial discrimination amid COVID-19 outbreak, says govt. study” The Hindu New Delhi, April 12.
<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/northeast-citizens-faced-racial-discrimination-amid-covid-19-outbreak-says-govt-study/article34303162.ece>.

Tacoli, Cecilia and David Satterthwaite (2013), “Editorial: Gender and Urban Change,” Environment and Urbanisation, 25, No 1: 3–8.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN Human Rights), “Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women New York, 18 December 1979.” See the link in
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cedaw.aspx>.

The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, see in <https://legislative.gov.in/sites/default/files/A2013-14.pdf>.

ENDNOTES

-
- ⁱ Eva Kolb (2009), *The Evolution of New York City's Multiculturalism: Melting Pot or Salad Bowl: Immigrants in New York from the 19th Century until the End of the Gilded Age*, BoD Books, pp.2-5.
- ⁱⁱ Article 14 of Constitution of India 1952: (The state not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India. Protection prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, Caste, sex, or place of birth).
- ⁱⁱⁱ Carolyn Changsan (2020), "COVID-19 Impact On Women Migrants From North-East India: Caught In Uncertainty," *Intersectional Feminism- Desi Style*, September 9, <https://feminisminindia.com/2020/09/09/women-migrants-from-north-east-covid-19/>
- ^{iv} Rosa Abraham, Amit Basole, and Surbhi Kesar (2021), "Down and Out? The Gendered Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on India's Labour Market", *CSE Working Paper No. 40 February*, Azim Premji University, p.3. https://cse.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Abraham_Basole_Kesar_Gender_Covid_Feb_2021.pdf.
- ^v Vijaitha Singh (2021), "Northeast citizens faced racial discrimination amid COVID-19 outbreak, says govt. study" *The Hindu New Delhi*, April 12. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/northeast-citizens-faced-racial-discrimination-amid-covid-19-outbreak-says-govt-study/article34303162.ece>.
- ^{vi} Manash Pratim Gohain, *Times of India* 24 January 2014, "81% of northeast women harassed in Delhi: Survey". <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/81-of-northeast-women-harassed-in-delhi-survey/articleshow/29270244.cms>.
- ^{vii} *India Today News*, March 23, 2020, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/verbally-abused-spat-at-harassed-northeastern-citizens-come-under-attack-amid-coronavirus-panic-1658826-2020-03-23>.
- ^{viii} *The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013*, see in <https://legislative.gov.in/sites/default/files/A2013-14.pdf>.
- ^{ix} The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN Human Rights), "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women New York, 18 December 1979." See the link in <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cedaw.aspx>.
- ^x Rebecca M. Blank, Marilyn Dabady, and Constance F. Citro, (2004) Eds., *Measuring Racial Discrimination, National Research Council. Measuring Racial Discrimination*, The National Academies Press: Washington, D.C. www.nap.edu.
- ^{xi} *Ibid.*
- ^{xii} Nandita Haksar (2016), *The Exodus is Not Over: Migrations from the Ruptured Homelands of Northeast India*. New Delhi: Speaking Tiger Books.
- ^{xiii} Duncan McDuie-Ra (2012), *Northeast Migrants in Delhi: Race, Refuge and Retail*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, Netherlands, pp.32-33.
- ^{xiv} Cecilia Tacoli and David Satterthwaite (2013), "Editorial: Gender and Urban Change," *Environment and Urbanisation*. 25, No 1: 3-8.
- ^{xv} Mala Mukherjee "Contested Urban Spaces in Delhi: Experiences of Discrimination of Women from Northeast India," *Journal of Social Inclusion Studies* 4(2) 2018, Indian Institute of Dalit Studies SAGE Publications, pp. 1-23.
- ^{xvi} Puneet Kumar Sharma, May 12, 2020, *India Today*, "Northeast students being forced out of Delhi University hostels, DCW pulls up varsity". <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/northeast-students-being-forced-out-of-delhi-university-hostels-dcw-pulls-up-varsity-1676963-2020-05-12>
- ^{xvii} Thongkhola Haokip, "Nationalism and Identities in Times of Covid-19: From 'Chinky' to 'Coronavirus': racism against Northeast Indians during the Covid-19 pandemic," see link in <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14631369.2020.1763161>.
- ^{xviii} Annie Banerji, *Reuters* June 19, 2020, "Spat on and abused: Coronavirus fuels racism against India's northeasterners". <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-india-discrimination-idUSKBN23Q2JS>.
- ^{xix} Anand Singha, *The leaflet* 19 June 2021, "Racism against Northeasterners: How Covid-19 pandemic propelled the existent social evil into an extreme" <https://www.theleaflet.in/racism-against-northeasterners-how-covid-19-pandemic-propelled-the-existent-social-evil-into-an-extreme/>

^{xx}Satakshi Singh, “The Unending Plight of Northeast Indians: From ‘Chinese’ to ‘Chinki’ to ‘Coronavirus’”, <https://medium.com/the-%C3%B3pinion/the-unending-plight-of-northeast-indians-from-chinese-to-chinki-to-coronavirus-b4dc86cb5b72>.

^{xxi}Vangamla Salle K S, EastMojo July 8, 2020, “63 Manipur youths among 530 from NE to join Delhi Police as constable.” <https://www.eastmojo.com/news/2020/07/08/63-/>

^{xxii}Delhi Police cadets from the Northeast fight stereotypes, Photos by Raj K Raj, Text by Prawesh Lama.

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/static/groundglass/delhi-police-cadets-from-the-northeast-fight-stereotypes/>

^{xxiii}National Commission for Women. <http://ncw.nic.in/ncw-cells/north-east-cell>.

^{xxiv}Ibid., “Violence Free Home- A Women’s Right,” A joint programme of the NCW, Delhi Police and Tata Institute of Social Sciences, (TISS) Mumbai. See links in <http://ncwapps.nic.in/PDFFiles/CAWCellcontactdetails.pdf>.

^{xxv}SPECIAL POLICE UNIT FOR NORTH EAST REGION (SPUNER), <http://spuner.delhipolice.gov.in/>

^{xxvi}Report of the Committee under the Chairmanship of Shri.M.P. Bezbaruah to look into the concerns of the North East living in other parts of the country.

https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/filefield_paths/ReportOfMPBezbaruahCommittee.PDF

^{xxvii}Parliament of India, Bill No. LIII of 2019, “THE CRIMINAL LAWS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2019,” AS INTRODUCED IN THE RAJYA SABHA ON THE 7TH FEBRUARY, 2020.

<http://164.100.47.4/BillsTexts/RSBillTexts/asintroduced/crim%20laws-E-7%202%2020.pdf>.

^{xxviii} Report of the Committee under the Chairmanship of Shri M.P. Bezbaruah to look into the concerns of the People of the North East Living in other Parts of the Country, pp.58-69.

https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/filefield_paths/ReportOfMPBezbaruahCommittee.PDF.