MLCU ACADEMIC DIGEST

Volume 5 2021

COMPILATION OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH AND ARTICLES

Martin Luther Christian University

Shillong, Meghalaya, India

MLCU ACADEMIC DIGEST

Volume 5 • 2021

Members of the editorial team

Dr. Glenn C Kharkongor
Dr. Vincent T Darlong
Dr.Larilin Kharpuri
Dr. Sanda Nichell Lyngwa

Cover Image: *Untitled*, 2019, Careen J Langstieh

MLCU ACADEMIC DIGEST

The MLCU Academic Digest is annual, online and print compilation of abstracts, book synopsis, articles and ongoing project details on multidisciplinary research written and carried out by the faculty, adjunct faculty, students and alumni of MLCU. The digest covers all the thrust broad research areas of MLCU including but are not limited to them. While pursuing multidisciplinary areas of research, the following are the emerging research thrusts in MLCU that cut across academic programs beginning from undergraduate level up to the doctoral studies.

Environmental Studies
Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices
Education
Gender Studies
Tribal Psychology
Mental Health
Traditional Livelihoods

OBJECTIVES OF THE COMPILATION

To provide a medium through which scholarly reports and materials are accessible to students, faculty and alumni.
To recognize the contributions of faculty and students in the overall academic development of the university.
To recognize the achievements of the students in the area of research.
To document and encourage research based writing by students and faculty of MLCU.

FEATURES

All materials will be an open accessible content
Only abstracts of published material are included. Complete content may be accessed from the respective source.
The soft copy can be downloaded from the university website mlcuniv.in

ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY

Creation of the University

Martin Luther Christian University was created by Act No. 11 of 2005 of the Legislative Assembly of Meghalaya and received the assent of the Governor on July 6, 2005. The Government of Meghalaya issued the gazette notification on February 22, 2006. The creation of the university is in accordance with the University Grants Commission Act, 1956 under Section 2(f) and the university is empowered to grant degrees under Section 22 of the UGC Act.

Several students and graduates of MLCU have been awarded JRF, NET and merit scholarships by the UGC. Many graduates of MLCU are pursuing their higher studies in universities and institutions in different parts of the country and abroad.

The First Christian University

Martin Luther Christian University is the first full-fledged Christian University in India, the capstone to more than two centuries of Christian education in this country. As a Christian university, MLCU has the mandate, mission and commitment to engage proactively with the Christian community, especially youth, Christian educational institutions and Christian organizations.

A Developmental University

The University recognizes its opportunity and responsibility to contribute to the sustainable development of Meghalaya and the Northeast region, participating not only in higher education, but also in vocational education, health care, information and communication networks, environmental conservation, gender studies, cultural documentation, peace building and interventional projects. The University collaborates with NGOs, community organizations, and industry in the development of the community.

The Name

The University is named after Martin Luther (1483-1546), a church reformer who is known as the Father of Protestantism. Though Martin Luther left law studies to become a monk, his enlightened views on education are quoted to this day. He was especially concerned about "parents who do not have the opportunity or means to educate their children". His sermon on "Keeping children in schools" later published as a treatise, focused on poor families who needed their children to work rather than go to school. He laid emphasis on the establishment and maintenance of Christian Schools in response to a decline in the church run schools in the 16th century.

The Emblem

The University Emblem comprises of the *Knup*, the Cross and the Hearth. The *Knup* is a traditional woven bamboo cane cape used as a protection against rain when working in the fields or out in the open. The *Knup* symbolises protection and nurture in the journey through hardship to gain knowledge. In the centre of the *Knup*, is the Cross which is the symbol of Christianity and denotes sacrifice and endurance. At the base of the *Knup* is the Hearth with burning fire which occupies an important place in tribal houses. It is a place where parents and elders gather to instruct, narrate stories and sing songs while imparting the cultural and traditional knowledge of the forefathers to the younger generation.

The Motto

Noted poet, historian and archeologist George Fabricius (1516- 1571) eulogised the Protestant Reformist, Martin Luther as "The Light of Truth." Martin Luther Christian University's motto has emerged from this praise of the Father of Protestantism. According to Fabricius, truth is a light that illuminates, educates and edifies.

The Mission Statement

To contribute to the sustainable development of Meghalaya and Northeast India, by providing knowledge, skills and values that will enable our students to become global citizens, while upholding gender, ethnic and religious equity for all, conserving its bio-cultural heritage and by recognising its Christian legacy and commitment.

Vision

Christian education and values for the betterment of society, especially its youth and Christian community.

The Vision of the University has encapsulated the mandate and commitment of the Founders of the University which have been recorded verbatim in the Minutes of the first meeting of the Board of Governors and is extracted as below:

"The role and responsibility of the church is to transform society in a manner that is relevant in today's context. The process of transformation must come about in such a way that it solves the problems of unemployment among young people, poverty, health, education and development. The university has come at the right time and should help our people to help themselves. Our state has a rich potential in nature and the university should help to tap these resources in a proper way. The university should be rooted in the local culture."

"The university should help to define the role of the church in this society. It should serve the people of Meghalaya. Historically, the church has provided school and higher education in Meghalaya but the university will be the crown of our educational efforts in Meghalaya. The praxis of faith, grace and scripture is education."

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FACULTY OF ARTS AND CULTURE

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND COMMUNICATION

DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM AND TRAVEL MANAGEMENT

DEPARTMENT OF DOCTORAL STUDIES AND RESEARCH

SECTION I

Abstract - Journal, Conference (Faculty and PhD scholars)

SECTION II

SYNOPSIS (BOOK, BOOK CHAPTER)

SECTION III

ARTICLES (NEWSPAPER, NEWSLETTER AND MAGAZINE)

SECTION IV

ABSTRACTS AWARDED ON UNIVERSITY RESEARCH DAY 2019

SECTION V

ONGOING RESEARCH
- FUNDED EXTERNALLY
- SEED GRANT

SECTION VI

CONFERENCES CONDUCTED

SECTION VII

PUBLICATIONS (BOOKS AND MONOGRAPHS)

District Councils-MBMA Consultative Workshops on *NRM and District Council Laws and Regulations* organized by World Bank funded CLLMP Project and MBMA, Govt of Meghalaya and ADCs. April 6-9, 2021

Summary of three presentations:

a. Key Limitations & Opportunities of ADC Laws [GHADC] & Suggested Areas for Improvement (key areas of presentations were on Garo Hills District (Jhum) Regulation, 1954; and Garo Hills District (Forest) Act, 1958).

b. NRM & JHADC Laws and Regulations: Limitations and Opportunities (discussion on the Forest and Fisheries laws of JHADC and the Forest Policy 2020).

c. NRM & KHADC Laws and Regulations: Limitations, Opportunities and Suggestions.

• Attempting to understand key essence & limitations of KHADC's NRM laws (namely, the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills Autonomous District (Management & Control of Forest) Act, 1958 and Rules, 1960; The United Khasi-Jaintia Hills District Fisheries Act, 1954; and the Khasi Hills Autonomous District (Protection and Promotion of Khasi Traditional Medicine) Act, 2011)

• Explore opportunities for possible areas of improvement/attention in emerging context.

• Ideas for forging win-win strategic partnership between KHADC & CLLMP.

• Strategies for community mobilization for CLLMP vis-à-vis imagining VNRMC's roles for sustainable NRM.

The NADI Conversation Series 2 on "*Ethno-Biological Practices and Conservation of Endangered Biodiversity In The North East: A Discussion*", organised by the Asian Confluence on March 25, 2021.

Summary of deliberations-The North-Eastern region of India is home to almost 50% of the flowering plants recorded from India and exhibits a phenomenal diversity. The region is also home to many wild variants of the current day cultivated plants like those belonging to the banana, orchid, citrus, and ginger families to name a few.

The region is also home to more than 250 tribes of different ethnic groups speaking over 200 dialects while following distinct cultural and ethnic practices.

Agriculture is the main occupation of this region, and the different tribes follow various indigenous and traditional practices while tilling their lands. There exists a rich and unique coffer of unique and traditional means of agricultural practices making this area a paradise for ethnobotanists and anthropologists.

It is also documented that the people of the region made a deep and strong attachment to nature which is reflected in their daily and religious practices. The traditional conservation practices such as establishing and maintaining the sacred groves and plants are also a reflection of their reverence for nature.

Ethno-botany is the scientific study of the traditional knowledge and customs of a people concerning plants and their medical, religious, and other uses.

The natural and native vegetation composition and their combined relative ethnobotanical importance with species conservation index have shown that native plants provide many ecological and socio-economic services including provisioning of food, medicine, and energy.

Though a wide variety of plants with high resistance to important diseases have been reported, a large number of folk medicines and their subsequent applications have remained restricted to certain tribal pockets only. Gaining knowledge with practical implications involved in the multi-propagation of such important crop/medicinal plants would be of immense importance and added practical value.

 Study of ethnobotanical practices in the region may show us the way for the promotion and best utilization of traditional herbal, medicinal plants and wild races of crops with high resistance to insects and other damaging diseases for the benefit of mankind.

The conservation of ethnobotanical resources and the wild variants of crop plants, floricultural species, and medicinal plants would be of importance while formulating future plant breeding programs with an emphasis on discovering a native germ

pool and its conservation as also to create a germplasm library through which related information from surrounding lands can be added and shared to promote socio-economic improvement and interactive stability in the region. Through this conversation we would aim to find answers to the following questions:

1. Could you tell us about the native medicinal and floricultural plants with significant economic importance that is being grown in this region?

2. How will the knowledge of ethnobotany and studies related to native practices of growing these plants help in the conservation and rejuvenation of the otherwise endangered and almost close to extinction plant variety in this region?

3. How can the existing knowledge of traditional cropping practices be perpetrated amongst the common people while encouraging them to follow these methods?

4. Can these methods be used to introduce micro-propagation of important and relatively unknown plants to a level where it can be turned into a cottage industry?

5. Since the climatic conditions are ambient for using and promoting plastic house/ greenhouse cultivation of plants do you envisage this as a possibility to promote economic stability?

About NADI Conversations

NADI (Natural Allies in Development and Interdependence) Conversations, is our on-going initiative, which includes a series of webinars and lectures on the common theme to highlight the narrative of a celebration of the common riverine and civilizational heritage of the nations and people in the Ganga Brahmaputra Meghna (GBM) Basin. 'NADI Conversations' are planned as a web-based, multi-stakeholder conversation series, under one of our flagship initiatives: NADI, to celebrate rivers as the pulse and life force of our ecology and civilization.

Water Conference organized by Rotary Club of Orchid City & Govt of Meghalaya.

March 24, 2021

Presented a paper on "People & Water: When it is too much and when it is too little" focusing on water management, rainwater harvesting, water crisis and water budgeting in the context of hill areas. Also making our roads "green", enabling rainwater water harvesting from roads. Green roads are:

• Roads that have secure transport functions

• Roads that are instruments for water management

• Road that are used for flood protection

• Roads that stem erosion and promote good land management

• Roads side vegetation that controls dust and filters effluents

---

Conference on "*Indian Himalayan Region (Ihr): People, Environment and Sustainability*" organised by the National Institute of Rural Development And Panchayati Raj North Eastern Regional Centre, Guwahati. March 9,2021.

Presented a paper on

"*From Slash and Burn To Sustainable Replanting: Transforming Jhumscapes Of Upland Ne India In The Eastern Himalayas*"

Key issues/questions:

a. What had been the diverse models of transformative replanting of jhumscapes in NE India?

b. What kinds of social processes had been developed through the project-people initiatives?

c. What might be the significance of transforming jhumscapes by replanting in the socio-economic and environmental

sustainability of the upland communities?

Social processes:

d. Free Prior Informed Consent.

e. Social agreement between the Project and Village Institutions.

f. Formation of CBOs (Natural Resource Management Groups or NaRMGs) for equitable inclusion and participation of men and women.

g. Wealth Ranking of the HHs.

h. Re-education on the natural resources of the village/community.

i. Women-focused initiatives (SHGs, Revolving Fund, etc).

Technical Processes:

Replanting and/or modification of jhum with some of the following interventions presented in details:

• High Value Annual Crops (King chillies, ginger, etc.)

• Perennial Crops (all types of fruit trees)

• NTFPs (Bamboo, broom, thatch grass, Medicinal plants)

• Horticulture crops

• Cash crops (tea, coffee, cashew nuts, areca nut, rubber, etc)

• Agroforestry species (such as high density Agar).

• Community Conserved Areas (CCA)

Common features: Integrated with home gardens & livestock system (including fishery, apiculture, sericulture where feasible)

Conference on *Contemporary Issues in North East India: Some thoughts from Social Sector Development Perspectives*" organised by Social Works Department, MLCU . July 20, 2021

Delivered the Keynote address, summary of which is given below:

I. PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Social Sector Development in North-east India

• Sociology – study of society, behaviour, relationship and institutions + governance.

• Social Works – understanding and striving for improving the life of people and wellbeing of the society.

• People-centric social sector development of North-east India.

• Human capital formation and development – converting population into assets.

• NE is not just a geographic entity, nor a monolithic socio-cultural society, but rich ethnic diversities, cultural pluralities and regional variations.

CONTEMPORARY TRIBAL SOCIETY IN NORTH EAST INDIA

• Transitioning tribal society – confused, conflicting and concerns --- on tribal identity --- hazy orientation or disorientation between traditions and modernity.

• Transitioning land and livelihoods systems ---- growing inequality in terms of land ownerships including access to productive land and increasing landlessness due to unequal land access and/or privatisation of community land.

- Transitioning society in relation to food systems --- traditional multi-species farming landscape to increasing mono-culture plantations.

- Transitioning society in relation to environment, environmental degradation, unregulated mining, pollution, waste generation…… disappearing sacred groves, community forest, defacing of our landscape due to stone and sand mining (in the guise of tribal rights, etc).

- Traditional egalitarian society to elitism with growing number of people with higher wealth assets.

- Inter-tribal rivalry and increasing inter-tribal conflicts.

- Increasing 'exclusivity'; departure from traditional 'inclusive' society.

- Dominant tribal groups with 'majoritarian' attitude; diminishing space for minor tribes including danger of their identity, language, and culture.

- Increasing conflicts and/or competitive societies particularly conflict between old belief system to new one (viz. Christianity).

- Within Christian groups --- increasing exclusivity based on denominations; denomination-based identity stronger than tribe's identity.

- Increasing departure from traditional tribal value systems of equity and equality for all to individualism.

- Covid-19 pandemic and vaccine hesitancy – are we still living in superstitious society? How do we graduate to scientific society?

YOUTH IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

A. Youth: Problems & Challenges

- Unemployment / lack of gainful occupation

- HIV/AIDS

- Drugs & Substance abuse

- Young pregnancies

- Not interested in agriculture / farming or traditional occupation of parents.

- Increasing generation and communication gaps between young people and the elders in the society.

- High mobility of youth; exposure to outside value systems; decreasing knowledge of their own traditional value systems.

- Import of culture, taste, behaviour, outlook…… many of which may be in conflict or not always compatible with their rural village environment.

- Insurgency and conflicts with law.

- Youth with different abilities or disabilities.

- Rural youth with challenges of access to quality education & skill development.

B. Youth Movements: Hopeful Signs

- Students movement for access to quality education and skills (not those who act only as pressure groups)

- Faith-based movement

- Rights based youth movement including Human Rights, Social Justice, Environment Justice, etc.

- Environment, Forest, Biodiversity & Wildlife Conservation based movement.

- Water and Spring-shed Regeneration based movement.

- Emerging youth leaderships in politics, faith-based organisations, entrepreneurships, sports, etc.

- Youth in media & entertainment.

Gender, Women, Children & Family

A.   Problems & Challenges

- Generally 'no land rights' across the tribes except among the Khasi & Garos.

- Practically limited space and voices in decision-making process in the traditional institutions.

- In typical rural economy and livelihoods, such as in shifting cultivation, increasing work-burden of the women (up to 70-75% work-burden in case studies).

- Women as 'custodian farmers' due to their deep knowledge on local biodiversity and food systems --- reducing women custodian farmers --- challenges of transferring mothers knowledge to children, particularly the young girls and future mothers.

- Illiteracy and anaemic health conditions higher among women in rural areas than the men.

- Differently abled women in the society.

- Women as victims of trafficking and flesh trade.

- How about creating respectful space for emerging 'Third Gender'?

- Growing number of beautiful houses as sign of economic prosperity. Do the beautiful houses proportionately reflect and transform into happy families, and happy neighbourhoods?

B.   Hopeful signs

- Emerging women's movement such as Mother's movement, young women's movements, faith-based women's movements, etc.

- Emerging women leaderships in education including in higher/technical/professional education, politics, sports, media, entertainment, entrepreneurships, etc.

- Women as peace builders among some of the conflicting tribes / communities.

II.   INSTITUTIONS & GOVERNANCE

- Diverse institutions but almost same story across the tribes--- mostly occupied by people with power.

- Need for modernising the traditional institutions, enabling inclusive participation of women.

- Weakening of traditional institutions and governance system due to influence of political system along with increasing evidence of money power (for example, departure from traditionally selecting most capable and respected individuals as leaders to selecting richest and moneyed persons through elements of corruption and enticement)

- Leaderships may not necessarily be among the wisest, but could be based on money power.

- How could ADCs be strengthened to enable improved governance?

- How do we take best advantage of Constitutional Safeguards via Sixth Schedule of the Constitution?

- How do we strengthen legal governance system enacted by the ADCs (as in Meghalaya on forest laws, jhum regulations, etc by the ADCs).

- For example, can our DorbarShnongs in Meghalaya be equated with the *Panchayati Raj* system elsewhere in terms of governance, fund utilisation, record keeping and overall welfare and development activities?

- Diminishing practice of voluntarism among the communities.

III.   THE YEAR 2022: NORTH EAST @ 75 YEARS & MEGHALAYA @50 YEARS

- What kinds of society we have envisioned for Northeast India at the dawn of Independence?

- Or, that of Meghalaya at the dawn of its Statehood in just 50 years ago?

- What might be the role of HEIs such as MLCU through improved vigour of research and academic skill development?

- What have we contributed to our society / state/ region thus far through our academic and research activities?

- All the aforementioned topics could be themes for further academic discourse and research.

- Read NITI Aayog's Strategy for New India @ 75 years including New North East India.

- Similarly, what might be the Strategy for New Meghalaya @ 50 years from now?

- What kind of society do we envisage for Meghalaya when the state turns 100 years, or 50 years from now? (most of us are unlikely to be there but we can certainly envision the type of society we would like it to be).

National Bamboo Webinar on "*Bamboo Value Chain Development for Poverty Reduction (SDG-1)*" jointly organized by TRIBAC, INBAR, MSME & MLCU .July 8,2020

Presented a paper on "*Bamboo Value Chains: Through the Lens of Rural Community Life*"

Summary of Presentation: Areas of discussion

- Overview: Bamboo in the life of the rural people from cradle to cremation.

- Bamboo-based traditional knowledge & practices.

- Bamboo in the socio-cultural-religious life including constructions of human and animal houses.

- Bamboo as foods and nutrition.

- Bamboo in the economic & farming life; fencing, etc.

- Bamboo for tools & implements; hunting traps; etc.

- Bamboo in environmental management.

- Bamboo in disaster responses.

- Future of rural life vis a vis Bamboo : issues, challenges and opportunities.

- Bamboo & gender – rural women.

Issues, Challenges & Opportunities in Bamboo Value Chain

- Focus on quality planting materials and quality raw materials supply (90% muli bamboo).

- Funding across the sectors of value chains.

- Skills development in value addition, supply chain and business management.

- Logistics and transport – high cost of transport both for raw materials and finished products.

- Climate factors – high humidity for storage challenges.

- Need for constant innovation, networking and advertisement.

- Lack of consumer confidence for bamboo products (in furniture and house construction) as reliable alternative to timber.

- Issues around high and multiple taxes.

- Inadequate linkages for research and development between bamboo industries & universities/research centres.

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Barriers and Facilitators for utilization of antenatal care services in Meghalaya State

Prof. PSS Sundar Rao & Nandaris Marwein*

*Email: nandaris.marwein@gmail.com

Abstract

Introduction: The Government of India has expanded the antenatal care services but utilized poorly.. The present paper discusses the situation in Meghalaya state, in northeast India known for low health status Methods: A house-to-house interview survey was done in South West Khasi Hills district in Meghalaya during 2018-2020, on a random sample of 539 pregnant women.. after obtaining informed consent. Data were computerized and analyzed using SPSS Findings: More than half (59.4%) of women poorly utilized the antenatal care package although aware of such services. due to deficiencies in functioning of health system and alleged barriers towards utilization. Although a quarter of women experienced health problems during their pregnancy most of them did not seek the help of the HC staff citing multiple reasons. Although aware, most women did not get benefit from maternal entitlement since they didn't have the MCP card and BPL card, no bank account, no voter ID, incomplete check up, or felt the amount too small Conclusions : Utilization of antenatal care services is poor due to multiple factors in Meghalaya. Proper education and counselling , motivated staff, adequate stocks of essential supplies will help in better utilization.. (192 words) Keywords: Antenatal care utilization, knowledge, attitudes, Health Centre Meghalaya.

Prevalence of Anaemia during Pregnancy and its Correlates in Meghalaya State, India

Nandaris Marwein & P. S. Rao Sundar Rao

*Email: nandaris.marwein@gmail.com

Abstract

Anaemia during pregnancy adversely affects maternal and fetal outcomes. It is a major problem globally and in India. Despite much progress in provision of public health services, the high burden of prenatal anaemia continues and Supplementation with iron and folate tablets have had low impact. Despite rich biodiversity and high literacy rates, women in Meghalaya seem to suffer from high anaemia during pregnancy and there is scarce published research. Studies were done in South West Khasi Hills of Meghalaya state during 2018-20, on anaemia during pregnancy. Nearly 500 Mothers were personally interviewed while pregnant after informed consent Hemoglobin levels were assessed through standardized techniques and graded(g/100ml) as Normal: 11 or more, Mild:9-11, Moderate: 7-8.9 and Severe: <7 The research proforma was validated by experts subjected to essential pilot studies, computerized dsing Microsoft excel sheets, and analysed using SPSS software. The research was approved by the University Research and Ethics Committee(UREC) Formal informed consent was obtained from each respondent .Of 539 pregnant women interviewed, 32 had no antenatal checkup and hence the analyses done on the 507 women. Overall prevalence of anaemia was 38.1%, (95% Confidence Interval from 33.9% to 42.3%). The majority had mild anaemia, but significant numbers had moderate or severe anaemia causing concern. 34.1% mothers in their first trimester ,37.9% in their second trimester and 39% in their third trimester (39.1%) had anaemia; 30.6% of primigravidae women as compared to 69.4% of multigravidae have anaemia,38.6% of younger women less than 25 years, 38.3% in ages 25-34 and 36.9% in the oldest age group above 35 years are anaemic. 37.5% of illiterate women 36.8% of intermediate level 43.2% of well-educated were anaemic. On the other hand, 34.1% of mothers from nuclear families but 45.7%, from joint families have anemia However none of the differences are statistically significant. Prevalence of Anaemia during pregnancy is high in women of south westkhasi hills district of Meghalaya. Multigravida, large families, poor knowledge and attitudes, improper and inadequate nutritious diets seem to be major factors to be addressed urgently.

Keywords: Meghalaya, India, Anaemia, Pregnancy, Prevalence, Correlates

Dietary diversity and its determinants among Khasi and Garo indigenous women (15 to 49 years) in Meghalaya, Northeast India

Melari Shisha Nongrum*, Lukas Pawera and Bhogtoram Mawroh

*Email: melari.nongrum@gmail.com

Abstract

Background: Despite generally high agrobiodiversity, the Khasi and Garo indigenous people in Meghalaya have poor nutritional status among children and women. Aim: To assess the dietary diversity of the Khasi and Garo indigenous women of reproductive age in Meghalaya, while examining the associated factors that affect it and to map the diversity of local food plants. Methods: A dietary survey was conducted through 24-hour recall with 276 women from 28 villages of

Meghalaya. The mapping of local food plants was conducted through key informant interviews and focus group discussions in the same villages. Results: The mean minimum dietary diversity for women is 4.22 (SD +1.26); with one-third (37%) of the women attaining a minimum dietary diversity of five or more food groups in a day. There were significant differences in the dietary diversity among the indigenous groups, the Garo community attaining higher minimum dietary diversity for women. There was also an inverse association between the number of land uses and dietary diversity. The mean number of food plants (including crop varieties) found in each village is 203 (SD+45.7). Conclusions: There is potential to enhance dietary diversity through diversifying lesser consumed crops such as vitamin A-rich vegetables and fruits, nuts, seeds and green leafy vegetables in existing land holdings. Also, proper management and access to the commons will provide a sustainable resource base for diet and food security, enhance dietary diversity and bridge the hidden hunger among children and women.

Keywords: Dietary diversity, agrobiodiversity, indigenous food, dietary diversity in Meghalaya, indigenous women, Khasi women, Garo women

---

Parenting Practices as Predictors of Adolescents Externalizing and Internalizing Problems

DahunMassar*, Prema B. Patil, Lata Pujar and Vinutha Muktamath

*Email: dahun.massar.12@gmail.com

Abstract

The present study aimed to determine the effects of parenting practices on adolescent externalizing and internalizing problems. The sample of the study comprised of 360 adolescents aged 13 to 17 years belonged to intact family drawn from urban and rural government and private schools. Self reported questionnaires i.e., Strength and difficulties questionnaire and Alabama parenting questionnaire was used to assess adolescents' behavior problems and adolescents' perception on parenting practices, respectively. The results indicated that positive parenting was associated with pro social behavior and negative parenting (inconsistent discipline and poor monitoring) was associated with externalizing and internalizing problems. Further, except corporal punishment, all parenting practice components emerged as significant predictors of pro social behavior, externalizing and internalizing problems.

Keywords: Adolescents, Externalizing problems, Internalizing problems, Parenting practices, Pro-social behavior.

Impact of COVID-19 on Tribal Working Women's Mental Health, Meghalaya

Ibasaralyne Thabah Synthiang*, H.S Dawnthingla & Lindsay Murray M. Sangma

*Email:

Abstract

The present study was carried out to highlight the immediate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health faced by tribal working women across various working sectors from Shillong and Tura, Meghalaya, India, where cross-sectional study was carried out. The sample size of the study consisted of 60 participants for quantitative method and 10 participants for qualitative approach between the age group of 27-53 years based on mixed method approaches, with objectives pertaining to problems encountered by tribal working women during COVID 19 situation on their mental health. The data was collected using standardized assessment tool through social media where online survey was done to assess the respondents, semi-structured questionnaire; telephonic interview schedule using snow balling and convenience Sampling. The tools used in the study were demographic sheet, Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), self-structured questionnaire covering three aspects career, family life and support systems. The on-going global pandemic have badly affected women taking a toll on their mental health where they have multiple roles to play, distressed due to restrictions of movement, limited support, likely to lose job, limited resources to support the family members when all essential goods are being overpriced. Majority of the women are also working in healthcare sectors which is also risky for their family members where isolation and quarantine forces them to stay away from their loved ones. When crisis affect people's lives high level of stress are expected and mental health of women is no exception which could lead to risk factors for short and long term mental health problems.

Keywords: Tribal, Working Women, Mental Health, COVID-19 Pandemic, Stress, career, family life, Support System

New Perspective of Social Work Education and Field Work Practicum during Lockdown

Marbabiang Syiemlieh, Dr. Naorem Arunibala &

Ms. NadeenPakyntein

*Email:marbasyiemlieh@mlcuniv.in

Abstract

The study focuses on the scope of enlarging the social work education and filed work practicum in post COVID-19. There were guidelines prepared by the Department of Social Work to enable the students complete their field work credit hours. The paper highlights the students' experiences during COVID, challenges, the relevance of social work theories, and scope of Field work post-COVID. The study has adopted mixed method i.e., qualitative and quantitative studies. The sample of the study was collected from the undergraduate and post-graduate students of the School of Social Work, Martin Luther Christian University. The total number of respondents is 84. There are 78% of the research participants who are female and 22% are male. Among the research participants, there are 56% of the students pursuing MSW and 44% are in their BSW. The methods used for data collection is through Google form which includes both closed and open ended questions. The data reveals that there is a larger scope of learning by involving themselves directly or indirectly in their own communities.

Keywords: Flexibility

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Teaching Experiences of University Faculty during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Content for Teacher Up skilling and Perceptions on Career Progression- Indian Journal of Career and Livelihood Planning, Journal of the Indian Association of Career and Livelihood Planning

Iwamon W J Laloo* and Glenn C Kharkongor

**Email: iwamon@mlcuniv.in

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought widespread disruption to the education system all over the world. While the policy advisory papers from international agencies recommend teacher upskilling, they have provided very little detail as to the content of such training. We report a survey of teachers in a university in north-eastern India that helps fill this gap in the literature. This survey was conducted to document their teaching experiences during the pandemic, their opinion of the skill sets they would need and their perceptions of the post- Covid future of the teaching profession. An online questionnaire was circulated to all the 86 teachers on Google Forms, of whom 51 (59%) responded. In spite of difficulties with internet connectivity, 70% of students attended 85-100% of their online classes, and 74% submitted their assignments and tests 85-100% of the time. About two-thirds of the teachers (66%) were satisfied with the ability of the students to manage their learning experience.

The respondents recognized and agreed with Covid-influenced trends that will shape the Higher Education sector will include increased use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), blended learning, and more sharing of power between teacher and student. However, one-third of teachers (34.7%) felt that lectures would no longer be at the centre of learning though there was a large spread in the responses. Teachers indicated the need for a broad range of academic and other skills, most urgently in the use of ICT for course delivery, instructional design and pedagogy. Apart from these must-haves, the respondents expressed the need for personal psychological, emotional and social support and adaptations. While there was a mixed response about the future attractiveness of a teaching career, more respondents agreed that potential teachers would not be discouraged from entering the profession, while strongly agreeing that teacher roles would be enhanced. The results of the survey provide strategies and content for teacher upskilling programmes and teacher careers so as to meet the challenges of higher education teaching-learning.

Keywords: COVID-19 and teachers, faculty development, upskilling, ICT skills, online education, teaching career

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Life Satisfaction of youngest daughters in West Jaintia Hills district, Meghalaya

PorsaraMesha J Kharbhih* and Balarishisha Lyngdoh

*Email: porsara@mlcuniv.in

Abstract

This study explored the Life Satisfaction of the youngest daughters in West Jaintia Hills District, Meghalaya. It explored the different experiences encountered by the youngest daughters and the factors that contributed to their different experiences. This study comprised of 30 respondents from age 21 to 60 years. In-depth Interview is used. Findings indicated that most of the youngest daughters are happy and find it helpful for them in their daily life,

however some of the individuals faced hard-time experiences with the responsibilities they have to take. The factor led to hard time experiences is because of financial problems and not receiving enough support from the family and for those who are content, it was because their family members are willing to help.

Study on the Causes of Juvenile Delinquency and its Prevention by the Community

Anniesha Lyngdoh* and RiyakaSurong

*Email:

Abstract

Juvenile Delinquency is one of the serious problems where almost all the societies of the world are facing and Meghalaya, Shillong is not an exception. The present research study in Meghalaya, Shillong aims to explore the causes that lead children or youths to commit offenses and how as a community we can take preventive measures to help in curbing the rise of juvenile offenses. Exploratory research design was used for this study. The samples for this study were 26 respondents who was supposed to be Teachers, Headman, Police, Officers from the Juvenile Observation Home, Social Workers and Teachers but only 18 of them responded and out of the 18 respondents 7 of them were teachers and 11 of them belongs to the police department. A Semi-structured Questionnaire and thematic analysis was used for data collection and analysis. After the study was conducted, it was found out that the major causes that leads children to commit offences are Peer pressure, Adolescence phase (Emotional instability and personality), financial instability, Environmental factors (Family background, parental skills and surroundings) and Social Media. It was also found out that Education plays a major role in shaping the beliefs system and moral values and that Community and schools can come up with awareness programmes, role plays and counselling to help the youths to learn how to engage in positive self-appraisal, deal with conflict and aggression.

Keywords: Juvenile, Delinquency, Prevention, Community, Autonomy, Community, Technology, Challenges

A Three-Site Study of Alcohol Consumption among Adolescents from indigenous Tribes in India

Ryntihlin Jennifer War*, Vaibhav V Gharat , Susmita Chandramouleeshwaran , Sunil Nayak , Vishwajit L Nimgaonkar , Shylaja Devi

**Email: jenniferwar@mlcuniv.in

Abstract

Background: Alcohol use disorder is elevated among members of indigenous tribes in India, like native populations in several other countries. Despite constituting 8.6% of the Indian population, tribals are among the most geographically isolated, socioeconomically underdeveloped, and underserved communities in the country. Based on the experience from our centers (in Tamil Nadu, Meghalaya, and Gujarat), we are aware of escalating alcohol use among tribal communities. The aims of this study are (a) to estimate alcohol use and psychiatric morbidity among teenagers from indigenous tribes, and (b) pilot test a psychoeducational efficacy study. Methods: The biphasic study is being conducted in three states of India: Tamil Nadu in South, Meghalaya in Northeast, and Gujarat in West. Phase 1 is a cross-sectional study of tribal adolescents at each site. The MINI 6.0/ MINI Kid 6.0 questionnaire was used to estimate extent of psychiatric morbidity and substance addiction. Phase 2 is an intervention trial of 40 participants at each site to assess the effectiveness of NIMHANS LSE module in protecting the tribal adolescents from alcohol use. Conclusions: The desired primary outcome will be forestalling the onset of alcohol use among this group. This paper focuses on the methodology and strategies to be used to achieve the objectives.

Keywords: Tribal adolescents, alcohol use, psychiatric morbidity, life skills education training, MINI 6.0

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS, COMMERCE AND MANAGEMENT

DEPARTMENT OF

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Managing Entrepreneurial challenges to Person with Disabilities during and post COVID-19 pandemic

Marina B Marwein *

**Email:marina@mlcuniv.in

Abstract

Nearly two decades ago, Bethany Society, in Shillong, Meghalaya state pioneered a program for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), to train and develop entrepreneurial skills for enabling them to earn their livelihoods. These persons were trained in such vocations as tailoring, leather and rexine making, handicrafts, handmade paper, food processing and baking, basics of computers, organic farming, poultry, piggery and composting, etc and were fairly successful entrepreneurs. There were many challenges which were overcome through participative management. The advent and continuing Pandemic of COVID-19 has created several obstacles to pursue the routine programmes but Bethany Society has adopted the "new" normal using various advisories on preventing infections through face masks, hygienic practices and social distancing norms. Changes have been made in training,display, marketing and ensuring good returns to promote sustainable livelihoods through online training, modified supervision, and supporting virtual Self Help Groups (SHGs).In this paper we provide a description and development of the new initiatives, offering guidelines for effective entrepreneurship during COVID19 times.The importance of being positive and resilient, staying connected and open to the concerns of all stakeholders, including customers and investors is emphasized.

Social Network Applications as a teaching-learning platform: Effectiveness on student's performance in higher education.

Minorita Lyngdoh* and Glenn C. Kharkongor

**Email: minorita@mlcuniv.in

Abstract

In this paper we use Facebook and WhatsApp as social network applications for teaching- learning undergraduate students of Martin Luther Christian University (MLCU). This paper examined the effectiveness of using Facebook group and WhatsApp group during the course that was carried out over a period of 36 hrs. The study design is an experimental between two groups. Students have been divided in to two groups through random selection as experimental group (n=22) and control group (n=23). Pre test was performed before the experiment for both the control and experimental group and finding shows no significance difference. This can be explained with groups of students are beginners in the course, hence, they have had the same level of knowledge and hence no significant difference was noticed. Post test was conducted immediately after the experiment. The findings from the post test revealed that the experimental group made better and effective learning progress compared to the control group. Follow- up test was conducted after five months gap and results revealed better performance signifying long term retention for experimental group. Furthermore student's feedback from the experimental group showed positive feedback on the use of Facebook and WhatsApp for teaching-learning on the university students.

SECTION 1

FACULTY OF ARTS AND CULTURE

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
AND COMMUNICATION

Re-reading Folklore through Indigenous Wholistic Theory

LalnunsangaRalte* and Lashynna Duncan

**Email:lalnunsangaralte@mlcuniv.in

Abstract

In order to comprehend the term "Folklore" it is best to begin by dissecting the word into its original form consisting of two separate words "Folk" and "Lore". Folklorist Alan Dundes, emphasized the necessity to "overcome the tendency to treat 'lore' as though it were totally separate from 'folk'" and continued to lay the importance of "getting the folk and the lore together." In Wholistic Indigenous Theory the Self is at the center of the sphere it is then surrounded by family, community, nation, society and eventually encompassed by creation. Every sphere forms a relationship where one cannot exist without the other. A lack of understanding of this wholesome interrelationship creates an imbalance. Indigenous Folktales create a platform where important issues such as representation, misrepresentation, the importance of correct depictions are expressed. It exemplifies the importance of relatability and link between all life and elements.

Opportunities and Challenges of Online Learning for Students in the State of Meghalaya

Dawanisa Dhar*

**Email:dawanisadhar@mlcuniv.in

Abstract

With the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, the teaching and learning process has been severely affected. Online learning replaced face-to-face learning and this 'New normal' is the biggest challenge ever faced by all stakeholders in the education scenario. Understanding the challenges encountered by students will give teachers some direction in aiding or rather easing students' workload. Students are usually at the receiving end of things when it comes to submission of assignments and meeting deadlines. These challenges are further fueled by other factors such as connectivity problem, family or financial problem and in some cases, mental stress and anxiety.

This paper will attempt to look at the varied opportunities and challenges of online learning in the state of Meghalaya, but one can say for sure that students are giving their best in adopting and adapting to this 'New normal'.

DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

A Study on the Structure and Techniques of Khasi Indigenous Vocal Music

Wadahunlin J. D. Kharlukhi* and Margaret Bastin

Email*: wadahunlin@mlcuniv.in

Abstract

This is a study on the techniques of singing Khasi indigenous vocal music by first understanding its structure. This study is also an attempt to compile and document the different techniques involve in singing Khasi indigenous songs right from the songs that has been sung for generations altogether to the songs of contemporary composition which are however based on a similar structural pattern. This endeavor of documenting Khasi indigenous vocal music is part of the conservation of Khasi music which thus aims at conserving the musical identity of the Khasi people. The key-finding in this research is the melismatic nature of Khasi indigenous vocal music. Though there are differences in the geographical settlement, the dialect spoken, the intonation in speech as well as in singing, yet the melismatic structure of the melody in these three study area binds them in one accord of Khasi indigenous music. Melismatic singing in Khasi indigenous vocal music is described as kyriah. How to sing them? or how to kyriah?, of course require different other techniques which has been defined in this study.

Index Terms – Khasi Indigenous Vocal Music, Melisma, Kyriah, Glottal stop, Yodelling, Twang

DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM AND TRAVEL MANAGEMENT

Current and Future Prospects of Events Tourism With Reference To Cherry Blossom Festival, Shillong

Iadonlang Tynsong *

*Email:iadonlangtynsong@mlcuniv.in

Abstract:

This paper highlights the prospects and challenges of Cherry Blossom festival present in the state of Meghalaya. In the 21st century context, Festivals and events are becoming progressively more important to localities and the tourism industry, especially in regional areas where the available sources of income are more limited than in metropolitan areas (Jackson, Houghton, Russel, &Triandos, 2005). Even in the field of research, people have started to take keen interest in this area, since it is one of the industry which grow rapidly. Meghalaya is known as the Rock Capital of India, to have hosted a number of international events, ranging from films, photography, rock concerts and national and international trade fairs, North East Slow Food and Agro-Biodiversity Society, South Asian Games etc. Through pilot study, the researcher found out that there is a future perspective that this festival can flourish in Meghalaya, although it one of the small state located in the corner of the country, yet one cannot deny the fact that it has a rich culture and also the most happening destination in the country.Exploratory research is adopted for this study since limited number of a study had been done on this area.

Keywords: Cherry Blossom, Festival, Meghalaya, prospects, challenges

---

Socio-economic consequences for tourism due to pandemics: With reference to East Khasi Hills, Meghalaya

Vanessa Kharkongor, PynhunlangNongsteng, Faithfully Mallai, Iadonlang Tynsong*

*Email: iadonlangtynsong@mlcuniv.in

Abstract

Meghalaya is a well-known North-East state that provides natural beauties, stunning landscapes, splendid clean waterfalls, caverns and live root bridges. It is commonly known as the "Abode of Clouds." Meghalaya is home to three tribes: The Khasi, the Pnar, and the Garo. The Khasi that resides in the central plateau is famous for its native specialties, traditions, festivals and cultures. Its originality and charm have taken travelers from all over the world to their hearts. Moreover, this place has enormous tourist potential. Tourism helps to the country's overall growth and development in two ways: first, by delivering diverse economic values and employment opportunities; and second, by assisting in the development of brand recognition, reputation, and identity in the country. Tourism now plays an important part in people's lives and provides several benefits. Because the essence of the industry is still connected to people traveling, pandemics have a significant influence on the global tourists and hospitality sector. In the past, diseases and pandemics have had an immediate impact on hotels and restaurants, airlines, and travel agencies, resulting in international travel bans, media attention, and government initiatives (Tounta, 2020). Pandemic leads to Socio- economic problem of various individual. Such as Job security which is seen as the most pressing issue in the tourist sector, causing stress and unhappiness among those who are directly or indirectly involved in the industry. The study is focus on the status of the tourism industry in study area as a result of the pandemic, the impression of the host community during the pandemic, and also the behaviour of the tourists post pandemic. Descriptive research design is adopted for this study and questionnaire are used to collect the primary data from the field. The outcomes of the study shows that pandemic has really impact the socio economic of the stakeholders in the tourism industry. The pandemic has changed the perception of many tourists with regards to not wanting foreign travellers coming to the state and their preferences with whom to travel while still wanting to travel after the pandemic but with extra precautions.

Keywords: Tourism, pandemic, socio-economics, Consequences, East Khasi Hills.

DEPARTMENT OF DOCTORAL STUDIES AND RESEARCH

Unemployment among Educated Youth: A study on the Career Plans of Under Graduate and Post Graduate Students in Higher Educational Institutions of East Khasi Hills District, Meghalaya

Julian O Dhar* & Maribon M. Viray

*Phd Research Scholar

*Email: juliandoscar@mlcuniv.in

Department of Economics, Commerce and Management

Abstract

This research is a study on the career plans of under graduate and post graduate students studying in various educational institutions offering formal under graduate or post graduate programs located in East Khasi Hills District, Meghalaya. Although the state witness a literacy rate of 74.43% and East Khasi Hills District in particular has literacy rate of 84.7 %, the current trend of unemployment, under employment

and lack of self employment among educated youths in the state is still a concern (Rao, 2016). The overall greater unemployment rate (GUER) in Meghalaya state amongst those with atleast a graduate degree as of 2019 is 13.09 of the labor force (Center for Monitoring Indian Economy, 2019). It is commonly observe that unemployment and employability related issues among educated youth in the state were directly related to conditions of labor market and scarcity of jobs. However, this initial perception fails to take into account the career planning and career development resources for a student at the undergraduate (UG) and post graduate (PG) level as they prepare themselves for starting a career. In this study, mixed qualitative and quantitative research was applied aiming at identification of career plans among the under graduate and post graduate students. Variables such as gender, socio-economic status, and other socio-cultural dimensions that may be influencing their plans were explored. Following convenience sampling, a total sample size of 385 having 223 UG and 162 PG students, participated in this study with an average age of 20 for UG and 23 for PG. There were six faculty, 2 Heads of institutions, and 3 representatives from job providers in Meghalaya who were interviewed for this study. Both undergraduate and post graduate students shows average to good career planning, however data from the qualitative research reveals that most of these students do not seem to have plans after their studies. There are also variations of the findings across gender, socio-economic status but not in the type of institution, level of study and ethnicity. This paper discusses at length the gaps between the student's perception of career planning and their expression of need for structured career services in the higher educational institutions. Key words: Career planning, under graduate (UG), post graduate (PG), higher educational institutions, Meghalaya.

Occupational Stress Among Dual Career IT Families: A Cross Sectional Study

Francis Doddamani * and MaribonViray

*Phd Scholar

Department of Psychology

*Email: francis.doddamani@gmail.com

Abstract

Purpose of this study is to find out about the occupational stress among the dual career families working in the IT sector, Bangalore. Revised Occupational Stress Inventory (OSI-R) scale was employed for collecting the data of 600 samples from IT professionals. It was a cross sectional design with snow ball technique to collect data for the study. Findings are analysed using Statistical package for Social Science (SPSS.16). Occupational Stress Inventory has 140 items, with three main sections and 4 subscales or stressors. Three main sections are Occupational Roles, Personal Strain and Personal Resources. Findings were analysed with descriptive analysis using SPSS.16. T- scores were generated after generating Z- scores. Significant stressors in the Occupational Roles are, Role Boundary, Physical Environment, Personal/ psychological Strain, Vocational Strain, Psychological Strain, Interpersonal Strain. In the Personal Resources, Self-Care, Social Support and Rational/Cognitive coping Resources have indicated significant lack among dual career families. Dual career families need coping skills such as physical exercise, reliance on God, meditating the Scriptures, music therapy to reduce or remove these stressors and maximise their marital satisfaction.

An in Depth Analysis of Machine Learning Classifiers for Prediction of Student's Performance. \

Thingbaijam Lenin* N. Chandrasekaran

*Phd Research Scholar

*Email:lenin.th@gmail.com

Department of Information Technology

Abstract

Machine learning algorithms are sensitive to the nature and the dimension of the data that are fed into the model for analysis. These algorithms tend to perform significantly different depending upon the dataset used for analysis and training. It then becomes difficult to discover the best algorithm to handle a particular dataset. In the current work, we have made an attempt to verify 24 different state of the art supervised machine learning algorithms in an effort to find the most suitable classifier for predicting the performance of students in our University. Out of the 24 algorithms that we have identified, we found Naïve Bayes (NB) and Stabilized Nearest Neighbor Classifier (SNN) to be the most suitable for deployment followed by K-Nearest Neighbors (KNN) and Cost Sensitive C5.0 (C5.0Cost). We have also determined that handling missing values using KNN improves the classification of minority classes. The classifiers have been evaluated with the sensitivity, specificity, precision, kappa and F-score metrics. It has further been established that the performance metric "Accuracy" is misleading when dealing with imbalanced dataset and balanced accuracy provides far better and reliable information for the model being developed.

Keywords: Educational Data Mining, Machine Learning, Classification, Data Imputation, R Programming, Stabilized Nearest Neighbor, Naïve Bayes.

Traditional Food Consumption pattern among the Khasi youths, Mylliem Block, Meghalaya

Ms.Laribha Dohtdong* and Dr. Bonnie Nicole

*PhD Scholar

**Email: laridora@gmail.com

Department of Nutrition and Dietetics

Abstract

Tribal population stills depends on agriculture and forests products for sustainability and follow a homogenous food habits and dietary practices. Wild plants and fruits consumed by most tribes are found to be more nutritious and nutrients dense than other common vegetables, and if proper channelization and marketing strategies are being provide to them, it can be one factors for the cash generation for them. However, the health status of tribal population is drastically degrading due to a change in the environment and their lifestyle brought about by modernisation. The indigenous youth are greatly influence by this change and are drawn towards transition in their dietary habits, thus having an impact on their nutritional status leading to Malnutrition.

Objective: The study aimed to assess the frequency intake and the preference consumption of traditional food among tribal adolescents.

Materials and method: A cross sectional study was carried out in educational institution among the Khasi youth of Mylliem Block, East Khasi Hills District, Meghalaya to elicit information among the respondent on the frequency intake and the consumption preference of home cooked meal over outside cooked meal, traditional snack over non traditional snack and on the most preferred locally available plants, fruits and snack.

Results and Discussion: Analysis was done on the frequency intake of local plants and fruits and the preference consumption pattern of food cooked at home and outside and the traditional over non-traditional food among the respondents. The study reveal that majority of the respondents rarely (66% female and 46 % male, n=952) consumed the local foods but if it's seasonally available frequency intake would be twice a week (17 % female and 16 % male, n=952). The study reveals that the food preference and food choice of the respondents is mostly influence by factors like taste, accessibility, hygiene and convenience and majority preferred to consumed home cooked food (99% female and 97% male). Emphasis should be given on creating awareness on the nutritional benefits of traditional food and to channelize the used of locally available seasonal food for income generation among the population by incorporating value addition to make these foods available throughout the year.

Keywords: Tribal, Traditional food, Consumption Preference, Food Choice, Seasonal food.

Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Participatory Management in forest conservation and sustainable livelihood in a community conserved forest in Meghalaya

Abandapalei P. Wahlang[*] and Subhasish Das Gupta

*PhD Scholar

*Email:awahlang@gmail.com

Department of Environment & Traditional Ecosystems

Abstract

This paper highlights the role of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) in ensuring sustainable conservation of community forests and livelihood avenues for the village community. Indigenous knowledge being unique to a given culture or society forms a key element of the social capital of the poor helping them to gain control of their own lives and resources. The study involved collecting primary data on the status of forest biodiversity, soil health and water quality besides documenting indigenous practices employed by the community in conserving forest, soil and water bodies.

The study revealed the effectiveness of TEK with community participation in conserving natural resources in the study area. Community conserved forests were classified in to sacred forest, village protected forest and village forestallowing collection of non- timber forest products (NTFPs) from all three types forests, while prohibiting collection of firewood from the protected forest. Land demarcation was based on settlement, farming, forest and quarrying site; prohibiting encroachment to the community forest. Livelihood sources included subsistence farming, daily wages in quarrying sites and MGNREGA programme.Vegetational analysis showed the dominance of tree species belonging to Asteraceae, Ericaceae, Melastomaceae and Rubiaceae families in the community forest. Acidic soil samples had high concentration of Org-C, total-N and Fe while registering lower values for K, P, Ca, Mn and Zn signifying nutrient enriched condition of the soil in the community forest as a result of protection. An analysis of sample from the water source revealed the potable nature of water. Conservation practices included classification of forest, prohibition of logging, construction of fire line, building of man- made dykes for rain water harvesting, preservation of a hillock to conserve springwater source. The prioritised conservation with a participatory approach has ensured sustainable conservation. Such knowledge and practices can be integrated with scientific methods for an effective conservation strategy.

Keywords: Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), Indigenous knowledge, Community conserved forest, Participatory approach, sustainable livelihood.

Role of Traditional Ecological Knowledge in Community Forest Conservation, Meghalaya

Abandapalei P. Wahlang[*] and Subhasish Das Gupta

*PhD Scholar

*Email:awahlang@gmail.com

Department of Environment & Traditional Ecosystems

Abstract

The use of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) in biodiversity conservation has been recognized globally, however, its application in conservation strategies is still complex, limited and lacks documentation. Since time immemorial, community forests in Meghalaya have been traditionallyconserved by the indigenous tribes at a community, village or clan level based on the knowledge of conservation and utilization purposes. The conservation of these forests is significant considering their rich floral and faunal diversity. The seasonal analysis of both vegetational and edaphic characteristics in the study area comprising both sacred forest or *'Law Kyntang'* and adjacent village protected forest or *'Law Adong'*have revealed the preponderance of dicotyledonous families like Asteraceae, Ericaceae, Melastomaceae and Rubiaceae besides Poaceae members. Several important endemic, rare and medicinal plant species like *Rubus khasiana, Droserapeltata, Gaultheria fragrantissima* respectively have been recorded in the study area. The calculation of IVI of important tree species namely *Rhododenronarboreum* (63), *Myrica esculenta* (40.46) and *Symplocos glomerata* (29. 06) pointed towards high species dominance in both the forests. The acidic soil in both the sites registered high concentrations of organic-C, N and Fe while K, P, Ca, Mn and Zn recorded low values. Enhanced level of org-C and N in the sacred forest and the protected forest soils indicated nutrient rich condition of the sites. Socio-economic survey of the forest fringe villages revealed their dependence on the ecosystem services like water, litter, wild fruits, mushrooms, firewood medicinal plants etc from the village forest. Besides having restriction on forest product utilization, the village has also been conserving the community forests by undertaking rain water harvesting in several dykes to rejuvenate the forests, notwithstanding the traditional practice of spring water management by conserving water in an adjacent hillock to replenish the spring-water body. The study revealed a close link between the traditional ecological knowledge and effective community forest conservation vis-a-vis the rich level of biodiversity. Creation of better livelihood opportunities would aid in the process of conservation and sustainable use of the resources.

Keywords: Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), Indigenous tribe, Community forest, Biodiversity conservation, Ecosystem services.

Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the indigenous people of Meghalaya, North- East India

Abandapalei P. Wahlang[*] and Subhasish Das Gupta

*PhD Scholar

*Email:awahlang@gmail.com

Department of Environment & Traditional Ecosystems

Abstract

The novel corona virus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has affected every person on earth irrespective of geographical boundaries, countries, ethnicity, community or gender. Furthermore, it has adversely affected the lives and livelihoods of the 370 million Indigenous People worldwide living in both rural and urban areas notwithstanding the threats of the disease looming large. The impact of the pandemic on indigenous people goes beyond health issue as a consequence. Right to land ownership, right to identity, inaccessibility to livelihoods, food insecurity, poverty, unemployment, lack of healthcare facilities to name a few are some of the concerning issues where indigenous groups have been grappling with even before the pandemic had broken out. Against this backdrop, a short-term quantitative study involving an online survey disseminated through google forms was carried out to assess the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the indigenous communities, namely, the *Khasi, Jaintia* and the *Garo* tribes inhabiting the North- eastern state of Meghalaya. The study tried to understand the effect of the pandemic from a local perspective. The study revealed that education, cultural rights and practices, social life and activities, transportation, economic activities and health care were the major factors affecting both the rural and urban residents belonging to the indigenous community. The role and involvement of the traditional governance institution called the *'DorbarShnong'* were instrumental in implementing various protocols and instructions issued by the Government from time to time. 65% of the respondents in rural areas had access to forest and forest products during the pandemic, while 75% of the respondents in rural areas agreed with the increased dependence on the forest during this period. Only 31% rural and 32.6% Urban respondents believed that the pandemic had posed a threat to the traditional knowledge. However, both the rural and urban respondents thought that the restrictions on cultural rites and rituals, cultural festivals and alternative use of official language were the possible drivers that might lead to the loss of traditional knowledge. It is evident from the study that the pandemic had affected various spheres and urban life of the indigenous people in the state.

Keywords: COVID-19, pandemic, indigenous people, traditional knowledge, traditional practice.

Vegetational changes in the Eco-sensitive Zone of Nonkhyllem Wildlife Sanctuary, Ri-Bhoi district, Meghalaya

Thoudam James Singh[*] and Subhasish Das Gupta

*PhD Scholar

*Email: thoudam.james03@gmail.com

Department of Environment & Traditional Ecosystems

Abstract

The present study attempts to highlight the changing pattern of vegetation in the villages around eco-sensitive zone of Nongkhyllem Wildlife Sanctuary (NWLS). The vegetation data of four villages namely, Umladoh, Lailad, Umtasor and Nongkynrih located inside the eco-sensitive zone of NWLS, Nognkhyllem Reserve Forest revealed varying levels of floral diversity and formation of forest fragments due to anthropogenic disturbances. The conversion of forested area located outside the protected forest but within the ESZ of NWLS for cultivation of agricultural and horticultural crops like rice, banana, betel nut, betel leaf, broom, tea, rubber and bamboo, plantationetc have resulted not only transformed the landscape of the area but also represented increased livelihood pressure on the forest ecosystem. The total no of species was 331 nos in the forested while it was 239nos in the non-forested stand. The dominant tree species recorded in the study area were *Shorearobusta, Shimawallichi, Tectona grandis, Trewianudiflora, Carya arborea, etc*in the forested stand, while being negligibly present in non-forested stand. Both *S.robusta and S.wallichi* were uniformly present in both forested and non-forested stands. The calculation of Important Value Index, Shannon's and Weiner Diversity Index and Sorenson's similarity index has helped in assessing the change in species composition, species richness and diversity due to anthropogenic factors.

Keywords: Floral diversity, Eco-sensitive zone, NWLS, Important Value Index, Shannon's and Weiner Diversity Index and Sorenson's similarity index .

SECTION I

ABSTRACT - JOURNAL, CONFERENCE (FACULTY AND PHD SCHOLARS)

SECTION II

Synopsis (Book, Book Chapter)

SECTION III

ARTICLES (NEWSPAPER, NEWSLETTER AND MAGAZINE)

SECTION IV

ABSTRACTS AWARDED ON UNIVERSITY RESEARCH DAY 2019

SECTION V

ONGOING RESEARCH
- FUNDED EXTERNALLY
- SEED GRANT

SECTION VI

CONFERENCES CONDUCTED

SECTION VII

PUBLICATIONS (BOOKS AND MONOGRAPHS)

Treasures from Shifting cultivation in the Himalayan's evergreen forest

Melari Shisha Nongrum*, Mawroh B., Sohtun R., Ranee P., Nongrum M.S., Roy P., Meldrum G

School of Social Work

*Email: mealri.nongrum@gmail.com

(Chapter 3 inIn Indigenous Peoples' Food Systems: Insights on sustainability and resilience from the front of climate change. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT. Rome. ISBN 978-92-5-134561-0 (FAO)

Synopsis (book chapter)

Jhum, fishing and gathering food system of Khasi people in Meghalaya, India

The Khasi are a group of Indigenous Peoples that predominate in the eastern part of the hilly State of Meghalaya in northeastern India. Meghalaya is known to be the wettest region of India, and it is also recognised as a singular subtropical forest ecoregion that hosts a remarkable biodiversity. The village of Nongtraw, where the research took place, is inhabited solely by Khasi people. The food system of this matrilineal and Christian society relies on shifting cultivation in jhum fields, home gardening, livestock rearing (poultry and pigs), beekeeping and, to a lesser extent, on fishing, trapping and the gathering of wild edibles from the forest. In spite of its remoteness, the village of Nongtraw for a long time has taken part in the weekly market in the adjoining villages. These markets allow for important social interactions and are places where local produce, goods and services are bartered and traded. The Khasi have been traditionally open to contacts and marriage with other groups. This interdependent and open socioeconomic approach is one of the reasons why the Nongtraw inhabitants obtain an important share of their diet from the market. In total, the food system of the Khasi people is based on 150 species and varieties of plants and animals used for food. In addition, there are at least 17 prominent species used for construction and materials, and medicinal purposes.

Gender, Sexuality & Society in Northeast India: Contextual Studies of Tribal Communities.

R.Jennifer War* and Glenn C Kharkongor

Centre for Gender Equity aNd Diversity Education and Research (GENDER)

*Email: jenniferwar@mlcuniv.in

(Edited *Gender, Sexuality & Society in Northeast India: Contextual studies of tribal communities.* ISBN 978-81-940739-1-8, MLCU Press. Shillong, India. March 2021)

Synopsis

The chapters in this book emanated from a seminar held at Martin Luther Christian University in Shillong, Meghalaya, held on November 21-22, 2017. The objectives of the seminar were to provide a historical and social context to gender issues in Northeast India, to examine contemporary issues in gender among tribal populations in the region and to engage in a dialogue with youth in addressing the gender issues of the region. Several themes were explored at the seminar, which also included an exhibition of paintings on Tribal Women in Art, presented by Careen Langstieh, who has also contributed the art work for the cover.

While the primary studies and stories are from Northeast India, these have been contexted in the social milieu of tribal culture, colonialism and Christianity and the worldwide issues of patriarchy, women's rights and the LGBTQIA+ community.

Property Rights among the Khasi Matrilineal Community in Meghalaya, India.

Centre for Gender Equity aNd Diversity Education and Research (GENDER)

Lavinia Mawlong*

*Email: laviniamawlong@mlcuniv.in

(Chapter 6 in *Section A: Changing Social Structures and their Impact on women,*Gender*, Sexuality & Society in Northeast India: Contextual studies of tribal communities.* Edited by R.J. War, G.C. Kharkongor (1st ed.; pp 113-122). Shillong: ISBN 978-81-940739-1-8, MLCU Press. Shillong, India. March 2021)

Synopsis

This paper traces the transformation of land property regimes in the Khasi Hills of Meghalaya, in particular in Ri Bhoi District as it represents a region with widespread privatization and contentious issues over property rights. Transformation is highlighted against the backdrop of the traditional land tenure system. It elaborates the various aspect of the classification of the traditional land tenure system, the main actors responsible for land governance, the administrative hierarchy and the terms of use of community land and private land as emanating from empirical data from Ri Bhoi District in Meghalaya.

Social and Economic challenges faced by Single Mother Households in the Khasi matrilineal Society of Meghalaya.

Marbabiang Syiemlieh*

School of Social Work

*Email: marbasyiemlieh@mlcuniv.in

Synopsis

The three main tribes of Meghalaya, Khasi, Jaintia and Garo are matrilineal, and the status of women is assumed to be better than in patriarchal societies. In the Khasi tribe, the children take their mother's clan name, and inheritance, residence after marriage, and succession are traced through the female line. Although matrilineal in nature, Khasi society is dominated by patriarchal mindsets, traditions and practices. The objective of this study was to identify the social and economic challenges faced by Khasi single-mother headed (SMH) households. The study was conducted in urban, semi-urban and rural areas covering 24 villages and localities in East Khasi Hills District of Meghalaya. The majority of SMH households faced financial problems because of low earnings, lack of assets especially land and non-payment of alimony by their ex-husbands.

Masculinity of Khasi men in a matrilineal society, Meghalaya, India.

Ardonister Lyngdoh*

School of Social Work

*Email: ardonister@mlcuniv.in

Synopsis

This study looked at the Khasi matrilineal social system and its impact on masculinity in Khasi men. The qualitative study was conducted in Shillong and three rural communities. The participants, men and women, were in two age categories: 20 to 45 years and above 45 years, older and younger generations. The respondents described the changes in Khasi society from the decline in the clan structure to nuclear families to the diminution of the role of the maternal uncle, whose roles have been taken over by the father. Inheritance and lineage were felt to favour the woman. In the nuclear family, responsibility is placed on the father but without patri-lineage or shared lineage, i.e. domestic responsibility but without lineage rights. The traditional concept of masculinity such as *khatarbor,* strong man, has been lost and modern familial arrangements have not substituted for this loss. This may have contributed to low self-esteem among men and social problems like abandonment of wives, alcoholism and drug abuse. Most respondents, men and women, especially in the older age group favoured the continuation of Khasi matriliny as it gives women their deserved importance and affords protection to children, but certain changes such as children using both the parent's clan names should be considered

Women's education and the health of children

Melari Shisha Nongrum*

School of Social Work

*Email:Melari.nongrum@gmail.com

Synopsis

The dominant approach to health and disease has been the biomedical model where a person's ill- health was treated by medical approaches and therapies. However, the bio-psycho-social model is gaining importance as it considers the psychological, social and environmental factors as essential to improve the treatment efficacy, disease control and individual well-being. This paper aims to highlight the importance of one social determinant i.e. women's education and its impact on the health of children. This paper is based on a study that was conducted in 8 villages in Pynursla Block, East Khasi Hills District, Meghalaya. Household interviews were conducted with 419 women and 1201 children under 15 years were assessed for their vitamin A status. It was found that women's education was an important factor. For a mother with no formal school education, she is 9.3 times more likely to have a child deficient with Vitamin A, and these results are statistically highly significant ($p < 0.001$). Maternal education is important not only to reduce vitamin A deficiency but other diseases as well. Education should not be confined to formal education but traditional education also needs to be promoted among mothers and women so that the quality of the diets of children is optimized and health and nutritional security is ensured.

SECTION II

Women's Mental Health

Melissa D Kyndiah*

*Email:melissakyndiah@mlcuniv.in

Department of Psychology

Synopsis

Mental disorders can affect women and men differently. The literature indicates that some disorders are more common in women such as depression and anxiety, whereas men are more affected with substance use disorders. When it comes to other mental disorders such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, research has not found major differences in rates between men and women. Violence related mental health problems are common among women but are poorly identified as women are often reluctant to disclose a history of violent victimization. Gender bias occurs in the treatment of psychological disorders where doctors sometimes over-diagnose women with emotional disorders. The National Mental Health Survey (NMHS) of India 2016, showed a high prevalence of depression and suicidal risk among women in the age group of 40-49 years among those residing in urban areas. In Meghalaya, data from the NMHS shows that about 30,000 people need urgent specialized mental health care, and the ratio of female and male mentally ill are relatively similar. Meghalaya lacks sufficient treatment services for the mentally ill.

A Traditional Food Consumption Pattern among the Khasi youths, Mylliem Block

LaribhaDohtdong*, B. Nicol, and G.C. Kharkongor and B.C.Warjri

*Email: laribhadohtdong@mlcuniv.in

Synopsis

Tribal population still depends on agriculture and forests products for sustainability and follow a homogenous food habits and dietary practices. Wild plants and fruits consumed by most tribes are found to be more nutritious and nutrients dense than other common vegetables, and if proper channelization and marketing strategies are being provide to them, it can be one factors for the cash generation for them. However, the health status of tribal population is drastically degrading due to a change in the environment and their lifestyle brought about by modernisation. The indigenous youth are greatly influence by this change and are drawn towards transition in their dietary habits, thus having an impact on their nutritional status leading to Malnutrition.

Objective: The study aimed to assess the frequency intake and the preference consumption of traditional food among tribal adolescents. Materials and method: A cross sectional study was carried out in educational institution among the Khasi youth of Mylliem Block, East Khasi Hills District, Meghalaya to elicit information among the respondent on the frequency intake and the consumption preference of home cooked meal over outside cooked meal, traditional snack over non traditional snack and on the most preferred locally available plants, fruits and snack. Results and Discussion: Analysis was done on the frequency intake of local plants and fruits and the preference consumption pattern of food cooked at home and outside and the traditional over non-traditional food among the respondents. The study reveal that majority of the respondents rarely (66% female and 46 % male, n=952) consumed the local foods but if it' s seasonally available frequency intake would be twice a week (17 % female and 16 % male, n=952). The study reveals that the food preference and food choice of the respondents is mostly influence by factors like taste, accessibility, hygiene and convenience and majority preferred to consumed home cooked food (99% female and 97% male). Emphasis should be given on creating awareness on the nutritional benefits of traditional food and to channelize the used of locally available seasonal food for income generation among the population by incorporating value addition to make these foods available throughout the year. Key words: Tribal, Traditional food, Consumption Preference, Food Choice, Seasonal food.

Indigenous Dietary Practices and Traditional knowledge among Khasi Youth, Mylliem Block, Meghalaya

LaribhaDohtdong*, Bonnie Nicol, G.C. Kharkongor and B. C. Warjri

*Email: laribhadohtdong@mlcuniv.in

Synopsis

The major problems associated with health that seems to be arising in both rural and tribal settings are Nutritional deficiencies and a transition of diet. Studies revealed that the health status of Indigenous People (IP) is drastically degrading due to a change in the environment and their lifestyle brought about by modernisation. IP are often regarded as nature's caretaker and keeper as they have a closed bond with the environment. Indigenous youth are influenced by this change and are drawn towards transition from dietary habits to lifestyle, thus having an impact on their health and nutritional status. The traditional knowledge system for the usage of indigenous food as a therapeutic purpose which is orally transcribed from generation to generation seems to be diminishing in the current scenario.

Addressing the health and nutritional needs of tribal population is important, as a close association is found between the tribal ecosystem and their health status. An understanding of the traditional food system combined with nutrients analysis will help in finding solutions and strategies

to tap the health problems associated with nutrition for the future.

Objectives: Thus the study was under taken to assess the consumption pattern of traditional food among the Khasi youth of Mylliem Block, East Khasi Hills District, Meghalaya and to document on the therapeutic purpose of indigenous food.

Materials and Methods: A cross sectional study was conducted in four educational institutions to elicit information on the consumption patterns of indigenous food through the use of a standardised self administered food frequency questionnaire, and on the therapeutic purpose of indigenous food. A total of one hundred and sixty five respondents participated in the study comprising of ninety two Khasi girls and seventy three Khasi boys from standard IX & X.

Results: Analysis was done on the consumption pattern of traditional food and on the therapeutic purpose of indigenous food. The study reveals that the food choice of the respondents is mostly influenced by factors like taste, accessibility and convenience. Majority had knowledge on the usage of food as a therapeutic purpose which was orally transcribed and practiced by their parents and ancestors. Thus emphasis should be given on creating awareness on the nutritional benefits of indigenous food and to channelize the traditional methods of using indigenous food as a therapeutic for ailments which could help in breaking the vicious cycle of malnutrition.

Keywords: Dietary practices, Indigenous people, Indigenous food, Traditional knowledge, Therapeutic purpose, Nutritional deficiencies.

Event Tourism: An Emerging Entrepreneurship Practices in North East India

IadonlangTynsong* and Dr. Sharad Kumar Kulshreshtha

Department of Tourism

*Email: iadonlangtynsong@mlcuniv.in

Synopsis (Book)

North East India is land natural and cultural diversity. The eight states have knitted various custom and traditions also known as melting pot of unique cultural celebration as part of events. In this regards each state promoting event as tourism products. Event Tourism is a systematic planning, development, and marketing of festivals and special events as tourist attractions, image-makers, catalysts for infrastructure and economic growth, and animators of built attraction" (Getz & Wicks,1993). In Meghalaya, though event tourism as a subject area is completely new but organizing an event is present in the heart and soul of the local people as the host community. The success of organizing events like the Monolith festival, Indigenous Terra Madre and sporting events like South Asian Games 2016, I-League, Inter-state sport tournament, Indian Super League, business events, FICCI, CII, International Trade Fair, India Tourism Mart, Travel and Tourism Centric trade shows, seminars, symposium, conferences, workshops etc. Musical Concerts like Bacardi NH7 weekender, Shillong Chamber Choir, International band concert, Papon, many more, attract the visitor into the region. All these planned events act as a catalyst for promoting events tourism potential in the Meghalaya. In spite of tremendous potential of cultural diversities in the state, in term of vibrant cultural, local, fairs and festivals, business events, sporting events the state still not identify the key potential of the events. Event tourism is untapped niche product which urgent needs to be synergies along with other tourism products. It creates for socio-economic impact as well help to develop as the tourist destination and destination branding and maintain cultural identity. It can generate the real potential of channelizing their creative, management skills, and synergy of human resource to event tourism-centric activities, as the event planner, organizer, and volunteers, to create more jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities. Many people especially youth have started this event entrepreneurship as best alternative for employment and self- managed and micro enterprise. Events entrepreneur are playing an important role in for promoting and creating identity of indigenous events. This paper will focus on event tourism potential in Meghalaya, Destination marketing and branding through events, event tourism stakeholders and prospects and challenges.

Keywords: Event Tourism, Destination Marketing, Meghalaya.

SECTION I

ABSTRACT - JOURNAL, CONFERENCE (FACULTY AND PHD SCHOLARS)

SECTION II

SYNOPSIS (BOOK, BOOK CHAPTER)

SECTION III

Articles (Newspaper, newsletter and Magazine)

SECTION IV

ABSTRACTS AWARDED ON UNIVERSITY RESEARCH DAY 2019

SECTION V

ONGOING RESEARCH
- FUNDED EXTERNALLY
- SEED GRANT

SECTION VI

CONFERENCES CONDUCTED

SECTION VII

PUBLICATIONS (BOOKS AND MONOGRAPHS)

Language as a Global Connect for people and cultures

Chelmelyne Dhar

Published in Highland Post

June 25,2021

Before delving into the topic, there is a need to understand what a language is. David Crystal (2008), "At its most specific level, it (language) may refer to the concrete act of speaking, writing or signing in a given situation-the notion of Parole and Performance."

Merriam Webster Dictionary ":the words, their pronunciation, and the methods of combining them used and understood by a community".

Chomsky (2018), "A language is a set of (finite or infinite) sentences, each finite length and constructed out of a finite set of elements".

Aristotle stated that language is a speech sound produced by human beings in order to express their ideas, emotions, thoughts, desires and feelings.

Language is composed of verbal and written components. These are what came to mind when asked about it. Language is used with certain sounds and symbols coming together in a specific way to convey meaning. Though there are some other ways to communicate without the use of language, it is primarily the clearest human communication's method.

There are innumerable definitions of language; they exhibit a significant message as it is a mode of communication through the use of devices like sounds, symbols, gestures and words. Generally, it is a tool of communication for expressing our inner feelings. Through its existence, civilizations strive for existence and survival over the decades.

Simultaneously, language connects us globally in an incredible manner, moulding our thoughts and emotions. The capacity to communicate lies in the fact of how the flow of our vocabulary becomes enriched. Adding new words to our lexicon leverages the use of our language. No individual can interact with a foreign community without knowing their language. In its own way, no language is prestigious over another as it has its own unique features and structure.

Language acquisition can be observed in a child of eight to ten months. A child starts speaking with limited vocabularies and improves the capacity of growing up. Beginning with simple words, knowledge widens from learning simple phrases to construction of meaningful sentences.

Sometimes, a child is able to detect grammatical errors fairly at a young age. Through growth and development, he/she is able to learn and apply the grammatical rules effectively in one's native tongue. The transition occurs similarly but at a rapid pace in adults. The factors are the well-formed speech organs, brain development and comprehensive exposure to the different languages around.

On the contrary, language is more than just a mode of communication; it is a link between us and the outside world. It gives us immense power to feel confident and excel in our academics as well as social life. We connect with people when we socialise and apply language in diverse fields of life, paying a great deal of attention when we utter a speech.

We potentially use language consciously, since we have the capacity to surmount the nuances of its aspects. In this way, we conform to people around us who entirely have different beliefs and opinions. It is considered to be the key competence and performance for equal opportunities in terms of education, for work and life generally. On a broader spectrum, we can appreciate other societies if we learn to appreciate their language.

Language connects both children and adults globally. With the advancement of technology, it has created a huge rapport between the speakers and the listeners.

According to E. H. Sturtevant, "A language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by which members of a social group cooperate and interact."Bilingualism and multilingualism allows a person to interact benevolently with other communities, the more one master languages, the more one has the power to attain wisdoms that the world holds. It also facilitates a person to switch a language and personality to fit in the situation. It's fantastic to observe that they seem to shift their perception and reflect that of the people who speak their respective languages.

"The phrase "language is culture and culture is language" is deeply meaningful. There are not only various interconnections between the two but a lot of history. Language and culture developed in unison, influencing the lives of people just as much as one another. In order to understand one, you must understand the other," explains Elisa Abbott, a writer, and translator for PickWriters.

Language and culture existed together long from time immemorial. Learning cultures around the world is relevant for language learners. Exchanging cultural knowledge is significant in the modern world, as people like to travel from places to places. They are an integral part of our lives. Culture shock is a common phenomenon occurring in the present scenario. Respecting other cultures and retaining one's own is appreciative.

It is to be mindful that culture knowledge should not result in discrimination; rather it is to be considered as an advantage for us. There are ample differences and similarities along the way if we compare our cultures with that of the others. Our different identities are connected through the cultural knowledge that we are willing to share.

As children and adults, it is beautiful to connect with the cultures around us. It enables us to learn about our traditions and cultures in order to maintain the practices within other cultures. Some enthusiastic and inquisitive individuals live within the community and adapt with their beliefs and practices.

Researchers from around the world spent their time living with the locals and observing the community closely. This makes it easier for them to collect their data through thorough observations. Vibrant traditions and customs are exhibited to the travellers/researchers who are willing to transmit knowledge to the world.

Maximum exposure helps us understand the values and imbibed in us the cognitive behaviour of the others around us. Youngsters who aspire to go abroad for studies should

inculcate the habit of reading and learning about this aspect of life which will be beneficial for them. By exercising this habit, they may avoid being gullible to the deceiving natures of a few.

Interpersonal connection is crucially imminent in the employment world. When language is positively utilized, we discover our potential. Our capacity to show self-confidence and competence is displayed through our performance. The more we encounter challenges, the more confident we become through the wonderful experiences. We can easily evaluate the evolution of eloquence in us.

It is understood that when we come across a language different from ours, we might not have a clue as to what it meant. We may not know the structures and systems of that language since it is not attached with our cognitive ability to comprehend.

If we are language enthusiasts, we have to decide on a Lingua Franca to communicate with that language in particular. Being compatible with the system, structures, grammatical functions, pronunciation of a foreign language etc, we are able to use that language confidently and connect with the people in any spheres of life. Effective interaction with people using our interpersonal skills will greatly affect our choices and chances of excelling at work.

Restoring our relationship with nature

Dr. Subhasish Das Gupta

The Highland Post, June 5, 2021

Time spent among trees and the environment is never wasted! Its only with healthy ecosystems that we can enhance people's livelihoods, counter climate change and arrest the process of biodiversity loss. Nature offers benefits for all the species on this planet- from animals to humans; from the food we eat to the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the climate that makes our planet habitable, all comes from nature itself. Each year, marine plants produce more than half of our atmospheric oxygen, whereas a mature tree cleans our air, absorbing 22 kilos of carbon dioxide, releasing oxygen in exchange. Despite all that, we the humans mistreat our environment.

It is against this background that the observance of World Environment Day assumes significance as it offers mankind the opportunity to renew its commitment and obligation towards maintaining a healthy and sustainable planet. World Environment Day offers a global platform for inspiring positive changes in the environment pushing individuals to think about the way they consume the natural resources and ecosystem services notwithstanding an opportunity to mend their fences and strive for a greener future.

At the 1972 Stockholm Conference on Human Environment, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) decided to observe World Environment Day every year. Two years later, in 1974, the first World Environment Day (WED) was held with the theme 'Only One Earth'. And then in 1987, the UN came up with the idea of rotating the host country for the celebrations of this day.

World Environment Day, 2021

The theme for this year's World Environment Day celebration is 'Ecosystem Restoration'. The day to be observed by millions of people in 143 countries digitally is being hosted by Pakistan in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The event will also see the launch of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. This is a "10-year initiative to halt and reverse the decline of the natural world." Since the pandemic disrupted normal lives, the most important thing that will perhaps have a very far-reaching impact is the breakdown in the "relationship between human and natural systems." The UNEP's campaign – "Recreate, Reimagine, Restore" – focuses on reversing the degradation of our ecosystems. The UN Decade runs from 2021 till 2030, which is also the deadline for the Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030) and the timeline scientists have identified as the last chance to prevent catastrophic climate change.

What is ecosystem restoration?

"Once we restore, we are no longer retreating, trying only to slow the wave of destruction. We begin to actually advance, to regain lost ground. Can we really do it, or is the idea only human arrogance rearing its head one more time?...The short answer is: yes, we can really do it – to some degree. At worst we can produce something that mimics the real thing and that, given enough time, could become the real thing" . . . John P. Wiley, Jr., 1989

Ecosystem restoration means preventing, halting, and reversing the damage caused by human activities and finally healing our nature. Ecosystem restoration assists in the recovery of ecosystems that have been degraded or destroyed in the past years, as well as conserving the ecosystems that are still intact. Healthier ecosystems, with richer biodiversity, yield greater benefits, such as more fertile soils, bigger yields of timber and fish, and larger stores of greenhouse gases.

Ecological restoration is a means of sustaining the diversity of life on Earth and re-establishing an ecologically healthy relationship between nature and culture. Ecological restoration is the process of recreating to the extent possible the structure, function, and integrity of indigenous ecosystem and the sustaining habitats that they provide.

It is realised that unless something is done to reverse the deterioration of ecosystem health, current and future generations will continue to incur increasing costs while simultaneously enjoying fewer benefits from public lands. Of particular concern is the cumulative effect of ecosystem simplification such that ecosystems are at risk of catastrophic losses of biological diversity and human habitats (Myers 1984).

Restoration and maintenance of ecosystem health is seen as central to ecosystem management nowadays. Restoration of ecosystem health is, in fact, an international theme. The United Nations recognized ecosystem restoration as a central concern in the Rio Declaration (Earth Summit,1992) on Environment and Development in Principle 7 which declares that "States shall cooperate in a spirit of global partnership to

conserve, protect and restore the health and integrity of the Earth's ecosystems." The principle of restoration is based on (1)identifying the species,(2) putting a stop to further abuse by reducing factors,(3) reintroduce the native species, and (4) protecting the area from further degradation.

Ecosystem degradation

Environment can be degraded due to increased urbanisation, industrialization, population increase, unsustainable land use, sewage, water run-off, eutrophication , fragmentation and loss of habitat, biodiversity loss, low crop genetic diversity, pollution and climate change notwithstanding natural calamities like volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, cyclones, tsunamis, floods, epidemics even pandemics.

Degradation may result from harmful policies such as subsidies for intensive farming or weak tenure laws that encourage deforestation. Lakes and coastlines can become polluted because of poor waste management or an industrial accident. Commercial pressures can leave towns and cities with too much asphalt and too few green spaces.

Half of the World's tropical forests and wetlands have been destroyed since 1960. UNEP and FAO estimated the rate of deforestation during 2015-2020 at 10 million hectares/year compared to 16 million hectares/year in 1990. UNEP and FAO reported a decline in global forest area from 32.8% to 30.8% last year. In India, 96.4 million hectares (29.32% of total GA) of land became degraded in 2011-13. Degradation causes a reduction in food productivity, soil fertility, man-animal conflict and deforestation. India has committed itself to rehabilitating 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030.Implementation of National Afforestation programme and Green India Mission has helped India to increase its forest cover to 21.67% (ISFR,2019). Use of organic manure, fertilisers, indigenous seeds can help revive soil fertility and ecosystem health. Effective waste management and green house gas emissions from agricultural activities can save terrestrial bodies from being degraded.

Rivers used for drinking, food, irrigation, electric power generation, shipping, fishing, coastal area expansion, tourism, recreation, water transport have deteriorated in quality and quantity due to mindless pollution, disposal of sewage, toxic or harmful effluents, plastics etcin to it. More than 8 million tons of plastics end up in the ocean every year. At this rate, there will be more plastic than fish in the ocean by 2050. Effective treatment of domestic and industrial sewage, controlled fishing, designated area for shipping, prohibition on dumping and defaecation can go a long way in ensuring greater availability of this scarce fresh water resource. Some initiatives like Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan, Jal Jeevan Mission, Swachh Bharat Mission ,NamamiGange, Clean Jamuna have contributed to improving the scenario.

Biodiversity loss has been taking place at alarming rate all over the world. IUCN Red List(2019) records 132 plant and animal species as being critically endangered in India out of which 48 belong to the plant kingdom. Destruction of forests and wild life habitats have contributed to their dwindling population. Nepenthes khasiana is a critically endangered plant species while Sunderban gets recognised as critically endangered habitat. Bringing in more areas under protected areas (981 at present) including sanctuaries and national parks, wetlands (42 at present) have helped in the conservation of biodiversity not to speak of an incremental population of Tigers and Elephant etc.

A transformational shift to clean and green renewable energy can help us clean up our environment.

The Need

Ecosystem degradation is one of the biggest environmental threats arising as a result of various developmental, social and anthropogenic factors impacting biodiversity and ecosystem services. This has resulted in poorer habitats for wildlife, increased human-animal conflict, impairment of water security and protection against natural disasters, higher risk of species' extinction, lower carbon sequestration, etc. While degradation of freshwater and marine ecosystems is equally serious.

The Opportunity

Ecological restoration offers scope for large-scale recovery of damaged natural systems. It presents a huge opportunity to improve biodiversity, human lives, restore precious habitats for wild flora and fauna . Importantly, restoration provides the potential for generating rural livelihoods based on activities aimed at building ecological resilience, thus making local communities active partners in the overall conservation effort contributing to even GDP. This can help us move closer to fulfilling SDG targets.

Restoration and climate change

Restoration can remove up to 26 gigatons of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere. But this has to be done cautiously without sacrificing the basic principle of restoration. Increasing canopy cover is an urgent priority. Otherwise it can affect biodiversity, and lead to the alteration of many unique ecosystems like arid, semi-arid and scrub forests threatening the flora and fauna. Policies and restoration methodologies have to be designed keeping ecological priorities in mind. In fact, empirical evidence shows that natural ecosystems are more effective at meeting the twin objectives of climate change and ecosystem services, and also markedly more sustainable.

Challenges in the Indian context

Some of the challenges in restoring degraded ecosystems is the lack of trained restoration professional, lack of any scientific standards to ensure consistency in approach and methodology besides funding. A typical restoration project lasts well over 6 years, and this raises the challenge of sustaining projects for such long periods. Concerned government departments can partner with restoration agencies having relevant qualifications and experience to address this issue.

Putting the brakes on Covid 19

Safeguarding the reproductive health of Adolescents in Meghalaya

Dr Bonnie M Nicol

Published in Meghalaya Times June 3, 2021

Adolescents are recognised to be one of the most important advocates for reproductive health interventions being vulnerable to the adverse consequences of early sexual behaviour. This increased vulnerability seen in adolescents is caused by a number of biological, behavioural, and psychological factors including hormonal changes at puberty, cervical anatomy, inability to recognise symptoms of infection and poor health seeking

behaviour.

The defining event of adolescence is reproductive maturation and teenage pregnancy is certainly a cause of worry in Meghalaya. Both young men and women in the region face an increased risk of sexually transmitted infections due to inadequate sexual and reproductive health information, services and counselling. Adolescent females are at a high risk for unwanted and unplanned pregnancies which often results in unsafe abortions or poor maternal health outcomes. It is a matter of great concern that our state of Meghalaya saw an increase in adolescent fertility rate (AFR) from 48 to 49 births per 1,000 women in the age group of 15-19 years. There was a decline in AFR in most of the states except for Tripura and Assam which saw an increase from 82 to 91 births and 60-80 births per 1,000 women in the age group of 15-19 years respectively (as per the NFHS-5 factsheets). Teenage pregnancy and Multiple gravida has been identified as key factors for high maternal and infant mortality rates. As per the State data, teenage pregnancy accounts for 10% and Multiple Gravida accounts for 30 % of the total pregnancies in Meghalaya. Maternal and Infant Mortality Rates are of great concern to the State with 197 MMR(SRS, 2016-18) and 3.4% IMR (34 deaths per 1000 live births) as per HMIS, Apr-Sept 2020.These can be attributed mainly to teenage pregnancy, multiple gravida and untimely healthcare intervention. Teenage pregnancy has also been one of the major cause of school drop outs among the adolescents especially in the rural areas. The battle against teenage pregnancies can only be overcome with the help of the community intervention. Parents, teachers, peers, mentors and the community at large have a pivotal role to play in addressing teenage pregnancies. Adolescents' knowledge and access to reproductive health services is important for their physical and psychosocial wellbeing. Studies have shown that the lack of knowledge about the consequences of unprotected premarital sex among adolescent females predisposed them to unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortion and its complications, and sexually transmitted infections. Providing adolescents with sexual and reproductive health education on a broad variety of topics related to sex, exploring values and beliefs and gaining the skills that are needed to navigate relation- ships and manage one's own sexual health . This will prove an effective way of promoting healthy adolescence and sexual development enabling them to understand the dangers of teenage pregnancy and preventing unfavourable outcomes of sexual behaviours.

COVID-19 has led to adverse global impact paralysing social networks and health systems. Apparently the COVID-19 pandemic makes an unintended pregnancy even more dangerous for a woman and her child, showing that reproductive health must be considered as an essential health need — especially during the pandemic. The availability of reproductive health services and awareness on the reproductive health care is all the more essential during this unprecedented time. For sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services, interruptions in information and service delivery are estimated to have a serious impact on women's health and well-being. The absence of adolescent SRH services from "essential" health services during COVID-19 amplifies this need. While COVID-19 pan- demic has disrupted access for everyone, it has possibly exacerbated the limitations and adversities for vulnerable groups like adolescents more, much of which remains unsubstantiated. Teenage pregnancies are high-risk pregnancies. According to WHO, complications during pregnancy and delivery are the leading cause of death for the 15-19-year-old girls globally. Adolescent mothers aged 10- 19 years have higher risks of pre-eclampsia, puerperal sepsis and post-partum endometritis, and their babies are at a higher risk of preterm delivery, low birth weight and severe neonatal complications, compared to women aged 20-24 years. Adolescents conceiving during the COVID-19 pandemic may be at higher risk of adverse maternal and neonatal outcomes due to disruption of maternity care.

In today's context the sexual and reproductive health (SRH) of young people is of immense importance. Adolescent-friendly health care services and provisions should be available responding to the changing needs of young people actively engaging them in their own healthcare.

Stumbling blocks: Why do adolescents avoid existing reproductive health services?

Studies from around the world indicate that young people are often unwilling or unable to obtain required health services. A handful of reasons might be hindering the adolescents from availing the existing services including legal constraints which provide access to certain kinds of health services according to age, marital status, or both. Fear and embarrassment possibly constitute the greatest barriers to their seeking information and services. Even pre-COVID, adolescents' open access to SRH information and services has always been socially scrutinised, with restrictions on what sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) support is available and accessible. In many societies, sexual activity among young people prior to marriage remains stigmatized, and even talking about sex is a taboo. There could be operational barriers such as inconvenient hours of operation or high costs of services, lack of information among the adolescents about their emerging sexuality and development. Perhaps the most widespread explanation for young people's avoidance of clinics and service providers is their discomfort with real or perceived clinic conditions and attitudes of the providers.

The knowledge and attitudes about the risk related to RSH and non-availability of proper health system also act as barriers in seeking services besides easy access, acceptability and appropriateness of healthcare. A particular challenge is to

provide healthcare that is private, confidential and friendly.

The friendly approach to Reproductive Health services for Adolescents

"Youth-friendly" services are a primary requisite if young people are to be adequately provided with reproductive healthcare. Globally there has been a growing recognition among reproductive health providers that such services if provided will be able to effectively attract young people, meet their needs comfortably and responsively. This friendly service can be provided in a clinical setting or made available in convenient locations in youth centres or at a workplace or through outreach to informal venues such as recreational centres, restaurants and com- munity centres. Besides the involvement of specially trained providers the other basic components of the health services including privacy, confidentiality, and accessibility needs to be given focus. This urgent need for reproductive health care especially prevention services for the young people could be as a result of a longer period of non-marital sexual activity, related to earlier menarche, greater economic opportunities for women, increased urbanization, and liberalizing attitudes influenced considerably by social media. Furthermore the consequences of sexually transmitted infection prior, during and after pregnancy due to high rates of risky sexual behaviour can increase the biological potential for HIV infection.

Health services are usually available in hospitals, clinics, and health centres to a major extent as the infrastructure is already available. However, there is a practical urgency to consider how such services could be adapted to better attract and serve a clientele of young people.

One can look at a number of channels which may have the potential to provide the youth with friendly Re- productive Health services.

Active engagement of the community as a whole helps set expectations around self-management practices as a prerequisite to behaviour change and a strategy to sup- port future engagement with adult health services. The reproductive health service providers need to develop better innovative ways to provide this important service to adolescents. Sexual and reproductive health promotional activities should target parents as a way of breaking the social barriers. Community sensitization and training of health workers is required to remove barriers and increase the utilization of reproductive health services. Access to services can be improvised when health-ser- vice provision combine with community-based interventions to create a more supportive environment for adolescent care seeking and increased utilization of services especially during the Covid 19 pandemic.

Interventions targeting adolescents can be based in school or within the wider community. No doubt the school-based education is attractive in that it is potentially cost effective and feasible but in many communities it is the out of school youth who are most vulnerable to sexual risk for a variety of reasons. On the other hand, school based sex education has to compete with academic subjects for resources and time within the main curriculum the programmes are often poorly implemented. More emphasis should therefore be given for successful implementation of the reproductive and sexual health education in schools.

Several studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of peer educators in promoting behaviour change. Peer educators can act as effective role models, thereby facilitating positive changes in adolescent behaviour norms. In addition to educating young people either in or out of school, it is also important in educating parents about issues relating to adolescent sexuality and reproductive health with the aim of improving their communication with young people and helping them act as educators.

The other ways for reaching out to youth include the use of mobile vans and community -based distribution agents, and social marketing, which makes effective use of mass media and other communications to help reach young people. Drug stores or pharmacies can also serve as distribution points for information in the form of flyers and pamphlets. Media plays a crucial role in reaching out to the masses creating awareness on reproductive health among the adolescents utilising phone-in radio shows and other communication strategies in vernacular languages to help disseminate information on reproductive health issues and the available services.

In March this year, Meghalaya has introduced the Health Policy with a broad framework for providing essential public health services and functions. The good news is that a lot of emphasis has been given to Maternal and Child health Protection Policy (Section 6.1). The State is proactively taking steps to ensure the safety of mother and child during pregnancy and has already developed the innovative MOTHER app which tracks the pregnancy of women in the State. This app ensures that expecting mothers are getting proper antenatal care facilitating safe deliveries. This team of frontline workers will also be involved in addressing a number of local issues such as correction of anaemia in pregnant women, compulsory registration of first pregnancies, regular VHNDs, and use of various forms of contraceptives to practice birth spacing. We all look forward to the implementation of the policy for the overall health and welfare of the community in general.

This is a pertinent indication to the society to help foster support provision of Reproductive Health services to adolescents by diligently identifying community leaders representing key stakeholder groups such as the health sector, policy makers, schools ,religious sector and youth organizations. The lessons from prior humanitarian crises must remind us not to neglect adolescent girls' health, a population at risk of adverse reproductive health outcomes, with short-term and long-term undesirable consequences. Only by paying attention to adolescents and understanding the specific barriers they face will we be able to give them the guidance and support they need so that they can be responsible for their own health, understanding risk, imbibing principles of safety, being skilled and empowered contributing to the much needed reconstruction and reform as we look beyond COVID-19 and also reliably con- tribute to the society as the next generation.

We can make a difference! Stay safe

Who will speak for these Innocents?

Children are getting Covid

Glenn C. Kharkongor

The Shillong Times, May 26, 2021

In the last one month, among my circle of friends and colleagues, four families have been affected with positive cases, hospitalizations and one tragic death. In all these families, each child tested positive, one as young as two years of age. The children have been isolated at home with one parent, also positive, with food being left at the door by relatives. These small children cannot understand why they can only wave to an aunt or a grandparent from the window. One exposed frontline worker had to be isolated at home in his own room, sequestered from the family. His young daughter was distraught, sobbing, "Is papa going to die?"

In the din of Covid, the voiceless are mute spectators, suffering their quiet fate amid the clangour of the pandemic. Their world has become even more harsh: domestic violence for women has increased, migrant workers have suffered a second economic devastation. Even the highly visible health workers, not belonging to powerful trade unions or influential lobbies, do not have health insurance cover from the government or any other meaningful support.

Children have been under the Covid radar. From the beginning of the pandemic we have been reassured by glib statements that children are at low risk. In the colourful graphics in the newspapers or TV, there is no breakdown to show statistics for children. One of the few stated worries is that if schools are opened, will the children contract Covid at school and bring the infection home to the adults? Such has been the sidestepping of children in conversations about Covid.

More cases in the second wave

The second wave has been vastly different for children. The new variants, being more infective, have been affecting children in much larger numbers and with greater severity. Yet still, demographic data for infected Indian children is hard to find. All we can rely on are anecdotal reports that are truly alarming. Just two districts in Rajasthan reported more than 600 Covid cases in children over a few days last week.

In the month of April 2021, more than sixty thousand cases in children were reported in Maharashtra. Entire families including infants have quickly turned positive if one member was affected. The Maharashtra government has directed health authorities and the public to be alert for symptoms in children. Addressing over 6,300 paediatricians virtually, the chief minister said vigilance and immediate diagnosis was the need of the hour for children.

The World Health Organisation (WHO), in an October 2020 document, reported that Covid-19 among children and adolescents, being 29% of the global population, represented about 8% of reported cases. In the USA, children account for 22% of the population and 14% of the cases. In India, if we extrapolate the lower figure of 8%, it would mean that so far there have been more than two million affected children.

India Today opened a recent feature article with the statement, "Covid-19 may have turned severe and even deadly for thousands of children in India". The real number is apparently unknown.

Unlike in the first wave, Covid has turned more severe for children. According to the Indian Academy of Pediatrics, more than two thousand cases of multi-system failure, affecting the hearts, lung and brain, have been reported in children so far, some with fatal results. Sir Ganga Ram Hospital in Delhi alone had 140 cases.

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, the country's apex child rights body, has asked the Centre and states to ramp up their preparations and services to protect children and infants.

Children vulnerable in many ways

Poverty and malnutrition are factors that grind out a vicious circle for children. Malnourished children have weaker immune systems rendering them more susceptible to infectious diseases. A report from Azim Premji University released earlier this month has estimated that Covid has pushed an additional 230 million Indians below the poverty line. Imagine the huge number of malnourished children that will be added to the already high numbers in our country.

The fifth National Family Health Survey (2019-20) released a few months ago has shown that in Meghalaya, the infant mortality rate and the under-five mortality rate has actually increased since the last survey in 2015-16. How come these unforgiveable statistics are never highlighted in the media or by the government?

In Meghalaya, the prevalence of underweight, wasting and stunting remains high. In preschool children, the prevalence of stunting is 46.5%, perhaps the highest in the country and has increased from 43.8% in the last survey. Stunting indicates chronic malnutrition over a period of years, and almost half our children have suffered in this way.

Children who have lost parents have been rendered orphans. Delhi has announced special schemes for these children, whose lives have been traumatised forever. A UNICEF India official has called for speedy help for children, saying that "children are being orphaned and we do see that there is a lot of trafficking of children".

According to the American Psychological Association, there has been a spike in child abuse in the USA during lockdowns. Child abuse has increased in India as well. The key risk factors include overstressed caregivers becoming violent or abusive due to economic stress, and children's restricted mobility as schools are closed. Childline India Foundation has reported a 50% increase in phone calls during the lockdown. Of the calls received during this period, 30% were related to protection from abuse.

When we know that 93% of perpetrators are relatives or known individuals, child sexual abuse can be devastating, as the isolation of lockdown has made it even more difficult for victims to seek help or escape. Children are subjected to unimaginable feelings of helplessness and mental health consequences. Another vulnerable population of children are

the homeless, rag pickers, and those who beg on the streets. Thousands are being exploited in exchange for a meal or a daily wage just enough to sustain themselves. With lockdown, the usual crumbs obtained on the streets ae no longer there.

According to Childline India Foundation, the most heart-wrenching calls to their helpline are the now regularly received "silent calls". The child behind the call does not know what to say or how to express it.

Those who are from my generation will remember this song by the Carpenters, the side B of a record released in 1971.

Bless the beasts and the children

For in this world they have no voice

They have no choice.

Half a century on, is the world a better place for children?

Mental Health and Social Stigma

A tribute to all healthcare personnel involved in the care of COVID-19 patients

Maribon Viray, Anniesha Lyngdoh, Jochanan Diengdoh & Phibawan Syiemlieh

The Shillong Times, December 31, 2020

As we approach the end of 2020, we all hope that COVID will soon be history. Unfortunately, the new strain of the virus has been detected and the extent of its spread and impact cannot be underestimated. While many aspects of the economic activities have opened, and people have been trying to adjust to the new normal, the micro level of economy and the health system continue to bear the brunt of this problem. The healthcare workers continue to be under pressure to work round the clock for COVID management in different stages, because the fact is, cases are still being reported on a daily basis although numbers are in a downward trend.

The thoughtful gestures of giving flowers, candle lighting and air parade are an encouragement to the healthcare personnel. However, there remain other aspects that affect their mental health. Mental health at workplace is a crucial determinant of the overall health of an individual. Burn out, for instance, is a well-recognized psychiatric diagnosis, involving symptoms of emotional exhaustion (anxiety), cynicism (depersonalization) and reduced work efficiency (reduced accomplishment). Reports across the country also highlighted that healthcare workers are being stigmatised just for being exposed to patients. To determine the mental health and social stigma among healthcare personnel involved in the management of COVID 19 patients, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) conducted a research covering ten States which included Maharashtra, Delhi, Kerala, Assam, Odisha and Meghalaya among others in which Martin Luther Christian University (MLCU) was selected as the implementing agency. There were 92 Doctors, nurses, laboratory staff, X-ray technician sanitation workers, ambulance drivers, housekeeping, ward boys, and ASHA workers from both public and private hospitals in East Khasi Hills District with COVID 19 patients who participated in

the survey and 55 among them were also interviewed. The national data analysis is still on-going, but permission was granted to share the highlights of the findings in the district.

Psychological distress and burnout

The highest percentage (71.4) who have shown psychological distress as per General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) were the ASHA workers followed by (68.8) of the doctors, (64.3) percent of the ambulance driver/staff/ward boys/security guard while more than half (58.3)percent included the auxiliary nurse/paramedical staff. However, a total of 64.7 percent of all the participants showed that regardless of their categories, they were facing psychological distress during the period of data collection – that is between September 15 to November 25, 2020. Records show that some are working 24 hours and 7 days a week. In the Burnout scores, nurses recorded the highest scores followed by doctors and auxiliary/paramedical staff. The interview revealed that the pre-dominant factors revolved around the workplace, family life, and experience of stigmatization.

Impact of COVID in work life and family life

All participants have reported that workload has increased during the pandemic. The results highlighted burden of work. One doctor said, "We have to juggle between COVID duty and our own normal duties," while an ambulance staff mentioned, "We are exhausted because of overwork, and we sometimes get angry too because public don't understand the situation."

Feeling of inadequacy was expressed by a doctor, "I feel demoralized at time when people look at me with a question mark in their eyes. It was like the people are not trusting me anymore." Worry over shortage of adequate supplies, lack of management appraisal, strained relationship among colleagues due to pressure, discomfort in using PPEs, and feeling of dissatisfaction in giving quality time to the patients are other highlights of work related stressors.

On a positive note, some of the staff highlighted the importance of teamwork. One staff said, "We work more as a team now than we did earlier when we were working separately performing our own duties."

Impact of COVID on family life

The impact on family life underlined having limited family time and fear of infection. Statements like, "I miss home, because now I do not get a chance to go and my family every day." Or "I cannot risk their lives so I have to keep my distance." To, "I worry about them getting infected from me. I cannot be near my children/parents, etc." resonated among the participants.

Experience of stigmatization

Stigmatization was found to be prevalent in the workplace, within the family, and in the community level. At work, comments like, "Non-COVID duty colleagues do not talk to us or mix with us anymore."; patients or family of patients

saying, "It is your fault," when the patient gets worse or passes away. In the family, echoes such as, "Immediate family are somehow supportive, but relatives shun us so that we are not even informed nor invited to any family occasions. It is painful"

In the community, "Even the relatives who are healthy cannot come out to go to work just because they are related to me. At that time I really felt discriminated." Another person says, "In our village, we were told not to enter the village, even though were not COVID positive" Others said, "We are exhausted from long hours of duty yet could somehow replenish our strength for the next day. But when we are blamed or shunned, the struggle is worse – we have to fight emotionally and mentally." Someone said, "I just hope that people will understand that we are humans too, and that even we are new to this virus." Many participants, however, expressed that the intensity of the stigmatization was worse in the beginning of the lockdown compared to the time of the interview.

Coping strategies

The most prominent coping strategy recorded was the "expression of faith" and "spirituality" across religions. Praying, meditating, reading the Bible and Holy books, listening to spiritual teachings and songs gave solace. Receiving family and social support which also included prayer were sources of encouragement. Engagement in recreational activities such as indoor exercises, reading, watching movies, social media, and music while in isolation like in hotels or quarantine centers, were found helpful.

At the work place, occasional team building exercises, venting of emotional and psychological stresses to colleagues, and sessions conducted by a Psychiatrist were found helpful. However, the participants expressed hope that a full-time Psychiatrist would be employed in all the hospitals. One of the hospitals reported that only a part time Psychiatrist comes once in a while which does not meet the increasing need for mental health care.

Suggestions from the healthcare personnel

Wide awareness programs at all levels on the concept, prevalence, and manifestation of stigmatization, improvement of infrastructure and increase of essential supplies, increase of human resources including training were suggested. Training should include recent updates on the pathogenesis of COVID 19 (and the new strain of the virus) and also psychological coping mechanism. They all voiced the need for appointment of full-time Counselling Psychologist, Clinical Psychologist, and Psychiatrist for public and private hospitals and CHCs. They also voiced the need for enhanced salary packages for all healthcare workers, clearer communication between the government and community leaders for dissemination of new guidelines and notifications and transparency of the government on the management of COVID 19 which would increase the trust of the public in the health sector. Above all they aspired for development of community based strategies for psycho-social care in both rural and urban areas.

A tribute message

Charles Glassman said "Kindness begins with the understanding that we all struggle". As the team researchers for this project, we acknowledge the fear and anxiety that may arise towards our healthcare personnel in the process of battling with COVID 19, and this article reflects the very need for encouragement, trust, respect, and kindness towards them.As stated by Daniel Goleman, "True compassion means not only feeling another's pain but also being moved to help relieve it".

A conscious effort, as individuals and communities, will promote positive mental health which will in turn enhance our own wellbeing.

On behalf of the patients and their family members who were the recipients of care, we salute all the healthcare personnel who were involved in the management of COVID 19 patients in Meghalaya in particular as well as the rest of the country and the world. We pay tribute to the healthcare personnel who have lost their lives in the war against COVID. For your sacrifices and commitment to uphold your calling to serve the humanity, we thank you.

The authors are faculty members of the Department of Psychology, Martin Luther Christian University, Shillong and may be contacted through cpmlcu06@gmail.com

---

Hand washing for better health outcomes

Melari Shisha Nongrum

The Shillong Times, October 15, 2020

The Global Handwashing Day is celebrated every year on October 15th since 2008 as a global advocacy day dedicated to increasing awareness and understanding about the importance of handwashing with soap as an easy, effective and affordable way to prevent diseases and save lives. The current COVID19 pandemic has reminded us about the effectiveness of one of the simplest preventive measures to stop the spread of the corona virus and other viruses through handwashing with soap. Hand washing might have been taken seriously during the pandemic since we are reminded time and again through various media and because of the fear of the virus.

However, we have torealise that hand hygiene is not limited only to this pandemic but ensures better health outcomes beyond the pandemic. Research studies have revealed the effectiveness of handwashing with soap. As diarrhoea and pneumonia are leading causes of death for children under the age of five, handwashing with soap can save lives, cutting diarrhoea by almost one-half and acute respiratory infections by nearly one-quarter. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 50% of cases of child undernutrition are due to repeated diarrhoea and intestinal infections caused by poor sanitation and hygiene conditions or lack of safe water. When children get diarrhoea, they often eat less food, and have a reduced ability to absorb and benefit from nutrients in the food they do eat. As a result, this can contribute to undernutrition. When children are undernourished, they

become far more susceptible to developing diarrhoea when they come into contact with the bacteria and viruses in faecal matter. And so, the cycle repeats itself. Handwashing with soap is therefore a critical determinant for achieving and maintaining good nutrition and it can break this viscous cycle.

We are very well aware that the two primary times to wash hands with soap are after contact with faeces (such as using the toilet or cleaning a child) and before contact with food (preparing food, eating, feeding a child, and so on). The other times are after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; after contact with an animal, animal feed, or animal waste; after handling pet food or pet treats and after touching garbage. When hands are contaminated with disease-causing bacteria and viruses, these pathogens can enter the body or pass from one person to another to cause diseases such as diarrhoea and pneumonia.

In view of the facts indicated above, given the context in our own state, we have many children who are undernourished. According to the National Family Health Survey (2015-16), a large proportion of the children under five years of age are stunted (43.8%), underweight (28.9%), wasted (15.3%) and severely wasted (6.5%). The health indices reflect poorly of the health of our children. There could be many other factors that can make a child undernourished but we have one simple and easy solution that could help curb this condition among children and contribute to healthier children.

Home is where we can wash our hands regularly; adults and children are to take hand hygiene seriously. Though doable, this is not done. The National Sample Survey (NSS) 76th round report, 2019, revealed that only 35.8% of households in the country practice hand-washing with soap or detergent before a meal, while 60% households wash hands only with water. More surprisingly, about 24% population don't wash their hands with soap or detergent even after defecation. Besides, there is a gap between the rich and the poor where only 2 out of 10 poor households use soap compared to 9 out of ten rich households. The reasons are multifaceted; knowledge, attitudes and access to water facilities and soaps are the main problems. It is important to note that several studies including a study conducted in Bangladesh found that while the use of water alone does help reduce the risk of diarrhoea, use of soap is substantially more effective. Given this context, there needs to be more awareness on the benefits of handwashing. During this pandemic and during community placements, Social Work students from the Public Health specialization have always conducted sessions in their villages to remind people including children of the importance of handwashing with soap and the steps for effective handwash. Such efforts will hopefully bring about an increase in knowledge, change attitudes and mothers and children alike would practise handwashing with soap.

Besides the home, there are other institutions that are important to consider at the community level namely schools and Anganwadi centres. These are places where children spend a lot of time and also eat their mid-day meals and supplementary nutrition respectively. The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has stated that handwashing with soap reduces absenteeism due to gastro-intestinal illness in school children by 29-57%. One important issue is for teachers to teach children to wash their hands after using the toilet and before eating food. But the larger question is, "where do they wash their hands?". According to a report by the National University of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi, it was found that only 57% private schools and 66% private unaided schools in Meghalaya do not have water facility in schools. However, it is not surprising to note that the report did not mention the availability of handwashing facilities in the schools which shows that 'handwashing' has not been considered important enough when planning and assessing infrastructure in schools.

Furthermore, in Aganwadi Centres, under Section 5(2) of the National Food Security Act, 2013, every school and Anganwadi Centre shall have facilities for cooking meals, drinking water and sanitation. In Meghalaya, according to the Meghalaya State Food Commission, out of 5890 AWC's, only 1799 or just 30% have potable water supply and 1537 have toilet facilities. The Department is said to be dependent on Public Health Engineering (PHE) to provide these facilities. When the lack of convergence and funds are given reasons, the children continue to bear the brunt of these lacunae.

My experience in working with communities and schools is the issue of 'soap'. Who will provide the soap? We had promoted community contribution for the soaps with a collection of Re 1 per child per month to buy soap for the purpose. Of course, this was done only after parents and teachers understood the importance of hand hygiene.

With the New Education Policy, reforms would be implemented to bring about positive change, which we are hopeful that the quality of education would be enhanced at all levels. But I urge the government that while ICT and smart classrooms are essential for learning, it must be equally mindful that learning environment includes good sanitation and handwashing facilities for children. If children are not attending school because of preventable diseases, we have failed our children in putting into practice the subject of *Health Education*. Let's make handwashing with soap a habit that adults and children can practise at home, in schools and workplaces. Handwashing with soap must be a priority now and in the future for better health outcomes.

The writer is from Department of Public Health, School of Social Work, Martin Luther Christian University

Email: melari.nongrum@gmail.com.

Covid is the Catalyst

NEP 2020 is a Golden Opportunity for Higher Education:

Glenn C Kharkongor

The Shillong Times,September 12, 2020

The National Education Policy 2020 is the best policy on education in the post-Independence era. Not since the 1949 "Report of The University Education Commission", known more popularly as the Radhakrishnan Commission, has India been given such an enlightened agenda for educational change. The only other policy document of high quality was the National Curriculum Framework of 2005 from the NCERT. There have been various other commissions and policy formulations, but they hadfew bright spots. Sadly in India, most well-intentioned policies have been reduced to rubble by education hacks and control-minded bureaucrats.

The abysmal state of Indian education is too well-known to need repeating. Two Nobel laureates have summed it up well, albeit a couple of generations apart. Rabindranath Tagore sadly noted, "In my view the imposing tower of misery which today rests on the heart of India has its sole foundation in the absence of education." And then Amartya Sen, "The general state of public services in India remains absolutely dismal, and the country's health and education systems in particular have been severely messed up."

So what's good about this policy? Firstly, that it will provide youth with a broad-based liberal arts multi-disciplinary education that will enable them to look beyond the confines of a single knowledge domain. Silo learning suffers from the danger of obsolescence and prevents individual versatility in the job market. Job seekers need broad-based skills to adapt in a rapidly evolving marketplace.

Secondly, university autonomy will enable innovation in teaching-learning. Decades of strait-jacketed regulation has sapped the vitality of Indian universities. As Amartya Sen has observed, students are not at fault, they do well when given opportunities to show their potential, for example when they go abroad.

Other much-needed radical changes are termination of the affiliating system by 2040, and teacher education, four-year BEd, to be conducted only within multi-disciplinary environments on university campuses. The present statutory bodies will have only advisory roles and no statutory powers.

Some critics have bemoaned the lack of adequate increase in the education budget and the clear move to more privatisation. These notions go hand in hand. A mixed public-private sector has advantages, but balance is key. Right now we have an under-funded over-regulated regime in education and this had to yield to a better formula.

Overview of the Policy

The Draft NEP released in 2019 is a pretty heavy document, 484 pages in all, and will take a good day of reading to get to the last appendix. It has been distilled to 66 pages in the final version, but the larger version provides the background thoughts of the committee.

The document, bulky as it is, sits lightly in your hands throughout the reading. The early pages provide a sense of freshness and the succeeding chapters do not disappoint. One is conditioned to policy papers compiled by bureaucrats that make laborious reading, but this is different. New directions have been crafted and the visions that have been laid down make striking departures from our hitherto hapless education system.

Those that love the paranoia of conspiracy theories will be disappointed. Given the present political dispensation, some would have expected ideological demons in the print, but there are none such, either overtly or between the lines. There is the expected clarion call to recall India's rich heritage and to draw on the wide cultural diversities in the country but this is balanced by a global outlook.

21st century skills through a liberal education

The introduction of the NEP records the usual lofty premises but there is a focus on 21st century skills which have been listed, defined and justified. Theseskills are critical thinking, communication, problem solving, creativity, cultural literacy, global outlook, teamwork, ethical reasoning, and social responsibility. For this, students need a broad-based multi-disciplinary education.

The reductionism of education has created isolated disciplines, specializations, and subjects, but modern-day problems like climate change require an integration of knowledge. J. Krishnamurti said, "Wisdom is infinite, but we take hold of a branch and think it is the whole tree."

The multidisciplinary approach to higher education is a new horizon for the educational system in the country. If higher education is to prepare students for life, for work and for becoming an effective member of the society, they must be given a lens that will help them view the world from scientific, artistic and humanistic angles.

Indigenous learning

A liberal arts education will enable the inclusion of cultural heritage. Tribal communities have a legacy of dominance and influence from colonialism, Westernization, Christianity, and mainland India. We can come to a rapprochement by taking the best of this variegated legacy and intertwine it with the richness of tribal traditions, knowledge and worldview, using it to secure identity, achieve conservation and broaden horizons.

In Soso Tham's poem, *Grains of Gold* are these lines: "We scour the world in search of light, now not the light within our land". According to T. K.Bamon: "What the learner needs is learning materials prepared by one's own countrymen, relating to his own life, but challenging him to think beyond his everyday concerns. To combat the threats of being de-ethnified and deculturalised, there is a need to establish identities both local and global."

Student assessment

More than any other feature, examinations have been the culprit of the dismal education landscape. Bharat Ratna CNR Rao, the then scientific advisor to the PM, wrote bluntly to Manmohan Singh, "India has an examination system but not an education system."

The Radhakrishnan Commission observed, "examinations have been recognized as one of the worst

features of Indian education… We are convinced that if we are to suggest one single reform in

university education it should be that of the examinations. It has subjected teaching to the examination, made it almost impossible to provide true education and to develop wider interests, and has created temptations of cheating, corruption and favouritism."

According to the NEP, "The rigid curriculum that is transacted, combined with the external assessment of students that follows – with no formal processes for formative assessments in the majority of institutions – ensure emphasis on rote memorisation with little room for critical thinking, creative projects, and discussion. All assessment systems shall be decided by the higher education institution (HEI).HEIs should move away from high-stakes examinations towards more continuous and comprehensive evaluation."

"The purpose of assessment must not be to label or rank but to identify areas of strength and areas that need improvement, as students move towards attaining the outcomes defined for their programme.A range of tools and processes for assessment should be used for this purpose, e.g. peer and self-assessment, portfolios, assignments, projects, presentations, and dissertations. The criteria and rubrics for assessment must be determined in a collaborative manner by the faculty and shared with students. The NEP provides room for teacher-led assessment.

Autonomy

According to the NEP, regulation has been too heavy-handed for decades. Institutions will be enabled to start and run novel and cutting-edge programmes, and develop innovative curricula.

Private higher educational institutions will move towards full autonomy inorder to allow them to strive for excellence. HEIs will be governed by independent boards, with complete academic and administrative autonomy. All HEIs will have complete autonomy on curricular, pedagogical, assessment, and resource-related, including qualification of faculty, matters.

MLCU has conducted several workshops on NEP 2020 and its academic council has approved its adoption. All undergraduate degrees from this year are in alignment with the NEP, and also with the Meghalaya State Education Policy 2018. In fact the State education policy seems to have been drafted keeping in mind the early versions of the NEP (2016).

Covid as catalyst

The Covid shutdown of universities has unwittingly accelerated many concepts of the NEP. The decrease of spoon-feeding note-taking lectures is welcome. Blended learning has been accepted as a mainstream pedagogy. The separation of teachers from students has increased self-responsibility and self-efficacy in learning. The stressful hegemony of exams has been reduced. The forced awareness about Covid has shown its many dimensions: scientific, social, medical, psychological, economic and political. This in itself is an excellent exercise in multidisciplinary thinking.

Celebration with a Difference

75th Anniversary of The Shillong Times:

Larilin Kharpuri

The Shillong Times ,August 31,2020

For people in Meghalaya or those in the worldwide diaspora from Meghalaya, a normal day would start with reading the Shillong Times. Many of us do keep abreast of the happenings in the country and around the world by reading other newspapers. But in a small community like ours, a local newspaper has its own charm and place in our lives. It's more than just a paper that reports the happenings in the state. It gives us our own space and a sense of community. The Letters to The Editor and opinion pieces on local matters provide a forum for our thought leaders and activists, and even though many issues are fiercely debated, in the end these forge our collective identity and well-being.

Hence all readers, from across a wide spectrum, will happily celebrate this well-deserved anniversary of a special newspaper. The Shillong Times has completed 75 years of existence, which means 75 years of serving the people, 75 years of non-stop journalism and 75 years of reporting the good, the bad the ugly.

A platinum jubilee is a big deal. What comes to our mind when we hear the word celebration? A grand function, dinner party or both, well dressed people, announcement of competitions, and maybe fireworks. Well, all this didn't happen for ST. Instead ST took the road less travelled. They did have a half-day function for the launch of the 75th Anniversary year on August 9, 2019. But that was the only formal event.

True to its commitment to social betterment, The Shillong Times decided to take up a unique anniversary celebration project, which came to be known as Operation Clean- Up

(OCU). A detailed plan was set in place for the cleaning of the two rivers: Umkhrah and Umshyrpi. The project was to be executed in collaboration with schools, colleges and universities that are willing partners, and to work hand in hand with the district administration and Shillong Municipal Board (SMB).

The project was inaugurated on August 8, 2019 with cleaning the Umkaliar riverbed and banks at Nongmynsong. Afroz Shah, the well-known Mumbai-based environmentalist and United Nations Champion of the Earth awardee was present for the launch. So no fancy clothes, no decorations, definitely no fireworks. Present were dedicated individuals, helping hands, and concerned citizens.

The Umshyrpi and Umkhrah rivers, which flow through the city of Shillong, originate from the foothills of Shillong Peak. The Umshyrpi river flows in a south-north direction. The Umkhrah river runs in an east-west direction, and flows through a relatively flat bed in the Umkaliar area and this is where the early efforts were focused as a pilot project.

The Umkaliar riverbed is clogged with all sorts of garbage: kitchen waste, clumps of old clothes, bottles and cans, used toiletries and diapers, you name it and you will find it here. A team of people with genuine concern for the environment and its resources was formed. With time more people joined in and we christened the effort as Operation Clean Up (OCU). This team comprised of individuals like Rudi Warjri, AibanSwer of MBDA, Avner Pariat, Derick Pariat, Larsing Ming Sawyan of Centre Point, JiwatVasvani and the Jiva team, Christine Beale, Jasbir Singh, Toki Blah, Adeetya Tiwari and his team, Nicholas of Radio Mirchi, St Edmund's 1979 Batch, institutions such as Jyoti Sroat School, Kiddies Corner Secondary School, Women's College, Martin Luther Christian University, St Anthony's HS School, St Anthony's College, KL Bajoria College, St Mary's College, Seven Set HS School, NGOs such as Bethany Society Make Someone Smile, The Green Signal and others. The OCU army was led by Kong Patricia Mukhim, along with Bah Manas Chaudhuri of The Shillong Times, editor and managing director of the newspaper respectively.

The team met almost every Saturday starting with the first clean up on August 8, 2019 and continuing till the lockdown in March 2020. In total 17 clean up sessions were carried out. This included seven at the Umkaliar river, and also cleaning drives in Laban, Police Bazaar, Golf Links, Malki forest, Umiew River at Umphrup village, Ward's Lake and Botanical Garden. Some of the clean ups were initiated by Make Someone Smile and The Green Signal. Jiva and other sponsors provided, boots, cleaning tools, and snacks for the volunteers.

Now, why would we clean the same area several times? Because it gets filled with garbage again almost immediately. Every time we visited Umkaliar, it was like starting from scratch. So during a couple of the clean ups, some of the team members visited the houses and premises along the stretch of the river to generate awareness. On one such occasion, visually challenged students from Bethany Society joined the team not just to clean up but to talk to residents.

It was encouraging to see enthusiastic participation by youth, and especially young school students in these clean ups. It

surely makes one optimistic about the future and that the world will be in safe hands; hands that would care for and clean the environment around them. Young voices from all over the world are leading the way. In October 2019, Suhani Ravi Tiwari joined OCU to visit few schools and colleges in Shillong advocating against the use of plastics. Suhani is a 12 year-old girl from Gurgaon who has taken an innovative approach to spread awareness on the menace of plastics, through poetry and Twitter.

So what did we learn? The first lesson was that it was not easy. It requires dedication, patience, courage and sacrifice of one's personal time. Secondly, it is not easy to change the mindset and habits of people, even those who are living in the midst of garbage. The "who cares" and "chaltahain" attitude prevails, and attitudinal and behavioral change is needed. That particular scene from the 2006 film Lage RahoMunna Bhai made more sense now…you clean and someone else pollutes it again, and then you keep on cleaning till that someone stops doing so.

Thirdly, team spirit makes a difference. During some of the clean ups, there was heavy rain and stormy weather, but nothing could deter our commitment as a team. The sheer grit of the leaders and the willingness of the team members enabled the project to carry on. Another positive outcome is that individuals and groups in other parts of the state are initiating clean ups of public places and water bodies, with people taking ownership of local issues, and trying to find solutions collectively.

A collective approach will be a game changer, with people becoming more responsible in waste management and in caring for the environment. But what if, just like ST, other institutions, organizations or even individuals celebrate their anniversaries, commemorations and birthdays by taking such initiatives? Do we dare to ask ourselves this question? Kudos to The Shillong Times and thank you for making a difference!

Gender Through a Covid Lens

R Jennifer War and Glenn C. Kharkongor

The Shillong Times,August 6, 2020

Everywhere one looks, it is women who bear the most responsibility for holding societies together, at home, in health care, in schools, or in caring for the elderly. In many countries, women perform many of these tasks without pay. But while the spotlight of the Covid pandemic has been on health, and secondary attention is being paid to the effect of the pandemic on the economic landscape, the gender cost has hardly received even lip sympathy.

Political leadership during the pandemic, while purportedly propelled by public health necessity, has been typified by power plays and in many countries the entrenchment of authoritarianism. When political autocracy grows and the economy declines, these twin factors militate against women. The hard-fought gains of gender slide back into the darkness of patriarchy.

So many of the stories of Covid casualties are about women

in distress. Women who deliver on the road, or at the hospital gate, a woman in labour denied admission because she is from a containment zone, a 14-yearold girl raped in a quarantine centre, a woman's newborn baby sold by a desperate labourer husband, homeless elderly women living on the footpath. Such heartbreaking stories multiply daily.

In pandemics, the physical, social and economic fallout is felt more acutely by women. In these Covid times, while we see pictorial and graphic statistics on every page, very little is about women. Recent data from the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) show a rapid increase in cases of domestic violence. In 2020, between March 25-May 31, 1,477 complaints of domestic violence were made by women. This 68-day period recorded a 10-year high.

From the National Family Health Survey data (2015-16) we know that one-third of women have experienced spousal violence. Only 14% of these women seek help, down from 24%, 15 years ago, 77% do not mention the incident to anyone. Meghalaya is on par with the national average, but twice as much as Mizoram and Nagaland. Domestic violence among Christians is not different than the national average. Patriarchy, matriliny, religion: none of these make any difference.

Global bodies express concern

The World Health Organization has called all member states to invest in gender-sensitive research in determining the impact of Covid-19. In a statement, underscored in bold letters it said, "There is limited availability of sex- and age-disaggregated data, thus hampering analysis of the gendered implications of COVID-19 and the development of appropriate responses".

Initial reports reaching the WHO and the United Nations indicate that domestic violence has increased by at least one-third during lockdowns, women being trapped at home with their abusers.Increased stress in the home, restriction of movement, difficulty in seeking help are exacerbating factors in the increase in sexual and gender-based violence. Women also face increased risk from men with rigid notions of masculinity who refuse to wear masks or adhere to distancing precautions.

Access to reproductive health services including contraception, menstrual hygiene products, and safe terminations of unintended pregnancy, has been curtailed. Most evident of all are restrictions to antenatal care, hospital deliveries, and infant care. Yet women make up 70% of the global health force and social services. They have increased exposure to Covid infection, around two-thirds of health workers infected with Covid are women.

Women with coronavirus symptoms are sometimes dismissed by doctors as having a psychological condition or stress.Past research shows such bias by health professionals. Women are less likely to be tested if they complain of cardiac symptoms, and more likely to die after a heart attack due to a lack of care.

The year 2020 marks the silver jubilee of the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, when the Beijing Declaration for Women was declared. The United Nations in a recent policy communique has remarked that even the limited gains made in the last few decades are at risk of being rolled back during the pandemic. Already women spend three times as many hours as men in unpaid care and domestic work. In many countries, women eat last and the least, rendering them even more vulnerable to anemia and malnutrition.

A World Bank paper has stressed the increased threat to housing, land ownership and property rights (HLP) by women during the pandemic especially in low and middle income countries. According to the World Bank, "Previous epidemics, and post-conflict or post-disaster situations, have shown that women are likely to be further disenfranchised of their rights to HLP if their rights are not protected. During the AIDS epidemic, widows and orphans often lost property to other family members and were left homeless, even as they dealt with their own health emergencies. Women in traditional, customary, or informal marriages are further at risk, because legal rights to HLP are usually dependent on their being formally married (in relationships sanctioned by the state)."

Concerns in India

In Mumbai, 4.5 million people lack a household water connection, forcing them to line up at community water taps. In her 2012 award-winning book Behind the Beautiful Forevers, Katherine Boo writes: "She lost two hours of her morning standing in line for water at a dribbling tap…" The operative word here is she; this task almost always falls to women.

According to Sitaram Shelar of PaniHaq Samiti, an NGO focused on water access,"Under India's strict COVID-19 lockdown, household water needs have swelled, owing to high summer temperatures, all family members being at home, and the emphasis on frequent hand-washing. The result: Women are spending more time queuing up. Shelar goes on to say that as women step out in the wee hours of the morning to get water, they often face sexual and verbal harassment.

Aparna Joshi, Project Director of iCall, a mental health helpline, called the current situation "a brewing pot". Frustrated, unemployed, and struggling to access tobacco and alcohol, men are unloading their anger through physical, verbal and sexual assault. The surge of violence is affecting millions of women of all classes.

According to SEWA (Self Employed Women's Association), in the sudden lockdown, women found themselves without any means of support. The remittances from their migrant menfolk in the cities stopped abruptly. At the same time, women's own incomes collapsed. Women who grow vegetables could not take them to market; garment factories are closed, domestic labour curtailed. Among BPL families, 45% have not got free rations, 70% had not received money into their Jan Dhan accounts.

Even in higher paid jobs in the formal sector, job prospects for women have decreased. With reduced public transport, access to the workplace is difficult.

Meghalaya

Like in many parts of the country, women in Meghalaya too have borne the brunt of the pandemic. The poorest families

have suffered further deprivation, being denied even the subsistence existence they had earlier. Vegetable and kwai sellers have been hounded off pavements, daily labour is hard to find. Children who received the barest education in rural schools are now at home, forced dropouts who have no access to online education. Mothers who have little education themselves, cannot help with home schooling. Illiteracy, unemployment and starvation looms.

Already Meghalaya has the highest percentage of single-mother headed households. They fall at the lowest rung of the economic scale, with high dropouts among their children and poor access to health services. Women, the mainstay of these families, have to call on their last reserves of resilience.

Middle class mothers have turned into private tutors now. Most urban schools have been giving continuous assignments from the start of the lockdown in March. Home school has to be integrated into the schedule of household chores. Help from domestic workers and family members is limited because of restricted movement and increase in transportation costs. Mothers with office jobs struggle to keep up with online work.

In pandemic decision making at all levels, women are underrepresented. The UN has advised that national and regional strategic plans must be grounded in gender differentiation, with special provisions for women and girls in policy making and implementation, with their full participation in all levels. A recommendation of the World Bank is that cash relief must be placed in the hands of women. Are the men in power listening to these recommendations?

Yet there are tales of heroism. Mansi Bariha,a 19-year old tribal girl's brave actions led to the release of six thousand migrant workers, virtually held captive, in brick kilns in Tamilnadu. Another teenage girl, 15-year-old Jyoti Kumari cycled 1200 km to Bihar from Gurugram, carrying her ailing father back home. The resilience of our response to Covid lies in the hands of women.

Being Mindful of our Mental Health

August 6, 2020

By Anniesha Lyngdoh and JochananDiengdoh

The Shillong Times

The Covid 19 pandemic has left us with feelings of uncertainty and apprehensiveness about the future. Such precariousness intensifies the risk of experiencing stress. Our body is equipped to deal with stressful situations and activates the fight or flight response to tackle it. However there is a downside to it as well. Stress can drain our physical and mental energy. Our physical health deteriorates making us more susceptible to bacteria and viruses as our immune system is compromised. Stress also hampers our mental capacity to think rationally, to learn something novel, to plan and execute a task effectively and to stay focused. It can impair the way we regulate our emotions and increase the risk of experiencing an array of negative emotions such as anger, fear, sadness, anxiety, and jealousy.

According to a recent study by The Mavericks, 61% of their respondents in India felt their mental health was somehow impacted during this crisis and this is what many are experiencing first hand. Another study by the Indian Psychiatric Society suggests a 20% rise in cases related to mental illness many of which had to do with the uncertainty this crisis has led us to. This unravels the importance and the need to value mental health in the same degree as we value physical health. Mental health encompasses thoughts, feelings and behaviour. Any disruption can affect various facets in life whether it's the interpersonal or social domain. Psychologists have found effective benefits of being mindful which is awareness of the present and what's in front of us. It's about acceptance, acknowledgement and contentment. When we step towards these elements, even if we cannot eliminate the problems, we can maintain calmness and mental clarity to deal with the new challenges we encounter. It is therefore imperative to optimize our mental health with the resources available within us so we can readjust our lives to adapt to the new challenges and cope with them in an effective manner. Hence despite the 2020 rollercoaster ride, there's always a way to make it worthwhile.

Re-organizing our lifestyles:

We may be physically restricted from pursuing our daily activities and that can result in restlessness and frustration but not everything is restricted. Mentally, we still have the freedom to make choices to cope with the current scenario. Reorganizing our lifestyles help us to direct our behaviour effectively and be committed to achieving our goals. Once we make independent decisions we will feel responsible about achieving our goals. The sense of satisfaction after accomplishing the goals will in turn motivate us to create and achieve other goals. This is an area that makes an individual take control of his/her own life decisions

Working from home:

You or your child taking online classes, extra added home chores and duties, change in timings and routines can trigger the stress of re-adjusting and multi-tasking. Add to that the loss of motivation and the technicalities of technology and it's another crisis indoors. All these require major re-organizing, and add to both physical and mental well-being. So it is vital to prioritize our needs and tasks to find the balance. It is essential to maintain a healthy diet, build a routine and plan ahead on things that we have control over, allowing some time and space for ourselves to take a breather, seek help from others to lighten the weight of multi-tasking.

Communicate:

With the new norm of social distancing and stay-ins, recent studies report a sense of disconnect from friends and colleagues. Yet one of the greatest boons this pandemic has given us is to spend quality time with our loved ones. Those unable to connect in real life can take advantage of virtual forums to stay in touch. Despite this there can be loneliness and quietness as this pandemic has made us weary and worried about the future. Hence, sharing our views and lending a listening ear can ease the burden in our minds. Communication can act as a catharsis to deal with pent up emotions. Listening and understanding will teach us the art of being kind and empathetic. Therefore communicating

and connecting in a non-judgmental manner regardless of the social platform used, is the need of the hour.

Emotional Self Regulation:

We should take time out to navigate the emotions and observe how they're affecting our behaviour. Have we become increasingly impatient? Anxious? Short tempered? Do we lash out at others frequently? Negative emotions can drain us out and hinder our ability to function effectively in mind and body. Being aware of experiencing such emotions is the first step. Addressing it is the next step. We need to address them with an open mind and take time to get to the source of the emotion. Then we accept their detrimental effects on our lives and finally equip ourselves with techniques that can help manage our emotions and be more in control them. They can range from breathing exercises to yoga, meditation and mindfulness. We can resist reacting impulsively which can worsen the situation. Instead let us cultivate positive emotions and improve our level of resilience as well as our relationship with others.

Creativity:

'Creativity is not competition'- Autumn Sky Hall. We can be creative in our own ways. Most of us are busy with our responsibilities and duties and have no outlet for genuine creativity. But creativity does not require one to be a professional. It's about bringing to life the ideas of our minds and expressing them in any form. They can range from creating music to writing, photography and other forms of art. Being focused on doing something we love brings about a sense of calmness and reduces the stress level. It can foster self growth and help realise one's own potential and maximize it to the fullest. The bright side is that creativity also enhances positivity which is a much needed dose at the moment.

So while in the midst of this pandemic we need to be mindful of our mental health and that of others as we go through the process of acquiring a healthy mind. The resources we have within us are limitless. This pandemic has opened doors to re-examine our capabilities and to challenge us to deal with something we have never dealt with before. Every situation teaches us something. One of the lessons we can learn from the pandemic is how integral mental health is to our lives and to value this because mental health can equip us to deal with adversities effectively. We may not be able to change the circumstances of our lives but we can definitely change how we appraise the situation. As humans we have the ability to overcome any situation if we have the strength of mind to do so. Ryder Carroll said, "No matter how bleak or menacing a situation may appear, it does not entirely own us. It can't take away our freedom to respond, our power to take action."

The Making of Covid-19 Heroes

David Blah

The Shillong Times July 28,2020

It is now the seventh month now since the first incident of Covid-19 surfaced. What once was a rumour of a terrible disease in a faraway land has now brought the world on its knees. On our knees, millions of us have been praying, for the safety of Doctors, Nurses and all frontline workers, for our Government and Scientists. Many heroes have emerged through the struggle, heroes whose actions encouraged us and even called us to join in the heroic endeavour within our local communities and spaces. There have also been situations where we see Covid-19 get the better of us. We prayed and spoke up for those who were on the receiving end- the migrants, the poor, the weak and the sick.

It is unfortunate to hear about the incidents of hospital workers being turned away by their community and also people being turned away from the hospitals. I don't know the whole story and all the factors that led to such incidents, nor do I want to start a blame game. That is not my intention. As a counseling psychologist, I take this incident as an occasion to talk on certain aspects about us, as human beings and what influences and shapes the way we react and respond to the current situation and, being a huge fan of superheroes, I wish to present all this within the idea of the Heroic.

I want to begin with two interrelated observations. The first is there are some topics, such as death or illness that are not to be talked of, even though they are not "evil". The second observation is that people think that when the times comes they will be able to act in the right manner or do the right thing. When they are put in a place where they need to act courageously, somehow they will be able to do it without preparing for it.

When these two are combined, things do not turn out the way they hope for. Firstly, because we have not talked about it, we are not prepared for it. By not entertaining the various possible situations that may happen with Covid-19, such as, "What happens when I get Covid19, or my kids do?" we are not giving ourselves the opportunity to shape our responses. Secondly, when we are in that situation, we won't necessarily be doing the right thing but the thing that we have always been doing in similar situations in the past.

One may ask, why is this the case? Well it's because of two things. Firstly, about 40-45% of our daily behaviours are habitual. That means, most of the time we behave and react in an automatic and "seemingly unconscious" way. Secondly, the reactions that these situations elicit and the emotions attached to them have a strong influence on our Behaviour. The survival instinct, with its accompanying emotion – fear, is necessary and a natural instinct but it can also be counter-productive and when it has not been properly formed and shaped, will result in the very opposite. This is not a new thing. Horror or killer movies are full of side-actors who try to save themselves but actually make silly decisions that lead them to the hands of the enemy. What is crucial for us to note is that our initial reactions shape our subsequent thinking and thus also influence our morals.

The way out of this is to firstly understand the difference between Reacting and Responding to a situation. These two can fall in line with each other, but they can also fall separately from each other. An example of the latter is that there are numerous occasions when we have asked ourselves – "Why did I react in that way? I could have responded better." Secondly, we can shape the way we react by forming our Responses. As we do this, we need to remember that our initial reaction, be it thoughts, emotions or actions, may not be the best or most suitable.

We need to talk about values and morals and the desired ends of our life as individuals. "What kind of life do I want to live? What kind of person do I want to be? How do I want others to treat and respond to me and my family?" It is worth noting that when we do this, we usually take the side of the one defending and protecting, the one who is still safe from danger. We also need to take the side of those who are already in danger, or who may be perceived by others as being in danger. After this, we need to train our responses by imagining various situations in our heads. We need to talk about it with others and try to practice the response that is based on our values so that we will be prepared when the situation comes. N.T. Wright, explains it like this [paraphrasing him], 'Courage is not born for a single BIG action, but a series of consequent small courageous decisions, so that when the BIG time comes, you will naturally act courageously because it has become second nature to you'. Every hero has a back story where he/she undergoes a period of training, a period of forming his/her skills and his/her identity. It is because of this "training period" that they are able to instinctively act in such a heroic manner.

Moving from the personal to the social, I want to briefly highlight how a heroic community might look like. I think that when we make decisions, it never takes place just between the person and the situation. It is within social relationships that ethical norms are manifested, prioritized and must be discussed. Such situations are complex and it is never a case of Black and White and I do not seek to offer any ethical suggestion to solve the mystery! What I am interested in is the kind of community that will be able to act in a heroic manner and be able to integrate and heal itself when a part of it is shattered or wounded.

There are two immediate reactions that may drive people to subsequent actions and usually to sustained action along that particular manner. They are the Survival Instinct and the Moralization Instinct. Steven Pinker writes that "Moralization is a psychological state that can be turned on and off like a switch, and when it is on, a distinctive mind-set commandeers our thinking." Moralization makes people think that rules are universals- "It is never Okay to Lie", and that people who break them must be punished. It creates a black and white picture of a complex world and creates splits and fissures rather than bridges.

As stated earlier with regards to the survival instinct, people's moral sense is crucial and natural, but when our mature moral sensibility gets overtaken by this "moralization", to the on-lookers who have not turned on their moralization switch, we will look foolish or childish as we try to tackle a complex situation.

An alternative way of responding is one that is characterized by Bridges that open communication and companionship between different parts of the community, especially those that are on the "Other" side. Ladders helps us reach the top, bridges helps us reach each other. It is within the spaces that Bridges create for us that we can form our community's responses, and in turn our community's reaction. This is where we can heal and grow. When we watch the movie Avengers, we see them fight each other, then work together to defeat the enemy. Anyone can fight with one another, but we need a relationship if we want to settle our differences and work together.

As we form our responses, at an individual and community level, we need to keep on educating ourselves by reading about Covid-19 so that we can dispel unfounded fears and keep on fighting against stigmatizing people associated with it. As we are shaped by our Values, let Information inform our Decisions and Reason shape our Emotions so that we will be able to come out of this successfully. Pomlakrai Village is an example of how a heroic community responded to the situation.

(The writer is Assistant Professor Department of Psychology Martin Luther Christian University. Email: davidhblah@ gmail.com

Children and Video Games: A Covid Surge

Glenn C. Kharkongor

Almost all children have access to video games, especially with the universal ownership of mobile phones with pre-installed or easily downloadable games. A 2017 survey conducted by the Asian Institute of Gaming and Animation(AIGA) among school children in Classes 1-5 in Bangalore showed that all children played video games, 97% using android phones. In a UK survey, 74% of children are playing more during the Covid closure of schools.

The AIGA researchers used screen pictures and rapid fire questions to ascertain student familiarity with popular games, and found that even the younger children could not only immediately identify various games but could quickly spot the level of play. They found that boys and girls play equally, though boys preferred shooting and racing games while girls preferred puzzles and strategy games. The youngest children liked collecting points and prizes, escaping from a monster, or just running.

The video games industry is huge, larger than Hollywood, Bollywood, TV, and the music industry. The movie hit Avengers: Endgame, which has the highest opening weekend box office intake of $357 million is dwarfed by a video game like Grand Theft Auto V, which sold 11 million units in 24 hours for over $800 million. There are an estimated 80,000 video games available.

Many children play frequently during the course of the day, and their normal schedule of socializing, family time and homework can be altered by video games. But a lot of adults

SECTION III

play too. In the age group 40-55 years, 71% play. The fasting growing segment are women 35-45 years.

Like films, video games are required to indicate age ratings, based on suitability of content. A small child should not play adult games. Parents can easily identify the age category on films, but this is not so easy on video games as most parents are not into screen games. The AIGA survey found that even small children were familiar with adult games.

Perhaps the most popular game in India is Player Unknown's Battleground (PUBG), with regular updates and new features. The National Child Rights Commission has recommended barring the game for its violent nature. The game has settings for decreasing the intensity of violence.

Good or bad?

Oldies tend to decry almost anything new. Even newspapers and TV were condemned as a bad influence when they were introduced. The accusations against video games are that they are addictive, cause social dysfunction such as isolation, and promote violence. Video games encroach on the balance of time for homework and household chores and lead to family arguments.

Some games carry children to extremes like the Blue Whale challenge in 2016 that led to at least 130 teenage suicides. In 2014, a Korean couple, became obsessed with Prius, a child raising game, playing virtually non-stop. They neglected their own three-month old daughter who died of neglect and starvation.

The early medical literature in the 1980s and 90s reported addictive psychological problems such as depression, chronic fatigue syndrome, obsessive–compulsive disorder, dysfunctional social performance, irregular dietary habits, sleep deprivation, nightmares, and even increased use of alcohol and tobacco. Other studies reported physical problems like wrist and neck pain. The leading mental health institution in the country, NIMHANS in Bangalore, started the Service for Healthy Use of Technology (SHUT) clinic for management of addiction due to video games.

It turns out that early reports were anecdotal and overestimated the problem. Addiction is different from habituation. An example of habituation is the psychological yearning for coffee every morning. Addiction on the other hand is a physical dependency, which causes withdrawal symptoms, making the individual sick when deprived of the addictive substance. One part of the AIGA survey evaluated the knowledge of college psychology students in Bangalore, and found that most of them held outdated views on the psychological effects of video games.

Using addiction as a loose term, rather than a scientific definition, may be applicable to a few children that indulge in binge playing. A study from Iowa State University says that 8.5% of children show behavioral addiction, using the term to indicate that these children have lost balance with other normal teenage activities. They skip homework, family activities, and lie and steal money to cater to their habit. But according to the researchers, one question remained unanswered: "Does poor school performance motivate children to cover their low self-esteem by mastering a video game, or does excessive video playing lead to bad academic performance?"

A recent paper in the Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry says that many children find it difficult to sleep because of Covid related anxiety. They are not able to go out, meet friends, play sports and so turn to more screen time.

Video games are good for children

Recent research reviewed by the American Psychological Association found that playing video games, including shooting games, boost spatial ability and hand-eye coordination. Games improve quick thinking, problem solving, and resilience. It promotes relaxation, positive moods and prevents anxiety. More than 70% of children play with friends, so social isolation is not a danger for most children. A specialize d game, Re-Mission, for children with cancer, has a robot that shoots cancer cells and helps children recover faster.

There are cognitive enhancements too. A study by Michigan State University, funded by the National Science Foundation, showed that the more kids played video games, the more creative they were in tasks such as drawing and writing stories. Students who played video games scored higher on the Torrance Creativity Test which uses tasks such as providing a curve and then telling the child to use it to draw "an exciting and interesting picture", about which they have to then write a story. Creativity Research Journal reported enhanced creativity when children played Minecraft.

The Oxford University Internet Institute says that young people who indulged in a moderate video game-playing were associated with better social adjustment than those who had never played or those who were on video games for three hours or more. A Harvard study found increased levels of healthy competitiveness among teens. One recommendation is that children be allowed to play for a while before doing homework. Scoring high points and moving up a level enhances self-confidence which may carry over to school assignments. A study found that aggression was not related to game content but to frustration at not being able to master the rules and controls within 20 minutes.

A prospective controlled study conducted over an eight-week period, found that college students who were assigned to a video game group attained better adaptability, resourcefulness and communication skills, qualities that are important to success in life.

Guidelines for parents

1. Provide an allotted time and duration for playing video games. Play can be a reward for completing assigned tasks. This will teach discipline and time management. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no screen time under the age of 1 ½ years, and one hour a day up to 5 years. For older children, a family discussion can set the parameters, but perhaps not more than 3 hours of screen time per day, including video games, and other device-based entertainment.

2. Make sure that the child has a balance of leisure activities like outdoor play and reading.

3. All video games must be approved by parents. Those that have an M (mature) rating are for ages 17 and older, and can contain heavy-duty violence, strong language, and sexual content.

4. Parental review of video games is also important for security reasons. Some games, especially internet-based ones, require users to release personal information, and so make the child vulnerable to online predators.

5. Discuss games with the child. This may provide the opportunity to have meaningful conversations with your child and you can become part of their world. They could play a variety of games including creative games like Minecraft, Lego Worlds, and Super Mario Maker.

6. Encourage them to play with friends or family members. Competitive and team games have social benefits and promote cooperation and healthy interactions.

On a flight a few months ago, a woman with a year-old infant was seated next to me. She gave the restless child the airline magazine to look at. Looking at the colorful cover, the child began to move her finger across the page, thinking it was a screen, and became frustrated when the picture didn't change.

Suicide: a much needed dialogue

Yohana Mawrie

The Shillong Times, July 21, 2020.

As children we've all had big colourful dreams of how our lives are going to be. Everything seems possible; everything seems like a clear cut road in the eyes of a child. There are people who get to live out their childhood dreams as adults. However, life can be very unpredictable at times and many people have to make new dreams along the way. Being an adult is not easy and I'm sure you will all agree. It's ironic how we could not wait to grow up (at least for some of us). Sometimes it's difficult to see the colours that we visualized as children. Pressures from work, family, society, health etc can blacken everything out. Nevertheless, we get up every morning and are grateful for a brand new day. If only this is the case for everybody! Wouldn't it be lovely if we could all walk hand in hand towards tomorrow with ease?

There are many people who are just like you and me, who struggle daily to just get out of bed. They battle their demons who deny them the strength to see a new day. Some win their battles (by seeking help) while some tragically do not. Every year about 800,000 people die by suicide worldwide (World Health Organisation). About 17 to 20 percent suicide rates are from India. That means every 40 seconds, someone loses their life to suicide. Moreover, there are more than 20 suicide attempts for each suicide. According to the latest data provided by the Meghalaya Police, year 2018 saw 189 suicide deaths which is the highest for the state. In 2005, the number of suicides was 71. That is a 166 percent increase!

The causes of suicide vary from individual to individual. In 2018, 72 individuals died by suicide for causes unknown, 29 individuals due to marriage related problems, 21 individuals due to illness, which showed mental illness to be the leading cause and 16 individuals due to drug or alcohol dependency. Other reasons include love affairs, unemployment, suspected or illicit relations, death of a loved one, family problems, failure in an examination and fall in social reputation. The data also revealed that there is a stark difference in the percentage of men and women who die by suicide. There are more men than women who lose their life to suicide. This should not cloud the fact that the attempt at suicide is much more than the rate that people die by it. The reasons may vary but it is a question that as a society we need to ask 'why'?

In India, there has also been an increase in the suicide rates during this pandemic. It has been reported that there have been more than 300 suicide deaths which were 'non-coronavirus' related. It was triggered by the nationwide lockdown. The causes were distress, fear from contracting COVID-19, starvation, withdrawal symptoms and financial distress. The rate at which suicide is increasing is alarming. Suicide attempt is an act of harming oneself with intent to end one's life but not to die of the attempt. Suicide is an act of harming oneself to end one's life. It is a major health problem that has affected people irrespective of age, education, socio-economic status, religion and gender. People's untimely death is not something we should ridicule, mock or take lightly. It is a serious problem that requires the right kind of help. People who die by suicide feel a deep sense of hopelessness and helplessness. Having suicidal ideation is not by choice. Who is at risk? As stated earlier, suicide can happen to anyone. It is important however to know who are more likely to be at risk. i. People who have depression or other mental disorders. ii. Family history of mental disorder. iii. Had previously attempted suicide. iv. Family history of suicide. v. Exposure to others who have died by suicide. vi. Alcohol or drug dependency. vii. Family history of alcohol and drug dependency. viii. Prolonged illness or health related issues. ix. History of abuse, trauma or family violence. x. Stressful event in a person's life such as death of a loved one, end of a relationship, loss of a job, a global pandemic etc.

What are the warning signs? We cannot predict suicide. However majority of suicide cases are not sudden. We can help prevent it by paying attention to the warning signs. :i. Talking about death, wanting to die or killing oneself. ii. Talking about being a burden to others. iii. Feeling hopeless or having no purpose. iv. Excessive sadness or moodiness. v. Dangerous or self-harm behaviour. vi. Withdrawing from loved ones or feeling isolated. vii. Losing interest with what they once considered interesting. viii. Decline in academic performance. ix. Start giving away their belongings for no reason. x. Change in sleeping and eating habits. xi. Behaving recklessly or acting anxious and agitated. xii. Excessive writing or drawing of death related topics.

So how do we help? Recognizing the warning signs is our first step towards helping an individual at risk. Warning signs are a cry for help. If we see some of the warning signs (this may sound controversial), ask the person if they are thinking about killing themselves. Yes ASK. If they are, we need to make sure that we remove all objects that they may use to

harm themselves. Be there for them. Talk to them and listen. Be an emotional support system.

To help we need to remove all judgments and preconceived notions that we may have. If we do not understand why people think about suicide, it is important to educate ourselves on the matter. Remember suicide is not a sign of weakness. It is an illness. Hence it is crucial to seek treatment from mental health professionals such as counsellors, psychologists and psychiatrists. They are trained to help individuals who see suicide as the only option. They are trained to give the right kind of help. For those who feel there is no way out, please remember that it is only temporary. There is plenty of help. They only need to reach out; talk to someone.

As a society we need to remove the stigma attached to suicide or any mental illness. There can be no change if we are not willing to understand. It is a myth to say that talking about suicide will lead to and encourage suicide. Talking about suicide will actually help reduce the stigma around it. It will encourage people to seek help, to share their stories and to learn healthy coping skills. "Suicide is a layered, complex issue. It's not simple, and we all need to work together" – Jonathan Frecceri. Everyone's life is valuable. We need to address this issue. We need to start a dialogue.(Yohana Mawrie is Assistant Professor Department of Psychology Martin Luther Christian University Email id: yohana.mawrie@gmail.com)

Covid Psychology: Ideology, Instinct, and Need

Glenn C. Kharkongor

The Shillong Times ,July 7,2020

First of all, be very sure that Covid is real. This is stating the obvious to most people, but there are some who deny its existence or importance. Not that we need only real things to worry about. For those who wish to worry, apparitions will do as well. Many examples of superstitions exist in our own tribal societies, leading to suspicion, fear and even violence. But this is not unusual, superstitions exist in all societies, even in supposedly advanced ones. Some of these superstitions go by a newer nomenclature such as science denial, anti-vaxxer, and covidiocy.

The reams already written on a disease that has not yet run its course, is encyclopedic in its breadth. Never has so much science been written on one topic in such a short span of time. Revisions and retractions have not stemmed the flow of academic and media coverage. The virus has 'gone viral'. While the focus of science has been mostly biological, the psychological realm is also science, indeed it is part of medical science.

The upshot of our Covid fears, real or imagined, is a gripping of the mind. Apart from physical and social barriers around us, our psyche also erects barricades and withdraws into oneself. We have become self-caged.

Safetyism

It starts with 'safetyism', a concept first described by Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt, an educationist and social psychologist duo. In their book,The Coddling of the American Mind (2018), they define safetyism as a culture or belief system in which safety (which includes 'emotional safety') has become a dominant value, which means that people become unwilling to make the concessions demanded by practical and moral concerns.

In safetyism, the right of people to feel physically and psychologically safe supersedes core liberal values, like freedom to practice one's traditional lifestyle. Tolerance to other ideologies, religions and cultures are not a given anymore. Behaviours that may have merely offended our sensibilities earlier are now re-interpreted and raised to a level of threat to our personal safety. For example, we may have been repulsed by spitting in the street, but now the droplet infection may give us Covid. But this is a mild example. Safetyism may now arouse prejudice or hate against communities who eat paan, or religious groups who gather for crowded rituals.

With this, liberalism with its tolerance for diversity and respect for 'others' is becoming diminished. Liberalism also protects civil liberties. In many countries, citizens regard orders to wear masks, or restriction of movement to be an infringement of rights, which cannot be taken away by the state. This may create a confrontation with the police. The rise of rightist ideologies could be partly ascribed to a growing perception that liberal demands for rights will now fail to keep the rest of us 'safe'.

Survival instinct

The first need is to survive. Survival is the instinctive driver of evolution. This urge is embedded in our genes. Richard Dawkins, in his celebrated book "The Selfish Gene" showed that living beings like humans are nothing but a clump of genes that have fought to survive. Even the Covid virus is doing what it does, just to survive.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a pyramid of five levels of human ne eds. The first level of need is physiological: food and water. The second level is shelter and safety. The third is love and belonging. The homeward-bound migration of poor labourers, was driven by these basic needs.

For the fortunate social classes whose focus is on Maslow's higher levels of self-esteem and self-actualization, Covid is an unexpected threat. Attitudes and behaviours turn to stigmatization and further discrimination against targeted minorities, blaming them and even the poor as irresponsible spreaders.

Common sense

Common sense, to Merriam-Webster is, "sound and prudent judgment based on a simple perception of the situation or facts." Cambridge Dictionary defines it as, "the basic level of practical knowledge and judgment that we all need to help us live in a reasonable and safe way." So common sense is universal knowledge, judgment, and conclusions, that are held without reflection or debate.

One school of philosophy has equated common sense with moral sentiment, which comes from the notion that common sense must lead to community values, which are

then incumbent upon us all to abide by. Otherwise the cohesiveness and harmonious relationships of society will be damaged and all of us will suffer. It also means that we should be pleased with the welfare of others, and empathetic to their misery. So common sense cannot only be for one's self-interest. Common sense, thus, evolves into pragmatic and moral positions.

Common sense gives us a good start to good behaviour. Or does it? Descartes agrees that everyone has a similar and sufficient amount of common sense, but says it is rarely used well. In other words, the mere possession of common sense does not ensure sensible attitudes or behaviour.

Common sense dictates that we wear masks to block the transmission of highly infective viruses. Community values mandate each citizen's cooperation for collective protection. Moral values require us to protect others from illness and harm. Unfortunately, common sense does not always lead to common good because of stubborn outliers who refuse to wear masks.

Safetyism and mental health

Health professionals recommended social containment measures to prevent spread of Covid. While many leading epidemiologists advised against total lockdowns on a national scale, lockdowns became the order of the day. Apart from the fear of the pandemic itself, and the economic fallout that affected millions adversely, the lockdown itself has had negative impacts on people's mental health.

Early in the pandemic, the WHO warned of elevated rates of stress and anxiety. The WHO statement noted that, "as new measures and impacts are introduced – especially quarantine and its effects on many people's usual activities, routines or livelihoods –loneliness, depression, harmful alcohol and drug use, domestic violence and self-harm or suicidal behaviour are also expected to rise." Going beyond these factors the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres said in a video message, "The COVID-19 virus is not only attacking our physical health; it is also increasing psychological suffering: grief at the loss of loved ones, shock at the loss of jobs, isolation and restrictions on movement, difficult family dynamics, uncertainty and fear for the future."

Many countries have reported escalating mental health problems. Canada's national statistical agency noted that a fifth of Canadians aged 15-49 had increased their alcohol consumption since the start of the crisis. Increased addiction behaviours will lead to a rise in "deaths of despair," deaths traced to suicide and the misuse of alcohol and drugs. In the US, as many as 75,000 more people will die from drug or alcohol misuse and suicide. Another US survey found that 14% of people had high levels of psychological distress, compared with an average of 4% during the pre-Covid era.

Mental health services in India were already inadequate before the Covid crisis. The hurdles in accessing mental health care because of Covid restrictions worsens an already difficult situation.We read of suicides every day, but the actual number of severely mentally affected persons is almost impossible to calculate.

According to the India Disease Burden Initiative, the total mental disease burden in the country doubled between 1990-2017 to 197 million Indians, with depression, anxiety, schizophrenia and bipolar disorder making up the majority of patients. A recent survey by the Indian Psychiatry Society has reported a 20% rise in mental illness since the pandemic started. Higher psychological effects are felt by young people, women, and those with comorbid physical illness, in another study published at the end of May.

But there are others who are at high risk: school children in social isolation and apprehensive about their future, youth who need to finish their degrees and seek employment, handicapped and LGBT persons. We already know about the rise in domestic abuse, the millions driven into life-threatening poverty. A pandemic of mental illness is at hand. It will not receive sufficient attention, because physical illnesses always take precedent over mental disease.

More psychology experts needed

The country has 4000 psychiatrists but needs 13,000. Twenty thousand clinical psychologists are needed against 2000 available. We need 50,000 counsellors, compared to about a thousand at present. For psychiatric social workers, the need is 35,000, but only 900 are available. For any young reader, consider a career in psychology. You will be in great demand.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Deafening Silence of the Church

The Shillong Times, February 10, 2021

Editor,

There are two entrenched centres of power in Meghalaya, the government and the church. Of course, there are other power centres also, such as the pressure groups and mining mafias, but the government and the church are the overarching centres of authority. The government speaks daily. The church is a visible force, seen in the countless churches dotting the countryside and the lines of church goers each Sunday, but its voice is silent, outside of the Sabbath pulpit.

It takes courage to challenge centres of authority, so I admire Albert Thyrniang for his powerful article "Calling the Church Out" (Shillong Times, Feb 9, 2020). He has pointed out the failure of the church to fulfill its moral role in society. This moral role has three dimensions: religious, social and political and the three are inexplicably intertwined. The church cannot choose the first role and neglect the other two.

In Matthew 5:13, Jesus said "You are the salt of the earth: but if the salt has lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men." In Meghalaya, the church has lost its savour, firstly by abandoning the poor, hungry, single mothers and destitute children, and secondly by its social apathy.

To pursue Albert Thyrniang's theme, unless the political voice of the church is raised, it cannot be "the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid". It must be among us. Why is the church oblivious to the poor among us? What's more, these poor people are our fellow tribals, our fellow Christians.

The National Family Health and Family Survey, just released a month ago shows Meghalaya to be dead last in many health indices, most glaringly in the malnutrition of our children, even worse than in Bihar. Why is the church not holding the government to account for such tragic failures?

How does the church let its light shine? The Bible says it very clearly. Isaiah 58:10: Feed the hungry, and help those in trouble. Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright as noon.

We celebrate Meghalaya Day, Cherry Blossom Festival, church fetes and installations and a myriad other feel-good events. But it's a thin camouflage for the failure of the government and church to provide even basic succour for the poorest among us.

Yours etc.,

Glenn C. Kharkongor,

ILP jibber-jabber

The Shillong Times, January 15, 2021

Editor,

Senior politicians continue to spar over the ILP in a seeming stalemate. The daily front-page pronouncements from politicians on this contentious issue is only one-upmanship. So we must support Vincent Pala's position on a modified ILP that does not come in the way of tourism and employment. This is a more pragmatic stand. A blind blockade to supposedly forestall immigrant influx will damage and disrupt the local economy. Tourism has been a boon to the state in the last decade, especially for small vendors and local communities, and such gains must not be lost.

Pala's "modified ILP", even though he has not disavowed ILP, reminds us that a nuanced discussion is needed. He rightly said that the mere presence of gates does not stop illegal coal trucks, so a more effective system is needed. Most tourists will arrive in a tourist taxi through the national highway. As they pass the gate a glance inside may show a family and they can be waved through without stopping or asking for credentials. Or a downloadable pre-registration sticker can be placed on the windshield. In this way, only a few will need full verification. This will avoid hassle to genuine tourists and prevent long lines.

The entire country is now open to domestic tourists. Why should they come to Meghalaya if they have to suffer hassle and suspicion at a check gate? Word gets around fast and once Meghalaya is branded as a difficult destination, it will be difficult for tourism to recover. Those who are talking about 'high-end' tourism, should remember that first of all, there are very few high-end facilities in the state and that elite tourism benefits only big name hotels and tour operators and not small local business.

I know from personal experience and from friends who have visited other states with ILP in the Northeast that it is not leak-proof. ILP will be circumvented easily by those who are determined to do so and it will only deter genuine visitors. The state will be saddled with one more inefficient scheme.

Another big earner for the local economy is education. If we call Shillong as the education hub of the Northeast, then we must have a more enabling system for students from outside the state. Many local schools and colleges have large numbers of students from outside the state. Apart from tuition fees, they support hostels, guest houses and rented apartments. The out-of-state students are generally from middle to upper-middle class families and they patronize transport, shops and restaurants. Yet while colleges are opening all over the country, and students have returned to hostels, our state government is dilly-dallying, in spite of UGC providing Covid precaution guidelines.

We need a dose of realism. Meghalaya is a lightweight state and the Centre will look at ILP only from a political angle. They are not bothered about our concerns with illegal influx. Furthermore, there is no hard data to show immigrant threat. ILP and Covid have hit the state with a double whammy. Unless we manage these issues in a more nuanced and practical manner, our state will continue to fall behind. We need leaders like Mr Pala to provide realistic and sensible

solutions.

Yours etc.,

Glenn C. Kharkongor,

Via email

Falling off the tightrope

The Shillong Times,August 21, 2020

Editor,

The letter "Understanding Religion" by Jennifer Dkhar (ST Aug 20, 2020), provides a balanced and humanistic frame to an inflammatory topic. When she talks about 'us', it is a plea for acceptance without discrimination. She makes astute and credible observations, without any 'putdown' phrases. That's the ultimate criteria for human discourse, that while one asserts his or her viewpoint, the general appeal is for the good of all.

The numerous articles and letters on religion that have appeared in this newspaper in the last few weeks have been largely evenhanded and constructive, and the elucidation of various viewpoints has been educational. In recent days, however, we have seen a more shrill and strident tone. I refer to the personal innuendo against one of your august contributors, Mr HH Mohrmen, whose erudite and informative articles over the years, have enlightened us about our own society.

In this vein, the letter "No country for atheists" (ST Aug 20, 2020) is particularly objectionable. The authors wear their religion like a badge on their sleeves, no prizes for guessing. It is true that religion, Christianity especially, has given the world many wonderful things, as is rightly pointed out in the letter, and it is true that atheists have not contributed much. But the shortcoming of such a debating position is that it cherry-picks facts of history to suit a particular line of reasoning.

Organised religion is also the source of history's worst cruelties and mankind's greatest failures. Religious wars, slavery, colonialism, and genocides, are traceable to religious fervor. In these horrors, Christianity leads the way. Every religion, in spite of their noble and compassionate precepts, have failed to secure a just, equitable, and safe existence for all. Atheists have not contributed much, because it is more a personal thing, and not an organized movement on the same scale as religion. Which is good, I think.

Phrases like 'bait for fools' and accusations like 'terrorist organisation' without incontrovertible evidence, are unacceptable in dispassionate discourse and even amount to insult and defamation. Good arguments can get contaminated by immoderate language.

Presenting only one side of the coin is distortion and dishonest. It leads to polarization and communalism. In a recent FB post, the editor of this paper has herself decried this trend on TV channels. Sane discussions on religion, ideology, even gender and patriarchy, are akin to walking on a tightrope. I am surprised that the Shillong Times has permitted intemperate statements to permeate its respected

pages. Even while Rome is burning or the Titanic is sinking, human kindness and decency must prevail.

Yours etc.,

Glenn C. Kharkongor

Via email

Public education on Covid is key!

The Shillong Times, October 1, 2020

Editor,

Yesterday's Shillong Times (Sep 30, 2020) raised two questions that seem to vex the public mind. The first pertains to plasma therapy. Dr P. Bhattacharya, the Director of NEIGRIHMS has rightly questioned the use of plasma therapy. At best, it can be considered an experimental treatment.

One of the few well-designed trials, which covered 464 patients in 39 hospitals over 14 states in India, was conducted by ICMR during April-July 2020. The results indicated no benefit in reducing deaths. In fact the study deplored questionable practices such as appeals for donors on social media, patients being asked to source their own supply, and sales of Covid plasma in the black market.

Unfortunately early hype raised hopes of Covid plasma being a lifesaver. Leaders like Donald Trump and Arvind Kejriwal heaped premature praise on this form of therapy. This kind of a frantic rush only distracts from real priorities and diverts resources from proven modalities of care. Hats off to Dr Bhattacharya for setting the record straight! We should not pander to unrealistic hopes of magic cures.

"Are Covid protocols actually snag free?" was the other question. The short answer is no. No medical protocol is perfect. They can only be based on up to date research data, which continuously evolves and adds more precision to the picture.

In this light the answer to the question as to whether Covid positive patients should be tested again after 10 days is a clear 'no'. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, even though the virus may still be present in the blood for up to three months, and gives a positive test result, it is now an inactivated virus which cannot replicate. Therefore the recovered patient is not infective and cannot spread Covid to others. So sending them home is not risky.

These conclusions are based on several studies. In South Korea, a follow up of 285 "persistently positive" persons, which included 126 persons who had developed recurrent symptoms, found no infections among 790 contacts. A comprehensive summary, dated Sep 10, 2020, of recommendations and the studies that they are based on is available on the website of the Center for Disease Control, USA, at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/duration-isolation.html

Secondly, hospitalization should not be prolonged, as this exposes the patient to other risks and uses precious health resources. Unreasoned testing also uses up the time of health personnel who could be used for other priorities, such as maternal and child care. A huge fall out of the Covid

pandemic is the sharp rise in maternal and infant deaths all over the country because of decreased availability of health services.

Credible and effective education and reassurance in the media and by government spokespersons is the answer to public apprehension, not repeated testing.

Yours etc.,

Dr Glenn C. Kharkongor

Via email

Covid captives

The Shillong Times , August 11, 2020

Editor,

All those movies about invasion by aliens have come true. These aliens are not mechatronic robots or multi-eyed blobs, but invisible slivers of RNA from who knows where. They've closed our borders, shackled us to our homes, and preyed on our brains.

As the Editor has pointed out (ST Aug 7, 2020), we are "Caught between the Devil and the Deep Sea". The Devil is named Covid and the economy is drowning in the Deep Sea. Apart from a handful of small island countries, every other country, rich or poor, well-administered or chaotic, has seen spikes and surges, even with the most cautious unlocking.

The best leadership and the best brains seem baffled and bewildered. We are caught in a vicious cycle of lock and unlock, and their various versions. Punctuating this cycle with testing and treating seems to be a lost cause and we are only falling further behind. What looked like well-laid strategies in the beginning are now scattershot in the dark.

Hospital services are disintegrating. Yeoman front line workers are succumbing to fatigue and the virus itself has taken a toll of health workers. Shortage of supplies and expensive drugs mean that the poor are refused adequate treatment. Worse still, patients have died in hospital fires or by suicide in the wards, or found dead in the toilets.

All hopes now rest on a vaccine that's good enough to stem the invasion. When that comes and how effective it will be, remains to be seen. Rich countries and those that have a robust pharmaceutical industry will be at the front of the line. Till then, we will need to have a responsible citizenry that is mindful of everyone's welfare. But brash VIPs are above the law and party going youth imagine they are immortal. So no hopes of rowing together as one.

Perhaps attention can shift to the rural hinterland. Let local commerce and livelihoods go on, subsistence will enable survival. Rural schools can open, those children need education more. Rural healthcare should be made self-sufficient, with minimal referrals to the city. Cities are the most dangerous habitations now, where the virus breeds unhindered.

Yours etc.,

Glenn Kharkongor,

Via email

Are we teaching & assessing our children right?

July 30,2020

Editor,

Apropos Albert Thyrniang's article, 'The ills in education: reform the educator first' (ST July 29, 2020), I concur with the writer's observations. He notes that in a recent letter to the editor, a teacher blamed the students for failure. Our teachers need to be innovative enough to engage with millennial students. We can start by getting to know our children's preferred learning style and tap into their multiple intelligences, so that we as teachers can use varied pedagogy to suit their needs. But does the system provide teachers the space to innovate and invest in their training? The recently declared SSLC results by MBOSE speak for themselves. While it is heartening to note that many students from not so popular urban schools were listed in the top 20 merit list, Vol No: LXII No.349 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, JULY 30, 2020 TO THE EDITOR on the flip side it was sad to see that the overall pass percentage was only 50.31%. This makes us wonder if we are assessing their learning in the right way. Is the long awaited matric examination the only way to gauge a student's learning? Can we not minimize the weightage of the regurgitation (examination) process that mainly measures memorized knowledge? Can we give more emphasis to internal marking and place the onus of academic judging of the child more on the teacher (teacher led evaluation) who interacts with them on a daily basis? If this change were to happen then proper planning and capacity building of teachers is needed. If there is a will, there is a way. Introspection time is over, our children's lives are at stake; we need to act now!

Yours etc., R Jennifer War, MLCU, Shillong

SECTION I

ABSTRACT - JOURNAL, CONFERENCE (FACULTY AND PHD SCHOLARS)

SECTION II

SYNOPSIS (BOOK, BOOK CHAPTER)

SECTION III

ARTICLES (NEWSPAPER, NEWSLETTER AND MAGAZINE)

SECTION IV

Abstracts awarded on University Research Day 2020

SECTION V

ONGOING RESEARCH
- FUNDED EXTERNALLY
- SEED GRANT

SECTION VI

CONFERENCES CONDUCTED

SECTION VII

PUBLICATIONS (BOOKS AND MONOGRAPHS)

A Study on Lexical Relations in Biate

Hubuangamang Gonmei*

*Email: hubuangamanggonmei@gmail.com

MA Linguistics, Department of English and Communication

Abstract

This study is a study on the relations of lexical items in the language of the Biates living in Saipung, Meghalaya. It may be noted that though there are enough literature in the language, linguistic texts on the language is quite limited. This study was conducted in order to examine and identify the various lexical relations that is present in the Biate language. Organizing lexemes into a lexical hierarchy based on different semantic domains and help in preserving the language of the Biates by building a sample sense dictionary and lexicon for Biate-English using FLEx were the further aims of the study. To achieve these objectives, a number of lexemes were collected from randomly selected individuals living in Saipung through interviews and focus group discussions. A number of lexical relations, namely, synonymy, hyponymy, meronymy, homonymy, polysemy, antonymy and other relations of opposites were identified in Biate. The data collected were also used to place the lexemes into a lexical hierarchy based on the different semantic domains. A sample of each one of them were distinguished to build a sample sense dictionary and lexicon for Biate-English using FLEx. The documentation is done with the intention that it will help preserve the Biatelanguage, as a whole. This study was done only with a handful of data as it was of the intention from the start that it would not cover all the lexemes of the Biate owing to time limitation during data collection. Moreover, trying to get all the lexemes is just not feasible. However, it is a hope that many would follow suit and study more into the language of the Biates. That, the samples provided in this study will be of great help for more studies to come. To conclude, it is an expectation that this study will be a great campaign towards preserving one's language.

Analysis of Groundwater in Khimusniang area of Jowai Town, Meghalaya

FortunatelyPaslein*

*Email:fortunatepa071@gmail.com

MA ETE, Department of Environment and Traditional Ecosystems

Abstract

In this study, an investigation was carried out to monitor the groundwater quality in Khimusniang area of Jowai Town in the state of Meghalaya, India. Groundwater samples were collected from ten sampling stations during post monsoon and pre monsoon seasons of 2019 and 2020, respectively. The groundwater quality was determined by analyzing water parameters such as pH, electrical conductivity, turbidity, total dissolve solids, total hardness, calcium, magnesium, free carbon dioxide, iron and fluoride. The analytical results showed that most sampling stations are within the permissible limit. This is affirmed by incorporating water quality index, which indicate the water is under good category and groundwater sources in the study area is fit for consumptions purposes.

Keywords: Groundwater Quality, Water parameters, Jowai. Meghalaya

SECTION IV

SECTION I

ABSTRACT - JOURNAL, CONFERENCE (FACULTY AND PHD SCHOLARS)

SECTION II

SYNOPSIS (BOOK, BOOK CHAPTER)

SECTION III

ARTICLES (NEWSPAPER, NEWSLETTER AND MAGAZINE)

SECTION IV

ABSTRACTS AWARDED ON UNIVERSITY RESEARCH DAY 2020

SECTION V

Ongoing research
- Funded externally
- Seed grant

SECTION VI

CONFERENCES CONDUCTED

SECTION VII

PUBLICATIONS (BOOKS AND MONOGRAPHS)

Sl. No	Name of the research Project	Name of Principal Investigator / Co-Principal Investigator	Designation and Department	Funding Agency	Amount sanctioned	Year of sanction
1	Biodiversity and Critical Habitat Assessment and Preparation of site-specific Biodiversity Management Plan,2021 for Meghalaya Integrated Transport Project (MITP)	Dr.Vincent T.Darlong Dr.S.DasGupta – Member, Core Team	Centre for Sustainable Development Studies	World Bank	Rs. 33 Lakhs	2020-21
2	Cluster Scoping Exercise :- Cluster: Bows and Arrows making, Raid Nongkynrih, East Khasi Hills District.	Dr. Sairabell Kurbah and Mr. Soopaia Kharmawphlang	Department of Economics, Commerce and Management	NEDFi, Guwahati	Rs. 1,00,000	3 months
3	Tracing of Thomas Jones Trail in Meghalaya, a Heritage Tourism Project in collaboration with the State Council of Science, Technology and Environment (SCSTE) Meghalaya		Department of Tourism and Travel Management.	State Council of Science, Technology and Environment (SCSTE) Meghalaya	Rs. 1,00,000	2019, 2 years
4	Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) funded project: Alcohol use among adolescent tribals in three corners of India: prevalence and pilot intervention studies	Dr. R. Jennifer War,	Centre for GENDER	Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) funded	Rs. 39.6 lakhs	Three years
5	"Development of Science and Technology Innovation Hub: Utilization and adaption of traditional knowledge, resources and technological advances in post-harvest management and nutrition for empowering women and youth in tribal Meghalaya"	Dr. MelodyniaMarpna (Co- PI)	Department of Nutrition and Dietetics	Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India	Rs. 3.55 crores	2021, 3 years

SECTION I

ABSTRACT - JOURNAL, CONFERENCE (FACULTY AND PHD SCHOLARS)

SECTION II

SYNOPSIS (BOOK, BOOK CHAPTER)

SECTION III

ARTICLES (NEWSPAPER, NEWSLETTER AND MAGAZINE)

SECTION IV

ABSTRACTS AWARDED ON UNIVERSITY RESEARCH DAY 2020

SECTION V

ONGOING RESEARCH
- FUNDED EXTERNALLY
- SEED GRANT

SECTION VI

Conferences conducted

SECTION VII

PUBLICATIONS (BOOKS AND MONOGRAPHS)

Title of Conference / Seminar/Workshop	Organized by	Level	Venue/ Date
Online Training on Google Classroom Learning Management System	Academics, MLCU	University	July 13-14, 2020
Online University Research Week	Department of Doctoral Studies and Research,MLCU	University	August 10-13, 2020
International women's day with the women church leaders of the Laitumkhrah Presbytery	School of Social Work, MLCU	University	March 8, 2021
Webinar on Child trafficking and related issues organized by Project Kalki,Mumbai	School of Social Work, MLCU	University	June 8 -9, 2021
Webinar on Understanding health policy and the role of ASHA from Workers	School of Social Work, MLCU	University	June 8 -11, 2022
Health Care Delivery in the wake of COVID 19: A tribute to the Allied Health Front Liners	Department of Allied Health Sciences, MLCU	University	December 14, 2021
World Mental Health Day: Mental Health for All. "Focusing on Mindfullness",	Department of Psychology, MLCU in Collaboration with Bethany Society Shillong	University	October 10, 2020
Webinar: Teachers as Mentors,	MAPC in collaboration with MLCU Department of Psychology and Rotary Orchid City Shillong,	University	September 5, 2020
Crest And Troughs During The Pandemic In Educational Institutions. Series 1: View from Private Schools	MAPC in collaboration with MLCU Department of Psychology and Rotary Orchid City Shillong,	University	26th September 2020
Webinar: Crest And Troughs During The Pandemic In Educational Institutions. Series 2: "View from RuraSchools,	MAPC in collaboration with MLCU Department of Psychologyt and Rotary Orchid City Shillong	University	3rd October 2020
Webinar on "Trauma and Forgiveness" (Mizoram-Meghalaya)	Department of Psychology, MLCU in collaboration with Black Olives Psychological Training and Research Centre, Mizoram	University	25th January 2021
Research Methodology workshop	Department of Economics, Commerce and Management and Mr. Badondor Shylla, Consultant to Health Department, Government of Meghalaya	University	March 20 &April 10 ,2021
Role of Entrepreneurship in Employment Generation and creation in the Field of Psychology, University,	Department of Economics, Commerce and Management and Design, Aatma Prakash Mental Health Foundation,	University	November 7,2020,

Title	Organised by	Level	Date
A journey as a novice entrepreneur	Department of Economics, Commerce and Management and Entrepreneur of Diagnostic Centre, Shillong	University	November 10, 2020
Green Entrepreneurship	Department of Economics, Commerce and Management and E-waste awareness trainer and in-charge, Shillong	University	November 18, 2020
Excel skills for managers	Department of Economics, Commerce and Management and Faculty and Chief Administrative Officer, Madras School of Economics	University	November 18, 2021
Public Finance in India during the Pandemic	Department of Economics, Commerce and Management and Former Director of the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, New Delhi, and currently the counsellor at Takshashila Institute, Bangalore,	University	November 19, 2020
Marketing Planning	Department of Economics, Commerce and Management and Jio Point Manager (East Jaintia Hills Circle), Meghalaya	University	November 23, 2020
Agriculture, Food Processing, Nutrition and its Role in Economic Building	Department of Economics, Commerce and Management and Technical Associate-II, Directorate of Food Processing, Govt. of Meghalaya.	University	November 23, 2020
Class to Corporate & HR at workplace	Department of Economics, Commerce and Management and General Manager, HR. First Solutions Limited, Bangalore	University	November 24, 2021
GST using Tally	Department of Economics, Commerce and Management and Tally Solutions Pvt. Ltd.	University	September 8 2020
NSE Capital Markets	Department of Economics, Commerce and Management and Business consultant and Financial Trainer of RAA Media.	University	September 11, 2020
Webinar on Zero Waste Way: Principles and Action	Academics Office and Department of Environment and Traditional and Ecosystems, MLCU and facilitated by Zero Waste Himalaya	University	January 27-29, 2021,
World Environment Day – photography competition Theme: Ecological restoration, conducted through Online mode	Department of Environment and Traditional Ecosystems in collaboration with NSS unit of MLCU	University	June 5, 2021
Posters for World Environment Day – photography competition Theme: Ecological restoration	Department of Environment and Traditional Ecosystems, MLCU	Department	June 5, 2021
Three-Day International Webinar on Cultural Heritage in Meghalaya: A way forward" and online competitions	Department of Tourism and Travel Management, MLCU	University	November 19 - 25, 2020

Event	Organised by	Level	Date
Online "World Tourism Day 2020" celebration	Department of Tourism and Travel Management, MLCU	University	September 27, 2020
World Blood Donor Day" Online Competitions on	Red Ribbon Club, MLCU	University	June 14, 2021
Drug Demand Reduction Workshop held at MLCU Hall, Nongrah, Shillong	Red Ribbon Club, MLCU in collaboration with The Meghalaya State Network of Positive People supported the Directorate of Social Welfare, Meghalaya	University	November 27, 2020
Webinar on Digital Marketing	Department of Information Technology in collaboration with Weblay Technoserve	Department	October 5 , 2020
Webinar on "Discovering Javascript	Department of Information Technology in association with Grow Eagles TechSoul Private Limited	Department	October 8-9 , 2020
Webinar on "Arduino and its Applications"	Department of Information Technology	Department	November 9 , 2020
Webinar on "Academic Integrity"	Department of Information Technology	Department	November 11, 2020
Awareness on New National Education Policy 2020	Department of Information Technology	Department	December 11,2020
Webinar on "Internet of Things (IOT) using Arduino"	Department of Information Technology in association with Innovians Technologies Pvt Ltd, Noida	Department	June 28-30, 2021
Webinar on "Javascript Applications"	Department of Information Technology, MLCU in association with Weblay Technoserve Private Limited	Department	July 1-3, 2021
Webinar on "ELI PHP framework"	Department of Information Technology, MLCU in association with Grow Eagles Tech Soul Private Limited	Department	July 8-9, 2021
'Mainland Northeast; Re-Centering the Centre'; International Webinar	Department of English and Communication with Mitra Phukan and Easterine Kire	Department	October 9,2020
Coping with Covid, Tomato or Tennis Ball: Counselling for Resilience	Department of Religion and Theology, MLCU	Department	June 3, 2021.
Online workshop on Liberal Arts Approach and Curriculum development	Department of Education in collaboration with the office of Dean Academics	University	August 7, 2020
Webinar on "Shaping Peace Together"	Department of Conflict and Peace Initiatives, MLCU	Department	September 21, 2020.

Activity	Organizer	Department	Date
Webinar on "Recover Better - Stand Up for Human Rights"	Department of Conflict and Peace Initiatives, MLCU		December 10, 2020.
Webinar on "Mental Health For All" on World Mental Health Day	Centre for Counselling and Department of Psychology,	University	2020
Faculty Development Programme on "Mentorship"	Centre for Counselling, MLCU	University	2021
Mental health awareness programme: "Open Mic" event at Dylan's Café, Shillong	Centre for Counselling, MLCU	University	2021
Mental health awareness programme for Mental Health Awareness Month with the theme "Winning Ways of Well-being"	Centre for Counselling, MLCU	University	2021
Formative Career Guidance for outgoing students	Centre for Career Development and Placement	University	July 1 to July 10, 2020
Career Talk for students across Departments and Semesters on the topic "Studying Abroad"	Centre for Career Development and Placement	University	October 19, 2020
Foundation Course – Career Orientation and Preparation	Centre for Career Development and Placement	University	October 28, 29 and 30, 2020
Unsatisfactory Foundation Semester 2018 & 2019 as on 23.10.20	Centre for Career Development and Placement	University	October 31, 2020
Internship at Blitz Jobs	Centre for Career Development and Placement	University	November 2020 to January 2021
Formative Career Guidance	Centre for Career Development and Placement	University	January 30, 2021
Formative Career Guidance	Centre for Career Development and Placement	University	February 6, 2021
Formative Career Guidance	Centre for Career Development and Placement	University	January 16, 2021
Formative Career Guidance	Centre for Career Development and Placement	University	January 23, 2021

Activity	Centre	Level	Date
Foundation Course for Career Orientation and Preparation	Centre for Career Development and Placement	University	February 20, 2021
			February 27, 2021
			March 6, 2021
Career Counselling for Associate Institutions	Centre for Career Development and Placement	University	March 12, 2021
Career Guidance Session	Centre for Career Development and Placement	University	March 15, 2021
Career Counselling for Associate Institutions	Centre for Career Development and Placement	University	March 19, 2021
Career Guidance Workshop: Lhomithi Baptist Akukuhou, Dimapur, Nagaland	Centre for Career Development and Placement	University	March 7, 2021
Career Guidance Workshop: PLS Auto Shell Industries Pvt Ltd. Dimapur, Nagaland	Centre for Career Development and Placement	University	March 8, 2021
Career Guidance Workshop: Skills Alli, Dimapur, Nagaland			
Career Guidance Workshop: St. Mary's Montessory Higher Sec.school, Dimapur, Nagaland	Centre for Career Development and Placement	University	March 9, 2021
Career Guidance Workshop: Namchi Public School, Namchi, South Sikkim	Centre for Career Development and Placement	University	March 18, 2021
Career Guidance Workshop: New Light Academy. Namchi, South Sikkim	Centre for Career Development and Placement	University	March 18, 2021
Basic Career Skills Training for MLCU Faculty	Centre for Career Development and Placement	University	April 16-20, 2021
Formative Session on Career Orientation and Preparation	Centre for Career Development and Placement	University	June 5 & 12, 2021

SECTION I

ABSTRACT - JOURNAL, CONFERENCE (FACULTY AND PHD SCHOLARS)

SECTION II

SYNOPSIS (BOOK, BOOK CHAPTER)

SECTION III

ARTICLES (NEWSPAPER, NEWSLETTER AND MAGAZINE)

SECTION IV

ABSTRACTS AWARDED ON UNIVERSITY RESEARCH DAY 2020

SECTION V

ONGOING RESEARCH
- FUNDED EXTERNALLY
- SEED GRANT

SECTION VI

CONFERENCES CONDUCTED

SECTION VII

Publications (Books and Monographs)

Gender, Sexuality & Society in Northeast India: Contextual Studies of Tribal Communities

Edited by R J War and Glenn C Kharokongor

March 8,2021

ISBN 978-81-940739-1-8

INR:899

Gender, Sexuality and Society in Northeast India: Contextual Studies of Tribal Communities is a compilation of studies conducted by well-known international, national and regional experts in the field. The book reports the proceedings of a seminar on gender and deals with themes ranging from *the changing social structures and their impact on women*; *health, education and environment;survival, balance and positivity*; *news items; LGBTQIA+ individuals and community; declarations, statements and acts* with additional material for students and researchers of social issues.

Compassion: In the Expression of Healing and Comforting

MaribonViray and Glenn C Kharkongor

August 31,2020

INR :100

The monograph is an account of the personal experiences of the authors born out of their desire to tell their hearts and minds to the larger society that we live in. Compassion – one of the unique human and tribal values is rapidly eroding in the various social transformation that we are witnessing in the tribal society of Northeast India. This, thus, renders the monograph timely not only for personal reflection and growth but also as an instrument for resurrecting this important value in everyone.

MLCU Academic Digest

VOLUME 5

Martin Luther Christian University

Dongktieh, Block -1,

Nongrah, Shillong 793006

Meghalaya

Ph: 0364-2535467/0364- 2535437

E-mail: admin@mlcuniv.in, registrar@mlcuniv.in, admissions@mlcuniv.in

Website: www.mlcuniv.in

mlcuniv   MartinLutherChristianUniversityShillong   MLCU