

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

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## **The Study**

The study of borders has undergone a renaissance of sorts over the past few decades. The ubiquitous nature of borders and its dynamic characteristics has given wide scope to researchers interested in the study of borders. The changing nature of borders as a social and a political construction calls for a multidimensional approach in understanding it. Walter (2011, 1) who opines that borders are defined by its history, functions and roles, says it changes based on context and that borders are shaped by history, politics and powers as well as by cultural and social issues. This feature of border paved way for other disciplines to interrogate borders. Geography was probably the earliest discipline to study boundaries and borders which has also given directions to other disciplines (Kolossoy, 2005, 607).

Border is now a subject of study in various fields including cultural studies. Historians, political scientists, along with cultural and literary critics have started examining the curious relationship between geographical borders and cultural boundaries (Salafia, 2010, 651). Cultural boundaries manifested in the geographical borders between states justify a case for further probe. Borders may signify the point or line of separation between distinct entities, separating one category from another, in some cases institutionalizing existing differences, while in other cases creating the difference where none existed previously. Contingent upon social and political conditions, borders experience processes of opening or closing, reflecting the degree to which cross-border separation or contact takes place (Newman, 2011, 33).

The differentiation of one from the other, separation and contacts that originate with the creation of border has drawn the interest of scholars. Houtum (2011, 50) shares that border can spatially be drawn everywhere. It is the symbolic meaning attributed to the appearance of the line which must be seen as constructor of the normative form. A border should, thus, be more broadly interpreted than as a mere object. In such an understanding, this study proposes the idea of borders as socio-cultural discourse in the everyday lives of the people. Border as a study is moved from its traditional understanding of being read as geographical lines that separates jurisdiction to being perceived as a living entity.

Newman (2011, 34) citing Anderson and O'Dowd 1999; Berg and Ehin 2006; Blake 2000 views borders as differentiated through society and space, such that while they are becoming more porous and amenable to crossing in one place, they are becoming more restrictive in other places. This view subscribes to Anderson's analysis of borders as 'barriers' or 'filters' which protects from the outside world while at the same time act as 'bridges' or 'gateways' to it (Anderson, 2012, 220). A border acting as barriers and bridges indicates the territorial power and control it possesses. It also signifies how identities are constructed in border areas. The dichotomies such as 'us' and 'them' tend to be the product of the territorial boundaries which is also marked by physical appearances such as fences, barb wires, check posts, rivers and forests. The physical structures are not clearly drawn in every area where borders are located. Most of the times borders are imaginary but the process of bordering is not. This is because a set of social practices are part of the bordering process. The symbolical and institutional understanding of border is produced and reproduced in social practices and discourses (Paasi, 1999).

Newman (2011, 36) is of the view that when borders are created it become transformed into a reality, a default situation which impacts upon daily life patterns and social mores, determine the parameters of exclusion and inclusion, and creates the categories through which social and spatial compartmentalization is perpetuated. The concept of 'we' and the 'other' originating from borders is the result of such creation. Cartography also plays part in drawing map for the borders from which the idea of inclusion and exclusion stems. Houtum (2011, 52) writes, "The map of a border is *sur-real*, it is not a border. What a map of a border creates is a gap, a difference. Representing is making a difference. It is an image of reality, a truth outside truth itself. The border represented on a map colonizes the free and constantly ontologically reinterpreted space that truth necessarily is. The border demarcates, represents and communicates truth, but it is thereby not truth itself."

As borders tend to demarcate, the process of 'othering' and the sense of 'belonging' develops a vibrant axis in looking at how identities are constructed. Discourses and practices are said to bring about a contrast between communities. Paasi (2011, 27) is of view that, "The ideas of difference and the other – originally developed within cultural studies – soon became significant in many fields. Scholars have scrutinized the ways in

which difference has been constructed historically and reproduced in various geographical contexts and how such ideas have been used on various spatial scales.”

The ‘other’ that is herewith constructed, is a reflection different from one’s identity. One recognizes oneself best in the reflection of the eyes of the ‘other’ (Houtum, 2011, 56). In borders, the concept of ethnicity finds a prominent place as people tend to categorise ‘self’ and ‘other’ in terms of ethnic groups. This process of placing into groups is activated in the narratives with social inclusion and exclusion playing a dominant role. The narratives define how people incline to conceptualise and relate with a society by being exposed to what is outside it. There is continuity in assertion of identity by the ethnic groups along the borders. Barth (1998, 11), defining ethnic group, shares that it has a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order. He (ibid) says the identification of another person as a fellow member of an ethnic group implies a sharing of criteria for evaluation and judgement. This entails that the exclusivity of territoriality is also continual of assertion of identity.

This study is an attempt to see how borders shape narratives and how narratives in turn construct the identity of ‘self’ and the ‘other’. The study lays emphasis on narratives for the obvious reason that borders and identities are shaped by/in narratives. Barthes (2006, 237) writes, narratives are articulated language, whether oral or written, pictures still or moving, gestures and ordered mixture of all those substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fables, tales, short stories, epics, history, tragedy, drama...movies, local news, conversation. He (ibid) says, “In this infinite variety of forms, it is present at all times, in all places, in all societies; indeed, narrative starts with the very history of mankind; there is not, there has never been anywhere, any people without narratives.”

The activities at the border are shaped by social contacts, the nature of which is open to interpretation. ‘A line in the sand is not always a limit, as well as border is not always a line in the sand. A line is geometry, a border is interpretation’ (Houtum, 2011, 56). Interpretation being a subjective phenomenon is guided by social circumstances. There is a condition- a state of being/mind that shapes border and gives it varied meanings wherein it conditions the rhythm of life, the very social existence. Interpretation is in itself a discourse created by the cultural condition of the narratives. This practice

indicates certain knowledge about the people who interprets the world around them and others.

The study attempts to look at borders from the perspective of cultural studies by incorporating the concept of ‘othering’, ‘bordering’, ‘belongingness’ and studying ‘the self’ and ‘the other’. Attached with the society, borders are often created and its meanings are often construed by the very people involved in the process. Borders may appear static, but also come to life in the experiences of the people in the border areas. The experiences of the people living along the borders are given importance in order to understand the process of bordering that creates identities of exclusivity. It is, as such, not the question of where the border is located, but an investigation into how a border is constructed and what are the practices related to border. Thus, the present study is not as much about the border as about it is of bordering. A socio-cultural perspective can help analyse how borders create identities and how identities as sets of practices and discourses both construct and deconstruct the borders.

### **The background of the study**

Post-independence, when the Union of India decided to reorganise the boundaries of Indian states, the creation was based on linguistic lines. The states of North-East India<sup>1</sup> were however reorganised based on ethnic identity. The socio-cultural identities of ethnic groups were the indicators for marking the reorganisation of states in North-East India. State creation in North-East India as such reflected the demand of different ethnic groups in order to maintain their distinct identities. North-East India is the easternmost region of India and a conglomeration of eight states; Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, Tripura, Nagaland, and Sikkim.

North-East India is often defined as a British imperial construct that became part of the post-colonial nation-state. During the post colonial days, North-East India which now has eight states was a single whole known as the North-East Frontier<sup>2</sup>. It was also called the undivided Assam or Greater Assam. North-East India since post colonial days has

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<sup>1</sup> The North-East is an umbrella connotation used to club the eight states of the region (Chaube, 1975).

<sup>2</sup> Term used for undivided Assam when other states were not carved out of Assam.

been a challenge for the government of India, as it is engulfed in serious inter-state border conflicts. The region is struggling with the issues of territorial dispute, ethnic aspirations, insurgency, regionalism, separatist and secessionist movements, crisis of identity and survival, tribe-non-tribe conflict, identity, infiltration of foreigners or outsiders (Ray, 1996, ix).

Before the British administration took possession of the undivided Assam, the region was known to be a cave of treasures of rich folklores, myths and legends about Kings and Gods and was ruled by different kings and tribal chiefs who maintained their sovereignty. Some of the popular myths and folklores have mention in many academic works. The peace treaty of Yandaboo signed on 24 February 1826 between the East India Company and the King of Ava brought an end to the First Anglo-Burmese War. The war is said to have begun originally over controlling North-East India. The treaty brought an end to the Ahom rule in Assam which lasted for 600 years. The Burmese renounced all claims and absolved power over the principalities of Assam, Manipur and Jaintia Hills.

After the advent of British colonizers, the boundary drawn in terms of a line under the banner of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873 took the shape of permanent borders in the North-East Frontier. The British administration divided the hills from the plains based on the 'Inner Line' Act. The act prohibited hill tribes from coming down to the plains and vice-versa. The line system was introduced on the pretext of protecting the ethnic groups of the hills areas from foreign subjects. In the year 1935, the hill areas were divided into "excluded" and "partially excluded" areas. The hills categorised as "excluded areas" comprised of North East Frontier Agency, Naga Hills, North Cachar Hills, Lushai Hills, and "partially excluded areas" had Garo hills, Khasi Hills and Mikir Hills. The excluded areas had exclusive tribal population while the partially excluded areas had mixed populations, including both tribals<sup>3</sup> and non-tribals<sup>4</sup> (Sarangi, Pai, 2011, 284). British rule played its part in dividing the diverse groups of people living in the region into the "civilised" and the "uncivilised" (Banerjee, 2010, 93).

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<sup>3</sup> Termed used to describe people residing in the hill areas and foothills.

<sup>4</sup> Termed used to describe people residing in the plain areas and not belonging to the hill society.

The border drawn as a result of the reorganisation of states is constantly being contested and renegotiated today. Arunachal Pradesh was carved out of Assam as a full-fledged state in 1987. It was a union territory before it got its statehood and prior to that it was known as the North East Frontier Tract<sup>5</sup>. Barring the two princely states of Tripura and Manipur, four states were carved out of Assam which was annexed by the British. In 1963, Nagaland was carved out of Assam, followed by Meghalaya in 1972. Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh were union territories in 1972. In 1986 and 1987 the states of Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh became full-fledged states respectively. Since then the states are yet to come to terms with their demarcated boundaries. The creation of the new states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura and now Sikkim today gives North-East India its heterogeneous identity. The region strategically considered important due to its international borders with China in the North, Bhutan in the Northwest, Myanmar in the Southeast and Bangladesh in the West is replete with stories of affirmation and reaffirmation of identity. The new territorial arrangement, though approved by the Government of India, is being challenged by the states bordering Assam. The objective of state formation in North-East India was to integrate but achieving it became next to impossible with states like Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Mizoram opposing the ‘constitutional boundary’<sup>6</sup> demarcated by the Government of India. Multi-lingual and a multi-ethnic region like the North East India with a clear cataloguing of ethnic groups and sub groups have states demanding demarcation based on ‘historical boundaries’<sup>7</sup>. According to these states by historical boundaries they mean boundaries that were there before independence. Chaube (1975, 193) writes that the interethnic politics in North East India has assumed a critical dimension due to its ethno-cultural background, loss of direct contact of much of the territory with the rest of India mainland after creation of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and the nationalist sensitivity about territorial integrity of the country. He is however, of the view that no native category is permanent since every historical situation is subject to the process of change.

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<sup>5</sup> North East Frontier Tract is different from North East Frontier. North East Frontier was the name for undivided Assam. North East Frontier Tract is the present day state of Arunachal Pradesh.

<sup>6</sup> Inter-state boundaries demarcated by the Union of India based on State reorganisation commission report.

<sup>7</sup> Historical boundaries are boundaries accepted pre-independent period.

The formation of new states as such in the North-East India is a process of reformatting linguistic-cultural and regional identities gradually leading to the demand for 'homelands' to communities living within these states or areas (Sarangi & Pai, 2011, 17). The contours and content of state formation and demarcation is never constant. Chapter 3 presents the complete history of the Assam-Arunachal border.

The Britishers who had demarcated the two states in the foothills on the basis of its topographical terrain (hills and plains) continued to be used by independent India. The boundary demarcation based on hills and plains is being challenged by Assam and Arunachal Pradesh with claims and counter claims over the land thereby creating an 'us' and 'them' divide. In this divide, identities such as hills-plains, tribals-non tribals, insider-outsider, Arunachalee-Assamese, civilised-uncivilised, worthy-unworthy, insider-outsider have been emerging in the border areas. In such a situation, it is interesting to look at how narratives from the field site define borders as frontiers and dichotomies. Further, it is also interesting to look at how the state has set control over the physical movement of state subjects.

During pre-colonial India, the nature of borders may have had its own imagined understanding or on the contrary, the idea of border may not have been known at all or may have been known differently from contemporary times. However, the boundary drawn in terms of a line took the shape of permanent borders after the advent of British colonials in North-East India. Border is shaped by various factors leading to a condition that is social (cultural, economic, administrative, and political). It is indeed debatable, if the rationale behind creating independent states in the North-East region after India's Independence served its purpose. The reorganisations of states after Independence paved way for heterogeneous communities to benefit from the separations, at the same inter-state conflicts emerged as a by-product of the reorganisation.

After the nation's independence, the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India as recommended by the 'North East Frontier Tribal and Excluded areas subcommittee' of the Constituent Assembly further divided the tracts into 'Excluded' and 'Partially Excluded' areas. The 'Excluded' areas included Balipara Frontier Tract, Tirap Frontier Tract, Sadiya Frontier Tract and Naga Tribal area which were appended in Table-B of the Sixth Schedule. Much like the British officials did in the colonial days, it was the



1951 notification of the Union of India that changed the geographical, cultural and social mosaic of the region. This has been the bone of contention till date between Assam and Arunachal. At present the matter is pending with the Supreme Court of India. Both the states are part of the judicial battle with claims and counter claims. The study will explore the way in which the Assam- Arunachal border is manifested in the choices people (who live alongside the border) make in their discourses and narratives.

The new politics of cartography after independence ensured that barriers were created in a place where few existed; the hills and the plains were not exclusive to people of any ethnic groups. The 1951 notification that declared some parts of the area claimed to belong to the hill tribes of Arunachal was transferred to the government of Assam. As such the state of Arunachal calls the notification to be “defective” because of its “arbitrary”, “ex-parte” and “unilateral” nature. About the same notification of 1951, the state of Assam has all together a different view. It considers the notification to be a practical and a realistic one. According to them the notification righted the historical wrong when allegedly sparse areas were taken from Assam and included in the North East Frontier Tract. The present boundary dispute is from the notification that excluded certain plain areas (approx 3648 sq kms).

Identity, territorial control, shifting spaces and the question of who is more indigenous to the land is part of the popular narratives in the interstate Assam-Arunachal border. By looking back at the history of the border creation and the present day narratives, the idea of borders, its functions and roles are being redefined. These debates necessitate a new theoretical paradigm in examining the concept of border.

### **The rationale of the study**

The proposed study is rooted on the foundation that while border is a political, economic or cultural periphery it can also be understood as an important centre of human activities. Newman (2011, 36) says that once created, borders become transformed into reality as a default situation which impacts upon daily life patterns and social mores, determining the parameters of exclusion and inclusion, and creating the categories through which social and spatial compartmentalisation is perpetuated. The social practices, experiences and ways of life of people living in the borders are perceived as the key to make sense of the dynamic nature of the border. Borders cannot be seen as an exclusive entity and it should

not be limited to physical and geographical forms rather be extended to the social, economic and cultural aspects of the bordering process.

Paasi (2011, 22) is of the view that if borders are understood as a mechanism of societal and political control over society, then there must be varied ways in which borders are present more widely suggesting it to be a context-bound phenomenon. Social, cultural, political and economic practices and discourses in making sense of borders cannot be undermined in the study of borders. Border is an interpretation, and this understanding has changed my outlook on borders as being rigid lines dividing two states. Coming from the state of Arunachal Pradesh and carrying out my research study in a university from Assam has given the study on interstate borders a direction to embark on challenges in dealing with the historically sensitive border cases. In a layman's perspective border has a set definition of being a demarcation. My perception and understanding of border changed completely as I advanced to examine the narratives collected from the field site and the tour dairies of the British officials.

Unlike the general understanding of border as a geographical entity, the study traverses through how identities are being shaped in border narratives. It also highlights the flexible nature of borders. Territorialisation, social practices and discourses emanating from the border areas give a conceptual perspective of borders in terms of how the 'self' and the 'other' are identified. The interstate boundary skirmishes at times make front page news and for some time the border goes quiet. Borders are thus a subject of occasional contestations which appears and disappears from time to time. The study gives an account of people who assert their indigeneity to the place. I look at how people in their narratives have internalized an imagined framework of their belongingness.

The interest and importance of this study stems predominantly from the understanding that border is an ideology and a context bound phenomenon that is objectified in our everyday social practices. In the social practices, land ownership becomes a key tool to assert one's identity and right over the border areas they believe to be theirs.

## Theoretical overview

An interdisciplinary approach with a conglomeration of sociological, historical, border studies, cultural studies, media studies and literary studies have helped to shape the theoretical framework of this study. But, primarily, the study is based on cultural studies conceptual framework of Roland Barthes's *structural analysis of narratives*, and Fredrick Barth's *ethnic boundaries*. This study also incorporates Anssi Paasi, David Newman, Hank Van Houtum, David Newman and James Anderson's conceptual work on borders. The study is conceptualised by employing an analytical perspective of the theoretical work done on narratives, ethnic boundaries, and identity construction in the context of interstate borders.

Barthes's view on narratives as the ultimate way to knit the world around us makes narratives an important aspect of social science. The society is often exposed to countless forms of narratives, thus making it universal in nature. He is of the opinion that the structure of the narratives should be considered in the narrative itself. From the very beginning, linguistics provided the structural analysis of narrative with a decisive concept, because it pointed out the essentials for any system of meaning namely its organisation (Barthes, Duisit, 1975, 241).

Barthes and Duisit (ibid, 260) opine that narrative viewed as object is the basis of communication; there is a giver and a recipient of a narrative. His explanation on the importance of narratives has made the study focus on narratives in order to come up with an image of the world that societies and communities see around them.

Borders as 'text' paves its way into narratives that are understood as 'tools' or 'codes' by means of which individuals and social groups agree upon or contest the definition of 'reality' and the normativity of bordering actions and practices (Prokkola, 2009).

Fredrick Barth's in *Ethnic Boundaries* (1998, 10) explains an ethnic group as,

- largely biologically self-perpetuating
- sharing fundamental cultural values, realized in overt unity in cultural forms
- making up a field of communication and interaction

- having a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order.

The study takes into account the second and third criteria of Barth's definition about ethnic groups. In the interstate borders two large group; Arunachalee<sup>8</sup> and Assamese<sup>9</sup> live along the borders. It is to see how these groups identify each other in the context of boundary demarcation with the help of such characteristics of an ethnic group.

Barth's understanding that though an ethnic group refers to a group of people with a shared identity, a common history and a traditional cultural heritage, it can also be associated with the idea of social organisation as emergent and contested is important for this study. Ethnic identity is a matter of self ascription and ascription by others in interaction with them and about social organisation of culture difference (Barth, 1998, 6). He (ibid, 11) also opines that the idea of each tribe and people maintaining their culture in ignorance of its neighbours is no longer entertained. He is of the view that social relations are maintained across such boundaries and are frequently based precisely on the dichotomised ethnic status,

Boundary persists despite a flow of personnel across them. In other words, categorical ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of mobility, contact and information, but do entail social processes of exclusion and incorporation whereby discrete categories are maintained despite changing participation and membership in the course of individual life histories. (Barth, 1998, 10-11)

Anssi Paasi's view on border as a context-bound phenomenon, the ideological practices that manifest the 'us' and 'them' divide and the understanding that borders should not be seen merely as static lines but a set of practices and discourses which are 'spread' into the whole society, not merely to the border areas are the framework of this study. Passi (2013, 12) argued that new interest in borders and the rise of border studies is related to another important social category: identity. He says that 'border phenomenon' other than being significant in the context of state borders in cases of social and cultural meaningful

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<sup>8</sup> A generalised term for people belonging to the state of Arunachal Pradesh

<sup>9</sup> A generalised term for people belonging to the state of Assam

spaces, is also important as a concept from the level of the human body to local and regional administrative units, from the turfs of gangs to no-go areas and red-line zones.

In understanding narrative from a border studies perspective, Eeva Kaisa Prokkola and Anssi Paasi's views on narratives are taken. Prokkola (2009, 26) says, "Although scholars in the humanities and social sciences disagree to some extent about what constitutes a narrative, they concur that all forms of narrative aim at making sense of experience and constructing and communicating meaning – and often identity. Meaning is not inherent in an experience or act, however, but is constructed through cultural and social discourses". Prokkola and Paasi's view on narratives falls on similar lines with Roland Barthes's structural analysis of narrative that expresses the universality of narratives with which social beings are in constant contact. He says that these narratives have various styles and forms from language to practices and discourses. There is a lucid similarity in Prokkola, Paasi and Barthes's view on narrative.

As such, this study looks at narratives from the point of view of Barthes's structural analysis of narratives, also encompassing Prokkola's and Paasi's view. The attempt would be to analyse various narratives from the Assam-Arunachal border to understand if border as a social condition is shaped by people on both sides of the border. In the context of Assam-Arunachal border, the conventional understanding of border is that of an endorsement of differences and conflicts.

In this we can accommodate Anderson's (2012, 220) view on border as 'barriers' or 'filters' which protects from the outside world while at the same time acts as 'bridges' or 'gateways' to it. Houtum suggests border to be understood as interpretation, this calls for a thorough understanding of the various factors that gives border its interpreted meanings. Houtum (2011, 50) proposes that there is no original model for border rather it is a simulation of a model and it is the meaning attached to the border that actually creates the border.

Newman's views on demarcation of boundaries as categorization of borders reflect existing ethnic, linguistic differences and evolution of ethnically different groups on both sides of the border. Newman (2011, 34) also speaks of the other classifications related to the legal status of the border and the extent to which they result from warfare or from

bilateral agreement and, to a lesser extent, some simple functional classifications reflecting the extent to which international boundaries were open to trans-boundary movement. Newman's (ibid,35) views demarcation as not only being about the lines on the map which are transformed into physical fences and walls on the ground but about the way societal managers determine the nature of inclusion and exclusion from various social categories and groups. This social construction of compartments and their borders is necessary for the ordering of society, but will always be contested, because there can rarely be a single border which is totally congruous with the absolute category (ibid).

### **Objectives of the study**

The study draws on an interdisciplinary approach keeping in view the context and rationale of the study. In a bid to give a simple and comprehensive result, the objectives have been placed unambiguously explicit and direct.

- To analyse the historical evolution of the formation of the Assam-Arunachal border
- To conceptualize border in terms of text
- To compare border narratives collected from the field with media narratives
- To analyse the role of border narratives in the construction of identities

### **Statement of the problem**

Border and boundary making has always been a contested area. It is therefore important to analyse various narratives that emerge from the border areas. This study will bring out knowledge of the people about their version of life in Assam-Arunachal border and beyond. Interstate border dispute has always called for state and centre's attention in the case of North-East India. The region is in a never-ending war like situation when it comes to border dispute. This has now become a case being fought in the Supreme Court of India. There are records from the colonial times which give an idea about the boundary demarcation in the undivided Assam. However, there are few accounts on the life in the border areas before the colonial regime. Books on North-East India deal with the history of how states were created in the region. However, there are few accounts of how people living along the border perceive it.

While border has been related with conflicts (taking place in the Assam-Arunachal borders), little effort has been made to understand border as a social condition. How the narratives help to shape the border and how border in turn constructs identities are some aspects the academicians have not ventured upon. International border issues manage to draw Centre's attention. Unlike the international borders, interstate borders have not been able to build higher fences and as such have not got due attention and has been left to be tackled by the respective states.

There is rarely any academic work done on studying narratives linked with borders of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. Border has been studied in terms of the material condition, the political discourse but not in terms of social condition with cultural boundaries and border narratives. The ethnic conflicts in the border due to economical and political reasons have been given much attention; people living in border and identities that are constructed through the cultural-ethnic boundaries in their narratives have not been correspondingly investigated. Empirical and literary work on various narratives consisting celebrations, travelling, free market, infrastructures (church, temples, schools, check posts) have been left untouched.

### **Research setting**

Likabali and Banderdewa are two places that have been taken as the core research area. Both the places share boundary with Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. Likabali in Arunachal Pradesh shares boundary with Dhemaji district of Assam and Banderdewa shares boundary with North Lakhimpur of Lakhimpur district in Assam.

Likabali is a sub division of West Siang district in Arunachal Pradesh. According to the population census 2011, the area has a total of 69 families with a population of 462. The area is a tribal majority. The local population is primarily Galo tribe. Earlier known as Gallong Abors, or Adi Gallong the Galos constitute a major tribe of Arunachal Pradesh and has been listed as a separate tribe (scheduled tribe) in the Amendment to the Constitution (ST), Order, 1950, Part-XVIII. The name has also changed from 'Galong' to 'Galo'. There are other tribes from the state residing in the area such as Adi, Nyishi. Bengalis, Assamese, Nepalese, Bodos, Marwaris also reside in the area who have mostly established their business in the area but are not the permanent settlers. Malinithan, the religious site is a ruin of temple with valuable scriptures from the 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century. The

site being claimed by both the states is situated in the Likabali subdivision. The Malini Mela<sup>10</sup> ground is a place where trade fair is organised annually. The ground is below the Malinithan temple and is said to be a 'disputed' territory. The state of Arunachal Pradesh in claiming the temple to be in the Arunachal side of border says that it was found after series of expeditions carried out from 1968 to 1971. The ruins of temples and valuable scriptures were unearthed at this site.

Dhemaji is located near the North bank of Brahmaputra and Likabali is situated on the northern side of Dhemaji. The Dhemaji district was formed in 1989 which is spread over an area of 3237 sq kms. People residing in the district are mostly Assamese, Bengalis, Nepalese, Bodos, Deoris and Mishing tribe. Banderdewa is situated in the Papum Pare district of Arunachal Pradesh and is also part of Assam. The national highway that passes through Banderdewa is a boundary between the states of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. Starting from the Gate no.1 of the Arunachal Pradesh Police Training Centre to the fringes of the Dikrong River Bridge with NH-52 A as the boundary line is the place called Banderdewa. On entering Banderdewa from Narayanpur (Assam) or Police Training Centre Gate No-1, locals of Assam dwell on the right side of this Highway while the left side belongs to the people of Arunachal Pradesh. It has a mixed population of tribals and non-tribals. Nyishis and Galos mostly reside in the area. And from the Assam side there are many Assamese communities including Bangladeshis (immigrants) in the area.

My long-term association with print media drew my attention on boundary skirmishes that often grabbed major headlines and front page coverage. The boundary issues I personally covered as a journalist made me embark on an odyssey of self exploration i.e. the research I under took to study more about border and lives in the border areas. The study though is majorly carried out in Likabali and Banderdewa, some of the border peripheries like Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Harmutty, Tarasso/Behali have also been taken for the research purpose. The selection of the study area is justified on the ground that the issues are often on the table of discussion between the states of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. New media, print media and electronic media have been active in covering boundary issues that erupt from the interstate borders. There's often negotiation with the

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<sup>10</sup> Mela is a Hindi term for fair. In the context of Malini Mela, the mela word has become a title in itself.



Government of India for resolving the boundary issues. These are some of the aspects that make the current location fit for the study. The sites are also of relevance because it has a mixed population of people from Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.

It is not only the site but also the boundaries of the places that have inhabitants from both sides of the state. This, as such, gave opportunity for taking into accounts the narratives of the people from both the states. The selected sites i.e. Likabali and Banderdewa are in contrast to each other in terms of their nature and characteristics. Unlike Likabali, Banderdewa has turned to be a completely commercial hub where boundary gets relatively blurred. Likabali, on the other hand, is volatile in nature and boundary assertion is much more strongly felt than in Banderdewa.

### **Ethical issues**

Border being an extremely sensitive issue and as a native of Arunachal Pradesh it was challenging for me to get people from Assam to talk about their lives in the border. My approach as such had to be that of a customer or a traveller inquisitive about the beauty of the area. On the Arunachal side of the border people who knew me as a journalist were very open about the issue and shared stories and views without hesitation. The narratives collected from the Arunachal side of the border were plenty and I had to work hard to balance out and collect narratives from the Assam side of the border. In using the term 'Assam-Arunachal border', I chose to place Assam before Arunachal as it has been used the same way in the Constitution of India. Another reason to keep Assam before Arunachal Pradesh in the term is because Arunachal Pradesh was part of Assam before it got its statehood.

My visit to Likabali and Dhemaji during festivals and the trade fairs helped me get insights into people's notions about borders and boundaries. The reason I choose to visit the area during those times was because people from both the states in large numbers participate in the fair and festival. Many of the visitors are from Assam. It was a golden opportunity and the right time to visit the location. Other than that, I had to pretend to be a customer in some of the shops and hotels of Dhemaji. While having *tamul paan*<sup>11</sup> over a silly conversation I managed to get people to talk. In dealing with the administrative

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<sup>11</sup> Betel nut which is of cultural value in an Assamese society.

officers it was not a herculean task. They were cooperative and gave their versions of the issues and stories that often do the roundabout in both the states. Many a times, I made it a point to counter their statement with that of the people living in the border areas. This gave me a clear picture of how borders are perceived, how it functions and what are the roles it plays in the lives of the people living along the borders.

In Banderdewa, it was not difficult to get people from Assam or Arunachal talk. People were very open with the issue. It quite did not appear like it was even an issue for them. I sat with roadside vendors pretending to be one of them to see how trade has changed the texture of border in Banderdewa. Sunday market in Harmutty, near Banderdewa has highest visitors and is busy and chaotic. Every shop I went to interview, I had to buy something or the other from the shop. Some of the participants were informed about the research study. While few people from the Assam side of the border were approached casually in a set up like shops and hotels. However, people I interviewed in the fair and festival were informed about my research.

In Chapter 5, which deals with the narratives of the people, I use the real names of my informants. I have avoided using pseudo names. However, participants who wished not to be named are mentioned right after the anecdotes as ‘on condition of anonymity he/she said....’ People who collectively expressed same understanding of a subject were combined and cited as ‘People from the Assam side of the border said...’ or ‘People from the Arunachal side of the border...’. For those who had no problem to be named, I have used their original names.

While recording the interviews the participants were informed beforehand that their interview will be recorded. In all my efforts, I tried to maintain neutrality during the discussion and interview. There were no set questionnaires. The conversation started casually and with every statement made by the people, I framed my question in order to have a proper understanding of their opinions. The conversations were guided by the research objectives.

### **The participants**

As the base of the study is narratives, much emphasis was given on narratives collected from the field site. The narratives were collected from the Assam and Arunachal Pradesh

sides of the state borders. The research required in-depth interaction and discussion with people belonging to Assam and Arunachal. The participants were categorised as state party and the people living along the borders. The state party in the research are people that represent the state; administrative officers, police personnel, security personnel and public representatives. The other party, i.e. people living along the borders, include people both from Assam and Arunachal residing in the border areas. The state party in their narratives refers to borders as an entity of setting control. They mostly discuss about the State Reorganisation Act of 1956 and the 1951 notification that led to the demarcation between the two states. In their narratives borders and boundary demarcation is important for smooth functioning

### **Method of data collection**

Primary data were collected from the field through an ethnographic approach of participant observation by actively taking part in the festivals, market life, bus travelling, bandhs/strikes so on. Interviews of actors in local enterprises, administrative organizations, and the public, were the sample of the research. Secondary data such as policy documents, maps, census report, survey, tour dairies, administrative reports, police files were collected. Secondary data gave idea about the historical process of identity construction and study the bone of contention between the two states. Books, journals, internets, newspapers and articles that suit the research objective were taken for study.

Narrative analysis was used for analysing the materials collected from the border area and its peripheries. The primary method of collection was through casual and formal interview. With the public, I opted for casual communication as the approach to get their perspectives. I did not want the interview to create any sort of panic. Instead of facing opposite and standing in front of them in terms of posture, I chose to sit/stand beside them to get genuine answers. People living along the border generally do not open up about the existing situation and condition. Their views at times merge with the views of the state and media. It was imperative to take the participants into confidence to get them to talk about lives in the border areas from their experiences.

Some anecdotes were taken from the social networking site Facebook. It was observed that during border dispute the news surfaces first in the social sites. Some posts inform

about the incident while some advice people not to travel from the area where the incident is happening.

### **Data analysis**

The use of technical equipments helped in order to get information in its accurate form. Most of the interviews were recorded using a mobile phone recorder and a professional recorder. Those interviews were then reproduced word by word in a dairy. Based on the research objectives the transcribed data was arranged and used under appropriate titles in chapters. Specific style has been followed in quoting the narratives. The narratives from the field have been stylised in separate paragraphs with indent on the left side of the document. Inputs of historians and records from the tour dairies of the British officials collected from State archives are put in double quotes (“”) without italics. The views of authors and researchers are put in double quotes (“”) and indented space with proper citations.

### **Review of literature**

Fredrik Barth’s book *Ethnic groups and boundaries* is a collection of essays that reveal the persistent nature of ethnic groups. Barth who was the pioneer in shedding lights on the relationship between ethnic groups and boundaries, proposed that the continuity of ethnic units depends on boundary maintenance, on dichotomization of ethnic status or the insiders and outsiders.

In *An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative*, Roland Barthes writes that there are countless and various forms of narratives ubiquitous in all societies, places and human. The universality of narratives makes it important to be placed under a theory to which Barthes associates linguistics itself as a basic model for the structural analysis of narrative. Since it is evident from Barthes study on narratives that they are ubiquitous, it makes this study important because the universality of narratives can actually in real sense give other multi dimensional views and role of the border.

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the discourse on language*, Michel Foucault mentions that discourse operates in various ways from creating a world, generating knowledge and truth, saying something about the people who speak it, relation with power, being multiple in characteristics to being changed over time. Thus, discourse can

be studied understand can also be employed to identify with border, its interpretation, its nature and its role from past to contemporary times.

In the book *The Art of Not being Governed*, James C Scott presents the ideas of nation-state and the lived-experience of people during the formation of states. It takes into account the relation of states and the barbaric frontiers. Keeping the states in distance and the administrative ways hard, Scott makes an attempt to understand the Zomians through modern and pre-modern perspectives.

In the book *Narrative and Culture*, Janice Carlisle writes that the representation of external events and telling of those events fits in narrative and to omit narrative means to elude meanings. Narrative is this writing and rewriting the text of our life from various experiences. People live in their narratives and discourse which directs and is directed by the everyday experience one meets.

In his book *Tropics of Discourse*, Hayden White considers narrative as a solution to the problem of how to translate knowing into stories. He calls narrative a meta code on which messages about the nature of shared reality are transmitted. He examines the structure of human experience of the world in narrative forms—a process.

In the book *Narrative in Culture*, Christopher Nash examines all human activity and communication as narrative or as governed by it. This is evident from other series of writers contributing to the book linking social science, physical science, philosophy and literature to narratives.

In *Conflict on the Michigan frontier: Yankee and borderland cultures* by James Z Schwartz as part of the evaluation study examined the creation of both formal legal borders and informal cultural boundaries. In his effort to explain cultural boundaries he focuses primarily on how the creation of cultural boundaries defined Michigan's borders.

In *Borders, Boundaries and Barriers, Oh My!* Matthew Salafia reviews the work of James Z Schwartz and writes that borders are externally created physical divisions meant to divide a region. Cultural boundaries, on the other hand, are internally created distinctions aimed at erasing hybridity. The relationship between externally created

borders and internally created boundaries forms the fundamental dynamic of borderlands creation of both formal legal borders and informal cultural boundaries.

In *Boundaries as Social Practice and Discourse: The Finnish-Russian Border*, Anssi Paasi interprets boundaries as sets of practices and discourse not restricted to border areas but spread to the whole society. She is of the view that boundaries exist and get meanings that are reproduced in local everyday life. As such, she uses narratives based on local experience in the border to explain boundaries as discourse and life in the divided community. In her work, she gives a multidimensional approach to the analysis of boundaries rather taking a narrow view of boundaries as lines.

In *Boundaries as Social Processes: Territoriality in the World of Flows*, Anssi Paasi writes that collective identity is socially constructed and produced by the social construction of boundaries. This suggests that boundaries are none the less a 'social construction'. Paasi's work shows that narratives help in construction of the meanings of communities and their boundaries and provide people with common experiences, history and memories, and thereby binding them together. She looks at the concept of boundary as part of collective identities, shared memories and the sense of continuity between generations. She suggests narrative to be used as discourses that crucially shape social practice and life.

In *A Border Theory: An Unattainable Dream or a Realistic Aim for Border Scholars?*, Anssi Paasi scrutinizes the current state of border studies and the emerging role of borders and border studies as diverse and integrated. How borders are transforming and being re-defined.

Paasi discusses the complexity of political borders as research objects and then go on to investigate the purported shaping of the interdisciplinary field of border studies. This will be followed by a discussion on how various concepts of theory could inform border studies and how concept of border has been challenged, re-interpreted and expanded.

In *Borders*, Anssi Passi gives an account of how borders provide an enduring subject for research objects. Passi tells about major revival in Border studies in the 1990s. He speaks of the collapse of ideological divide between the capitalist and communist blocks, the

acceleration of the ‘globalization’, and the development of information and communication technologies (Passi, 2013, 1).

In *Borders and Border Crossings*, Anssi Passi draws many elements of borders that can be studied by cultural theorists. He brings out the relation between borders and identities as entities dependent on each other. Passi also talks about bordering, ordering, and collective identity-building as being understood as processes (Albert et al. 2001, Passi 2003).

In *Boundary: the Word, Concept and Practice (invited commentary)*, Anssi Passi explains the difference between the words border and boundary. Passi defines ‘Boundary’ as a dividing line contrary to the broader, currently popular terms ‘border’ or frontier.

In *Constructing Territories, Boundaries and Regional Identities*, Anssi Passi presents a conceptual and empirical framework of the construction of territories, boundaries and regional identities. The work takes a departure from the geographical study of borders and sees how socio-spatial consciousness encourages the creation of identities. It presents arguments that territorial identities are often shifting. He views that though border is of major importance for states but it may be not the same for the people and places located in the immediate boundary.

In *Unfixing Borderland Identity: Border Performances and Narratives in the Construction of Self*, Eeva-Kaisa Prokkola writes that humanities and social sciences scholars though disagree to some extent about what constitutes a narrative, they however agreed that all forms of narrative aim at making sense of experience and constructing and communicating meaning – and often identity. Meaning is not inherent in an experience or act, however, but is constructed through cultural and social discourses. In the narrative study of Finnish-Swedish borderlanders Prokkola found that people’s interview stories suggest that their borderland identities cannot be fully understood in isolation from their life experience and ambitions, or from the societal and material conditions which enabled them to narrate.

David Newman in *On Borders and Power: A Theoretical Framework*, writes that all borders share a common function to the extent that they include some and exclude many others. This is as true of the hard territorial line which determines the shape and size of the territorial compartments within which people play out their daily lives, as it is the social, religious, cultural, ethnic and cyber boundaries which reflect the groups to which people belong and affiliate and, for many, determine their various identities.

In *Contemporary Research Agendas in Border Studies: An Overview*, David Newman writes about the dynamics of the bordering process as impacting society and space. He speaks about the multi-dimensional meaning borders have taken. Newman paves way for sociologists, anthropologists and border practitioners to study borders stating that it is no longer the domain of the geographer, cartographer or diplomat.

In *Narrative and Consciousness* by Gary David Fireman, Ted Eustace McVay, and Owen J Flanagan highlight the importance of narrative in understanding the content of consciousness and memory. They share that stories are created by people to understand the world around them and themselves.

*The Mask of the Border* written by Hank Van Houtum deals with the question of why and how in general borders are socially produced and/or reproduced. Houtum gives scope to the study of borders by stating that border has no original model, it is a simulation of a model. The write up presents border as an ideology with a belief in the presence and continuity of a spatial binding power, which is objectified in our everyday social practices.

*Borders and Memory* by Tatiana Zhurzhenko is an analysis of how memory works to provide continuity between past and present of people belonging to social groups, and individuals.

Anthony P Cohen in *Symbolic Construction of Community* writes that boundaries more than being understood and seen as map, in law and physical features can also be thought of, rather, as existing in the minds of the beholders.



Gary David Fireman, Ted Eustace McVay and Owen Flanagan in *Narrative and Consciousness* gave interdisciplinary views of narratives. The book reads how humans in all cultures come to cast their own identity in some sort of narrative form considering humans as storytellers.

In *Text*, Joseph Margolis writes that 'Texts' to be artifacts apt for interpretation. He says actions and artworks are the paradigms of intrinsic texts. Margolis asks how apt for interpretation must anything be to be apt enough? Are human selves texts, then, seeing that they interpret them-selves?

In *Myth* William G Doty explains why myth concerns the society and how meanings are attributed to the stories making it of relevance in the society. The article also tells about the interpretations attached to myth and how it works for certain community in their understanding of society from the past.

In *Acculturation and Myth*, Vito Signorile discuss about myth as being symbolic representation of cultural priorities, belief and prejudices.

In the book *Becoming a Borderland: Space and Identity in Colonial North East India*, Sanghamitra Misra writes about a place Goalpara in Assam as being fragmented into many borderlands in the narratives and counter narratives. She writes how narratives in earlier writings and practices of the regional elite designed 'Goalparia' as borderland cultural collective having narratives of cultural and historical differences.

In the book *Myths of the North-East Frontier of India*, Verrier Elwin presents stories collected from villages along the borders and areas untouched by the British administration. The book presents volume of stories that gives the idea about how the people have imagined the hills and plains to be created. It also draws the kind of bond people from Arunachal Pradesh shared with the Assamese society in the olden days. In the stories, the Assamese societies are categorically mentioned to an extent that they considered to be born out of two brothers from the hills.

In the book *A Philosophy for NEFA*, Verrier Elwin gives a clear demographic profile of the North East Frontier Tract. It shows the effort Elwin makes in trying to understand the

frontier area and derive a sense of the right intention the administrators have to carry forward in dealing with its people. He shows a way and approach to the problems in the region. Taking Gandhi's philosophy 'We must approach the poor with the mind of poor', Elwin writes 'We must approach a tribesman with the mind of the tribesman'. In the book, he explains on how India should treat its tribals. He is of the view that the tribals are neither a subject of research nor a challenge for integration in the mainstream.

In the book *Hill Politics in North East India*, SK Chaube traces the historical background of the reorganisation of the north eastern states and the impact it had on the people of the states. He also talks about the administrative and policy spheres in the North East. It brings out the socio-political dynamics of the region.

Girin Phukon in his book *Politics of Regionalism in North East India* writes about the politics of regionalism that emanates from the socio-cultural and regional diversities. He is keen in talking about political pluralities coupled with politicised ethnic identities. In talking about regionalism Phukon also presents personalities of diverse groups and stresses on socio-political situation of the North East region.

*Interrogating Reorganisation of States* is the work of Asha Sarangi and Sudha Pai. The book is an account of the state formation which deals with the historical and political context of such state making processes. The authors have examined themes like cultural identities, underdevelopment, political participation, governance and so on. It provides a conceptual framework in understanding reorganisation of states in democratic India.

Archana Upadhyay in the book *India's Fragile Borderlands* offers a comprehensive study of cross border links, connections of organised crime and development of terrorist groups within the region.

In the book *Reorganisation of North East India since 1947*, B Datta Ray and SP Agrawal probes the historical background of the problem of the North East based on the administrative works. The book examines the consequences of partition and reorganisation and also looks into the socio-economic developmental process in the region.

HK Barpujari's book on *Problem of the Hill Tribes North-East Frontier (1822-42)* makes an appraisal to the problems of the Hill tribes. The factors and forces used to mould the British policy towards the hill tribes have been presented categorically.

HK Barpujari's book on *Problem of the Hill Tribes North-East Frontier (1843-72)* offers a comprehensive study of British suzerainty over areas occupied by the frontier tribes. The book presents peace missions and the policy of non intervention in the region. It also gives brief account of the hill regions and the way the region functions.

Verrier Elwin's *Democracy in NEFA* is a record of the political and judicial institutions of the North East Frontier Agency of India. It gives idea about the ways in which an administration should work in the region. It elucidates about tribal councils and their functions.

Verrier Elwin's *India's North-East Frontier in the Nineteenth century* consist series of passages from the older literature that help explore the conditions of the people living on the borders. It also has accounts of foreign travellers who had toured the region and shared their experiences of the frontier. The book is written way back in 1959 and is a treasure of information.

*In Abor Jungles of North-East India* is a book written by A Hamilton in the year 1983. This book explores the tribal way of life. It also discusses the relationship shared by the British administration and the tribal people. Plenty of records on the political missions in the area are presented in the book.

*Documents on North-East India*, is a book written by SK Sharma and Usha Sharma. The book consist all the rules, regulations and acts introduced in the region in order to build an administrative structure. Commission and committee reports on the region have been covered in the book. The documents compiled relate to the creation of the state and the way was administered.

*Cultures, Communities, Identities* by Maarjorie Mayo talk about how these concepts have emerged in the contemporary academic debates. The book incorporates the concepts that provide contested meanings. It is an account of how these concepts are features in the political debates both in theory and practise.

*India and North east India, Mind, Politics and the Process of Integration 1946-1950* is a book written by Sajal Nag. Nag in this book gives a detailed study of structure of consciousness, the pattern of mobilisation, the state of mind and the politics of integration.

*Troubled Periphery, Crisis of India's North East* by Subir Bhaumik is an account of the ethnic struggle, assertion of identities, region with numerous state conflicts, democratic assertion involving smaller minorities and hitherto-marginalised group and so on. It traces the history of North East from its frontier days to region. Ethnicity, ideology and religion are another aspect the book deals with. While in dealing with other areas such as insurgency, migrations, crisis of development it consist a chapter that reflects the road ahead for the region.

In *The Bengal Borderland: Beyond State and Nation* in South Asia, William Schendel's interrogation on how borderlanders and their states cop with new previously unimagined reality of border gives a new dimension to study the counter narratives of denial. The book also informs about the changing social geographies of the borderland. Schendel writes how the border merges with work on identity, ethnicity, citizenship and culture.

In *Ethnic life-World in North-East India: An Analysis*, Prasenjit Biswas and Chandan Suklabaidya discusses about the social formation of the country marked by colonial, pre-colonial and post-colonial transformation. How communities are constructed based on socio-culture knowledge in the lived experience of cultural politics. What constitutes identities in a community has also been taken up in the study. The writers also talks about ethnic politics in the North East.

*Alexander Mackenzie and evolution of British Policy in the hills of North East Frontier of India* by HK Barpujari gives the account of the British administration's approach towards the North East Frontier. It details about the geography and demography of the hills and plains and the practices and systems prevailing in the unexplored region.

*Pursuit of Colonial Interests in India's North East* by Ranju Bezbaruah gives the account of the colonial pursuits in the North East India. It takes the readers to the historical journey of how the region was annexed by the British and what were the systems of governance prior to Britisher's advent in the region.

In the book *Symbolic Construction of Community*, Anthony P Cohen discusses how people see themselves as belonging to society through ethnic communities. He emphasizes on boundary as being symbolical to the values and identities of the communities.

Shibani Kinkar Chaube in *Inter-ethnic Politics in North East India* presents the conflict and collaboration among ethnic groups and within themselves. Chaube also questions the ways in which ethnic affinities survive and the role of the states in such struggle.

*The Margins Strike Back: Echoes of Sovereignty and the Indian State* by Udayon Mishra tries to give an account of the efforts made by the people of the North East in understanding the concept of nation-state and how the tribal population distant and at the same time corroborated to the idea of nationalism.

In *Forest Policy in North-East India*, Tiplut Nongbri examines the evolution of forest policy in the North East and the struggle between the forest based communities and the executors of forest reservation acts.

*Violent Borders: Killings in Nagaland-Assam* by Hiren Gohain is an account of how shrinking land resources have become the reason for the dispute. He invests much on analysing the ulterior motives in putting limitations to the control of natural resources. Gohain tries to analyse the reason behind the boundary problems while looking at violence and state apathy.

*What Ails the North-East? Challenges and Responses* by Kedilezo Kikhi looks at the issues that ails the North Eastern states and examines the challenges and responses to the issues.

*Arunachal's Tribal Economic Formations and Their Dissolution* by SN Mishra studies the emergence of new economic bases and the reactions and response of the people to the new ideas.

*Tribalism vs. Colonialism: British Capitalistic Intervention and Transformation of Primitive Economy of Arunachal Pradesh in the Nineteenth Century* by Sudatta Sikdar discusses the colonial operation of trade and the impact of capitalism in a tribal domain.

### **Limitation of the research**

There is a wide scope to study many other aspects of borders. This research carries work based on the objective of the study. Other researchers may explore other areas that would interest them. The targeted informants are people actively involved in the border related affairs. In terms of covering the selected sites, some of the villages in the interior of the places could not be visited. However, the areas near and around the boundaries which tends to experience some activities has not been left untouched. For the historical records of the British officials and writings of eminent historians from the North East I had to take the help of Arunachal State archives situated in Itanagar and Assam state archives in Guwahati. The distance between the two states is an overnight journey by a train. In the limited time I had in hand, I managed to scan through many political tour dairies, reports and books.

I had visited Likabali thrice in 2014, 2016 and 2017. My stay at the tourist lodge was for a week in all the years. Also, I could gather some data from the people working at the lodge. Over the years, the lodge saw three different management teams. To reach out to some administrative officers in the Assam side I had to manage with telephonic conversation. With free outgoing call offer, the conversations lasted for 30-45 minutes. The approach was as such a formal conversation.

Most of the narratives were subjective in nature. The issue concerning subjective opinions is that it is a constructed opinion and needs to be interpreted that way. In some places, I visited at Likabali, I was accompanied by a local from there. People from Assam residing in Likabali may have not been too open in front of the Arunachalee local who accompanied me. Keeping that in mind, I made it a point to talk to shopkeepers from Assam doing business in Arunachal Pradesh on my own as well.

### **Organisation of the thesis**

The thesis consists of six chapters. Each chapter has a sub-chapter that is organised in a manner to give clear picture of the concepts, theories, analysis and the content itself.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

## Chapter 2: Defining border, boundaries, text and narrative

- 2.1 Understanding border in Cultural Studies
- 2.2 Towards a new theoretical paradigm for border studies
- 2.3 Borders and Boundaries
- 2.4 Border as Text
- 2.5 Text and Narrative

## Chapter 3: History of Assam-Arunachal border: Negotiating with the past

- 3.1 The Story of Borders and Boundaries: North East India in Perspective
- 3.2 Contextualising and experiencing reorganisation
- 3.3 Assam-Arunachal border: 1951 Notification
- 3.4 Focus area: Likabali, Behali-Taraso, and Banderdewa

## Chapter 4: Reporting the Border: Media narratives and stories

- 4.1 Media Narratives about the Border: A Study in Contrast
- 4.2 Stories about life on the other side of the border: myths and realities

## Chapter 5: Analyzing narratives from the field

- 5.1 Dichotomies, power and control
- 5.2 Ethnic identity as shaped by narratives
  - 5.2.1 Shifting identities and spaces
- 5.3 Boundaries and changing meaning in memories
- 5.4 Reappearance and disappearance of borders

## Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion

Chapter 1 includes the 'Introduction' part. This chapter gives the idea about the background of the study, the rationale and objectives of the study. It also includes theoretical perspectives and research paradigm that gives the basis on which the study has been mounted. Research setting and information about participants have also been duly incorporated to give an in depth understanding of the source on which the analysis and findings depend. Method of data collection, data analysis and limitation of the research has been touched upon as well to give the trajectory of the gradual progress of the study and the limitations the study encountered. The introduction has also included the chapterisation in the organisation of the thesis part.

Chapter 2 is titled 'Defining border, boundaries, text and narrative'. This chapter gives an overview of the concepts and theoretical perspectives. Sub-chapter 2.1 elucidates on understanding border in Cultural Studies. It takes us through a journey of how borders can be studied in varied ways. 2.2 is an attempt to look at the possibility of a new theoretical paradigm in understanding borders. 2.3 deals with how and why borders can be read as text and what scope does it have in being read as text. 2.4 look at the lucid relation between text and narrative. Interpretation as an act is the connecting link between the two concepts here. 2.5 discuss about the difference between terms Borders and Boundaries as it often interchangeably used in the study. In order to clear the concept, the terms are defined in the context of the study.

Chapter 3 titled 'History of Assam-Arunachal border: Negotiating with the past' is an account of the origin of the present-day border dispute in the states of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. 3.1 deal with the story of Borders and Boundaries keeping North East India in perspective. This segment time travels back to the pre-colonial days, days of chieftainship and kingship. It discusses the changing nature of borders and boundaries. 3.2 contextualise the experiences of people after the reorganisation of the states. After India got its independence and it start reorganising the states what were the immediate repercussions is discussed in this sub chapter. 3.3 give the idea about a notification that is said to have changed the whole map of the territory in the region. It presents the claim of the two states over the notification that demarcated the state. 3.4 This portion explains the geography and demography of the research sites with maps.



Chapter 4 titled 'Reporting the Border: Media narratives and stories' presents two extreme facets of the activity in border area. 4.1 divulge in media narratives about the border as to how borders and its issues represented reproducing meanings in existing time and space. 4.2 on the other hand present myths people living along the borders believe. The myths are quite in contrast to media reports. This chapter gives the general view of how borders as a concept have been emerging.

Chapter 5 titled 'Analyzing narratives from the field' is the interpretation of the fieldwork carried out. 5.1 reflect on border dichotomy and investigate power and control it sets on lives along the border. 5.2 This deal with how identities are shaped by narratives. Identities of the other and self are projected in the narratives. 5.3 discuss about boundaries and changing meaning in memories. 5.4 deal with the varied characteristics of borders. Borders are constructed and shaped by narratives as such it appears and disappears time to time.

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