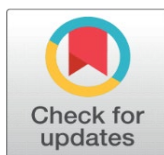


CONCEPT OF HOME: ISSUES OF ASSIMILATION, RACISM AND IDENTITY IN HOMEWARD: TOWARDS A POETICS OF SPACE

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ABSTRACT

The concept of home as a static space undergoes its meaning in modern times. Homelessness and displacement happen to be the apprehension of modern times. What is home to the Northeast people who are constantly displaced by violence? Embedded in this concept is the issue of belongingness, which, in the context of the people belonging to Northeast India, poses a problem of integrating into mainland India, which is drastically different in terms of culture, features, languages, food habits, etc. The question posits the reasons for (re)conceptualizing the concept of home among the Northeast people. The persistent discourse on Northeast India is defined through the perspective of this region's dominant stereotype, which is reinforced through many discourses concerning conflict, displacement, violence, and so forth due to the troubled colonial past. This present paper foregrounds the understanding of the sense of belongingness, assimilation, identity, alienation and racism, eventually changing the perception of home. For this paper, selected pieces from *Homeward: Towards a Poetic of Space* will be analyzed to understand the polyphonic voices that emerged from the Northeast writers, giving different meanings to the notion of "home".

Keywords: Assimilation, Belongingness, Conflict, Home, Northeast India

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1. INTRODUCTION

Northeast India is a generic term used to define a region connected to mainland India by a chicken neck. To the people belonging to this peripheral region, the sense of belonging to mainland India is a matter of contention due to discrimination based on race, colour, features, linguistic differences, food habits, etc. Why do we need to (re)conceptualize the concept of home? Why do we need a discourse of difference and marginality? Baral (2018) asks:

Is marginality a feature of literature, and if so, in what way(s)? Does it underline the author's location, his/her identity and sociocultural background? Does it connote a political conundrum identifying the relationship

between the centre and its periphery? Or is it about other differentiated markers such as ethnic or linguistic identities and the politics about them?" (p.3).

The marginal position occupied by Northeast India vis-à-vis mainstream India regarding identity markers—features, foods, dresses, language, and customs, among others, often demarcates this region from the rest of India. The emergent discourse on Northeast Literature has not been confined to a single issue but aspires to represent the pressing concerns regarding home, identity, race, and other problems encountered by the Northeast people. Regarding the peripheral position of the Northeast, Rakhee Bhattacharya in "Paradox of Assimilation and Alienation in North East India" (2011) remarks:

The ruthless 'restructuring of North East India' by colonial rulers has forced the region to remain at the periphery, and even in post colonial era, this peripheral status was never been broken, rather North East became further away from mainstream due to its persistent political-economic swings along with Nehru's policy of protection. This had to set a gradual resentment in the region and manifested in way of separatism, secessionism, insurgency, and above all a terrible hatred and denial for 'mainland'.

Furthermore, an attempt to converge to mainland India is taken as "cultural imperialism" by the younger generation [Bhattacharya \(2011\)](#). Northeast India has fought the most protracted battle—one against British colonial rule and another against mainland India—as the Northeasterners feel isolated and estranged from the rest of India.

Later on, due to ensuing violence and conflict, the common people were entrapped between the two warring forces—the insurgent groups who fought to retain the pre-colonial status of the regions, and the other was state forces who were deployed in various regions of Northeast India to subdue the rise of the insurgent groups whom they termed as 'revolutionaries' or 'militants'. Gradually, we could see the migration of many northeasterners to other parts of India, mainly for education, jobs and prospective lives in the metro cities away from the violence, which greatly impacted the ordinary people. This part of India is perceived differently owing to its different features in terms of look, dress and food habits. It mainly becomes the target of racism, being called 'chinki' in a derogatory manner. Due to the dislocation and migration to different terrains, the notion of home changes its meaning. The homecoming is also imbued with the memories of violence, which not only displaced people but also the ecology of the regions.

What is a home for the Northeast people? The word 'home' resounds with a multitude of meanings. The mutability of the concept of home is tangible in the modern world. This article emphasizes strengthening discussion around the sense of displacement and dispossession of the northeast people, thereby problematizing the idea of being at home and the security it brings to the mental frame of the people. And also with the concept of home comes the issues of identity and belongingness. The notion of home is moving in multidimensional directions due to the transnational aspect of the modern man who is constantly moving from one place to another in search of a prospective life. The idea of location regarding the northeasterners within the ambit of Indian society becomes difficult due to the dissimilarities in tradition, cultural beliefs and language, which are imbued with numerous tribal differences and also due to its closeness to the Southeast Asian countries.

Homeward: Towards a Poetics of Space (2022) edited by Soibam Haripriya is a mélange of poems, memoirs, graphic arts and short stories by the writers, poets, graphic artists and artists who, in their own conceptualize the home of their imagination, which is replete with memories and other intricate issues which shape their identities. As Haripriya has said in her preface to the edition, "This collection is a montage, which attempts to recontextualize and relocate the idea of home from a perspective that moves beyond the glorification of four walls..." (2022). Re-contextualizing the concept of home breaks the generic definition of home, which alludes to stability, permanence and roots. With the shifting landscape, the home as a stable concept changes from permanence to transience.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Why is there a need for a poetics of space for the Northeast people?
- What are the underlying problems that impeded the assimilation and convergence of the Northeast people to mainstream India that changed the perspective of home and belongingness?
- How do the selected pieces from the anthology *Homeward: Towards a Poetics of Space* (2022) address the concept of home, migration, assimilation, racism and many other relevant issues interconnected to the themes mentioned above?

3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is paramount for illuminating the growing alienation and isolation of people in the Northeast from mainland India. Furthermore, it is only in recent times that the literature from Northeast India has been accepted in academia, which has been in the shadow of Indian Literature. Northeast India has a long history of repression, and even the writings from this part could never enter mainstream literature dominated by Indian writers. In this paper, an endeavour is made to address some pressing issues the Northeast writers and artists have raised in their writings through poems, memoirs, short stories and so forth. The present paper attempts to make cognizance of the sense of belongingness, alienation and sense of being at home when there is a displacement and an erasure of the ancient traditions, beliefs, eco-system and pertaining issues regarding Northeast India. It will redefine and re-conceptualize the different layers of the perception of home. For this paper, select sections from *Homeward: Towards a Poetics of Space*, edited by Soibam Haripriya will be analyzed to comprehend the multiple voices of people belonging to Northeast India to extract different meanings rendered to the conception of “home”.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

Zama (Ed.). (2013) highlights the emerging literatures from the Northeast region which has its share of historical and political trauma. In the literature coming from Northeast India, one could find the immeasurable sufferings and marginalization registered in the discourse on the literature.

Kakoti (2021), navigates to mainstream India's tendency to stereotype the entire Northeast without even investigating the distinct problems that have plagued it. She foregrounds numerous issues relating to the Northeast region regarding identity, migration, ethnicity, language, homeland, and belonging. Failure on the part of the Indian government to address numerous issues of the Northeast region has widened the gap and further alienated the entire region from mainstream India.

The internal migration of any form, voluntary or involuntary, brings cultural displacement and the dislocation of identity. In India, migration of the Northeast people to other metropolitan cities for economic growth, education, employment, career, prospective life, and others brings the problems of cultural and racial discrimination. The Northeast people term the metropolitan cities as “tougher than expected” and “more insecure” than their native places (Remesh, 2012).

Duncan McDuie-Ra (2017), in his essay “Solidarity, Visibility and Vulnerability: ‘Northeast’ as a Racial Category in India”, discusses the migration of the Northeast people to other parts of India, which has dramatically changed in the last decade. Furthermore, through the interviews of the migrants, he learned about the various factors for leaving the Northeast, including seeking refuge from conflict, changing attitudes towards Indian citizenship, poor education options at home and better connectivity between the frontier and Indian cities McDuie-Ra (2017). He explains the intersection of work and race, leading to racial discrimination, where the Northeast migrants were attacked in Pune and Bangalore. In another book, McDuie-Ra (2012) McDuie-Ra examines the reasons of migration and makes a two-fold argument—first, the problem of insurgency and counterinsurgency which is responsible for the migration and second, due to the overwhelming focus on militarization, the dynamics of migration and the demographic profile of migrants have been ignored McDuie-Ra (2012). In the post-colonial period, according to Saikia and Baishya (Eds.). (2017), this part of India was recast as “the ‘violence-ridden’ borderland inhabited by disgruntled and disloyal subjects”. The Northeast was seen as a potential threat to India's nation-state.

In the context of assimilation theory, Parekh (2008) notes that a society cannot be cohesive and stable unless immigrants assimilate into the prevailing culture and become like the rest. Accordingly, a society needs a common system of meaning and values, and if they hold different beliefs and values, they cannot sustain a shared life. In the case of the Northeast, the assimilationist's idea of sustaining shared life with India is full of paradoxes and contradictions. The reason for the failure to be part of a larger Indian discourse was that after India's independence, the people of the Northeast were uncertain of their position and identity, and the Indian government failed to acknowledge the diverse ethnic communities and treated the Northeast as a homogenous identity.

The instances of racial discrimination abound in the narratives of many northeasterners who encounter unwarranted discrimination at the hands of their fellow Indians. Because of the feeling of estrangement from the

majority, the question of 'home' and 'belongingness' becomes somewhat blurred and confounding. To the majority, they are the 'other' and the 'tribals'. Locating Northeast is rather complex due to its accessibility to outsiders. As Hazarika (2018) mentions that "they represent this complex innumerability, these ethnic distinctions, which are so perplexing to the enquirer' and to the non-enquirer, who gets most of his information (or disinformation) from the burgeoning mass media..." The integration into India becomes more problematic, leading to separatist demands, which have been the rhetoric of many insurgent movements in the Northeast.

5. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION: ISSUES OF HOME, ASSIMILATION, RACISM AND IDENTITY

The concept of home is associated with many related things like culture, identity, belongingness, race, and so on. Home as a stable abode undergoes a change in meaning with the transnational movement across the globe. McLeod (2000) says:

The concept of 'home' often performs an important function in our lives. It can act as a valuable means of orientation by giving us a sense of our place in the world. It tells us where we originated from and where we belong. As an idea it stands for shelter, stability, security and comfort... To be 'at home' is to occupy a location where we are welcome, where we can be with people very much like ourselves.

What will happen if the very space of home is displaced and the accustomed home turns into a fearful space where the identity is fragmented and uprooted? The integration process is always riddled with racism, and India is a failed example of multiculturalism, where people from the Northeast are less accommodated in the mainstream culture.

The book Haripriya (2022) addresses the urgency of creating a separate space for the Northeast, especially by focusing on the articulation of people of these regions, facilitating the re-imagining of the heterogeneous cultures and linguistic ethnic groups. As reverberated by Misra (2011), "An intense sense of awareness of the cultural loss and recovery that came with the negotiation with 'other' culture is a recurrent feature of the literatures of the seven northern-eastern states". To use Kearney's interpretation of 'poetics' which means "an exploration of the human powers to make (*poiesis*) a world in which we may poetically dwell" (qtd. in Donoghue (2011), the poetics of space in the forms of writings deem necessary for the Northeast people to articulate persuasively their experiences of subjugation, racial discrimination, conflict and manifold issues which have been neglected in the larger discourse. For analysing the pressing issues of migration, assimilation, racism and many related issues, the select writings—"Angela" (a short story) and "Every Homecoming is in Fact, a Leaving" (a poem) by Amorette Grace Lyngwa, "Back Home" (memoir) by Leki Thungon and "Homesick" (a short story) by Malsawmi Jacob will be analysed for further understanding of the problems of Northeast people.

Many Northeasterners left their native places due to insurgencies, which disrupted their normal existence. After migrating to other cities within their nation in search of semblance and peace, what they have encountered differs from what they had visualized. The inability to speak Hindi and different physical features problematize the assimilation process. While commenting on the silence accommodation with India which led to the diasporic sweep of communities to the metros, Hazarika says that the violence of discrimination may continue, but the answer is also equally vibrant and open: the 'outsiders' are saying, "We are here and we're not going back. This is as much our place as anyone else's" (2018). In this case, the outsiders are basically the insiders, i.e. the Northeast people, who are treated as outsiders in their own country. The rift between the locals and the migrants is so enormous that it turns into abuse and harassment.

Amorette Grace Lyngwa's "Angela" narrates the narrator's ordeal, who desperately endeavours to assimilate into the Indian mainland culture to accept and validate her existence. Angela and the narrator belong to the same home town, Shillong, but they moved to South India. The narrative accentuates the encumbrance of the narrator, who seeks validation in mainland India while trying to integrate into the South Indian culture. She complains that due to their different features, Angela, with her brown skin and lotus eyes, is more acceptable to the South Indian culture, whereas the narrator, owing to her mongoloid features, fights for her presence. The people of different regions in India consider themselves different, but when it comes to the Northeast, they do not fit into the Indian discourse. Furthermore, as McDuie-Ra (2012) pronounces that:

There is a strong belief in both the India mainland and in most of the Northeast itself that the different state, autonomous units, and peoples grouped together as the 'Northeast' do not share. They will never be able to be part of India in the same ways that other diverse groups of peoples have been accommodated.

Moreover, there is a binary between people in the Northeast and those in other parts of India. The binary remains intact in every interaction, and the narratives of Northeastern lives do not fit into the standard canon of literature on India [McDuie-Ra \(2012\)](#).

Racism is usually entwined with many perplexing questions on various interrelated terms like xenophobia, hostility to 'outsiders' and 'strangers' [Rattansi \(2007\)](#). To the inhabitants of a country, the idea of protecting the indigenous identity is rooted in such a way that it is always an attempt on the part of the racist to prevent outsiders from settling in their native land. The narrative of "Angela" also weaves the poignancy of the insider-outsider syndrome when the narrator, who is not even an outsider, fails to fit into the dominant culture despite learning the language and culture of the host state, making her an outsider owing to her mongoloid features. In her desperate attempts to be part of the mainstream culture, she even disowns the home of her birth and prefers to call Bangalore her home.

Here, we find two narratives of migrants—first, those who have migrated and assimilated into mainstream India but were treated racially because of their differences; second, those who have migrated but still hold to their culture and ethnicity. The insider-outsider syndrome is created because the Northeast people look more like the Southeast Asian people than the majority of the Indians. Even though they are very much the insiders, they are treated as outsiders, thus furthering their estrangement from the rest of India. Unlike the narrator, Angela holds to her Shillongness, knowing that Bangalore will never accept the northeasterner. She has a sense of ethnic consciousness that shows her loyalty to her region or land of birth. The narrator despises Angela as she is everything that the narrator wants to disown—her old identity, home and culture. When she was harassed by the mainlanders for wearing a tight dress with a cigarette and was termed as easygoing, Angela reminded her of being an outsider in this strange place. Not entirely accepted by the host state, the narrator often looks at the mirror when asked about her place and belongingness. Despite experiencing racial prejudice, she holds indignantly to the culture which never accepts her. In her urgent need to assimilate into the hostland, she fails to recognize herself and does not remember anything about her ethnic identity. In the process, she feels a rage for disclaiming and repressing many memories of the past, and she ponders how both the worlds disown her and grieves the loss, which deprives her of her history, identity and belongingness, making her homeless and lose claim to everything that defines her existence.

Along with internal racism, moral policing to control the debauched behaviours of the Northeast people, endangering the inhabitants of the host state, becomes a matter of concern and also becomes one of the reasons for discrimination. The people of Northeast India are often portrayed as Westernised, immoral and promiscuous, indulging in immoral habits which lead to exclusion. The intrusion into their private lives heightens the vulnerability of the Northeast migrants when their identities are defined by the mainlanders in terms of how they should behave, live and stay. Social labelling is another factor in the discrimination against the Northeasterners. The reason for such labelling is that many Northeast states are predominantly tribal/community-based, and their social norms differ from those of the Indian communities. This misconception regarding Northeasterners, labelling them as lacking moral values, leads to prejudice against these people. [Remesh \(2012\)](#) has studied that the main reason behind such discrimination is the "lack of exposure of the local community to the rich cultural heritage and social norms and values of tribal communities of the NER." The images created by the media are also responsible for the discrimination against these people.

The locus of the Northeast within the cultural map of India, as [Verghese \(1996\)](#) alleged, has been portrayed as the relationship between core and periphery. Furthermore, the idea of the "mainstream" unknowingly suggests an arrogant or dismissive attitude towards "little" traditions. As India is not a melting pot, labelling the Northeast region as regional or peripheral, and insisting that it be culturally integrated into the mainstream, goes against the Indian tradition of accommodation and tolerance, which seeks unity in diversity. Thus, he proposes acculturation and synthesis rather than assimilation for making them part of India.

While discussing migrancy and home, the place and the memory are closely interconnected. Through memory, the migrants connect to the past lives which they left behind. Homecoming is not always a good experience for the migrants who are entangled in the violent torn state. The poem, "Every Homecoming is in Fact, a Leaving", by Amorette Grace Lyngwa, reverberates the longing for home tinged with memory. Every homecoming is forged with the sense of leaving. Homecoming only heightens the difference between what is left behind and what has been newly embraced in the new home. The rhetoric of home is built up out of the myths and folktales which are often remembered in bits and parts, and the poet laments how home is imagined out of "new origin myths out of folktales half-remembered, waiting for it to become home" (2022). The arrival in the new state is never completed, even if "you have changed into a city whore". She says, "Every longing for home is more fictitious, but every visit, a robbery" [Lyngwa \(2022\)](#). The act of homecoming and

then leaving is a process of displacement and dispossession from one's roots and memories, which becomes longing, and gradually, it leads to "what they call an uprooting, this is erosion."

Leki Thungon's "Back Home" is a memoir which traces the migration of the author from her place of birth to the cosmopolitan city in her youth and how her life oscillates in different states which coerces her to question the vague concept of "back home" which is used as a point of reference to the place of origin and also the place which gives assurance and solace to the grieving mind of the people on the move. She takes on the concept of "back home", which is generally attributed to the process of arrival and how someone encounters alienation and discrimination on arrival, especially when someone from the Northeast comes to the national capital and how these Northeast people are racially discriminated against.

The sense of alienation and unbelongingness to the Northeast people often comes with the racial difference inherent in the societal framework of India. The debate on racism and discrimination encountered by the Northeast people has been thwarted many times in the mainstream discourse. [McDuie-Ra \(2017\)](#) notes the connection between work and race, evident in certain metropolitan cities. The exodus of the migrants created a kind of fear in the host states, and later on, the attacks on the migrants. Moreover, racism against Northeast people brings solidarity with one another, especially while outside their homelands. But it could also be said that it is not entirely due to the "shared negative experience of racism and discrimination, but shared attributes that differentiate them from other communities in India" ([McDuie-Ra, 2017](#))

The concept of home has multiple significations. What is home to the Northeast people? When the notion of home becomes oppressive and a place for exclusion and discrimination, the meaning of home takes its own different turn. The "back home" as a notion indicates the experiences when someone is displaced in a new place and when a sense of belongingness seems rather bleak. In that bleakness and uncertainty, people of similar background and features are bonded together. Leki Thungon says, "back home" refers to a place of belongingness. However, in everyday conversation, this term actually refers to a difference and/ or a duality ([2022](#)). "Back home" is confounded in the sense that it is used as a point of reference to the place where one leaves behind, but it also acutely reminds the migrants of their difference in the host state, alienating them completely from the mainland discourse.

Leki Thungon refers to different layers of the concept of "back home" in this memoir, starting from her childhood memories at school and universities, which involved the process of constructing and articulating a fluid notion of home when she migrated for the first time for education. The notion of "back home" is treated as a "temporary refuge" from the harsh realities of the new life in a cosmopolitan city like Delhi, where people with different features, colours and languages are categorized differently in their own country/ homeland. They are often welcomed with racist remarks. The sense of exclusion further alienates them and brings them closer to "back home", which designates "a notion of a safe haven... marked by memories of familiar sounds, smells, flavours and places" [Thungon \(2022\)](#). A deep sense of loneliness and alienation arises when people are treated as outsiders, with a lasting impact on their minds. When their existence is disapproved by their own people on the basis of their difference in features, the author says she finds "solace in the idea of back home" which gives a sense of permanence to the very notion of belongingness depending on "distance/ or memory, and enjoys a capacious ability to morph into an orderly world with fixed tastes and aspirations" [Thungon \(2022\)](#). She remembered her hostel life, which reminded her of the place where one came from. It is again in this place where the difference deepens while mingling with dissimilar people. The author, in her memoir, necessitates the urgency of having a home to have a stable identity, without which a person will be a nomad, moving here and there, becoming a misfit in this world. Generally, she ponders upon the racial discrimination she encounters in New Delhi, where the Northeast people are not accepted openly and are poorly treated for looking different. Though New Delhi often attracts her for its prospects, which she does not find in her home town, she experiences alienation and dispossession in the very place which she calls her motherland, thereby escalating the problem.

Furthermore, she highlights how alienation intensifies in the adopted place when she meets people from her community speaking the same language and having the same background. She contemplates the foreignness that comes from recognition of a similar background, which is both alienating and comforting to the author. She also reflects on how people from the northeast migrate to Delhi for education, jobs, and a prospective life, and how they are frequently discriminated. Finally, she talks about "a transient home, between dreams of 'back home' and the realities of this home, demands no such clarifications" [Thungon \(2022\)](#).

On the other hand, Malsawmi Jacob's "Homesick" deals with the narrative of Joanna, a half-Mizo and half-Malayalee who got married to a foreigner in Georgia, Tbilisi. She always feels a kind of displacement for being a migrant in the host

country, but not only that, her father's family did not accept her and her mother for inheriting Mizo culture and lineage. Her mother was often taunted by her brother-in-law for being a free-spirited woman with a profound interest in music. He wanted her to assimilate into the Malayalee culture, serving the men and respecting the elders. Thoma Appachen's words, "A woman's duty is to serve! Not entertaining herself! Do you hear? Remember this if you wish to continue living among us!" [Malsawmi \(2022\)](#), clearly show how a Mizo woman who considers herself an Indian is never welcome to another Indian family. These words take the life of Joanna's mother, and later on, her father embraced death, making her an orphan, a homeless person belonging nowhere. To the foreigner, she is an Indian, to the Mizos, she is a *vai's* daughter (outsider's daughter), and to her father's Malayalee family, she is a Mizo tribal with no similarity.

Mizoram's tryst with outsiders has a long history. Mizos had a long struggle of subjugation by the Indian government in the 1960s-70s. The fear of a *vai* (an outsider) instilled in the minds of the Mizos who fought for a free and independent Mizoram and resolved to cut off its allegiance to India. With the imposition of the Armed Forces Special Power Act 1958 to curb the insurgent movement, the atrocities of the state forces increased, leading to mistrust and suspicion between the state forces, which mainly consisted of the Indian army and the Mizos. The sentiment of the Mizo people's hatred of the outsiders is projected in [Jacob \(2015\)](#), in which she articulates the voice of the Mizo people: "... the Mizo people can never be at home in India, the land of the *vai* people. Our culture is different. Our customs and practices are different. Our religion is different. So they do not consider us as their people" [Jacob \(2015\)](#). The Indians always remain outsiders for many ethnic communities in the Northeast, and there is a sense of alienation and isolation in this part of the country.

At last, Joanna strikes no roots with any of the culture, and she often misses her home, wanting to go home, but asks, "Where is home?" [Malsawmi \(2022\)](#). She remembers her husband saying, "It's time to take roots". In search of her roots, she decided to visit Mizoram and Kerala. In Mizoram, though she is welcome, she is seen as a *vai* (outsider). She heard her cousin saying, "She is a *Vai*, a *Vai* man's daughter. And married to another outsider whom we don't even know. She comes here and gets treated like a princess" [Malsawmi \(2022\)](#). This context alludes to Levinas's concept of 'home' emphasizing "its feminine nature and highlighting the home as a place of welcome, of hospitality and a place where wanderers can find sanctuary" as [Donoghue \(2011\)](#) has put it. Moreover, the home in this case has the potential for being a place of dignity which is open to the Other as well. Ultimately, Joanna realizes that "home is not a geographical location. It is people. It's family. Home is in the heart" (p.144). Prioritising home in this short story suggests a space of belonging and meaning to the individual trapped between cultures. This space gives complacency to the person who is uprooted and who is in search of her roots.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, home conveys different meanings to different people. Home is a fragmented place for some who migrated and whose concept of home is based on the myths and folktales which they remembered. Home is the old memories to which one holds adamantly, even with displacement. Longing becomes a distant memory for some whose home is uprooted due to conflict. Home for some is the roots to which their identities are attached, making them cognizant of their forefathers' lives. Home for some is the concept of 'back home', a vantage point of arrival and leaving. To some, home knows no geography and boundaries; it depends on the people of the host, and it is a matter of the heart. Whatever the notion of home, people in the Northeast hold onto their ethnic identity even in the face of disruption.

To the northeast people, the sense of home means the sense of belonging to the larger discourse of India, which carries its own political implications. Brendan O'Donnoghue remarks on Levinas's concept of home, which has the dangerous political consequences associated with the sense of home "for it implicitly sanctions the distinction between native inhabitants, those who are at home and outsiders, who are not at home" (2011). Though Northeast is part of India, its allegiance to the nation India is a contentious issue, as its people are yet to be accepted as part of the mainstream. Politically, the Northeast is alienated, and the repercussions of this can be discerned when its people are racially discriminated against, which, to some extent, leads to a sense of alienation and isolation. In the case of the northeast people, when they encounter racism in their own country, they question their sense of belonging and their fractured identities for being different in their own country. Above that, when they left their home in search of greener and more promising lives in mainland India, they never envisioned the forms of seclusion, estrangement and racial prejudices that the mainland Indians had on them. When they encountered racism, they felt uprooted and could not assimilate into the dominant Indian culture. They are treated with disdain due to a lack of understanding of the people of the Northeast, further aggravating the situation. They are treated as tribals with no culture, language and tradition and often imposed the worst form of discrimination.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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