

PROHIBITION ON *TIPE*, CULTURE CHANGE, AND THE APATANIS IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled “**Prohibition on *Tipe*, Culture Change, and the Apatanis in Arunachal Pradesh**” is the result of investigation carried out by me at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati, under the supervision of Prof. Sambit Mallick and Dr. Ngamjahao Kipgen. The work has not been submitted either in whole or in part to any other university/institution for a research degree.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that Ms. Tania Sen has prepared the thesis entitled “**Prohibition on Tipe, Culture Change, and the Apatanis in Arunachal Pradesh**” for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati. The work was carried out under our supervision and in strict conformity with the rules laid down either in whole or in part to any other university/institution for the purpose. It is the result of her investigation and has not been submitted either in whole or in part to any other university/institution for a research degree.

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Abstract

This thesis explores various social events and associated complex relations surrounding the event of prohibition on *tipe* among the Apatanis in Arunachal Pradesh. The main contribution of the thesis lies in the changing contours of the idea of development and modernization constitutive of modernity. The categorical imperative is to interrogate the idea of modernity itself. In other words, the idea of modernity remains unsettled and contemporary researches continue to be engaged in this. This study is a contribution in the same direction as new methods of looking at the indigenous people, and studying their struggles and negotiations with modernity. Ethnography is critically embedded in the present study. The study on the Apatanis in their homeland of Ziro valley attempts to grasp the underlying causes of culture change and its transition. The dynamic interrelations between the economic, cultural, political and psychological factors have important implications for the changing patterns of the Apatani life.

Developing the postcolonial and postmodern concepts of development, the thesis aims to move towards a new understanding of “modernity” and break the chains of “Western” civilizational discourse of studying community and/or knowledge. The field is where the theories are drawn from. The results have been drawn through an amalgamation of experiences shared by the respondents as well as the past research and theories surrounding the ideas of culture change, indigenous studies and the idea of modernity.

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CHAPTER 1: DEFINITIONS, LITERATURE AND THEORIES

Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both.

C.W. Mills, 1959

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Anthropological and sociological investigation of the human body and physicality (Synnott, 1993) has been receiving considerable attention in recent decades – surveying the history for thinking about the body and the senses, then focussing on specific themes such as gender, beauty, the face, hair, touch, smell and sight. The present study focuses on the social event of culture change in an indigenous setting in Ziro valley in Arunachal Pradesh (in India), with a focus on tradition, facial tattoos, prohibition on *tipe*, culture change and modernization.

The study deals primarily with culture change and modernization in/of an indigenous community. This chapter analyses the concepts used in this thesis like tribes, indigenous, culture change, body modification and modernization through the existing literatures and prevailing theories. The study is based on the Apatanis of Arunachal Pradesh and undertakes one aspect of the Apatani culture that went through changes and transitions, which is the tradition of marking the face. The traditional tattooing and piercing system is prohibited to be continued by a local youth association, the Apatani Youth Association (AYA), in the year 1971. This thesis is thus an attempt to understand the social complexities that led to this decision and the result of the ban.

By understanding and discovering the causes and consequences of the prohibition of this tradition, the study is unearthing the particular politico-economic context and placing the study in the theoretical frame of contemporary outlook on the question of modernity and culture

change. It may lead to some new conversations and discussions on the thick and rich scholarly topic of change in modernity. At the same time, contemporary methods and perspectives to study and analyse the lifestyles and practices of the indigenous people are explored and used in this study. The study aims to provide critical contributions to indigenous studies, development studies and methods of data collection in social science research. This is achieved through re-conceptualising certain terms like development, indigenous, modernity, ethnography, and oral history.

1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

When it comes to the existing literature and debates around the topics discussed in this thesis, there are several scholars who made tremendous contributions to the understanding of indigenous people, ethnography, oral history, culture change, modernization, stigma, and enculturation among other areas of study. The literature not only helps us understand but also aids in the analysis of data of study. In this section, some of those literatures are highlighted and also drawn heavily from for their contributions and perspectives. The purpose of providing the literature is also to be able to situate this particular study within the larger context of sociological theories and schools of thought, like sociology of development and sociology of knowledge. Sociology of development helps us critically analyse the development and transitions of certain societies like the ones in the Global South. Sociology of knowledge is a specialty that examines to what extent and in what ways the knowledge that we (tend to) produce is *relational*. For example, when Mannheim (1954) attributed superiority of scientific knowledge over non-sciences including literature, art and music, Bloor (1976) questioned Mannheim (1954) and wrote, ‘All knowledge *including* scientific knowledge is socially caused’ (emphasis added).

It is important to realise where the study stands at in terms of the prevailing and generating differing arguments. Various new ways to collect data have led scholars to also store these vast range of information in several forms like diaries, photographs, videos, speech and many more. Several of such literatures are also taken into account here. Being new forms of data, analysis of their strengths and weaknesses can provide good insights to the scholarly world.

The literature used in the study is divided according to the topic of discussion. Although the topics follow no particular sequence, it has been formatted in a logical manner. At the same time, studies and scholarly writings are drawn from several disciplines and schools of thought. This helps us broaden our perspective and get an interdisciplinary outlook. Thus we begin by a discussion on the body, moving specifically into tattooing and then finally on tattooing among the Apatanis, followed by a discussion on some of the theoretical concepts used like stigma, modernity and culture change. The literatures are drawn from a wide range of disciplines to ensure a critical and multidisciplinary perspectives.

Body: Body as a subject of study has existed within the sociological scholarship for quite some time now. Some of the notable works that exist are that of Foucault (2000), Turner and Featherstone (2010), and Mauss (1973). The idea of human body as a social arena of power and politics is fascinating to look into, making the topic an important one within social sciences. However, social constructivism surrounds the question of body inevitably given the fact that anatomy of the body keeps transforming in accordance with social reality (Turner, 2008). Social constructivists' emphasis on the role of polity, economy, and cultural factors in determining individual actions fails to see individuals as equally important actors capable of constructing reality. Critics of social determinism rightfully explain the flaws in the theory that must be avoided because humans are not passive actors and mere recipients of what society throws their

way. Marcel Mauss (1973) provides a series of observations on the manner human body is utilised in the manner 'taught' by the society. His 'observation' implies that each of human behaviour is taught rather than attained.

Bryan S. Turner's contributions to the field of sociology of body hold immense significance in this study. The founder of *Body & Society* (1995) has extensively written several books and articles on the topic. Turner expands on the significance of body as a topic of social science research. This journal has been successful in publishing several ground-breaking researches on the field of sociology of body. The current editor, Mike Featherstone's book *Body Modification* (2000) touches upon topics of branding, implants, surgeries, tattooing and many more in the West, questioning the return to indigenous communities and 'primitive' ways of marking the body.

With the increasing advancement in technology and medical sciences, the idea of body assumes greater significance in the present context. New developments in the field of sociology of body have made us question what constitute social body and how is it beyond mere physicality (Synnott, 1993; Crossley, 2001; Waskul and Vannini, 2016).

Embodiment of culture is another aspect provided by scholars like Cohen (2009), Voestermans and Verheggen (2013). They explain that human bodies are one of the carriers of culture in society. Body language plays a pivotal role. Scholars from varied disciplines of psychology (Ussher, 1989; Demarest and Allen, 2000; Cash, 1990), archaeology (Joyce, 2005; Boric and Robb, 2008; Meskeil, 2016; Krutak, 2015), sociology (Fisher, 2002; Shilling, 2004; Turner, 2008), cognitive studies (Altabe and Thompson, 1996), sports (Cole, 1993; Hargreaves and

Vertinsky, 2007), to name a few, study and conceptualise how human body is an important source to unveil their culture and cultural affiliations.

When discussing about body markings and bodily artefacts, it is important to take note of some cultural anthropologists who shed light on the question of signs, marks and symbolism. Cultural anthropologists like Douglas (1966), Saussure (1916), Geertz (1973), Turner (1967) among many others have worked on the area of importance of signs and symbols in the formation of culture and society. Victor Turner's symbolic approach suggests that the actions of humans can be determined through signs and symbols. Borrowing concepts from Emile Durkheim (1895), Turner finds meaning and purpose of social actions in the symbols prevalent in the society. In his *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (1967), Turner has thoughtfully put together the rituals and social life within the Ndembu of Zambia, exploring the social life through their ritual symbols.

Mary Douglas was a symbolic anthropologist, who worked on the categorization of societal cosmologies on the basis of grids and groups. She writes, "Body is a symbolic medium which is used to express particular pattern of social relations". She also explored the idea of purity and pollution which should be noted is closely related to body markings depending on the society's cultural and religious associations. The markings on the body can be symbolic of a wide variety of things. In *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (1970), Douglas distinguishes between grid and group to separate class from status, by following a structural functionalist approach – complementarity and reciprocity of roles in the social division of labour.

Similarly, Malcolm Quinn in *The Swastika: Constructing the Symbol* (1994) explains the idea that each symbol derives its meaning through the socio-political context of its existence.

Malcolm's book demonstrates the power of a symbol to manipulate human behaviour by tracing the history of swastika through the years across the globe. The book narrates how symbols are capable of representing race, ideology, nation and/or political party, which is relevant to grasp the power of symbolic or material images.

Enid Schildkrout (2004) took issues of modernity and exotic Other into question when studying the 'inscribed body'. He sees the individual body as "the interface between the individual and society". What we find interesting in Schildkrout's reflection is the reference to what is called "second skin" – all impermanent forms of body decor like masks, jewellerys, wigs, etc.

The association of body marks with criminality was further asserted by the use of body as a writing space by the capitalist and colonial states. These authorities often used the body of a criminal as a writing surface to mark the crime (Clastres, 1989; DeMello, 1993; Anderson, 2004). The human body was not seen as an individual and as something personal but rather as something through powers that be. That is why traditional tattoos were not individual choice rather imposed upon (Turner, 2005). Such delineation helps us realize the way body has been viewed over years and at the same time the relation between tattooing and criminality. J. Caplan's *Written on the Body: The Tattoo in European and American History* (2000) depicts the split nature of tattooing as exotic and sensual, on the one hand, and its association with criminality and slavery, on the other.

The imperial and colonial states considered people as not only the subject of their rule but also considered their bodies as object in control of the state's power. That is why we see branding and labelling of bodies as criminal or slave in the colonial and pre-colonial times. The individual's control over their body as opposed to community-imposed rules is supposed to be a marker to

what is termed as “modernity”. Present times evidence more individualised control of the body. Although individuals still continue to mark their bodies, what they wish to mark on it is their ‘free will’ and their own personal choice. It is beyond the scope of the present study to critically engage in the debates on free-will determinism. But in this study, we question the presumptions and generalisations about body markings. The association of tribes with criminals and slaves may be traced to its initial use in the western countries that did not limit it to those continents but rather it made its way to the whole world and is used by every community as either reward or punishment. Several feminist studies have also been conducted over this idea of identity through body and how society controls the body to control identity (Visweswaran, 1990; Mathur, 2008).

Tattooing: Scholars (Krutak, 2015; Deter-wolf et al., 2016) are trying to trace the archaeological footprint of ancient tattooing and several recent studies in the area have come up. A study by Deter-Wolf, Robitaille, Krutak and Galliot (2016) emphasize that Ötzi, the Tyrolean mummy, possesses the world’s oldest preserved tattoos. This mummy is 5200 years old which makes the practice way more ancient than the human written history itself. Aaron Deter-Wolf, an archaeologist, has thoroughly looked into ancient tattoos, exploring their origins, relevance, inks and tools used in the past. He foregrounds the reassurance that body markings which are today called tattoos have been part of the human civilization for many several centuries, although many consider it new. It underscores the origin of the practice of tattooing in order to attain a detailed understanding of the transitions and circumstances. Archaeological studies have advanced in leaps and bounds, and have also provided the academia with evidences about tattooing that would otherwise be unbelievable (Deter-Wolf and Peres, 2013; Yatsenko, 2013; Deter-Wolf and Krutak, 2017).

Scholars have attempted to find out the reasons and purposes of these ancient body marks (Wohlrab et. el., 2007; Atkinson, 2002; Frederick and Bradley, 2000). They surely had some role in the lives of early *Homo sapiens*. This is re-established by the fact that most of the earlier civilizations and indigenous communities had the tradition of marking their bodies. Several studies show the prevalence of body marking in indigenous societies all across the world, although over the years this tradition became extinct (Turner, 1995; Loren, 2001; Fisher, 2002; Balvay, 2008; Friedman Herlihy, 2012; Alvarez, 2019). Referring to tattooing in North America, Balvay (2008) writes, “All the nations of North America seem to have practiced this art, although certain people tattooed more than others” (Balvay, 2008, p. 1)

The prevalent theory that Captain Cook was the first to introduce tattooing in the West after his voyages in the islands of Oceania has been proven to an erroneous one. A recent study shows that the practice had been prevailing in the lands of Europe and Native Americans long before 1768 that is before Captain Cook undertook his first voyages (Friedman, 2014).

While for some it constitutes marks by/of the body like a tradition (Douglas, 1970); for others is it an expression of personal desires (Yates, 1966; Atkinson, 1971; Vergine, 2000). In ‘On Tattooing’ (1988) A. W. Buckland provides an understanding of the role and structure the practice has undergone over years. Sometimes used an ornament and sometimes used as a marker into manhood, such varied uses and methods of marking the body is well described by Buckland. She believes that “this painful mode of personal adornment was adopted at a very early period of human history, and was at one time almost universal” (Buckland, 1888, p. 319).

The Maori, the Phillipines, and most indigenous people in India all have had the tradition of marking the face (Te Awekotuku, 1997; Tan, 2013; Phanon, 2015). But the unfortunate truth is

that all of these communities face the danger of losing their tradition in the face of changing politico-economic scenario of their respective societies.

Turner (2005) explains the transition of humans after getting marked. Turner is critical of the consumerist culture rising around tattoos. Because these tattoos which can be bought and sold borrow signs from traditional 'exotic' cultures, Turner delves into processes of production and reproduction. In the conclusion he writes about the ironic nature of primitiveness because 'committed primitivism is no longer a feasible option' (Turner, 2005).

Jill A. Fisher in 'Tattooing the Body, Marking Culture' (2002) provides a historical narrative of the tattooing practice starting from the early use of the term to late capitalism up to 20th century USA. It also looks into the construction of meaning behind tattooing which is described as a physical as well as a social practice by Fisher. Fisher cleverly provides the varied definitions of body modification which different people at different time periods associate with it. Fisher also explains the stigma or taboo associated with tattooing till the 20th century USA. Further he provides a perception about the practice not only from the person getting tattooed, but also the person making it. In other words, experiences of both tattoo artist and the tattooed person are taken into account to provide the promised 'multiple levels of constructed meaning' (Fisher, 2002).

In 'Modifying the Body: Motivations for getting tattooed and pierced', Wohlrab, Stahl and Kappeler (2007) provide ten broad motivational categories for possible motivations of tattooing or getting pierced by making use of explorative approaches. These categories or 'motivational clusters' are diverse from fashion to spirituality, from addiction to affiliation.

Clare Anderson's 'Legible Bodies: Race, Criminality and Colonialism in South Asia' (2004) describes the practices of tattooing the criminals prevalent in South Asia during colonialism. She conceptualizes the manner in which the physical body of a criminal is used as a text to identify and mark the crime committed.

Josep Marti's work in 'Tattoo, Cultural Heritage and Globalization' (2010) runs along similar lines as that of Anderson. At the very beginning, Marti states that several cultures have lost their rich tradition of tattooing due to western influence and portray 'uniformized attitudes coming from dominant paradigms'. He goes on to state five reasons for the extinction of traditional tattooing among most cultures, namely, loss of functionality, dynamic of fashion trends, aversion by civil authorities, aversion toward body modification by collectives with some moral authority, ideal body images spread by globalisation and mass media. These reasons hold prevalence in the case of the Apatanis and is found to be overlapping in our study.

Marti's findings are along the similar lines of figurational sociology. Norbert Elias's figurational sociology (1939) based on 20th century Canada, deals with two key sociological problems; viz. people's motivations and change in personality that make them mark themselves. Elias's '*The Civilising Process*' (1939) also provides insights into the development of state which he recognizes as not merely a political but also a mental process, which holds relevance when we look at the changes in the Apatani community and attempt to understand it as much more than a mere transition. The complex multi-layered social structures that go into any social phenomena need to be taken into consideration.

Juniper Ellis (2008) tells us a story about tattoos. She narrates the journey this art made from the Pacific to the rest of the world, specifically the West. According to her, 'modern tattoo begins in

the Pacific' (Ellis, 2008). In this excellent detailed work, tattoos are portrayed as signifiers, a social language and at the same time, she notes the shifting nature of this language, depending on where the bearer at a particular point of time is well portrayed. An important aspect of her work is that it challenges the assumption that indigenous communities never change over time. However, Ellis's unidimensional focus on the Pacific does not fully recognize (or take into consideration) the influence of older tattoos from other varied cultures.

All these works indicate the significance of tattooing in the respective cultures and how important it is to trace the origin of these practices to get a better understanding of the role it plays. Studies on body marks and their significance in the society are thus not rare, but rather what is important to point is the fact that most of these studies look at the changing meaning systems associated with the term. Though the art of tattooing originated in pre-modern economies there is hardly any focus on these ancient forms of body marks and evolution.

Several scholars (Sanders, 1989; Caplan, 1997, 2000; Featherstone, 2000) from the field of sociology and social anthropology have looked into this idea. These researchers have looked at the world of body modifications and markings from various perspectives. Atkinson's '*Tattooed*' (1971) takes narratives directly from the tattoo holders, presenting a grounded perspective on the practice from its makers. Atkinson looks at the act of tattooing as much a response to the stigma as it is a form of personal expression (Atkinson, 1971).

Clinton R. Sanders's work (1985, 1988, 1989) is another important literature when looking into the relation between body marks and social structures. He calls tattooing a form of symbolic communication. Through his several studies, Sanders has explored various social aspects of tattooing practice, although mainly in Canada: from looking at the impact of 'organizational

structure of the production world' on tattooing choices (1989), to 'purchase risk' and 'production risk' (1985). Continued association with the marginal social groups has influenced the probability of tattoo artists to showcase their skill and grow as serious creators (Sanders, 1989). At the same time, those who choose to be marked also put a lot at stake which has a direct influence on social relations. The tattooed person carefully chooses who to reveal her/his 'deviant' actions to, leaving this 'marginal consumer' dissatisfied. Sanders has dissected the world of tattoos for the general audience to the scholarly masses alike. He has efficiently located the transition of the practice from a more deviant and revolting action to a more serious, sensitive and thought-invoked action. The claim is that since no social phenomenon is constant and change is the only common element between them all, tattooing too has undergone several changes and will continue to do so. In *'Marks of Mischief'* (1988), Sanders depicts the relationship tattooing has had with stigma, criminality and deviance as well as how a tattooed person chooses to shape her/his identity and consequently form certain social relations and interactions. Drawing upon Goffman's (1963) work on stigma, Sanders has accurately explained the social perceptions and preconceived notions surrounding the practice of tattooing in North America like markers of alienation or voluntary stigma (Sanders, 1989). The idea that it is not an indigenous practice aids in the formation of such ideologies. Alan Taylor (2016) article focuses on the Ramnamis of Chattisgarh, India who use tattoo as "acts of faith and defiance to those in higher castes". Such traditions of tattooing reflect the multiple uses and meaning body marks can have.

The relationship between indigenous communities and body marks assumes greater significance in the context of the present study. The indigenous people were the early settlers of the society and their way of the life was the first instance of human civilisation. Over the years they

disintegrated and their practices evolved. One such practice was that of marking the body. These early communities made use of body marking for a wide range of purposes. Thus body piercing, permanent marks, certain haircuts and even certain operations (in traditional way) were common practices among the indigenous people around the world. Of course this underwent several transitions and now there are handfuls of indigenous people who still practice their traditions of marking the body; for example the Kalinga of Philippines or the Maori of Polynesia (Salvadore-Amores, 2011; Kips, 2011; Awekotuku, 1997; Robley, 2003; Pawlik, 2011).

Scholars (Awekotuku, 1997, Samantaraya, 2019) and tattoo practitioners (Moranngam Khaling, 2016) from the indigenous communities have also written or talked about the tattoo tradition practiced in their culture. Indigenous communities from the developing countries are increasingly getting represented in bigger scale due to more studies and research done in these areas. The question of whether a true representation of those who do not often get an opportunity to represent themselves is ever possible requires critical examination. The insider/outsider lines get blurred. This makes attainment of representation a difficult task. In such scenario, experiences of indigenous people can be best presented only through their own memories and narrations. The present study aims to present the views of the people attained through their narrations, avoiding the trap of ethnocentrism.

Indigenous studies: “Indigenous studies” as a discipline and field of research is crucial while dealing with equality, development and modernization. The discipline has seen major contributions and progress in research over the years as well as several changes in our understanding of ‘indigenous’, ‘indigeneity’ and the overall community of the tribes. “Indigenous studies” has undergone modification in leaps and bounds in terms of understanding

and studying tribes. The way early anthropologists and researchers used to observe and explain them is certainly not the same in any measure.

Moreover, indigenous people have often been misunderstood and misrepresented. Early laws as well as some writings often portray them as savage, uncivilized or undeveloped. The colonial reports and 18th century anthropological reports have portrayed them as the exotic Other and 'different' (Radhakrishna, 2001). The Criminal Tribes Act (1871) by British India described them as 'criminal by birth'. The law notified 150 tribes as criminals. Several scholars have extensively written about the status and struggles of various indigenous communities (Sengupta, 1980; Lancaster, 1994).

Representation becomes more troubled if the community is from what has been known as "third world" or "developing" or "underdeveloped" country, where representation and growth is already politically manipulated or culturally constructed. So the issues related to development and integration is double layered for them, as the pressure builds up dually at a national as well as at an international level. Scholars working on the indigenous communities of the 'third world' countries have extensively dwelt upon it (Brown, 2004; Li, 2007, 2014).

Works of several other scholars working on and with the indigenous communities are of equal importance. Kent Redford (1991, 2009); Stuart Blackburn (2003, 2008, 2015); Margaret Mead (1928, 1938, 1953); Christopher von Fürer-Haimendorf (1944-45); Stephen Fuchs (1960, 1963, 1977, 1988); Radcliffe-Brown (1922, 1931, 1952); Robert Redfield (1953, 1955, 1956); L.P. Vidyarthi (1977, 1986); Behera (1997-2015); Aurora (1963, 1985); Pathy (1982, 1984); Xaxa (1999) are just a mention to name a few of them.

Since its inception in 1945, Anthropological Survey of India (ASI) has done many studies on the castes and tribes of India. It has published studies on the indigenous communities of India which were possibly the first ethnographic accounts of the indigenous communities from people within the country. Verrier Elwin was the deputy director of the Institute and wrote extensively on the situation of indigenous people of India. His book, “A Philosophy of NEFA” (1957) explores the ‘tribesmen’ of the Northeast Frontier Agency. In the very first chapter he questions if the indigenous people should be left alone instead of seeking to study them. He comes to the conclusion that isolation of societies is not possible and admits that the administration of NEFA is bringing the indigenous people closer to “mainstream modern life” by building roads to “make plains easier of access”, “encouraging national language and Assamese” to help communicate, western education and organising tours around India especially New Delhi (pg. 3). These changes have in fact taken place, partially or fully, and transformed the indigenous way of life, like in the case of Apatanis.

D. K. Behera (1997-2015) along with Georg Pfeffer has written ten volumes on varied social aspects of the indigenous people. Their structure, identity, psychological development as well as questions around health are brought to light through these rich writings.

G S Aurora (1963, 1964, 1985) in his numerous studies provides in-depth and elaborate details of the lives of various ‘adivasi’ communities. Through his writings on the indigenous community called Bamanta of Madhya Pradesh, Aurora (1963) provides the readers an understanding of how culture of the Adivasis are transformed through the culture of the feudal lords.

Virginius Xaxa in ‘Transformation of Tribes in India: Terms of Discourse’ (1999) explains the way tribes are being looked at in the modern scholarship- ‘tribe’ as a term has undergone sea

changes over the years. He explains the loss of tribal identity in relation to other ‘mainstream communities’. Since its inception, these terms have of course changed dramatically. One cannot claim which culture is mainstream and which is not. Moreover, indigenous communities are not mere recipients of the impact by other communities. Rather they are active participants in the process of transition.

Apatani: Historically, there have been 'official' designations labelling tribes. The British administration of India, in 1871, named some tribes as 'criminals' under the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 (Radhakrishna, 2001). After independence, in 1952, the Government of India repealed the old law. The stereotypes and prejudices still exist and discrimination was perpetuated post-Independence when the denotified tribes (who were previously notified as criminals) were reclassified as habitual offenders in 1959 with the Habitual Offenders Act (1952), which changed the nomenclature from 'Criminal' to 'Denotified' tribes (Kapadia, 1952; Simhadri, 1978).

The increasing need felt by scholars and policymakers to “improve” and “help” the indigenous communities is both unnecessary as well as useless (Li, 2007). Indigenous people are constantly pressurised to change in the name of progress and development. These changes, be it land rights or policies for resource utilization, might occasionally work in favour of indigenous communities but for the most part they seldom benefit the indigenous people. By now we all know that investment by big companies and industries promising to keep the needs and space of the locals in mind is invalid and holds no ground. Yet these projects for ‘development’ do not stop. The repeated violation of promise to help them progress and the failure of these promises to work gives rise to feelings of further discrimination, depletion and separation. This also reflects the exploitative relation that indigenous people have with non-indigenous ones.

Colonial reports have been the main source of information for most of the indigenous communities in India. Even though flawed and distorted, the images they produced have been used in the past and continue to be used as sources of information about the communities. When it comes to the Apatanis, Fürer-Haimendorf and Elizabeth (Betty) Barnado (1944-45); Ursula Graham Bower (1913), and Blackburn (2003, 2008) provide elaborate reports among several of the other officials who visited the region. More recent times have produced several other writings on the culture, tradition and lifestyle of the inhabitants of the Ziro valley, many of whom are from within the community as well. This type of an insiders' perspective is utmost crucial to get a true sense of the way people want to see and portray themselves to the outside world. Mead (1934) explains this idea of looking glass self which aptly applies here. According to Mead, people define themselves the way they would want others to see them.

Some of the existing writings exist by members of the Apatani community itself are by Kani (1993), Kaning (2008), Gyati (2014) and Tadu (2017). The works of these scholars are in-depth and essential to attain a better understanding of the community. Kani (2008) has written three books on the life and culture of the Apatanis. Being a member of the community, his writings originate from first hand experiences and from emotions as well. Such writing is vastly different from the one written by someone who is not part of the community or does not have any experience living in the valley.

Kaning (2008, 2010) is another scholar from the valley itself who wrote two books on the life of the Apatanis and several religious texts on the Donyi Polo religion followed by Apatani and some neighbouring tribes. These religious texts are very important for a society who has little to no written documents on their past, ancestors and heritage. These documented folklores (Kaning,

2011) help studies like ours to gather data which are not mentioned and available in any other official documents.

The initial purpose of the study was to record traditional practices of the Apatanis because it had not been researched enough. So the lack of literature on the tattooing practice of the community is no surprise. Especially when it comes to the origin of this practice and its social significance there are a lot of stories, confusions, misconceptions and non-uniformity in the narratives and the lack of scholarly writing does not help much, if not adding to the confusion. However, there have been some passing comments on the tattooing practice of the Apatanis (Blackburn, 2008; Bower, 1913). Thus, this research aims to fill the gap, at least partially, that exists about the history and purpose of these traditional tattoos.

The tattooing tradition among the Apatanis is old and it is difficult to trace its origin. Both women and men used to mark their faces at a young age to most likely, mark their membership to the tribe. The symbols are basic lines whose symbolic purposes are unknown. But like many other tribes, they had to give up their tradition because of the changing society. Every society undergoes transformation. And so do their culture.

Stigma: The world of indigenous has unfortunately been often misrepresented and for a long time these socially, politically, economically and geographically isolated communities had been denied several of their rights and marginalised. Thus their association with stigma is not surprising. In fact, according to Goffman (1963) most people get stigmatized “at least in some connections and in some phases of life”. Stigma can be either at individual level, collective level or both. Stigma has a powerful lasting impact on the memory and for many does invoke change. Goffman’s ideas on stigma hold relevance till date especially when it comes to the indigenous

people. In India and most of the world, indigenous people are raising concerns over the discriminating and prejudice towards them over the several years, which has deeply impacted their socio-political condition. This is of course directly concerned with stigma and the distorted picture of indigenous people presented in the public domains. The overbearing social stigmatisation prevalent in the case of indigenous and indigenous studies is alarming but through contemporary research and policies this fact can be changed. This study draws from this aspect of tribal stigma significantly. The idea of stigma being powerful enough to provoke change and transition amongst individuals as well as groups or communities is analysed further in the fourth chapter when we look into the Apatanis and their transition through social evolution at length and in detail.

Writers such as Frieh (2020), Whetten et al. (2008) Hong and Kang (2017) have explored the concept of trauma caused by stigma. Jeffrey C. Alexander and his colleagues provided a theory of cultural trauma which “occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways” (Alexander et al., 2004: 1).

Ron Eyerman’s (2004, 2019) conception on cultural trauma examines events in fresh light to grasp memory and identity formation. He explains how certain identities are formed based on collective experiences of trauma. Taking powerful memories like racism and 9/11 into consideration, his theory of cultural trauma grasps the interplay of psychological, social and political factors very accurately.

Many of the stigma studies, viz. Corrigan and Watson (2002), Link, Yang and Phelan (2004), Corrigan and Bink (2005), and Rüsçh et al. (2005) focus on the relationship between psychological trauma and the social behavioural response caused by it. Stigma and shame caused by psychological disorders or medical condition are a common theme of analysis within the scholarly writings (see Cunningham et al., 2002; Chapple et al. 2004). While these studies explain the individual aspect in depth, little attention is paid to the factor of social trauma, or the idea of collective stigma faced by a social group as a whole. Ethnic groups, feminists, homosexuals and other minority groups often face discrimination as a whole. Only few studies (Sutton et al, 2014, Narayana, 2000; Chase and Walker, 2013) focus on the shame and stigma caused by socio-economic conditions like poverty. Thus, the discrimination and stigma faced by them collectively as a social group needs to be taken into consideration.

Stigma may arise from two types of social affiliation: one, belonging to a social category which is discriminated against; two, having an individual trait which the society looks down upon. People having such trait may be seen as similar to others having the same traits, but there is not enough “class consciousness” for them to form a formal social category collectively. There however is a deep relation between stigma and body marks. Scholars have documented that the word ‘stigma’ originally meant to be marked (Goffman, 1963; Jones, 1987). The reputation built around the early years of when tattoo entered the western world, its association with stigma cannot be overlooked. A negative connotation around the world made many to perceive the old tradition with contempt.

However, in his article titled ‘Stigma: Tattooing and Branding in Graeco-Roman Antiquity’, Christopher P. Jones (1987) explains that in Greece the term stigma was meant to refer to only

penal tattoos and thus makes an argument against the popular belief that the term 'stigmata' refers to the practice of branding humans. Arguments about the origin of the word still exist.

Several studies have also focussed on the experiences of stigma and collective trauma experienced by the indigenous communities across the globe. Brave Heart, Chase, Elkins, and Altschul (2011) narrate the experiences of discrimination, oppression and racism amongst the indigenous people of America. The study found impact on the emotional and overall mental health of the respondents due to the intergenerational massive group trauma that they experienced. Thus the authors hope to reduce emotional suffering by empowering indigenous people and reclaim traditional knowledge and identity.

Another study by Isbister-Bear, Hatala and Sjoblom (2017) looks that the impact of colonisation on promotion of stigma, stereotype, prejudice against the indigenous Canadians. The historical colonial policies are believed to have reinforced racist stereotypes and thereby discriminatory behaviours of the non-indigenous population towards the indigenous ones. The writers argue that such instances have repetitive negative consequences on health and well-being.

Culture Change: Culture change has been part of human civilization ever since its formation. What is cultural change? Culture change depends on how the society constructs and perceives it. Every society undergoes changes depending on their socio-economic history and the direction its inhabitants want to give it.

As simple is this truth about cultural change, the underlying factors that determine such changes are far from simple. Several social factors play a role, each equally important, when it comes to the determining socio-political factors. Historical events too play a major role while trying to grasp the course of change of cultures.

Culture change can take several forms and have been looked at through several lens. The process and direction of these changes determine the term that is associated with it. Acculturation, enculturation, cultural diffusion, cultural lag, etc. are some of the names used by scholars to address the issue of change in culture and their forms.

According to a memorandum by Redfield, Linton and Herskovits (1936), “Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups” (1936: 1). In the underlying note they mention that acculturation is not the same as culture-change but rather an aspect of it. “Current definitions of acculturation describe it as ‘essentially a continuous, dynamic process’ rather than a static event (Melville, 1983; Ramirez, 1984)” (cited in Clark and Hofsess, 1998: 37).

Guarnaccia and Hausmann-Stabile (2016) argue that due to the negative connotation and post-modern turn in the field, anthropologists abandoned the study of acculturation and sociologists and psychologists embraced it. Spiro (1995) explains that sociologists and anthropologists have been concerned with acculturation for a long period of time now. The study shows a corelation between acculturation and social status within the community, stating that those with higher social status are more likely to be acculturated. They state that “the acculturation of ethnic groups is unique, as has already been noted, in that the acculturator is predominantly a sedentary group, which is numerically and politically dominant, while the acculturatee is an immigrant group” (pg. 1249). These studies provide us a skeleton for what to expect in the field. At the same time, these literatures are important to receive a comparative perspective. E. Franklin Frazier (1957) distinguished between “material acculturation” and “ideational acculturation”.

In contrast to acculturation, there is the process of enculturation which has been defined as “the process of socialization to and maintenance of the norms of one’s heritage culture, including the salient values, ideas and concepts” by Herskovits (1848). Tan (2014) writes, “Enculturation refers to the acquisition of one’s own culture, including its values, behaviors, beliefs, understandings, social norms, customs, rituals, and languages. A term used in sociology and anthropology, it can be thought of as a socialization process whereby family members, peers, and other members of society help people learn normative social standards” (p. 393). Being similar to the process of socialization, this process hardly entails any form of cultural change.

The notion of ‘cultural diffusion’ will also aid in our understanding of the empirical data collected about the Apatanis. Franz Boas (1937) proposes the notion of cultural diffusion by writing, “the assumption that any culture is autonomous, uninfluenced from outside sources, or that each type of man produces a culture which is an expression of the biological make-up of the race to which he belongs, is quite untenable.” (1937: 295).

The culture of body marking has also undergone several changes. Although the reason and aim of these changes may differ, the value such traditions hold in the formulations of societies is undeniable. In the Apatanis too *tipe* played a major part in the past and continues to play in (re)articulating the course of change. *Tipe* formed an integral part of the Apatani culture that has undergone social and cultural changes.

The change in the Apatani society is also a form of culture change. Like many other aspects of the Apatani life, the tradition of marking the face to underwent change and was eventually prohibited. As a form of enculturation, the present study looks at this type of culture change.

Sociology of modernity: The study also draws from theories working on and around the idea of modernity. The patterns of behaviour and decision making by the Apatanis largely reflect the influences of western thinking and their approach to development. Ideas like multiple modernity, post-modernity and decolonizing modernity are taken into account to understand the situation of the Apatanis.

Modernisation theory was born in the era post the chaos and change caused by World-War II. The models of development presented promised economic transition towards growth. However, the ideas of uniformity and staged transition promoted by the proponents of this theory was later realised to be flawed and even discriminatory. All the aspects of the so-called First world countries were romanticised, making the poor countries dependent and poorer. Consequently, globalisation and liberalisation caused many changes, both economic as well as political, to most countries across the globe. Many countries and their resident communities accepted the so-called “superior” way of the life as the desirable way of life, leading to loss of local knowledge and culture alike. However, the path of development is distinct for every society based on their history and knowledge systems.

It is important to revisit the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals. It enables [its user] to take into account how individuals, in the welter of their daily experience, often become falsely conscious of their social positions. Within that welter the framework of modern society is sought, and within that framework the psychologies of a variety of men and women are formulated. The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relation between the two within society (Mills, 1959: 11–12). The sociocultural construction of *tipe* should be examined in its

'historical integrity' (Kuhn 1962). The present study goes beyond the narrow confinements of dichotomies of opinions, whether by researchers or respondents included.

As Mills writes, "Unless one assumes some trans-historical theory of the nature of history, or that man in society is a non-historical entity, no social science can be assumed to transcend history. All sociology worthy of the name is "historical sociology" (1959: 162). Abrams stated, "In my understanding of history and sociology, there can be no relation between them because, in terms of their fundamental preoccupations, history and sociology are and always have been the same thing. Both seek to understand the puzzle of human agency and both seek to do so in terms of the process of social structuring. Both are impelled to conceive of that process chronologically; at the end of the debate the diachrony – synchrony distinction is absurd. Sociology must be concerned with eventuation, because that is how structuring happens. History must be theoretical, because that is how structuring is apprehended. Historical sociology is thus not some special kind of sociology; rather, it is the essence of sociology". (1982: 2) Similarly Giddens writes, "What distinguishes social sciences from history? I think we have to reply as Durkheim did ... nothing-nothing, that is, which is conceptually coherent or intellectually defensible." (1985: 357-358). Thus to understand what constitutes modernity for a particular society, it is crucial that we grasp the history and past of that society.

Ronald Inglehart and Wayne E. Baker (2000) explain that there are two paths to development, one with the traditions and the other without. Modernization theorists wanted development without tradition because for them the traditions and cultures of a society were holding it back from development. According to this work, critiques of modernization theory argue with traditions because they see the problem as existing outside, rather than within the society. Ronald

Inglehart's (2000) work of cultural shift and modernization, also succinctly explains the theory of modernization.

Critiques of modernization theory argue that there is not one single form of modernization. Postmodernists are propagators of multi-modernity. For the purpose of this thesis, we refer to 'modernization' as was explained by early 1990s theorists, that is, improved education, better healthcare facilities and standards of living. Because it is easier to change traditions and replicate other cultures, rather than being different, many choose this path of development. At the same time, the hopes and aspirations of a community have had a major impact in determining the path they choose not only for themselves but for the entire future generations to come.

Ziro became a post-industrial society, in Daniel Bell's (1973) terms, before industrialization hit. That is because the valley made a big leap from being primarily an agricultural society to a service society. There are very little industries set up in the region, mostly due to its geographical shortcomings. A large share of the monetary influx comes from the tourism industry with a big turnover (Choudhury et al., 2016; Patnaik, 2020).

The study puts the impact of the world outside Ziro into the Apatani society in the larger framework of the modernization theory. The world portrays the idea of development in a linear manner – that is the manner in which western countries have developed. This picture attracts several groups and group members to follow them. The ideas of capitalist development and socialist progress are powerful ones, and vulnerable groups like the indigenous communities want to follow either or both of them to attain similar statuses.

Let us explain some of the crucial terms used in this thesis and the meanings associated when referring to. By tattooing, here, we mean the act of puncturing the skin and putting ink into the

dermis layer of the human skin, so that the image becomes permanent. The techniques, tools and colours used may differ from context to context but the act of putting a permanent mark into the human skin remains the same. When we talk about tattoos, the first thought that comes to mind is the modern body markings that the individuals get made in a tattoo clinic with their own will. This kind of ‘modern tattoos’ are not group associated and the decision usually arises in the conscience of an individual. However, the present study deals with the traditional form of tattooing. Here we refer to the traditional tattooing systems of the indigenous and old practices which are on the brink of extinction. These were mostly collective action and part of the cultural practice of the indigenous people. This kind of bodily marking is the result of a group decision and the individuals have little say in it. This is of course a characteristic of all traditions and cultural norms.

By prohibition, we meant the act of putting a total ban on something. When an action is prohibited under the law, it means to put a complete stop to the action and if any person is found to be doing so, she/he shall pay some fine or undergo other form of punishment. Thus the study looks into the total ban on the traditional tattooing practice, which implies anyone found to be making them has to pay a heavy fine of either 50,000 Indian rupees or one *mithun* (scientific name: *Bos Frontalis*)¹. In other words, with not a single person allowed to make the traditional tattoos anymore, this cultural practice has been put a complete stop to.

Dhaouadi (2002) in his book “Globalization of the Other Underdevelopment: Third World Cultural Identities” proposes the idea of “other underdevelopment” by which he means the

¹ Mithun is a four-legged animal – a valuable possession for the Apatani household both in terms of consumption and cultural symbol.

tendency of the underdeveloped countries to ape the West by using their language, cultural values as well as modern science and technology. As a psycho-cultural category of underdevelopment, Dhaouadi's "other underdevelopment" can explain many cultural aspects of western capitalism which the socio-economic factors do not necessarily take into account.

The cultural values and knowledge systems of the indigenous people were hidden away from the rest of the world. Thus through ethnographic accounts it is important that we represent such a society which was away from the rest of the world and whose knowledge was hidden.

This thesis is trying to understand one such form of culture change which is the ban of traditional tattooing (*tipe*) among the Apatanis in Arunachal Pradesh. And in doing so, the aim is to explore the underlying social factors of stigma, modernization and ideas of development. Although the Apatanis have undergone several changes over the years, prohibition on tradition is not a common practice. Traditions fade away when enough members stop abiding by them, but the idea of imposition of ban on a tradition from members of the community themselves would provoke questions in any scenario.

Northeast India is a debated and much discussed topic within and outside the academic world. Reason for discussion includes almost all topics including politics, ethnicity, development, innovation, communication, terrorism, culture, market, wars and many more. Study in this area is a challenge in itself, albeit opening various opportunities and sub-themes of study as well. This is truer and more surprising when we analyse the position this part of the country attained over the years. We should comprehend the discontinuous ruptures embedded in nation-building and attaining freedom from colonialism, and hence the status attained through development and recognition has been low. The government is but a part of the society and comprises its

members. Cultural and social status of a community determines a lot about the future of a community, which unfortunately is often unfair and discriminatory. Thus proceeding with caution is important to avoid disrespect or misinformation of any kind.

When it comes to understanding the indigenous community, it is imperative to proceed with caution without offending or hurting anyone's feelings. Every community is unique and members are sensitive as well as protective towards their community. Thus making generalisations or arriving at oversimplification is erroneous. Since humans are wired to survive better in community, thus the social bonds hold immense value. The dichotomy of 'us' versus 'them' is common and anthropologists as well as sociologists have started to question the base of these binaries in reality. Mostly such otherness is a perception rather than the existence of real differences (Staszak, 2009). In the case of the indigenous people such otherness is doubly enforced: one, by the non-indigenous world to maintain their status quo, and the other by the indigenous community to maintain exoticism. Like any other community, initial contact with the rest of the world was met with doubt and scepticism. This was evident with the *Kure Chambyo* war which was the tribe's first war against external rule (Tadu, 2017). Thus for an outsider to study their customs and lifestyles, and document them for the rest of the world, is challenging.

1.3 THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

A sociological understanding of the prevailing system in the society draws heavily from an overall picture of differing social factors. The present study draws heavily upon the ideas on modernization and development to attain a clearer picture of the dominant knowledge system prevailing in the Apatani society. In other words, the implications of modernization led development paradigm on the economy, culture and polity of the Apatani society must be

critically examined. Changes in the practice of traditional tattooing cannot be simply attributed to one factor rather needs to be placed in the larger economic, cultural and political contexts.

The study aims to do away with the conventional stereotypes regarding indigenous people and indigenous studies and come up with an understanding of what modernization means to the Apatani society by providing a subjective insider's perspective by the members of the community themselves. Certain preconceived notions about indigenous population such as their unwillingness to change and modernize are proved to be erroneous ones in this study. The Apatanis are taken as a case in point and the change in their tradition of body marking is analysed to understand their unique approach to modernity.

The study looks at traditional tattooing (*tipe*) from three points. One, why was it banned? Two, what was the impact of external factors on indigenous community? And three, how have the ideologies of modernization and development influenced such changes?

The study is placed within two key theoretical frameworks, namely that of modernization theory and Goffman's conception of stigma. Both the theories are equally relevant to understand changes in the Apatani society and explain the prohibition on tradition that was caused from within the community instead of impacted from outside. While stigma and social pressures are necessary to understand the immediate decision on the ban, ideas of what constitutes modernization and development are necessary to realise the underlying deeper social entities of such particular course of change.

'Stigma' as a phenomenon has been prevalent in the society for many years. As a theoretical concept it began to take the form with the advent of Erving Goffman's seminal work. In the context of the Apatani society, it should be seen as an influence of the non-indigenous, external

world on the workings of the inner spheres of this society. Goffman's ideas on stigma have been useful in drawing the conclusions. Goffman describes stigma as a 'situation of the individual who is disqualified from full social acceptance' (Goffman, 1963). Amongst so many other factors that influence the changes and transitions of a society, the psychological ones have a direct and immediate influence on the social events.

The study uses theories of modernization to understand the thriving nature of an indigenous community. Zygmunt Bauman's (2000) concepts on modernity as a continuous process hold relevance here. Liquid modernity looks at modernization as a free-flowing process, unlike the rigid, solid form it was seen to hold by several theorists. Borrowing ideas from theories of modernity as opposed to Post-modernity, the thesis attempts to understand how entry of mass media and better communication have had an impact on the traditional Apatani society. In other words, the process of acculturation and its impact on the indigenous culture and knowledge system is examined.

The thesis attempts to look at the Apatani people as active agents, determining their own course of action. While modernization looks for the problems as something within the communities (Lerner, 1958) and the critiques of modernization theorists look for the problem as outside (Weiner, 1966; Inglehart and Baker, 2000); the study tries to find a middle ground whereby the Apatanis are neither attempting to grasp on to the traditions, nor be victims of capitalist modernization systems, rather they negotiate and collaborate together with the rest of the world in the postcolonial, neoliberal country. Their growth is seen like that of any other community or humans for that matter.

Every community has its own set of struggles and ways of dealing and coping with them. But that is where they are similar too, because they are the agents of that change that they wish to bring to their community. The thesis moves away from the conventional manner in which indigenous people are theorised and attempts to grasp the 'indigenous reality' in all its forms and diversities.

Since 'modernity' is a very subjective word in the world of social sciences, it has continuously been re-defined and formulated variedly by different scholars and theorists. This study avoids abiding by any singular definition in order to realise the diversity of modernity.

1.4 SITUATING THE STUDY WITHIN THE SOCIOLOGICAL ACADEMIA

Tradition and modernity constitute a continuum in a more dialectical manner. With society continuously evolving, social institutions and structures keep changing too. And to make sense of these fast changes and transitions or stages a society goes through is a pivotal step towards understanding a society and providing a critical analysis beneficial to both the indigenous people and the academic world.

In the academic world of sociology, there have been several studies on culture changes and the factors leading to these changes. The contribution of the thesis lies not on the area of the study, but rather in the approach taken to conduct the present study. The idea of modernity has been critically evaluated largely with several alternative possibilities and explanations to the socioeconomic future of the society. The concept of "modernity" arose in the Post-World War II era in Western Europe. Influenced by enlightenment, it was characterised by individual subjectivity and rationalization. Sociology was also a product of these changes. According to Peter Wagner, "modernity has always been associated with progress" (Wagner, 2012, p. 28).

Postmodern theories also provide several explanations about the morality and the alternatives for the future of a community. But one aspect amidst these alternatives, one fails to grasp the ground realities and experiences of the indigenous people themselves. Without understanding the lived realities of the subjects of the study, analysis of their culture and society is not possible. This study provides a perspective drawn from the life experiences of the indigenous people themselves. Instead of focusing only on the material or economic aspects of development (like Marxist theory of development), the thesis attempts to provide a more holistic view incorporative of all structures of social life.

“Social relations of knowledge and knowing, as well as politics of knowledge and knowing, are highly consequential structures and processes both within and between societies across the globe” (Hornidge, et al. 2018). The aim of the present study is thus to place knowledge formation in the framework of these social relations, political as well as historical factors.

Stepping into the second decade of the 21st century, a lot of complex contemporary issues were faced by humanity. Starting from environmental crisis, global pandemic, new forms of war to the ever expanding digital and technological innovations, this century has it all. These changing aspects of the society need to be analysed and better understood, not just for academic explanations but also for the stakeholders, civil societies, and most of all for humanitarian reasons, so that biases and injustice can be avoided. By peering into the past and scanning the present, the study provides outlooks and possibilities to understand the future of the Apatani society, in particular and the future of studies in indigenous communities in general.

Thus the aim of the present study is twofold: one, it aims to provide contributions to the existing theories, concepts and conversations surrounding the topics used here, like modernization,

stigma and change. And two, to interrogate the existing methodologies employed to conduct the study amongst the indigenous community. The lack of written data and research in this field makes the study more critical as well as necessary.

1.5 RATIONALE, SCOPE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The modernization theory postulates that the supposedly 'lesser developed' countries would make progress provided they emulated the economic and social system of Western capitalism. Thus, the modernization theory is essentially a by-product of an ethnocentric worldview. The term, "ethnocentrism", coined by Sumner (1906), has been used to describe prejudicial attitude, between in-groups and out-groups where *our* attitudes, customs and behaviours are uncritically and unquestionably treated as superior to *their* social and cultural arrangements.

The study contributes to the hitherto-existing understanding of the indigenous communities and their non-linear changing patterns. Understanding of the modernization process of the lesser-known communities and common perceptions on the body in general and the process of body modification in particular are challenged and thereby put to question in the present study.

An ethnographic study of the indigenous communities helps us get a clearer picture of their past and present, so that they can be explained from a subjective point of view to the indigenous people themselves, which can avoid more misunderstanding and misinterpretation about their way of life. Thus keeping these needs and the objectives of the study in mind ethnography was employed as the methodology that provides opportunity to get real close (sometimes personal) to the subject of the study. In this case the subjects were the Apatanis and participant observation through ethnography was helpful to be familiar with the cultural practices of the respondents, to

get lines of subjectivity and objectivity blurred and to achieve a true picture of the life experiences of the people.

Theorists (Steward, 1972; Atkinson, 1990) of culture change have focussed extensively on the 'what' and 'how' aspects of culture changes. However, the question of 'why' these changes take a particular course over other courses are seldom asked, let alone analysed. The thesis aims to question – why cultures chose a particular course of change over others. What possible influence and social constructions lead them to follow one over the other and why. Thus the need to focus on this particular question of 'why' the indigenous people have chosen one course of change and development, what directs the indigenous people to transform and progress in a particular direction, and why they neglect the alternatives, are some of the questions to be addressed.

The Apatanis present a unique case of modernity and change whereby tradition and modernity are in a constant juxtaposition as well as dialogue surrounding their cultural practices. That is the reason why the Apatanis were selected for this study. The urgency of the study arises from the fact that their traditional tattooing system is on the verge of extinction, which means the number of people with *tipe* is on the wane each year. Post prohibition the traditional tattooing can hardly be seen and even the tools on making them are no longer found or made. We use the term 'traditional' tattooing because there is no hard and fast rule on modern tattoos, which young members of the community continue to practise. The youth of the community make contemporary forms of tattoos in their hands, sometimes within their home and sometimes in the newly established tattoo parlours that the young Apatanis run.

Although the study is based in India, the perspectives provided are not limited to studying indigenous communities of North-east India. Rather the theories and ideas can be used to study

most indigenous people. The voices and experiences of the people is important while studying indigenous communities and needs to be taken into account while studying any community.

It is important to understand the *Lebenswelt* (Schutz and Luckmann, 1973) of the indigenous people. Universal distinction between “us” and “them” is based on racism of the biological school of the evolutionary theory. Moreover, portrayal of the indigenous communities as victims of the ‘mainstream’ politics or as exotic exclusive groups fails to consider their participation (and contribution) in the larger socio-political world. Thus it is important to give the ownership back to the indigenous people and other marginalised sections of the population.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Keeping the above objectives and purpose of study in mind, the corresponding research questions were formulated:

1. Is there any change in the traditional forms of tattooing in the Apatani society? If so, what kind of changes have taken place, and how? Why has the meaning of the acts of tattooing changed for the Apatanis?
2. What is the relation between stigma and cultural transition? How have the personal experiences of stigma played a role in the ban of facial tattoos among the Apatanis? Putting it succinctly, how are Apatani practices stigmatized in the context of ethnocentrism unveiled by their non-indigenous counterparts?
3. What role did the western conceptions of modernity and development play? How is modernization theory applicable to the changes in the cultural practices of the Apatani society?

1.7 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. Understanding the changing practices of facial tattoos among the Apatanis;
2. Examine the factors of the imposition of the ban on *tipe*, and as a corollary, to understand the relationship between stigma and the ban on *tipe*, as well as the role played by non-indigenous knowledge systems in stimulating such stigma;
3. Situate the Apatani community against the backdrop of critiques of the modernization theory.

1.8 ARGUMENT OF THE THESIS

The thesis is a critique to the existing ethnocentric and hegemonic ideas around indigenous groups, their identity, culture change as well as their development. The manner in which “tribes” are portrayed, understood and studied are prejudiced. The present study challenges the preconceived notions, and attempts to reformulate the meaning of development and/or modernity. The study further analyses how cultures undergo changes and what relation these changes have with the politico-economic formation of the society. The study interrogates and challenges these assumptions paving way for more inclusive methods and concepts of analysis. And to make sense of these discontinuous ruptures that a society undergoes is pivotal towards understanding each limb of that particular society and also towards providing a critical analysis of the cultural and political construal of “the indigenous”.

1.9 CHAPTER SCHEME OF THE THESIS

The first chapter provides an introduction to the study highlighting the rationale and objectives of the study. The research questions as well as the literature reviews are provided in this chapter. The next section of this chapter outlines the theoretical frameworks in which this study can be located. This chapter also provides particular meanings associated with the terms used while writing this thesis, especially the contested ones. This is followed by situating the study within the sociological academia, rationale, scope, and significance of the study. The research questions and objectives of the study being one of the crucial aspects are thereafter described, followed by this chapter scheme.

The second chapter of the thesis focuses solely on the methodology used for conducting this study. Based on ethnography, we present a bottom-up approach to understand the truth and reality as viewed and perceived by the indigenous people themselves in this chapter. In addition to that keeping the research questions in mind appropriate tools and techniques of data collection have also been employed, which are discussed in detail in the second chapter.

The third, fourth and fifth chapters of the thesis comprise the data chapters of the study. These data chapters draw their content directly from the field of study. At the same time they are grounded on the theoretical framework in which the study is placed. The third chapter outlines all the spheres of a Apatani society, including its history, economy, religion, and cultural practices. The purpose is to understand the historical position of the indigenous people in order to understand the cultural transitions. The fourth chapter of the thesis looks into the causes and consequences of the prohibition on *tipe* in depth. Two major causes of the prohibition on *tipe* are stigma and influence from outside the valley. The fifth chapter places the data in the theoretical framework and the existing conversations in sociology.

The fifth chapter places the entire study in the larger theoretical framework of sociology of development. Since ideas of modernization and development are unsettling and in a constant state of transition, thereby we question and critically analyse the implication of this in the practical field, in this context, in the case of the Apatani society. Instead of taking a stand about the ideal course to develop, we examine and question the way these concepts and ideas are studied and looked at. In other words, the process of formation of knowledge about the indigenous people needs to be critically evaluated. Finally, the last chapter provides a summary of the findings of the study, sheds light on limitations of the study, and explores scope for further research in the field.

1.10 CONCLUSION

To sum up, the present study focuses on a wide range of concepts and ideas around the topics of body, tattoo, modernity and culture. Based in an indigenous community and taking the lived experiences of the people into account, the study is based in the Ziro valley which is the hometown for the Apatani community. The complex interplay of several factors of the Apatani society, some of which the study is bound to miss out on, has made the events of cultural change interesting and unique for study. The study is not just a contribution to the existing theories and ideas floating in and around sociology for long, but at the same time provides ideas and concepts either in support or contradiction with the existing ones. It also attempts to provide some perspective into the ongoing conversations of decolonising ethnography and decolonising modernity. It was important that the study should contribute more insights in the already over discussed conversation around modernity and change in cultural traditions.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the last chapter, we provided a detailed overview of the study, and then moved onto reviewing the relevant and meaningful literature, theoretical underpinnings, situating the study within the sociological traditions, rationale for the study, research questions, objectives of the study, argument of the thesis and chapter scheme of the thesis. It is against this backdrop that the present chapter provides methods of analysis in detail.

Methodology constitutes one of the most significant parts of any research. The methods employed in order to collect data need to be carefully selected and in alignment with the research questions and purpose of the study. Keeping that in mind, the present study is based on ethnographic research- personal narratives of the respondents. The field for the study was Ziro valley, because that is where the Apatanis traditionally settled and have been living for several years. Till date, a majority of the members of the Apatani community reside in this valley. And since the present thesis takes the Apatanis as the point of reference, conducting the fieldwork in the Ziro valley was necessary.

The study is qualitative in nature and employs ethnography as the main research method. The tools employed for data collection are participant observation, in-depth personal interview, and group discussions. The research objectives demanded a prolonged stay in the field and for that purpose nine months were spent in the valley collecting data. The first phase took place from August 2018 to October 2018 and was of approximately 45 days. The duration of the next field

visit was two month and took place from October 2018 to November 2018. The third and final visit took place over a time period of six months, that is, from mid-June 2019 to December 2019.

Apart from day-to-day observation and participation in local activities, a total of 63 respondents with *tipe* were interacted with and interviewed, some more than once. These were people above the age of 55 and the selection was through systematic random sampling. Of these 41 were female and 22 were male respondents. Another 12 politically active respondents were interviewed based on snowball sampling; previous respondents suggested their acquaintances to be the future respondents. These included members of AYA, office holders in the DC office, IAS members as well as people with various other occupations but who are influential in the Apatani society. Another group of respondents belonging to the youth category, that is in the age group of 0 to 18 years, were interviewed to grasp the connection young people have with their traditions. A total of 34 people from this category of people were interviewed. These respondents were met in schools, colleges, hostels and paying guests. Of these, 21 were female and 13 were male respondents. For collecting data, both primary as well as secondary data have been used keeping the needs of the specific research questions in mind.

A substantial amount of secondary data from varied sources are collected while undertaking the study. These include colonial reports, field diaries, books, articles and photographs and videos. Another major source of data collection has been the narration of oral history by the members of the community. The folklores, tales, mythologies and religious books have provided useful insights and information which are rarely found in any physical tangible form and can be best understood or contextualized only when the local members narrate themselves. These data are seldom found in any written form and thereby add great value to the study. The life stories and narratives of the local members of an indigenous group are just as important as tools of

ethnographic analysis as observation. They help us narrate the counter-stories of the indigenous people which is generated from emic perspective. Such tools are however slightly more complicated to apply in the field and have been used with caution keeping the ethical considerations in mind.

The data analysis has been done in a qualitative manner within a theoretical framework acknowledging local knowledge, promoting voices and stories from the field. The study attempts at using methodology free of colonial and imperial preaching. The methodological and field-based challenges encountered in conducting the study have been discussed in the last section of this chapter.

The purpose of writing a separate chapter on methodology in this thesis is to delve deep into the issues and complexities in conducting research through a particular method and finding possible solutions to overcome the same. Since we have employed ethnography as the main method, thus the advantages as well as disadvantages in employing the same are discussed. These have not remained the same over the years since its inception and so a historical account of the changes that ethnography has undergone is also analysed at in this chapter.

Moreover, there is a need to decolonize theoretical constructs and methodological devices. The stories and memories of the indigenous people need to come from the ground itself. These alternate historical narratives are powerful tools capable of “decolonizing research methodologies”. The mainstream as well as alternative histories start with a provisional selection of facts and a provisional interpretation in the light of which that selection has been made. The interpretation, selection and ordering of facts undergo subtle and perhaps partly unconscious charges through the reciprocal action of one or the other. That is why the historical narratives

(mainstream or alternative) consciously or unconsciously reflect our own position in time (Carr, 1961). The present study aims to contribute to this rich source of scholarly research, connecting the field, its inhabitants and subjects of the study, closely with the existing theories and debates.

There is a form of detestation among several indigenous communities about the way research is conducted. The nature of these methodologies is not always in alignment with the ethics and truth that the indigenous people hold, which leads to repulsion and anger among them. There is also some form of negative connotation to words like research or scholars among certain indigenous people (Smith, 1999). This has been so because of the misuse, misleading, misconceptions created by several research projects. According to several studies (Smith, 1999; Trask, 1993), indigenous people feel cheated because researchers often make false promises of change and development, which they fail to live up to. In this context, our purpose is not to reform or revolutionize the community under study but rather to report, examine and study. So, a promise of that kind would be wrong and pretentious. The existence and persistence of such false promises leads to distrust and disbelief in the minds of indigenous people towards those with the intent of research.

In such circumstances, it is imperative to pose the question of what are the “ethical” ways to study indigenous communities and whether there is an ideal way of conducting research at all. Social science research (and ethnography) has undergone oceanic changes- theoretical and methodological. It is necessary to acknowledge that every research faces certain challenges and shortcomings while conducting the study. Similar issues have emerged while conducting the present study (discussed later) and this chapter narrates those issues.

The uniqueness of this research lies in the fact that it does not follow the conventional notion of ethnography. Rather, in order to provide an unbiased ethnographic fieldwork, it was important to carry no baggage of preconceived notions and theories about the field and the subjects of the study. The research was conducted by respecting the differences and recognizing the similarities between this lesser known world of the Apatanis and the rest of the world.

Another major contribution that this approach to methodology tried to achieve is (and this is related closely to the previous point of bias) to overcome the idea of homogeneity. Neither are all indigenous communities homogenous, nor are the members of the Apatani community. Although regarded as a 'community' based on equality, similarity and descent, there are inherent differences and hierarchy which are inevitable at several levels. Thus instead of seeing all the members of the Apatani community as equal, their differences based on experiences as well as their socio-economic and political position need to be kept in mind. Each individual would have a different story to narrate based on their social position, economic status and political affiliation. This proves that in spite of belonging to the same ethnic community, making generalization about all members on equal ground may not always be justified. Differences exist not only across communities but within a particular community as well and these differences which exist within a community reflects the importance of considering voice of each respondent equally in order to project a truly representative picture of the social and cultural experiences and/or changes.

Keeping these developments in mind, this thesis identifies and attempts to overcome such challenges of employing methodologies propounded and promoted by the West. The first part of this chapter provides a deeper introspection on ethnography, and how it is deployed in the present context. The works of major scholars employed over the years have been closely discussed. At the same time, we have explained the existing drawbacks of this methodology and

possible ways to overcome them. Recent studies (Uddin, 2011; Gobo, 2011; Smith, 1999) have shown the need for decolonizing ethnography which has been aimed at in the present study. Further the rationale for employing ethnography as the key method of data collection has been provided. After discussing ethnography, a brief understanding of the field and reason of its selection is presented. An understanding of the field is necessary to create a backdrop and storyline for the samples and techniques as well as challenges of the research to fall on. The sample of the study and techniques used in selection is then presented. The next part of this chapter goes on to discuss the tools and techniques employed in the field, which ranges from participant observation to videos by colonial officers. This diversity of tools is necessary to grasp as much information about the field as possible so as not to leave out any angle which might be crucial for our understanding of the changes this indigenous group has undergone. Finally, the process of data analysis is provided. The last section of this chapter discusses the challenges undergone, the scope for possible changes or alternative methodologies for future researches as well as the ethical considerations. Although discussed in brief, these final thoughts on the methodology of the study serve an equally important part in the thesis.

2.2 ETHNOGRAPHY: AN INTRODUCTION

Ethnography is an engaging method of data collection because it involves observing, interacting, understanding and listening to those “ethno” on whom the study is being conducted. The method itself is more than a hundred years old, whose meaning keeps changing and getting reformulated over and over. The Chicago school understanding of ethnography involved living with indigenous community, often synonymous with ‘participant observation’. The early days of ethnography also treated indigenous tribes as people in need for transition and ‘development’ (Stocking, 1983, 1992). After the 1980s, the definition of what constitutes ethnographic research

has undergone several changes (Gobo and Marciniak, 2016). For many, the goal of ethnography has shifted to provide an 'emic' perspective.

Scholars (Smith, 1999; Gobo, 2011; Bejarano et. al 2019; Kaur and Klinkert, 2021) working in the field have discussed the idea of 'decolonization of ethnography'. Since one of the main themes of the thesis are critiques of modernization and ethnocentrism, it is important to employ the same techniques when it comes to the methodology as well. Ethnography as a method of data collection took birth in the western countries and the primary objective was to collect data on the poor, less represented and remote cultures of the world. Thus by its very nature ethnography recognizes, and maybe to some extent even promotes, the division of what is believed to be "developed" and "underdeveloped". In order to continue this erstwhile hegemonizing research technique, it is necessary that these preconceived binaries and discriminatory divisions are done away with. Taking the perspectives and voices of the local indigenous people and honouring the differences, rather than trying to overcome them, can help us decolonize ethnography.

The relevance of the social context which differs from society to society cannot be emphasized enough. Several years ago, C. W. Mills (1959) talked about how sociologists need to understand a phenomenon in the social setting in which it is taking place. Putting the value of 'context' back into the 'text', he argues that the social setting is as much important as the facts that take place within it. However, one needs to take the past as well as present into account in all spheres of life including economy and polity to analyse the social setting. Thus to emphasise and realise the value of social factors, this method of study favours prolonged fieldwork by the researchers staying in the field and also participating in the life and lifestyle of the subjects of the study.

Ethnographic delineation: Several theories and a vast array of literature present on this old methodology help us realise its changing nature and grasp the issues better. Theories surrounding ethnography are similar to the ones that exist in social sciences in general.

Iconic ethnographic works, like Bronislaw Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922), Margaret Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928), or Mary Douglas's *The Lele of the Kasai* (1963) have inspired several scholars across the globe (including us) to conduct research through this method. In sociology, the Chicago school first developed this method. Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess (1925) and their students developed ethnography through publications in the University of Chicago Sociological Series. W.F. Whyte's (1943) *Street Corner Society* was the first ethnography to be conducted in an urban setting, breaking the stereotypical understanding of ethnography which restricts it to the indigenous communities. Whyte's (1943) unique approach to conduct ethnography made researchers think along new lines and experiment in innovative techniques. In a way the study helped ethnography break free of its previous bindings to particular societies and tools employed.

Ethnography is a research method, under which many tools and techniques of data collection can be employed. This is what makes it a unique and flexible method for conducting research. Having said that, ethnography is generally conducted through either of the two methods: participant observation or non-participant observation. Participant observation involves direct participation in the day-to-day life activities of the actors and thus relies on developing a more direct close relation with them. This thesis is based on participant observation. We took part in several activities of the Apatanis' life. The entire process took several visits dispersed into several months. We were also fortunate enough to encounter many of Apatani festivities during the fieldwork, which are vibrant and full of merriments. Getting insights on the festivals and

ceremonies of the Apatanis helped attain a deeper understanding of the community through the emotions, sentiments, rules and customs.

Observation is crucial in ethnography, and when accompanied by complete participation proves fruitful for in-depth analysis. Participant observation also allows us to realise the minute details of the study group daily actions which entail underlying meanings and patterns. Participant observation opens up the gates to enter the symbolic sphere of the field and the actors involved in it. This is precisely what this study employed as well. As an observer and researcher, I had taken part on many of the day-to-day activities of the indigenous people. Fieldwork of nine months has helped us decode the meanings and importance of the so-called mundane day-to-day actions of the people.

Ethnography uses a diverse range of tools and techniques of data collection. Be they photographs, colonial reports, diaries, newspapers, or audio-visual aids, and each of them are valid sources of data collection for ethnographers. These diverse tools help us make the study more in-depth by gathering first-hand qualitative data. Each technique also serves purposes unique and specific to it. Thus it was crucial to carefully select the methods which suited and supported the kind of data that this research demanded.

Ethnography has undergone several changes over the years: from anthropology it is now practiced by many social sciences; from a structural-functionalist perspective it is now employed even by critical theorists; from limited to the study of “others” now it is also deployed to understand one’s own culture. In her elaborate essay on the history of ethnography, Laura Nader (2011) describes the changes this methodology has undergone, pointing at the ethnocentric and imperial perspective early ethnographers provided. Rightfully describing ethnography as “a

theory of description”, she goes on to mention those ethnographic accounts which broke free of the “unstated rules”.

Shortcomings of ethnography: For a long time, ethnography was synonymous with colonialism and ethnocentrism. This method of study initially served the purpose of gathering information about the distant “uncivilised” world by the educated “modern” scholars. There was an inherent hierarchy in the way ethnography was conducted or the way ethnographers perceived their subjects of study. In other words, the ethnographic studies of the mid-20th century were highly biased and broadened the West versus the East division further. The problem with presenting such a perspective was that one could not get a true picture of the communities under study, but rather a picture based on comparison with far flung communities whose lifestyles and most importantly, whose history differed vastly from that of the indigenous ones. Ideas of exotic places and tribes who were in need of education, civilisation and mannerism were widespread and even promoted within the early world of ethnographic researches. But by the end of the 20th and early 21st century scholars began to recognise this flaw and attempted to showcase a more inclusive approach. Recent researchers do recognise the differences each society has and shows the relevance of taking these differences into consideration before drawing conclusions.

According to Nader (2011), ethnography has some ‘unstated rules’ which include ignoring colonial and imperial presence, ignoring similarity between ‘us’ and ‘them’ as well as the power politics involved. These rules include (but are not limited to) doing ethnography on a community “lesser civilised” than the one the researcher belongs to, a form of comparison and future plan for these “undeveloped” community is required; that such geographically remote societies are exotic and it is the duty of the ethnographer to bring them to light and “help” them. However,

given the flaws and prejudices associated with this method of inquiry, changes in such rules of conducting research undergo severe changes and transformations.

Instead of providing a perspective based on comparison, it is thus rather more helpful if ethnography is conducted in an unbiased and fair manner. The distinction of “us versus them” needs to be overcome with the realization that ‘us’ is not so different from ‘them’ and vice-versa. Such distinctions only widen the gap and hierarchy imposed by colonialism and imperialism. This is very much in sync with the colonial construal of modernity.

Decolonizing ethnography: For a long time ethnography in social science research presented the opinions and perspectives of the privileged western scholars. The interpretations made by early ethnographers have been criticised to be biased and one-sided (Thomas, 1991; Nader, 2011). With the coming in of the new era of postmodern or multi-truth research, scholars have begun to question the ‘traditional’ methods of data collection. This soon led to the discovery of new methods through reflection on the flaws of the old ones.

Many scholars have been blamed of overgeneralisation (Gobo, 2008). This has led to a lot of distrust and doubt on the minds of the indigenous communities. Part of this mistrust arises from the confusion regarding the true purpose of the researcher in the field. Some believe that the researcher is to provide them some financial incentives, others believe that the researcher can get them out of their misery and improve their socioeconomic conditions. There are still others who believe that the purpose of the researchers’ frequent visit is associated with wrongdoings like spying, criminal informants, etc (Uddin, 2011). Such misunderstanding can create confusion, usually hurting one or both parties involved. Thus it is the task of the researcher to clearly state the purpose of her/his visit at the very outset, so as to not misdirect the respondents or allow for

false hopes to nurture in their mind. Methodology books may not explicitly provide such information to their readers (mostly students) but these practical problems and solutions are only visible after one physically visits and stays in the field.

More recent studies (Smith, 1999; Gobo, 2008; Bejarano, 2019; Bhambra and Holmwood, 2021) provide an understanding of how ethnography has for several years been an imperial and colonial tool of data collection. Scholars (Smith, 1999; Bejarano et. al, 2019) have now proposed to ‘decolonize ethnography’. Such innovative methods of introspection ensure inclusion of “subaltern voices” as well as providing them with a platform to represent these voices. Scholars like Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), Giampietro Gobo (2008, 2011), Gurminder K. Bhambra (2021) among others have been working on this area of decolonization of the research methods in social sciences. Owing to the long association of ethnography with the customs and methods of the west, it would be difficult to uproot such a system which is so deeply engraved into the social science researches. But in order to get past the discriminatory and biased understanding provided by these methods, one must look for inclusive ways of collecting data, especially while dealing with vulnerable communities like the indigenous population or communities which have undergone a lot of political turmoil. The members of these communities are sensitive and are often exploited by those in power. The members of these communities are also diverse and albeit sharing common histories and memories, have differences in their narration of the past or the personal experiences. Thus it is the responsibility of the academic world to take all these differences into account without ignoring any aspect of reality.

Why this ethnographic study is unique: The present study has made use of several data collection tools unique to ethnography. The audio-visual and photographic aids have made the study denser and more detailed. The present study puts the context back into the text by going beyond mere

observation of the field and the actors involved. We have taken the personal histories of the members of the Apatanis as well as have examined the historical, economic and political changes incurred by the Ziro valley itself over the course of the past half decade.

Trying to break through the “untold rules” (Nader, 2011) of ethnography, this thesis takes a bottom-up approach of understanding the indigenous community and their perspectives on how they want to represent themselves. The narratives provide a space for the respondents to express their thoughts and points of view. Although the present study is ethnographic in nature, we have attempted to break free of the prejudices and the western conceptions which are usually associated with it. In other words, the ethnography employed in this study is not the same as that of the 1950s, but rather employs an unbiased, inclusive and considerate way of data collection in order to truly analyse rather than compare.

2.3 THE FIELD

The field chosen for this study was Ziro valley, located in the Lower Subansiri District of Arunachal Pradesh, a Northeast region state of the Indian subcontinent. The selection of the field was imperatively in alignment with the main objectives of the study. Since Ziro valley is historically the residential location of Apatanis, conducting ethnography in the valley was more of a necessity than choice. While some also believe Apatanis to be the original inhabitants of the Ziro valley, there is no evidence to that.

Ziro is also the district headquarters with government offices, a district hospital, the museum and all the other facilities. Located at 115 kms away from the state capital, Itanagar, the valley is secluded from the rush of the city life. The scenic beauty of the valley and the annual music festival attracts thousands of travellers from across the globe each year. The highest temperature

recorded was 28.2°C and the lowest was -6°C as it gets very cold (often snows) during winters due to the high altitude. Ziro is located at 1667 metres above the sea level, 27.63°N 93.83°E. Since geographic and environmental factors determine a lot of human lifestyles, they need to be taken into consideration when trying to understand the socio-cultural aspects of a society. They also explain the seclusion of the inhabitants. Steep hills and fierce rivers made communication difficult and much delayed in the region. The roads leading to the valley is extremely rocky and in broken condition in many places.

Our first-hand observation follows that the valley is divided into two: on the one side there is the township with all the administrative offices, hotels and other service providers, known as Hapoli. On the other side is the rural area with the agricultural lush fields and traditional houses and infrastructures. People entering the valley, are mostly in the service sector and can be found residing in the town. Although majority of the locals reside in the rural location, over the years there is a gradual shift to the town and other cities of the state as well as neighbouring states. According to the Census of 2011, 53.7% of the population resides in Hapoli (Ziro Sadar) and 46.3% reside in rural Ziro (Old Ziro).

The rural Ziro is further divided into several small villages. Some of these villages are: Hong, Hari, Mudang-Tage, Bamin-Michi, Duta, Hija, Bulla, and etcetera. In reality however it has been observed that there are many more villages than that. These villages are based on descent and are the same as the surname of those from the particular villages.

Entering the field: People are wary of an outsider entering their home and asking questions around. This is especially true when the community is closely knit. Something similar happened when we entered the field. People cross questioned us, wanted to know our intentions and

credentials. While some were curious, others were suspicious. The role of gatekeeper was essential in making this possible (Atkinson, 2019; Singh and Wassenaar, 2016). The role of a gatekeeper is important in research, especially in those which involve dealing directly or interacting with respondents. Through the gatekeeper one can hope to get entry into the field, get acquainted with the field and make some connections with the locals. Moreover, the field was a completely unknown territory with unaccustomed terrains and cultural norms. Since this research involved staying in the field for a prolonged period of time, the initial introduction to the field and more importantly, to the norms and rules of the indigenous group was necessary. Mr. Tai had introduced me to Mani, who holds multiple jobs around the valley and thereby is well versed with the entire region and has friends from diverse backgrounds, holding diverse occupations. Mani helped me get acquainted around the valley initially and introduce us to several respondents. As a travel guide to several tourists visiting the valley, she is well acquainted with the Apatani society. As a friend and companion, she patiently explained to us the geographical, historical and many of the cultural aspects of the community. After getting a sense of the region and making some acquaintances, it became easier to move around and interact freely alone. Thus we started snowballing more respondents by often visiting the already acquainted ones. However, after the first field visit, it was felt best to make connections on one's own, avoiding the chance of bias that may cloud a gatekeeper's judgment.

After the initial formality of getting around the valley and making acquaintances, it was necessary to conduct prolonged interviews and to be engaged in deeper conversations that directly addressed the research objectives. These discussions and interactions were semi-formal in nature keeping the comfort of the respondents in mind. Each respondent was treated with equal respect and care. Questions around sensitive topics were dealt with cautiously and politely.

Entering this beautiful secluded valley is a lengthy process for someone visiting for the first time, because one needs to go through several formalities. One will thus have to change vehicles several times and portray patience as well as bravery to cross the steep narrow hill roads. At the same time, the path offers several serene beauties like natural waterfalls and the river Ranganadi, which surely compensate for the bad road. Some respondents (five out of the total sample) have mentioned themselves that the corruption of government officials is responsible for the poor connectivity (bad roads) of Arunachal Pradesh.

Initially, a pilot study of seven days was conducted in the month of July 2019. During the pilot study, we visited the location to decide on the place of stay and sources of commuting. Entering the state requires an Inner Line Permit (ILP)², which requires the details of a local person from the district of visit. Mrs. and Mr. Bamin were kind enough to let us stay in their home where they also accommodated young students as paying guests.

In the subsequent visits to the field, we started the process of data collection. A total of nine months was spent on the field in three phrases. The first phase took place from August 2018 to September 2018 and was of approximately 30 days. This period was useful to make more acquaintances and garnered sample of the respondents. This time was also crucial to get a basic understanding of the traditions and lifestyles of the Apatanis. The first phase is the difficult one because one takes time to get accustomed with the field and at the same time, the respondents are

² Inner Line Permit (ILP) is an official document issued by the state government before letting anyone enter the concerned state. ILP is required for entering Arunachal Pradesh through any of the check gates across the interstate border with Assam or Nagaland. An ILP for temporary visitors is valid for 15 days and can be extended, while one for those taking employment in the state and their immediate family members is valid for a year.

reluctant to open up to a stranger entering their territory. Once this initial phrase is gotten past, things start flowing more easily. I interviewed 15 respondents in this period of time. When meeting for the first time, the interviews were formal abiding by the semi-organised questionnaire. This was followed by friendly discussions and informal conversations. The duration of the next field visit was a little over two months and took place from September 2018 to November 2018. This time I managed to interact with another 31 respondents in addition to meeting some more than once. Because the second phrase also involved a second or third visit to the previously interviewed people, the task was easier as the respondents were at ease. The conversations became more spontaneous and answers felt more genuine during this visit. The third and final visit took place over a time period of six months, that is, from mid-June 2019 to December 2019. During the final visit I conducted interviews with 63 respondents and two group discussions, and undertook active participation in their day-to-day life. One of the group discussions included six women participants and the other one had five participants of which two were women and three were men. I visited their agricultural fields with the respondents, helped in their kitchen and took part in their weekly religious activities. By then a mutual relationship of trust was built and conversations were non-structured. This helped me gain insight into areas which would not have been easy to know about otherwise.

It is necessary to mention here that the members of this indigenous community are extremely friendly and more than eager to help someone who wants to study their culture and share their stories and experiences. And that is probably the major reason why leaving the field is as much difficult as entering it. Although research is meant to be objective, human emotions are not as much objective as the data. Since complete objectivity is debatable in social science research, the factor of emotions and bias can never be completely dismissed. The researcher inevitably

develops an attachment towards the field and the subjects after spending prolonged period of time in the field. To get so involved in the lives of the members of the community and not feel the attachment is to say that the researcher is no more than a data collecting machine. One can never be too sure to have attained all data before leaving the field. Nevertheless, after spending nine months, we decided to start transcribing and draw findings from all the interviews and discussions with the participants.

Setting up the research questions and deciding on the field were the first step to initiate this research. At the same time, gathering available secondary sources of information and reading through the reports were necessary prerequisites before entering the field. At the same time, visiting the field practically is very different from gathering information sitting at a desk, which is full of surprises and no amount of training prepares one for the challenges and uniqueness that each field beholds.

Entering the field and questioning the members of an indigenous community as a stranger and “outsider” is seldom an easy task. The welcoming nature of the Apatanis made the process easier. Building trust in order to ensure reliable and honest answers from the respondents is crucial as well as time consuming. Thus over nine months of time a relation was built with the members of the Apatanis in order to gain trust and get a true understanding of their way of life.

Take away from field: Once the respondents became comfortable with me, they were happy to represent their tribe, their culture and their lifestyle. The stories and experiences shared were the main sources that provided an insight into the life and history of the indigenous local community. The tool used for this purpose was collection of oral traditions. This was achieved through repeated discussions and narrations of personal history. Oral tradition has been vastly used by

scholars across disciplines to get a personal account of the past. This is of relevance more in cases where there is a lack of documentation of the past. In the case of the Apatanis, a lack of script and alphabets to fall back on clearly implies that unless English was introduced among the members of this indigenous group, no written document about their culture, past or present existed. Like many of the Northeast Indian tribes, Apatanis also make use of Roman script to write. In such a scenario, oral communication is the key to pass information, knowledge and the history of the community. Orally transmitted knowledge holds immense significance given their conventional and raw nature. Passed down with the help of folklore and folktales, these narrations are well kept secrets which only members of the community, speaking the language and participating in their activities, can make sense of. Concomitantly there also exists the fear of loss or change when passing of the tradition relies solely on the voices of fellow members. They are susceptible to being forgotten or undergoing transformations over the years of passing through several generations. Herein lays the significance of documentation and official records, which helps keep a record of the past for the future generations.

Memories and thereby histories are tools in the hands of those in power. Thus a lot of thought and investment goes into controlling how history is told and passed on. It is no surprise thus that the tales of victory are narrated more as compared to tales of shame, loss, misery, or sorrow. Such investments shape the history and knowledge system which get passed on to the coming generations. Tales about good times and evidence of growth and business are promoted more often within any given community as compared to those reminding us of a disaster, war or invasion. Such manipulation can reform and bend history which is supposed to be collective. And since “knowledge is power”, those holding power and status try to control the knowledge system so as to maintain their status quo. The relevance and existence of political power is felt

across all sections of the society, including the scholarly world, threatening it to lose its secular nature. Proceeding with caution remains to be the only possible solution for the researchers, especially those working in contested areas. Thus it is the need of the hour that instead of mere documentation, proper documentation scientifically backed and diversity inclusive research is more promoted. Kar (2003) discusses how 'history' (the academic subject) is 'organised and circulated in authorized ways'. He is critical of premade categories for events and facts to fit in, which commonly reproduce and confirm to the already established past, ignoring the deviances and conflicting memories.

2.4 SAMPLE

Apart from day-to-day observation and participation in daily activities, a total of 63 respondents with *tipe* were interacted with and interviewed. These were people above the age of 55 and the selection was through systematic random sampling. Since the youngest respondent with *tipe* was 56 years old, we kept the first category of those above the age of 55. Of these 41 were female and 22 were male respondents. Another 12 politically active respondents were interviewed based on snowball sampling; whereby previous respondents suggested their acquaintances to be the future respondents. These included members of AYA, office holders in the DC office, IAS members as well as people with various other occupations but who are influential among the Apatanis. Another group of respondents belonging to the youth category, that is in the age group of 0 to 18 years, were interviewed to grasp the connection young people have with their traditions. A total of 34 people from this category were interviewed. These respondents were consulted in schools, colleges, hostels and paying guests. Of these, 21 were female and 13 were male respondents.

Table 2.1: Profile of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	62	47.47
	Male	47	52.52
Age	0-18	34	31.2
	18-55	12	11
	Above 55	63	57.8
Marital Status	Unmarried	37	33.9
	Married	60	55
	Divorced	0	0
	Widow	11	10
	Separated	1	0.9
Education	Illiterate	43	39.5
	Primary school	24	22
	Secondary school	23	21
	Graduation and above	19	17.5
Occupation sector	Primary	72	66
	Secondary	8	7.33
	Tertiary	5	4.5
	Unemployed	24	22
Area of residence	Rural	63	57.8
	Urban	46	42.2
TOTAL		109	100

The aim was to ensure the inclusion of a diverse sample which could represent the field adequately. A wide range of categories was included given the diverse nature of the field. Respondents from different villages, age, gender and even different education qualification were included. Political and economic diversity was given utmost importance so as to avoid a biased picture of the field.

The sample of the study was built in a way so that the respondents were selected free of bias and people were added over nine months in the field, instead of having a fixed list of respondents at the initial stage. The sample selected and the tools utilised for data collection were keeping the research questions and objectives in mind.

2.5 TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

For collecting data, both primary as well as secondary sources have been used, keeping the needs of the specific research questions in mind. The nature of each research question, though interrelated differs from the other and that is why each demanded to be treated differently. Different tools and techniques of data collection are employed to draw the results and conclusions of each research question differently as well as for drawing general conclusions for the whole thesis as well. These tools and techniques proved to be useful in drawing data in several scholarly works like Mead (1928), Bateson (1936), Whyte (1943), Malinowski (1948), Leach (1961), Levi-Strauss (1973), Evans-Pritchard (1976) to name just a few, done in the field of social sciences in general and in conducting ethnography in particular. While ethnography provides a wide range of tools for data collection to the researcher, some of the techniques have been quite commonly used over the years proving their validity and reliability and that is why they are employed in this study as well.

The initial tools used in conducting the research were books, public records, colonial diaries and reports, articles and government documents. This helped in understanding the field before collecting primary data. Knowledge of the field helped us understand the experiences of the respondents better, thereby making collection of first-hand data easier.

When it comes to the collection of primary data, the tools used were in-depth personal interviews, participant observation, group discussions and recording of oral history. Most of the data was collected through in-depth personal interviews. Time after time the academic world has seen the capability of interviews in collecting valid reliable data. In ethnography too it serves as a major asset of data collection where meanings and values are attached to people's ideas and opinions.

Group discussions are another tool used to collect data for the present study. This is where the role of gatekeeper is crucial. The gatekeeper made use of her connections to bring in together a group of women and men.

Clifford Geertz's (1973) work is the most recognised to be amongst the first to employ participant observation as a tool of data collection for communities which are not the same as the researcher. The concept of "multi-sited ethnography" also gained popularity among researchers experimenting in the field of the still developing research field of ethnography (Marcus, 1995). The present study too employs participant observation as a tool of data collection. This is done through participating in their day-to-day activities and observing their social life through this participation. This method helped us again a thick and in-depth understanding of the Apatani social life.

Oral history is employed when secondary sources of data are least available (like in this study) in order to draw history events from the past and preserving it. Memory is at the heart of it. In 1773, Samuel Johnson argued that “all history was at first oral. This method of data collection showcases the art of interviewing the best, because it all depends on the conversation that occurs between the interviewer and the interviewee”. Some notable works include that of Morrissey (1980), Terry (1984), Ritchie (2003) among others. Like the issue of colonialism with ethnography, oral history also had the division of rich and poor because not everyone could make effort to record conversations. It is through struggles and changes that today oral history can be used in research. According to Ritchie (2003), historians have been sceptical of using oral history for two reasons: one, in search for objective evidence, stories and narrations seem too subjective to be reliable; and two, scepticism also arises from the fact that data drawn depends a lot on human memory, which is susceptible to fallacy, distortion or fading away.

To address the first research question concerning the history of the Apatanis, most of the data was collected through secondary sources and interview with elderly members of the community. One of the most important sources has been of the colonial diaries and reports, written long back by the officers under the British administration, and collected and printed by local scholars. The work by Mihin Kaning (2008) in compiling several of such colonial diaries is remarkable and has been useful in conducting this research. Apart from such reports and diaries, we took the help of audio-visual sources of data such as photographs and videos by Betty von Fürer-Haimendorf (1944-45). When it comes to the historical political information about the valley and its inhabitants, we had to rely on the official records and archives, the validity of which is uncertain (Sengupta and Bharadwaj, 2021; Sharpe, 1991). Yet these state-produced documents are the only source of knowledge available to us. The lack of documentation amongst the Apatanis about

their past and history might serve as a major loss of several pieces of information not recorded in these reports by 'outsiders'.

When it comes to the second research question, to find out the reasons of the ban and the role stigmatization has played in ethnocentric attitudes, the data was predominantly primary in nature. All data presented while trying to find out answers to the second research question were drawn from interviews, group discussions or direct observation. The personal experiences of the individual members of the Apatani community helped us understand the implicit psycho-social reasons which may not be obvious on the initial visits to the valley. Such responses were possible to be attained through building a relationship around trust and confidence. Thus repeated visits and interviews with the Apatanis was important. This helped us to get closer to the field and all the residents in the valley. Once the respondents became familiar with us and trusted us, opening up about their life experiences around *tipe* became much easier. The prolonged stay in the field, interviews, group discussions and participation in the daily activities were the major tools employed when trying to answer the second research question of the thesis.

When it comes to the third and final research question both primary as well as secondary sources of data had to be used in order to draw conclusions. Given the theoretical nature of the research question, most of the theories and conclusions were drawn by relying on the past researches of scholars and the prevalent understandings of information in and around the field. Yet, since theory and the field go hand in hand, the historical facts of the Apatanis as explained by the members of the community themselves were of immense significance. The theories were thereby tested and implemented in the context of the Apatanis to draw the conclusions of the fifth chapter, in particular, and the thesis, in general.

Reliability and validity of methods: Another important factor kept in mind while collecting the data was the validity and reliability of them. These tools have been used by researchers across generations and applied on several communities and organizations all across the world. These methods were tried and approved by several researchers and scholars proving them to be useful and sometimes necessary tools of data collection.

Remembering that one of the major arguments of this thesis is that cultures cannot be generalised as each is unique, spatial validity was not aimed at with the data presented hereby. The history and politics of a community even in close vicinity to the Apatanis differ vastly from that of the Apatanis. And so to generalise the findings might be considered inappropriate here.

The study is of relevance over the years because they will help one understand and explain the indigenous groups and communities. The methods, data as well as findings claim reliability over the coming years. Even though taking one cultural event as the source of information, it is the way of analysis and understanding cultures wherein this thesis aims to make a contribution.

2.6 DATA ANALYSIS

After the final visit to the field, all the interviews were transcribed and notes from the observations were maintained. We drew the results and conclusions through qualitative analysis of the data collected. Each note and interview are represented and recognised while drawing the conclusion on the field. The final chapter of the thesis discusses these findings in detail.

It took about six months to complete the transcriptions and begin the writing journey. All the collected data have been considered and interpreted through a variety of different perspectives.

In social science research it is not the data collected that counts but rather the way these data are

interpreted and made sense of to the larger audience. Anyone who enters the field can come up with these data after a prolonged stay, however the task of a researcher begins when these data begin to be analysed and are put within a theoretical framework. After 9 months of stay, a pattern in the responses and experience of the members of the Apatanis was found. Similar experiences of stigma, shame and attraction of the 'other' communities and modernization could be seen across the community members. The responses and emotions expressed were also getting repetitive as respondents explained similar life experiences. This led us to draw conclusions based on what a majority of the respondents explained. Each individual's experiences are different at some levels and are similar at some others, so the thesis tried to incorporate and represent as many responses and experiences of individual members of the community as possible. The life experiences also differed on the basis on the social, economic and political positions of the members, and that is why the respondents were from different socioeconomic backgrounds. The study also incorporates a lot of diversity among the respondents, ranging across age, gender, occupation and political affiliation. The purpose of the sample is to be widely representative of the members of Apatani.

The knowledge and information passed on by the respondents included in the study were then analysed through different perspectives. Presenting the data in the historical context that they took place in, rather than attempts at generalizations have been the purpose of the thesis. Equal attention has been paid to the indigenous knowledges and understanding as well as sociological theories of post-modernity to make sense of the field and its transitions. The purpose of presenting the data in different perspectives and through a wide range of lenses is that it allows us to consider all possible understanding and explanation to the phenomena. At the same time, the existing theories pave the way for new ones through their existing gaps and flaws.

For the purpose of this thesis, the data collected could answer the research questions and also fulfil the objectives of the study. Thus soon after, we went on to draw the conclusions from the data collected. The continuous entry of secondary sources, owing to the constant generation of new knowledge and new research papers, helped us enrich this study further. The secondary sources have been incorporated into each data chapter and do act as the backbone for the primary data. At the beginning of this methodology chapter, it was stated that both primary as well as secondary data had been collected and how they helped draw the conclusions. While drawing the findings it was more apparent that the two were highly dependent on each other. While the primary data were backed by research and theories found in secondary sources, the secondary data were proven and grounded through the first-hand findings using the primary sources of data collection. The interdependent and cross-referred data helped us make the analysis reliable and well established. Finally, the analysis and writing down of the thesis took a little over a year to complete.

2.7 CHALLENGES

Since the society is the laboratory for social scientists to conduct their research, and human action is the main subject matter, such studies are inescapable from challenges. Ethnography means first-hand interaction with fellow social beings, which calls upon several subjective unpredictable factors.

First, and probably the most common challenge in social sciences, is the issue of objectivity. Like Max Weber had explained in *The Objectivity of the Sociological and Social-Political Knowledge* (1904), total objectivity is neither possible nor desirable in social science research. It is the subjective nature of humans which make them unique subjects of study and at the same

time the most difficult subject to grasp and deal with. Personal feelings and bias of the researcher are believed to be impossible to do away with. In such scenario, the best attempt would be to accept one's biases and at the same time try one's best to keep them away. As an ethical consideration it has to be recognised that the researcher's feelings might have crept in with or without her/his awareness. However, such subjectivity of the researcher does not necessarily need to be a setback. Rather recent studies (Gergen, 2001; Ratner, 2002) note that subjective perspectives of the researcher may even aid in providing different opinions and sometimes fresh outlook into research through differences of opinions and assertion.

Second challenge while conducting ethnography is the notion of homogeneity with which the subjects are treated. The community under study differs not only from (majority of) the community in the rest of the world, but also within the community, each individual member differs from the other on the basis of their social and cultural capital as well as their lived experiences. Every individual narrates a story different based on their recalling of the past and opinion of the future. Thus the heterogeneous nature of society need to be recognised and is reflected in this research. It is reflected in the methods employed, the subjects studied, the conclusions drawn as well as the theories sketched. The respondents themselves too provide a wide diversity in explaining their past and their history. The lack of singularity of truth and reality allows for many voices to be heard, thus enabling one to look at it from various points of view. But at the same time makes the task of writing down difficult for the researchers.

Thirdly it is difficult to conduct fieldwork in a socio-cultural setting which the researcher is not familiar with. It requires a fair share of time and energy to get acquainted with the setting. Moreover, we had no understanding of the Apatani language prior to entering the field. Over the months some basic words and phrases had been picked up but the gap of data in original

language could not be checked in spite of that. The challenge of a lack of familiarity with language is common among social science researches. This challenge was overcome to a large extent due to the fact that most Apatanis know to speak either Assamese or Hindi. Simultaneously, the geographical and terrestrial locations were unknown and unfamiliar territories. The digital maps were not explicitly marked, most likely owing to the uneven terrain areas. Dependency on the local guide during the initial period of fieldwork was thus high.

The geographical location of Ziro valley could also pose a challenge for many social scientists. The location is remote and the roads pass through unevenly cut roads and hills and are too narrow for two vehicles crossing each other. At the same time, unfinished and improper construction of the roads makes it difficult to travel and dangerous for many visitors of the valley as the terrain is prone to landslides. The valley is placed at a high altitude amidst several hills, making the valley not easily accessible.

Yet another challenge faced during the field visit was accommodation. Since the hotels and hostels were on the other side of the valley and the villages and most of the indigenous people on the other side (with a distance of 10 kilometres in between the two), travelling from the town everyday was not a feasible option. People were resilient and did not trust outsiders initially. They were taught (and strongly believed) to stay away from plainsmen, whom they called *halyang*. To find a host was thereby challenging. Finally, Openg agreed to host us in her house. Openg was kind enough to allow us to stay at her home, however visiting respondents living in a different village or far near the forests still meant we had to walk long distance and travel several kilometres sometimes to meet them. This consumed a lot of time and energy. Finding the residents of several respondents was an issue but the local guide helped in communication and transportation a lot.

These problems and several others are common among social science researchers, especially while conducting ethnography or fieldwork. This arises due to the fact that the main subject matter within social science research is not matter or substance but rather social interactions, relations and behaviours among human being. Human nature and relations are subject to change in relation to the surrounding atmosphere and conditions. Thus this changing nature of the subject of study makes it difficult to grasp freely. Also indigenous studies are critical topics and being a non-native to the community, researching meant we had to use the tools and methods very carefully.

Given the nature of ethnographic research, there is a possibility that more visits to the field could provide more data. The feeling of “unfinished business” is common to almost all ethnographies and field visits in general. The more time spent on the field, more will be the data and information about the area and its inhabitants. For the purpose of this thesis, nine months were spent in the valley, but further research can be conducted in the area over the coming years, which will substantially add to the information attained on the topic.

2.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The original names of all the respondents have been changed in order to maintain anonymity and confidentiality of the data. The conversations were recorded upon the consent of the respondent herself/ himself. Yet the identity and personal information of each of the respondent has not been disclosed. This also helps us build the trust of the respondents. The assurance that the interview was taking place in a safe space of non-judgement was necessary to make respondents open up about their experiences. But it should be noted that in the process of doing so, the true emotions were not tempered with. Feelings of fear, insecurity or resistance are as much real as feelings of

nostalgia or happiness. But researches seldom take emotions into account. Emotions are capable of reflecting the underlying impact of social events that can help us understand the situation better, which is why they have been considered in the study.

The research was conducted abiding all the research ethics. The study is not replicated to the best of my knowledge. And all the sources are duly cited and acknowledged wherever applicable. No harm, mental or physical, was caused or intended at the time of conducting the fieldwork. All the subjects inside or outside the field were treated with utmost respect and caution. The respondents never expressed any distress or disapproval of any kind.

2.9 CONCLUSION

The second chapter of this thesis has thus explained the methods used for conducting the research, the rationale for using these methods, as well as their challenges. Ethnography was the primary method of data collection but in the thesis, we have tried to break free of the conventional colonial bindings of the methodology. The first half of the chapter has also explained the field, that is Ziro valley and the rationale for its selection. However, given the word constraint several of the information was left to be explained in more detail in the next chapter. The sample was collected through snowball and random sampling. The tools and techniques of data collection as well as data analysis is provided in the chapter.

The next chapter describes the field in more detail in all its political, social and economic terms. At the same time, the initial data from the stay in the field, using the aforementioned techniques is provided in the next chapter of the thesis.

CHAPTER 3: TRADITIONS, FACIAL TATTOOS AND PROHIBITION

3.1 Introduction

The last chapter provides an understanding of the methods used in data collection while conducting the study. We challenged the conventional way of conducting ethnography and attempted to decolonise it. The field, sample, tools of data collection, data analysis as well as challenges of employing the methods have also been detailed. Keeping the discussion in mind, this chapter will attempt to present the several facets of the Apatani society and provide a background for the study.

This chapter provides a detailed description of the Apatanis. Since each part of a society is important to understand, this chapter attempts to explain each of those parts as elaborately as possible. In other words, the different aspects of the society, including the economic, the political and especially the cultural, is observed in depth. Not only has this helped us understand the society and make sense of their actions better, but it also has helped the study by drawing a clearer picture. The tradition of tattoo-making among the Apatanis is also explained at length and in detail in this chapter. The reasons, history of origin, prohibition on facial tattoo-making among the Apatanis are elaborated in detail. This chapter aims to provide a descriptive analysis of the Apatanis' traditions, and the eventual prohibition on *tipe*.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Apatanis settled mainly in the Ziro valley, which is situated in the present lower Subansiri district of Arunachal Pradesh. It is also the district headquarter and is about 115 km away from the state capital, Itanagar.

The Apatanis earlier were known by various names like Onkas, Onka Miri, Auka Miris, Ankas, Apa Tanang, etc. before C.V.F. Haimendorf mentioned them as the Apa Tani in the reports of his visit to the valley in 1944-45 (cited in Kani, 1993). They have been called so ever since. The Apatanis refer to themselves as Taniis and add the word syllable 'apa' as a prefix to any name as a gesture of love and respect. For the purpose of this thesis, we will use the two terms interchangeably. In Apatani language, *Tani* means name or race. The history of the origin of the Apatanis goes back a long time. So much so, that it was extremely difficult to extract because there are different variations of history as narrated by the Apatanis themselves. It implies that there is no single narration or truth about the origin of the Apatanis. The folklores are of immense help here as they provide us with some idea about the origin. According to folklore, the Apatanis had come to the north of Tibet and they had to cross a river to get to Tibet, from where they kept walking south all the way to present day Subansiri district and decided to settle in this beautiful valley. The Nyishi settled before them and that is why they are located north to the Apatanis, whereas the Miris kept walking further south and they reside southern to the Apatanis. This history has been narrated by the respondents and, with a lack of written data, it is a part of the oral history of the community.

Colonialism entered the valley only as late as 1897. And was possibly the first instance of contact with the outside world (Blackburn, 2003). Prior to colonialism the Apatanis were in a state of isolation with little route connecting them to the rest of the world. With the entry of colonialism, several changes entered the valley. Education, clothing and communication were the three major areas which underwent changes. These will be further discussed later in this chapter.

The methods used to collect the data of this chapter are based on the secondary data available about the valley, backed by first-hand observation during the field visits. After spending nine

months in the field, we gathered an idea about the rules and norms followed in the concerned valley. Apart from living among them and observing their day-to-day activities, general interaction took place and semi-structured interviews were also conducted.

The initial response towards an outsider questioning about their lifestyle and culture was not largely welcomed. Once they got an idea about the aim of the study, they became more friendly and cooperative. Owing to a lack of the documentation of data on the Apatanis, the help of oral tradition narration by the locals became crucial and provided important information. Understanding of the cultural life was crucial to place a particular cultural practice, namely facial tattoos in the larger context. And that is why this chapter attempts to present the different aspects of the Apatani society. We attempt to draw a picture that helps us understand the context better.

The origins of the practice of facial tattoos, known as *tipe*, have, similarly, being grasped mainly through the mythologies and folklores. Although a handful of people know these folklores by heart along with the meanings, we were fortunate to have met two such personnel, whose memory did not betray them in spite of old age. One of the respondents chanted a folktale to us, which described the origin of *tipe*, as part of the ornamentation process that the mothers of Sun, or *Donyi*, took in order to find suitable grooms. He goes on to explain the meaning of the entire folktale in broken Hindi, after reciting it in Apatani. When mothers, *Ami Niiku* and *Ami Niido*, were unable to find the perfect groom even after waiting for many years, they finally resorted to rituals, trying to pray and please the Gods. The Gods asked them to decorate themselves. The mothers put on their best clothes, jewelleryes and decorated themselves. This was when they also put facial tattoos and nose plugs for the first time. In older times, these were like modern day make-up. The bigger the nose plugs, the more beautiful was the bearer considered.

92% out of the entire population of 109 respondents could speak either Hindi or Assamese or both and that made data collection more direct and free from errors of translation. Direct communication was also useful in gaining the trust of the people, allowing for wider access. That is why the help of semi-structure interviews was taken after the respondents became comfortable with the interviewer.

3.2 The Apatanis

The Apatanis are the second largest indigenous community in the state of Arunachal Pradesh, after the Nyishis. Like any other community, the rituals and traditions of Apatanis hold immense significance in the formation of the daily actions of their members and the socio-political setting of the Apatani society. Claiming to have ancestors in Tibet, the elders explain that their ancestors are not originally from this valley called Ziro, but rather they travelled far from the North of the country. A detailed description of several aspects of their life are as follows:

Literature

One must realize that although there is a huge gap in terms of the presence of literature on Apatani society, it is not non-existent. Field diaries and reports by British officials were the first written documents about the Apatanis. Christoph von Fürer Haimendorf (1962) and Ursula Graham Bowler's (1913) works were among the most famous. Anthropologists such as Stuart Blackburn (2008) and Pascal Bouchery (2009) also visited the valley and wrote extensively. There are also studies focusing around the question of sustainable lifestyle and resourcefulness of the Apatanis as well as their flora-fauna and agricultural practices in general.

In 'The Apatanis and their Neighbours' (1962), Dr. Christopher von Fürer Haimendorf provided a detailed description of the life of the Apatanis. The book is based on his 1944-45 visit to the valley with his wife. According to him, albeit being similar to the Daflas and the Miris, the Apatanis are unique in their living pattern, the language they developed and the kind of settlement they formed for themselves. His book seems to have covered the major aspects of life in the valley, including economy, social structure, law and order, religion, slavery and resource utilization. He wrote:

A strong tribal sentiment, a consciousness of their basic separateness, a pride in their institutions and customs, and a passionate attachment to their small homeland, turned by incessant labour into a veritable garden, unite all Apatanis and set them apart from the surrounding populations... (Haimendorf, 1962).

Through this book people of the valley were first officially addressed as the Apa Tani. The book has been able to narrate the lives of the people in a very detailed way, evidence of which one can still find while visiting the valley. Similarly, this thesis also aims to provide a detailed narration of the Apatanis and their transitions.

Another colonial report was written by Ursula Graham Bowler (1953), who visited the valley in 1946 with her husband Lt. Col. Frederick Nicholson Betts. The book is written more in a form of diary, rather than an analysis. It just describes her visits and observations. Being an ethnographer herself, the approaches and methodologies are interesting to look at. She also made films during her travel and stay in the valley which are available with Pitt Rivers Museum of Oxford University Museum of Natural History. These videos are helpful in letting us visually experience

the times and see for ourselves the situation the valley was in more than seven decades ago. One can clearly see the difference in clothing over the years. Also evidences of traditional hairstyles and ornaments including tattoos, ear and nose plugs can be found. Such field diaries and videos are of utmost importance for all researchers who studied the valley after Bowler and provide us with a rich collection of data.

Other anthropologists such as Stuart Blackburn (2003, 2008) and Pascal Bouchery (2009, 2010) have also conducted some study in and on the valley. The works of Stuart Blackburn hold value because of his unique outlook on oral tradition, which he sees as “a combination of linguistic forms, local conventions, cultural attitudes and behaviour patterns, all of which comprise a system of oral genres” (Blackburn, 2008, pg. 213). In *Himalayan Tribal Tales*, he provides a detailed analysis of the Apatani oral history, the mythologies and tales, rituals and at the same time an account of the changes undergone by the valley.

After spending three years in the valley, Pascal Bouchery has written extensively on the language of the Apatani in several of his works (2009, 2010, 2013, 2019). In ‘Is Apatani a threatened language’ (2010), he genuinely questions the assumption of loss of language in a culture. The article provides fresh perspectives to understand the threats possessed by a subaltern language and the consequent impact that may have on the larger society. Bouchery (2009) has also written a dictionary on the Apatani language out of his concern of its extinction.

Closer home there are, although few, researchers who were passionate enough about their own culture to write books or articles on it, yet their work provides crucial information nonetheless. Some scholars viz. Kani (1993), Kaning (2011), Gyati (2014), and Tadu (2017) from the region have also brought their own traditions into light by writing books on the Apatanis. But

unfortunately, these books are rare to find and due to their limited printed are on the verge of being forgotten.

Takhe Kani is an officer working for the State Secretariat in Itanagar. He is an Apatani who cares deeply about his culture and homeland and this is reflected in all the books he has written about the Apatanis and about the Ziro valley. He has also done an impressive work in compiling the field reports and tour diaries of various British officers who visited the valley. His *The Advancing Apatanis of Arunachal Pradesh* (1993) is widely cited by various scholars working on the valley. The book is a mandatory read for anyone willing to know about the history and culture of the Apatanis. The different chapters of the book provide description to different aspects of life. The book also explains the traditions and cultures of the Apatanis in detail.

Mihin Kaning was an educator in Arunachal Pradesh. He has written many books both in English as well as in Apatani. Because of his close association with religious and spiritual world of the Apatanis, many of his books revolved around this topic. *The Spiritual Enquiry System of the Apatanis* (2011) is one such book which comprises many of the chants and rituals, as well as folklores of the Apatanis, translated in English. This book has been helpful to understand the religious practices of the Apatanis. His *The Rising Culture of the Apatanis* (2008) is another such important text which explains the culture, past and present of the Apatanis. Most aspects of an Apatani's life are explained in detail.

Tani Biidi: Abotani's Struggle for Survival (2014) is a book written by another local author, Gyati Rana. The sub-title to the book says that it is based on *Miji-Migun*, which is the oral tradition of the Apatanis; and rightly so because as one reads the book one can find all facts and information backed up by the folklores of the Apatani society. In the introduction, Gyati

mentions that the book is a documentation of oral tradition. The writing style of the book is unique as each chapter provides the Apatani narration present in the folklores before explaining its meaning in English. This serves two purposes; one, the tradition of Apatani is preserved in written form and two, one can still understand Apatani tradition without learning the language. The book includes Abotani's journey to the valley, who is considered as the ancestor of many indigenous groups in the region like Nyishis, Apatanis, Galos, among others in the region. This provides us with an opportunity to understand how they came to the valley and the lifestyle they adopted to survive here.

Rimi Tadu (2017) wrote her dissertation on collective and individual memories of the Apatanis around the Kure conflict, also known as Kure Chambyo of 1949. Titled as 'Writing Local History of Apatanis', the thesis provides accounts and narratives of the locals in a sensitive yet holistic manner in which the historical Kure Chambyo was seldom presented before. In fact, according to Tadu, the Kure War was never "commemorated nor re-told in public life" (Tadu, 2017). And that is why through her thesis, she wished to clear the misrepresentation around the event and fill in the lack of official documents surrounding it. The use of a "people-centric methodology" was apt and necessary in the collection of thick oral history that the thesis aims at. The thesis justifies the act of gathering voices and narratives and presenting them in as much an unfiltered manner as possible. The data presented in this study provides critical outlook for this thesis.

Economy

Traditionally the main source of income for the Apatanis has been agriculture with creative ways being adopted to grow their own food raise their own cattle and live an independent life. The

traditional jobs done by the Apatanis are: farming and cattle harvesting. The Apatanis have traditionally been engaged in paddy, maize and bamboo cultivation. Pisciculture is also traditionally integrated into the same fields as rice cultivation. Over the years they also started growing other grains and fruit, most common being kiwi and potato, yet rice being a staple food for the Apatanis, it is still highly valued and yielded (Sundriyal, 2002). The Apatanis usually have their own gardens where they can produce their daily vegetables and fruit. Most houses have tomatoes, some herbs and green leafy vegetables, seasonal fruits, etc. Although these home gardens are for personal use, whenever they have a surplus amount of growth, they would just carry it to the local market to sell, in order to make some extra income. Most households in the valley have a kitchen garden in their backyard. This garden provides them with the daily basic foods they need, and growing surplus of which also helps them earn extra income from the market. 'Home gardens are an important component of the Apatani economy, as they meet almost all the varied food requirements of the community through mixed cropping' (Kumar and Ramakrishnan, 1990, p. 321).

Apatanis have a unique system of collective farming. Here, a group is formed of five to six women, called *Patang*. There are two types of *Patang*: *Aji Patang* and *Yasang Patang*. *Aji Patang* takes turns to visit the farm of one of the members and does the needful work. Those who have their farms close to each other logically form a group amongst themselves, but at times it can also be based on personal relationship or kinship. *Yasang Patang* is comprised of women who help each other to collect firewood from the forest. This is a helpful and considerate system at the same time being a very productive one. This is because if one of the members falls ill, the other members can cooperate to help in her field, temporarily. Also at present times, the young generation moves to the secondary and tertiary sectors, and the women, most of whom are more

than 40 years old, are working in the field. The help from fellow Apatanis is crucial and keeps the social bond intact.

The young generation of the Apatanis has resorted to various forms of occupation other than agriculture. This shift towards other 'city-based' sectors has led to a gap between the youth and their origins. Ziro is a small town which they are eager to get out of, be it in search of job, educational prospects or prospects of a life partner. Most of the natives who settled out of the Ziro valley are working in Itanagar, Guwahati, New Delhi or other big cities. Such a change makes one wonder if the socio-political changes in the valley have a connection to these economic changes.

Changes in the socio-cultural sphere can trigger changes in the agricultural (economic) sphere of life. A study by Ngidlo (2013) mentions five such drivers of change that reduce over integrity of rice terrace, namely, diminishing culture, vanishing varieties and breeds, shifts in economic activities and outmigration, physical degradation of the rice terraces, and urbanization (2013: p. 151).

At present many people in the valley also have a fair share of earning from tourism. Tourism produces a large amount of revenue for the valley in particular and also the state at large. Since the valley attracts a large number of tourists all year round, many locals have turned their houses into hotels or guest houses. Especially those houses with good view of the valley can attract more tourists.

The occupational shifts are not sudden although their effect may be everlasting. Over the years natives have moved out of the valley, and at the same time people of other ethnic origins have entered the valley for many reasons, trade and business being of the major ones. The response of

the indigenous people to these forms of changes are of mixed kind. Apart from the infamous Kure War, the Apatanis have rarely ever publicly raised any objection against settlement of outsiders in the valley. Of course, under the laws of the Government of India, they cannot stop the entry and exit of someone, but the social response has also surprisingly been of acceptance, given their experiences of mistrust about the outsiders. Even in between the conversations with the Apatanis, instances of blame and mistrust on people who are not of Abotani³ origin seem to arise. Some of the respondents believe that the valley was free of disease and many other issues before the entry of outsiders.

Nonetheless, one cannot fail to see the correlation between shifts in lifestyle with the entry and exit of people to and from the valley, which inevitably also means entry and exit of ideas and knowledge. According to the theory of cultural proximity, cultural capital plays a dominant role in determining the preferences and life choices of an individual as well as the society as a whole. As Bourdieu (1984) explained education plays an essential role in cultural capital. Influence of one culture on the other due to proximity is not unusual (Straubhaar, 1991) and one is forced to believe that something along similar lines may have happened for the Apatanis as well. When the cultural practices and traditions of a society undergoes changes, they may be attributed to several factors including the economic, political and even psychological ones. In the case of the Apatanis as well, the changing nature of their culture and lifestyle can be attributed to several factor.

³ The members of the Apatani tribal community believe that they and some of their neighbour tribes are descendants of *Abotani*, a godly figure. And while all other *Abotani* descendants are said to be violent and aggressive, the Apatanis believe themselves to be cool headed and very rarely resort to war unless threatened.

Slavery has been a part of most of the tribal groups in Northeast India (Banerjee, 2015). Slavery has also existed in the Apatani society for many centuries. The slaves were provided with some agricultural plot and a house to live in exchange for his years of servitude. The masters even paid for the slaves' marriage, given they were loyal. The slaves were deputed primarily in agricultural fields, millet land, to cut and collect firewood and in household chores (Kaning, 2008). The local term for the slaves was *miira* while the owners of slaves were known as *miti*, and although the two were treated almost equally on other grounds, there could be no marital union between the members of the two groups. There were strict rules against surrounding the slave system. (Thakur, 1999; Banerjee, 2015)

After the entry of administration in the valley, this practice has ceased to exist and currently one can find no mention of the system, let alone people being addressed by these terms. However, some houses still do have household helpers. Certain houses, especially in the Hapoli region, even have children working for them.

The western education was introduced in the valley by the missionary schools established under British India. Old Ziro has a literacy rate of 79.5% and Hapoli has a literacy rate of 82.45% (Census, 2011, GoI). The valley, at the same time, provides an excellent education policy. So famous is the education quality in the valley, that people from all over the Northeastern region of India come to study in the educational institutes of the valley.

The Apatanis, like most indigenous people, have a deep knowledge about the plants and herbs that are indigenous to the region. It is understood that before the introduction of modern medicine, the use of natural remedies was used for any diseases.

My grandmother used to say that Taniis never made use of modern medicines and chemicals, they relied mostly on the herbs and local produce and were living a healthy life. It is only in recent times, that we find the entrance of modern medicine into the valley. Somehow, in those times people rarely ever got sick. Whenever something would happen they would seek the help of the priests and through some herbs or prayers they would recover soon. (Yano, September 2019)

Each plant, fruit and vegetable had a specific purpose and medicinal property beyond the mere consumption at the time of hunger. Even in the making of *tipe*, the use of a thorn found in a particular tree is used. The selection of the tree whose thorn is to be used is not random and rather selected very cautiously, keeping the piercing in mind, to avoid infections. Also the ink and oil used is believed to have antiseptic properties.

Gyati Rana (2014) writes, 'The modern education system has made obsolete the traditional system of percolation of oral tradition.' He goes on to conclude that '... people get attracted towards materialism and have become vulnerable to apostasy' (Rana, 2014, 33). From such writings of local scholars, it is evident that modern education has not been accepted in its entirety by all in the society. When western education was first introduced in the valley, it led to a lot of distrust and conflict. The conflict that arose between traditional knowledge system and the western education cannot be neglected. And although the distrust still pertains in the mind of people to some extent, they have embraced the western knowledge system more freely now.

Location

Geographically, the valley is placed at an altitude of 1624 metres or 5328 feet. The longitude and latitude are 93.8385 and 27.5950 respectively. Average annual rainfall of the valley is 934.88cm during 2000. The weather is mostly pleasant at an average temperature of 14.2°C. During the summers, one can see the beautiful green fields spread across the valley and the temperature is a maximum of 33.4°C. However, during the winters white snow covers the valley and the temperature drops up to a minimum of -6.7°C (India Meteorological Department, 2020).

Ziro is a valley, surrounded by mountains on all sides. Because of its inter-montane nature, 'it is often mistakenly referred to as Apatani Plateau' (Kani, 2012). The aboriginal inhabitants are claimed to be none other than the Apatanis by the members. The valley officially consists of seven main villages, which the Apatanis formed based on their kinship. These villages are Hong, Hari, Bulla, Bamin-Michi, Mudan Tage, Dutta and Hija. So, for instance, the members of the Hong clan have their traditional house in Hong village, those belonging to the Hari clan have got theirs in Hari village and so on. However, in reality there are many more villages, and thereby clans, than that like Tajang, Reru, etc. The villages are divided into residential area, forest area, bamboo grooves, agricultural fields and religious grounds. At the entry of the village, one can find the agricultural fields, in the centre they have the houses, bamboo grooves and religious grounds and towards the extreme end there is the forest area used for hunting and building materials. At the heart of every village also lies a *lapang*, which is a pole like structure situated at an elevated platform. The *lapang* is a symbolic monument around which many religious events take place.

In more recent times, people have shifted from Old Ziro to Hapoli town, and this has become Ziro officially as all the major government offices and hospitals are situated here. But that was not the case originally. And now many traditional houses are getting abandoned. The population

in Hapoli town consists of not only the Apatanis but also people of other ethnic groups who have migrated to the valley in search of job. According to Census 2011, the population in Lower Subansiri is 83030. Of which, 19605 are living in Old Ziro and 22747 in Hapoli, while others live in the non-Apatani inhabiting areas of the district (Census, 2011). Many Apatanis have left their traditional houses in the village and settled in Hapoli town. The distance between the two places is 7 kms.

Traditional Apatani houses are made of bamboo and wood. The valley was mostly swamp land when the Apatanis moved in on account of which their houses are built at an elevated level from the ground. Below the ground of the house, they keep their livestock, like pigs and chicken. As soon as one enters an Apatani house, the first thing one can notice is the traditional fireplace. Each house has a hearth at the centre which is used to cook food daily and keep oneself warm during the brutal winter. Most conversations with guests take place around this fireplace, which is very comfortable, especially during wintery nights. At the top of the hearth is a structure used to store wood, meat and other foods for the winter. The meat is kept for drying out from the heat of the fire, which is a favourite delicacy among the Apatanis. The use of chairs and sofas is comparatively new for the people, so they used to make use of small stools made from cane or bamboo. As it is evident bamboo plays an essential part in the lives of the Apatani and most of the household has their own bamboo garden.

Kinship

The Apatanis are said to be the descendants of the mighty *Abotani*. This is the same as its neighbouring tribes, namely Nyishi, Miris and Daflas. The Apatanis are said to have brought certain trees and plants along with them before travelling towards the south. These include pine

trees and black rice. As per oral narration and folklores the forefathers of the Apatanis, and some neighbouring tribes, *Abotani* came to this part of the world after crossing several mountains and rivers. Later each indigenous group parted their own ways and settled in different areas of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam. The Apatanis decided to settle in Ziro valley, which was scarcely inhabited by another indigenous community, whom the Apatanis call '*Tani-taru*'.

In this study, 20 out of 109 (18%) of the respondents claim that the Apatanis have travelled from a place called *Mudo Suppung*, or the present day Tibet. Some (Kani, 2021) have even written about it. However, due to a lack of written documentation about the past, we could not validate these facts, but oral history claims that the Apatanis have descendants in regions far northern to Ziro and they have travelled from there before settling in the present-day Arunachal Pradesh.

The close-knit nature of the Apatani society is apparent in every aspect of their lifestyle. Be it the *Patang* groups who help each other in their agricultural activities, or the friends they host during the Myoko festivals, the kinship and friendship ties shared by the community is widely cherished by all. When it comes to their social ties, Apatanis maintain, respect and cherish every bond and relation. The relation of *Patang* is unique to the Apatani society and that is why it is especially important to understand the social relations of the Apatanis. The *Patang* is an institutionalised system of labour division that has existed in the Apatani society for a long time and helped maintain equilibrium in the society.

Formation of *Bine Ajing* is also a mark of the close friendship ties that Apatanis cherish. *Bine Ajing* is a bond formed and celebrated during the Myoko festivals among Apatanis. According to the rules of which each individual would have 6-7 friends in a village and clan different or outside of their own. It is symbolic of maintaining old friendships as well as formation of new

ones. During each Myoko festivals individuals meet and gift their respective *Ajings* and then they reciprocate the same way. The system is several years old and according to the Apatani mythology, the ancestral figure *Abotani* had started upon failing to maintain his friendship with his friend called *Siiki* (Hilaly, 2018). Although these rituals and customs of the traditional Apatani society has undergone several changes, but their spirit and intentions still continue albeit in a transformed manner.

Religion

The Apatanis are followers of the Donyi Polo religion, whereby *Donyi* signifies the Sun and *Polo* signifies the moon. All the other descendants of *Abotani* are also traditionally followers of this religion. As the name suggests, the followers of Donyi Polo worship the Sun and Moon as their Gods. The Apatanis view the Sun as their mother and the beginning of life. Also according to the folklores it was mother Sun who had first got the *tipe* and the humans followed her footsteps.

The Apatanis have a religious ground called *yugyan*, whereby most of their important religious events take place. Apart from this common ground for the entire valley, most of the villages also have their own *soko*, or ceremonial ground, where the annual festivals are held. Each village has a structure amongst their residential location called *babo* which is used for both religious as well as physical development purposes. The *babo* is of immense social importance in the Apatani society. A *babo* is made of a particular class of wood for the auspicious *Myoko* festival. Before the beginning of the actual events of the festival it is important that the villages put up their *babo*. Essentially, it is a big mast which is erected on the village *lapang* on the day of the festival. Villagers decorate the *babo* by wrapping cane and putting ring and head gear on it among other things. This also because some consider *babo* as a new bride in the village. Another

purpose served by *babo* is acrobatic performances which the young boys are encouraged to perform on it (Landi, 2015). This encourages physical strength and growth amongst the young members. Every house with male child has a smaller version of the *babo* made outside their house. Shamans and priests of Donyi Polo are known to take the help of several animals and livestock in the performance of their rites and rituals. For example, the lines on and condition of liver of the chicken which is sacrificed can tell a lot about the fortune and future course of events. Festivals commonly make use of blood of a sacrificed *Mithun* (wild ox) blood to impress the Gods. Therefore, livestock plays an important role in almost every ritual of the Apatanis.

Their religious temple is a place they call *Donyi Polo Meder Nelo*, where a gathering takes place every Sunday. Each village has their own *Meder Nelo*, and members of the particular village are supposed to gather here. The interior of the temple is a big rectangular hall with a few windows. At one end of the hall is a platform at a height little higher than the rest of the hall. At the centre of this platform is a big sign, usually made on a white cloth, of Donyi Polo, which looks like a big Sun but with several coloured layers in it. The priest chants the major prayers, followed by everyone reading the prayers together. They bring their own prayer books and share with the ones who do not have theirs. The women sit on one side and the men on the other. Some food in the form of '*prasad*', which is considered sacred food, is also distributed among those who attend the gathering.

However, over the years many of the Apatanis have chosen to convert to other religions. Christianity entered the valley in the year 1857, after the entry of the British in the valley. The first British official to enter the valley was R. Wilcox in 1825. Christianity plays a significant role when it comes to the course of evolution that the valley and the people residing in it have undergone. First of all, in the context of this thesis, let us point out that according to early

Christianity, body marking was not ideal. In fact, some texts in the Bible are clearly against it (Leviticus 19:28, Old Testament, Bible⁴). Thus, not all the customs brought about by Christianity may have matched with the existing customs of the Apatanis. Father Kenny of Don Bosco School, Ziro told during an interview that coming of Christianity did not affect the local tradition and in no way imposed Christian values on the Apatanis. At the same time, when asked if he would allow his students to mark their body as part of the traditional practice, he refused politely since such practices are against Christian values.

To our surprise, there were only 10-15 people attending the Donyi Polo Meder Nelo in the gathering on Sundays, but when we went to a Church on a Sunday, the mass gathered there was large in number. Also the age group attending these two Sunday gatherings differ largely. People in the Donyi Polo temple are mostly of higher age group, above 50 years of age and sometimes the small children they bring along. However, the ones attending the Church belong to a much broader age group. One could get an idea of a shift in the Apatanis' religious interest. This is of course based on first-hand observation of the six times we went to Sunday gatherings and not on the members registered on the two institutes.

The flag of Donyi Polo religion is white in colour with a red Sun in the centre. And this hangs proudly outside every household where its followers reside. Naturally, most traditional houses have them. When entering Old Ziro, one can get a clear view of these flags and *babos* all around. However, the same is not true for Hapoli as the houses and buildings in the area are modelled more around western style of architecture.

⁴ “Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the Lord.”

The religion of Donyi Polo reaffirms their faith in the nature as they worship the Sun and the Moon. Owing to this close relation with the naturalistic forces, the Apatanis have a strong environmental ethics and use the natural resources sustainably in their everyday life. Wilkinson, (2017) even claims that the current religious and environmental problems are ultimately indistinguishable (Wilkinson, 2017, p. 295).

The UNESCO included the Apatani valley in their tentative list of World Heritage Site for its extremely high productivity and unique way of preserving the ecology (UNESCO, 2014). The Apatanis follow a simple and sustainable lifestyle. And when it comes to nature, their daily actions reflect immense respect and care towards it. Their approach to the environment is unique and refreshing. Since they follow the Donyi Polo religion, they can be said to be nature worshipers. The Apatanis have a deep connection with nature. Apart from the fact that they worship the Sun and moon gods called, Donyi Polo, their lifestyles and festivals are all well-tuned to protect nature. Through the center of the Ziro valley flows a river called the Kiile. The Apatanis respect this river a lot as they believe it to be the source of their life and that of the valley. This river is important in providing water to their agricultural fields as well as some households. Although the breadth and force of the river is said to have been reduced substantially over the years, it is treated with utmost care and respect.

Kumar and Ramakrishnan (1990) examine the efficient energy flow system in the valley based on the traditional recycling of resources. According to them, the farming techniques used by the Apatanis are very efficient and sustainable. Techniques like recycling of crop residues, using of organic wastes, and maximising the use of irrigated land boost the quality of the natural resources of the valley. The Apatanis also sow different varieties of rice with differing sowing

and harvesting times, depending on the nature of the soil available in different parts of the valley. This allows for maximum utilisation of land resources.

Bamboo plays a major role in the lives of the Apatanis. Each village has some area of ground reserved for the bamboo grooves. Bamboo is used by the villagers, to build most of the structures, viz. house, *babo*, *lapang*, etc, in weaving baskets, in the form of shoots in their cooking, and making ornaments and many more things. Bamboo is also considered sacred and is used in most of the religious ceremonies. Thus this humble tree/grass is treated with much care and respect in this valley. According to by Sundriyal et.al., the Apatanis have a rich culture of conservation of bamboo and cane, which can help in the local natural resource development if directed correctly. The study has shown that the Apatanis make use of nine bamboo and three cane species for their livelihood purposes (Sundriyal et.al., 2002). Hardly any of these are used for commercial purpose or for revenue generation. Because of their unique approach to nature, the valley sets a good example of how to live harmoniously with nature without exploiting it.

The only aspect of the Apatani society's relation with nature which could be harming over the years of growing population is the large sacrifice of animals and cattle. Animal sacrifice is a part of the culture of this valley for several decades now and is customary in every festival, ritual and occasion. For the low temperature that the valley encounters, consumption of fatty meat is obviously necessary to keep them warm. However, while making these customs, what the forefathers could not have seen is the growing demand of the ever-growing population. At this rate, the animals may not be able to reproduce enough to satisfy the need of the entire valley. This may be an issue of concern in the coming years.

Politics

During the pre-colonial period, the Apatanis followed a chieftain system, common to many indigenous groups in Northeast India. The members of the Apatani society would select a chief whom they consulted for settlement of any issues or in times of need. The religious priest, called the *nyibu* too had some form of political power and before any war or to settle some dispute they performed rituals which were believed to help them achieve the desired goal.

Even though the entry of British rule was late into the valley, it had a colossal impact on the life of the inhabitants. The first entry of British official was as late as 1825 according to Stuart Blackburn (2003), although it was only two days long. In spite of being an un-administered territory, many officials entered the valley fearlessly and even wives of two officials also came to the valley with them. The first of them was Dr. Christopher von Fürer Haimendorf, an anthropologist and then Special Officer for Subansiri area, who came with his wife, Elizabeth Barnado, also known as Betty, who is also an ethnographer. They were in the valley in March 1944 to May 1945. And the other couple was Lt. Col. Fredrick Nicholson Betts, a military officer and an ornithologist, who visited the valley along with his wife, Ursula Graham Bower, who was also an ethnographer as well as travel writer (Kani, 2008). These visits also resulted in the publication of many books on the Apatanis which are essential references if one wants to understand the old Apatani society under British rule. The entry of the Britishers into this previously un-administered region however did not lead to any political unrest, and the locals had in fact, according to the reports, accepted them, helped them travel across the different parts of the region.

Towards the end of the British rule, a permanent post was set up by the Assam Rifles as the then Arunachal Pradesh was under the Assam administration. It was then that the first instance of violence and force used by the Apatani people. This later came to be known as *Kure Chambyo*.

After Arunachal Pradesh was formed as a separate state in 1987, political power was handed over to the newly formed state and political authority resided closer home. It was known as the North-East Frontier Agency until on 20 January 1972 gained the status of Union Territory and was renamed as Arunachal Pradesh.

In 1971, the Apatani Youth Association (AYA) was formed. The purpose of building this association was to be able to provide better opportunities and power to the youth of the society by making their voice heard. The first and foremost agendas included better roads in the valley for improved transportation, more schools to provide better education to all, ban on age-old tradition, which are no longer seen to be serving any purpose, like facial tattoos, nose plugs and child marriage, and many more changes which helped in the overall development of the Apatanis. The first president was a person who had come back finishing his education from other parts on India, namely, Dr. Dani Dure. Albeit spending years away from his hometown, Dr. Dure decided to come back to the valley not only to serve as a doctor for his fellow Apatanis, but also to help the youth lead a better life by forming the Apatani Youth Association. The association has gained several praises over the years for its active role in political decision-making and improved life-chances for the youth of the society. The members of the association are from varied strata of the society and represent a wide range of interests. However, not all their decisions are accepted without contest. In the interest of the present study, it should be mentioned that when the AYA first put a ban on the facial tattoos and nose plugs, a section of the

society raised their voice in protest, fearing the loss of a significant cultural practice. This was one of the few instances of internal conflict amongst the Apatanis.

What is supposedly considered to be superior, acts as an influencer for the indigenous groups. The indigenous have a tendency to adapt and incorporate the outside world as an attempt to gain a status similar to that of the “others”. Beteille (1998) writes that Hindus influence as well get influenced by the tribals. The changes in the Apatani society can be understood in this light. For many years, the world of the Apatani people was in isolation from the rest of the world. They were in contact with their neighbouring indigenous groups, who also happen to be from the same ancestor, but other than that they had no source of contact with the rest of the world. It was the British who were the first to enter this ‘unregistered’ and ‘unknown’ land. During the British rule, forces from Assam were also sent to look after and maintain law and order in the region. This introduced the two groups to each other as they began to know more about the others. During the fieldwork, we encountered narratives suggesting that the initial relation between the Assamese people and the Apatanis was not a very harmonious one and this is also realized when one closely examines the Kure War.

The Kure War took place in 1949 in a region northeast to the Ziro valley called Kure. The war caused death of 26 Hill Miris and burning of two Apatani villages. There has been quite a bit of controversy around this historical event. The fact that the details are believed to be suppressed by scholars (Tado, 2017) is reflexive of the fact that both sorrow and at the same time shame are deeply embedded in the event. According to Tado (2017), *Kure Chambyo* or the conflict at Kure has little written official documents and was first ever reported by Stuart Blackburn in 2003, who loosely mentions the event and blames the colonial administrators for it, in spite of it taking place in independent India. However, Takhe Kani (1993, 2008, 2012) provides extensive reports

on the *Kure Chambyo*. According to Takhe Kani (2012), the Apatanis did not want foreign administration to interfere with the traditional customary laws of the tribe. So when Robert G. Menzies, an Indian civil servant, took over the outpost in Kure base camp in May 1948, a clash occurred between the locals and the officers. This base camp was originally set up by Colonel Betts in December 1946 and the locals confused Indian officers with the British.

However, according to Rimi Tado (2017), the incident took place differently. Some local Apatani people began reporting their personal troubles to the *halyangs* (non-tribals, in this case the *sepoys*). This was disapproved of by the influential Apatanis who felt personal problems could be and should be solved by traditional norms. So they started mobilising people and all villages except Hiija and Reru joined in. Firstly, they did some war rituals all night and by the time that was over it was early morning. They then burned down a big house at *Papii*, which was already empty as someone informed about it beforehand. Now, when they went to Kure to kill the *halyangs*, they failed to realise that they were armed with bows, spears, swords, guns and much more. Owing to their miscalculation and overconfidence, the Apatanis lost many lives that day (Tado, 2017). The Apatanis have different names for people belonging to different ethnicity. As mentioned non-indigenous outsiders are called *Halyang* and Nyishis are called *Missang*.

In 1971, the Apatani Youth Association (AYA) was formed. The intent was to welfare and better education of the youths. Soon after they decided to prohibit the practice of *tipe* and *yapin*. The first president of the AYA is a doctor who had stepped out of the valley at the age of 16 to pursue higher education. Some of his personal experiences provide a glimpse of the factors that might have led him to decide on changes for his valley. According to his narration, his good academic performance could not save him from the judgment of fellow mates. Some of his classmates made fun of his facial marks during an award ceremony and that memory has stuck

with him till date. He narrates the incident sadly yet distinct as though the event took place just the day before:

Tipe does not serve the same purpose as it used to in the bygone days. People who still have their tipe are judged, laughed and maybe thought to be 'wild' by several others. When I went to Kolkata to pursue my degree, I got many questions and comments on my facial marks. They knew I came from an indigenous community. I remember some of my classmates commenting "Kala poita ache". They did not realise that during my stay I had learned Bengali and could understand what they were saying clearly. (Dr. Dure, September 2018)

When asked how such incident made him feel, he replied:

It was painful of course. I was sad and talked about it with my father. My maternal uncle had told me to be like the people around me, when I was leaving Ziro for the first time. That advice stuck with me and I decided to get rid of my tipe by operating on it. People from my village were angry initially but as you can see now most of the people have operated on it and very few people still have their tipe. (Dr. Dure, September 2018)

The formation of the AYA has furthered the changes in the Apatani society, especially in the political sphere of life and in the direction deemed best by its members. The politics and poetics behind the politics of the Apatanis have undergone changes and the determinants of its direction was a result of a reciprocal relation between the Apatani power holders and the politico-economic forces from outside.

Cultural Sphere

Answering the question of whether there has been a loss of cultural practices due to these changes, is not the aim of this study. There were narratives both of conforming as well as denying it. But the study attempts to analyse the transformation in the various other spheres which may be the result or the cause of the wider cultural change. In terms of social customs and rules, the Apatanis have tried to maintain their original form as much as possible. Traditionally, there are three major annual festivals which form the heart of the cultural life for the Apatanis. They are Myoko, Dree and Murung. Each festival is celebrated in a specific period of the year and serves specific social purposes.

Myoko: Celebrated annually on the 20th of March, *Myoko* is a beloved festival of the Apatanis. The main aim of this particular festival is to maintain friendship and harmony within the community. For the purpose of this festival, the Apatani villages/clans are divided into three groups: Hari, Bulla and Tajang villages conduct the *Hari-Bulla Myoko*; Bamin-Michi, Mudan Tage, Dutta and Hija villages conduct *Hiichi Myoko*, whereas Hong being the largest village of the valley, alone forms the third group and conducts *Hong Myoko*. Each of these groups takes turns to host the *Myoko* festival. Hong hosted the 2019 *Myoko* and Hari-Bulla hosted the 2020 *Myoko*. All members of the village from the host group help and participate in conducting the festivals. The members would come to attend *Myoko*, irrespective of where they are settled. Preparation of the festival starts one month ahead as it is a lengthy and expensive affair. A lot of food, meat and liquor as well as dance and music surround this auspicious occasion. Kaning observes three reasons for the reducing glory of the *Myoko* festival over the years. First is the strict rule of the *Myoko* festival, according to which, one must be physically present at the altar during the festival, but because many have migrated outside the valley it is not always possible

to do so. Secondly, is the huge expenditure involved in the festival which not everyone can afford. And thirdly, Kaning mentions the influence of other cultures on the youth of the valley (Kaning, 2008).

Dree: *Dree* is celebrated annually on the 4th and 5th of July. The main meaning associated with this festival is a common one as among many Indian festivals, which is, to get a good harvest year. Over the year *Dree* festival like many other cultural aspects have undergone changes. Thus *Dree* is now celebrated in different parts of India, wherever the Apatanis live, in any manner befitting to them and this is also why it is more popular among the people. The festival involves preparation of rice wine, sacrifice of hens and eggs, observation of some taboo period post festival, dance by young girls as well as traditional sports and games.

Murung: *Murung* is celebrated in the month of January every year. The Apatanis consider *Murung* as much more than merely a festival, which involves many rites and rituals. Traditionally *Murung* festival was organized to please the Gods in times of need. There are two types of *Murung* festival: *Rontii* and *Ronser* (separated by the amount of expenditure expected to make) and it depends on the performer which one they wish to perform⁵. According to Kaning (2008),

Murung rite is performed by the Apatanis as and when they are suffering from some mysterious diseases or disease caused to domestic animals or infertility of male and female or problem faced in maintaining social status or sometimes to sacrifice old Mithuns (*Bos frantalis*) to God. (pg. 172, italics added).

⁵ The priest (performer) carefully takes out the liver of a chicken. Upon careful examination they get to know if God want them to sacrifice more (*Rontii Murung*) or less (*Ronser Murung*).

It is both a lengthy as well as an expensive affair, for it takes almost an entire day to perform all the ceremonies of *Murung* and the sacrifice of many cows and *mithuns*.

Apart from these three main festivals, the Apatanis have also adopted a modern festival celebrated each year which attracts tourists and artists, across the continents. It is this famous “Ziro Music Festival” which draws international attention and allows the valley gain revenue from. Held in the month of September every year, the festival although means inflation for the visitors, at the same time provides job and profit for the local residents. Musicians and music enthusiasts all over the world come to perform and spend three nights of music, camping, local delicacies and fun.

Both dance as well as music play an important part in the Apatani society. Its importance is not limited to entertainment and relaxation, but forms an integral part of the Apatani society like any other festivals, religious ceremonies and major social events. Irrespective of age or village membership, everyone participates in dance and merry making during festival seasons, and this continues till date. Traditional music, known as *Siirii Munii*, is performed at various rituals and ceremonies, whereby a loud horn is played for the Gods to hear their prayers. Although all festivals involve dance and music, it seems like *Murung* festival involves the most amount of dance and music. The young members of the community, however, rarely know to play the traditional instruments and the songs or lullabies.

Physical education too plays a major part in the Apatani culture. It has been given equal importance as formal education since the times of the *Abotani* and is considered of absolute essence for both the mental and physical growth and development of the children. These games are played during festivals and sometimes after religious ceremonies as well. According to Mihin

Kaning (2008), 'When some rites are performed for the welfare of the people, for some days, there is ritual prohibition that no one should go for agricultural works, to the forest to cut firewood, or for any other purpose.' During this time, called *Buth Anyo*, the Apatanis keep themselves engaged in sports and games. The most famous of these are *Babo Piiding*, whereby the one who holds the head of *Babo*, a ceremonial wooden pole, wins the game; *Giibii*, which is a form of wrestling; *Apu Eka Sani*, traditional arrow shooting, which is said to have been played by *Abotani* himself (Kanings, 2008). The respondents included in the present study have also mentioned other such games such as *Iisang*, *Lapang Piiding*, *Buha Bonii*, etc. But Kanings (2008) also writes, 'Such traditional games are now forgotten by the people of the Apatani society. It becomes a dead history.'

Regarding the traditional attire of the Apatanis, Mihin Kanings describes it as:

The Apatanis also wore *Ahu* and *Yari*, which was a kind of tail, made up of strips of fine cane bent into the shape of horse collar with an elongated end...To cover the genitals, they put *Yari*, the loincloth. It was made up of cloth with breadth 4 inches and the length of about 6 feet...they kept long hair. After growing long enough, they made a knot in front of forehead called *piidin* and a brass skewer called *khotu* was passed through it. Between knee and calf muscle, they also put a band made up of cane, which was called *Ali Tarin*. (Kanings, 2008).

The Apatani women traditionally wore *Yapin Hukho*, that is nose plug and both male and female members wore *Yaru Hukho*, that is ear plugs made from cane or wood. This was considered to add to the beauty of the Apatanis. Takhe Kani has also described the traditional attire of the Apatanis as 'the men-folk tied hair knot on the forehead with skew, tattoo in the lower chin, loin

belt with girdle of scarlet cane matted hanging from the waist like a tail, etc are the main characteristics of the Apatani male dresses. The womenfolk wearing blue beads on the neck, calico jacket and skirt, nose plug, earring, etc are the main feature of the Apatani women dresses' (Kani, 2012). However, when visiting the valley one can find that this description rarely matches with the current scenario. Now the informal attire, which most of the women in the valley wear, is a plain blouse and a wrapper skirt made from traditional handloom textile. During formal meetings, they wear the traditional attire described by Mihin Kaning (2008).

The young Apatanis however are rarely seen wearing these traditional attires. They prefer what is understood as 'modern' clothing like dress, trouser or jeans and t-shirts. Of course, this can be seen as an influence from the outside world especially the west, which will be explained at length and in detail in chapter 5.

When Ursula visited the valley in 1946, the concept of clothing was very less among the Apatanis. Later, however, handloom production was initiated within the vicinity of each household. Many households still produce their own piece of clothing, rather than buying from the market. These practices are gradually changing given the economic and political changes of the valley. The people belonging to the younger generation prefer to study, work and eventually settle outside the valley to the glamorous cities of the country. And simple traditional clothes like (skirt) and plain t-shirts are not in alignment with their style anymore, rather they prefer to wear western clothing. These types of economic activities and clothing styles inevitably help them mix well with the world outside the valley. Acculturation takes place in a slow yet with certainty whereby much might be lost but much can be gained.

Culture invariably undergoes several changes over the course of time. However, the manner it changes varies depending on several factors and reasons. In the case of Apatanis, the change can be attributed to its contact with other cultures and societies. This form of change in culture has been termed as “acculturation” by several scholars (Redfield, et al. 1936; Herskovits, 1937) and so we attribute the same term to the changes occurring in the Apatani society.

Being subjected to discrimination and seen as an inferior form of cultural society, the change occurred in one direction, that is, from the supposedly “dominant” culture to a supposedly “inferior” culture. The changes in the indigenous setting seems to be more than the changes in the societies of plain or non-hills societies. Being a vulnerable form of society, it seems that the indigenous people are more receptive to change – more frequent and fluently than the non-indigenous ones.

The language of the Apatanis is named after the people themselves, Apatani. It belongs to the Indo-European language group, like all other languages of the descendants of Abotani. Yet, the language of an Apatani differs from that of a Nyishi or Miri largely.

However today one can find the residents speaking in so many different languages, other than Apatani. Of course, the help of a common language had to be taken when communicating with an outsider, and it is Hindi in this case. What is even more surprising to notice is that the young people speak in Hindi even while communicating with their fellow Apatanis. Many parents speak in Hindi with their children and even encourage it. The elders continue to use Apatani language in their day-to-day life but unfortunately there are very few young Apatanis who can speak it fluently. There is no larger cultural loss than the death of a language. According to the Linguistic Society of America, a majority of the languages on the verge of extinction are those

spoken by minorities and marginalised communities of the world. The article also mentions that ‘When a community loses its language, it often loses a great deal of its cultural identity at the same time’ (Linguistic Society of America).

Pascal Bouchery (2010) writes, ‘... out of the 25,576 Apatani listed in the 2001 Census, less than 10,000 returned as Apatani speakers, and therefore Apatani is not even regarded officially as a Non Schedule Language’. He fears that unless the language is taught more by the parents and schools, and preserved in written form, it might die out soon. The UNESCO (2009) has listed Apatani as an endangered language in its electronic Atlas of the world’s languages in danger.

Tattooing has been a part of most of the indigenous community. From the Kalingas of Philippines to the Todas of Tamil Nadu, tattooing has been an integral part of many indigenous cultures. The purpose may differ from tribe to tribe. So for example, some mark themselves after victory in war as a symbol of pride, others mark themselves after reaching a particular age to find suitable match. Also the techniques, ink used and the piercing instrument, all these may differ from one social group to another. Yet, the similarity lies in the tradition of marking the body. According to Lars Krutak (2015), the oldest tattoo found till date is on a 5200-year-old mummy of a European Iceman. This is indicative of the fact that tattooing has been a part of the dawn of human civilisation. Over the years, some sort of negative attitude has been added to this practice, a lot of which can be attributed to tattooing being famous among criminals and voyagers. Tattooing has hardly ever been included in the so-called prestigious society amongst the mainstream cultural practices. Its association with rebellion and revolt has built a reputation around it, thus preventing it from entering the mainstream culture. But tattooing should be seen as much more than that. The social impact goes well beyond what is observed on the skin. Many associations encourage members to mark themselves in solitude. Tattoos can be symbolic of a

wide variety of things: memories, experiences, cultures, new beginnings or ends, and many more. Tattoo enthusiasts around the world meet at tattoo conventions and festivals and the community is growing larger day by day⁶. Tattoos can be cryptic and complicated, or simple and straightforward. There are numerous techniques, art forms and inks used today to make tattoos. While the traditional processes were much painful and time-consuming, modern technology has allowed tattoos to be quick and decorative, although they cost way more than the traditional ones. While modern tattoos can be chosen by the bearer, traditional tattoos did not give the bearers the choice.

This study revolves around one such ancient tattooing system among the Apatanis. Being on the verge of extinction, a need for documentation and cultural preservation was felt. The only people with the traditional tattoos still seen in the valley are those aged minimum 55 years. After this generation is gone, the first-hand evidence of this tradition of tattooing will be gone forever from the valley. Thus this study aims to keep the tradition alive through documentation and data collection. Hopefully, researchers who choose to study the Apatanis in future can benefit from such documentation.

⁶ World's first tattoo convention was held in January 1976 in Houston. 135 tattoo artists attended the convention. Tito's in Goa, India will organize its 6th International Tattoo Festival in January 2022. Hundreds of such conventions take place across the globe each year where tattoo artists show off their work in order to gain recognition and win prizes.

3.3 The tradition of tattooing

Amongst all the other cultural practices mentioned in this chapter, this study focuses primarily on the facial tattoos which are called *tipe* by the locals. For age-old tradition, it is not possible to trace the exact year when this tradition had begun (lack of documentation furthered the aspect), but the Apatanis believe it has been present since the very beginning, and the folklores provide similar suggestions. However, there are also some stories which suggest that *tipe* was made only after the Apatanis settled in the Ziro valley and had a conflict with the tribe previously inhabiting here, namely *Tanitaru*. The fact that the other children of *Abotani* like the Nyishis and Miris do not have any facial markings may indicate that these are cultural practices exclusive to the Apatanis which were adopted post-settlement.

So among the Apatanis, there was a tradition of marking the face of young boys and girls. As soon as they reach the desirable age (most likely of six or seven years), the Apatani children are marked. The Apatani women have a straight line from the temple of their forehead running up to the tip of their nose, and five lines on the chin. Whereas, the Apatani men have a symbol, much like the English alphabet 'T' on their chin, although has no connection to the Latin alphabet. Traditional *tipe* is made with the dust collected from the bottom of the vessels which get black from being cooked on wood coal for years. This powder is then mixed with either pig fat or cow fat, as they are considered to be anti-septic. This forms a thick past and with the help of hammer and prick method, *tipe* was made on the face. The thorn use for pricking is from a tree called *tipe tiirey*. Now, this thorn is carefully attached between two cane sticks and dipped in the prepared ink. Then with the help of another cane stick, the thorn is repeatedly hammered on the skin in order to pierce it and leave the ink behind the skin. The process was painful and there was no use

of anaesthesia on the person getting marked. That was why other members of the family would hold their legs, arms and head in place, while blood and tear fell down from the novice *tipe* bearer.

The reasons for the practice of such tradition are highly debatable as a wide variety of responses have been collected during the fieldwork. However, there are several complementary as well as competitive speculations and narratives. While interacting with the respondents and upon asking them about the origin of the traditional tattoos, four stories came up. According to the first story, the Apatanis made *tipe* to distinguish themselves from the Nyishis, Miris and other neighbouring tribes. This was done to identify members of their own tribe – to know who are their own. The second story narrates members of a hostile neighbouring tribe (often called *tanu tarii*) used to kidnap and rape the Apatani women and also loot and create nuisances among the them. In such a scenario, it was difficult to distinguish which women belonged to which community. Thus to avoid losing members of their community, they started marking their women. The problem with this narration is that it does not explain the reason why Apatani men also made *tipe*. The third explanation on the origin of *tipe* is similar to the second one. While they also believe that members of other tribes were abducting the women of their community, *tipe* helped make the women look unattractive rather than to enhance the beauty. Aesthetically, they thought *tipe* would help in making the women look ugly and thereby unattractive (a process of uglification). The fourth and final explanation draws heavily from the Apatani folklores. As explained, *Ami Niido* and *Ami Niiku* who were the mothers of Sun (*Donyi*) were looking for an appropriate groom and so they used all kinds of ornaments to decorate themselves. These included exotic jewellerys, beautiful clothes as well as marking their face and wearing nose and ear plugs to look beautiful. Only after these efforts were taken, were *Ami Niido* and *Ami Niiku* able to find a

suitable groom of their choice. Thus began the tradition that all women must decorate their face in order to be able to find appropriate groom. Without *tipe*, Apatani women cannot be married. When asked about this version of the origin of *tipe*, one of the respondent states,

This is the story our mother and grandmother used to narrate to us in our childhood days. But not many people remember these stories now. We were happy to decorate ourselves like the Gods would. These marks make us beautiful and all the Apatani men find it attractive. (Kayo, October 2019)

The problem with the latter three stories is that they only provide explanation for why women mark their faces and do not take into consideration the fact that men too mark themselves at the same age and manner as the women of this society do.

Thereby, one cannot agree with only one of the narrations and ignore the others. These four narrations are quite different from one another in terms of the meaning associated with *tipe*. Whether one sees it as a process of beautification or as a camouflage determines the ways in which they treat this cultural practice and eventually its prohibition. Nonetheless each of the narration is important when one attempts to grasp the Apatani society as a whole. The presence of different narrations about the origin of *tipe* only points to the fact that in any society there is no one singular or universal truth which explains all. Different narrations and experiences make up a society and this heterogeneity needs to be recognized before drawing any conclusions. Since knowledge is based on power, it is important to not make it singular and allow for power to be a weapon in the hands of a few. Knowledge is based on the varied life experiences of the members of the society. Since the experiences and memories of each individual member differ from the other, one cannot expect the truth to be the same for all.

The *tipe* was usually made by the female members of the family, it could be the mother or the elder sister, or other relatives. Other female members helped in holding down the person or in the preparation period. Although there was no religious ritual and chanting involved, the process itself was transforming enough for both the person bearing the *tipe* as well as the members of her/his family. Many of the parents, although not all, are happy to get their child tattooed which is seen as an important step in the growing process.

When a child reaches a particular age, they are made to attain *tipe*. However, a girl gets a smaller version of this *tipe* almost right after she is born. At the age of one or two, a small *tipe*, around one inch, is put on the forehead of a baby girl, called *panyo*. This has been described as a symbol of sex by the respondents, because as a child, a boy and a girl look the same. Apart from this *panyo*, by the age of seven both girls and boys of the society get their first *tipe*. Although it is customary to mark the face only once, many choose to do it more than once in order to make it darker. Such was the meanings associated with *tipe* in the past that even though it was a painful process, many were happy to do it repeatedly. One of the respondents expresses extreme joy while getting her *tipe* for the first time. To her dismay, it started fading as she grew up. So, she went ahead and did it again. Yet dissatisfied with the depth of the colour of her *tipe*, she decided to do it again after two years. In this way, she went through the painful process of *tipe* making four times in total. She explains it with much pride and joy in her face and does not regret for this at all. Now this is not unique among the people of elder generation. Getting one's face marked was a rite of passage which marked entry into womanhood or manhood, which is of course a matter of pride for the bearer and their family. The child gets 'separated' from her/his fellow mates and is 'transitioned' to be 'incorporated' into adulthood (Gennep, 1909).

Bearers of *tipe* associate a lot of meanings with *tipe*, much more than mere markings on the skin. It constitutes their identity, affiliation, gender and to some extent age. Its historicity and relevance make its absence difficult to cope with or incorporate into the Apatani life. Different respondents have associated different meanings and importance to the tradition.

I could never imagine an Apatani without his/her *tipe*, that was until it was banned. Now it is so rare that many even forgot that it was compulsory for people to mark their face until a few years ago...I don't know the origin of *tipe* although I never different stories. People make many speculations about why the tradition had begun. I don't know how far it is true. Many say that it begun due to the fact that Apatani women are extremely beautiful, much more than those of the neighbouring community and so the later was attempted to abduct and at times even married Apatani women. So to prevent that from happening repeatedly, our people had to mark the faces of the women, to identify them as Apatanis, so the members of other communities cannot take them. (Yanni, August 2019)

This narration was provided by Yanni, when asked about the origin and value of *tipe*.

Yami is another old lady living alone in the village of Bamin-Michi. She cannot tell her exact age as the idea of identity certificates is relatively new for her. Her voter ID indicates that she is 62 years old, but she admits that her real age is way more than that. When asked about why she marked her face, she says,

Everyone in our time used to do it. My parents told me to do it, so I did. We were not questioning and arguing like the children now-a-days. We just did what our parents asked us to do. (Yami, September 2019)

Such responses are common among respondents who are unaware of the origin and reason of the tradition but did because they were asked to. We also asked the value of *tipe* in her life. When we met Yami for the first time, she said *tipe* is important but it is discontinued and thus holds no value in the present context. However, when we met Yami for the third time (second time was coincidental) we asked her the value of *tipe* in her life again. She explained that after so many years of having it, it has become a permanent part of her life and her body. It is associated with her identity because without the marks people would not recognise her. She continues, ‘There is no Yami without the marks. The *tipe* makes up who I am, just like my arms, legs, hair, these marks are part of me and who I am. People in my village would not recognise me if I operate on it, like many Apatanis are doing now-a-days.’ The importance of *tipe* might be on the wane, but it certainly holds much value and importance in the lives of the wearers. She also explains that she receives a lot of attention because her face is marked. This happens especially when she is travelling to the plains. She says, ‘People stare. They stare at me a lot, mostly I ignore but experiencing it all the time makes me very uncomfortable.’ This aspect of discomfort will be further explored later in this chapter.

When another respondent, Salang, was asked about the value of *tipe* in his life, he said, ‘Without *tipe*, an Apatani cannot be recognised as Apatani. Nowadays everyone looks the same and you cannot tell if the person next to you is an Apatani brother or a Nyishi. *Tipe* helped us to recognize that.’ The experience of Salang is unique. Salang got his mark when he was 10 years old. He was very excited to get it as most of his friends already had their mark. He has strong

emotions associated with his marks, which is evident in his statement and his understanding of the origin of the mark. According to Salang, *tipe* is a technique of beautification used by the Gods and they wanted all their followers to employ the same in order to find appropriate mate. According to him, people marked their faces as a form of respect to the ancestors and at the same time as a process of beautification. He narrates,

Tipe was part of the culture and tradition of the Apatani life for a long time. Like the Hindus wear *sindoor* (vermillion) and *maangalsutra* (sacred necklace), the Apatanis wore the *tipe* and *yapi*, and some sacred necklaces. It was an essential part of every Apatani. (Salang, August 2019)

When asked about his feelings about the ban, he says that initially it was difficult for many of the locals to accept this fact that *tipe* was no longer a part of their customs, but over the years people came to see the prohibition as important as well as a necessary step to improve the condition of the local indigenous communities.

It is the way we wanted the world to see us. It was part of our culture and identity. People from other tribes could not recognise an Apatani without any mark. Many, like the police and guards, recognised us through our *tipe*. So for them too it was initially difficult to accept that Apatanis would no longer mark their faces. (Salang, August 2019).

The way people associate the origin and meaning of *tipe* also has a huge impact of the way they perceive *tipe* and its ban. For those who do not attach much historical significance with the way *tipe* originated, the ban is not a big deal or loss. But there are others who see that *tipe* originated because the gods used it for beautification and for selection of mates, associated much value with

the tradition of marking body and thus found it difficult to let it go based on the rules of a newly formed organisation by the youth, that is AYA.

The fact that the entire Apatani community is closely knit and does have mutual trust of one another's deeds implies that the rule of prohibition is being strictly abided by all the members. The bond shared by the Apatanis made it easier for the members to follow the rules and customs and also it was easier to keep the actions of the community members in check as the population was not very high (Census 1971). Given the little choice, the members had accepted the prohibition. While some were happy (even eager) to be spared of the pain, there were others who were unhappy about the new rules. Young Apatanis promoted the idea of the ban more than the elders. They did not want to go through the same pain that their forefathers had to go through. The conservative section of the community tried to prevent the prohibition (for obvious reasons) but to their dismay it took the form of a proper law in 1971.

Similar responses were gathered from people, for whom *tipe* makes up their identity as well as their 'self'. Another respondent, Kadi, says that they do not need any Inner Line Permit while returning from the city because the officers at the post just look at their *tipe* and know that this is a local person, implying that their face (or *tipe*) acted as their identity marker. In other words, *tipe* should be understood as a part of the body, self, identity and life of the Apatanis. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about the Apatani youth. Even though to an outsider, they may admit supporting the ban on *tipe* but at the same time, the elders also express sorrow over loss of cultural identity.

However, there are some who do not want their child to get marked. The story of Nanya is not like those around her. When Nanya was young, her father started working in Guwahati and soon

realised that it is not a mandatory custom for people outside the Apatani valley to mark their faces. And because Nanya's father had a vision of letting his children achieve anything they wanted, he did not want them to be held back just because their face was marked. Because Nanya did not mark her face for a long time, her friends and classmates teased her that she did not look like a true Apatani and was not one of them. To her father's dismay, Nanya got her *tipe* at the age of ten, sans her father's knowledge.

Similar story was narrated by Grayu, whose parents decided that their son should not be marked. Friends of Grayu made fun of her. Unlike Nanya, Grayu has got no *tipe* on his face till date.

My father was very clear about not letting his child get their face marked. So he told me that even though I may look different from the rest of my friends, I must get my face marked. He wanted me to go the city in search of job and settle there. I worked in Guwahati for a long period of time. The absence of *tipe* helped me fit better with them, I think. But my friends and relatives all teased me a lot, saying that I am not an Apatani (laughs). (Grayu, November 2019)

Irrespective of the parents' desires, *tipe* formed an essential part of the life of the Apatanis. It was much more than a mark. It was symbolic markers of one's tribe, the age attained and the pain the person went through for the sake of tradition. In the past, there was more respect for one's culture and tradition, which has been replaced by the fascination of the unknown world. Also laws were more repressive in nature (Durkheim, 1893), which prevented people from breaking them and made sure tradition was abided by. But changing times have also changed people's view on tradition, which is now viewed as "baggage" rather than pride. Traditionally,

one could not recognise an Apatani person without her/his *tipe*, *yapin* and traditional clothes. However, these practices have ceased to exist.

When the respondents were asked about operating on the *tipe*, the responses were again widely diverse. Several of the members of the Apatani community decided to operate on their *tipe*. Unlike the advanced technology of plastic surgery, the doctors in the region are more comfortable with stitches. So when asked to operate on *tipe* in order to hide it, they would stitch the dermis layer of the skin together. This leaves a visible mark on the skin and to some extent changes the original structure of the face. The operation thus changes the structure of the face substantially. When Opyang was asked about it, she was quick to express her disapproval of the same. According to her,

The operation was not a part of our culture and tradition. This is a new thing that many people with *tipe* like to do now-a-days. But I do not like it. Because it does not make the face attractive, instead it changes the structure to a large extent. I would never operate on it. I love my *tipe* so much. (Opyang, October 2019)

Does this imply that only those who do not like their *tipe* much are the ones to operate on it? And those Apatanis who did not operate on it are the ones that love their facial marks a lot? As it turns out, the division is not always so simple or straightforward. At times some of the members are pressurized to operate on it by the other members of their social group, mostly family and friends even though personally they may adore their *tipe*. The operations are more common among those who travel outside the valley for trade and business purposes, implying the role economic political factors too played. Since they had to deal with so many non-Apatani people,

the tendency to look like those they met was more common and obvious. Out of the 109 respondents, 17 had decided to permanently operate on it and live with the marks forever. The scars of *tipe* stay with the person for the rest of their lives, reminding them of the past. Because the choice of operating on it arises from a particular kind of experiences of shame, stigma, discomfort or even the pain gone through while getting the *tipe*, the after-marks of the operation are a constant reminder of the past and such experiences.

At other times, those Apatanis who decided to not operate on their *tipe* did not necessarily comprise all those who loved their *tipe* so much to get rid of it. Instead, this category of non-operators comprises mainly those who do not have the will, money or appropriate resources to operate on it. The scar that is left behind also provokes several senior members to avoid operating on it.

The changes are evident when one visits the valley. But what is missing from the existing scholarship on/of the valley is the analysis to these changes and a holistic sociological understanding. The gap this study thereby attempts to fill is the critical analysis and breakdown of these changes. A need to critically understand the changes by focusing on the psycho-cultural aspects of the indigenous way of life seemed necessary because of the scarce attention paid to such factors of change in the academia.

3.4 Prohibition on *Tipe*

In 1971, the young members of the Apatanis took a decision to form an association called the Apatani Youth Association (AYA). Under its constitution, the association strived to bring about a lot of changes in the valley for the betterment and progress of fellow Apatanis. Some of these changes include building better roads and more schools, ban on child marriage as well as ban on

facial tattoos and nose plugs. Although it might be difficult to track the precise motivations for these changes, we will explore certain factors that had a probable effect. The next chapter will explore some of these psycho-social changes. When asked, most of the AYA members would say that they decided to put a ban on the practice because it was too painful and did not really serve any purpose. However, the factors that actually went into the prohibition were a little more layered than that.

Firstly, instances of embarrassment due to stigma compel us to question if that have any role to play in the ban. The first president of AYA, Dr. Dani Dure himself mentions of instances when he was ashamed of his *tipe*. Dr. Dure came first in his class during his studies in Kolkata and while he went up to the stage to collect his award, he overheard some of his college mates make fun of him by saying “Ki kala poita ashche?”, which in Bengali means, “What is that black ink he smeared on his face?”. Hurt young Dani had memorised these words and does so even after so many years. So, after completing his education, he decided to permanently get rid of his *tipe* by operating on it. Although his *tipe* is not visible now, the place where it used to be is still marked. When asked about the reason for removal of his *tipe*, he recalled a memory when his maternal uncle told him on the railway station, while he was leaving Ziro to attain further studies, to adopt the life of the land in which you are living. So, he adopted the life of those outside Ziro, where facial tattoos were not customary.

The case of Dr. Dani Dure assumes greater significance as it portrays the role played by the views and opinions of the members of other communities and the psycho-social impact this has on the decision making of the local indigenous community. Dr. Dure was a student when he went to Kolkata to complete his medical training. But the impact of the thoughts and opinions held by the members of community other than his own was deeply engraved in his mind. They acted as

powerful tools to promote change of a community or society. Eventually this experience took a stronger form when Dr. Dure decided to act on it during this term as the AYA president. He along with others decided that the age-old custom had no relevance in the present context and thus it would be better to discontinue this practice. Such experiences of shame and stigma were not unique to Dr. Dure.

Opyang, often goes out of the valley to sell her handmade products, like baskets, handloom, and surplus produce etcetera. But whenever in Itanagar or Guwahati, both of which are cities, she feels out of place, as people often stare at her or pose questions about *tipe*. A few years ago she decided to put an end to it by getting operated to permanently hide her *tipe*.

Ladeng, a member of the AYA, who was denied a job because of the tattoos on his face. He describes the memory with a lot of pain and anger. After completion of his education, the qualified and experienced Ladeng went to Itanagar to appear in an interview. To his dismay, his marked face was not “professional” enough for the job. According to Ladeng:

I cannot change this. It is not in my hands. Our culture had asked us to make these. I did not have a choice. The interviewers knew this. However, they still decided not to employ me. It is their choice. But I eventually decided to operate and remove my *tipe*. In that sense, the Apatani youth are in a better position because they don't find so difficulty in searching for jobs. It is easier to mix with members of other communities now that they don't carry the *tipe* anymore.

(Ladeng, August 2019)

Such instances demonstrate that there have been more reasons for prohibition of *tipe* that it merely being a painful process.

Secondly, changes in the cultural practices coincide with the contact of the people with the rest of the world. Thus, one must not overlook the possibility that influence of other cultures has had a major role when it comes to the decision on *tipe* prohibition. The coming in of multiple languages, clothing as well as housing style requires critical examination. The influence of a foreign culture on the indigenous culture is evident when the young members adopt and prefer the foreign cultural practices over and above their traditional ones.

Nampi studies in class 10 and often studies in group of friends preparing for her boards exams. Her school hosts not just students from Apatani ethnicity, but also students from Nyishi, Mizo, Naga ethnic group amongst others. Thus the students naturally speak different languages at their home. The most preferred language to communicate thereby is Hindi. Hindi is also one of the official language of the Indian sub-continent, which means that the news and media are readily communicated in Hindi, making the learning much more convenient. So much so that many of the indigenous groups are giving up their indigenous languages, as the young members continue to speak in Hindi or English. Most of the Northeastern states of India are facing a language crisis in the present context which is hardly ever addressed in the academia (Bijukumar, 2013; Singh, 1987).

The economic and political changes have also contributed to the making of the present cultural scenario. The AYA was of course a key to the prohibition on *tipe*. But at the same time, the formation of Arunachal Pradesh as a separate state coincides with the formation of AYA. Political disintegration leading to accumulation of power and the use of such power to do away with traditions requires further articulation.

3.5 Conclusion

Indigenous people have often been mis-conceptualised and misinterpreted by the academic world. Andersen (2009), and Nakata (2012) explains the need to break free of the conventional methods of studying indigenous people. The methods used in this study were thus applied critically, keeping the aims of the study in mind. The role of an ethnographer is to observe the subject in its natural setting. The subject/s of the study and their opinions are as important as that of the researcher and needs to be presented free of any judgement or manipulation. Reflexivity in research is important for ethnography and has been aimed through direct narratives, oral history and participant observation. According to Xaxa (1999a), for long tribes have been equated with caste groups and the two have been used interchangeably in British India literatures. But empirically such statements hold no ground. Decolonial and post-modern school of thought (Maldonado-Torres, 2011; Mignolo, 2009; Hountondji, 1983; Smith, 1999) critiques the way indigenous studies have been studied.

Thus as a researcher, it is our job to foreground the opinions and voices of those who have been historically at a disadvantage. We may not be able to represent them completely, but one must withhold the preconceived notions and judgements in order to avoid one's personal opinion from clouding the truth. The subject/s of the study should be presented in as much a natural light as possible, and this research has continuously attempted to do so. Representation has been aimed at in a manner to avoid exoticism of the indigenous people and its practices and treat them and the collected data with utmost respect and sensitivity.

Through this chapter one can understand the various politico-economic processes of the valley that have either directly or indirectly contributed to the ban on *tipe*. The question of whether such

ban was necessary or not, elicits different responses from different sections of the Apatani society. While some believe that it was important in the light of development and contact with the rest of the world, others feel a part of their rich culture as being lost forever. Critical engagement with such controversies is the main purpose of the present study. The reasons for such changes will be investigated in detail in the following chapters.

The youth of the Apatani society have already moved on to making more contemporary forms of tattoos on different parts of their body. The middle aged to the elderly in the valley, however, do not approve of this kind of body markings. The difference they say between *tipe* and such modern tattoos is that the latter has no meaning or social purpose of identity formation or association with the society at large. Even though that may not necessarily be true about modern tattoos⁷, the bearers of modern tattoos in the valley admit to make them more spontaneously than having deeper meanings and integral value in their life.

The aim of this chapter has been to provide a detailed view about the Apatanis and the Ziro valley, and to understand their cultural practice of marking their face. Only when one has a clear idea about the cultural and political scenarios of the Apatanis, can one understand the process that has gone into the banning of such practice. To be able to historically situate the cultural changes, understanding the context is important. This chapter has thus aimed to achieve so by placing the practice as well as its extinction into the socio-political context.

⁷ For example, Project Semicolon is a suicide prevention campaign, whereby survivors tattoo the semicolon sign to symbolically represent that the sentence could have ended but it continued. Collectively the bearers of this tattoo represent destigmatising mental illness and discussions around suicidal tendency. Auschwitz tattoos also represent the collective pain and memory in the minds of the survivors and their family.

CHAPTER 4: PROHIBITION ON *TIPE*: A DISCURSIVE ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided a detailed description of the economic, political, religious, and cultural aspects of the Apatani life. This understanding was necessary to get a clear picture of the Apatani way of life, in order to make sense of the changes and transitions better which will be discussed in this chapter. Having discussed the context in the previous chapter, we move on to discuss the reasons for the changes in the Apatani society in the present chapter.

The aim of this chapter is to provide a critical perspective on the prohibition on *tipe*. This chapter underscores the possible reasons that might have gone into the ban on *tipe* and also attempts to locate the psycho-social factors responsible for the ban. At the same time, we attempt to grasp the effects of this ban on the socio-cultural life of the Apatanis. This chapter is broadly divided into two parts: first, the reasons of the ban and second, the consequences of this ban on the Apatani society. While locating these reasons and results of the prohibition of a cultural practice, it is important to note that social events cannot always be justified merely in terms of ‘cause and effect’, precisely because they do not occur in isolation from the other aspects of the society. The changes occurring in a particular society may be triggered by several factors. The present chapter hopes to understand some such factors responsible for the change in the cultural sphere of the Apatanis.

The data of this chapter are based on the narratives and memories of the respondents. The reasons of the ban have been drawn after analysing the responses recorded during the field visits and by studying the events occurred. One may find the causes of the ban on *tipe* to be somewhat

different from those initially stated by the respondents. The Apatanis initially claimed that *tipe* was banned on account of it being way too painful to bear. We question what triggered the prohibition in the year 1971 after the Apatanis bore this pain for several years. This research shows that the causes beyond physical trauma might have had a deeper impact and motivation for this prohibition. This chapter thereby provides detailed insights into such instances of stigma and influence from outside of the valley which are seen as the leading factors in bringing about the ban on *tipe* making, by using oral history and narratives as the main sources of data collection.

After the ban on *tipe*, there were certain impacts on the society and we have aimed to cover most of, if not all, such impacts on the different spheres of the Apatani society. This chapter thereby examines the economic, political and social consequences of the ban on the lives of the people residing in the Ziro valley. The direst of the consequences have been the loss of indigenous knowledge, which may be attributed to colonial dispensation and external imposition. Multiple knowledge systems can mutually coexist harmoniously. If not, indigenous knowledge systems will fall prey to the politics of mass media and constructed cultural beliefs.

Another major consequence is that when a tradition is replaced by another, a change occurs⁸. The change from indigeneity to a non-indigenous culture is a product of a certain mindset, beliefs and psychology. This mindset in turn is a result of the changing globalising and homogenising world culture propagated by the colonial imperial powers of the world.

From a tradition of the presence of a culture we move to a tradition of the absence of the culture, which is not the same as the absence of the tradition itself, it is not a void. It is only replaced by a

⁸ This will be discussed in the next chapter of the thesis.

culture where the custom is no longer practiced. Thus by putting prohibition on *tipe*, the AYA has not only discontinued the culture of marking the faces, but it has replaced it with a culture which is considered more 'normal' or 'civilised' in the western sense of these terms. According to such so-called 'civilised' culture, the face of human beings is not supposed to be permanently marked, ornamentation is supposed to be temporary and marking the body is considered backward or savage, something more associated with the criminals and outcast groups in society. The consequence of such prohibition is deeper than it may seem. It is the way modernity has been projected among the indigenous people without taking their opinions and desires into consideration.

The aim of this chapter is thus to explore the reasons for prohibiting the tradition of marking faces, known as *tipe*, and to look at the changes that have resulted from the decision of this prohibition. That is what, the last section of this chapter is about. And because one of the major consequences has been the loss or modification of the knowledge system of the indigenous people, the last section aims to focus solely on the issue of transition in knowledge systems, its impact and process of transition, with the inroads of modernity and other changes in the economy.

Another explanation commonly stated for the prohibition on *tipe* is that the practice lost its relevance and use over the years. Here it is important to point out that a culture can bind the community together, provide the members of the society with a sense of belonging and an identity for all its members. The story of how it all started is circumstantial and also on the factor of how the community wants to tell their story. If they decide to relate the origin of a tradition to war victory or travel history, it is their choice. But the main purpose of the story is for all the members of the community to feel a sense of how it all began, so that following the tradition

becomes easier by providing a sense of purpose. These stories are what history is made up of. Therefore, by choosing to narrate and repeat a particular story over and over among the members, they have chosen their own history. And often so happens that the ability to tell these stories lies in the hands of power and once again our history, like all other forms of knowledge, is determined by those in power.

The methods used to collect the data used in this chapter are in-depth personal semi-structured interviews and group discussions. All the primary data are presented and located in the larger theoretical frameworks used.

4.2 Stigma

Goffman accurately described the meaning and value of stigma in social life. Goffman described stigma as an “attribute that is deeply discrediting” (1963, p. 3). A stigmatized behaviour is capable of inflicting changes in the mental and behavioural aspects of a person. When enough people from a community feel stigmatised, it is perhaps enough to cause a cultural change as well. On the one hand, while most studies on stigma focuses on the impact of stigma on the mental health of individuals (Goffman, 1963; Crocker and Major, 1989; Steele and Aronson, 1995; Pinel, 1999), recent research has broadened understanding of the concept. On the other hand, sociologists look at stigma as a social phenomenon, as both cause and effect of certain social actions and processes, instead of an individual problem and this helps to understand the process of stigma at the collective level (Link and Phelan, 2001; Tyler and Slater, 2018).

Although studied mostly as a psychological phenomenon, stigma needs to be carefully placed in the social context for a holistic understanding. Studies by Link and Phelan (2001) look at the sociological aspects of stigma by linking it to operation of power in society. A major

psychological factor to determine the behaviour of many individuals as a united group, this chapter looks at the idea of collective stigma. Collective stigma here refers to the idea of stigmatization at a collective or group level and not solely at an individual level. For the purpose of this study, the Apatanis and their experiences of stigma are focused at.

This study looks at stigma as one of the major reasons of the ban on the traditional tattooing practice among the Apatanis. The responses from the people and the behaviour of people outside of the valley about this traditional practice has been indicative of the fact that stigmatization and consequently, stereotyping played an essential role in the decision to ban tattooing. Stigma can have had a direct impact on the decision of the ban, and it has also given rise to the spirit and essence of the ban. It has enabled people to question the age-old practices and 'rationalize' them.

A respondent mentions while being asked questions about his facial marks, when he visits the city. Questions about the reason, purpose and where can one get 'this kind of tattoo' done, had to be faced by this respondent. He goes on to admit that although initially it made him feel special and unique, however the constant reactions soon began to irritate him and he always felt out of place. Not surprisingly, he decided to operate on his marks and to hide them forever. One's personality gets attached with the marks on one's body and this respondent also feels that he is being identified as the one with the marks even when there is a lot more to his personality than what he wears on his skin. *Tipe* attracts a lot of attention which may or may not be desirable by the Apatanis. It is in human nature to make assumptions about people or things they know little about, which eventually gives rise to stigma making the situation more complicated.

Stigma in this case is not just about the indigenous identity, but is closely intertwined with other concepts of body marking and modernization. This interconnectedness of several social

phenomena which have gone into the imposition of the ban is the key to arrive at a sociological understanding. Any social event does not take place in isolation from others. In fact, each of the events has some form of broader social meaning and association with other social phenomena. That being the major reason behind, this chapter looks not only at the reasons but also the other factors that reinforce the whole process of the prohibition from a broader sociological perspective.

Goffman argues that most people get stigmatized “at least in some connections and in some phases of life” (1963, pg. 138). According to Goffman, tribal stigma is that form of stigmatization which is based on one’s race, ethnicity and religion. Preconceived notions about the cultures we have lesser knowledge often leads to stigma. Because ideas and knowledge about the indigenous world is lesser known than those cultures which are repeatedly presented in the media, the former gets more stereotyped and assumed often about than is the reality. Having preconceived notions about things we do not know about is not uncommon and the case is similar for the indigenous world. The indigenous people have often been misunderstood and stereotyped. In such case, stigmatization is not uncommon. Similarly, the respondents report to have felt stigmatization when they step out of the valley. This gets enforced even more when they wear their identity on their skin. Tattoos are a permanent mark on the body signifying one’s sense of belonging to a particular group. The Apatanis wear this mark on their face as a sign of their indigenous identity. In other words, they wear their identity on their skin, like many indigenous cultures. This implies that anyone who even remotely sees their face could identify their indigenous association. In fact, instances of identification of this indigenous group by merely looking at their face have commonly been reported during the field visits to the site. One’s identity is of immense importance for the person or the concerned group. Identity can be

in various forms with each culture having their own set of identity markers. Some are identified with the head cover they always wear, some with the way they speak and some with the ornaments they wear. For the Apatanis, it is the mark they always bear on their face. This facial mark was their ornament as well as their decor. An integral part of their culture, the Apatanis wore their identity on their skin, before it was banned. At the same time identity can sometimes also have a political connotation to it, whereby a cultural group prefers to present and identify themselves in such a manner so that they can get a political upper hand. As for the Apatani youth, they wanted to represent themselves as ‘modern’, sophisticated and advanced, and therefore put a stop to all those traditional practices which were not commonly associated with and which they felt might be a hindrance to this goal. In spite of being a matter of pride and a sense of identification, feelings of not belonging to the larger society was, ironically, simultaneously present. Being seen as different, unique or usual can be overwhelming for the people of a closely knit indigenous group, used to seeing *tipe* on ‘everyone’. This gave rise to a feeling of stigma among the Apatanis.

Tattooing has often had a negative connotation to it. For a long period of time, it had been attributed to the criminal world and the world of the deviants. Franz Kafka in “In the Penal Colony”, notes that officers ordered that whatever commandment the prisoners disobeyed, it be written on their body, like “Honor Thy Superiors!” Body is being presented as a writing surface, a surface suited for receiving the legible text of the law (cited in Clastres, 1989). Such associations of tattooing with the criminal world led it to have negative connotations. Captain Cook is said to have introduced tattooing to America after his visits to the islands of Oceania (Gilliam, Donnelly and Gopinath, 2008; Buss and Hodges, 2017). It is because of this lack of knowledge about the indigenous world and its least contact with the rest of the world that

practices of body marking were assumed (Camacho, 2014; Adams, 2009; Koch et al., 2010) to be something unusual and deviant. Little is known that such cultural practices have been prevalent in most cultures but away from the larger popular picture. This is also reflective of the fact that knowledge of the powerful gets more acknowledged than that of the indigenous groups. In other words, those systems of knowledge which fail to enter that is widely considered mainstream is often neglected and forgotten; distorting certain practices which origin from it. In this case, it is body marking, the idea of which has been distorted and presented as unnatural and unsophisticated. Although indigenous people seem to have held on to this practice for a longer period of time than its counterparts, but that does not demean the worth of these practices. Such a lack of knowledge about the origin of body modification is what has led to its association with stigma. Although for the Apatanis *tipe* was a mark of identity, the ban transformed this relation between Apatanis and their identity drastically. Till date they are associated and remembered with their facial marks, and mass media also presents the Apatanis as the tribe with facial tattoos and nose plugs, but only a handful of people have them.

Consequently, when the Apatanis stepped out of the valley, their 'natural' body marks began to be seen as 'unnatural' and eventually put under question. Stereotypical notions associated with body markings were applied, making them feel 'out of place'. An elderly person from Hong village of Ziro valley had described the situation as uncomfortable as her marks were not so exotic and uncommon from where she had come.

Stigma is a powerful tool having deep impacts on the minds of members of a society. So when the Apatanis felt that their tradition might be putting them in a disadvantaged position, their decision to ban it altogether, was not unforeseen. Such impacts of stigma on the large society are common whenever the people involved feel that change is both possible as well as mandatory.

Often the social impact of collective stigma ends up being larger than those at the individual levels.

When societies are assumed to modernize along the same path as the West has, it puts an unruly pressure on the members of a particular society to grow in a pre-set manner and progress in a readymade fashion. However, since society is different from the other, each take on their own set of direction of growth. This does not make them any lesser. The race to modernization in a pre-fixed manner puts societies, especially the vulnerable ones like indigenous people, under an unspoken pressure risking the loss of indigenouness. But each society should choose their path of progress and development, instead of blindly following what the West imposes on us.

There is a feeling of labelling or standing out from the larger 'other' that is often felt by the Apatanis, whenever they choose to step out of the valley. The question of their experience with members of other community when setting out of the valley was raised repeatedly among the respondents.

Tache (age 63) got her *tipe* when her height was four feet. Like any other child she cried and bled through the process and it took almost a month for her *tipe* to dry. Professionally she is a farmer and an active Christian participating in many of the conventions that take place in different parts of the country. Her friends described her to be very friendly and in habit of making new friends wherever she went. In spite of her nature she was very uncomfortable with the questions people posed upon their first or second meet about the "marks on her face". She explains,

They ask what is it? Why is it made? How is it made? So many questions, answers to some of which I did not even know. How much can you explain?

Sometimes I even made up stories just to shut them up. I would say this is how I was born. (laughs) What else could I do? I try to answer the questions every time I meet someone, they have so many. (Tache, October 2019)

Tache's experience is not so different from those around her. For instance, Noye is 58 years old and often travels to Itanagar, Guwahati, Shillong and Jorhat to buy some materials for her handloom business and to sell the final products. She narrates her experiences of being stared at and questions about her *tipe* on a regular basis during her visits to the plains. Noye explains that people often discriminate and have biased behaviour with indigenous and since the Apatanis wear their identity on their face, the behaviour of those around her are highly manipulative. She painfully narrates a horrible experience she encountered which really hurts her. It was one of those fairs in Guwahati where she put up a stall to sell her clothes. Two young girls passed by her shop making fun of her and laughing at her face. She narrates,

One of the girls whispered something into her friend's ear after looking at me. Then the two of them stared at me and started laughing. First I was very confused, but later I was just angry for such bad behaviour. The parents do not teach them basic manners and the children feel entitled to behave in whatever manner they deem fit. (Noye, September 2019)

This shows how important the incident was for her and what a deep impact it had had on her mind. The experiences of the indigenous people are important to understand the past and present as they are the key source of their genealogy. Each individual experience taken together into account can narrate the collective past of the Apatani society. And so each narration is equally important.

Hunge is a farmer of over 60 years of age. His wife passed away several years ago and his only son lives in Kolkata. He lives alone in his ancestral house and is more than capable of taking care of himself. He has several friends and loved ones in his village, Tajang, and often has them come over to his house to host them. I asked if he goes to visit his son in Kolkata. He explained, “I go to him sometimes. It is a big city, so many people.” Then I asked how the people outside the valley received him and has he ever faced any trouble due to his *tipe*. He laughed and says, “They don’t know our culture and our traditions.” I asked, “Did someone say anything?” He said, “No, no. No one dared to say anything to my face. But they look at me like they never saw a man before. You see, these marks are not common in their culture and so they stare, ask questions or say something. That happens commonly. Ask other Tanis, they also must have similar experiences.”

Hunge was right because many other respondents shared similar experiences. Tattooing is rare till date and in the 20th century it was extremely difficult to come across a person who bore a tattoo on the face. Even if such a person was encountered, the presumptions and preconceived notions held by co-members of the society was high. Such judgements were highly degrading. Negative assumptions have surrounded the act of tattooing for a long time, making stigmatisation against it to be much more common.

The narrative provided by Renu will reaffirm this point:

The first time I went to Itanagar, I felt very strange. No one has their face marked or wear the nose plugs. People were staring at me thinking where did she come from. It made me conscious and nervous... I had my friends with me so it was fine. But the next time I visited I got used to it. I was prepared that

not everyone knew our culture and traditions and so it was normal” (Renu, October 2019).

Such experiences of shame, stigma and discrimination tell us two things: one, humans have a built-in nature to judge and be biased (Haidt, 2012). That is the reality of *Homo sapiens*. It has always been so and always will be. And two, the Apatanis were embarrassed and subjected like most other indigenous communities of the country, if not the world. Such psycho-social impacts arise from deep rooted issues of self-esteem and inferiority complex (Dhaouadi, 2002) and were strong enough valid reasons for the local members of the indigenous community to put a complete prohibition on it.

The prevalence of a collective memory of stigma and shame was repeatedly reflected through these narrations. When the same memory is shared by a group or community, it is termed as ‘collective memory’, which serves as a very powerful tool. These memories may be of loss or wins, they may be happy or sad memories. Irrespective of the emotions and sentiments such memories behold, it is the existence of same or at least similar memories and histories in the minds of the people which matters. The fact that these events of the past exist in no written form in documents or reports but only through cultural transmission increases its significance and value many folds, thereby making its recognition necessary. Culture is not like a tree. Once a tree is uprooted, it dies. Culture rather is like a stream that flows from one generation to another. For this purpose, the aim of this thesis has partially been to record and document the history and culture of the Apatanis.

When society puts such unseen rarely known pressure on the members of other community, people often choose to change them by making some personal transformations. However, rarely

is the case that a society decides to change its cultural practice. Not all instances of labelling lead to changes radical enough to transform traditions. Changes usually take place at a more individual level. The case in point however is quite different as it involves what Goffman described as “tribal stigmas”, which consequently led to change in a prominent feature of the Apatanis. The impact of collective stigmatization on the lives of the Apatanis is visible quite clearly when one looks at the cultural changes that the society has gone through. Changes specifically that of the ban of *tipe*, have been traced back to ideas of stigmatization and modernization in this study.

Thereby according to the present study, stigma and stereotyping are the primary reasons of the prohibition on *tipe*. The experiences and life stories narrated by the Apatanis direct our findings in this direction and based on these primary data collected, such conclusions have been drawn. At the same time, stigma cannot be fully understood without grasping the idea that the Apatani society does not exist in isolation and is thereby continuously influenced by the factors outside its control or, more specifically, outside its immediate territorial boundary. These include the entry of economic and political forces into the valley as well as physical entry of varied personnel and opening up of roads and transportations connecting in earlier territory with the rest of the world on a regular basis. These factors are crucial to look into the historical events that have taken place in the valley around the 1970s. These factors are also seen as being directly responsible for provoking the notion of development and modernization in the same manner as modernization theorists had. Changing politico-economic scenario in the valley (which will be discussed later) can be seen to largely influence the path of modernisation this society has undertaken. In other words, the Apatanis’ attraction or desire to modernize in a particular

manner, which happens to be the same as promoted by the modernization theorists, is a direct result of the economic and cultural influence as well as the political power.

4.3 External Influence

Along with the concept of stigma, this chapter explains external influence as a factor of the ban on *tipe*. By external influence, we mean the impact of the 'others' from outside the valley and the non-Apatani society on the local culture of the Apatanis. As is evident in the colonial reports (Bower, 1913), anyone trying to enter the valley had to go through many days of trekking and river crossing, which would not be possible without the help from the locals. In Ursula Graham Bower's (1913) reports we can see that she and her husband were accompanied by two Nyishis and an Apatani person to guide them into the present lower Subansiri region. This however changed eventually after better roads were constructed. Even before India attained her independence, some officials from Assam did commute to the valley. After independence communication to and from the valley became more frequent among the non-resident people as better roads were built and communication was equally aided. Better transportation facilities not only carry humans and goods but also import ideas and cultures. Similar thing happened in the Ziro valley, when people from across the country began to travel to this beautiful valley in search of jobs and housing settlements. This is true of any region which opens its roads for communication in a densely populated country with many job seeking individuals. Having been under the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) jurisdiction at that point, there was hardly any restriction on travelling and settlement, which allowed many non-indigenous groups to settle there, either in search of job or to expand their business. Today one can find people of varied socio-cultural backgrounds settled in the valley.

The dichotomy between ‘us’ and ‘them’ is central here. Mead’s *Mind, Self and Society* (1934) explains the concept of social identity and how the self gets created through social interaction but also a separation from it. Individuality gets created when it is separated from the rest of the society. The identity of a society or a particular ethnic group is also similarly created through separation from others. According to Zygmunt Bauman, “the notion of otherness is central to the way in which societies establish identity categories” (cited in Zevallos, 2011). Binaries compel us to create a sense of belonging to one kind of group.

The use of such binaries is common among social sciences. Binaries help us segregate and differentiate. Binaries also create divisions and differences among the researcher and the subjects of the study. When we see the subjects as the “other” we are increasingly making them and their experiences as something not “natural”. This can further broaden the gap between societies, making the analysis more distant from the field itself. Such a perspective is neither grounded nor subject-oriented. This concept is often confused with attempts to homogenize cultures. Each culture is unique but that is precisely significant and common among all cultures and communities and members of every known society. When researchers recognize that differences is what makes all of us equal and we are similar in that aspect, binaries like ‘us versus them’ do not hold ground because they are not concrete categories in themselves.

Nonetheless the people of the community continue to differentiate themselves from members of other communities. Such binaries are socialized into members of all society and the same is the case with the Apatanis. Fear and competition can trigger such distinctions further as the indigenous groups continue to separate themselves from their neighbouring communities. The Apatanis call anyone outside their immediate periphery as *halyang*. Some respondents have confessed that there is a feeling among some Apatanis that *halyangs* have brought diseases to the

valley. While such general statements hold no ground in reality, this belief originates in the fact that it was during the often visits to the plains by the Tanis that they caught many diseases and infections. The unfortunate spread of these new diseases to the valley has been associated with the plainsmen, thus leading to a feeling of distrust among the Apatanis. This is indicative of their initial relation of separation and distrust with those outside of their valley.

As mentioned earlier, the entry and exit of people not only brought people of varied cultures closer, but also aided in the exchange of ideas and living patterns. Just as globalization has enabled people from different parts of the world to come closer and exchange ideas as well as lifestyles, just as it enabled intermingling of cultures through enculturation or acculturation, building of better roads and networks enabled people from this part of the country to exchange cultural practices and to get to know the lesser-known societies better. By this we mean the Apatanis were no longer in isolation from other cultures, which would either directly or indirectly influence the indigenous way of life of the locals. After spending some time in the valley, one can find social aspects which are not native to the Apatanis but have become the normal norms of living in the present times. Absence of body modification is just one such practice which was transformed eventually and which this research associates with the influence by cultures not indigenous to the Apatanis. But there also exists a conspicuous change in the housing, dressing, dietary habits as well as the language spoken. For instance, the young Tanis prefer to speak in Hindi more than they converse in Apatani language. Aji is a young Apatani girl of 25 years old and she explains that all her friends in school speak in Hindi which is why she does the same.

My friends always speak in Hindi and I do the same. All my friends are not Tani and so everyone does not know our language. But everyone knows Hindi

and is comfortable speaking it, so that is what we use mostly. Our favourite shows are also either in Hindi or sometimes in English. I am not so comfortable speaking Apatani and sometimes mix up certain words (Aji, November 2019)

What may start out as a result of peer pressure has an enormous effect on the cultural life of the Apatanis. Another essential reason of this is that Arunachal Pradesh has no single official language, as all indigenous people of the state have their own set of languages, each quite different from the other, which makes it difficult for them to converse. Thus the country's official language, Hindi, becomes the lingua franca – an essential medium through which they can communicate with one another as well as those from outside of the region.

There are studies which show the impact of cultures contact with other cultures, which is part of socialization (Mead, 1928; Briggs, 1992; Miller and Moore, 1989; Miller, 1996; Grusec and Hastings, 2014). Such studies hold proof to the idea that change in at least one of the two cultures, if not both, is inevitable when they come in close contact with each other. In such scenario, the case is usually such that the cultural group which is more vulnerable is the one which undergoes more changes. Social vulnerability derives from a number of political and social structural influence (Cutter, 2003). A society may either be the one influencing others or may be the one influenced by others. Either way, the process leads to some form of cultural loss and intermingling of cultural norms and practices.

In the case of Ziro valley, once roads were opened, the entry of people and goods ensured that the Apatani society no longer remained in isolation. What began with the entry of officials for better administration was soon translated into a destination for migrant workers and people of

different cultural backgrounds to enter and eventually settle. This would obviously have an impact not merely on the economy, but also on the socio-cultural scenario of the valley. Different cultural and religious practices entered the region as part of 'development', causing unforeseen changes.

One such change was the ban on *tipe*. At the outset the events seemed unconnected, but since the aim of this research has been to unfold the several underlying social factors involving the body modification, we shall explore the connections between these events. The argument of this chapter is that stigma as well as contact with the larger society outside of the valley are key to the ban on body modification tradition. Ethnography and in-depth analysis helped us see that such a connection is not groundless and possibly what happened in reality. From a sociological point of view it is important to remember that events do not take place in isolation, but are rather backed up by several socio-cultural factors. Several factors may be attributed to the ban on the tradition of marking the face. Let us take a look at the events happening around the same time in order to attain a better understanding of the ban.

The first official and recorded entry of an outsider in the valley was in 1889 by Mr. Crowe, but it was not until the 1940s that military authority was established in the region (Blackburn, 2008). In 1943, the central government decided to extend its control to the international borders, especially Arunachal Pradesh keeping the recent risks from Tibet and China in mind. In 1944 Austrian anthropologist, Christopher von Fürer-Haimendorf entered the valley, back by the assam rifles.

Over the years, the number of people from different socio-ethnic backgrounds living in the Ziro valley increased substantially. One can find people from Assam, Bengal, Nepal, Bihar among

others and they live harmoniously together. According to the 1981 Census, 15700 people migrated to Lower Subansiri district from outside, of which 8851 were from Assam, 1794 were from Nepal, 1638 from Bihar and so on (Census of India, 1981). It should be noted that people from these varied groups are mostly settled in the Hapoli region of the valley, which is a township; while most of the indigenous folk live within the Old Ziro region which is a rural setting comprising the various clan-based villages.

Soon after independence, the government of India formed the North Eastern Frontier Agency (NEFA) “administered by the Ministry of External Affairs with the Governor of Assam acting as an agent to the President of India” (www.arunachalpradesh.gov.in, accessed on 18 October 2021). This made it extremely important for the region to be well connected with the rest of the country, or at least Assam. Under such circumstances, roads were constructed and public transport from the valley to Assam and Itanagar became better. This allowed people outside of the valley to come and settle in the region. A respondent from Nepal, who works as household helper in a house in Hapoli cannot recall the exact year they came to the valley as it was her father-in-law who had first settled in the valley. Her husband works in a shop and her two kids study in the government schools in the valley. She expresses that it has been several years since their family has been in the valley and the exact years are difficult to trace. Instances such as these are indicative of the early entry of non-indigenous population to the valley.

Modern education plays a major part when it comes to the changing of the behavioural patterns and mindsets of the people. The first school in Ziro was built in 1948 but it was burned down by the locals as a protest against the outsiders in the region (Blackburn, 2008).

In 1954, the NEFA took administrative control over Arunachal Pradesh. And subsequently the government's power over Ziro valley began to expand in the form of *gaonburas* (village headmen) and government schools. This opened the roads for external power to take over the valley completely. Stuart Blackburn (2008) describes this transition in the 1950s:

At the close of that decade the outsiders were moved to the southern end of the valley, where a new town was hacked out of the jungle. This is Hapoli, today the headquarters of the Lower Subansiri District. Within a few years, Hapoli was linked to Assam by a motorable road and bus service, while the full array of administrative offices, courthouse, post office, police station, bank and bazaar was completed by the early 1970s. The transfer of power from Apatani villages to an outsider government was now complete (pg. 40).

This marked the beginning of entry and exit of Apatani and the rest of the world, implying not just exchange of goods and services but also ideas and cultural artefact and practices.

According to a study conducted by the ICSSR and OKDISCD, the level of access to media and communication in the valley is low with 4.6 per cent having access to newspapers, 2.2 per cent having access to the radio and 42.9 per cent of the population having access to television. There is no factory but several small scale and cottage industries in the region are inducing self-employment among the youth.

On the one hand, the traces of influence by Christianity can be found in the valley as early as the beginning of the 20th century after children started attending schools in North Lakhimpur and Tezpur regions of Assam. On the other hand, traces of influence of Hinduism are as old as they are in Assam. According to Stuart Blackburn (2008), conversion to Hinduism was aided by

convincing the indigenous people in central Arunachal Pradesh that Donyi Polo is a local form of Hinduism. The idea spread around was that worshipping of *Donyi* (Sun) is similar to *Gayatri Mantra*, which is a Hindu prayer to the Sun. Coming in of new religions had unavoidably brought about/in cultural changes to the valley. These doctrines and ideologies were although foreign to the land, yet merged alongside the Donyi Polo religion.

There were certain economic factors of the entry of non-Apatanis as well. Tour to Assam for trade or to work in plantations or fields had started at the beginning of the 18th century, although such movements were rare. Gradually, people from the valley started to move out not only in search of jobs in the neighbouring cities of Shillong, Guwahati and North Lakhimpur, but also started sending their children to these regions to attain higher education.

City dwellers are presumed to have better employment opportunities and living standards than those in rural settings. The promise of city attracts people from across regions and that is how urbanization takes place. Cities are a great place for people from across any region to come closer and get to know about previously isolated cultures. Studies on cities (Mumford, 1938; Lefebvre, 1974) show how it is a space for competition, power accumulation and acculturation. Cities are like core or the centre, which attract and draw from peripheral regions of adjacent villages and towns. The periphery provides human labour alongside goods and resources, and in turn, the core supplies finished goods. The ideologies of the ruling classes and regions, thus become the ruling ideologies.

So when the Apatani Youth Association wanted to put a ban on *tipe*, it was not surprising to see better schools and roads. Most members of the youth association had gone out of the valley for education or job, and started having a standard of living quite different from the traditional kind.

Out of the 109 respondents, 45 respondents have also given up their agricultural fields, traditional bamboo and wood house, in order to settle in concrete brick houses in Itanagar and Hapoli with government jobs.

There is nothing wrong with wanting to modernize and live a life like city dwellers. The aim of this research is not to undermine any way of life. Rather what this research aims at is to provide an understanding towards why the life of city and so the presumed modern way of living is so attractive and why people tend to follow this trend.

Thorstein Veblen's (1899) delineation of lifestyle changes and leisure are of importance in this context. His theory of leisure class and conspicuous consumption is a take on the idea of modernity and the habits of upper class. This form of "useless" consumption is indicative of the power of mass production (Shipman, 2007). That is how a society attains the attributes of developed economies. The coming in of goods and lifestyles not indigenous to a society reflects the entry of foreign culture and foreign ways of mass consumption into the region.

It may be interesting to note here that in the past indigenous people took pride in their distinction from 'others' and to some extent even considered themselves to be superior to the 'others'. However, with the passage of time, people became more influenced and attracted to the idea of modernity so much so that they want to do away with their age-old traditional practices, lost faith in them and perceived that the way of life practiced by 'others' is better than their traditional one, taught by their own forefathers. It is important to engage with how this change in faith has occurs, and what has led the Apatanis to believe in "others" more than their own traditions.

In this study, 70% (76 out of 109) have expressed concern over the fact that there will be no difference between 'them' and 'us'. They predict that the Apatanis and non-Apatanis would look

the same and they will not be able to differentiate between the two. This was important in order to identify their kin and without the body marks and specific ornaments, it was getting hard to do so. The initial purpose of *tipe* was to be able to differentiate between members of the Apatanis and others.

Tasha explains that her father was very upset when AYA decided to prohibit the making of *tipe*. According to him, it helped the fellow *Taniis* to identify a *Tanii*. Tasha explains that her father told them stories of how *halyangs* are not good or friendly, and they brought in diseases and war to the valley. There are many in the valley who blame plainsmen for the *Kure Chambyo* or Kure War which took the lives of many Apatanis.

My father did not approve the entry of Assamese tradesmen on the valley. The elders used to say that it was *halyangs* who brought in the diseases and conflicts among the Apatanis. I am not saying that is true. But that is something our elders believed in. A lot of the things begun to change in the valley after the Apatanis came in contact with the outsiders (Tasha, August 2019).

Such responses are understandable given the fact that many Apatanis associate the origin of *tipe* as something used to identity and differentiate Apatanis from those of other indigenous people.

These events are indicative of the changes that took place around the 1970s in the valley. These events and changes help us understand the entire process that went into the ban. The outside influence on the Apatanis had a direct impact on their cultural life.

When asked about their opinion about the influence of English language, modern attires, modern tattoos, social media or western culture, 75% of the respondents (82 out of the total 109) explain them to be inevitable, or even necessary to progress. There is a visible rapid shift among the

Apatanis towards the western culture. The youth of the Apatani society is increasingly attracted not only towards those material artefacts but also cultural habits which are definitely not indigenous to their culture, but also not originating from the country. Thus the Apatanis tend to follow the cultural practices of these (technologically) advanced countries and also the western civilisation which, given their power, have their cultural influence all over the world. This helps explain the entry and acceptance of western formal education and clothing among those who attempt to climb the social ladder.

When asked about why western education is important, 48% (52 out of the total 109) of the respondents often reply it to be necessary for jobs and 'development'. "How else will our children get jobs?" "Everyone in the world needs education." These are the common responses. Although it is certainly true that education is a right and necessity, the same cannot be said to be true about western education. When we again look into the question of western clothing, responses like, "Everyone in the cities wears it." "My favourite star dresses like this" "No one wears the kind of clothes their parents used to wear" "It is more convenient to wear and buy" are common. It is important to note that this is not an issue solely of the Apatani society. People in every society and from all cultural backgrounds wish to incorporate these changes and practices in their everyday life. Each society, especially the vulnerable ones, fall for this power circle. It is the pull, attraction and aspiration of these far-flung cultures which calls for further analysis. It is the power they possess to make distant communities follow their lifestyles and living patterns that allow such countries to dominate the world till date.

Such opinion about plainmen from that of the American-European culture, reflects a lot about the influence that power has on the minds. It shows how the big economic political powers of the world attract members of other communities to follow their route to development – a fixed route

to modernization, in the post-World War II sense of the term. Irrespective of the moral reasoning of this route to modernization, it is still the most followed and desired route among most of the societies, especially among those in Global South. The complex interplay between power, desire and modernization determines the future of the indigenous people.

Many respondents even feel the need from us as researchers to provide a justification for this understanding by saying that we are also educated under the western system, wearing western clothes and can speak in English fluently. This again reinforces the reality that such attraction is not unique or extraordinary among the Apatanis solely. The phenomenon is rather universal and each and every society is subject to. The degree in which these changes take place and the impact of these changes, however, differ from society to society. Such impacts or consequences are further looked into in the next section.

Modernization and urbanization have an impact on the existing social pattern of life in a community. By this we mean that it was not only the body modification tradition that had undergone change, rather the impact is visible on the language spoken, robing pattern as well as dietary habits. In the first chapter we have discussed such changes. Although change and loss is an inevitable part of every culture and society, the task of a sociologist is to look at the various factors that go into these changes and their associated consequences.

In the case of the Apatani society, the modernization and urbanization processes led to loss of some traditional practices in an attempt to mix with the 'modernized' world. This also meant that those practices which were exclusive to the Apatanis did not fit into the new world they were seeking and thus had to be done away with. Practices like child marriage, body modification and even farming was all part of the traditional world and thus could not fit into the new kind of

society they were trying to create. Consequently, the Apatanis wanted to change all those practices which did not fit into their preconceived idea of modernity and urban setting, in order to be like 'others'.

Whether or not the ban on the tradition of body modification is a cultural loss can be interpreted variedly, but the change cannot be overlooked. For some it was a necessary means for the larger betterment of the entire group, whereas, there are some who believe that this would lead to serious transition in their native way of life and were strictly against it. Each member of the indigenous group has their own set of ideology about their own culture and it is the task of an ethnographer to take all of these perspectives into consideration before reaching any conclusion.

4.4 Ramifications of the Ban

After a prohibition is being put on a social practice, eventually it just vanishes and in the case of traditions they just become extinct. After 50 years of prohibitions on *tipe*, today there are very few with these marks and those who still bear the mark are at least above the age of 50. During the field study, the youngest member encountered with *tipe* on her face was 56 years old.

The change in the cultural sphere of indigenous people after prohibiting one of its traditions is undeniable. Thus there were several consequences, foreseen as well as unanticipated, on the Apatani society. After the Apatanis were prohibited to mark their face in the traditional manner, different sections of the group had different reactions to it. While the young Apatanis were happy over the fact that they do not have to go through the painful process of *tipe* making, the orthodox members were displeased over the decision. There were also some forms of protest over the early decisions of the Apatani Youth Association in the valley. Distrust over this newly formed association by the young Apatanis was expressed by 14% (15 out of the total 109) of the

respondents during the field study. According to these respondents, there was a fear of loss of the tradition and uniqueness of their indigenous ethnicity. This distrust made many Apatanis come out on the streets and hold meetings in protest to the fast-occurring drastic changes in the newly formed state of Arunachal Pradesh.

On the contrary, there were others who felt that such a change was necessary for the development of the Apatanis. The supporters insisted to stop the traditional norms which have become irrelevant over the years. For instance, nose plugs (*yapin* in Apatani language) were traditionally worn by the women folks, the origins of which overlapped with the origins of *tipe*. Sasha states, “*Tipe* and *yapin* were part of the women’s attire. They helped in decorating the body. They made us Apatani women look more beautiful.” (interviewed in September, 2018)

Irrespective of the reason of this custom, nose plugs were something adored by the women folks and worn equally among them. With the establishment of the Apatani Youth Association, this practice was stopped as its purpose was hardly known by its wearers and its significance was lost over the years. Because validity of traditions often gets lost over the many years of its practice, they may start to seem irrelevant and irrational. This is true all the more for societies who lack written documents on their history and culture. Most indigenous societies do not make use of written script to register their cultural practices, art and folklores are more common for these purposes. This lack of written history and scientific reasoning is the main cause of the loss of relevance of traditions in the modern ‘enlightened’ world.

As already discussed in the third chapter, the exact reasons of the facial tattooing tradition are not known as there is no single common history of the tradition known among all the members. Through this, one can infer that the importance of the facial marking tradition was lost and

forgotten over the years and thus deemed irrelevant. Moreover, the process of attaining these facial tattoos in a traditional manner was immensely painful which all the more gave an impression of being irrational and the youth wanted to discontinue it as soon as possible. The process of getting these traditional facial marks involved a lot of blood loss and pain sometimes to the extent of unconsciousness. Such extreme physical pain could not be tolerated by all, making it undesirable among the young Apatanis. Subsequently when the AYA was formed in the early 1970s, they saw an opportunity to prevent the young members from going through the painful process. Backed by local political authority, the AYA had the power and necessary support to put a ban on the tradition of body modification.

Another consequence of the ban on body modification was that people who had already attained a *tipe* but did not want to continue with it any longer, took to operating on it. Since it was no longer a mandatory part of their cultural tradition, the need to carry it was lost. After the ban, *tipe* ceased to form a part of the identity for those belonging to this indigenous group. Over time, it was no longer part of their tradition, but something in the past only the memories of which exist. In the study, 20% (22 out the total 109) of the respondents admitted that they did not want to continue having this mark on their face as it was no longer a part of Apatani culture and thereby decided to operate on it. Surgery on the facial marks took only little time and money which they were ready to invest on. Ban on the practice of *tipe* introduced Apatani people to dermatological surgeries previously unknown to them. However, operating on *tipe* was not so common as not everyone approved of this method due to several reasons. One of the respondents admits that operating on the skin to hid one's *tipe* in a way distorts the face as it changes the structure to some extent. The method of hiding *tipe* we are talking about is not advanced plastic surgery but a mere stitching of the skin to hide the marks instead of its removal. Moreover, in spite of the

surgery, some marks along the lines where *tipe* used to be were still left on the faces of the ex-bearers, like the past leaving unfading marks. Through this process the structure of the face undergoes some transitions and consequently not all Apatanis approves it. As a result, 16 out of the 63 (above age 55) respondents decided to operate on their facial mark in order to hide or get rid of it.

I don't want to have *tipe* on my face anymore. It does not serve any purpose. No one is going to kidnap me (laughs). It is anyhow banned, so what is the point of having it on our faces. (Gana, August 2019)

I operate on my *tipe* before going to Chennai for a meeting. I did not want people to think me strange or a villager. My friend suggested we should operate on it. That was in 2014 I think. We operated on it. (Saya, October 2019)

When asked about the marks left behind Saya says

I used to look a little different. Not so much. The marks will fade. I don't think they will ever go. It is alright. It will remind my grandchildren of our *tipe* (laughs). (Saya, October 2019)

Yet another consequence of the ban on *tipe* has been the idea of 'identity' (re)formation that all 63 of the senior (above age 55) respondents have expressed concern over. Eight (8) of the respondents shared their experience that since the time they stopped making *tipe*, people across communities and cultures within and outside the state have difficulty in recognizing them. So common was for the neighbouring indigenous groups to see facial marks on the faces of those belonging to the Apatanis that it was difficult to identify people without these marks as an

Apatani. It took time for others to realise that Apatanis no longer wears the facial marks, and this is the new cultural practice. When Yichu, one of the respondents, went to Itanagar in 1975 without any marks on her face, the people of other indigenous groups had a hard time believing that she was indeed an Apatani. This happened because they were so used to seeing facial marks on from Apatanis, that the two became almost synonymous. It was hard to imagine an Apatani without her/his facial marks and also without ear/nose plugs. After imposition of the ban, this connection was broken and it was hard to identify Apatani people without their traditional body markings. In fact, for some it rose a feeling of doubt because through hundreds of years they were used to seeing the Apatanis with their body modifications. During the study, 60% (55 out of the total 109) of the respondents mentioned the value that *tipe* had attached not only as part of their tradition but also for its contribution to their identity, culture and ornamentation. Similarly, people of neighbouring communities considered the same about the tattoo-making tradition of the Apatanis. So, when the ban was imposed it took the other indigenous people also some time to get used to not seeing an Apatani without her/his body marks.

While the traditional kind of tattoos was permanently removed from this society, the modern ones made their way through the younger members. These forms of modern tattoos have no connection to the traditional ones and very often constitute new concepts for the indigenous people. Respondents above the age of 30 years have expressed displeasure over the fact that young Apatanis have started making modern tattoos. The modern forms of tattoo have often been expressed as ‘unnecessary’ and ‘non-sense’ by the respondents of the study and is highly discouraged by these people. The stereotype associated with modern tattooing had seeped into this society. Yet the young members are attracted to get inked in the modern ways represented

through popular culture, which comes at a cost of the knowledge embedded in their traditional practices.

Another consequence of the ban on *tipe* is that the tree whose thorn was used to make *tipe* in the traditional manner no longer had the same kind of symbolic importance (sacredness) in the Apatani society that it used to have earlier. Known as '*tipe tiirey*' in the local Apatani language, the plant had lost its significance and now is being treated no more than merely a wild tree. In a sense, the indigenous conservation ethics has diminished to a large extent. Eventually, what this caused was a decline in the number of this particular species of plant available in the region. As opposed to the previous times when each house had at least one plant of *tipe-tiirey* in their residential house due to its use, now the plant is a rare sight in the valley and only a few houses still grow it. This small example can provide us with an idea of the relationship of Apatani people with nature. The Apatani society always gave nature a special place – embodied in their culture and daily life.

Tipe ban had no direct relation with the change in relation of Apatanis with nature but it was surely a parallel change which occurred in the valley over a period of time. Both changes have been directly derived from the transition to modernization which the valley had witnessed. Both changes can be seen as offspring that a society may get in the face of inevitable changes brought about by the process of modernization and development. There is always a correlation between the natural world (mundane) and the man-made world (cosmology), whereby each influences the other equally. The Apatani society always provided a special place to the natural world in their customs and everyday practices. However, with the change in these traditional customs and everyday practices, their relation with the natural world have also undergone certain changes.

While making the ink for *tipe*, ox fat or cow fat was used as it was believed to be antiseptic. But

since the ban on *tipe* and the coming in of western/modern medicine in the region, the fat is no longer used for such medicinal purposes, transforming the relation that the locals had had with their livestock.

However, in spite of all these changes in the valley over the years, it may be surprising to recognise that *tipe* still has relevance in the Apatani society. Although for many it is a past, soon to be extinct, but for some it is a tradition which will always be important for them. The ones who got their *tipe* before the ban and decided to live with these symbols forever, instead of operating on them are less in number. These few Apatanis have lived their entire life with the facial mark, have forgotten what they used to look like without them and cannot be recognised by fellow Apatanis without these marks. *Tipe* is not only a part of their cultural ethnic identity but also their physical identity, as they will not be recognised without these facial marks.

At the same time, *tipe* serves as a source of income for its bearers, especially after its ban. Since it has been put away as a tradition of the 'past', *tipe* is now rare even among the Apatanis and can be found only within a particular age group of people. This has made it way rarer than it was before the 1970s. The exclusiveness of *tipe* puts it in an unwanted space where speculation and misconceptions are easier to breed. Mass media and fragmented information from the media has enabled people outside of the valley to get partial knowledge about the indigenous people and to expect them to look and behave in a certain manner. This kind of partial knowledge is dangerous as it may distort certain cultural practice. To present the real picture without any such distortions, without filters, directly through the subject of the study is the task of an ethnographer which this study aims to achieve. Making of this exclusiveness about any society about which little is known and published, makes people treat them as exotic and something in need of being captured and exhibited. One must not confuse documentation with exhibition. A person who has

never visited the valley and knows little about its cultural practices may not be able to realise and understand all the social processes that have taken place beyond an article or a photograph. Documentation should be broad enough to grasp the totality of a culture including its history, politics and ethnic struggles. They are particularly famous among photographers who come from all over the world to capture the Apatani women and men in their traditional attire and in their traditional houses. For this purpose they of course prefer those who have *tipe* and *yapin* (nose plugs) in their face, so that they can be presented in the entire authentic traditional look. But such attempts fail to capture the entire story. Visual ethnography can be a powerful tool of representation when analysed properly. One of the respondents expressed jealousy over the fact that her mother-in-law and friends of her mother-in-law get to wear pretty traditional clothes and get photographed in her traditional house and nobody asks for her pictures.

It is so nice to see these people clicking her pictures. You know this house is mine. Before also some photographers came to take my mother-in-law's pictures. They look pretty in their traditional attire. I wish to get dressed and photographed too. But I don't have the *tipe na*. So nobody asks for my picture.

(Nona, August 2019)

One of the elderly respondents said that she was glad that *tipe* was banned because that made her feel special as being one of the very few with these traditional marks and she can make hefty sum for getting photographed.

It feels nice to get dressed once in a while and get photographed. These traditional clothes are not worn so often now-a-days, so it is nice to take them out whenever we get a chance. People from outside like to see us in these

dresses and take photos. Moreover, why would someone no to it when they pay money also. (Tara, November 2019)

We witnessed a scene in the Donyi Polo temple when a photographer was trying to take a picture of an old lady praying without asking for her permission. She immediately told them to pay if they want her picture.

There is also a misconception among many that only elders with *tipe* have knowledge about the past and history of their culture. Although this is largely true, there are also some scholars and resource persons among the Apatanis who have vast knowledge about their history and culture. Although Takhe Kani has no *tipe* on his face, the amount of knowledge he has on Apatanis is appreciable. He has written several books on the history, festivals and religious practices of the Apatanis. He has also compiled colonial diaries and field notes of all those officers who have ever visited the valley which is of immense value to scholarly researches. The authenticity of knowledge cannot be predetermined only by judging its source. Modern Western system of knowledge has taught us to think and understand the world in a prefixed manner, fitting them into boxes, using specific methods of knowledge attainment. But we must break free of these presumptions and take all forms of knowledge irrespective of their source into consideration.

The relation between tradition and economic benefits is unique to those traditions which are on the verge of extinction. On being close to extinction, cultures are preserved and protected through various means, which invariably increase their value. One of the major consequences of the ban was that it increased the economic value of those who still bore it. This also helps us make the Apatanis more known around the world, giving them recognition and at times even helping in documentation.

While discussing the consequences of the ban on facial marks, one must recognise the obvious ones. As stated by the members of the Apatani Youth Association, the young members no longer have to go through the painful process of making *tipe*. In the absence of modern tattooing equipment or anaesthesia, *tipe* was made through a process called hand tapping, where a needle is tapped on the skin, in the complete consciousness of the bearer. This method of hand tapping the skin to get desired patterns in the skin is very old and very rare to find today. This made the process exceptionally painful. In fact, most traditional indigenous tattoos are made through this process. All of the respondents describe the process of getting their *tipe* to be full of pain, blood and tears. Only upon hearing about the experiences, the young Apatanis present in the room during the interview would cringe. It is apparent that for many it is a relief that they need not go through such painful process. Physical pain is an enough incentive to make anyone not want to go through the process.

One of the young respondents, Tiley states that “the ban on *tipe* has been helpful in stepping out of the valley freely and make more acquaintances”. He is pursuing his bachelor’s degree from a reputed college in Delhi. Given the discrimination and atrocities faced by students from the Northeastern region of the country in big cities, this was a very big step for him and his family members. Tiley explains,

If I were wearing a *tipe* on my face, everyone in my class would laugh at me and question me. If I had a *tipe* on my face, I would myself probably not step out of the valley... In Arunachal it is not much of a problem, but in other states where facial marks and tattoos are not common, people will be very surprised if I went to study like that.” Thus, the young generation of respondents were glad that a prohibition was imposed on this age-old tradition because one,

bearing the pain was extremely difficult, and two, they can study freely or can be employed in any place of their choice. (Tiley, September 2019)

In a way the consequence of loss or hiding of identity makes up both a positive as well as a negative consequence of the ban. In the past people wanted a distinct identity for their indigenous groups and so the traditional tattooing system helped them achieve it. But for the young generation although a distinct identity is desirable, this identity needs to be in sync with the demands and the popularity in the present context. They want to merge with the rest of the world first in order to discover their own identity. Thus wearing a distinct affiliation marker seemed not beneficial for the progress of the youth of their community. In order to complete the process of assimilation into the larger social context of the present world, they felt the need to get rid of the old customs.

Ranu, another young Apatani, also expressed great relief over the prohibition on *tipe*. She mentions,

I don't think I could ever bear that amount of pain. How did the elders do it? It seems so dangerous just listening to the process and seeing these marks on them. I never even pierced my ears or nose. It would have been impossible for me to do it. (Ranu, August 2019)

Similarly, another respondent who had got her *panyo* right after her birth but could not get her *tipe* because by the time it was time for her to get her *tipe*, the tradition was banned. She was partly relieved about the prohibition because it meant that she did not have to go through the painful process. But she was also unhappy about the fact that her *panyo* is a constant reminder of her incomplete *tipe* which will stay throughout her life. When she went to NEHU, Shillong to

pursue higher education, she was asked several questions about her *panyo* – what, how and why of it. She explains, “No one in my campus had such marks on their body. It made me special but also the way people stare and the questions they ask can sometimes make you uncomfortable.”

The fear of pain was expressed repeatedly by young Apatanis. However, the generation that implemented the prohibition expressed the ‘need’ of the prohibition more than the fear of pain. Instead of a fear of pain, the 1970s generation had a fear of being left out in the world outside of the valley. Fear is a powerful tool when it comes to provoke change. And, in the contemporary times, these fears may not be those of survival but they are regarding more complicated issues of cultural assimilation/ isolation. In the case of developing societies, the fear of modernization, fast progress, technological innovation and advancements is omnipresent.

At the same time, when young Apatanis are asked about their opinion on new-age tattoos, which have no fixed meaning or art associated, the responses have been of more than approving. Such supposedly ‘modern’ tattoos can be very abstract or random and depend largely on the bearer for their meanings and patterns. These tattoos can also seem to lack group affiliations at the outset, like the kind provided by traditional customary body markings. Since each individual design and purpose differs from the other, solidarity – the assemblage of people in the performance of rituals – becomes a major casualty. But tattoo enthusiasts from all across the world form associations and organisations open to all tattooed persons of the world, find their own form of solidarity.

An urge among young members of any community to do away with the traditions and customs that their society provides them with and to replace it with such practices which is popular and trendy among their favourite celebrities and idols is common.

Finally, the ban on *tipe*, although may have distanced the youth from their traditions and cultural history, it has surely brought them closer to the outside world. The young Apatanis are more prone to being influenced and having lesser knowledge about how the world works, are more scared and vulnerable. This also puts them under unanticipated pressure to mix well into the world. Absence of indigenous marks like *tipe* and *yapin* helped the children of the Apatani society to mix better with the non-indigenous population. This was especially of relevance whenever children from the valley stepped out to study or search for jobs in the plains. It is often seen to be advantageous to socialise well into the host society that one enters. One of the respondents recalls that while leaving the valley to enter a college, his uncle told him to adapt the practices of the city-dwellers. Later, this respondent operated on his *tipe* to realize this socialisation. Such problems did not arise for the youth of the later generations as they did not have any such mark on their body, which disclosed their ethnic affiliation. This provided them with an opportunity to mingle more easily and quicker than their forefathers could, who wore their affiliation on their skin. There is no doubt that the ban made the process a lot simpler than it was for the *Taniis*, around five decades ago.

Each social decision will invariably have some positive and negative outcomes. The task of this study is to mention them and analyse their impact. Each perspective and individual opinions are important and should be taken into consideration when it comes to decisions regarding one's culture and traditions.

4.5 Indigenous Knowledge

A loss of cultural heritage can lead to the loss of the knowledge associated with it. The knowledge which is traditional/indigenous to a particular group or collective holds immense

value for its members since it holds much cultural and emotional values. Indigenous knowledge is the local knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society (Warren, 1991). Loss of indigenous forms of knowledge is a serious problem in the present world but very little has been done to preserve these knowledge systems. According to many scholars (Todd, 1999; Sithole, 2007; Ngulube, 2002), the solution to prevent any loss of knowledge is documentation. In the face of western knowledge entering fast through western education systems, it is important to preserve the forms of knowledge of our forefathers. Modern methods of learning have often ignored the traditional ones. If the traditional methods do not fall into the framework of the Western knowledge system, they are at the risk of being outcast as unscientific and irrational. One must realise that the stories, folklores and songs are equally important sources of knowledge. For those societies without any written history and rare official documentation of data, these sources of information are immensely crucial. Although modern scientific world might not have provided these methods the importance that it deserves, through persistent research and documentation this gap can be filled. Collection and preservation of the past with the help of oral history narrated by the respondents from their memory also helped gain data about history which is not written or documented in any form. These have several names like people's history, subaltern history or history of the marginalised, which are forgotten, subjugated or least recognised forms of knowledge. The historiography and truth that is real to them is seldom reflected in the scholarly work and whenever it does get represented, risk of manipulation remains high. Thus, fear and risk of loss of indigenous knowledge system is legitimate in the present context.

There are respondents who speculate that such kind of ban on tradition has led to a loss of knowledge and customs. That is because the young Apatanis have little knowledge about the

history and origin of their own cultures and traditions. Responses like “no one cares about tradition anymore”, “children find history boring”, “even we are not so sure of our history” were commonly stated by respondents while answering questions of the importance and reach of their traditional knowledge. On the contrary, there is a tendency to follow those practices which are more popular and can be learned through mass media and social media sites. However, mass media does not necessarily always provide the entire picture truly. Some stories are twisted and distorted as a result of being coated with preconceived notions or presumptions. Being social beings, it may be obvious for these subjective points of view.

There are two aspects of the truth here. One concerning the depth of knowledge people have about their community is low. This may be attributed to a lack of written documents as well as a lack of ability of read had these documents been available. And secondly, the spread of this indigenous knowledge is also severely low. Not all sections of the society have access or are interested or have the resources to access these data. These factors limit the spread and growth of these knowledge, making loss or even extinction way easier.

Knowledge systems originating in foreign lands can exist harmoniously alongside indigenous ones, however it becomes a problem when one overrides the other. That is why the last section of this chapter focuses on the issue of transition in knowledge systems with the coming in of modernity.

The indigenous knowledge of the Apatanis regarding their use of natural resources like plants or animal fats are on the verge of being lost. On only the ecological knowledge but also knowledge about identity like age and sex markers are on the discredited by the present society. The priest of the Donyi Polo Meder Nello in Hong village narrates,

The young members are not interested in the customs and rituals that our forefathers had taught us. We have a small library our Meder Nello but no one is interested to read them. Only occasionally when researchers like you come to the valley do I have to open the library. It makes me sad to think that the folklores and tales are forgotten. (Nandi, October 2019)

Macedo et al. (1999) argues for the need to decolonize indigenous knowledge through abandoning grand narratives. The purpose of the present study runs along similar lines. Max Scheler's (1924) concepts on 'Sociology of Knowledge' may be of relevance here, who assigns priority neither to society nor to mind. Avoiding the trap of social determinism, Scheler acknowledges that social processes and structures interplay with patterns of intellectual life to give rise to knowledge systems. According to the theories of sociology of knowledge, the human thoughts and thereby knowledge systems have a direct connection with the social context they are formed in and at the same time, these knowledge and ideologies consequently have an impact on the society as well. The relationship between the society and the ideology prevalent in is not as linear as often thought to be. Rather the two are interdependent and shape each other mutually. In other words, the mind and matter go hand in hand. The study also draws from theories of sociology of knowledge, especially Foucault's (1975) ideas on power and knowledge. Since the existing knowledge systems are those that work in favour of the powerful members of the community, the study looks at knowledge control as an inconspicuous form of modern mechanism of subordinating the less powerful ones. Karl Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia* (1936) also helped us provide the conceptual frame for this research. Social knowledge is highly dependent on the social reality of the thinker, and this social reality could be ideology-based or utopia-based depending on the social position of the individual. Karl Mannheim's *Ideology and*

Utopia explains the nature of social knowledge and the methods of knowledge production. Knowledge is not produced by an individual but rather is a collective endeavour whereby both individual experience as well as social structures come together to form particular thought processes and systems of knowledge. These and many other fast developing theories on sociology of knowledge help us understand how indigenous systems of knowledge may be overridden by the “ideologies of the dominant (*or popular*) class” (Marx, 1887; italics added). The most famous and widely followed knowledge is often believed to be true. “Wide acceptance of an idea is not the proof of its validity” (Brown, 2009). People thereby often believe that which they hear often. Many types of misinformation are being spread in this manner and one must avoid falling into these traps.

So when the rest of the region did not make any facial tattoos, the groups who used to wear it with pride started questioning their own beliefs and cultural practices. According to Peter Horn (2009), “... folk cultures are often regenerated after they had all but succumbed to invaders or to global mass culture as a conscious effort to regain some form of cultural identity” (p. 2). On the contrary, popular culture is denigrated as “primitive” and had been ignored by theoreticians for long. But in the present context, it is popular culture which is the most “popular” amongst various communities. It is the youth who are more attracted to the popular culture well promoted by mass media. The idea of modernization is skilfully promoted through mass media. In attempts to revive some form of cultural identity, the vulnerable indigenous groups often blindly follow what they are being presented with. Now there are several issues associated with this. Firstly, it leads to a loss of originality of a indigenous group’s cultures and traditions. Since each culture has its own set of traditions, forms of knowledge and customs, dominance of foreign culture can lead to a loss of these practices. Secondly, when each of these “peripheral” societies starts

following one dominant or popular form of culture, attempts to homogenize communities begin to arise. Cross cultural practices are so common today that it often becomes difficult to trace the origin. Most common arena of society where this kind of cross culturing occurs is food. Good delicacies and recipes travel very fast around the world and people may not always be able to trace the place of its origin.

Knowledge can be either explicit or implicit (Ngulube, 2002). *Tipe* is an example of both implicit and explicit forms of knowledge. While the tattoo itself is explicit as it can be seen, the history and knowledge surrounding it is implicit and exists only in the minds of people. This makes it unique and its transitions as well as preservations complicated. What is visible to the eyes and clearly on the skin can be photographed or described easily, making its preservation easier and comparatively straightforward. What does not meet the eye, is ‘beyond the skin’ and exists only in the minds of a few in the form of a distant memory, which is much more difficult to be captured and preserved. This implicit form of knowledge is subjective. Responses like “my father used to narrate” or “my grandmother used to tell us stories” makes tracing the history and origin difficult. This research aims to have captured the essence of this complexed cultural practice of *tipe* by analysing the different social processes surrounding it.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a deeper understanding of the factors that surround the ban on *tipe*. By looking at the social, political, cultural, economic as well as psychological factors around the decision to discontinue the tradition of facial marks, this chapter has attempted to unveil the underlying, often implicit, reasons of such decision. The rationale for unveiling these reasons of prohibition is to discover the ‘why’ behind the event, which is what an analytical social science

research is about. Personal opinions and grounded data are considered in order to get an unbiased, impartial and anti-colonial view of the field. The present study found stigma and external influences to be the two main causes of the ban. Stigma is a psycho-social factor responsible for having impact on the minds and memories of the indigenous people through the persistence of traumatic and discriminatory experiences. The influence of modernization and desirable lifestyles was another important factor. It is evident through the changes in every aspect of Apatani life that the influence of western culture is present boldly in each of them. These causes and the changing political and economic scenarios of the state, in general, and the valley, in particular, made the local youth to decide to completely prohibit the traditional act of marking the face along with some other cultural changes. This, they considered, to be in the best interest of their community and their future.

At the same time, it is important to analyse the aftermath of this changed culture. In order to attain this goal, the consequences of the ban have also been looked into towards the end of this chapter. The major consequences of the prohibition on *tipe* are found to be: (i) the absence and almost extinction of cultural practices of more than a hundred years old, (ii) the use of modern medical operations to cover *tipe*, (iii) identity change (in some cases hiding), (iv) change in relation with nature, (v) new source of income, (vi) absence of physical pain, and (vii) improving chances of more relations with people outside of the valley and more proximity with the rest of the world. Some of them treat their community closer to the goal of progress and the goal of moulding their society in a particular way in which they perceive developed countries to be. Some of the other consequences of the ban have brought about certain changes that are not acceptable to everyone. Loss of indigenous identity is a concerning consequence of the prohibition and documentation seems to be the immediate effective solution for it. As mentioned

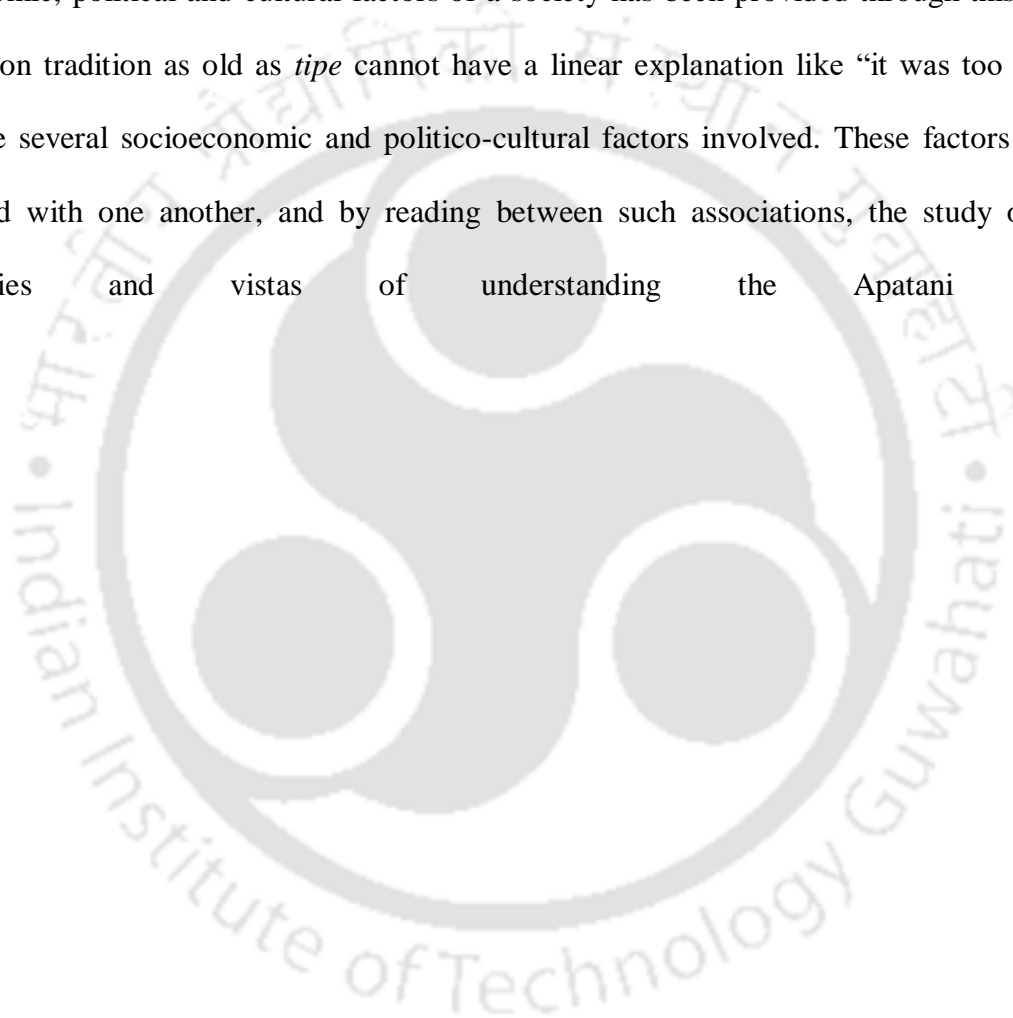
earlier, some Apatanis are happy about the ban, whereas others oppose it vehemently. Since the Apatani is also not a homogenous group or term, differences of opinions are bound to occur as that is a common feature in every society. The presumption that each member would respond to the changes in the same manner provides a much distorted picture, one that is not grounded or drawn from the realities of the people themselves. And from recent developments in social science research, we know the importance of a grounded perspective, to represent the voices of the people themselves, without projecting imperialist/ dominant opinions and points of view.

All these consequences, irrespective of being positive or negative, have a major impact on the way the Apatani community is formed and shaped. They change the way we understand and look at the indigenous society. Through these consequences we realise that Apatani society is like any other society which is impacted, changed, modified, colonised, and attracted towards a particular path, by all the social, political, economic, cultural and psychological events. They are not passive recipients of these changes in and around their home valley, but rather negotiate, contradict, act upon and interact with them and are in fact active participants and actors in provoking and promoting certain course of change in the community.

Both these causes as well as consequences have helped us present a holistic understanding of *tipe* in this chapter. The categories of the causes and consequences have been formed on the basis of data collected during the field stay and after closely interacting with several respondents. These categories may help future researchers understand the field better. The list is not exhausted as society and social events cannot be summed up in a few categories. Thus, further research can contribute to an enhanced understanding of the factors that caused the ban as well as the impacts it has had on the Apatani society. These impacts can neither be said to be negative or positive,

for each social action would elicit differing responses which depend on the perspective from which it is being viewed.

By analysing the various facets of the prohibition of *tipe*, this chapter aims to achieve a holistic understanding of the event. Keeping the aim of the study in mind, the interconnection between the economic, political and cultural factors of a society has been provided through this chapter. The ban on tradition as old as *tipe* cannot have a linear explanation like “it was too painful”. There are several socioeconomic and politico-cultural factors involved. These factors are well associated with one another, and by reading between such associations, the study opens up possibilities and vistas of understanding the Apatani society.



CHAPTER 5: CULTURE CHANGE AND MODERNIZATION

5.1 Introduction

“The Only Constant in Life is Change.” - Heraclitus

The objective of this chapter is to critically sketch a larger picture based on the empirical evidences presented in the third and fourth chapter. In the third chapter, we discussed the various aspects of the Apatani life to help place the study historically. In the fourth chapter, we analysed the various reasons for the prohibition of *tipe* and the underlying impacts of the prohibition. In this context, it is important to look at and beyond the complexities arising out of sticking with and deviating from dichotomies – between tradition and modernity. The purpose here is to dialectically engage with and interrogate modernity. Engaging with modernity is as important as interrogating modernity, as part of not “instrumental rationality”, but “substantive rationality”.

“I love these tattoos. They look so beautiful. My clients love my art, which makes me happy”.

These words were spoken by Lido (October, 2019), an Apatani tattoo artist practicing his art in Itanagar. At Ziro he used to mark his friends, until someone suggested him to open a tattoo shop in Itanagar. The designs and patterns he draws using his electric tattooing machine is nothing like the traditional facial marks known to his ancestors. His clients who come up with their ideas (and rarely their own patterns) and he gives shape to their concepts. His friend Anuj has several tattoos on his arms and when asked about the meaning of these marks he replied, “I just made them because I felt like it. I did not think about the meaning and all. Most of my friends have them and I think it looks very cool. Virat Kohli has also got tattoo, so it is not uncommon now-a-days.” (Anuj, October 2019).

Such narratives provide us an insight into the mindset of young members around modern tattoos. At the same time, when we enquired about the Apatani tradition of tattooing, the responses were vague. Lido said, “I have seen it on my grandmother, but I don’t know why they made it.” (October 2019). Another young respondent had a similar response of “I know they made it but I cannot tell why or how they made it.” (October 2019).

There is a shift of attitudes and practices in the Apatani society. An interesting event to note here might be the increasing feeling of unity and community among the Apatani youths. Though the indicators of membership into the community has changed, it does not imply a fragmented society. Far from it, we can find instances of community belonging, mostly at times of festivals. Be it Dree or Ziro music festival, all the Apatanis can be found united in such celebrations. The change in markers of togetherness is not synonymous with the absence of the togetherness itself.

Societies are bound to keep changing over time in accordance with the circumstances, be it social, political, economic or psychological. Such changes have an impact on cultural practices of a community. The transition from traditional societies to modern societies is seen to be one such major leap. But at the same time, terms like modernity and modernization have kept changing their meanings and left the scholarly world of academicians confused as to what it really connotes.

Keeping these factors in mind, we pose some old yet still meaningful questions: What should be probable tenets of modernization? Is it the same for every culture, community and society? Why do cultures undergo change? Which class of forces determines the course of such change? These are certain macro questions researchers are confronted with while dealing with these critical

questions. These concepts help us understand the complex relations in the society better and so understanding them is necessary. We attempt to understand these concepts in the context of the Apatanis and the changes they have been going through culturally in the context of the body marking tradition.

This chapter makes an attempt to understand these macro questions in the context of the Apatani society and the changes it underwent since India's Independence. The context of post-independence is of relevance here because colonialism is a socio-historic truth which cannot be ignored and without taking it into consideration, understanding of modernity remains incomplete. Recent revisits to the question of colonialism by several scholars (Bhambra, 2021) have made dissecting modernization more critical. The prohibition on *tipe* and the subsequent impact it had had on the identity formation and cultural framework of the Apatanis has been theorised under the modernization framework. The area of culture change has been explored by many scholars (Herskovits, 1937; Mead, 1963; Szapocznik et al. 1978; Glazer, 1993; Poole, 1994; Rumbaut, 1997; Singh, 2000; Berry, 2003; Bentley, Hahn and Shennan, 2004; Tan, 2014) from anthropology, sociology, political scientists, and cultural studies among others. By placing the event of prohibition on traditional practice within the framework of culture change, we can explore why cultures change, how they change, and the impact of these changes. These ideas of culture change are studied in the theoretical framework of modernity. Conceptual understanding of the historical trajectory of the idea of 'modernity' helps us understand the changes in the Apatani cultural practices. Since the idea of 'modernity' has undergone oceanic changes over the decades, how we place the present study amidst the ever changing understanding of being modern and modernization, will be the focus of this chapter.

Thus locally based studies and findings need to be given more emphasis on, rather than broad generalisations. Instead of looking at culture and reality as stable or passive, the dialogues between indigenous culture with the rest of the society is explored by such perspectives. Communities are active participants of the larger society and they need to be looked through those lenses. Thus this study does not look at Apatani as a fixed category waiting to be explored but rather attempts to explain the role played by several embedded sociological factors in the making of the present day 'Apatani society'.

Some civilisations remain untouched by the rest of the world till date, like the Sentinelese (Sasikumar, 2008; Schönhuth, 2019) or the many in Peru (Castillo, 2004), through voluntary isolation. There are those who get in conflict after being introduced to other civilisations. The clash of civilisations provides us a better understanding of how differing cultures work. At the same time presenting these societies to the rest of the world highlights the differences as well as puts them *in perspective*.

Although the term 'culture change' largely encompasses change in all socio-cultural aspects of a society, here we specifically mean change in the tradition of body marking. Anthropologists (Boggs, 1958; Chance, 1960; Tveskov, 2007) see cultural change as a phenomenon which persists among the humans and has been an integral part of the human civilisation for several thousand years. "Culture change is defined by anthropologists as a reformulation in group behaviour" (Williams, 1966). Processes of diffusion and transformation within as well as across different cultures are indicators of change. These changes keep a culture alive and evolving as per the changing needs of humans.

Such evolution of societies and their cultures began to be carefully studied in the 1950s (Wallerstein, 1971; Frank, 1971; Cardoso, 1969). Such scholarly writings from different theoretical backgrounds have attempted to put forward what they consider a better understanding of 'development' for the nations across the world.

Modernization theorists provided the first sociological account of "development". The post-World War II period was dominated by the western capitalist trajectory of "development". However, by the 21st century, the world of academics was well aware of the debates surrounding sociology of development. How modernization theory was severely criticised for being Eurocentric by theories like that of dependency and world-systems had begun to be taught in every advanced sociology course. Thus, the mistake of providing Eurocentric views was no longer done or acceptable within the academic disciplines. But Eurocentrism of 1980s was not the only problem. Notions of Occidentalism (Mignolo, 2000); debunking terms like 'developed', 'underdeveloped' and 'developing' (World Bank, WDI, 2016); and colonial problem (Mignolo, 2002; Allen, 2016; Bhabra, 2021) are all ground-breaking theories in the field of sociology of development. Each of these theories provides their own set of explanations and methodologies to study systems of development in varied forms of societies and their cultures. However, it may be argued that the task of social science research is not to propose an ideal solution but rather to critically evaluate and question the way we understand the social institutions with each new perspective and theory.

Similarly, this chapter does not hope to resolve the issue of how to study indigenous communities, rather provides one such possible methodological and epistemological standpoint which may be suited to explain such a community. Thus using theories on post-modernity,

sociology of development and theories on culture change, the study tries to explain the change in traditional culture of the Apatani society.

This chapter deals with the third and final research question of the thesis, that is, what role did the western conceptions of modernity and development play; and how modernization theory is applicable to the changes in the cultural practices of the Apatani society. Like mentioned in the introductory chapter, the objective will be to situate development of Apatani community into the macro theoretical concepts of post-modernity and sociology of development. In the following sections we have analyzed the idea of modernization, its historical developments and situated these theories in the context of the Apatanis. An understanding combining modernization theorists' idea of 'modernity' and post-modern idea of individual freedom and agency has been proposed in this chapter. The complex overlap of ideas of culture change and modernity is explored through this chapter as both concepts continue to influence each other as well as continue to be of relevance to social science research.

5.2 Culture change

Theorists (Herskovits, 1937; Chance, 1960; Steward, 1972; Szapocznik et al. 1978; Tan, 2014) have dealt with the question of culture change for several years. But most of these theorists viewed culture as evolutionary which inevitably produced a racist understanding. Each school of thought has their own set of ideologies and principles to address with the question of culture which has been a burning topic in academics since the mid- to late 20th century.

Culture as a subject of study grasped the attention of scholars with social sciences exploring a wide range of concepts around the term 'culture'. 'Culture' was first studied by anthropologists and so we find the early definitions of the term which look at it as more natural than constructed.

According to Edward Tylor, culture is “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (1871: p. 1). Kluckhohn and Krueber define culture as “culture consists in patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values” (1952, p. 86). Geert Hofstede defined culture as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from the others” (1980, p. 385). It is seen as the integrating mechanism (Geertz, 1973) to ensure homogeneity and togetherness. In general terms, culture is seen as common set of norms, beliefs and practices shared by the members of a group or organization (Varnum and Grossmann, 2017). Culture also comprises conflict, inconsistency, and hence is subject to change. Marxists and neo-Marxists address the idea of conflict as a necessary and normal part of the society. Change being not only important but also a necessary part of the society, must be taken into consideration by social scientists working in the field. But the changing nature of culture also makes it difficult to grasp the process in its entirety. At the same time, culture change occurs unevenly across a particular culture. This is to imply that culture change may be, and in most cases is, non-linear (Steward, 1955). It implies that changes do not occur equally for all members of the community and it may also not be perceived in the same manner by all members. The ban on *tipe* was a major change for the senior members of the community who had already marked themselves and had never seen an Apatani without their *tipe*. Whereas for the newer members of the community who were more accustomed to seeing people without their face being marked, the ban was ordinary, if not “natural”.

Culture (and subsequently culture change) depends, like most other social phenomena, on how the members of a society perceive or conceptualize culture. So while for some there may be no change at all, there may be drastic consequences of simple change for others (Meyerson and Martin, 1987). This concept was also looked at by Berger and Luckmann *Social Construction of Reality* (1966). Whether one sees and accepts culture change as an integral part of the society or as a staged transition has a lot to do with the way these changes are dealt with and managed.

This chapter analyses the idea of culture change, linking it back to the Apatanis' transition from body marking tradition to a strict prohibition on it. The way culture change has been portrayed in the academia has also undergone change over time and thus largely impacts the way it is being studied. The prohibition on the body marking tradition is seen as an appropriate example of culture change in this study.

So before drawing the findings of the study, it is necessary to look at what the term culture change represents. It should also be noted that the term has been used with a specific meaning and purpose which should not be confused with the other ones. Although Inglehart and Baker (2000) do acknowledge that the cultural changes brought about by economic development are dependent on other socio-cultural factors, yet they focus on only one such factor, namely religion. They examine religion as the specific factor to showcase that “different societies follow different trajectories even when they are subjected to the same forces of economic development” (Baker, 2000: p. 22). There are however several other socio-cultural factors which influence the course of economic and political development of a community. The major one being the perspective that the members of a community possess towards the notion of ‘development’.

Culture change can take place due to many reasons. Cultures flow and influence each other, or the community may consider it to be unnecessary or a hindrance, or political power may impose some law, or environmental factors, economic factors, or transition in society. The idea of acculturation is not new and scholars across anthropology and sociology (Redfield, Linton and Herskovits, 1936; Ward, 1996) have provided diverse range of studies and opinions when it comes to this cultural process. Although an old concept, it holds relevance as cultures continue to reform and transform through the process of enculturation.

In the case of the Apatanis, such change in tradition and cultural practices of body modification can be attributed as an example of acculturation to a large extent. The influence of external cultures that we discussed in the fourth chapter clearly indicates this relation. The entry of non-indigenous community mainly to improve market relations and to ensure political safety (or control) brought about serious changes in the socio-cultural structure of the indigenous community. Because the Apatanis adopted cultural practices not indigenous to them, neither was it a result of colonialism, we need to understand that the changes came through constant socialisation and gradual transition over a period of time.

Although acculturation can happen in either direction that is either or both of the groups could undergo change, however in reality this direction is biased. There is always a power relation that comes into play, as 'power is everywhere' (Foucault, 1998: p.63). According to Berry, et al., acculturation tends to induce more change in one group (acculturating group) than in the other (1997: p. 294). Among the two groups, the one that is more vulnerable or susceptible to change is more likely to be influenced by the cultures considered powerful or have an upper hand in terms of economic and political power.

The traditional tattooing culture (*tipe*) of Apatanis underwent serious changes in the face of acculturation, pressure to modernize and with several other psycho-social factors coming into play. That being said, the power relations this community has had with the neighbouring indigenous groups and other non-indigenous communities also play an equally significant part.

The general assumption that as cultures change there is a universal shift from collectivism to individualism has been challenged in studies by Inglehart (1977, 1997), Inglehart and Baker (2000), and Kashima (2014). These studies present more contemporary and complex transitions like materialism to post-materialism, uni-dimensionality versus multi-dimensionality (Inglehart, 1997; Kashima, 2014).

Psychologists (Berry, 2003) have also focused on the idea of individual acculturation or psychological acculturation. These concepts are equally relevant as one realises that acculturation (or culture change, for that matter) in a society does not happen at the same rate for every individual. For example, in 2020 when the world was struck by the Covid-19 pandemic, wearing mask suddenly became a new “normal” for safety and survival. But not everyone could get accustomed to this change and some took more time than others to adapt to it. The way people adapt to changes differs from person to person. The entry of non-indigenous forces into the Ziro valley impacted different groups, very differently. While some could continue living their lives as before, others felt the presence of “others” more profoundly. Some found no change in their routines, whereas some of the other Apatanis expressed several disruptions in their day-to-day activities while dealing with those they call “*halyang*” became inevitable in their path of vocation. Thus there will be differences in the opinions people hold and the way they receive these changes. Differences are based on the level of impact these changes will have on the individuals’ lives.

When the law of prohibition was implemented in the Apatani society, some took more time to adapt them and accept the new way of life. For them this meant getting used to not seeing *tipe* on the faces of the members of the community. They had to get used to unmarked faces of fellow Apatanis. Many described difficulty in identifying fellow *Tanii*, but of course over the years the absence became the norm and the marks only a memory.

Even though the idea of describing or depicting indigenous people as exotic needs to be avoided but at times the lines seem to blur. Some of the senior Apatanis (mostly women) have expressed joy over the fact that photographers from across the globe come to the valley just so that they can capture a few photographs of theirs in their complete traditional attires. Such actions further enhance the idea that indigenous people are unnatural, distant, alien and thereby exotic. Although done with the right intention to celebrate their special characters and to provide a platform to represent them, this practice may in fact additionally increase the distance between indigenous and non-indigenous world, making communication and understanding more complicated than it needs to be. Erroneous images of the indigenous groups are so different and atypical that has led to a deep-seated fear of communication and close relations among them.

The influence of colonialism is equally important when it comes to culture changes because capitalism and global economic political systems can be best understood through “globalization of culture” and “coloniality of power” (Mignolo, 2002). The present study unfolds Apatani community as active actors capable of deciding their fate and their course. The welfare and development of a group does not depend on the right or freedom to do so, rather on the capability and will of the individuals (Sen, 1985).

Walter D. Mignolo (2000) focuses on the local histories of imperialism and colonialism which play an active role in knowledge production. He explains that modernity itself is a colonial construction and coloniality is embedded in it. In part, we believe his ideas on geopolitics are in alignment with Cepek's (2018) idea of decolonising the researches and studies. Both studies in turn are in alignment with Beck's (1986) concept of how theories are limited to nation-states, given generational methods are critical methods to explore the changes in a culture (Kashima, 2014). These studies thus add much value to the body of literature on culture change. Such comparative studies are helpful to provide an outlook of how much of differences or similarities exist inter-culturally as well intra-culturally. Often cultures are compared with one another and in that attempt, the differences of experiences that exist within a particular community itself get overlooked or might be deemed as not important.

When it comes to studying cultures, we need to ask two questions in order to understand culture change in its totality. The first is: how do cultures change? Anthropological and evolutionary theorists have provided several general factors based on which a culture may undergo change, but each society has its own set of determining factors given the circumstances. The factors specific to the Apatani society will be broadly touched upon here. However, the second and more important question is: why do cultures change? And to answer this question in detail has been the focus of this chapter. A study by Varnum and Grossman (2017) uses social ecological approach to provide insights into the explanatory framework of culture change. The social ecology approach explores the environmental and psychological factors in depth, which explains a lot of the contemporary issues around the topic. Varnum and Grossman define culture change to be "Changes in ideas, norms, and behaviours of a group of people (or changes in the contents or themes of their products reflecting such changes), over time, typically on the scale of decades or

centuries” (2017: p.2). Social ecology provides a sociological understanding of the environmental events and changes. To discover the “direction and magnitude to future cultural changes” (2017: 4), increasing research in the field of cultural change (especially cross-temporal research) in both sociology and psychology is crucial. The study places the changes historically because humans are not isolated individuals. Instead humans are highly dependent on their natural and social environment and past, and each of their change and development is influenced by these external factors.

Culture change among the Apatanis

We have analysed earlier the changes in the tradition of face marking among the Apatanis. What the tradition was, how and why it was banned have been explored. But to arrive a deeper understanding of such change we need to realise the idea of ‘culture change’ within the local community. The idea of culture and a sense of belonging are at the centre of the Apatani community. Like any other community, the Apatanis respect their traditions and customs dearly. However, the problem arises when these customs are seen as hindrances for the progress or goal they have in their mind. In the local context, the facial tattooing tradition was holding them back because they felt ‘stigmatised’ as it did not allow them to forge comfortable social relations with other communities.

Redfield (1934) explains, change is an inevitable part of every culture. There may be several reasons for the change in cultural practices of a society. Qualitative analysis of changes in any sphere and institution of the society is critical to gain understanding of culture in the community concerned. For the Apatanis, change is not a new phenomenon but an integral part of cultural and social transitions. Right from the start of Apatani civilisation adapting to the nature and society

around them has been a question of survival. Their ancestors are said to have travelled from some far flung country to settle in the present-day Arunachal Pradesh. In order to adapt to the nature and climatic conditions of the Ziro valley, they have undergone several changes. The practice of handloom was something they initiated in the valley. Thus one can draw the conclusion that clothing or warm clothes is something they adapted only after settling in the valley. This was one of the early instances of culture change among the Apatanis.

Another instance is the adaptation of clothing to cover the entire body. Early colonial reports and video diaries of Elizabeth Barnardo (Betty von Fürer-Haimendorf, 1945) show that the Apatanis made use of fabric just to cover vital organs. However, soon after the British officers entered the valley, the Apatanis started clothing completely to cover their entire bodies. Similar was the situation in terms of the Apatanis' primary mode of occupation. Agriculture was adopted as a strategy for survival after they settled into the valley. Once they realised that the soil of the valley was fertile for growing and harvesting crops, the Apatanis made a transition from the nomadic life to an agrarian economy.

During the period of change, a community could either accept it, reject it or be ambivalent about it. Since heterogeneity of opinions exist in all societies, we overcome the obsession with binaries. Apart from mere rejection or acceptance there exists instances of ambivalence to changes. In the case of the Apatanis, the members were split into different groups holding different opinions with regard to *tipe*. Some members agreed to the decision of prohibiting *tipe* right from the start. They were of the opinion that the practice was only holding them back and to do away with it was the only way to move forward. Although these constituted mostly the young and 'unmarked' members, it is not to say that no senior member supported this idea. There were other members who protested and raised strong disapproval over the idea of prohibition.

The idea of loss of a part of their culture was daunting, but the fear of identity loss was what did strike them the most. At the same time, there were certain members who expressed a need for existence of both tradition as well as improved lifestyle, in the hope that the two can go hand in hand. Culture change evokes mixed feelings and opinions about them and therefore can neither be seen as positive nor negative. Any black and white judgement about change (or continuation) from tradition to modernity in the society is biased and need further exploration of the layers of varying opinions and irregularity of social institutions are explored.

In the fourth chapter it was established that the major reasons of the prohibition on *tipe* were the psycho-social factor of stigma and the cultural factor of acculturation or what we called the influence from outside. Although these factors are clear answers to the question of ‘why’ the Apatanis decided to change one of their cultural traditions, there requires a deeper understanding since social events do not operate merely along the oversimplified cause and effect explanations. This chapter thus attempts to firstly, decode the idea of prohibition of facial tattoos as a culture change and secondly, the role the idea of ‘modernization’ has played in bringing about such change. Both concepts, ‘culture change’ as well as ‘modernity’ have undergone sea changes over the years. So how can a social science researcher grasp a social event by these ever-changing concepts and ideas?

Culture Change in the Present Context

So the question of why we should study culture change differently again despite the presence of so many already existing theories? This is precisely why the notion of culture change is relevant to study till date. Since the ideas and theories around the concept are in a constant flux, recent researches provide novel insights for them. According to Varnum and Grossman (2017), cross-

temporal psychological factors that explain culture change are important to explain new political economic development and new researches in the field are necessary and exciting.

The reason why studying culture change is important in this thesis is because these ideas explain and represent the prohibition and its decision best. Like explained by social and cultural anthropologists (Henrich and McElreath, 2003; Flannery, 1972), cultural evolution is inevitable. Many cultures undergo change over time in a wide range of spheres. But these changes are unique to each culture and society. Moreover, this path of cultural development was chosen by the young members of the community themselves. Because of this unique nature of the change amongst the Apatanis, it was necessary to gain a wide range of perspectives on the decision rather than seeing it as a direct result of a particular cause. The ban is considered more of a change than a law in this thesis. The reason for doing so is that the tradition was replaced by the absence of it. The void itself is the new culture. And that is why the phenomenon has been presented more as a change or a transition rather than an event or law. The transition was slow and took place over years of discrimination and subordination.

In research concerning culture change, it is important to take note of yet another factor. The definitions and understanding we have of a particular term may undergo (cultural) change as well. Such changes are provoked by the cultural and political scenarios. Cross-temporal studies play a major role in this regard (Cronbach and Meehl, 1955; Ogihara and Uchida, 2014; Baltes, 1997). Thus any future investigation into the matter must take note of any such change as well as explicitly clarify the associated meanings.

The idea of culture change has come a long way from what it meant and was portrayed initially. Nonetheless the notion has still not lost its significance and each research in the field can still

add value to the body of scholarly work. Since transition of cultures is a never-ending process, contemporary studies from varied perspectives can be of help in a wide array of disciplines. Not only do they add value to the world of academic research, but they are also useful in planning the future of communities. Such studies are important more in the case of indigenous communities and communities in developing or underdeveloped countries because they are more susceptible to change and are getting moulded through influence. Thus for the purpose of their growth and development the trends of their change need to be taken account of.

Change in the Apatani life can be seen in a variety of spheres: education, clothing, language and communication and transportation in general. After exploring each sphere separately, we draw conclusions describing factors that have influenced each of these spheres equally and are responsible for the overall culture change in the Apatani society.

An understanding of why these changes occurred would be incomplete if the idea of “modernity” is not taken into account. The argument that this thesis is trying to make is that modernization is not just a process of development, rather it is an ‘aspiration’, an ‘achievement’, a ‘goal’ for many societies. When the society is trying to achieve a position, the most romanticised route will invariably be the most sought after. This position, irrespective of social or economic, ensures that the members of the community are able to get better opportunities and their capabilities are utilised to the fullest (Sen, 1985).

The transitions of a culture are as important as the culture itself. These transitions are reflective of the changing socioeconomic and political, patterns of behaviour. Consequently, these details are useful to understand the culture and its people better, their past and future. The past is important to realise the future direction and welfare of the members of the community. The

socio-economic changes a society is likely to incur will reflect on its policies and also aid in governance. The way non-indigenous markets not only took base, but also flourished prosperously in the valley, makes one attain insights about how. When it comes to the Apatanis, their relations with the colonial officers, Assam rifles as well as the plainsmen are crucial to examine, all of which makes one understand their behaviour, experiences and decisions much better.

Thus, it might be safe to say that the Apatanis underwent transition in the face of modernization and development brought about by the changing politico-economic scenario of the country. These ideas of modernization and development will be explored in the next section. The concept of culture change is portrayed more like a transition. When we look at this as a transition, it helps us grasp the complexities surrounding this idea, rather than looking at it as a merely political one. If we were to see the prohibition law by the AYA as merely political, we will not be able to see the interrelations it has with the economic, social and cultural factors.

5.3 The Idea(s) of Modernization:

This section addresses the role of modernization in different spheres of the Apatani society. The changes brought about in the valley over the years are interconnected and invariably have a social impact on one another. The idea of culture change and modernity is closely related. The way modernization and development has been looked at for several years is put to question. These concepts are even more critical when it comes to indigenous communities and their struggles. Thus, this section aims to provide a nuanced perspective by looking at these communities as the main actors who decide their fate and the course of development.

The idea of modernity has long been debated and argued over in the world of social sciences. A part of the reason of its high debatable nature is the fact that the meaning and our understanding of the process of modernization keeps changing. Scholars (Rostow, 1971; Hoselitz and Moore, 1963) have tried to come up with an 'ideal' route of modernization for the previously non-modernized ones, but the error lies in the fact that there is no single way to modernize which can be generalised for all societies. Works of Hamza Alavi (1982), Donella Meadows (1972), S.F. Schumacher (1973), Andre Gunder Frank (1967), Paul Baran (1957), Fernando Cardoso (1969), Immanuel Wallerstein (2004) are the just a few notable ones in this area.

Right after the havoc caused by World War II came to an end, it was time for scholars and practitioners to take decisions about future course of "development" and "progress". Industrialisation proved to be the gateway which the western countries believed could lead them to modernization. But along with industrialisation came many problems associated with the process. There was an invariable need to debunk these problems and issues associated with industrialization and modernization.

In this study we have used the terms development and modernization interchangeably. The rationale lies in the fact that modernization does not have to be synonymous with the western path to modernity and development. Both "modernization" and "development" should be used in a non-western and/or anti-colonial context. Both terms have also been uprooted from their conventional understanding and re-analysed. But these phrases depict the larger idea and feeling of growth and progress which a community may aspire to turn itself into.

The work of modernization theorists represents a particular notion of modernity which has been widely criticised by many. The works of these scholars Frank (1967, 1971) Wallerstein (1971,

2004), and Amin (1997) undoubtedly contribute more insights into the world of social sciences, yet because of their flawed character, these theories have been widely criticised.

One of the major tenets of modernization theory was that they saw underdevelopment as a flaw within the society, as it is binding to traditional institutions. And thus for them, to modernize meant to do away with traditional customs, patterns of living as well as traditional mentalities.

For many modernization theorists, like Alex Inkeles (1950, 1961) and David H. Smith (2017), “underdevelopment is a state of mind” (Harrison, 1985). Critiques of modernity have criticised such a perspective loud and clear. Underdevelopment is not an “error” from within. It is a social status implied by the social norms and rules, determined by political-economic factors.

As a critique to modernization theorists, Inglehart and Baker (2000) argue that although all societies do shift from traditional value systems to industrial and subsequently postindustrial value systems, each “tradition gives rise to cultural zones with distinctive value systems that persist after controlling for the effects of economic development” (2000: 49). Thus Inglehart and Baker, like many other postmodernists, rightfully claim that the value systems of a society do not just vanish with the advent of industrialization and modernization. In fact, in their studies Inglehart et al. (1990, 2000, 2008) suggest that countries with economic growth show evidence of more secularism, self-expression, free of choice, democratization and social liberation (cited in Kasima, 2014).

Ulrich Beck (1996) through his writings dwells upon second modernity and reflexive modernization. These concepts have contributed in advancing our understanding of the society we live in, encapsulating the risks and dangers that the modern society brings along. After industrialization, the world saw a kind of modernity in the form of the rising information and

technology society. Each stage of development the world progresses towards in order to do away with the problems and risks of the previous form/s of society brings in their own set of risks. According to Beck (1996), the postmodern world or what he calls second modernity is one filled with problems of environment, cybercrime and resource scarcity, which is why he named it as 'risk society', the one filled with risks.

The factor of level of modernity also comes into play, when societies are assumed to modernize along the same path as the West has. This puts an unruly pressure on the members of a particular society to grow in a pre-set manner and progress in a readymade fashion. However, since each society is different from the other, each takes on their own set of direction of growth. This does not make them any lesser. The race to progress in a pre-fixed manner puts societies, especially the vulnerable ones like indigenous population, under an unspoken pressure risking the death of originality. But each society should choose their path of progress and development, instead of blindly following what the West teaches us. Javeed Alam in *India: Living with Modernity* (1999) provides a critique of postmodernism and the idea of a single path to modernity. In spite of the several flaws it has brought along, Alam insists that modernity can be corrected. He proposes such a modernity which is humane and in consideration of specific cultural contexts.

Michael L. Cepek (2018) while studying the Cofan people of Ecuadorian Amazonia, gives the power of decision making to the people themselves. He looks at the community as someone who create and narrate their own story, rather than continuously being directed by the establishment. Cepek has explained the relation of this indigenous community with oil, petroleum fields and with those in power (Cepek, 2018). Such an understanding of the indigenous communities is helpful to realise that they are not mere passive receivers and dominated groups. They are neither

helpless, nor victims. Instead their role as active participants, negotiators and decision makers needs to be reflected for one to realise their story and life events at a given point of time.

In an attempt along the similar lines, the current study aims to re-think the way indigenous communities are looked at. The world of indigenous people and indigeneity is a highly debated and still debatable area of scholarly works. It is continuously reformulated and reformed over the years. Social groups and institutions are constantly questioned as new theories and ideas of understanding continue to be presented. These theories and ideas are an excellent source to match the changing needs and demands of the current social scenario. In this thesis however, we attempt to take all factors of development into consideration when dealing with the changes in the Apatani society.

As rightly argued by Marcel Mauss, “Men know how to use their bodies” (1973, p.1), so it is their choice if they want to represent their culture through their body marks or if they wish to promote modernization through the absence of those marks. Either way these are “techniques of the body” (Mauss, 1973), which make each culture unique and, in that way, very special. There would be no point in trying to bind them to boxes of prefixed categories, rather this study celebrates the uniqueness of each culture.

Having said and understood that there is no single path to modernity, it is equally relevant to realise that communities are free to choose the path they wish to proceed with. The lesser explored notion of a desire for modernity is clearly reflected in the empirical evidences of culture change in Apatani society which we presented in this study. The idea proposed behind this concept is that humans feel a pull towards modernity as the process of modernization is consistently presented as desirable, powerful and romantic (Li, 2014; High, 2008; Salemin,

2015). Rejecting the binary of power and resistance, Li (2014) talks about the power being present in the form of desires, way before the actual entry of power relations. At the same time, the pressures and expectations of the society to make a transition in certain directions and follow the same path as the ‘developed’ countries give them a push to change and get rid of traditions deemed useless. Globalisation and neo-liberalisation has furthered this pull to modernize with their free and constantly increasing markets. Often the respondents explain the change that they have witnessed as necessary for the youth of the region to step out of the valley, attain better education and get a free and fair chance at employment. Parents often send their children to other states of the country which are considered to be “more developed” for them to attain education and eventually settle down. This is what development looks like for the present generation of parents and young children.

Atya studies in Class VI in Danyi Polo government school and aspires to study in Delhi someday like his elder brother did.

All those who are good in studies are going to big cities like Delhi or Mumbai to study. I wish to do the same. My parents told me that if I get good results they will take me to Delhi. (Atya, September 2019).

Yassing sent both her sons to Delhi to study and get a job. One of them is an IAS officer and the other is a doctor. Another respondent had travelled from Mizoram to study in one of the best schools in Ziro.

The education system in Ziro is the best around here. My elder sister had also studied in the same school. When I saw her travel far from home to get good

education, I wanted to do the same. I want to study hard and be an officer someday (Tini, September 2018).

Like most societies, the Apatani society is making a transition from an agricultural society to a prominence in the tertiary sector. With the young generation rapidly moving out of the valley, the number of workers and members working in the agriculture has reduced substantially. The farming tradition in the region has been based on using hereditary land and family labour. Thus owing to the reduction in land as well as labour, the economic life of the Apatanis has undergone serious changes.

In spite of the existence of so many studies in the area of modernization, little attention has been paid to the psycho-social factors of pull and attraction towards “modernity” (Lerner, 1958). Critiques of modernization theory explain how these theorists had portrayed modernity to be one-dimensional and linear. However, what they do not explain is why in spite of being one-dimensional and inconsiderate of traditional, indigenous groups, these groups still have the desire and ‘spirit’ to ape the Western economy, culture and polity.

What is surprising in the world of social sciences is that the idea of pull factors of modernity has not been adequately attended to. Concepts of aspiration and desire are rarely taken into consideration. And in spite of being abstract ideas, it is important to explore aspirations and desires (High, 2008; Scheibelhofer, 2018). Drawing from these researches, the present thesis looks at what aspiration for modernity means and why people, especially those from indigenous background, are pulled towards it. According to Han and Shim (2010), pull factors do not carry the ‘negative’ expression of anger and frustration of push factors, but instead carry “the ‘positive’ expression of aspirations, desire and ideology by which individuals accept and justify

the new institutions” (2010, p. 15). In other words, when people are not forced to do something, they will be more willing to accept the rules.

In the case of the Apatanis, the will to change and give up on *tipe* came from within their community influenced by both internal and external factors. It was the young minds of this society where this idea was first generated. That is why the members accepted it more willingly.

The following section summarizes various domains of life where ideas of modernity crept into the lives of the Apatanis. Here we can see the idea of “modernity” coming into play, and how this theoretical idea represented the aspirations and desires of so many Apatanis.

Indicators of Modernization in the Valley: The point of mentioning the different aspects and domains of an Apatani individual’s life is to reiterate that each community is independent to choose how they wish to develop. Even when they do not consciously select a particular route, the society evolves towards a certain direction and this direction is solely guided by the actions and choices of the individual members as well as the sum of it. Every action and sphere in Apatani society indicates this ‘spirit’ of modernity. Be it education or the language they speak, the notion of ‘becoming’ modern has its trace in every area of an Apatani’s life.

This idea of aspiration for modernity is evident in the life choices of the Apatanis. The shift of occupational sectors, changes in housing and clothing patterns as well as the change in cultural practices and festivals are indicative of the ‘desire’ for modernity that lie among the Apatanis.

In this chapter, the question we thus ask is not from where this zeal from modernity arose, but rather how we should look at it and understand it. Since we established that the task of a critical study is to explore the complicated question of ‘why’ of anything and everything; we ask the same question in the context of the Apatanis. Modernization has so often been portrayed as

imposed and forced upon vulnerable communities. Although that may be true to some extent, the members of these groups are not passive receivers and their role in realising the goal of ‘modernity’ should equally be considered.

Several social institutions and structures of the Apatani society have undergone changes over the years, especially after independence. The entry of British colonial officers definitely set the entry of and contact with non-indigenous world into motion, but eventually it was the post-Independence state’s executive forces that changed the political economic scenario to lead to eventual changes in the social pillars. These social pillars constitute education, communication, clothing, language, lifestyle, etc. The influence of the non-indigenous communities on the locals cannot be overlooked and was essential to take into consideration, like done in the previous chapters.

Western Education: Education in the preliminary form existed in the valley way before colonial officers had discovered this part of the country. But the same was institutionalised and westernized somewhere around late 20th century. Several government schools like Dani Polo High school, Padi Lailang Memorial School, Government Secondary School, Hapoli, Vivekananda Kendra Vidyalaya School, etc. were established in the early twenty first century. Most of members of the old generation have little to no education.

The concept of school is new. In our times we did not get any education. In fact, my father was against the schooling system. He told me that schools destroy the minds of the children (Landi during September 2019).

Around 70 per cent of the members of the first group, that is those belonging to the age of 55 and above have either no experience in schooling or have studied till 10th standard in a government

school. Since the prospect of higher education was miniscule, they had to stop after the 10th standard and join work in the agricultural fields of their parents. Working in agricultural fields also meant the form of education taught in schools had little practical use in the future endeavours. For these reasons along with some scepticism towards modern institutional education, the elderly Apatanis can be found to be school dropouts or having just basic schooling experience.

Communication: Communication played a major role when it triggered the process of modernization. Entry of the mass media, better transportation and several service sectors changed the way communication was undertaken in the valley. These changes paved the way for changes in all spheres of Apatani life. These sources of mass media also aided in introducing the world of Western cultures to the indigenous population. Increasing sales of radio and television was recorded during this period and helped connect the Apatanis with the rest of the world or brought the latter into the comfort of the households of Apatanis. Since, 42.9 per cent of the population having access to television (Census, 2001), influence from different cultures and communities is not unusual.

Clothing: In the four videos of Elizabeth Bernardo, we could see that clothing was not much prevalent among the Apatanis. These videos were shot before independence at the beginning of 20th century. Within a short period of 70-80 years, the Apatanis had not only adopted clothing, but also changed the style. Many of the Apatani households have a loom weaver operated by hand, traditionally used to make shawls and other small artefacts. But over the years, these handlooms lost their significance as the market opened for fabrics and readymade clothing shipped from outside of the valley. Entry of neoliberal policies in the country ensured the expansion of market to every nook and corner. That with the opening up of new roads for better

transportation led the non-local market to sway the indigenously-run local market. The youth of the Apatani society can be found wearing only in t-shirt jeans, trousers or skirt, etc.

Language: At the very outset it should be clarified that the use or dominance of any particular language is neither the sign of being modern, nor does it ensure better life chances. Instead, what this section aims to do to is to show how the users of certain language feel t

When it comes to language, the Apatanis speak the language which goes by the same name as the indigenous group, that is, they speak Apatani language. It belongs to the Tibeto-Burman family group. Apatanis belong to the same language group as Nyishi and Miri language. Scholars like P.T. Abraham et al. (1985) and Pascal Bouchery (2016) have aptly described the grammar and syllables of the language. Their dictionaries are a useful hand tool for anyone entering the valley. However, having no foundation about the language did not hinder our interference with the locals because most of them speak Hindi or Assamese. So much is the use of these other languages that we find a trend among the Apatani youth conversing predominantly in Hindi even with the elderly Apatanis and in the absence of outsiders. One can attribute the convenience in learning a language which majority can understand as the primary reason for this. The overriding presence of tradesmen and businessmen as well as army officials in the valley is definitely an important factor towards the use of Hindi as a medium of communication. At the same time, frequent travels to the plains of Assam made the locals pick up the language for better communication and serves as a bonus in the trade market.

As a corollary, most of the Apatani youth get too comfortable communicating in Hindi. The mass media only further elevates this practice. Spread of movies and popular songs promote other languages. The parents too do not intervene in the matter and local members do little to

encourage the use of local language. The image portrayed is that foreign languages are way better as they feel exotic, rather the same old language that parents speak. This is a common trend among the youth of the entire world in most countries. In fact, this is true for most societies, where members are more motivated to foreign and alien languages (Dörnyei, 1990; Gardner et al., 1985; Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993). But amidst all such attraction and temptation to learn a language which is non-native to the land, there occurs a form of loss and distance simultaneously. Growing distance between the local culture and the local people is strikingly high as members begin to forget their language, customs and the folklores.

This is the attraction that this thesis attempts to reflect upon. Questions like, why do people want to follow a foreign culture; what makes a language extinct; why is the “other” so exotic, is what provokes us to look at modernity under fresh light. Any understanding of modernization or development remains incomplete unless the perspectives of the people from the ground are taken into account. And in order to understand why the indigenous people chose “foreign” over “local”, we took a closer look at how they described these two concepts and what understanding they held about these ideas.

Upon asking a young Apatani girl why she prefers to speak in Hindi. Her innocent yet sociologically layered reply was, “Everybody in my school speaks Hindi. All my friends speak in Hindi. Even when you go to shops or market, everyone is speaking in Hindi. That is why I prefer speaking in it. It is more convenient and desirable.”

Take the same instance in a college in the USA. When a non-English speaker enters the college, will the local English speakers try to understand and learn that language for communication or would it be the other way around. It is a common practice for non-native settlers to learn and

respect the local language, so that communication can flow fluently. But in the cases where the population speaking the local language is small, a foreign language can begin to take control. This is how language politics works.

This is how languages become extinct also. And of course that is a major loss of culture and the overall community but the process of cultural evolution can neither be ignored nor controlled. Boyd and Richerson (1988) in *Culture and the Evolutionary Process* discuss how cultures evolve over time. Thus cultural evolution is an unavoidable part of the human social world but that is not to say that it has no consequences.

One such essential sphere that this study lays emphasis on is the social indicator of aspirations and desires of the citizens. Although such concepts are a little more critical to measure given that they cannot be measured quantitatively, but the importance, nonetheless, remains the same. To understand these concepts, we take the help of the “ethno” themselves. That is through ethnography we can build a better, intimate relation with the subjects and understand what development means to them. Setting the right indicators to measure real progress of the members of the society is crucial for both political as well as economic reasons.

Transition from indigenous to subjugated is not a sequence. It is like a flow rather than end of old and beginning of new. Multiplicity (multi-dimensional) of knowledge systems and history and how are those created? How is knowledge created and by whom? Why do we believe in certain facts more than others? Authenticity and reliability/validity of knowledge is judged by whom? What role does power and politics play in all this? These are questions which although beyond the scope of the present study are important to raise and ponder over.

Truth is not singular, but is multi-dimensional. Especially in the case of oral history, we feel that there is no way of telling which story or narration is true and which is not. However, irrespective of the authenticity of one version of reality, the others cannot be dismissed as untrue. All narrations are to be given equal respect and attention.

5.4 How have the indigenous been studied?

Historically, there have been 'official' designations labelling indigenous people. The British administration of India, in 1871, named some tribes as 'criminals' under the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 (Radhakrishna, 2001). After independence, in 1952, the Government of India repealed the old law. The stereotypes and prejudices still exist and discrimination was perpetuated post-Independence when the Denotified Tribes (who were previously notified as criminals) were reclassified as habitual offenders in 1959 with the Habitual Offenders Act (1952), which changed the nomenclature from 'Criminal' to 'Denotified' Tribes (GoI, 1952).

The increasing need felt by scholars and policymakers to “improve” and “help” the indigenous communities is both unnecessary as well as useless (Li, 2007). Indigenous people are constantly pressurised to change in the name of progress and development. These changes, be it land rights or policies for resource utilization, might occasionally work in favour of indigenous communities but for the most part they seldom benefit the indigenous people. By now we all know that investment by big companies and industries promising to keep the needs and space of the locals in mind is invalid and holds no ground. Yet these projects for ‘development’ do not stop. The repeated violation of promise to help them progress and the failure of these promises to work gives rise to feelings of further discrimination, depletion and separation. This also reflects the exploitative relation that indigenous people have with non-indigenous communities.

5.5 Towards a New Perspective

This thesis has attempted to work out a different understanding of modernization and development. A different perspective as to why certain cultures modernize in a certain manner, the factors and historical events that go into it has been discussed here. More cross-cultural studies can further reflect on it and add to the value of such a theoretical perspective.

The way indigenous communities grow and progress may be individualized. Someone working from long distance away from the community may not determine this route. Theories may tend to generalise by finding similarities, but the only similarity that lies among these communities is that they are different – historically, culturally and politically. Thus any attempts at a grand narrative is ignorant and ahistorical.

Aspirations of modernity

A concept covering aspects of modernity has been proposed in this thesis. Borrowing the term from Weber's work (1905), we propose that the 'spirit' of modernity may be different for each society. Ideas like attraction and zeal to modernize comes into play. This 'spirit' is omnipresent in every community and yet each reacts and reflects upon it in a different and unique manner. The path selected by these communities also differs largely from another. Like Weber associated economic capitalism with religious doctrines, this thesis has related modernization with the psycho-social factor of stigma.

It is modernities, in plural, rather than just modernity. Because there is no single form of modernity, rather there are multiple ones. At the same time there some who instead of outright rejection, propose what is known as alternate modernities (Gaonkar, 1999). But the issue of taking Europe as the reference point still persists in such theories (Bhambra, 2007).

5.6 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to explore two ideas relevant to the study, namely culture change and modernization. The purpose to explore these concepts is that both are equally important to understand the prohibition on *tipe* among the Apatanis. These concepts provide a clearer explanation and help us explain why the changes have taken place. Along with these sociological concepts, the thesis has overall taken other historical events into account as well. Political, economic and psychological factors have been briefly touched upon to provide with picture of the evolution and modifications of the indigenous way of life.

Along with that, modernization has been looked at by taking the theoretical base of migration theorists (Zimmermann, 1996; Parkins, 2010) push and pull factors, and the idea that humans are the true agents of such modernization is been proposed. The study associates, what has been referred to as, push and pull of modernity to the changes and prohibition on tradition. This has been articulated in order to take the psycho-social factors of desire and aspiration, held by people to attain modernity, into account.

Future researches exploring the ideas of modernization or studies undertaken in the Ziro valley could draw from or add to the ideas presented in this thesis, since indigenous communities in developing countries undergo several changes.

Modernity has been changing its meaning and understanding over the decades and still remains unsettling. And such unsettling contours of modernity still fascinate us. Each theory followed by their critiques has largely failed to provide a holistic understanding of the changing notion or patterns of modernization. This led us to question if a theory was at all possible or even necessary. At the same time the negotiations and dialogues encountered between the members of

the community (also, the community as a whole) and the historical events, policies and culture changes have been brought into light. These negotiations and dialogues are an important factor in the making of the community and their identity, and concomitantly in shifting the perspective on indigenous people as passive receivers to them as active actors. The study in no way has claimed to represent the Apatanis, but instead attempts to put their perspectives and perceptions forward so that readers outside the region get an idea as to what might have gone into the culture change of prohibition on traditional tattoos.

Since the change in traditional practice of marking the face was enforced by the Apatanis themselves, the study portrays the Apatanis as active decision makers of their own fate instead of being merely victimised. When studied critically, modernization can be found to be quite sought after and romanticised by several societies whose voices might not have been adequately presented yet. Truth, reality, identity cannot be summarised into black and white boxes but as social scientists we can look at it through different social complexities.

In the case of the Apatanis, there exists negotiation, collaboration and a complex relation with modernity and modernization. Neither are they the passive receivers of it, nor are they conservatives who would be absolutely against the idea of it. Thus, there exists several social factors and dialogues which has ultimately led the Apatanis to be what Apatani means today. We have presented and explained them through their own words and in that tried to avoid the pitfalls of generalisation.

Sociologists are guilty of relying too much on grand theories which are result of imperialism and ethnocentrism. In an interview with Wimmer and Quandt (2006), Ulrich Beck clarifies that sociologists base their theory on the findings of their own society and go on to generalise it for

the entire world. At best they compare their societies with one or two other, but still end up making broad general statements. Every perspective rest on a social foundation and every theory is based on one society (or nation-state).

Thus, placing the study of each society in their social context is extremely relevant because history is not uniform and the past and social struggle of each society differs from that of the other. These struggles and circumstances are what determines the course of change. Rather than coming up with a grand narrative, these peculiarities if taken into account, can help explore the particular societies better. In his book, *The Return of Grand Theories in the Human Sciences*, Quentin Skinner (1985) notes the significance of this historicity and contextuality of the theories. This thesis aims to reinforce this spatial and temporal contextuality of human societies and social theories.

This chapter looked at two major aspects of the study. Firstly, it located the present study in the larger theoretical, conceptual context of culture change. And secondly, the chapter also discusses the importance of the concept of modernization for the changes in the Apatani community. What both these ideas of culture change as well as modernization indicate is that grand theories are at stake of being invalid in the present society of increasing heterogeneity? Since each culture, community, tribe or their traditions are different and unique, they must be comprehended uniquely keeping their historical struggles in mind. Identities and realities are not just handed over, rather get formed through the dialogues, compromises and conflicts that a particular community undertakes over years of struggle.

Recent human development indexes lay a lot of emphasis on the psychological wellbeing of the citizens. When psychological factors are important to measure the idea of human development in

all spheres, the aspirations and desires of the citizens are hard to overlook. Several countries in fact choose psycho-social factors to measuring human development. Like Bhutan chose happiness of country's citizens to be the major factor to determine the level of development of the country (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2017). Other countries take mental illness into account when measuring the level of development. In the present contemporary world, it is no longer enough to consider the conventional per capita income and GDP to be the true indicators of progress. That is because society constitutes of way more than the economic sphere and a true picture of development can only be drawn when all the other spheres are taken equally into account.

This chapter of the thesis has its base in the interactions and interviews conducted during the stay in the field. Yet at the same time, it draws heavily from the theories and concepts developed and already well established within the realm of sociology. Modernization theorists to critical theorists, most of the theories are well known amongst the sociologists and have been appropriately applied in accordance with the demands of the research questions and objectives. At the same time, the thesis has attempted not to limit itself to the understandings provided by sociology. The aim is to establish a multidisciplinary perspective by incorporating ideas from the politico-economic, psycho-social, cultural studies, etc. A holistic perspective is being aimed at by drawing from fellow disciplines of economics, political science, psychology, and so on. Although not claiming to be complete on its own, this chapter forms one of the crucial data chapters and in that hopes to get a little closer to provide a broad perspective by not limiting itself to any one discipline or theoretical framework. At the same time, a critical understanding was necessary in order to provide an original contribution through this research and so perspectives are not provided in a linear manner but are instead applied with cautionary measures

keeping the pros and cons in mind. Also the classical and contemporary theories used in the study have been viewed and subsequently presented from a critical perspective along with all their glories, achievements as well as their raw criticisms.

According to the Oxford Dictionary of Sociology, sociology of development refers to “the application of social theory and analysis to societies (usually in the Third World) which are undergoing a late transition of capitalist industrialization. It has been particularly concerned with analysing the social effects of development on class relations and on social groups such as the peasantry and the urban poor.

Development studies emerged as a distinct area of research in the post-World War II period, and was associated with the growing concern for the political and economic development of the postcolonial world. The first sociological account of development was modernization theory, which held that the less developed countries would eventually catch up with the industrialised world, providing they emulated the economic and social systems of Western capitalism. Based largely, on the theoretical premises of structural functionalism, modernization theory conceptualized development as a staged transition from tradition to modernity, to be brought about at the economic level by the operations of the market and foreign investment; at the social level by the adoption of appropriate Western institutions, values, behaviours; and at the political level by the implementation of parliamentary democracy. A product of the Cold War, and motivated by the concern to challenge socialist ideas in the postcolonial world, modernization theory was criticised for its optimism, over-simplification and ethnocentrism. It was displaced in the late 1960s as the most popular sociological analysis of development by the dependency approach. This was in turn charged with over-simplification and with merely investing the assumptions of the previous orthodoxy.

Criticism of these approaches has left the sociology of development as a fragmented field in which various competing and more modest theories jostle for supremacy. In recent years there has been a growing awareness that the nation-state cannot be analysed in isolation from the international context. The field also has significant and growing overlaps with the sociological debates about globalization and the environment. There has also been a renewed analytic emphasis on the interdependency and integration among nations, not just in terms of economic processes, but also at the level of culture and ideology. Serge Latouche (1996) argues that the concept of “Third World development” is rooted in specifically Western ideas of technical progress and the accumulation of capital. This leads to development policies which destroy the cultures of non-Western populations. In particular, Latouche maintains that the drive towards global uniformity in cultures, lifestyles and “mentalities” has been responsible for endemic civil wars, ecological disasters, and the widespread national debt throughout the Third World.” (Scott, 1994)

In the following chapter, we are going to summarise the findings of the study, shed light on the limitations of the study and also explore the scope for future research in the field.

CHAPTER 6: TOWARDS CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter aimed to place the study of the body marking tradition among the Apatanis in the larger theoretical understanding of modernization and culture change. It also aimed at looking at these concepts to gain perspective and understanding, taking the help of the empirical findings of the study. This aim to tie the empirical dots along the theoretical frame has led us towards conclusion, which is not an end in itself but directs the study towards the debates and continuous discussions which may follow the thesis.

As a refute to any metanarrative, the thesis has taken the diverse perspectives of each society and its inhabitants. Rejection of absolute truth: rejection in authority of any single knowledge system: multiple truths. The thesis also negates any claim to grand theories and carries forward the idea of multiple modernities. It reinforces the claim that each society and members of these societies have unique experiences and understanding of development.

This chapter summarizes the findings of the study. With the help of the data presented in the last three chapters, a deep analysis of changes in cultures of a indigenous community along with its causes and impacts has been provided in this chapter. Although each chapter has its own conclusion summarising the argument, this chapter will knit them altogether. In the first part of the chapter we will discuss all the findings in each separate chapter and later explain draw conclusions from the study. This chapter will also directly answer all the research questions, the findings of which are drawn from the data presented in each chapter.

The topics discussed in this chapter therefore are the findings from each chapter, drawing conclusions (both specific and general ones), summarising all these data, finding the limitations and future scope of the present study. This chapter aims to tie all the different pieces of information together into a single free flow story. This is necessary so that no information appears arbitrary.

The literature using the secondary data, books and articles helped in analysing, theoretical underpinnings and in drawing most of the conclusions in these last sections of the study. These literatures not only bind the previous studies and findings closely to the present study but also open up prospective areas of study and analysis in other domains and future areas of social science research.

With the last chapter of the thesis put down to paper, we hope the aims and objectives of the study have been successfully accomplished and this research was able to bring the task, it set out to achieve, to an end. The straightforward language with minimum use of jargons is employed to ensure a reach to a wider audience and from all socioeconomic background. These readers can be from any discipline or any stage of their research, they can still analyse the different perspectives presented in this thesis.

6.2 Summary

Only one of the traditions of the indigenous community could be focussed on in this thesis and the tattooing tradition was chosen to be studied. The methods used were in alignment with the research questions and objectives. And the use of ethnography helped us enrich the data collection process. Books, articles, folklores and colonial diaries were used to attain secondary sources of information which helped us attain adequate information before entering the field.

With the help of oral history and interviews first-hand data were collected. The data collected through these methods were not always directly addressing the research objective but they helped gain a deeper understanding of the field.

Like discussed in the introductory chapter itself, the purpose of the study was to look at one particular change, that is prohibition on traditional tattooing among the Apatanis. The perspectives include decolonisation of ethnography, decolonisation of the idea of modernity, and also the concept of 'push and pull' of modernisation. It is the way we construct Western modernity. The years of socialisation and projection has in fact left its mark on the minds of many, especially those that are new to this journey and being the least privileged are indeed the most vulnerable class. In this sense, the thesis has attempted to reformulate the way we understand the relationship between indigenous people and modernisation. Because every society's journey is unique, the manner in which they reciprocate, negotiate and formulate their path of development needs to be recognised rather than compared to that of another society.

The process of ethnographic data collection has also been keeping this unique nature of each community and each member within the community in mind. Personal experiences of the past are drawn from the memories of the respondents. The voice of each respondent has found a place in the thesis avoiding generalisations and homogeneity.

Separation of "us" versus "them" does not help in understanding the field because of the invisible barriers created. Such dichotomies reinforce the divisions and discriminations in the society. These dichotomies also narrow down the perspective of the individual members of the society by substantial amount. People should rather be encouraged to go beyond such divisions

and introspect the world beyond “black and white” by bringing all those grey areas in between into light.

Since certain concepts were repeatedly utilised and provided argument over in the writing of this thesis, in the concluding remarks it is important to make clear where we stand at. Debates around the topics discussed here are not unusual and yet highly controversial. The issue arises with the conceptualisation of terms like modernity or stigma. The understanding of these terms relies largely on the way they have been politically interpreted. Moulding and controlling of these interpretations by the rich and powerful impacts the poor and vulnerable in more ways than one. In the case of ‘modernity’, for a long time it was associated with a predetermined path to progress the one adopted by the European and American schools. The idea of modernity as a staged process which every country and society needs to follow has been proven to be flawed and it was well established that attaching certain economic indicators to the notion of development and modernity has its problems. New theories began to address this issue. The most prominent idea that had risen was that modernity, like truth, is multi-dimensional and there is no singular path to attain. Also known as multiple modernities, this idea was approved and taken forward by several scholars (Eisenstadt, 2017; Schmidt, 2006). In the case of indigenous people, their experiences failed to find recognition again. The experiences of the past, colonial and capitalist rulers, are hardly ever taken into account. Even within a community not everyone experiences these social changes equally and at the same pace. Thus it is imperative that the history of each individual be taken into account. It is also critical that such information be dealt with caution. The indigenous people need to be recognised as active decision makers, who are more than capable to decide their course of action and the future of their community. According to Cepek (2018), indigenous people are portrayed in the academic world in either of the two

ways. One, they are seen to be victims of the State and larger political scenario. They are seen to be helpless under the powerful ruling class and give into the new policies or laws. At other times, they are portrayed to be vehemently opposing any change in their traditions and cultural practices. They get misunderstood as orthodox community who are apprehensive to any transition or even growth. The issue with both these views is that they project the changes in indigenous community as an impact of changes in other communities as though the indigenous were incapable of changing, transitioning, transforming and growing on their own. The indigenous communities are rather much more than mere products of the dominant impositions – they are decision makers and agents of change. It is the active interactions and dialogues with the rest of the world that they engage in, that decides their course. Even though each section of an indigenous society may differ from the other, they make decisions themselves based on what suits them best. When it comes to modernization, there is no doubt that each community progresses on its own terms and in different ways. How they modernise should also be their choice. Thus when a indigenous community like that of the Apatanis decide to proceed the manner the Western European countries had laid down, that decision too need to be respected as theirs. The members of the Apatani community choose to do away with certain traditions so that they can make progress in the same manner as other communities, which they believe to be modern. It is largely the aspirations and desires of these communities which determine the course of evolution they walk upon. But often the mental factors of desires and aspirations often go unnoticed unfortunately. The need to take a leap beyond social determinism into a world of interdisciplinary explanation would be more beneficial. It may be argued that these psychological notions of desire and aspiration are also derived from social factors of romanticising the powerful. This may not be entirely false and ideas of influence and

romanticising certain lifestyles are also research backed. This thesis focuses on one such psychological aspect and proposes the concepts of ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors of modernization which shape the evolution of a society to a large extent. These previously unexplored notions are drawn heavily from the field and the narrations by the respondents. By doing so, the aim has been to provide a reality and experiences-based on insiders’ perspectives.

Similar dilemma arises while dealing with stigma. The notion has negative emotions attached to it because of its history of origin and past association with the term tattoo. The term “tattoo” itself has often been misconceptualized, associated with thieves, murderers, slaves and voyagers. Given these associations, tattooing practices invariably attracted more stigma and negativity around itself. The way the origin and etymology of tattooing has been outrightly ignored creates problems in grasping the essence of traditions. It also creates unfortunate divisions and hierarchies between different communities and also between different sections within a community. The way ‘stigma’ has been portrayed and studied furthers the divisions of the society and makes it difficult to get past such divisions. This happens when scholars try to resolve the inherent problems of the dichotomy instead of doing away with the dichotomy itself. The divisions which we take so easily for granted in the present day are man-made. They have been socialised and engraved into the minds of the citizens which make them seem natural. But these separations hinder equality. Thus the way these stigma causing differences are conceptualised and promoted need to be addressed first.

In this study, stigma can be a very powerful tool to provoke transition. The stigma experienced by several of the members of the Apatani community has led them to change the way they define their identity, their culture and most importantly, their future. It can be said that personal experiences of the members play a pivotal role in deciding the future of the community. The

lived experiences of shame, inequality, separation and stigma of colonialism, capitalism as well as casteism and regionalism have impacted the way indigenous people want to define themselves. This is true for all the communities and it is true in the case of the Apatanis as well. Their past literally determined their future when the founding members of the Apatani Youth Association, with oppressive memories in their heart, decided to put a stop on the practice altogether.

The purpose was to identify their own kin so that neighbouring indigenous groups did not abduct their women. Although abduction in a democratic country is illegal, identity still remains at the heart and core of each community. Identity markers are used by most communities irrespective of their economic position since the earliest of times. Be it in the form of clothing, language, accent, body language, one wears – her/his identity in more ways than imagined. So the question of why a indigenous community would not want its identity marker anymore still pertains.

It will be arrogant not to consider the other possible causes of the prohibition on *tipe*. It has often been pointed out that the prohibition was merely a part of their transition, like every other community does, because the reason and purpose of the practice had become obsolete. It is agreed that *tipe* did not serve the same purpose as it used to, whatever that was. In the case of *tipe* we do not know the original purpose of the practice, so we would like to consider each of them.

If we believe the purpose of *tipe* to be beautification of women to find appropriate groom, firstly, this theory fails to explain why men made *tipe* too. If it were to be true than it is understood that in an age of social media matrimonies, finding appropriate partner is not difficult. Moreover, we find the fashion and beauty industry increasing each and every day. The only explanation can be

the changing meaning of beauty. Because what is considered as beautiful changes in accordance with generation and socio-cultural changes. Especially with inter-community mingling, people might want to adopt new techniques of beautification. So the question is if a tradition was prohibited only for aesthetic purposes.

In the introductory chapter of the thesis we laid down the research questions and set out to find out satisfactory answers to them by using methods deemed appropriate. An interdisciplinary review of available literature on each of the concepts used in the thesis has been provided in the first chapter. The second chapter was based entirely on the methodology. An explanation of what methods have been used, and for each of research question provided in this chapter. The methods were utilised in a unique manner and the widely used ethnography was decolonised. We have attempted to overcome the existing gaps of ethnography, oral history and interview methods amongst others.

The third chapter drew not only from the secondary sources but also heavily from the field. The responses provided during the stay on the field helped us gain a deeper understanding of what constitutes the Apatani society. Given that a little data exists on the tattooing tradition of the Apatanis, the major contribution of this chapter lies in describing and presenting their cultural practices on a large scale. It is more descriptive than analytical, but every bit of the description was necessary.

The fourth chapter of the thesis deals with the causes and consequences of the prohibition on traditional tattooing system among the Apatanis. To put it succinctly, it was concluded that stigma and influence from the world outside of the valley were the major reasons for the discontinuation, prohibition and demolition of the face marking tradition. The impact of the

differences felt on the public domain can have a lasting effect on the minds of people. Instead of seeing these as only psychological effects, when we look at the after-effects of stigma, we realise that it is socially and culturally embedded. It was also found that when members from two diverse groups come together, enculturation takes place to some extent. And it is usually the politically and economically powerful group which determines or influences the less powerful ones. In the case of the Apatanis, coming in contact with non-indigenous population of the plains brought about changes in their culture. This is common when trade and commerce between indigenous and non-indigenous takes place. Over generations, exchange of products, clothes, birth of lingua franca or even cultural practices take place when communities come together for trade and better communication. The coming in of Nefamese⁹ language is also an example. Between the Assamese plainsmen and the Apatanis, exchange of foods, forest products and eventually cultural practices was common. Similarly, the media enabled the contact with the rest of the country simpler and brought the rest of the world closer to these indigenous lands. Over the years, we find the Apatanis practising religions alien to their land, where clothes are not made in their traditional handlooms, speaking language unknown to their forefathers and getting rid of historic cultural practices. These religions, clothes, languages and practices were not indigenous to the group but derived from foreign lands, be it Assam, Delhi, or America. The point is that they are not indigenous but are the result of enculturation. Of course, that is true for

⁹ Nefamese is the name given to the language spoken by different ethnic groups in Arunachal Pradesh, not only among themselves but also with outsiders. It was developed when these different tribes came into contact with economically developed Assamese for verbal communication for trade and other socio-economical purposes. Though Nefamese is mainly based on Assamese, it is also influenced by Hindi and English to a considerable extent. (Bhuyan, 2012).

every community and culture as they are constantly evolving and keeping pace with the changes in the other parts of the world. To study the impact of such changes in some other community will be the subject of another study. As for the Apatanis this was a direct effect of attraction towards colonial modernization.

The fifth chapter is an attempt to look at the theoretical backbone of the study. Theories of modernization and culture change have helped us situate the present study in the broader sphere of social science research. These theories provide a framework whereby one can place her/his study. This study provided a critique of the way we understand and represent the process of modernization amongst the indigenous communities of the country. It also provides a new angle of the way we study changes in culture over time. The idea of multiple modernities emerged in 1990s as a critique to the grand narratives of modernity and has been further expanded by including the idea of colonising Western modernity within the same framework. It is important to realise that the subjects of this study are not mere passive victims but rather participate actively in the social and political decision-making process of the community that they belong to.

These chapters together depict a story about the history, present and future of the tattooing tradition among the Apatanis and all the accompanying events and factors. About how each member has lived individual social lives experiencing the social dilemmas and divisions. Each of them has memories and stories in their mind which reflect upon the past, their relations and the way they see society. After all, our understanding of the society and culture is highly dependent on the memories and experiences of our social relations.

6.3 Findings of the Study

Tipe

The Apatanis had a tradition of marking their face (locally known as *tipe*) but in 1971 the practice was banned by a local organisation called the Apatani Youth Association. This organisation was already in form but loosely, and in 1971 it was officially formed. The reasons stated for the prohibition was that it was too painful to bear. The study attempts to uncover the deeper reasons for the ban which might have led to this decision. It was found that stigma and enculturation were two major factors that played a significant role in the decision to ban *tipe*. The complex relation between several social, cultural, economic and political events impacted the way the youth of this community wanted to mould their culture and society. In other words, the experiences of the individual members of the society make up collective memory which reflects in their decision making. In the case of the Apatanis, experiences of stigma and stereotype led them to put an end to it by passing the law of prohibition.

Prohibition

The AYA banned *tipe* in 1971. The thesis has provided the reasons and effects of the prohibition. It was concluded that there were several socioeconomic factors that contributed to the prohibition and the impact of this simple decision had several unforeseen consequences.

That is why any social event cannot be studied simply in terms of its causes and consequences. Instead, this research aimed to explain the other aspects of the society that were associated with the decision to prohibition and see the decision in its entirety. The event was placed in the context and explained holistically. It is all the more important in social science research to understand an event in complete retrospect with other surrounding events.

The major finding of this aspect was that the prohibition on *tipe* had economic and political reasons of progress and power amongst the fast-developing Apatanis. It was found that in the post-Independence period the Apatanis were in contact with the rest of the world as they began travelling outside of the valley more often. After the Assam rifles entered the valley post-Independence, as the Indian government began establishing its rule on the hills, the relations between tribesmen and plainsmen changed substantially. Spread of markets and industries played a major role in transforming the way hills and indigenous lands look today. At the same time, the search for control and power over their indigenous lands made the indigenous people come up with several new political rules and customs. The Apatani Youth Association was one such organization who wanted to take power to help the fellow Apatanis progress and improve their living conditions. These economic and political changes were possible because of the increasing contact between the hills and the plains. That is why contact with the world outside of the valley has been seen as one of the major reasons for the decision of the community to prohibit their tradition.

Modernization

The notion of modernization has undergone several ups and downs as seen in the literature review provided in Chapter 1. After years of its inception, scholars are still grappling with the idea of modernity and how to make it more inclusive. The present study is also another attempt at it, whereby we suggest that the Western idea of modernity is also a part of ‘multiple-modernities’. These provide alternatives to the American and European models of modernization presented in the post-World War II period.

The prevalence of the idea of Western modernity in the present world and amongst the lesser developed communities was put to test. Thus the present study questions the desirability of western form of modernization. It was concluded in Chapter 5 also that there are several who prefer to follow the western notion of modernization till date. This happens because of romanticising and glamorising of the Western lifestyles and cultural practices which through the process of socialisation is internalised into the individuals' minds. The study has linked these processes with the decision of the Apatani Youth Association to put a ban on the tattooing tradition. The past experiences of the early members of this youth association made them derive at this decision.

Culture change

To provide an explanation to the enculturation process, the study took the help of theories of culture change. The idea that cultures evolve over time is not new. Old traditions fade away and are replaced by new patterns of living. The findings of the study re-enforce that cultures do not change in a linear manner and even the experiences of each member of a particular community differs from the other.

The notion of cultural evolution was also a critic of cultural particularism which dominated social sciences for a long time. The idea that cultural evolution can be multi-linear was later proposed by many (White, 1957; Sahlins, 1976). The main concept propounded by them was that cultures can change or evolve in several ways and directions.

Since the task of scientific investigation is not to take anything for granted, the study does not point towards whether the prohibition was the right thing to do or not. What it rather does is to provide a critical analytical outlook towards the social events. It was important to connect

different events taking place around the same time period and look at each of them from different perspectives. The way we see the daily mundane matters differently makes a lot of differences and these varied perspectives need to be recognised at precisely that, rather than judging and selecting one point of view over the other. It helps us question, interrogate and analyse the current happenings around us.

The study is a contribution to an understanding of indigenous people, their struggles or successes with the idea of modernization and development. Indigenous studies are relevant now more than ever because of the changing development strategies and needs. Economic growth is no longer the central indicator of progress. Other important factors like equality, sustainability, inclusion and environmental concerns have been the foci. Some form of revivalism to the traditional way of life can be seen to be making its way back. That is why the present study also helps in documenting the lives and experiences of the Apatanis so that the current concerns of the world can have a base at the grassroots levels.

Distinction between tradition and modernity lies in the inherent racist character of the biological evolutionary theory. However, the objective of the present study is to overcome such binaries presented to us by Modernization Theory.

It attempts to go beyond the understanding of development and modernity, or post-modernity and their critiques. The study also adds to the existing knowledge of the way 'bodies' are seen in the social context. Bodies have always been politically contested and controlled. In the case of the Apatanis too we see the politically powerful groups taking decision for the masses.

This thesis promotes a dialogue between culture, the notion of modernity, and indigenous studies. The exceeding relevance of decolonization through locating the study historically as well

as contextual can not be overlooked. In response to that, the study aimed to do away with binaries, including those inherent in modernization theories.

6.4 Limitations and Scope for Further Research

The thesis opens up many vistas of knowledge production for future researchers. Like no research can ever really be complete, this present study too has scope of extension in the future. To understand the spread of modernization at a deeper stretch, one can expand the study to other domains of Apatani life and culture. Analysing the way their food habits, house structures, clothing and even language took a turn, one will be able to explain the impact of modernization in totality. The desire to take it up in my future research has persisted in my mind for a long time now. And anyone having similar research interests can also carry it forward. At the same time, the concept of decolonizing modernization is not just unique to the Apatani community and can therefore be tested in other communities as well. Of course, each community will have their own history and their own relation with modernization. The idea of the zeal to modernize and the attraction towards Western modernity can be put to test in any other indigenous or non-indigenous communities as well.

And this can also be seen as a limitation as the study can be broadened beyond the Ziro valley or even to other aspects of life within the Ziro valley. Some other limitations to the study were also unavoidable. One of them was the language barrier. If the researcher is fluent in the local language, communication between interviewers and interviewees becomes smooth and clear. Since I could neither speak nor understand the Apatani language, a barrier preventing free and easy conversation was sometimes prevented. Although most of the respondents spoke Hindi and Assamese quite fluently and the subject of the study is a local cultural practice, some feelings

and emotions could best be described in the local language only. Inevitably, this created a bridge whereby true and complete translation was not possible.

Another future scope of the research is to provide a point of view by a member of the community itself. The opinions and perspectives of an insider about their culture and lifestyle will differ largely from that of an outsider. The relationships built with the respondents are subjective and Apatanis might be able to connect with them better. The subjective opinions of a researcher outside the community invariably seep into the research but so does the personal community feelings when a researcher belonging to the community interacts or writes about her/his fellow community members. One cannot say whether an insider or an outsider's position is better for research because both can make equal contribution to the study. Since this research provides an outsider's perspective, someone from the Apatanis itself can provide their perspective through research in the future.

A possible prospect for future research also lies in the areas of cross-cultural studies/comparative studies. The proposed idea of modernity can be utilised to understand cultural changes in other communities as well. Although the experiences of each society and its members are different, it can be tested if the ideas proposed here is true for any other society.

Another limitation of the study is that I set out to search for the symbolic meaning associated with the lines drawn in *tipe*. Unfortunately, none of the respondents or the books studied could provide an explanation on why the symbols were used. It could have been any sign but their ancestors chose five lines for the women's chin along with a straight line on the nose and two lines at a perpendicular angle for the men's chin. The answer to why is that remains to be answered.

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ANNEXURES

Questions for open-ended interview

General Information:

Name:

Gender:

Age:

Marital Status:

Education:

Occupation:

Residency:

Traditionally tattooed person:

1. When did you get your first tattoo?
2. Did you pay in return? If yes, how much?
3. Was it a personal choice or were you asked by someone to make it?
4. How did your friends and family perceive your tattoo?
5. How many members are there in your family? How many of them and who all have tattoo?
6. What is the symbolic meaning of your tattoo?
7. What is the social meaning and importance of your tattoo?
8. What importance your tattoo holds in your life?
9. Why is tattoo traditionally being made among your tribe?
10. What are the tools and colours used to make your tattoo? What is the procedure?
11. Are there any ritual practices included while getting a tattoo?
12. How long does it take to get the tattoo made?
13. How long does it take for it to dry?
14. Do you know what the images/symbols signify?
15. Has traditional tattoo making in your tribe changes over the years? If yes, then in what manner?
16. Does the young generation also make tattoos? What are the similarities or differences of those tattoos to the ones you made?
17. Does all the people in the community follow same tattoo making rules? Or do they differ across geographic and social terrain?
18. Are people from all background allowed to make tattoo in your community? If not, then what are the rules and who decides them?
19. Are there different rules for men and women to make tattoo? What are the preferable symbols for each gender?
20. What is your opinion about transforming the traditional practice of tattoo making into a profit making business?
21. What is your perception about the commercialization of tattoo making and about the new designs bore by youngsters?
22. Is there any discrimination/ differential attitude across tribes of the same region?
23. Can a person be identified by merely looking at his/her tattoo?
24. Could the tattoo provide answers to questions about one's personality?
25. Outside your native region, do people question or judge you or your tattoo?

26. Do you feel yourself to be different from others, like me, for having your body marked?
27. Have you ever faced any sort of discrimination or difference in behavior due to your tattoo?
28. Have you been charged for getting the tattoo? If so, how much?
29. Has the price charged for making a traditional form of tattoo changed over the years?
30. Who are the artists who make the traditional tattoos? What is their socio-economic background?
31. Where do the artists get their training from and who gives them the authority to practice this tradition?
32. What role does power and authority play in the practice of tattoo making? Who is in-charge of the process of traditional tattooing?
33. Is your tattoo a part of your identity or is it a mere piece of ornament?
34. Do you want to make more tattoos? If yes, why and of what?
35. There are so many other ways of symbolizing tradition, why adopt such a painful method?
36. What is your opinion on people outside your tribe using your traditional tattooing symbols?
37. What is your opinion about modern forms of tattoos?

Politically active people:

1. What is the history behind the tradition of tibe?
2. Does both your parents have tibe?
3. What was the symbolic meaning of tibe?
4. When and why was tibe banned?
5. What is your opinion about the ban on tibe?
6. How has the ban helped the Apatani community progress?
7. What are the similarities or differences (if any) between traditional tibe and modern tattooing?
8. What is your opinion about the modern form of tattooing?
9. When and from where you attained your education?
10. How important is modern western education and how is it different from the traditional knowledge system?
11. How often do you step out of the valley and in what purpose?
12. Did you ever experience any form of discomfort when going out of the valley?

The youth:

1. Do you have any tattoo(s)? If yes, then when and why did you get it?
2. What do you know about the traditional form of tattooing of your community?
3. What was the significance of the traditional tattooing system of your community? Can you tell me the history of tattooing in your tribe?
4. Does it hold significance even in contemporary times? State reasons for your answer.
5. What is your opinion about its ban?
6. What is the meaning of your tattoo? How is it different from the traditional ones?
7. Do you know the semiotic and aesthetic meaning of your tattoo?
8. What ink and instrument has been used in the making of your tattoo?
9. What significance does your tattoo play in your life and in shaping your identity?

10. Do you want to make more tattoos? If yes, then why and of what symbol?
11. What is your opinion about modern tattoos which use traditional designs and patterns?
12. Why do you prefer modern tattoos over traditional ones?



PICTURES FROM THE FIELD



Figure 1: Luscious green fields in Ziro Valley



Figure 2: A woman with *tipe* on her face

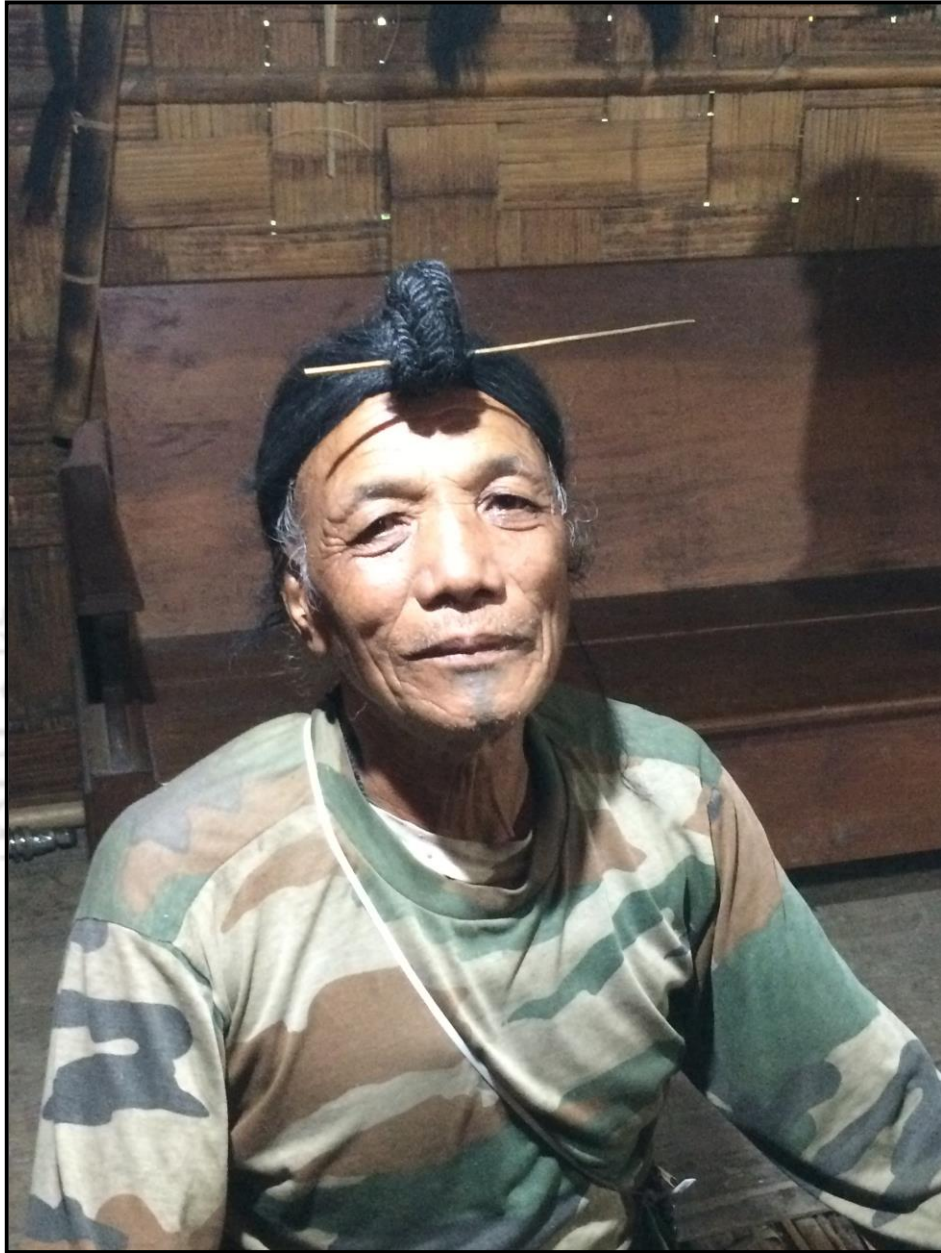


Figure 3: A man with *tipe* on his face



Figure 4: The thorn (*tipe tiirey*) used to make *tipe*



Figure 5: A group of women during group discussion



Figure 6: Map of India locating Arunachal Pradesh

Credit: Maps of India

Source: www.mapsofindia.com/maps/arunachalpradesh/arunachalpradeshlocation.htm

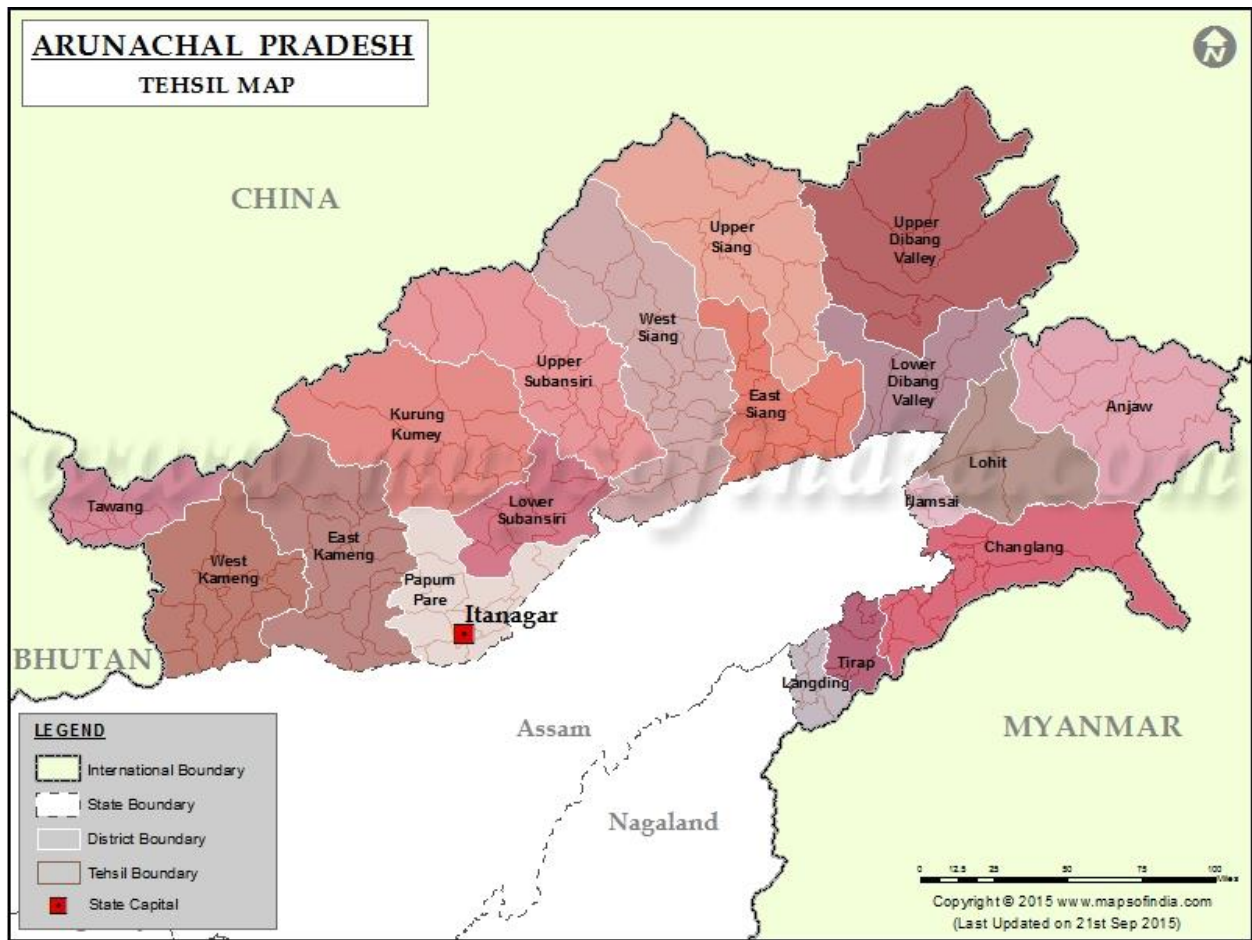


Figure 7: Map of Arunachal Pradesh locating Lower Subansiri

Credits: Maps of India

Source: m.mapsofindia.com/maps/arunachal-pradesh/tehsil/

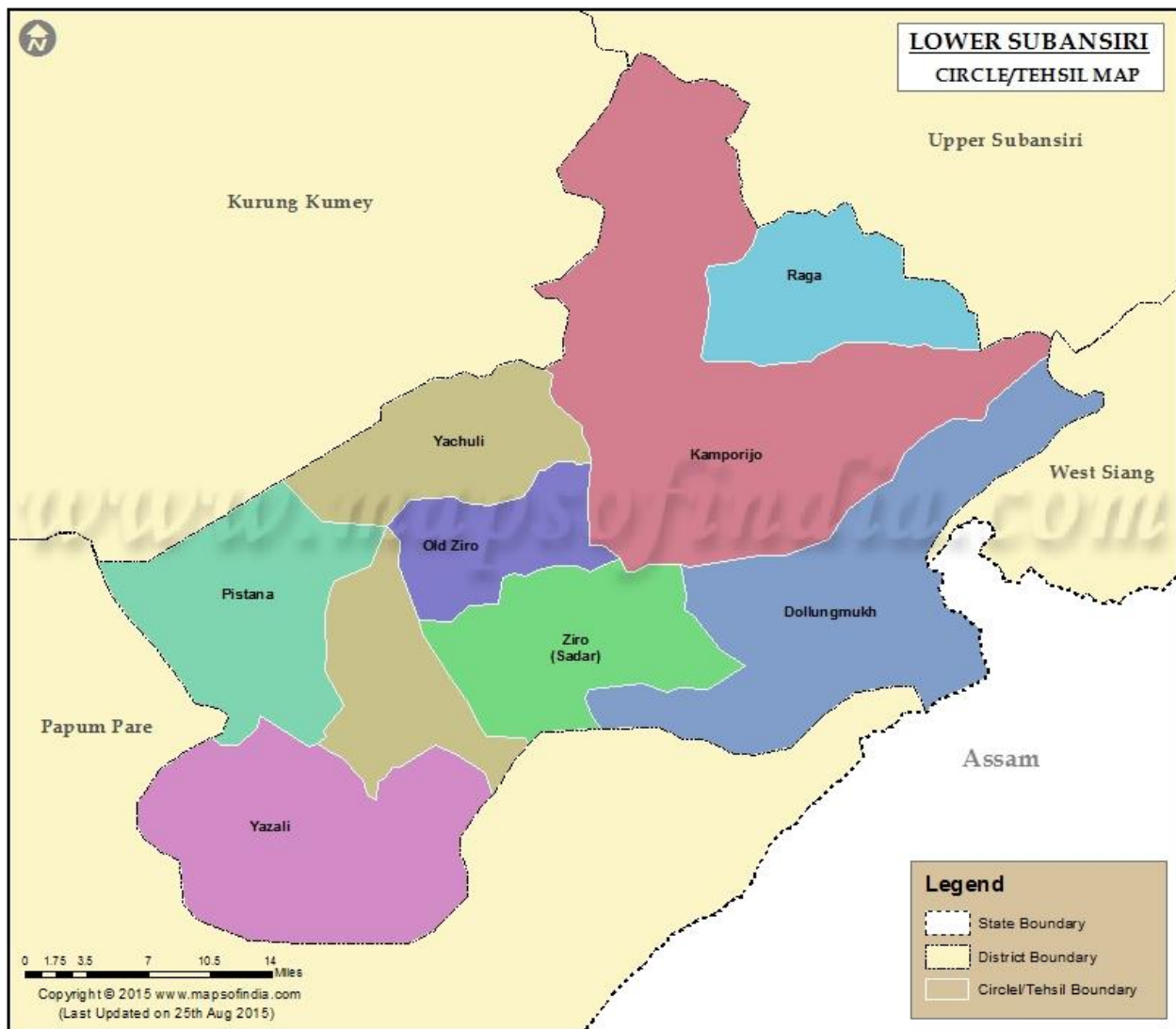


Figure 8: Map of Lower Subansiri locating Old Ziro and Ziro (Sadar)

Credits: Maps of India

Source: www.mapsofindia.com/maps/assam/tehsil/lower-subansiri-tehsil.html