Research Article

UNDERSTANDING AND UNRAVELLING THE FACE OF RACISM: A STUDY OF NORTH-EAST STUDENTS OF JNU

Samina Rehman

Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi 110067

A R T I C L E I N F O	A B S T R A C T
	Racism is a challenging social problem exists in India which somehow failed to get the required attention and acceptance of its existence. To understand racism, its alleged forms and racist attacks in India, I have conducted a study of north-east students of JNU. The aim of the paper is to know the perception of the north-east people, to explore the reasons if there is rise in racist attacks and to bring out the major impact on their minds. The research attempted to find out the measures to bridge the gap between the mainstream and north-east people. The small study highlights that the major cause of racism is the cultural ignorance since people in the main land are not aware about the history and culture of north-east states therefore carry prejudice and stereotypes against them. The racist attacks are increasing and it is having a major impact on their lives who live in fear and insecurity simultaneously making them more conscious of their identity. Majority of them believed it is socially constructed and general public can help to a large extent in solving the problem through awareness and cultural exchange.

INTRODUCTION

When we hear the word racism often we reflect on the atrocities done against blacks or for the matter of fact the discrimination and killings face by Indians in Australia or any other country. However, we hardly accept that racism prevalent in greater degree in India which is faced by one community or the other in different parts of our country. Unless we accept racism is deeply rooted in Indian society we cannot take steps to eradicate it. Problems can only be resolved when we accept there is a problem. Racism creates an atmosphere of insecurity and fear among the people who became the victims of the other people's ignorance and prejudice. Ignorance and prejudice often leads to killings, bantering, and illicit behaviour under circumstances that are difficult to apprehend and understand. Ignorance works in two ways one in which a society is ill-informed about the culture of other society and secondly not conceding the fact that racism exists in a particular society. However, racism does not concern with ignorance and prejudice alone but is a system of oppression in which one is powerful while other is powerless. It is high time that we recognise the violent ways in which racism exists in India whether the victims are of our own country or foreigners. Countless examples can be derived from the everyday experiences of an individual or the group like dubbing all north-easterners as 'chinkis' or the incident in Bengaluru in which a woman from Tanzania was assaulted and paraded naked by a mob or the killings and rapes of people from north-east India. Racism has existed in India in subtle ways that provokes very less debate however its ugly turn towards violent means has created large discussions and debates in media that force the people to change their attitudes towards its predominance. Race exists as a form of classification system that classifies humans into large distinctive populations or groups by their ethnic, cultural, geographical, religious or social affiliation etc.

Racism on the other hand is the practices, actions or beliefs in ranking different races inherently superior or inferior to each other based upon presumed shared inheritable traits, abilities or qualities. The idea of race first appeared in the 16th century and used by the Europeans and north Americans to describe phenotypical differences between human beings. India known for its diverse culture and plural society is the abode of many races and ethnic communities. Since the prevalence of many races the clash among them is evident. Even though India is not known as racist society still since last few years' racist attacks are on the rise particularly against the north-east people and the Africans. The recent several incidents and attacks in Delhi shed

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* ✉ *Corresponding author:* **Samina Rehman**
Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi 110067

many lights on the ongoing intolerance, cultural ignorance, prejudice and stereotypes against certain ethnic communities.

To understand racism in the context of racist attacks I undertook the study of North-east students of JNU. The study highlights the opinions, views and perceptions regarding racism and the attacks on them. The interest in the concept of racism and curiosity to know the perception of the north-east people on the racist attacks enticed me towards such kind of study. Considerable number of students from north-east states in the university made my study possible and comprehensive. The main objectives of the research are to understand and unravel the face of racism form the perspective of north-east students, to explore the reasons if there is rise in racist attacks on the north-east people and to bring out the major impact of racist attacks on the minds of people. The paper attempted to find out the measures to bridge the gap between the mainstream and north-east people. It also raises some critical questions like why there is sudden change in the attitude and rise of racist attack towards the people of North-east India. How the prejudice and cultural ignorance of the mainstream society can be reduced?

Review Of Literature

Development of racial prejudice was started with the exploitation of classes for the purpose of stigmatising some groups as inferior thus exploiting either their resources or the group. The possibility of racially differences being biological is excluded and two other approaches are assumed first is the psychological and second is the human groups are culturally distinct. Racism is a newer concept which emerged in the 1930's. The shift from race being biologically defined to the social construction of race is widely held. However, still the common sense knowledge of race is determined by physical characteristics exists among the people. The belief of racism is used by some groups to construct 'otherness' as prelude exclusion and domination leading to their subjugation and inferior status.

Moreover, many agree that race is mainly a social concept unrelated to an individual's personality or culture. This notion is supported by geneticists' explanations about differences in skin colour, hair texture, or eye shape—surface traits that evolved over thousands of years as regional populations adapted to their environment. 'All humans belong to the same species, critics of racial categories assert, and they believe that abandoning the use of race as a signifier of identity would liberate people from the societal stereotypes, divisiveness, and self-fulfilling prophecies attached to race.' (Williams, 2004 , p. 13)

Un acceptance and inability to tolerate the cultural diversity along with the cultural prejudice became a source of racism in America (between Black and White Americans). The superiority or inferiority of one culture towards other often leads to unjustifiable and in human practices of weaker groups. The distrust between the cultures exists and moving across the colour lines also means the moving across cultural lines. However similar kind of phenomenon is happening in India, the innumerable ethnic groups and communities, the distrust,

cultural ignorance, hierarchical mind-set etc. have become the root cause for the racist attacks. Bonilla-Silva (1997, p. 466)in the article, 'Rethinking racism: Towards a Structural Interpretation' says, 'Racism is defined as a combination of prejudice and power that allows the dominant race to institutionalize its dominance at all levels in a society. Races typically are identified by their phenotype, but the selection of certain human traits to designate a racial group is always socially rather than biologically based.'

In another book, 'Theories of Race and Racism' the authors said, "In the case of contemporary racist discourses, for example, race is often coded in terms of 'difference' and 'culture'. The social formations are justified in terms of social/cultural belonging'(Solomos, 2000, p. 20). Emphasis on the culture and identity in the literature of race and racism and the fragmentation of the definition of the racism in favour of the cultural difference and ethnicism is widely held. In India the context in which racism is prevalent is different from the racism in other parts of the world and it is important to study the problem in particular context and specific moments only, though the basic underlying meaning of the racism is the same. The dominance of certain groups and their ideologies often leave no space for other groups to co-exist independently as in case of India as against America (where the racism is one of the most important forms of inequality towards the minority group), the cultural ignorance in addition to conservative approach by the 'mainstream people' towards their culture have increased the incidents of racism. "On that count, it would be difficult to find a single north eastern Indian who has not as some point faced the brunt either of unwelcome banter or culturally curious questions ('Is it true you eat snakes?') whose naïveté would be touching were it not so offensive' (Liang and Naulak, 2014).

G.S Ghurye in his book 'Caste and Race in India' (1932), reiterates that caste system originated form a race colour basis and Varna, the Sanskrit term of colour was earlier used to specify orders in society. Thereby he concludes that caste emerged largely as a result of racial differences. The Aryans considering themselves to be fair and pure refrain from mating with other ethnic communities thus following the strict practice of endogamy. In contemporary times the context in which the racism is finding its way is through the difference in culture and maintaining the status quo of one culture is superior to other thus creating a hierarchy in the society. A north-easterners is subjected to various discrimination in Delhi or other places in India on the basis of physical featuresfor example in case of Nido Tania or in the form of smirks, referring women as 'chinki' or on the basis of their lifestyles like passing moral judgements about clothing, eating habits and sexuality presents an unattractive picture which stands in sharp contrast with the unity in diversitypomposity.

The racist attacks do not always mean the subjugation of north-easterners by mainland people but it happens in other way as well. When the mainstream people migrate to north-east India in search of job opportunities they face the same wrath as encounter by the north-easterners in Delhi or elsewhere. The various attacks and insecurity which the outsiders have to deal with in north-east explains many situations that north-east people are not only the victim. In '*The Hindu*'Mukhim (2014)

states, 'another time, a number of Bihari families were burnt alive in the dead of night. The culprits were never caught and no one has been indicted in any of the acts of communal carnage that happened in Meghalaya...at least in Delhi, north-eastern have the freedom to protest the government's acts. Nido Tania's killers are in jail. What about many deaths of non-tribals in Meghalaya since 1979? Will the family members of the deceased ever get justice?' This explains the abysmal attitude of the people in India that cannot be subscribed to a particular region or community but is widespread in many regions of the country. Nevertheless, the racists attacks face by north-easterners in Delhi, Bangalore or any other region is escalating and has deeply penetrated into their everyday existence.

Field Setting and the Field Work: An Overview

As my field was the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) campus where hundreds of students from different ethnic communities, region, religion etc. come from different parts of the country and abroad study. JNU is known as one of the best research institute in India which produces talented, endowed academician, research scholars and civil servants apart from other unaccounted jobs they are engaged in. It is popularly believed that JNU is a progressive institute, believe in liberal attitude, secularism, discards discrimination, biases, nepotism etc. and preach equality, unity, and respect for different groups. Gender equality within the campus is one of the distinguished feature of JNU with respect to other universities of the country nonetheless complete absent of gender discrimination cannot be negated. Hundreds of scholars every year produce pools of knowledge for the society. The debates, discussions, talks, seminars conducted within and outside the campus are few of the approaches which the people of JNU engage themselves to raise important question regarding various issues. Very few discrimination on the basis of gender, caste, religion, and region subsists within the campus that it provides a safe and secure environment to all the people irrespective of their backgrounds.

This has been corroborated in my study as very less number of north-east students discloses any discrimination against them within the campus. However this result cannot be generalised to the whole student population of JNU nonetheless it is one of the examples which show the best of JNU environment. JNU is also considered as one of the most politically active campus in the whole country since students here not only confine themselves to the campus issues but take active participation in condemning the disruptive and destructive forces exist both nationally and internationally. Being from a research institute I apprehended north-east students would have more idea and thoughts on racism and the racist attacks and might have a better understanding of the situation in which such attacks are taking place. Hence I chose JNU as a field to conduct my study and to have better understanding of racism and recent racist attacks. The topic on racism and racist attacks is chosen primarily because of interest in the subject and secondly because it involves intellectual as well as emotional concerns among the people. A key stage in any research process is the selection of the field and defining the boundaries. The source and sites of knowledge are basically the field at outside, field at home and field as self. Since JNU is the place where I stay and spent years studying here has become my home and it is the field which I chose to conduct my fieldwork. Both qualitative and quantitative like semi-structures questionnaire and interview schedule were used for the data generation. Also probability and non-probability sampling techniques were used which include the simple random sampling and snowball sampling. I knew only few students from north-east and other respondents were contacted through snowball techniques.

The field work was completed within the period of one and a half month time. Numbers of questionnaires were distributed out of which only 35 responded back meanwhile I conducted 20 interviews (with equal no of male and female respondents). As with all research interviews which do not begin when the first question is asked it is usually starts much before it. Tim May (2008, p. 132) in his book, 'Social Research: Issues, Methods and Process' says preparation and initial exploratory work on the concern theme and having adequate knowledge about it is very crucial for a successful interview. 'Clarifying the ambiguities which the people might have of the research, eliciting the information and being sensitive to the ethical, political and theoretical considerations in the process, form a central part of its practice'. The respondents were asked to choose the place to conduct the interview and adequate measures were taken not to force upon the researcher's wishes. The interviews went maximum for two hours or more with each respondent giving good insight on the topic. As a researcher I avoided leading and obvious questions, the questions of sensitive issues, the questions which may check their intelligence.

The respondents were given enough time to form their responses and I keenly listened to them so that they won't feel offended and disinterested in the research. Also space was provided so that the respondents increase their cooperation and take full participation in the research. In the process of research the identity and confidentiality of the respondents were fully taken care and no names are mentioned in the report. Their informed consent was taken before conducting the study and precautions were taken that their participations were voluntary. Even in the questionnaire everything was written about the purpose and objectives of the study and the intended audience. The use of various tools like tape recorder or camera was avoided as many respondents felt uneasy with the idea. This might be due to lack of trust as rapport building took time and also it was tiresome and time consuming on the part of researcher to transcript the whole conversations. The modes of engagement which usually the researchers follow were the distance, empathy and reflexivity. Since the study was directed in JNU, care was taken that the sample was representative for the population. 'Finally, there is representativeness. As it is the intention to make generalising claims about a population it is important not only that the sample is representative of the population, but also that the findings are statistically significant that is, whether they are larger or smaller than would be expected by chance alone' (May, 2008, p. 92).

Racism a Bitter Truth: Analysis and Discussion

The data included both the findings through the methods of qualitative and quantitative which was analysed accordingly. As a researcher I discover many new things which jarred with my pre-concept notions. The conditioned mind with which I went into the field made me realise that it is not correct way to study a field and engages in methods. The important thing that came out of this study is the emotional distress and the determination to overcome the social evil that has entrapped them to succumb to the situation. The respondents perceive that the misconception about the lifestyle of north-east people, lack of communication and misunderstanding about the region are the major factors for the escalating incidence of racist attacks. One respondent said, *'they don't have any idea of social co-existent and doesn't know that world is composed of composite cultures and races'*. Many also think that competition and more population of north-easterners have led to such incidents as in the interview a response came like '*due to job insecurity, people are trying to supress the north-easterners'*.

However, almost the number of responses was equal regarding handling the situation when being commented on the identity. One of the respondent said *'we need to be more proactive rather than simply being reactive as we are most of the times'*. Another respondent said, when someone comments on her features, '*I just knocked it off as a joke or banter. After all we are all going to perish away one day, why waste time, energy and resources fighting? Let other live as they want to be and let us also live as we want to just make sure that they don't cross the limit or we. Let's look at the bright side of the world. Jai Hind!'* The anger of the attacks is clearly reflected from the respondents responses as one of them alleged, '*Racist attacks are really inhuman. It shows that India is still uncivilised. If the mainland people think that the north-easterners are 'Junglee' then, what are they? They are the carnivorous animal of the Indian Jungle*'. The respondents totally condemned such acts and said such attacks show still people of north-east are being alienated and segregated as non-Indians and they still have to prove that they are Indians. It was clear that almost all North-East studentsI have studied have faced racial profiling although they do not experience in the university campus. Majority of them felt its culture[1] and society which are the main causes of racism, and cultural ignorant stood the major cause of increasing racist attack. After hearing about the attacks or encountering themselves, people mostly get more conscious of their identity. They tend to feel safer among their own ethic group. Few even try to retaliate back, although rarely it is of much help. Majority felt, it's the general public that needs to be aware of the North-East history which should be included in the school syllabus.

Coding and processing of quantitative data from the questionnaire was done using the computer program statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS). The relatively small size of the data set (35 entries) made it possible to work very

closely with the data. Contradictions or errors were identified through manual checking and cross checking of the data sheets. The SPSS program was mainly used for descriptive purposes. Language was no barrier as we communicated in English which was a common language for us. Once organised into the more manageable form of analytical categories, the unstructured material derived from interviews, discussions and field notes was analysed. It was also important to re-read and analyse each interview schedule notes to allow for authentic interpretation.

Table1 Racism Increased or Decreased

		Frequency	**Percent**
Valid	Increase	28	80.0
	Decrease	1	2.9
	It has stayed the same	6	17.1
	Total	35	100.0

In the table 1 ithas been observed that the most of the respondents **(80%)** said that the racism has increased over a period of time. But many people were also sceptical about the attacks and one of the respondents said since there are so many violence going against different groups of people and it's difficult to analyse the attacks in terms of racism. Also people from north-east states have been constantly increasing in the cities like Delhi which may have led to more number of violence and reports. Nevertheless the majority said it has increased and gave ample reasons for its augmentation. The unfortunate incidents have led people to think about what is it that leading to such episodes and what may be the causes of racism?

Table 2 Biggest Causes of Racism

		Frequency	**Percent**
Valid	Society	15	42.9
	Culture	15	42.9
	Other	5	14.3
	Total	35	100.0

It was evident from the table 2 that equal number of respondents **(42.9%)** said it is the society and culture both which are responsible for the causes of racism. The responses were that the society are not sensitized, educated and civilized enough to appreciate the diversity of India. Some even went to the extent of saying that India being so deep rooted in the caste system has to go long way to deal with inequality and discrimination, so as long as the superiority or inferiority notion exists racism will be on the rise which was echoed from one of the responses, *'moreover, the agenda or project to dominate over other culture on the false notion of superiority of other culture also largely contribute to the racism.'* There is a communication gap between the different groups and the cultural ignorance and prejudices against the north-east people have called for racism. Few respondents being self-critical said that the north-eastern people hardly try to mingle with the mainland people. In fact, they have a tendency to stay away with their own people. So, this weeds a lot of alienation.

Racism as defined initially is a certain set of beliefs with respect to ethnic out-groups. These various sets of beliefs can be the

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[1] By culture I mean the lifestyle of the people, the socialisation process in which one brought up.

crux of *different forms of racism*. Racism is not confined to any particular area it is a widespread phenomenon. In America, the racism started basically on the colour line and ultimately leads to slavery. The blacks were regarded as ignorant, less intelligent, filthy, and lazy, of bestial morals and best suited for slavery. 'Our hypothesis is that racial exploitation and race prejudice developed among Europeans with the rise of capitalism and nationalism, and that because of the world-wide ramifications of capitalism, all racial antagonisms can be traced to the policies and attitudes of the leading capitalist people, the white people of Europe and North America' (Back; Solomon, 2000, p. 72). The most significant change in the notion of race in the late nineteenth century is its transposition from the physical to the cultural plane, under the influence of such authors as Renan, Taine, and Le Bon (ibid).

In India the racism started with the advent of Indo-Europeans later called Aryans or Vedic Aryans who were fair in colour. They had rather strong views on ceremonial purity and strictly followed the practice of endogamy (Ghurye, 1968). In fact as we can see the racism in India also started on the basic of colour which in India called Varna (meaning colour) as in the case of America. This colour differences and stigmatising people as 'other', inferior and hierarchizing the society into orders thereby establishing caste system in India according to Ghurye. Eventually this racial discrimination on the basis of colour substitute itself into caste system thus loses its weight and the racial prejudices and stereotyping on physical features paved way to cultural slurring. The context in which racism prevailed in India is different form the context in which it exist in America. Presently, the society and culture of a particular region are the main causes of racism in India and the factors leading to the racist attacks in Delhi also depends on the place and the environment.

Table 3 Reasons for Racist Attacks in Delhi

		Frequency	Percent
	Cultural Ignorance	15	42.9
	Physical Feature	7	20.0
Valid	Prejudice	7	20.0
	Others	6	17.1
	Total	35	100.0

The table 3 shows that respondents **42.9%** think cultural ignorance is the main reason for the racist attacks in Delhi, followed by physical features and prejudice **20%.** This also negates the common sensical perception of the people that phenotype is the main cause of the racist attacks. For instance one of the respondent when being asked about the understanding of racism she said, *'it refers to the categorisation of people into consideration certain physical and biological makers such as hair texture, skin tone, colour and other such observable markers.'* Likewise general perception of many respondents during interview came out as this. But the statistics show responses of majority of respondents was inclined towards cultural ignorance. One of the respondent said, I quote *'there is cultural barrier or ignorance about the people of North-east. There is a lot of misconception about the lifestyle and attitude of the North-east*

people.' This resentment reflected almost in all responses which is also visible from the table. Another one said, *'cultural misunderstanding, miscommunication and at the same time perceiving different cultural practice as a threat, inferior to one own.'* Most of the responses were also in accordance with the view that prejudice or misconceptions about their culture pushed north-easterners into various problems. As the respondents opined that mainstream people have common notion that all boys from north-east are drug addicts or girls with the low morals, most of them are prostitutes, call girls etc. largely thinking that people form north-east are a bad influence and degrading the culture and the space which they occupy.

Table 4 Racism is Socially Constructed

		Frequency	Percent
	Yes	27	77.1
	No	4	11.4
Valid	Don't Know	4	11.4
	Total	35	100.0

In the interviews most of the respondents said that it's saddening, traumatising besides being a shameful act that north-easterners have to go through. They are constantly living in fear, insecure and uncertain about what lies in the future. Since the respondents are the students of JNU, they feel largely secure within the campus and very few mainly male responded that they are subjected to certain discrimination. The percentage was negligible but it was interesting to note that male face more biases than female within the campus which may have another dimensions to probe.

The table 4 also shows that the majority of respondents **77.1%** think that racism is socially constructed to oppress the weaker by the powerful one. **11.4%** said they don't think it is socially construct while the same number of people said they don't have any idea about it. The consequences of such attacks have been bore by the people in their everyday life. One of the major impacts was that they become conscious of their identity that they belong to a particular region and they are not accepted as Indians. One component of this literature on segmented assimilation focuses on identity formation and change, examining how the peculiar history of American race relations influences ethno racial self-identification among new immigrants (D. Bobo and Fox, 2003).

Table 5. Conscious of Identity

		Frequency	Percent
	Yes	21	60.0
	No	10	28.6
Valid	Don't know	4	11.4
	Total	35	100.0

Table 5 shows **60%** of the respondents accepted they are now more conscious about their identity. They reiterated the same thing that these incidents had made them to rethink about the autonomy of movement, their lifestyle and the opportunities in terms of jobs and other things. Resenting of the recent incidents one of the respondent said, *'In an expanding urban space like Delhi when disparity exist people who are different often are the*

first to be targeted." On the other hand even after feeling insecure about their life and a threat to their identity they still want to live in Delhi because of the opportunities available here. Nearly all the respondents said they do not want to go back as all their career opportunities lies in Delhi and such incidents would not make them weaker. In fact it will help them to unite against at the various atrocities done against them.

Table 6. Safer among People of North-east states

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Always Yes	12	34.3
	Sometimes	10	28.6
	Not really	13	37.1
	Total	35	100.0

It is fascinating to see that respondents do not feel much safer among the people of north-east states although racism has united them for a common cause.In thetable 6, **37.1%** opted for not really while **34.3%** said yes. This may be the case because north-east India has 8 states which have innumerable number of ethnic groups each having their own identity and way of life. Even the language differs from each other and whole region is not socially homogenous and much segregated on various basis. When they come out in a place like Delhi they are much united as north-easterners and therefore projecting themselves belonging to a particular part of India. As a result they regard other ethnic groups as 'outsiders' and feel that they are not safe among them as well.

North-east is ethnically divided and in this complex situation the mainstream people who have lived there four many generations have to go through the same situations as north-easterners are suffering in place like Delhi. The outsiders are subjected to various discrimination and atrocities like killings, beating and verbal attacks etc. in north-east region. "There reason for doing so is simplistic-the non-tribal are responsible for all ills that the afflict Khasi society. So attractive was the slogan "Khasi by birth, Indian by accident' that the words were splattered across public walls in the city. Claiming to be vanguard of Khasi society, the KSU then went on a rampage, pulling non-tribal out of the buses and lynching them…another time, a number of Bihari families were burnt alive in the dead of night.' (Mukhim, 2014). This reality was also supported and accepted by many respondents who felt that north-easterners were not only victim but also guilty of the same misconduct. As one of the respondent said emphasising the word secular, *"I am secular and does not blame for the attacks whole on the mainland people as same kind of discrimination is also faced by them when they are in north east so why to create a hype of it."* Disregarding all the blames on the mainstream people he said the attacks are happening may be to the drunkards, aggressive people. *"Even in our society there are gundas".* Extending his thoughts he said we should know our limits and behave the way like the people in which place one is residing.

Table 7 shows the reaction of the people when being commented on their identity and whenthey face verbal attacks or physical violence.

Table 7. Reaction on Comments of Ethnicity

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Remain Silent	17	48.6
	Retaliate Back	18	51.4
	Total	35	100.0

About **51.4%** respondents said they retaliate back through verbally only and **48.6%** remain silent because of many reasons. Though there is not much difference in the percentage of the reactions. In one of the interview respondent said that he in most of the cases let the other people who commented on him understand that it is not the right thing to do through reason and logic. He never tries to take revenge but just correct the other person. In another case the respondent said she uses the Indian law to warn them of the dire consequences. Many respondents think that retaliating back means calling for trouble like in the case of Nido Tania who shows aggressive behaviour when being commented on his hairstyle. People find themselves in dilemma they are caught in certain situation when they think twice before reacting to that situation. Respondents find JNU a much safer place than their counterparts who have to face such comments almost everyday and have become a routine. There is very less gender dimension to it since both women and men face threats of physical violence however women have to bear more abusive verbal comments than men.

Table 8 Agency that can Resolve Racial Discrimination

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Government	7	20.0
	General Public	22	62.9
	Ethnic Groups	2	5.7
	Others	4	11.4
	Total	35	100.0

The table 8 shows the awareness among the general public about the north-east people and bridging the gap between the two through moral and social education can play a tremendous role in reducing the instances of racism and the attacks. Table 8 shows the considerable number of respondents **62.9%** said that it is the general public who has the agency to create a peaceful environment for the north-easterners. The role of government is far behind **20%** respondents only think it can help to solve the problems. In the interviews almost all the respondents said that the cultural exchange and interaction between different ethnic groups can help a lot in spreading the awareness about their culture. Significant number of respondents also said that the most important thing that government do is to introduce north-east history in the schools that can aid a lot in reducing the prejudice and stereotypes about the north-east people.

Table 9 indicates **85.7%** respondents think that history can aware people about their region and they will be accepted as a part of India. The mind-set of the mainstream people will change to a large extent when they know about the various cultures, ethnic groups of north-east. Besides this, majority of the respondents also believe that media and civil society should take greater responsibility and openly advocate against racism

of all sorts. Many people felt the language as the barrier for interaction should be sort out through interactive programmes, seminars, conferences etc.

Table 9 Do you think history should be taught in all schools?

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	No, it's pointless	3	8.6
	Yes, it's necessary	30	85.7
	Up to the school to decide	2	5.7
	Total	35	100.0

CONCLUSION

Racism weeds a lot of hatred among the people and this can be measured by the burgeoning incidents of killings and harassments against the north-east people. The context in which it is prevailed in India is something to think and reflect upon. Every now and then the incidents of racism are in the news like the mysterious death of Loitam Richard, suicide by Dana Bangma, murder of Nido Tania as reminder of the insecure conditions under which people, particularly the youth of North-east have to live within the place like Delhi. Through this study we have been able to gain some insights on racism from the standpoints of north-east students studying in JNU. The general perceptions, misconception about racism and racis t attacks have been diluted through this research. The research helps in developing and enriching the perspectives on racism and opened up new dimension to probe into the context of recent racist attacks. Respondents believed that it is the cultural ignorance which segregate and alienate them from the other society. As many respondents said racism is on rise but there were others also who brushing aside such views said since the population of north-easterners is constantly rising in Delhi so do the awareness about the rights and legal safeguards. This results in more reports which were enhanced by the media.

It was fascinating to note in the interviews, most of the respondents said they don't think the attacks were racist attacks since there are so many vehemence against every other group and north easterners were no exception. It was just that they were at the wrong place at the wrong time. However we cannot negate the fact that there is no racism and subsequently racist attacks. Almost all the respondents said they faced some or the other kind of violence and has become a day to day routine. It was very interesting to look at the responses of the male respondents who said JNU is far better place than any other place in Delhi have a cosmopolitan environment still they face some discrimination on the basis of their identity though it was not explicitly visible as compared to female respondents who zeroed such incidents in campus. The violence, discrimination, biases small or big often leave an impact on the people who had to suffer such experiences.

They are under constant threat for belonging to a particular culture and resist the pressures to identify themselves in terms of mainstream people and at the same time compromise the right to be different. This was clearly reflected form the placards during the protest against racism which read: **"We are scared and confused in our own country. What shall we call ourselves? Indians? Nepalis? Chinese?"** There were also people form north-east who said they choose to be called Indian which was echoed in one of the responses, *"I love to be called Indian and hate the word north-east."* She prefers more salwar kammez not that she succumb to the pressure but because she loves the attire. They believed that awareness among general public can harbour love and peace in the places like Delhi. The cultural exchange, interaction, celebrating various festivals of north-east, including history in the school syllabus etc. can help to a great extent in reducing, challenge and transform the extant social structures of race.The time has come when we recognise that racism exists in our country and various actions emanate from it should be debilitated before it's too late. To be denying its existence means to be complicit in the discriminatory regime. Racism can be eliminated only when one respect and tolerate the differences rather than merely resorting to legalistic means to curb this discrimination. The pervasiveness of racism must be diluted through the messages of love, tolerance and respect for differences.

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