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Whose city? Ethnic communities in Kolkata, India: An Exploration into decentralization of urban Governance Systems in preserving their cultural identity.

Ethnic groups have always been a part of a city's cultural landscape giving a relief from the monotony of the concrete jungle, the 'facelessness' of modern cities. This is particularly true in the context of colonial Indian cities. There have been attempts to understand, define and explain the characteristics of different ethnic groups from different perspectives. This research project is based on the Chinese community of Kolkata, India. It tries to understand the role of the community members in urban governance system. In the Indian scenario, it is particularly interesting when amendments like that of 74th Constitutional Amendment Act (CAA) are to assure inclusion of the people (specially focusing on women, minorities) in the local area governance system but still the population of the community is decreasing sharply and their traditional occupational structure has been exhausted. The need of such a study is increasingly realized as the ethnic minorities are often the victims of the social seclusion and find themselves in a recurrent struggle to preserve their identity. The research seeks to understand the various ways in which identity is defined and this definition is continuously being transformed. The first part of the structure of the argument is built on the concepts like 'culture', 'nation-state' and 'multiculturalism' is the postmodern discussion. On the second part, this theoretical discussion is used in understanding the governance and policy formation regarding the ethnic communities. The connection of these two parts of research is the ground to analyse the role of the governance and urban policies on identity formation. The research methodology is predominantly based on qualitative techniques. Initially quantitative techniques is used for determining the ratio of population of the ethnic community with the total population and also to determine the size for focus group. Qualitative techniques (like in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, mental maps and visual tools) are extensively used to know how people from the community perceive the city and their identity. Also, two community based projects are to be run simultaneously during the entire fieldwork period.

Keywords: Identity, urban governance, decentralization, nation-state, culture