



NORTHEAST INDIA

Administrative
Reforms &
Economic
Development

07 JAYANTA KUMAR RAY
RAKHEE BHATTACHARYA

For several decades, India's Northeast has been plagued with multitudes of problems ranging from physical inaccessibility and remoteness of the region to absence of physical and social infrastructure, bad governance, inefficiency and their inevitable offshoot-endemic corruption, ethnic strife and, of course, the problems of separatist militant movements breeding a large number of terrorist groups that infest the region, keeping the region continuously in a state of flux devoid of political or economic stability so crucial for any meaningful development, negating the effects of whatever little economic development has taken place in the region.

Centre's strategy to develop the states in the region by classifying these as Special Category States and pumping in huge amounts of development funds without creating necessary credit absorption capacity in the economy has been pathetically inadequate to deliver the results; just as dismal has been the half-hearted attempts made by the different state governments in the region from time to time for development; most of these efforts were directed only towards extract more assistance and more grants from the Centre. It is time we take a re-look at these failed initiatives and re-examine the relevant issues while searching for an alternative. With this end in view, MAKAIAS organized a symposium in Shillong under its Long-Term Northeast India Research Programme, assembling academics, bureaucrats and people from various other fora with first hand knowledge, experience and familiarity about the problems of the region. The present volume is the outcome of this effort.

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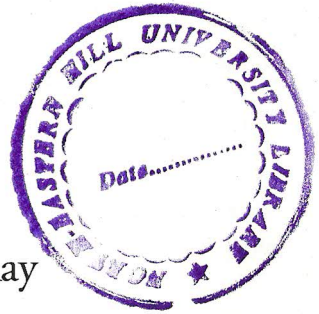
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Northeast India

Administrative Reforms and Economic Development

Edited by

Jayanta Kumar Ray
Rakhee Bhattacharya



Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, Kolkata



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Acknowledgement

This volume is the outcome of the research endeavour of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies (MAKAIAS), Kolkata focussed on Northeast India. At a meeting on 17th September 2006 held by MAKAIAS in Kolkata, we thought it extremely important to build up a long-term programme on this region by arranging seminars, symposia, dialogues, and collaborations with the Northeastern States. This in one way that can make us feel the pulse of the region and analyze the location-specific issues with development as an overarching theme. The present volume is the product of our second National Symposium that was held in Shillong on 12th July 2007.

We would like to take the privilege of expressing our deep appreciation to all those whose efforts, help and suggestions have given us support and strength to bring out this volume. Our foremost thanks are due to Prof. B. B. Bhattacharya, Vice-Chancellor, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, who is the adviser of the Northeast India Research Programme of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies. We thank Prof. H. S. Vasudevan, Ambassador Krishnan Srinivasan, Dr. Amiya Chaudhuri, Dr. P. K. Sengupta, Mr. Kausik Bandyopadhyaya and Dr. Binoda Mishra, for their continuous support and academic inputs in this ambitious programme. We are indebted to the distinguished authors of this volume, who inspite of their own pressing commitments, have contributed excellent papers, mostly based on first hand experience in their respective services. Finally, we thank all those persons who worked silently and surely behind the scene, like water nourishing a plant that bears the fruit to feed us.

Jayanta Kumar Ray
Rakhee Bhattacharya

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Introduction

This book presents a unique collection of papers presented at a National Symposium on Administrative Reforms for Economic Development in Northeast India held in Shillong on 12 July 2007. The Symposium was organized by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, Kolkata.

I designate this collection as unique, because, in the first place, it comprises papers written by academics and administrators with first hand experience of working in the North East Region (NER) of India. Secondly, it deals with such highly sensitive issues as terrorism, but does not hesitate to elucidate the visible as well as invisible links between ruling politicians and bureaucrats, businessmen and militants. Thirdly, it not only identifies problems but also suggests feasible solutions. What is indeed remarkable is that topranking officials (in service or retired) have unequivocally recommended administrative reforms, which would strike at bureaucratic vested interests. For, without such reforms, economic development of the NER will fail to acquire the requisite momentum.

Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura form the NER. They are all placed in the Special Category States, and the Union/Central Government extends generous financial assistance to them. In order to facilitate economic development in these states, the North Eastern Council was established in 1971, the North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Ltd. in 1995, and the Union Ministry of Development of Northeastern Region in 2001. One of the contributors to this volume, Rangan Dutta, has, however, raised the question of whether it has been appropriate to detach this region from the Eastern region,

and foster “an outlook that sees NER as distinct and even outside the East,” because it “ignores the reality that the economy and infrastructure of the region are integral to Eastern India, and left to itself the region has not had much of an economy.” The grim irony in this situation was aggravated in the last decade of the twentieth century when the Government of India announced a Look East Policy, and more so in the first decade of the twenty first century, when the Government of India repeatedly publicized its adherence to a Look East Policy. For, in the words of a former Foreign Secretary of India, Krishnan Srinivasan, “India may be looking East but evidently not to our own Northeast.” Moreover, as Jaidip Saikia, a contributor to this volume, has observed: “the Look East Policy has primarily been a principle on paper.”

The NER occupies 8.06 per cent of India’s territory, and 3.73 per cent of its population. The region can boast of abundant natural resources, e.g. oil and natural gas, coal, granite, limestone, etc. as also tea, timber and rubber plantations. The hydroelectric potential of this region is enormous. But, only about 3 per cent of these natural resources are being actually utilized. As to financial assistance from the Union to the NER, the per capita disbursement, 90 per cent of it as grants, remains one of the highest among all states in India. Still, the NER remains economically backward relatively and largely. Why? As Govind Bhattacharya aptly observes in this volume, “If only funding could solve the problems of economic backwardness of a region, North Eastern States today would be in the forefront of the developed states in India.” Rangan Dutta carries forward this argument as he stresses that, “economic development is not a natural phenomenon that has to take place as it is the consequence of human intervention and the will of the society to develop, modernize, adopt proper policies and create growth-inducing institutions.”

When I try to answer the question of why, despite a comparative abundance of natural and financial resources, the NER remains backward, I cannot but refer to a term used by me in my book *India:*

In Search of Good Governance (Kolkata, 2001), viz. the quadrangular alliance. This consists of ruling politicians and administrators, businessmen and criminals (who later on may or may not transform themselves into terrorists). The extensive operations of this alliance (apart from policy deficits till 1991) are mainly responsible for the huge gap between what India could have achieved, and what India has actually achieved in terms of economic advancement. The same observation applied to the NER right from the early years of independence, ruling circles in New Delhi and other state capitals in the NER have expanded and consolidated the activities of the quadrangular alliance. Consequently, funds meant for development, including poverty alleviation, are mostly spent on purposes other than development. As Patricia Mukhim writes in this volume, "there is a growing feeling that if the money allocated annually for various public services, including all kinds of poverty alleviation schemes, were to have been equitably distributed directly to the people there would have been more visible benefits than we see today because by the time a scheme reaches the last man in the village about 80 per cent of it has been creamed off."

An attendant query is: where have all the funds gone? A telling answer is provided by E.N. Rammohan in this volume: "Development money continues to be diverted, and the notorious Delhi durbar is alive and kicking. There are a dozen three to five star hotels in and around Delhi constructed and being run by these lackeys of the party in power with money diverted from the development funds" meant for states like Nagaland. If, thus, corruption/extortion starts in the national capital, and infects state capitals, where the distinction between the Haves and Have-nots becomes too glaring, the victims of underdevelopment can become restless. They may nurture ideas to share the booty ceaselessly accumulated by politicians, government functionaries and businessmen. If the activities of corrupt high level politicians/officers in national/state capitals are not easily visible, those of the traders (especially the Marwaris) are very much visible.

Since the British days, and in the decades after independence, Marwaris have specialized in creating a black economy in the NER, diverting civil supplies right from the railhead, and causing untold suffering to the ordinary people. The protection extended to them by politicians and officials is too obvious to be missed. It may not be deemed immoral to plunder these plunderers, and this is what militants in the NER have been doing for quite some time.

Gradually, the militants have expanded their net, and extorted money from other categories of robbers, e.g. politicians and government functionaries, who, after all, misappropriate nearly 80 per cent of development funds by way of their own salaries, allowances, etc. (not to speak of pure graft). One wonders how, in most parts of the NER, the looters are being fleeced by extortionists, labeled as militants, rebels, insurgents etc. Whereas politicians, administrators and businessmen can lay no claim to a minimum of moral strength, extortionists can try to derive some moral ammunition from consistent and unpardonable failures on the part of rulers in New Delhi to pay due recognition to economic, political and ethnic aspirations of the NER people. Extortionists, parading these aspirations, gradually uplift themselves to the category of militants. Afterwards, due to sheer incompetence of authorities in national/state capitals, some militants could mobilize supplies of arms, finance and training to promote themselves to the status of insurgents tapping foreign sources too.

All these are evident from the series of authoritative essays presented in this volume. But it may be useful to offer a few examples. Manipur illustrates how insensitive New Delhi has been to the legitimate ethnic-political-economic aspirations of the NER people. At the time of India's independence, Manipur had an ancient Kingdom, and no King in any part of India (including northeast India) had ever ruled the Meitheis of Manipur, who could boast of a developed language, religion and 2000 years of recorded history. In 1949, the King of Manipur held an assembly election. As E.N.

Rammohan sharply reminds us, "The Government of India crudely, without consulting this assembly, brought the King to Shillong, and forced him to sign the instrument of accession in 1949." New Delhi did not confer Statehood on Manipur, and refused to extend recognition to the Meithei language in the Constitution of India. New Delhi planted officials in Manipur, who, in collusion with Delhi-based contractors and Marwari traders, set up a thoroughly corrupt administration, while failing to develop an empathy for the rich Meithei culture. Inevitable alienation drove the people to form and multiply dissident groups in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1990s. They obtained arms, training and sanctuary in East Pakistan and Myanmar (Burma), and gradually earned eligibility for recognition as insurgents. Needless to add, political leaders developed a live-and-let-live relationship with insurgents, so that they could protect one another and amass wealth at the expense of the ordinary people.

The story of alienation of the Assamese too can be briefly related here by way of illustration. In the words of E.N. Rammohan, "by the time of independence, the Bengali Muslim peasant was grabbing the land of the caste Hindus and the tribals, the Bengali babu was beating the Assamese babu in the job market, the Marwari had taken firm control of the grain and essential supplies, textiles and every other item of commerce. The alienation of the Assamese was already complete." The Union Government began to adopt policies for use of Assam's natural resources, which smacked of colonial-style exploitation. In 1957, for example, New Delhi decided to construct a long pipeline (700 kilometres) to transport oil from Assam to Barauni for a 3.3 million ton refinery. For the first time in free India, an agitation against economic discrimination was launched. The sense of being exploited by New Delhi persisted, even though (partly because) this agitation produced a tiny consolation prize for Assam, viz. a 0.65 ton refinery at Noonmati. In the 1960s, the complaint of Assamese that New Delhi was treating their state as a colony got deeper as there was an attempt to construct another refinery outside

Assam. Nevertheless, agitation by students of Assam compelled New Delhi to set up a refinery at Bongaigaon.

Assam provides a copybook example of how not rulers in national/state capitals should behave. Bangladeshi Muslim immigrants have created serious political-cultural imbalances in Assam. Yet, rulers have been using them as vote banks and pampering them. They have passed the Illegal Migrants Determination by Tribunals (IMDT) Act, which is absurd, because, unlike the Foreigners Act, this Act places the onus of proof not on the person accused of illegal immigration but on the police. When the Supreme Court of India strikes down this outrageous legislation, rulers amend the order on Foreigners Tribunal following the rules of the Foreigners Act, and persist in appeasement of illegal migrants. Assam holds the record of an extraordinary ruling party which supported an insurgent group, viz. United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA). This support enabled the ULFA to loot banks, and adopt various modes of extortion, while their political patrons (obviously pleased with a share from such robbery) kept the police paralysed. The ULFA, too, has a peculiar record. It started with a campaign for eviction of illegal Muslim immigrants from Bangladesh. Subsequently, it secured financial-military assistance from the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) in Bangladesh, and the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan. The flow of such foreign aid can be curbed (if not eliminated) by building fences as on the India-Pakistan border. But national/state level rulers have not taken the requisite initiative. As to political leaders playing a risky game of flirting with insurgents, they may sometimes have to succumb to the revenge of changing times. For instance, Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, twice the Chief Minister of Assam, has been indicted for extra-judicial killings by the Justice K.N. Saikia Commission of Inquiry.

It is thus evident that ruling circles in national/state capitals have been consistently neglecting both the development as well as security issues of the NER. Neighbouring countries cannot be blamed if they



have capitalized this negligence. Operations by Indian Insurgent Groups (IIGs) in various parts of the NER have depended vitally on sanctuaries and military assistance provided by Bangladesh and (to a less significant extent) by Myanmar. But, as Jaideep Saikia writes in this volume, "it must be emphatically stated that while Yangon in all probability continues to turn a blind eye to the activities of the IIGs (there are stray reports that constituents of the Myanmar army receive payment and such other favours from the IIGs for their presence in Myanmar), there is clear official patronage for the IIGs in Dhaka." This, again, is linked with the policy of Bangladesh and Pakistan to promote international Islamic terrorism. An added complexity is that, despite lack of direct support from Beijing, retired Chinese military officers run the Yunnan Navigational Bureau, which supplies a huge quantity of small arms through Myanmar to IIGs in the NER.

The preceding account of the NER raises a query as to whether lapses committed by rulers in national/state capitals on the intertwined matters of security and development are irreparable, and whether there are some glimpses of hope. The answer is: yes. As K. Padmanabhaiah, a contributor to this volume, assures us, "The general impression that the North East is an area infested with insurgency is ... not correct. Nagaland is the only State in the region where some sections, not reconciled to the ground realities, are seeking a special states. As far as Manipur is concerned, while some of the militant groups have a proforma secessionist agenda, the people have a strong Vaishnavite tradition and are well integrated with the rest of the country in arts, culture and sports. The militant outfits in Assam, Manipur and Tripura do cause occasional disturbances, varying in intensity, more in the nature of law and order problems, which the states can cope with through appropriate strategies." Whereas this assessment is comforting, one must learn from contributors to this volume as to what urgent administrative reforms are to be launched to address the overlapping concerns of security and development in the NER.

If the security situation in the NER today is manageable, it is largely because of army operations. For, the police force is thoroughly corrupt thanks to politicians, who have sometimes even stopped military operations when these have nearly delineated an insurgent group. Yet, as H.N. Das rightly reminds us in this volume, the army may commit mistakes in detecting and identifying terrorists without the help of the local police, and then “face allegations, and even prosecutions, for human rights violations.” The Unified Command entailing and facilitating cooperation between the police and the army for joint operations has been a step in the right direction. In the past, the State Chief Secretary headed the Unified Command. Recently, however, due to usual political manoeuvres, the Chief Minister replaced the Chief Secretary in Assam as the head of the Unified Command. H.N. Das rightly complains that, “it was wrong to have put the political head of Government in charge of an essentially executive and operational Command structure.” Some urgent legal reforms, moreover, have to be carried out to improve the operations of the army and the police. Undoubtedly, military officers require special powers to cope with the multidimensional problem of terrorism. But the Armed Forces Special Powers Act confers draconian powers on military officers, e.g. the authority to enter into and conduct searches in any premises without any warrant. The exercise of this authority even when well-intentioned tends to lead to excesses which defeat the goal of combating terrorism. As to the police force, comprehensive reforms are required, and they have been recommended by a number of expert committees and commissions. A Model Police Act, in replacement of the 1861 Police Act, has been prepared by the Soli Sorabjee Committee. On 22 September 2006, the Supreme Court of India ordered the adoption of a Model Police Act. But ruling circles in all national/state capitals of India (including the NER) have nonchalantly flouted the Supreme Court's order.

As to administrative reforms for promotion of development work, the essential first step is to reduce drastically the number of

Government officers/employees, which will automatically curb inefficiency, wastage and corruption, enabling the poorer sections to have a much larger share of development funds. Govind Bhattacharya has correctly stressed "that the ministries and departments of the governments in these states are heavily overstaffed, without enough productive work for all," and "that some hard decisions may have to be taken if necessary, and that populism is a sure prescription towards catastrophe, because economic backwardness, if continued unabated, would inevitably lead to social and political turbulence and more insurgency and instability."

Cases of lapses even at the highest administrative level are glaring. To refer to Mizoram, only two instances may suffice. Not to speak of a land ceiling law, there is an abysmal lack to proper land records in Mizoram, as Lianzela states in this volume. Moreover, amazingly, Mizoram has a State Planning Board, which does not sometimes hold a meeting for as long as four years.

It is reassuring to learn from H.S. Das that Assam has taken some significant steps to curb wastage and corruption in government agencies. For example, Assam has abolished as many as twelve Public Sector Undertakings. Moreover, in accordance with the recommendations of the Twelfth Finance Commission, the Assam Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FEBM) Act was passed in 2005. Many other States of India, as also the Government of India, enacted FRBM laws. "But so far Assam's is the only FRBM with penal provisions," reminds H.S. Das. This Act lists a number of actions constituting unauthorized expenses, and, therefore, cognizable offences, for which the offending government functionary can be sentenced to rigorous imprisonment. If this Act is duly enforced, at least one important cause of alienation of the NER masses will be removed (or minimized) i.e. the ceaseless suffering resulting from corrupt/negligent/wasteful conduct on the part of numerous government personnel. One such suffering arises out of diversion by Marwari traders (in collusion with government agencies)

of essential articles of daily consumption to the black market (domestic or international). As E.N. Rammohan suggests, this can be counteracted by the deployment of Union security or paramilitary forces for monitoring the movement of civil supplies from the railhead to wholesalers and retailers.

Members/officers of these paramilitary forces, needless to add, must be incorruptible. But, for decades, the NER has witnessed such all-pervasive corruption that it will be unrealistic to identify honest NER people among these members/officers of paramilitary forces. Therefore, non-locals have to be deployed, and that too may cause alienation. Even if the poor people themselves may not be alienated, self-seeking politicians can always manipulate to arouse such alienation. This leads to a larger question. To what extent and for how long should the ruling circles in the NER enjoy the luxury of raising the bogey of alienation and linking it dubiously to the threat to an imagined/exclusive cultural identity, and simultaneously impose the double burden of combating insurgency and underdevelopment upon the Union Government? After all, they shy away from fighting the militants, but do not shy away from sharing huge takeoffs from development money (as enormous sometimes as Rs. 30,000 crore annually) supplied by the Union Government!

The answer to the above stated query may begin with a quotation from Govind Bhattacharya: "so long as the politicians, bureaucrats, thinkers and decision-makers in the north-east (some among them consider it a blasphemy for any outsider to say anything about the north-east as they treat it as their exclusive jurisdiction and prerogative) continue to self-congratulate themselves for creating a closed society, in the name of preserving the distinctive identity for the region by refusing to open up their economy to outside and driving merit, innovation and entrepreneurship way outside the region, and in the process putting a premium on laziness, and inefficiency, nothing can change the situation in the north-east." G.P. Wahlang has recommended in this volume that the NER's administrative

manpower requires "quality improvement programmes." It is not difficult in this perspective to demonstrate that the claim to legitimacy for the practice of such exclusivism is hollow, obsolete and counterproductive (although it takes advantage of such generous provisions of the Constitution of India as Article 371). Since the early 1990s, New Delhi has been pursuing the policies of liberalization, privatization and globalization (LPG for short). Taking advantage of LPG, many states of India have taken big strides towards economic advancement. Rangan Dutta has rightly stressed the importance of technological upgradation of the NER in the realms of agriculture, industry and services. This requires adoption of inclusivism and LPG. Actually, thousands of men/women in the NER have embraced inclusionism, valued the Indian identity, and moved to various parts of India in search of livelihood, prestige, and dignity. But inclusivism of the rest of India towards the NER is far from compatible with the exclusivism of the NER towards the rest of India.

It is pertinent in this connection to reveal how the plea for cultural-political autonomy of small groups of people in the NER when accepted by New Delhi becomes an instrument of autocracy in the hands of leaders of these groups. In accordance with the Manipur Hill Areas District Councils Act of 1961 (conforming to the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India), six autonomous district councils came into existence. Elections were held to respect ethnic aspirations of tiny groups of people. But, testifying to the autocratic propensities of the leaders of these ethnic groups, the first elections remained the last elections. If we turn to Nagaland, again, we notice that the search for autocratic power coexists with irreconcilable rivalries between small tribal groups, which can easily flare up into mutual slaughter.

As we think of the small above noted sample from a complex assortment of intractable problems in the NER, we may be inclined to seek refuge in the educational system as a long term solution. It

may be hoping against hope. Yet, this Introduction may end with what Debjani Roy has written in this volume. She urges “a revamping of our educational strategies to make our students, not just holders of degrees, but determined young men and women who are problem solvers, creative thinkers, lifelong learners, and valuable assets to their communities.” Undoubtedly, this underlines the imperative of inclusivism as opposed to exclusivism (that is often indistinguishable from shortsighted political-economic blackmail).

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The Education System in the Northeast: Need for a Region-Oriented Focus

Debjani Roy

It would not be an exaggeration to claim that, traditionally, education and learning have had an exalted status in India. Long before contemporary social science scholarship awoke to the fact that 'Knowledge is Power,' knowledge formed the basis of the stratification of Indian society, what with the Brahmin wielding a disproportionate influence due to his access to knowledge. The premium that knowledge and learning attracted can be ascertained from the allegation that the members of the lower segments of society had molten lead poured into their ears if they sought to empower themselves through exposure to the Vedas. It is no surprise that Nalanda was the site of one of the first universities in the world more than a thousand years back. If the past is any indicator, one would expect the India of today to have a well developed educational strategy and curriculum, catering to all aspects of the individual—technical, intellectual and spiritual. While the picture at a superficial level would indicate towards such continuity, what with an enviable number of scholars and technocrats that the country produces, a closer scrutiny reveals that all is not well. Behind the facade of 'Shining India' is revealed a moribund educational system, lacking imagination, creativity and still wedded to colonial ethos.

The intention of this paper is not to philosophize on the inadequacies of the Indian educational system, as there are worthier

minds to contemplate on such issues. Given the author's expertise in the educational system pertaining to the North-East, this paper shall focus on the ground reality, on the more 'immediate' aspects of the educational system pertaining to the North-East. What are the hurdles facing the students in the North-East and what steps can be taken to iron out the difficulties? Are the problems so structural in nature that it is a lost cause even to contemplate changes, or is there hope? Such questions will be raised, and, with the help of reliable data, certain solutions shall be put forward.

It is generally agreed that the educational system is beset with a few basic problems—the inability to include the lower segments of society in the educational framework, the disjuncture between the educational curriculum and the needs of the society as a whole, overemphasis on a certain sector or stream in the education system, and the production of unemployable graduates from institutions that remain untouched by the changes sweeping our society (Table 1). Of late, it has been noticed that there is arising a general feeling of despondency about the higher educational system, especially at a time when the emergence of the 'knowledge economy' is putting India on the global map.¹ This despondency can be attributed to a few factors. We are a witness to a steady growth in the enrolment in secondary education (Table 2) without commensurate growth in the relevant sectors that should absorb the products of such a system. Such a situation has been compounded by the fact that irrational shifts have taken place in recent years in government thinking and orientation as regards higher education, and consequently, the level of its commitment to higher education. Globalization has also been a culprit. It has unleashed new forces that determine the types of institutions that are encouraged (at the cost of others), and allowing the entry of new players into the arena who are intent on furthering their self interest. While these may be listed as the general malaise affecting the educational system in India, as regards the North-East, a few specific ones may be identified:

(a) While the rate of literacy is encouraging in some States (Table 3), there are many districts in these States which fall under the lowest literacy category out of the 150 identified in the country.

(i) *Arunachal Pradesh*: East Kameng, Tirap, Lower Subansiri, Tawang, Upper Siang, Upper Subansiri, Changlang

(ii) *Assam*: Dhubri, Kokrajhar, Darrang

(iii) *Nagaland*: Mon, Tuensang

(b) The Gross Enrolment Ratio for Classes IX-X fall under two categories—above the All India Ratio, viz., 52: Arunachal Pradesh 53, Tripura 57, Mizoram 65 and Manipur 73; and below the All India Ratio, Assam 48, Meghalaya 43, Sikkim 42 and Nagaland 27 (Source: Selected Education Statistics 2004-2005, Government of India).

(c) In spite of having encouraging literacy rates and gross enrolment ratio, the drop-out rates (Class I-X) in all the States except one is above the All India figure, viz., 62: Sikkim 82, Meghalaya 79, Assam 74, Tripura 73, Arunachal Pradesh 71, Nagaland 67, Mizoram 67 and Manipur 43 (Source: Selected Education Statistics 2004-2005, Government of India).

(d) There are serious problems regarding the quality of the educational curriculum, pertaining to science and mathematics.

(e) Due to difficult terrain and chronic law and order problems, the right type of education does not reach a large part of the population of the North East.

(f) It is strongly felt that the educational curriculum needs to be re-oriented as it is in variance with the broad cultural ethos of the North-East. Not enough is incorporated to hone and augment the natural qualities that students in the region develop as a result of their exposure to their society and environment.

(g) The general education system provides students with low employment opportunities, and when vocational education is offered to mitigate the low employment scenario, the latter is accorded a low priority since it is considered as having low social prestige.

(h) The prioritization of a largely alien model of education has resulted in sacrificing the holistic view that a more indigenous educational system equips the person with. Stress is laid on the parts as opposed to the whole, where students are forced to specialize in a certain 'stream' after completing their 10th level examinations. While such measures can and do ensure high marks in the competitive examinations (which have become the Holy Grail to judge a student's caliber), it is the student's intellect that is eventually confined within the narrow walls of 'specializations.' This leads to the development of a degree of insensitivity on the part of the students, who are incapable of associating and identifying themselves with the overall system, thereby leading to socio-economic disparities, which are given a fillip by globalization.

A malaise that one witnesses along the length and breadth of the country, the North East being no exception, is that the teacher-student relationship is changing at a rapid rate. The Expected Teacher Pupil Ratio for classes IX-X is 1:25, which for All India stands at 32, Arunachal Pradesh 28, Tripura 25, Manipur 25, Meghalaya 24, Nagaland 23, Assam 20, Mizoram 12 and Sikkim 11 (Source: Selected Educational Statics-2004-2005, Government of India). Education has become a kind of a commodity, where the students are no longer the recipients of knowledge, but customers. Seldom do students approach an institution with the express desire to benefit from a particular teacher's expounding of knowledge. Rather, they approach institutions, which are 'prestigious,' institutions that guarantee them a job. The brand name of the institute has a market value determined according to the number of rank holders it can attract. In turn, the value of a teacher is determined by his or her ability to 'package' information that can be retrieved and applied by the students in competitive examinations. Teachers who can 'dumb down' their subject matter are highly valued in the education market. The teacher is nothing but a paid worker in the assembly line of 'packaging' knowledge. In turn, the student is a customer with the specific demand and willing to pay a price for it. In the age

of globalization, even education is being commodified at a stupendous rate, in turn affecting social dynamics such as those between the teacher and the taught. Such trends can only lead to the dropping out of students who do not have the means to pay for their education, and to the generation of educated unemployed youth.

The above points are a reason for us to reflect on our educational system. In order to bring about reforms, the fundamentals of the education system have to be remembered, realized and incorporated in the curricula. In order to bring about reforms, one needs to ask: Is there a difference between life and livelihood? Does life go beyond livelihood? What percentage of our life consists of livelihood? What happens to a person whose life and livelihood are the same? Pondering on these questions will provide us with certain clues on how to effect reforms.

In order to make a real difference in the lives of individuals, not seen as commodities, the education system should strive for the following:

BASIC OBJECTIVES

1. Bring to the fore and enhance the natural capabilities and potentials that a child is born with, instead of negating them on the basis of a 'one size fits all' educational curriculum.

2. Rather than focus on the mere accumulation of facts, the student should be helped in developing a mindset that can cope with different situations, interpret events and act accordingly. The student should be helped in being aware of his or her environment and its symbiotic aspect. It is well known that education ought to be that which helps us in making sense of how different things and events are connected.

3. Education should help students in becoming independent, innovative and resourceful. In the absence of such a disposition, students rely heavily on the commonly trodden paths such as government jobs.

4. Help in the development of a secular and nationalistic outlook amongst students but in consonance with traditional/regional/cultural ethos. Diversity should be celebrated and be seen as the way to unity. Stress should be put on human dignity and the development of high regard for labor. Deviation towards the promotion of undesirable levels of individualism should be resisted, and stress should be on the larger social framework within which the person operates. Age-old consensus building mechanisms of the clans and tribes should be highlighted, and uncommon practices of conflict resolution should be given due importance.

5. Ethos of egalitarianism and fraternity that exist at the clan and tribe level should be studied and incorporated in the curricula to help in breaking the age old stratifications that have developed in large parts of the country over centuries. While the 'panchayat' system has been rightly studied and emulated, local and regional variations of the same and communitarian needs of the region ought to be stressed. The North-East, with its enviable record of egalitarianism and fraternity could serve as a rich repository of such ideals.

6. Help in expanding the 'moral horizons' of students towards a greater degree of cosmopolitanism, thereby overcoming obstacles constructed on the basis of caste, class and creed.

METHODOLOGY

(a) Moulding the child into a good citizen by enabling him to:
(i) Enjoy community life with grace and ease. (ii) Partake in the affairs of the State as a responsible citizen with honour and dignity.
(iii) Due appreciation of his role and responsibility as a member of humankind and as inheritor of the Mother Earth with all living beings as co-partners and not its sole master.

(b) Art and Culture: The most spontaneous expression of a child or even the early man has been in artistic forms which together comprise the abiding part of cultural life of the people. These need to be ingrained in the education system.

(c) Training for Participation in Economic Life: Goals of education in the context of NER-economy will relate broadly to the following:

(i) Agriculture and allied sectors including forestry, fisheries, animal husbandry and such like

(ii) Vocational streams of the new economy, e.g. electricians, experts in electronics, motor-mechanic, computer/mobile technicians, etc

(iii) Higher professional streams including IT, engineering, medicine, mining, management etc

(iv) Humanities, social sciences, physical sciences, biological sciences, liberal arts and such like

Roadmap for revamping the education system with region oriented focus: (the N-E region)

A. *Develop Centers of Excellence*

Instead of spreading the resources too thin by having all courses at all the places, it would be far better for the educational institutes to select subjects carefully, keeping in view their relevance to the local ethos of the area and the community, and develop Centers of Excellence around those subjects. These could then be shared by all with the help of information technology (IT).

B. *Cluster approach for quality up-gradation*

A system of organizing Colleges and Schools around a centrally located Mother Institution should be taken up so that facilities and training potential of such focal institutions, appropriately strengthened, could be shared by students and teachers of feeder institutions through periodic visits and interaction. Pooling of the limited resources is perhaps the only practical and affordable way of providing better inputs and facilities to students and training to teachers in widely scattered institutions. The general idea is to start with improving at one existing college per district, and one higher secondary school per block, as institutes of excellence. These should

emerge as hubs for networking under the umbrella of a university, and serve as Mother Institution for feeder institutions in their hinterland by sharing with them their upgraded facilities like libraries, laboratories and residential hostels, games and sports, and information communication technology (ICT) facilities. Students from the Mother Institution periodically will thus gain regular access to modern educational facilities. Teachers in these Mother Institutions could be trained as trainers/resource persons for training and orientation of teachers in the feeder institutions. The ultimate aim is to reach, in stages, the most isolated primary school in the remotest village of the N-E region.

C. Improving Teaching by Intensive Teacher Training Programme

Most children in their formative years look upon their teachers as their role model. It is in the primary school that a child needs to have a very good trained teacher, who would be able to enthuse the children to exercise their innate qualities, develop their interest, teach them to have a focussed learning interest and avoid rote learning. This can only happen if the schools have trained teachers and have the proper teacher-student ratio. The data of the 7th All India School Education Survey in 2002 conducted by the NCERT brings forth the urgency of teachers training programmes (Table 5).

Looking at the urgent need for reforms in the education system, the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) in 2003 enunciated 5 principles:

(i) Learning at school must be linked with learning outside the school.

(ii) Need to learn goes beyond the book. The text book is only a resource and it should be combined with other resources.

(iii) Learning must not be rote learning which masquerades scholarship.

(iv) Making examinations more flexible.

(v) Using education to inculcate participatory democratic identity.

Requirements for implementing the 5 principles:

- (a) Closer interaction between learner and the teacher
- (b) Creating a system where every subject has trained manpower
- (c) Reconceptualise Education Reforms
- (d) Intensive Teacher Training Reforms
- (e) Administrative and Financial Reforms
- (f) Education to be made accessible to inaccessible domains

For improving the quality of education, specially during the formative years for the child, the designated education institutes in every State need to set up teachers' training programmes at all levels. Table 4 shows the large number of teachers who need to be trained, and that can only be achieved with the help and collaboration of the institutes of higher learning in every State by providing their infrastructural facilities. The universities and the technical institutes can bring about tangible improvement in the teaching of Science and Mathematics, and of the medium of expression, i.e., of the language. The curriculum also needs to be rationalised. To bring about such reforms in a short time i.e. 2-3 years, a multi-pronged strategy needs to be adopted:

1. Build a large resource group
 2. Train higher secondary teachers as Resource Persons for teaching Science and Mathematics
 3. Provide opportunity for interaction between the teacher and an established laboratory
 4. Use Distance Mode of Education combined with contact and hand-on training sessions
 5. Train teachers for communicative skills and abilities to interact with nursery and primary level children
- (d) Skill-upgradation in Vocations relevant to the region and Integration of Vocational stream with Academic stream.

To address the problem of unemployment, students and youth need to be trained in skills and vocations that are relevant to the area and to their liking to enable them to earn a living when they leave the education system. For this the vocational stream has to be

integrated with the general academic stream, and the curriculum needs to be appropriately restructured and reoriented. Vocationalisation at the secondary level should provide entry both in the general stream as well as in the professional stream, depending upon the student/learners' choice. Distance learning courses should also be available to enable the learners to learn at their own pace, time and place for the further upgradation of their skill, and develop entrepreneurial capabilities.

(e) *Extensive use of Information Technology in Education*

Extensive use of IT would enable sharing of areas of excellence and the know-how and expertise available in the various institutes of learning in the region. Model lessons, especially in Mathematics, Science could be prepared centrally, and beamed right up to the primary school level. This could be the quickest way of overcoming the problems of difficult terrains, inaccessible localities and long distances. All centres of excellence should be interlinked.

CONCLUSION

The process of 'development' 'modernisation' and 'western influence' in the region was having the effect of depriving the children of adequate exposure to the excellent indigenous value system and knowledge, which are available in abundance in the region. An aggressive awareness programme, right from early years of education, would hone the strong intuitive powers of the child as the children in this region grow close to nature, and endow them with the potentialities of thinkers, discoverers and inventors. A revamping of our educational strategies to make our students, not just holders of degrees, but determined young men and women who are problem solvers, creative thinkers, lifelong learners, and valuable assets to their communities.

Table 1: Type-Wise Number of Colleges in the Country (2001-2002).

<i>Type</i>	<i>Number</i>
Arts, Science, Commerce and Oriental Learning Colleges	: 11,128
Teachers Training	: 784
Engineering/Technology/Architecture	: 1,077
Medical	: 1,253
Allopathy	: 262
Ayurveda	: 189
Homeopathy	: 141
Unani/Tibbia	: 29
Dental	: 142
Nursing	: 122
Pharmacy	: 241
Psyiotherapy	: 120
Natuurotherapy	: 5
Public Health	: 2
Agriculture	: 106
Veterinary/Animal Science	: 50
Law	: 368
Others*	: 671
Total	: 15,437

Others includes Colleges exclusive for Library Science, Physical Education/Yoga, Music/Fine Arts, Social Work, Journalism/Mass Communication etc.

Source: University Grants Commission.

Table 2: Secondary Education (IX-XII): Overview.

<i>Sl. No.</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>
1.	Enrolment (IX-X)	1.46 crore	1.01 crore
2.	Enrolment (XI-XII)	0.74 crore	0.53 crore
3.	Gross Enrolment Ratio (IX-X)	57.39	45.28
4.	Gross Enrolment Ratio (XI-XII)	30.82	24.46

Source: Selected Education Statistics 2004-2005, Government of India

Table 3: Literacy Scenario in North East.

<i>Census 2001</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Mizoram	88.80	90.72	86.75
Tripura	73.19	81.02	64.91
Manipur	70.53	80.33	60.53
Sikkim	68.81	76.04	60.40
Nagaland	66.59	71.16	61.46
India	64.84	75.26	53.67
Assam	63.25	71.28	54.61
Meghalaya	62.56	65.43	59.61
Arunachal Pradesh	54.34	63.83	43.53

Table 4: Number of Untrained Teachers.

(i) *Secondary Stage*

S. No.	State	Total Teachers	Untrained Teachers	% of Untrained
1	Arunachal Pradesh	1269	517	40.74
2	Assam	51194	35816	69.96
3	Manipur	5018	2911	58.01
4	Meghalaya	4845	2819	58.18
5	Mizoram	2640	1017	38.52
6	Nagaland	2046	1494	73.02
7	Sikkim	1086	616	56.72
8	Tripura	5773	3663	63.45

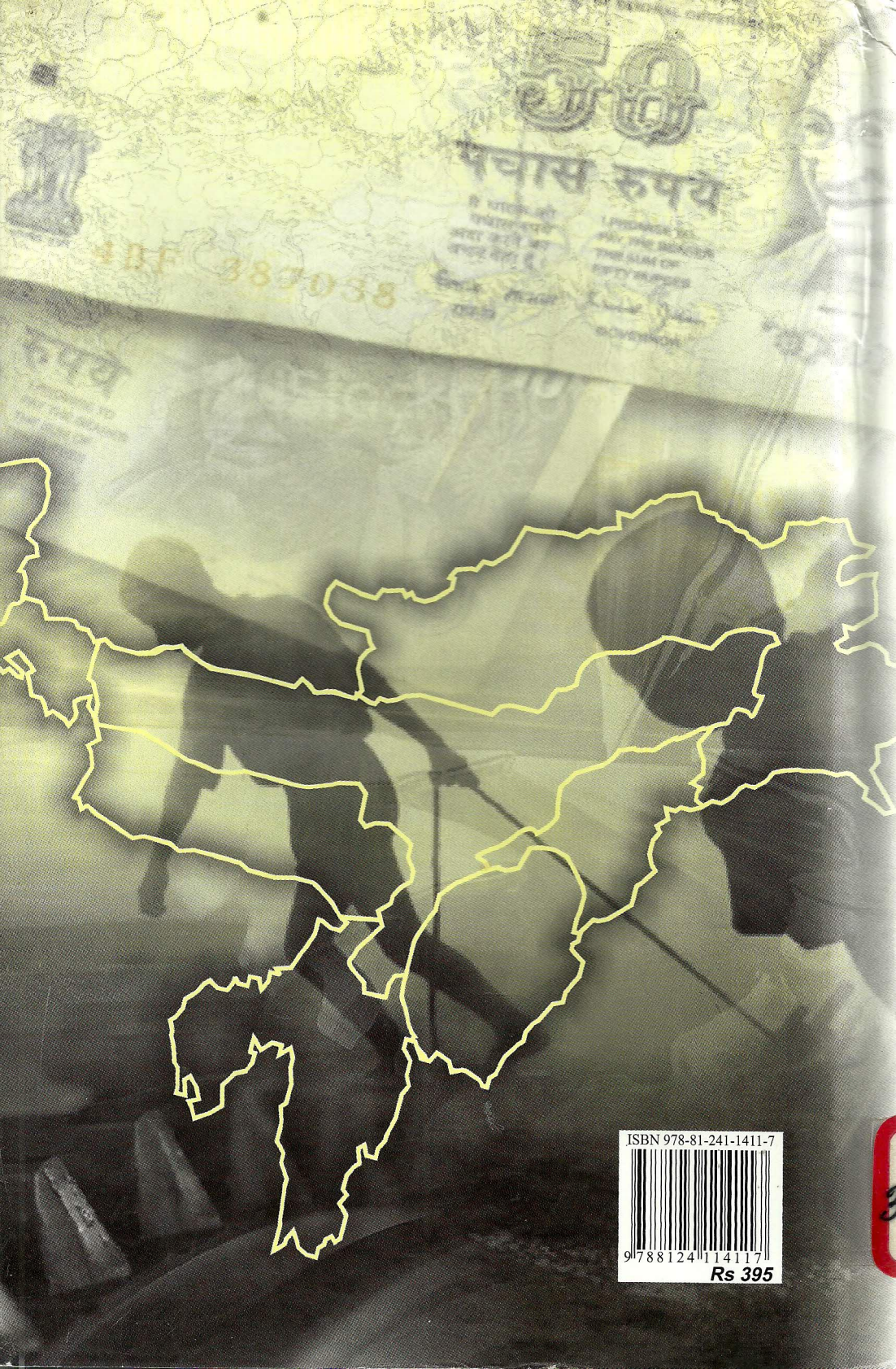
(ii) *Higher Secondary Stage*

S.No.	State	Total Teachers	Untrained Teachers	% of Untrained
1	Arunachal Pradesh	586	190	32.42
2	Assam	8540	5015	58.72
3	Manipur	1436	835	58.15
4	Meghalaya	609	308	50.57
5	Mizoram	528	332	62.88
6	Nagaland	224	165	73.66
7	Sikkim	428	232	54.21
8	Tripura	3130	1971	62.97

Source: NCERT 7th All India School Education Survey (Reference Date: 30th September, 2002).

Notes:

1. Abraham, I. 2000. "International Trends," India-Seminar, 2000 cited 14 December 2006 at <http://www.india-seminar.com/2000/494/494%20itty%20abraham.htm>.



पचास रुपये

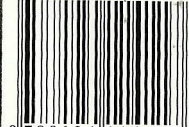
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