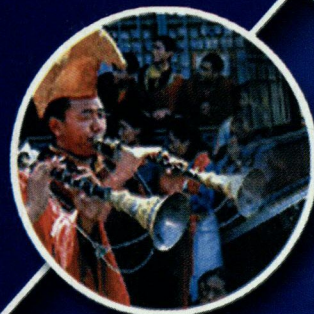
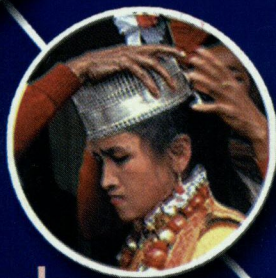


Society Politics and Development in North East India

Essays in Memory of
Dr. Basudeb Datta Ray



Edited by
Asok Kumar Ray
Satyabrata Chakraborty

This collection of twenty-nine essays, in honour of Prof. Basudeb Datta Ray, Secretary, North East India Council for Social Science Research, Shillong, touches upon the multiple contours of society, culture and development in the North-east region of India.

It deals with the different social institutions like family, kinship and marriage; youth dormitory in the tribal society; religious rites and rituals; cultural interaction and exchanges; folklore; value systems; caste and tribal identities; trends of social and political development; youth and women movements; and gender dimension in social development. It also addresses a wide range of issues conceiving development at micro as well as macro levels, the Look East Policy, economic and institutional returns, and the implications of border, citizenship and migration problems.

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Dr. Chakraborti has authored, edited, co-edited eleven books and published more than fifty research papers.

SOCIETY, POLITICS AND DEVELOPMENT IN NORTH EAST INDIA

Essays in Memory of Dr. Basudeb Datta Ray

Edited by
Asok Kumar Ray
and
Satyabrata Chakraborty

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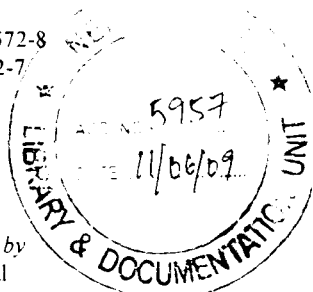
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Introduction

This book is a collection of essays in memory of late Dr. Basudev Datta Ray, Secretary of North East India Council for Social Science Research, Shillong. The research articles are drawn from interdisciplinary fields of social science and touch upon the multiple contours of society, culture and development in northeast India. The issues and concerns raised by the authors of these articles are of immense significance in the specific socio-economic and development contexts of northeast India. The scholars and researchers working on and in this region have shown anxieties and raised the criticalities of socio-cultural issues in the region vis-à-vis development. This book is planned in two parts: Part I deals with society and culture of northeast India and Part II deals with development issues thereof.

The northeast India in general exposes a paradox of cultural insulation and protectionism on the one hand and cultural exchanges, sharing and crosscuts with cultures of other regions on the other. This paradox to a large extent impacted the process of social formation and community imagination in different ethnic groups in this region. This paradox also attributed to articulate cultural politics or ethnic politics in this region. As such we have two types of historiographic sources to understand and analyse society and culture of northeastern region of India. One is the vast array of folk culture, archaic traditions and pristine socio-cultural institutions. The other is the more tangible archaeological and architectural remains found in different parts of northeast India. The first type of historiographic source is insulated in nature and is confined within the local society in which pristine content provides a shield for self-defence against the onslaught of the so-called outside world. It is true that industrialization and modernization have destroyed many properties of archaic cultural and social institutions although the majority of the people in this region still cling to those for their social existence and recognition at least in form though not in content. This gives rise to tradition-

modernity antithesis on northeast India. But as the forces of modernization are becoming stronger and stronger, the very survival and recognition of the community are becoming difficult unless the latter become flexible enough to cope up with the challenges of modernization.

Jayanta Sarkar traced the testimony of cultural interactions of the people of northeast India as evidenced in the archaeological and architectural remains found in northeast India. It is generally believed that the people of this region by and large remained least affected and were insulated by the cultures of other people in other parts of the country, primarily because of lack of adequate communication facilities till the recent past. On the other hand ethnic migrations from the neighbouring regions became historical fact in this region. Such migrants brought with them not only tradable goods in this region but also brought cultural packages to build up cultural relations between neighbouring countries and this region. They did the bridging function between the local and the outside world and built up strong foundations of cultural relations between the neighbouring countries and regions. This led to a process of cultural metamorphosis in this region. There are glimpses of these on some archaeological sites and architectural characters, as observed in the temple archaeology and old architectures of Assam, archaeological remains of Arunachal Pradesh, temples and monuments of Manipur and in the Archaeology of Meghalaya, Tripura and Nagaland. These bear the testimony of cultural interactions of the people of northeast India with outside cultures and show that the people of these apparently difficult terrains had actually experienced impacts of other cultures, particularly of eastern India together with some religious faiths during the medieval historical period. Contributions made in the spheres of art, architecture and culture by the people of Orissa and Bengal helped evolve a unique combination of local creativity with the artistic styles of Orissa and Bengal. Most of the archaeological and architectural activities of this region also received patronage from the rulers of the plains of northeast India. While these were happening in the plains of this region, the hills of this region were relatively insulated and remained largely unaffected. The hill people of this region could thrive within their self-contained cultural boundaries. The archaeological remains also suggest intrusion of Hindu religion in its art and cultural forms in

different parts of northeast India. In some cases association of Muslim architecture with Hindu art forms and sculptures is also found. Northeast India also exhibited interesting confluences of the Tantric and the Vaishnavite cults. All these confluences and interactions produced cultural synthesis, secularization of society and religious syncretism in the northeastern region of India.

Folklore, the archaic cultural expression of the people living in nature has been subject to both conservative and progressive discourses in the history. According to the conservative view, folklore is pushed back as a result of technology and civilizational changes- a view that prevailed till the first half of the 20th Century. It was the Marxist theory of dialectical and historical materialism that gave a new treatment to folklore and initiated a brake in the erstwhile conservative thought. The literature on this was first developed in Russia and then in other parts of the world. The Contextualists of the US also got disenchanted with the conservative view, although they did not agree with the Marxist view. A similar trend was found in Europe that rejected the view that folklore is quaint. The mid-20th Century folklore scholarship therefore found no antithesis between folklore and technological civilization. Folklore was rather seen as having adaptive potential in the situation of change. Prof. Soumen Sen with this sketch of folklore, stands for the complementarity of folklore with modernity. He considers tradition as a transitive series and denies folklore as quaint and irrelevant. From such standpoint Prof. Sen deals with cultural identity and cultural politics in the northeast India.

He contends the view that 'development destroys folklore' around which many socio-political movements of the region have evolved. In the northeastern region there is a tremendous sense of insecurity of culture and folklore in the face of modernization and globalization. This sense of insecurity provides the rationale for cultural protectionism in this region. But on the other hand the growing opening of the region to the outside world through education and information technology is bringing about fast changes in many traditional art and cultural forms including folklore. In this situation the Nehru- Elwin Policy of protectionism, once criticized by the political leaders including the tribal leaders and the anthropologists, needs re-assessment in the light of the current socio-cultural situation in the tribal areas of the region. This in turn demands re-assessment of the strategies for

development in this region. It is true that in the changing context, no culture can remain static and uncontaminated. Therefore utility of folklore lies in negotiating with the factors of changes and in coping up with the changes that are taking place in the region. In this way, folklore and development can become complementary to each other.

The archaeological and architectural evidences and from the progressive treatment of folklore of the respective authors have broken the 'isolation myth' prevailing in the psyche of the rank and file of the northeast India.

Prof. R.K. Das found that the tribal identity in the northeast crystallized with ethnic identity in the pluri-cultural situation. International boundaries influenced the greater territorial and even trans-territorial identity formations in this region. Cultural affinity had a great role to play in such formations that often led to intra-ethnic conflict and consequent politicization of culture. The concept of cultural relativism therefore could not remain uncritical, nor the region could build a proto-type of 'cultural type'. In this region there are cases when some tribes even adopted the identity of other tribes. The northeastern scenario in such situation resembles to R.S. Naroll's concept of 'cultunit' whereby the tribal people of Manipur, for example, became a subject group of a linguistically diverse state. On the other hand there is a growing trend to transcend the 'cultunit' status towards nation state status and a shift of emphasis from a pure 'cultural model' towards the nation-state-based model. Within the nation state model again there are other critical trends including the degree and extent of interdependency within the nation state and extreme claim for sovereignty by some section of the tribal groups. The latter however is a difficult proposition in the face of the authoritative Indian state. Despite, those who could assume power by defying the authoritative state, in turn, exercised power over the group and acted for a political struggle aspired by the people. In such case alignment of the ethnic groups with a distinct cultural base and their political organizations produced some kind of solidarity-oriented action. But the complex nature of society, local boundary systems, regional and national alliances, tension between change and preservation of cultural identity, resistance and development, shared cultural practices and so on in the northeast came in the way of typical culture-based politics. While the lives of the tribal

people of this region are rooted largely in their cultures, merging individual craze for wealth and power hit at the roots. On the other hand bureaucratic corruption, administrative and military repression let loose by the Indian state have de-essentialized culture and reduced sincere participation of the people in public affairs. To come out of this, as some people think, it needs re-negotiation with their identities that are forced upon them by the Indian state.

On the other hand, **Bobby Mohanta** found evidence of 'cultural pattern' that emerged in Assamese culture as a result of confluence of diverse folk cultures based on agricultural economy. As such the northeast as a region became a home for diverse cultures, nature-friendly traditional technologies and enduring social institutions that were shaped by the tribal and non-tribal population alike. While the indigenous communities still retain a great deal of pristine culture, tradition, knowledge, technology and social institutions, expansion of transport and communication, exchange of ideas and views on academic platforms, change in habitat pattern and global economy make way for greater cultural diversity and national integration. But ironically re-negotiating the identity of the people of the northeast that was forced upon them by the Indian state on the one hand and the more polite and civility of approach of national integration on the other not only created hiatus at the empirical level but also shaped and re-shaped the attitude of the people of this region towards the Indian state vis-à-vis their cultural identities.

According to **R.K. Bhattachariya and Kumkum Bhattachariya** a multi-ethnic society of India became a universal concern from the time of colonial rule. The colonials constructed both the terms 'Tribes' and 'Indigenous People' at different points of time. The other terms like 'Adivasi' 'Vanavasi', Janajati' etc. also came up as contending terms. In recent years the term 'Indigenous People' has become more popular among the more educated tribes. The democratic divide, thus created, is widened by the affirmative action of the Indian state that blocked the process of tribe-caste and caste-sanskritization continuum and state formation. At the global context, the terms 'fourth world' and 'Indigenous People' as used as an attempt to confederate the tribes did not much impact India. In fact, as the authors argue, there seems to be no historical and factual support to the concept of 'Indigenous People' except

when we define such people with 'ecological niche' criterion. Besides, in the Indian context, lack of appropriate definition of the term, the polarized power structure, dominant and minority differentiations, elite manipulation of the term and the instrumentality of the term in the international conventions are not unknown. On the other hand socio-political changes and external forces made the term ambiguous and made the exclusive tribal movements problematic. Nevertheless 'Indigenous People' became an ideological ammunition in the hands of the elites in reshaping their identity and gave them an agency to negotiate with others and made it important in transforming the local and global perspectives.

S.K. Choudhury and N. Wangsam dealt with structural-functional implications of the dormitories in the lives of the Wanchoo tribe in Arunachal Pradesh. The speciality of the Wanchoo dormitory is that unlike the others, the membership in it is permanent. Thus once a member, always a member. Therefore Wangchoo dormitory is not identical to any other youth dormitory systems prevailing among other tribes of the region. There are separate male and female dormitories among the Wanchos. The male dormitory is known as *Paa* and the female one is known as *zipsun hum*. While there can be more than one dormitory in one village, the size of the same may vary according to the number of households in the village. Besides, there is Chief's Dormitory which has a separate structure. There are different membership criteria, norms, taboos and rituals in both the male and the female dormitories. For the male dormitory there is a distinct ground plan and distribution of space. Inside the *Paa* there are different items and arrangements for common use. The girl dormitory on the other hand is not so structured although it is a socially sanctioned institution. The functional domain of male dormitory is varied. It deals with the issues and concerns of common interest. It is both a cultural and a communicative space wherein different socio-political, cultural and religious decisions are taken. Male dormitory also acts as village court to deal with petty cases of conflict among the members of the dormitory. It guards the village from enemy attacks and at the same time is a space for knowledge building, learning, and for working together. It is also the "lovers' point" for the young boys and girls.

In today's changing context such dormitories are facing

erosion. The authors have expressed worries about it and raised the question whether revival of these institutions is possible that can yet remain functional in addressing many contemporary issues facing the Wanchoo tribe?

O. Ranjit Singh dealt at length with the history and origin of the family and marriage in Manipuri society taking the cue from the "Mother Right" propounded by Bechofen, Bancroft and Morgan. He sketched the history of transition from the state of promiscuity through different regulatory forms of sexual behaviour to the present state of monogamy including the organization of family and the institution of marriage. This process of social formation corresponded to the revolutionary changes in the productive forces and production relations. These changes happened with the threshold of agricultural civilization that culminated in feudalism. Monogamous family and marriage superseded the state of "Mother Right" and brought about discordant patriarchal institution in stead. This state of social and institutional formation did not take place simultaneously in all the societies because of different stages of development of the productive forces and production relations in different societies. In case of Manipur, Dr. Singh traced the origin of different family structures and marriage practices including polyandry and polygamy parallel to monogamy and traced out the once existing matriarchal practices in Manipur. He also identified different forms of marriages in Manipur including marriage by capture, marriage by elopement and arranged marriage. Along with this came up the practice of bride price and clan exogamy. Though marriage among the Meiteis became an institution with religious character attached to it, in the semi-feudal society of Manipur monogamy, considered sacrosanct, could not mature into an ideal institution. Polygamy became very common but luxuriant practice among the kings, nobles and the rich people. The practice of polygamy also seeped into the practice of the common people though polygamous persons came to be treated with hatred and abhorrence in general.

S.B. Chakraborti while dealing with the youth movement in northeast India stated that in the absence of capital, the emerging middle class and the educated elites conveniently used ethnicity and the primordial cultural assets of different kinds both in the colonial and in the post-colonial times to assert their political demands and aspirations. The Bengal Renaissance had much to

do with the rising middle class consciousness and the rising youth movements in Assam. The involvement of the students in the freedom movement in the early part of the 20th Century made the city of Calcutta the hub from where the message of the movement spread out to some parts of Assam. After Independence the youth movement oscillated more towards the issues of ethnic mobilization, cultural autonomy, control over local resources, foreigners' issue, linguistic and regional identity, industrialization and so on. The emergence of AASU and Gana Andolan among the student communities in Assam was a pointer to these changes. In Arunachal Pradesh, the All Arunachal Pradesh Students Union flagged the issues of refugees, border dispute with Assam, trade license to non-Arunachalese, infiltration of foreign nationals and heralded the movement for reviving the indigenous faith known as *Donyo Polo'*. The student organizations of Meghalaya, Nagaland and Manipur got involved in socio-political issues. In Manipur, the women community built a chequered history of women movement. The All Manipur Students' Union established in 1946, fought for primary school education and for restoration of human rights in the state. The Mizo Students' Union got involved in state politics. The Young Lushai Association and the Young Mizo Association in Mizoram, Jaja Siksha Samiti and Gana Mukti Parishad in Tripura mobilized the youth for educational advancement and social transformation. The TUJS, an organization of the tribal youth in Tripura virtually matured into a regional political party.

As student and youth movements can not be de-linked Dr. Chakraborti found two distinct aspects in these movements. One is to consider such movements as necessary parts of the larger political movement and the other is to assess these movements in terms of the specific situations in the region. Two other emerging areas of student and youth movements in this region, according to the author, are: creative production in the fields of art including performance art & literature and political extremism. It is true that the student and the youth movements of this region have encountered different phases of ideological, social and political trauma. Later, liberalization and globalization have eroded the community. In such situation student and youth movements in this region need to look into the global, national and regional forces operating in the society in order to widen understanding of the

problem of the region in a macro perspective and to bring about social transformation.

Prof. Bimola Devi gave a chronological account of the socio-political happenings in the state of Manipur. She said that the heterogeneity of ethnic and community groups influenced the social and political processes in the state. Back to the social history of Manipur in 33 A.D. she unveiled the feudal character of the state with the hegemonic authority of the kingship institution, theologically backed by the mandarin class represented by the Brahmin and the Brahma Sabha. Both these institutions were responsible for dividing the people socially and economically, so that the poor and the common people were virtually reduced to the status of slaves in Manipuri society. With the coming of the British colonials the economic condition of the people started to further worsen due to oppressive taxation system and other bad practices of the colonial rulers on the denizens of Manipur. There were series of movements led by the women community against the British and even the royal scion like Hijam Irabot spearheaded social and political movements against the British. These movements led to the emergence of some form of democratic governance in the 1930s. After 1947 a constitutional monarchy was institutionalized in the state for a short period till this institution was ended with the Accession Agreement of Manipur with the Union of India. Later as a Part- C state, Manipur was kept under the virtual hegemonic rule of the Chief Commissioner. The upgradation of Manipur as a full-fledged state in 1972 was another landmark. But immediately after this, different kinds of social and political movements appeared in the state and made the socio-economic situation volatile until AFPSA-1958 was imposed on the state. This situation made further intensification of socio-political crises in the state. This scenario provoked the women community in Manipur to fight against this draconian act. A fresh lease of conflict arose in the 1990s first between the Kukis and the Nagas and then among different ethnic groups in the state. The mushrooming of the underground outfits among different ethnic groups let loose political turmoil and social instability. In this process a section of the new middle class played authoritative role.

Th. Binarani Devi pictured women's movement in the state of Manipur from the colonial to post-colonial period. The two major women's movements in Manipur, one in 1904 and the other in

1939, against the British bear testimony of historic struggle of women against the system of forced labour (*Lallop*) and against the export of rice from Manipur to outside by the Marwari traders. From the time of Accession of Manipur to the Union of India to the subsequent state violence in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s the rights and peaceful living of the common people were adversely affected. Imposition of AFSPA-1958 and other draconian laws in the state worsened the civil lives of the people. These events ignited women movements in different parts of the state. The organized movements of the women agencies against the police and military atrocities including rape and custody-killing culminated in an unrobed protest march of the women organizations in 2004 in the heartland of Imphal. The peaceful Hunger Strike by Sharmila against the imposition of AFSPA in the state is another landmark in the history of women's movement in Manipur. Many women organizations and state level networks of Manipur came together to fight against state-sponsored violence in Manipur.

The women community of Manipur has a greater role in ensuring economic subsistence of the households. Reduced livelihood options led them to work in unorganized sectors with untold sufferings and indignity. Under these circumstances, the author feels, the women community needs to reaffirm its solidarity and to commit for organized liberation movement in order to achieve a just and developed society.

Prof. J.B. Ganguli examined the impact of tribal values and culture on the northeast India's hill region's socio-economic development. Taking the cue from Max Weber's "The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism" (Which fore-grounded the role of protestant ethics in economic development), Prof. Ganguli found conspicuous absence of the value systems in the economic practices of shifting cultivation that prevails in most parts of northeast India. Characterized mainly as subsistence or stationary, shifting cultivation economy could not become accumulative economy congenial for economic development and growth.

Within the larger equalitarian values with no caste-like division of labour, sex-based division of labour gave the women predominance in agrarian activities in northeast India. This division was not obviously on the basis professional skill. This factor also kept production at lower level. Prevalence of slavery and slavery-linked economy could hardly promote human enterprise that could produce surplus for accumulation.

Prof. Xavier Mao presented a critique of the concept of culture on development in the northeast India. He too found the Weberian thesis of "Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism" irrelevant in the multi-religious, multi-cultural and multi-ethnic make up of the northeastern region. Physical vastness of India, lack of exchange and communication and lack of mutual trust and understanding hindered the process of development in the northeastern region. The apprehension of influx of outsiders and professionals from outside also stood in the way of development. The secular democratic principle of the Indian constitution could do little to change the scenario. Prof. Mao in such circumstances called for the pro-active roles of the enlightened citizens, teachers and student leaders in creating a new culture free of all inhibitions and complexities with a view to bring about development in the region.

Gita Pyal made a study of family as the primary agency of education among the poor Khasis of Shillong city. Such poor people are those who faced serious livelihood crises in their respective villages and hence migrated to the Shillong city in such of livelihood. Despite having a huge body of formal schools and other institutions of education for the children in Shillong city, the poor Khasi people adhered to the traditional family roles in educating (including religious education) and socializing the children, particularly the girl children. The poor Khasis in Shillong city failed to access formal institutions of education because of poverty, denial of social opportunities, rich-poor divide in the Khasi society and denial of equal opportunities in the missionary and private schools.

Though the parental roles in educating the children differ between the father and the mother in the family-based education practices of the poor Khasis in Shillong city, the children learn different coping strategies and survival education only from the family. But in the era of globalization, the focus of education is being laid on human resource development. Family-based education does not fit in with the emerging need of human resource development. At the policy level therefore not only investment in education and health needs be increased but also more opportunities need be extended to the children of the poor Khasis in the city for institutional education. Education should not be the blessed privilege of the affluent society alone. The poor children should also benefit from education in order to bring about an egalitarian society.

Asha Thokchom examined gender dimension in social sector development in Manipur. To her social sector development is not just about human capital formation and human development; it also refers to value component of social sector development like freedom, gender equality, nationalism etc. In terms of indicators of development like per-capita income, male and female literacy, sex ratio, Maternal Mortality Rate, Infant Mortality Rate and poverty reduction, Manipur exhibits a better profile. Total expenditure on social sector increased over the years in the state and the trends in annual plan outlays showed an increasing trend. However, viewing through gender lens, the gender planning including scheme-wise break-up of child welfare and women welfare, Grant-in-Aid to Manipur Social Welfare Board, total state plans and total sponsored schemes etc. seems to be top-down and welfarist in approach. In terms of HDI Manipur ranked 4th in 1981 but in 1991 it declined to 9th. The 2001 HDI ranking is not available but the human condition is found worsening in the state. Female literacy rate in Manipur is higher than that of India. But remarkable male-female literacy gap, non-accessibility of women to basic education, lack of awareness about woman education and premature marriage of girls stand on the way. The unemployment rate among the women is higher than the men in the state, work participation rate is also lower among women. By the 'life expectancy rate at birth' and IMR indicators also Manipur exhibits a better trend. But the incidence of HIV/AIDS among the male and female population is an increasing area of concern. The status of Manipur, in terms of availability of safe drinking water and sanitation both in the urban and rural areas, is lower than the All-India status. As water is basically a woman issue, it affects the woman community most. The BPL population in the state consists by and large the women and children. The people of Manipur still lack better access to social infrastructure. Thus the social sector expenditure needs to focus on improving social infrastructure for ensuring better quality of living to the people.

Debasis Basu has studied the Gene Differentiation and genetic distance at 'ABO Locus' among eight caste populations of northeast India. The study brought out the distribution of gene frequencies of *p*, *q* and *r* alleles of ABO system respectively and found O allele to be proportionality higher over other alleles among the caste group populations in reference. The estimate of G_{s1} has been

calculated for eight caste populations that show the total and average gene diversities among the caste populations of northeast India. It is found that the magnitude of inter-populations gene diversities is very small within castes and that no significant gene flow taking place among them. He also studied genetic distance among the sample caste groups. In the Hindu Varnashram system the Brahmins are located in the higher strata of the social hierarchy, followed by Katila, Baishya, Kumar, Jogi, Koch, Hira and Kaibarta. The study shows that Katila and Kumar together show minimum genetic distance making a cluster next to Brahmin and Kaibarta which together make a large cluster of four populations. Other studies show that Brahmins, Kaibartas, Katilas (and Muslim) of Assam form a loose cluster. The other two clusters i.e, Hira and Baishya are genetically close and Jogi and Koch together form the second cluster. The maximum genetic distance between Brahmin and Hira confirms their respective positions in the traditional social hierarchy.

Part II of the book deals with the issues of development in the northeast. In the development sector the complexities and criticalities are many more. These range from the policy issues at the micro, meso and macro levels; institutional issues; regional imbalance in development; income and employment generation; infrastructure building; land issue; social policies; supply of goods and services; redistribution; gender issues & women development to the issues of governance and environmental sustainability.

Prof. Samir Kumar Das presented a critique of the Look East Policy and expressed worries that while India may develop under the Policy, the northeast India may not. Under the globalization regime the Look East Policy banked upon the historic-cultural contiguity of the northeastern region and the contiguity of cultural heritage of the South Asian region as a whole. This factor has been officially proclaimed and has become a foreign policy asset for global trade flow across the countries of South Asia. While this policy has brought the northeastern region of India to the limelight, it has produced much hopes and promises for the people. Much of the literature on Northeast's claim to benefit from India's Look East policy is devoted to an analysis of the economic rationality. But in fact the impact of the policy on northeastern region is not that hopeful and rather it might spell disaster to the region unless

it is appropriately designed. The ethnic considerations in this region are more likely to blur the imperatives of economic rationality and are less aligned with the appropriate design of a possible policy. It is also doubtful, the author says, how the region would be able to derive trade related gain when India's trade with the South East Asia is primarily of maritime nature. The instrumentality of cultural affinity in exploring Asian market would therefore de-essentialize the normative elements, if any, of historico-cultural contiguity of South and South East Asia. It would rather cater to the expanding foreign markets in this region.

Prof. Das has shown concern as to how the Look East Policy can be appropriately designed in order to address some critical but specific and largely overlapping issues of borders (trans-border integration), citizenship (through trans-border politics of recognition) and labour migration (across the region).

In the present policy context borders are seen more as gateways for trade and commerce and less as traditional boundaries. In the same context the very reality of trans-border movement of the ethnic people for being with their kinsmen, independent of trade relations, often remains silent. In fact the ethnic insurgencies in this region are predicated on the recognition of the region's geographical and cultural continuities with the neighbours as well as continuities within the region. If therefore history of nation state and international borders separated the ethnic groups in this region, the author found alternative possibilities contra-history of reenacting them. Double citizenship is another problematic as it itself may not be the right solution in the face of ethnic situation in the region. It can however be viewed as a strategy and experiment with the concept can be made without destroying the nation-state order. Lastly, the illegal migrants (in Assam mainly) who work as cheap labour got enfranchised which is difficult to detect and deport. They may continue to be so in the era of globalization. In such situation the 'work permit' system for immigrant labourers may be able to address the problem. But it requires improved bilateral relation of India with Bangladesh in particular. The author sees that globalization supersedes the same old border control regime and the sooner its anachronistic character is realized, the more the Northeast as a region can benefit from Look East Policy. Otherwise, the region might lose out yet again to 'the overall framework' of Indian foreign policy.

Asok Kumar Ray dealt with the issue of institutional reforms programme against the backdrop of 'Growth Theory' under globalization. Institutional reforms, as we know, have happened at three levels: micro, meso and macro implicating the community, state and the international bodies respectively. The reforms at different levels have been geared primarily towards establishing and securing market and trade regime of the global political economy. The institutional reforms at all levels (which includes the Look East Policy at macro level), have their respective instrumental roles in facilitating the entry of FDI, market induced economy and in ensuring safety of FDI and market infrastructure in the countries of investment. For that, the whole range of institutional reforms also includes supranational institutions in order to secure safety, efficiency, effectiveness and 'Pareto Optimal' growth. In this process the supranational institutional and adjudicative bodies stymied the sovereign sphere of the Indian state and the regions within the Indian state. Unfortunately, despite all the promises made by the Look East Policy, liberalizing the market economy did not go parallel to labour migration and human resource mobility not only within the region but also across the regions. Eventually, the trade-off between institution and growth on the one hand and denial of redistribution and subsistence on the other hand could not be ignored. Looking from the wide angle of the WTO Rules on Trade and Services that are embodied in the GATS, the services that are traded can be classified in four modes: 'cross-border service'; 'Consumption Abroad'; 'Commercial Presence' and 'Movement of Natural Persons'. Among these the last one, called Mode-4, has remained non-negotiable. This gave rise to a renewed framework of conflict. While insurgency retards private investment and growth, lack of employment and social opportunities arising out of such growth model lead to new lease of unrest. Another paradox arose out of the soft approach of micro-community institutions and social capital on the one hand and the rational choice of force on the other, in the growth process in this region that trivialized political analysis of the regional insurgency and criminalized the entire community. The institutional reforms process in this region had to adapt to security-linked development strategy and gave highly subsidized package to FDI. This scenario invalidated the hypothesis of institution-growth binary in this region and this in

turn gave rise to subaltern globalization that became manifest in the region in different ways.

Prof. Keya Dasgupta raised the issue of space in colonized territories that were organised and constantly re-organized within global 'modernizing' forces. At each phase, new points and areas have joined the operational space in a sequence of stages of spatial organization. The spatial concepts are characterized by movements, migrations, trade network, river-road-railway nodes, indigenous areas, service and market areas, administrative areas and so forth. Though the colonial economy and society were based primarily on mines and plantations, several new elements were introduced in the region's spatial structure. The export oriented tea plantation economy impacted the wider spatial structure and marked the distinction between wastelands and lands for cultivation. The tea plantation had access to both types of land and the wastelands were kept as special preserves of commercial plantation of tea against conventional plantation. The trade and export-oriented plantation economy significantly affected the wider spatial structure and gave a different notion of economy, society and polity. The land tenure system for wastelands made it separate from that under traditional cultivation. The wastelands were the special preserves for tea plantation where traditional cultivation was denied. This plantation economy in the Brahmaputra valley stymied subsistence cropping and diluted the concept of agricultural labour on the one hand and invited cheap labour from outside to work in exploitative and sub-human working condition in the plantation sector on the other. Plantation economy also took over the local or regional trade circuits, however small. This created networks for export-oriented economy. Extension of transport and communication infrastructure was made along road, rail and waterways, mainly in commercial interest. The urban centers and the nodes in the spatial structure of the region primarily emerged as administrative centers and for organizing services for the exploitation of the produce of the hinterlands without any production function. These centers became distinct units in the spatial frame of the Brahmaputra valley. Agency houses, auction houses and depots of Calcutta mainly catered to the traffic of the indentured labour for overseas plantation. Besides the housing layouts were designed in such a way as to maintain the hierarchical order as well as to ensure

governance. Transformation of space therefore became both political and ideological under colonial regime. Space in colonial countries like India became a conjecture of diverse and heterogeneous smaller spaces the vestiges of which are still found in the region. Plantation and eventual transformation happened in the organization of space in Brahmaputra exemplifies this.

Prof. Gorky Chakraborti pointed out that in Assam the colonials made large-scale settlement of the people from outside on the wastelands of Assam and engaged them in plantation, mineral and railway industries. This made the wastelands economically profitable to the colonials. The revenue policy was made in such a way as to hard press the indigenous people and to give large-scale relief to the European Planters. Secondly, the British made settlement of labour coming from East Bengal to Assam with a view to engage them in making the wastelands including the 'Char' areas cultivable. He focused his arguments on the Char lands of Assam and the colonial rationale for wasteland use and for bringing these areas under the preview of the sovereign authority of the colonials. This broke the concept of community stewardship attached to land and brought in the concept of land as a tradable property. The vast areas of the so-called wastelands that were not so far revenue-yielding, were transformed into revenue-yielding lands. The colonials used rational choice of force and used the jurisprudential principle of '*res nullius*' and '*terra nullius*' to dispossess community stewardship. This also destructed the notion of lands based on the principle of '*lex loci rei sitae*' and such principle led the colonials to declare the "no-mans-lands as wastelands. Human habitation on wastelands since then depended on the colonial interests. Different land legislations and land revenue administration on Char areas of Assam were also governed by the colonial interests. During the colonial period there was virtually no concrete legislative protection of the Char lands. In the post-colonial period also we found conspicuous silence of the state government on the issue concerning legislative protection of the Char lands. Cadastral survey of the Char areas was not done thoroughly even after Independence. This silence often invited conflict between the users of Char lands and between them and the government. The rights and entitlements of the Char dwellers were not adequately addressed. As cadastral survey was not done, or even wherever it was done, three different patterns of land

revenue settlement namely: *touzi*, *ek chonnai* and rarely *meady* settlements were found. Such arrangements did violence to distributive justice for the Char dwellers. This scenario destabilized the lives of the Char dwellers and brought their lives under constant flux. Ironically the Char lands have neither natural stability nor adequate legislative protection from the government. What is worse is that these areas are often seen as the abode of suspicious persons.

In order to accord due recognition to the toil of the Char dwellers and to usher in development, some broad and tangible policy suggestions are made by the author, that can really go to the benefit of the Char dwellers and can allow to live them with dignity and security.

Prof. P. C. Dutta while discussing the issue of sustainable development in northeastern India, found that the macro context of development created regional imbalance and skewed income distribution in the developing countries. Growing demographic pressure on the economy, weak social provisioning, shrinking social opportunities and high environment cost had pointed critical fingers at the equity issue. The Millennium Development Goal under the New Economic Policy has raised hopes and aspirations for wealth creation and more social opportunities. But in the northeast Indian context unequal resource distribution, rapid and unplanned urbanization made the rural and the urban poor more vulnerable and belied many hopes and promises thus made. He pointed out that the northeastern region lags behind in the New Economic Policy Regime. Increasing unemployment, involuntary migration of outsiders in the region, poor housing, water and sanitation and poor health care infrastructure featured poor social development scenario in this region. By other indicators of social development the region has not achieved much. Although the region has higher literacy rate than the national average, per-capita income remained lesser than the national average. The agro-forestry sector in this region is under crisis. Poor industrial infrastructure including power infrastructure led to poor performance of manufacturing and processing industries. This eventually reduced the number of large and medium industries in the region. Tea industry, the major industry in the region is also facing downward trend. Inadequate banking services and falling credit-deposit ratio further discouraged development in this

region. Lastly corruption and growing governance problems in this region are largely responsible for poor investment and growth in this region.

The only alternative for sustainable economic development in the region, according to Prof. Datta, is to promote small-scale industries in the region so as to increase employment and income opportunities for the people. The Khadi and Village Industries Corporation has a great role in training, production and marketing of goods produced in small-scale industries. This needs improved institutional support of small-scale industries (and agriculture). There is also need for population control. Setting up of educational and technical institutions for creating better human resources and enhancing employment opportunities can address the issue of sustainable development. Governments of the northeastern states need to take bigger poverty alleviation programme and gender – sensitive social security schemes in order to ensure better socio-economic opportunities and to remove structural inequalities in the northeast Indian society.

Prof. Nixon Singh made a case for promotion of tourism in northeastern region of India in view of the growing importance of this sector in economic growth and revenue generation. The geographical location of this region, beautiful flora and fauna, natural beauty and attractive landscape, biodiversity, cultural variety, art including performance art, rich tradition and heritage, crafts and textiles of this region are attractive to the tourists and have huge market potential by way of tourism promotion. In the backdrop of the World Tourism Organization's Vision 2020, Prof Singh identified the recent trends and the emerging issues in promoting this sector in the region. Tourism industry not only provides services and products but also gives scope to enormous and diverse ranges of activities and increased employment opportunities including self-employment and income generation. Extension of communication and electronic media can make the sector more promising. The northeast can largely benefit largely through preservation and conservation of the tourist assets. At the social level tourism has the highest potential to promote universal brotherhood and solidarity. A realistic approach through planned tourism and cultural-environmental tourism can lead tourism industry towards sustainability. The Look East Policy may be made instrumental in promoting tourism industry by improving

connectivity, appropriate social and economic infrastructure, development of wayside amenities along the Asian Highway and feeder routes, public-private partnership and community-base tourism so as to attract not only the tourists from the other parts of the country but also those from the foreign countries. Tourism planning needs to focus on cost effectivity and inter departmental coordination. However the region has certain vital limitations in tourism promotion. These are lack of infrastructure and investment, governmental instability, land issues, Protected Area and Restricted Area Permits and so on. But the prospects are evident from Governmental attention towards the northeastern region, institutional support of the DoNER Ministry, the North Eastern Council, international and transnational connectivity of this region, support from Asian Development Bank, opportunities for promotion of cross border tours and potential for private sector investment. This needs long term and integrated planning of both physical structure and natural resource endowments. It also needs governmental will and public-private partnership. In this direction Prof. Singh put forward a set of actionable recommendations that could be of use to the policy makers and the planners.

Surojit Sengupta studied the urbanization dynamics in Meghalaya. He first dealt with the conceptual aspects of urban sociology that includes the process and determinants of urbanization and then discussed the urban hierarchies of India and various Classes of towns in the states of India. The uneven nature of urban growth, administrative categorization of urban areas, decline of small towns and growth of larger cities and many other anomalies in the urbanization process became great concerns. In Meghalaya, urbanization and urban growth scenario are characterized by 'push factor', migration, influx and immigration. At the same time the urban areas became concentrations of the rich people. All these taken together led to more urban pathology rather than urban health. The study shows increasing growth rate of urban population, relatively stagnant Class status of towns, increase in number of statutory towns over the decades, changing ranking of districts in terms of percentage of urban population and the overall trend in urbanization over the last century.

Increased urbanization caused pressure on available urban infrastructure and urban civic amenities. It created social and political tensions and led to the growth of urban poverty. The

Shillong Master Plan became ineffective. The Town and Country Planning was not extended on time. The Autonomous District Councils did not accord assent to urban development. All these taken together created more problems than solutions. The economy of most urban centers of Meghalaya is tilted towards commercial and service sectors with very little diversification in other sectors of the economy. Absence of private sector investment is another factor for low urbanization in Meghalaya. Under this situation, Sengupta felt that the urban policy of the state needs to gear up productivity and employment. Infrastructure needs to be built with community participation in urban planning and the urban policy needs to be based on distributive justice.

Prof. Malabika Dasgupta found low urbanization among the tribal population in Tripura. Though there are district-level variations in the tribal population as a percentage of the total urban population, the tribal people of Tripura have limited urban presence and there is considerable gap between urbanization as such and urbanization of the tribals in all the four districts of Tripura. Demographic profile of the households and higher male migration to the tribal areas might have been responsible for lower level of urbanization among the tribes. Lack of employment opportunities in the urban areas, agro-based occupational patterns, low literacy, poor urban amenities for the tribal people, urban locations in the plain areas, alienation of landed property of the tribals acquired during the royal regime, threat of ethnic violence in the urban areas and lesser choice of the tribal people to live in urban areas are the factors responsible for low urbanization and increasing ruralization among the tribal people of Tripura. Prof. Dasgupta suggested inclusive policy measures by way of improving education and employment opportunities, improving urban amenities and rural-urban connectivity for the tribal people. Setting up of urban center close to the tribal inhabited interior areas and overcoming the psychological impediments of the tribal people to become urbanized are also suggested by Prof. Dasgupta.

Prof. Sujata Bhadra analyzed the trends of urbanization in Kokrajhar town in Bodoland of Assam. In the context of globalization Kokrajhar town exhibits more pathology of urbanization. There is increasing pressure of population, inadequate urban infrastructure and civic amenities, growing violence against women, trafficking, increasing trend of migration,

corruption etc. in the town. In the agricultural sector, the production in the Kokrajhar Master Plan Area is very much meager as it is a town where very little production of major crops can be traced. Industrial set ups and industrial infrastructure in the town are not adequate enough for new entrepreneurship. The skewed land-use pattern, low employment generation potentials, informalization of labour, inadequacy of trade and commercial infrastructure, poor transportation and traffic hazards, cramped and crowded terminals etc. feature the town of Kokrajhar.

As remedial measures, Prof. Bhadra suggested quite a few points including diversion of agricultural working force and land to other sectors for balanced economic development, proper urban planning, improved road infrastructure, road safety and road safety-education to the people, roadside plantation, management of vehicle terminals, reduction of crowd, construction of bridge on river Gaurang for better connectivity, appropriate land-use and building market infrastructure.

Mr. A.K. Neog analyzed the trend of inequality in farmland holding in the states of northeast India by examining the endowments, farm size and farm practices. He used Gini Coefficient Ratio to examine concentration in holding. He found conspicuous inequality in share of holding vis-à-vis area operated and inter-class unequal distribution in holdings. The Gini Coefficient of concentration of operational holdings show that except in Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur, in all other states of the northeastern region there is a trend towards falling. The inferences that he drew from this study are: according to 2001 Census 81% of the total farm holding are marginal and small and 42.5% of operational area are marginal and small; there is inter class unequal distribution of land holdings; the degree of land inequality during 1990-91 and 200-01 is declining both at All India level and at regional level except in Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur; the degree of concentration is lower in the region than the All- India average; the tribal dominated states are categorized as non-land record states where community based ownership largely prevails. The author is however of the view that a Lower Gini Concentration Ratio with glaring inter-class inequality in land distribution might be misleading inference. Therefore in formulating policy, he thinks, the planners and policy makers need to keep the above scenario in view.

Prof. Rajmani Singh made a critique of the different centrally sponsored schemes of government for income & employment and rural development in northeast India. He found that the top down approach of the above schemes disable the people at the bottom to derive benefit out of those. Lack of access of the poor to the benefits of the schemes, lack of effective and efficient utilization of funds allocated for development, lack of transparency on the part of the policy makers and implementers and lack of people's participation are responsible for poor response of the centrally sponsored schemes in northeast India. The findings of his study on the centrally sponsored rural development schemes like SGSY, PMGSY, Special Accelerated RD Programme for NEI and NREGA show improper beneficiary selection; absence of baseline surveys; involvement of political leaders; bureaucratic red-tapism in the process of selection of beneficiaries; weak coordination among the functionaries of rural development & inadequate staffing; low bank access of the people; inadequate financial assistance; lack of governance; delay in delivery; poor rural infrastructure; under utilization and improper use of allocated funds and finally lack of people's participation.

To overcome these, Prof. Singh gave some concrete suggestions. These include plan for rural infrastructure; harnessing the central non-lapsable pool to build infrastructure and to undertake other economic development activities; harnessing the central grants for info-tech infrastructure and utilize them in right direction; developing agro-based, horticulture-based, forest-based small scale industries and eco-tourism. He also suggested use of Export Development Fund for setting up marketing development infrastructure and SEZ and gearing up of self-employment and entrepreneurship-oriented education policy. He felt that the state governments and local self-government institutions of this region should be pro-active and sensitive in the approaches towards rural development.

Prof. Paulavi Das raised the issue of women development and the skewed sex-ratio in the two social contexts of the north and the northeast India. The phenomenon of 'missing girls', sexual violence against women and sex-based discriminations are very much visible in the patriarchal structure of the Indian society. These phenomena are depicted both in the classical tradition as well as in the modern technology practices. The successive Census Reports

unveiled the fact of adverse sex ratio in different parts of India. In the north India the sex ratios in 1921 and 1951 Census Reports were severely low, even lower than the All-India average. In contrast northeast India showed a better trend. Prevalence of matrilineal system in some parts of the northeast, higher involvement of the women in socio-economic activities and relatively improved status of the women did not allow so much of gender-based violence, female infanticide and other gender based discriminations in the northeast Indian society. This might have also contributed to better sex ratio in the region. On the other hand the rigid patriarchal structure of northern India became highly oppressive for social existence of women and excluded them from private and public spheres of life. These culminated in pre-natal sex determination, sex-selective abortion and other kinds of violence against women.

On the other hand better trend of sex ratio in the northeast also owes to higher participation of women in social services and to the emergence of women organizations working for the cause of women development. There is also fare increase in educational status and professional skill of the women community in the northeastern region that did not take place in the conservative north Indian societies. Hence it is the duty of the activists, social reformers, NGOs and the government to take initiatives for development and progress of women in northeast India.

Professors Jahita Begum and M. Vakkil have shown how ICT can be instrumental in empowerment of women. While more and more women are now-a-days opting for ICT as career, they are also creating knowledge society. Media network at local, national and international levels has also facilitated information dissemination, networking and mutual sharing among the women communities in different regions. The role in Internet has become more significant in this regard. Electronic communication, community radio, video and print media are highly promising for improving the lives of the women at the grassroots. In order to really empower the women through ICT, gender equality, participation, mobilization and organization of women need to be encouraged. Considering the role of ICT in poverty eradication and entrepreneurship development both in the rural and in the urban areas, women's access to ICT and inclusive ICT policy need be pursued. It is also important to address the issue of structural

inequality and gender based discrimination in the society. This can be done through education, training and awareness campaign and through creation of women role models in training and management. At the social policy level again affirmative action is needed to bring the women in senior level management roles in the regulatory bodies.

ICT infrastructure in the northeast is yet to strengthen and spread widely. Weak infrastructure and restrictive ICT connectivity in this region need to be addressed adequately so as to mainstream the women of this region and to empower them. Northeast India has quite a number of vantage points. The youth community in this region is better equipped with English language, they have good communication skill in English language, the girls of this region are more exposed to public spheres and corporate sector is interested to promote ICT industry in this region. The DoNER Ministry also has earmarked a good budget for promotion of ICT in this region. Concrete efforts need to be made to tap the human resources of this region and to bring the women at the forefront of ICT boom in this region.

Prof. Kaustav Lahiri dealt with sustainable development with Ecological Dimension of Sustainability and focuses on the overall viability and health of ecological systems in terms of a comprehensive, multi-scale, dynamic, hierarchical measure of 'resilience', 'vigour' and 'organization' in the context of northeast India. In Development Management, the three foundations of sustainability namely, economic, environmental and social are of immense significance. Prof. Lahiri talked of an inclusive growth model steered by symbiotic sustainability and balanced use of assets with community aspirations. Common pool resources in this situation assume importance. In terms of selected indicators *Percentage of Persons Living Below Poverty Line (PPL)* and *Primary Product Export Share (PPES)*, India's inherent condition and her global status show relevance to livelihood planning through ecological orientation. He examined growth dynamics of the northeast region by Macro spatial Economic Impact on ecology Infra Structure. Considering the ecological vulnerability in the northeastern region, Prof. Lahiri gave some valuable recommendations and showed how ecosystem oriented Management can cultivate Livelihood Prosperity for North East India.

Development in the northeast is on the cross-roads. The process

of colonization of the region and the resources thereof started long ago. The situation, according to one view, has worsened in recent times and no amount of institutional reforms could address the situation effectively. According to the other view there are new opportunities for development in the region provided the region can cope up with the changing contexts. But development is as such not only about development of physical infrastructure and policy co-option. It is basically about redistribution, distributive justice to the vulnerable section of the society, environmental sustainability, balanced growth of urbanization, transparency and accountability in the development administration and abolition of class-based discriminations. Over and above enhancement of employment and income opportunities need be positioned at the center place of development.