



**IN DEFENCE OF**

**REGIONAL  
ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT  
IN INDIA**

**A CASE FOR THE NORTH EAST**

**P.M. PASSAH**

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OF  
REGIONAL ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA**

A Case for the North East

*Edited by*  
**P. M. Passah**

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*A  
Felicitation Volume  
in Honour  
of  
Dr. Basudev Datta Ray  
The Secretary  
North-East Council for Social Science  
Research  
A Freedom Fighter, A Teacher par excellence  
and  
A Champion of the North-Eastern Region*



M. M. Jacob

RAJ BHAVAN  
Shilong 793 001  
Meghalaya State

## Foreword

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This publication is a fitting tribute to a selfless scholar, whose contributions are much valued by all. I am glad that a felicitation volume in honor of Dr. Basudev Datta Ray is being brought out. It is also significant that this book is compiled and edited by an eminent Economist, Prof. P.M. Passah. I know Dr. Basudev Datta Ray intimately, for the past many years and I have great appreciation for the remarkable service rendered by him for the cause of promotion of research in various fields. As secretary, North-East Council for Social Science Research, he was always piloting the cause of North Eastern Region. It was his devotion, hard work and a vision that made him to conceive the idea of establishing NEICSSR way back in 1974 and thereafter, conducting large number of seminars, workshops and conferences, on various topics concerning North Eastern States.

His personal rapport with individuals and institutions in the country, enabled him to get prominent scholars, to attend the conferences held in Shillong. He was mainly responsible along with his colleagues to publish a series of publications, on behalf of NEICSSR. About sixty-six seminars and conferences organised by him and his colleagues attracted not only prominent scholars of North Eastern Region but also, from other parts of the country.

I had the good fortune of participating in some of the workshops and seminars in Shillong, during the last few years. The workshops and conferences were very useful and

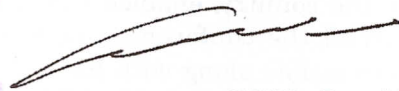
informative and attended by resource leaders competent to handle each topic under discussion. This felicitation volume is a useful publication as it comprises major contributions on topics of great interests in this North East Region as a whole.

Various papers on macro-economic and theoretical overview of the North East, by Amallesh Banerjee and others; Regional trade services and entrepreneurship by A.K. Neog and others; Micro-level studies by N.N. Bhattacharjee and others; socio-political aspects and women issues by Girin Phukon and others; are some of the topics of current interests to the readers. I do not wish to mention all the different topics included in this volume. This volume will be a treasure house to all those who wish to have a feel of North Eastern India.

Not only the choice of topics and themes for various conferences, NEICSSR is to be complimented for publishing many of the conference papers in the past. This publication is unique with a variety of topics from agriculture to industry including many other aspects pertaining to North East India in general.

I am happy that his contribution in social sciences are recognized by his colleagues through the publication of this "Felicitation Volume". I wish all success for this publication. May Dr. Basudev Datta Ray continue to serve the society through the NEICSSR, and I pray God to give him health and happiness to continue this endeavor to impart knowledge through this forum.

My best wishes,



(M.M. Jacob)

Shillong  
The 28<sup>th</sup> June 2005

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## Preface

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In the publication of this volume, the members of the North-East India Council for Social Science Research, Shillong are very proud and happy indeed. They had some time ago proposed to felicitate Dr. Basudev Datta Ray, the founder Secretary of the Council, and to publish a volume in his honour. Dr. Datta Ray deserves congratulations and felicitations not only from the members of the Council but also from all those who know him and his achievements in the field of social science research in the North-East. Many scholars and social scientists, young and old, in the North-East and in other parts of the country, have been provided with an ideal forum in the NEICSSR through the unstinted efforts of Dr. Datta Ray who continues as its Secretary for the last 31 years of its existence.

Dr. Datta Ray is well known as a teacher and research scholar of repute even though he had a chequered career as a student during his young days. At the young age, he joined the ranks of Freedom Fighters who fought for the freedom of India in the early part of the last century. He was born to a humble family at Bankura, West Bengal on the 10<sup>th</sup> of March 1924. His ancestral home was in a village in the District of Bakarganj, East Bengal where he had a part of his school education. He wrote his Intermediate Examination from Dum Dum Central Jail. He graduated from the Scottish Church College, Calcutta; obtained his M.A. degree in 1949 from the Calcutta University and then came to Shillong in 1950 to join the St. Edmund's College as a Lecturer in Economics and subsequently opened the Department of Political Science in 1962 and headed it till 1985. He was incharge of the

Faculty of Post-graduate studies in Political Science which was functional for seven years from 1973 in the St. Edmund's College. He gave lectures in the I.A.S. Pre-Training Centre as well. He was also a member of the Voluntary Health Association, Meghalaya and the State Resource Centre, N.E.H.U. Dr. Datta Ray obtained, in between, his B.T., LL.B., and Ph.D. degrees from the Gauhati University.

It was in the middle of 1974 that Dr. Datta Ray brought together a number of teachers and social scientists of the North-East in a meeting at Shillong on the 30<sup>th</sup> June of that year under the Chairmanship of late Prof. V. Venkata Rao of the Gauhati University. The meeting with one accord decided to establish the NEICSSR with the principal objective of undertaking, organising and facilitating research activities in the North-East besides other activities related to research. Earlier he founded the Shillong Political Science Association and the Inter-Disciplinary Forum and guided them for a few years.

Dr. Datta Ray who has been able to effect good rapport with many research centres and institutes both in the North-East and in other parts of the country, is guiding the Council which has since held more than 66 seminars, conferences, symposium, workshops, etc. and published as many research proceedings in the form of Books. Many national and international organizations have been attracted by the fairly high standard of publications of the Council mostly dealing with the question of socio-economic problems and issues of the North East. The Journal of NEICSSR is being published regularly since 1977 under his guidance.

By the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 1985, Dr. Datta Ray's service in the St. Edmund's College was superannuated but the college authorities continued to assist him and to utilize his service. Immediately in April 1985 he started the Women's College in the St. Edmund's College premises where the new college continued to function upto 1991. He was the founder Principal of the college upto 1992. In fact as the Secretary of the organization known as 'The Shillong Academy', he had earlier helped to revive a dying Secondary School at

Laitumkhrah and made it functional. The School had since shifted to its own campus at Upper New Colony. Dr. Datta Ray was instrumental in organising, as the Rector, both the School and the Women College under the sponsorship of the Shillong Academy, which are now functioning in the same campus. Dr. Datta Ray never retires. From 1993 onwards he has exclusively devoted his time to the cause of the NEICSSR.

He wrote a number of books including the *Assam Secretariat: An Administrative History of North-East India* (1978); *Tribal Identity and Tension in North-East India* (1989); and a volume of *Bengali Poems* (2004). He edited 20 books published by the NEICSSR and authored more than 40 research papers.

As an editor of the book, I am indeed very grateful to the members of the Council for the opportunity they have given me in associating myself with this work, and I join in with all of them in felicitating Dr. Datta Ray, the Secretary of the Council all the time. I am especially grateful to the authors of the Papers contained in this volume for their generous response and for their scholarly researched contribution. It must now be said that this Felicitation Volume is published, to use the words of one contributor, "in honour of Professor B. Datta Ray, a freedom fighter, a teacher *par excellence* and above all, a social scientist with deep concerns for the underdevelopment of the North-Eastern States (Region) of India. This octogenarian thespian has spent over the last three decades in herding the social scientists of the Region into the secular forum of the NEICSSR, of which he is the Secretary General. In times when the polity is fragmented and even this fragmentation is assigned morality and legitimacy, the aging Nehruvian Scholar still spends sleepless nights in building a new India, a dream consigned to ashes of history a long time ago." The title of the book justifies his conscious efforts as the Champion of the North East.

In a very special way, I must express my thankfulness to His Excellency, the Governor of Meghalaya, Shri M.M. Jacob for writing a Foreword to this Volume.

We must also thank M/s. Akansha Publishing House, New Delhi, for agreeing to expeditiously publish this book. Last but not the least our thanks are also due to Mr. Godfrey Pathaw for partly helping in computerised work.

Shillong:  
The 30<sup>th</sup> June 2005

**Editor**

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## Higher Education in India with Special Reference to North-East: Problems & Perspectives

—X.P. Mao

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### INTRODUCTION

India is the only country in the world perhaps where both higher education and illiteracy are on the increase. In other words, day by day the number of graduates, post-graduates including M. Phil and Ph.D degree holders keep on increasing multi-fold and at the same time the number of illiterates goes on increasing. It is a paradoxical situation but at the same time the situation obtains in the country. M.K. Gandhi, the Father of the nation, during his lifetime gave a clarion call to make basic education free and compulsory and make it state funded. However, he was not in favour of higher education being funded by the State. According to Gandhi, higher education should be left to private organizations. When Gandhi said this he was looked down upon. Even Nehru sneezed at him on the issue. Today, just after half a century of his assassination the country is giving serious thought to the idea of privatization of higher education. The beneficiaries of the so called higher education are up in arms against the very idea of privatization. Some State Governments even do not have funds to pay pension to their retired employees. In States like Orissa the amount of pension paid every month is

more than the amount of salary paid to its regular employees. Some State Governments are also thinking to introduce what is known as paypension scheme.

All these potentially alarming ideas and plans show that either the Government coffers are empty or the revenue of the Government is being siphoned off in a different direction to meet some other ends.

### HISTORY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The introduction of History of higher education in India goes back to the great sepoy mutiny after which the administration of the country was transferred from the Company to the crown. Consequently, three Universities, one each in the Presidency towns of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras was set up to spread higher education among the natives. For about hundred years i.e. from 1858 to 1958 there was no problem of unemployment of the educated in the country. Whosoever passed Middle English School Examination could get at least a job of school teacher. But gradually after independence, the number of colleges and universities grew up manifold. Particularly after the seventies, unemployment among the educated began to run all time high. We all know that at present even engineers and professionally educated young men and women are either unemployed or underemployed. Mad rush for admission to M.Phil and Ph.D. programmes is a clear indicator to the problem of unemployment among the educated youth. When so many students come for M. Phil and Ph.D. Programmes it does not mean that all on a sudden, students in India have become interested in research. It simply means that after doing post graduation they do not get a job and that is why they have crowded the corridors of universities and research centers. Unemployment is one of the causes of mad rush for higher education. In the past, when on every terminal point jobs were available there was no rush for higher education. In the sixties, in some of the Universities in certain departments like Sanskrit and Philosophy seats were falling vacant but today not only that seats remain vacant but also colleges have been forced to open post

graduate classes to accommodate the teeming number of aspiring students.

### PRESENT SITUATION

Both the Central and State Governments purely on political considerations are opening the flood gates of higher education by way of creating more and more universities at the expense of primary and secondary education. It is expected that the government shall not only invest in giving higher education but also invest in creating jobs for them. Today in India it is relatively easier to get a central University on political considerations than to get a primary school in a village. There are villages in India where there are no primary schools. Further, there are schools where there are no class rooms or even no roof over the head of the students and small children are required to sit under the open sky. At the same time, the Government keep on repeating in a parrot like fashion that they are bent upon removing illiteracy from the country. Unfortunately, this has never happened and perhaps in near future illiteracy is not going to be removed for the simple reason that the so called educational planning of the country is highly defective at the root. The process has to be reversed. At least for 20 years, top-priority should be given to primary education and the money earmarked for the so called higher education in general sciences including social sciences should be diverted towards the primary education. Unless this is done things will not improve at all.

The wasteful and counter productive higher education must be controlled and monitored without further delay. One or two instances will suffice to prove the point in this connection. There are primary schools in the country where there are no teachers or for four classes of students there are only one or two teachers. On the other hand, there are departments, centers in some Central Universities in the country where there are large numbers of teachers without having any work. How has such situation come into existence? Do the Ministry of Human Resource Development and the

University Grants Commission—the fund giving and distributing agencies know this? The possible answer is both Yes and No. The University authorities in connivance with the Universities Grants Commission create posts in order to oblige their own people whereas the Government Departments are very niggardly in creation of posts in Primary Schools. Again the Primary School Teachers have no say at all in the creation of posts in their respective schools whereas the University Teachers have a big say in the creation of posts in the University Departments. It is precisely because of this reason, Paulo Friere, the Brazilian Philosopher and Educationist argued that higher education is a conspiracy of a select few in their self interest at the expense of the masses. Higher Education in India is no exception to this type of conspiracy.

### DISTANCE EDUCATION

To ease out pressure on colleges and universities, the Indira Gandhi Open University (IGNOU) was set up and many other State Governments followed suit by setting up Distance Education Departments or even Open Universities. Still then the problem cannot be solved and Governments of various States are compelled to open Post Graduate Classes even in Colleges. In consequence, it has added to swelling number of unemployable Post Graduate Degree holders both in General Sciences and Social Sciences including Humanities. The amount of money incurred in wasteful expenditure like increasing number of Post Graduate Colleges and Universities should have come to a halt long before so that it would have been better for the country. Today the situation has become unmanageable and no political party in power can solve it.

### THE PROBLEMS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The situation has come to such a pass that because of paucity of funds some state universities are abolishing vacant teaching posts. On the other hand, Central Universities keep on creating teaching posts without any need and necessity.

This type of disparity existing between State and Central Universities must be done away with. After all, money comes from the same source i.e., the public exchequer and any discrimination between State and Central Universities on distribution of funds is abominable. It is high time that the Central Government in close collaboration with the University Grants Commission constitutes a task force to streamline higher education in the entire country so that no disparity exists between State and Central Universities on allocation of funds that has sometimes led to wasteful expenditure in certain areas.

The Ten-plus-Two-plus-three pattern of Education was introduced in the entire country with a great fan-fare. It was trumpeted that the new pattern of education would usher in a new era in the field of education. It was advocated by many that the new dispensation would not only diversify and draw large majority of students towards professional education and thus encouraging self employment but also would ensure quality education. But the goal is yet to be achieved. States like Orissa that had eleven years school and two years intermediate and two years Graduate Programmes did not gain anything at all in terms of years. States that had ten years of schooling education gained one more year but by and large quality education remained a far cry. In most of the cases, the courses of study for two year graduate programme was just split into three years with small addition and alteration here and there. This shows how clever are the teachers in Indian Universities and Colleges. The so called diversification has never taken place in India and perhaps would never take place in future. Our graduates can never compare with their counter parts in developed countries of the world whether we introduce ten-plus-two-plus-three or eleven-plus-three-plus-three pattern. It is high time that our educational planners take a re-look at the entire educational system.

In principle, the three years degree programme should have equipped the students to compete for the civil services and other comparable jobs. But as a matter of fact not only

our graduates including post graduates but also M. Phils and Ph.Ds. are so ill equipped that they do not have the required self confidence to take up any responsibility and compete for other jobs. It is sheer wastage of public funds that our Post Graduates and even M. Phils and Ph.Ds become clerks and office assistants. Higher education, particularly in general Sciences and Arts should be absolutely limited to the select few. Only those who have both competence and inclination should be allowed to go for it. The same principle should be followed while admitting students to M. Phil and Ph.D. Programmes. The University Departments are crowded by a large number of M. Phil and Ph.D students who are even unable to write a synopsis. In majority of cases, research themes are duplicated and triplicated. In certain cases, neither the students nor the supervisors even know how to write a synopsis for research. In most cases, major portions of M. Phil and Ph.D theses are just copied out from old books and journals with the knowledge of supervisors. Further, very rarely Ph.D theses are rejected. In Universities today there are professional evaluators. One has to just keep contact with them. The principle of "You scratch my back and I will scratch yours" is very much followed in award of Ph.D Degree.

There are instances where in certain University Departments only two or three external examiners have been examining Ph.D. theses done under the supervision of a particular teacher for the last 20 years. These M. Phils and Ph.Ds with half baked and borrowed ideas cannot even teach in the class room. Fifty years back when Ph.D and M. Phil Degree was not a requirement for appointment as Lecturers in Colleges and Universities, teaching was done properly and effectively. But today, teachers are unable and incapable of teaching variety of courses even with Ph.D. Degree. Therefore it seems that there is no need of making Ph.D. Degree a prerequisite for teaching jobs in Universities and Colleges. Ph.D. and M. Phil degrees have become so cheap and useless that even persons having such degrees are unable to get jobs in Primary Schools. To churn out Ph.D degree holders in such a large number is not only counter productive but is a glaring

case of wastage of public funds. Time has come to check this type of wasteful expenditure in production of unemployed and unemployable Ph.D. degree holders and the money earmarked for research could be diverted towards improvement in primary and secondary education.

It is expected that teaching and research programmes should go together. That is to say, that University departments should have both teaching and research programmes. But as the matter stands today in India a second thought in Ph.D programme is a must. Instead of encouraging research in all subjects in all the universities, the University Grants Commission should think in terms of setting up limited number of special research centers in certain subjects. As for example, to begin with instead of encouraging research in social sciences and humanities in all the Universities in the country four to five research institutions in each subject be opened in the country so as to attract talented students towards research. Take the instance of research in Sanskrit language and literature. Only two or three research institutions on the subject in the entire country can suffice for the purpose. Not only that there is no need to open post-graduate classes in all the subjects in all the universities of a state. States like Orissa have more than twenty Sanskrit Colleges, a large number of Sanskrit Pathshalas, one Kendriya Sanskrit Samsthan, one Sanskrit University and besides, Utkal University having post graduate department of Sanskrit, two or three colleges are having post-graduate classes in Sanskrit. Is there any need of mushrooming of Sanskrit learning in the country at the expense of primary and secondary education? But the genuine Sanskrit scholars are found today not in India but either in Cambridge, or Oxford, Harvard, Heidelberg and Tokyo. When millions are unemployed and Government do not have money to give quality education at primary and secondary level they open a Culture University in the country. Again a State like Orissa, where the tribal areas are still very backward in education the government has set up a University of Culture at public expenses and is spending crores of rupees. All these show

that the Government in the entire country does not really give serious thought to education.

### NEED FOR RESTRUCTURING HIGHER EDUCATION

It is high time that the Government both in the states and the center including the University Grants Commission must give serious thought to the entire domain of education. Some kind of rationalization and monitoring is the need of the hour. Instead of duplicating, triplicating and multiplying the same subject in all the Universities, the Government must take a decision not to open all the subjects in all the Universities whether funded by the states or by the Centre. As for example, subjects like education, library science, public administration, even History, Philosophy, Economics and Sociology should not be opened in all the Universities. Rationing should also be made in opening general science subjects including social sciences and humanities. Higher education is a luxury and this luxury should be curtailed as soon as possible. Instead, the Government should ensure what is known as manpower planning. A country that cannot extend all weather roads, clean drinking water, primary health care facilities, Sulabha Sauchalaya including primary schools in all the villages in India, has no moral right whatsoever to indulge in the luxury of so called unproductive and useless Higher education.

### GOALS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Commissions and Committees on the objectives and goals of higher education have been set up in the country from time to time. Reports have been submitted but it has not made any visible impact in the sphere of education. Creation, preservation and transmission of knowledge are some of the objectives enunciated and high-lighted by various commissions. Now the question is: have the centers of higher learning and education been able to fulfill declared objectives? The answer is an emphatic "no." After independence, there has been a quantitative growth of education at the expenses of quality. The number of Colleges and Universities have

multiplied but proportionately quality has gone down. In fact, instead of making primary and secondary education universal and compulsory we are making higher education universal. The process should be reversed. Higher education (Post Graduate upwards) in general sciences and humanities must be reserved for a select few. That is to say, it must be meant for those who stand to profit by it. If a survey is made as to the contribution of Indian Universities to the international pool of knowledge in the field of social sciences and humanities during the last two decades perhaps it is a big zero. In fact, we have not produced any kind of salable knowledge during these years. The counter argument may be advanced that such knowledge is not quantifiable and it takes ages together to create absolutely new knowledge. But these are arguments which are meant to save the skin and hide the truth.

Contribution to general sciences by the scholars in Indian Universities in past two decades more or less stands on the same footing. It is true that teachers belonging to general science stream have produced large number of research papers both in national and international journals. But it is yet to be known whether the so called research papers have really contributed to the fund of scientific knowledge. Instead of giving research grants to university department to conduct research in general sciences, research institutes on the model of Bhaba Atomic Research Centre and Tata Institute of Fundamental Research should be set up in various subjects so as to ensure quality research. Universities in India have failed in this respect. Preservation of knowledge does not mean collection and compilation of traditional knowledge and wisdom. One of the objectives of University Education is to collect, collate and critically examine the traditional knowledge and wisdom. But almost all the Universities in India have failed in this regard.

Almost all the Universities in India have department of Sanskrit and modern Indian languages, Social Anthropology and History. But hardly any attempt has been made to critically evaluate and examine the tradition of the concerned region. In many cases traditions have been blindly glorified

and exaggerated to the detriment of society. As for example, in spite of the fact that there are large numbers of post graduate Sanskrit departments, Sanskrit Universities, Kendriya Sanskrit Samsthans & Sanskrit Colleges, yet readable English or Hindi translation of Indian Philosophical Classics including the Vedas & Upanishads are not available to the public. One of the objectives of Sanskrit education in the country shall be to prepare and produce readable translation of Indian Philosophical tradition on the model of Plato's Dialogues and Kant's Critic of Pure Reason.

Transmission or extension of knowledge to the masses particularly to the less fortunates and the teeming millions who live in the rural areas has miserably failed almost in all Indian Universities.

#### ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY NEEDED

The University Grants Commission has created generously and funded certain centers in some of the central universities to carry on research in certain unconventional areas and to transmit and extend it to the masses. But like all other post Graduate departments these centers have also failed to deliver the goods. The University Grants Commission being the Funding Agency must hold such universities accountable as have failed in their objectives and duties.

Years back, the University Grants Commission, in order to impart quality education in Colleges and Universities floated many plans and proposals. One such plan was to introduce M. Phil & Ph.D. programme in various universities with scholarship. National Eligibility Test (NET) was introduced for the purpose. One of the objectives of the plan was to create quality teachers for colleges and universities. But gradually and in due course of time, the entire plan has been mangled and watered down. M. Phil Programme was visualized as a prelude to Ph.D. Programme for the simple reason that the post graduate programme does not equip a student at all to carry on research just immediately after M.A. and M.Sc. Degree. So it was visualized that M. Phil

Programme in the form of intensive Pre-Ph.D. courses will go a long way not only acquainting the student with frontier areas of research but with the latest techniques of analysis in the concerned disciplines. But what has happened as a matter of fact? Most of the University Departments have dropped M. Phil Programme on some plea or other. The real reason is that most of the University teachers wish only to take minimum number of classes. This has been one of the major reasons why M. Phil Courses have been dropped in most of the Universities. As a result, Ph.D. becomes purely a personal matter between the student and the supervisor. In Social Sciences and Humanities the situation is very precarious. As a matter of fact, it is now possible for a student to get a Ph.D. Degree without even reading at least ten to twenty books.

Recruitment, appointment and promotion are ultimately dependent on Ph.D. Degree, attendance in so called Refresher Courses and on the top of it, research publications including research supervision. As a result, it has created not only nightmarish situation but chaos and confusion in Universities. First of all, colleges and Universities have multiplied beyond necessity and a large number of Post Graduates have somehow been appointed as teachers. Once they have been appointed they must get some promotion.

But such promotion if any should not be based on research degree and publications. Research is something that cannot be demanded of a teacher. That is to say, if a teacher has neither potentiality nor inclination for doing research he/she should not be compelled or forced to do any research. If teachers in colleges and universities feel inadequate to teach it is not because they have not done any research but because they have not been properly trained at Graduate and Post Graduate stages. If Graduate Programme is of three years and Post Graduate Programmes is of two years then after completion of five years, a good student should be competent to teach in colleges and universities. If they are incompetent this means that our Graduate and Post Graduate

Programmes are defective. Further preparation of a Ph.D thesis on a particular topic is not likely to enhance the teaching ability of a student. As for example, preparation of Ph.D. thesis say in Purusarathas in Indian Philosophy is not likely to equip a student to teach metaphysics and epistemology. That is why as a matter of fact many Ph.D. degree holders nowadays have turned out to be very bad teachers. The need of the hour is to produce quality graduates and post graduates and not churn out substandard M. Phils and Ph.Ds. If at all M. Phil and Ph.D. programmes are to be introduced it has to be through rigorous course work and training followed by submission of a theses. Unless this is done M. Phil and Ph.D. theses in the context of Indian Universities primarily in the areas of social sciences and humanities will be meaningless and would be of no relevance at all.

Universities in India have been modeled on the pattern of British Universities. Sufficient autonomy has been given to Indian Universities with the hope and expectation that they would manage higher education without fear and favour. In this sense, Universities in India have been visualized as houses of reason. But as a matter of fact, most of the Universities in India have turned into hot bed of politics. In majority of cases, appointment of Vice Chancellor is being done purely on political consideration. Sometimes the aspirants also push and pull the string. Those who select the Vice-Chancellors are very often not free from corruption. A country where a section of judiciary is corrupt how do we expect that the selectors of Vice Chancellors will be honest and sincere? Of late some of them have become so revengeful and vindictive that it has made the life of self respecting teachers miserable in Universities. Vice-Chancellors like Sir Asutosh Mukherjee, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Sarvapali Radhakrishnan, Rama Swami Mudalir, Laxman Swami Mudalir and many others are very rare now-a-days. It is said about Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya that while he was the Vice-Chancellor of Benares Hindu University rusticated his own son Govinda Malaviya on the ground of

later's misconduct. Steps should be taken to appoint only persons of honesty and integrity who can transcend selfish considerations as Vice Chancellors of Universities.

Malaviya-like Vice-Chancellors are not only rare but almost non-existent today in India. Unfortunately, there are Vice-Chancellors in some Central Universities today in India who cannot see beyond their family members. If per chance both the spouses are working in the same University and one of them is elevated to the post of a Vice-Chancellor, the life of other teachers becomes miserable. Such instances are not rare in Indian Universities today. In many cases the Executive Council, the apex policy making body of the University, cannot transcend personal selfish consideration of loaves and fishes. In most of the cases external members do not attend the meeting of the Council regularly and if at all they happen to attend do not take active interest in the concerned university. The internal members, in majority of cases behave as mere stooges of the Vice-Chancellor thereby defeating the very purpose and objective of University autonomy.

### THE DEGENERATION

In the Indian University system, the Chancellor and the Visitor have been regarded as the highest authority and the Court of Appeal. But in due course of time, these offices also have degenerated. In the case of state Universities, Governor of the state concerned is the Chancellor and in case of Central University, except Viswabharati the President of India is the Visitor. It is expected that whenever there is a crisis in the University, the Chancellor/Visitor shall take steps to remove the difficulties.

Most shockingly in the recent past in case of a state University the Chancellor did not hesitate to interfere with appointment of a professor of economics and the matter was referred to the Supreme Court. The Apex Court in its judgment even did not spare the Chancellor for his undue and unwise interference. There are cases where in a Central

University some students prepared their Ph.D. theses but are not allowed by the Vice-Chancellor to submit it for evaluation. The matter has been brought to the notice of the Visitor but the Visitor simply does not respond. This type of situation was simply unheard of in the past. It is a fact that Universities in India in the past created intellectuals who manned various spheres of society and contributed to the fund of knowledge. But today universities are fast moving towards degeneration. Unless timely steps are taken to save Universities and higher education in India the future of the country would be doomed. It is time to fix accountability and responsibility for failure in higher education.

### POSITION IN NORTH-EAST

The situation in North-East is no better than its counter part in other parts of the country. There are five central Universities, four State Universities, one Indian Institute of Technology and one North-Eastern Institute of Sciences and Technology in the region. Like all other Universities in the country, these Universities keep on churning out unemployable graduates, post-graduates, M.Phils and Ph.Ds in the liberal arts and general sciences without taking into account the relevance and requirements of superfluity of such degrees in the modern day world.

In other parts of the country there are industries, heavy and small, to absorb educated youth but in the North-East the situation is different. The educated youth have to seek jobs only in the government offices, schools, colleges and Universities. But all of them cannot be given the so called white collar jobs. In order to solve the problem of unemployment among the youth in the North-East Professional Education must start in a big way replacing indiscriminate spread of higher education in liberal arts and general sciences. It is very strange to note in this connection that a Vice-Chancellor of one of the Central Universities in the North-East in a meeting of Scholars opposed faster economic and material development of the region on the flimsy ground that such development was wiping out the oral

history and culture of the people. The Vice-Chancellor did not specify in detail how economic development destroys history and culture of the people. On the contrary, economic development is likely to lead to protection and preservation of history and culture of a people. Vice-Chancellors of Universities who are supposed to guide educational development in the country should refrain from making such statements that are likely to misguide and mislead the populace.

Take the instance of North-Eastern Hill University Shillong. Besides Post-Graduate departments in traditional subjects it has centres like Literary and Cultural studies, Creative Arts and Adult and Continuing Education among others. These centers were created for specific objective in view. But they have miserably failed in the discharge of the intended objective. The Centre for Literary and Cultural studies should have collected folk tales, folk lores of various tribes and should have translated them into English. But they have not been able to do that. On the other hand, some University officials have gone to England and Ireland on funds meant for researches in local folk lores provided by the Ford Foundation to NEHU.

Of late, some University Officials are shedding crocodile tears in the name of oral history and culture of the local tribals. It may be pointed out in this connection that one of the ways of reconstructing history and culture out of oral tradition is to make scientific and exhaustive study of tribal languages. The department of linguistics was set up in North-Eastern Hill University Shillong with a view to conducting study and research in tribal languages. A critical and comparative study of tribal languages of N.E. region along with Tibetan, Chinese, Burmese and Thai languages will surely throw sufficient light on social and cultural history of these people. Unfortunately, the linguistics department of NEHU is as good or as bad like any of its counterpart in the plains. Compilation of a multi-linguistic dictionary with critical and explanatory notes is likely to throw light not only on origin, growth and evolution of tribal languages but also

of the tribal people of the North-East as well. This project may be taken up as a joint venture by all the five central universities in the Region. This is the best possible way of protecting and preserving the history and culture of the tribals of the North-East and not by refusing and rejecting modern economic and material development. The warning of a Vice-Chancellor of a Central University in the region that economic and material development of the region will wipe out culture and history of the people is the result of a misplaced suspicion. It resembles the Fascist and Nazi ideal of unfounded cultural superiority which ultimately led to extreme form of jingoism and extermination of six millions of Jews by Hitler. Time has come for all the Universities in the North-East both State and Centrally funded, to come together and design courses and programmes so as to accelerate economic development of the region. Teaching and research in Universities in North-East must be directly linked with economic and material development of the region as a whole.

### CONCLUSION

To conclude time has come to reverse the process of education in the country in general and North-East in particular. That is to say, emphasis should be laid on quality primary and secondary education with less emphasis on higher education in general sciences and liberal arts. Further, all the Universities including the I.I.T. and the NERIST in the region must strive for faster economic and material development of the region. Fascist ideal in education must be given a go-bye. Thus, complete overhauling of University and higher education particularly in the North-East is a must.