



# **DIMENSIONS OF SOCIAL ISSUES IN INDIA'S NORTH EAST**

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**H. SUDHIR  
JUBITA HAJARIMAYUM**

The current volume addresses various multi-faceted dimensions of some selected social issues confronting the northeast region with a specific thrust on the state of Manipur. This is a step into the task of exploring the problems, which have largely loomed over the region particularly the youth related issues of drugs, education and unemployment and their impact on the overall development question. The work sojourns to provide a broad glimpse of these problems by way of shedding light on the various dimensional issues which include extent, dynamics, trend, causal factors, impact, national and state responses, role of civil society, interrelations with the region's development index and suggested alternative strategies that could pragmatically respond the problems on development perspective. This work will certainly be of help for policy framers, social scientists, academicians, researchers and various agencies towards a creative understanding of this situation of the region.

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IN INDIA'S NORTH-EAST**

*Selections on Youth, Drugs, Education  
and Unemployment*

*Edited by*

**H. Sudhir**

**Jubita Hajarimayum**

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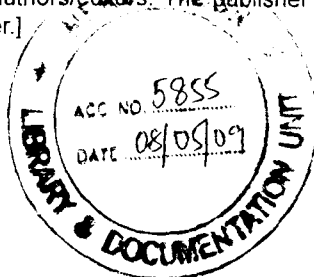
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# 1

## INTRODUCTION

—*H. Sudhir*

—*Jubita Hajarimayum*

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### **Beginnings**

Drug abuse particularly among the youth, which has a deep reaching impact in the larger context of social security and development, is recognized as a serious social concern. Since olden days, the history of mankind has an account of drug usages. Record shows herbs, roots, leaves and plants having used for medical purposes, however, over the past few years, use of drugs against medical meaning has shaken the globe that influenced the world community to respond to the issue.

Drug abuse is an increasing phenomenon in South and South-east Asia. Asian countries clearly demonstrated this phenomenon in the 1980s and the trend continued throughout. The northeast region nestled proximately on the Golden Triangle, which is famous for 20% of world heroin contribution precisely for production of pure heroin type crystal white injectable powder locally known as No.4. Geo-politically, the region has perforated international boundaries. From being a route in the lucrative drug trafficking, the region became a transit-consumer region characterized by an emergent youth's drug addictive behaviour at a large proportion by the 80s and its consequential impact in the society. The youth's addictive

behaviour in the region has been largely influenced by a ray complex factors that include inadequate education; want for social support system including youth counselling and health facilities; high scale of unemployment; lack of recreational spaces; usual confrontation to violence; broken familial background; inappropriate parental care; frustration; easier availability of heroin etc.

A serious concern closely associated with the drug addictive behaviour is the endemic called HIV/AIDS. Against the homosexual origin of the epidemic in the United States, the historical genesis of the endemic in this region is related to the high risk addictive behaviour among the injecting drug users transmitted in its own multiplied ways. A considerable percentage of drug users and HIV infected population is in the age group of 15-35 years. The dimension of the issue of drug abuse and HIV/AIDS is serious because it is beyond an individual matter rather a social issue. The more complexity of the issue is its concealed built-up character, costly intervention and programme implementation.

Along with drug addiction, there are questions on education and unemployment, which characterized the region. With the spread of education, the critical situation of unemployment more specifically among the educated youth and its social consequence has been a unique character in this region since the last few years. In spite of raising the number of educational institutions, higher enrolment rate of students to various educational institutions generating to a gradually raising literacy rate, a sizeable chunk of educated youth produced in and out of the state are deprived of remunerative work. This issue of the region is adhesive to its characteristics such as economic backwardness, infrastructural devoid, uneven regional development patterns, absence of medium and large scale industries, dying of public sector industrial ventures, want for effective incentive to small scale and household industries. On the one side, the government's various self-employment

and income generation schemes primarily meant for the educated unemployed need to be made more effective towards realizing meaningfully the desired expectation.

While unemployment is recognized as a situation where one is capable to work yet, unable to find it. It is an involuntary failure to get hold of income generating work. On the economic framework, the issue of educated unemployment is largely determined by the supply-demand relation. The phenomenal expansion of 'supply side' in terms of high population growth rate, expansion of educational institutions and considerable amount of educated youth brought forth both in and out the state is unproportionately commensurated by the 'demand factors' like the sluggish development trend, least employment absorption potentials, educated youths' white collar 'job seeking attitude rather than job providing aptitude' and so forth. The current type of education in the region needs to be given an accord. The region shows a trend of general education with least emphasis on professional and technical education. There is a need for a co-relation between the education system and employment in the region. The present education system requires attuning to the changing development scenario.

Of the total official unemployment data, the educated unemployment shares the lion's share. Apart from the official data, there is a mass of educated unemployed unregistered in the employment exchanges. Though the number of educated unemployment shows a real concern year by year, the actual placement done is comparatively quite low indicating an employment registration-placement imbalance. This acute problem has been worsened by the ban on fresh recruitments in the government sector.

Of the problems confronted by the educated youth, unemployment is a serious one for the simple reason that it is much more beyond an isolated issue of the educated youth themselves rather an overall social issue. The problem besides

affecting the individual educated unemployed and his familial set-up, it too affects the larger social fiber. At the individual point, the unemployment wrecks the identity, psychology and status of an educated youth but also failure on his part to fulfill the due familial expectation disturbs the familial cordial relation at the family level. At the larger social context, a great mass of educated unemployment perpetrating in the society unsolved is a great loss of the most vibrant social group unchanneled in the state's productivity. The serious danger of this continued problem is the liability of the youth to the prey of deviant behaviour, which might be detrimental to the region's overall development. The social and political tranquility of the state and the nation as whole is squarely related to the youth who remained unemployment. The overall development of the country is largely depended on the viable and cultural specific planning and policies that may alleviate the problem.

Unemployment among the uneducated youth is now a subject-matter of considerable debate for the policy-makers, administrators and academicians. The meaningful alleviation of the problem needs to be looked from a wholistic perspective. Despite Government's initiatives to response effectively to the problem in the forms of various employment schemes for the educated youth under the overall development process, there are still inconsistencies in functioning or implementation of the programmes towards adequately benefiting the target group thereby necessarily calling forth an integrated alternative strategy specified to the problem. The need for an appropriate institutional framework to implement educated unemployment alleviation programme touching several aspects viz, state, non-government organization, educated youth, academic and community participation is felt to ensure maximum efficiency. The need is to encourage an integrated participatory approach in planning, implementing, and managing feasible productive employment policies linked to the specific regional infrastructural requirements.

## **Broad Objective**

Taking a serious note of the escalated problem, the current work intends to step in into the task that aims to understand the crux of the problem and also aims to explore and develop the viable cultural and gender specific integrated strategies on collaborative partnership of the different professional expertises to respond effectively to the problem and to enhance effective intervention to alleviate the problem towards region's development orientation. Broadly the work touched upon the extent; dynamics of the problem; overall impact of the problem at different levels at individual, family and social levels; social attitude that causes barriers to the educated youth seeking employment; national and state response; relation of the problems with the region's development status; gap between the policy planning of the government and its implementation part; inter-relation between the various schemes envisaged in the government policy and the actual problem; suggested strategies towards effectively responding the problem.

## **Précis of the Canvas**

Dr. Romeobala begins the analysis conceding the escalating trend of drug abuse among the youth and its impact on the individual addicts and larger social implications. The easier accessibility of drugs in the region has been undoubtedly caused by its nearness to the golden triangle from where drugs are being trafficked to four identified main drug routes and many unidentified forest tracks. Different types of drugs either 'soft and hard drugs' or narcotic and non-narcotic, which have different side effects, are discussed. The core of the analysis lies in the examination of the relationship between the personal characteristics of the drug addicts and socio-cultural and economic factors. The analysis is made on three sets of variables as parameters viz., education, occupation and income. The author feels the need to combat the problem on both curative and preventive approaches and also to save the youth from the clutch of the menace.

In his paper, Ingocha makes an endeavour to explore Knowledge Attitude Behaviour Practices on safer practices among the IDUs based on field survey conducted within the Imphal Municipal Council to evaluate the mid term achievement of the intervention project. The aim of the paper is to understand the IDUS regarding concept and knowledge on safer injecting practices; perception and belief on the safer injecting practices and practice of injecting drugs. The findings show that the majority of IDUs within the 20-29 age category who are mostly literate with a highest number in the higher secondary level. Numerical data show that the majority of the IDUs are from joint familial backgrounds, unmarried and unemployed though a small number in the government salaried jobs. Besides, the data contain many more field information to understand this vulnerable social group of IDUs.

Jubita tries to explore the inter-connectivity between the question of women's health status focusing on STI including HIV and gender relations. Based on the field study, the paper shares the ramifications of gender differentials on women's health like their low socio-economic status, sexual and reproductive vulnerability, gender based violence, less health education and health facility etc. The paper highlights the increasing rate of HIV among the women and children as indicative of lower status, less autonomy, less decision making power and lack of health rights. The paper feels a specific need for women's health movement. In addition to valuing the traditional culture that supports women's higher autonomy, the paper gives a thought on modern universal standards that promote gender oriented development.

To begin, Dr Irene offers illegal drug production that has undergone globalization in the past few decades, co-ordinated distribution network of drugs and witnessing of the drug phenomenon in the northeast region in the 80's. The paper stresses the porous Indo-Myanmar border, lack of vigilance and 'trans border ethnic congruity' leading to drug flow from

the golden triangle or more drug refineries to the northeast region. The author argues the prevailing drug policies, which she feels, hard and paradoxical in its enforcement. She discusses addictive behaviour among the youth IDUs, its HIV/AIDS linkage and social implications. She feels the imperative for a strong social advocacy among the adolescents that could effectively challenge the issue of drug addiction among the adolescents.

Chitra's paper touches three factors, which have contributed in making the drug abuse as a serious issue in the world today. The paper is about inter-linkages of drug abuse with its consequential implications on health, economy and society. The author talks about compelling reasons that have dragged the youth to drug addictive behaviour and also provides proposed suggestions in a way to understand the issue.

Though studies on the linkages between drugs or HIV/AIDS and development issue have already made in the areas like Sub-Saharan, the area remains still new in the region. Here, two papers, one by Dr. Bijoy and another by Sudhir are exercises, which try to see the issue. Dr Bijoy argues the dynamics of interactional linkages between drug abuse and development question in a backward sub national economy of the region. An economist's perception is reflected in the analysis of drug abuse and its multifaceted ramifications on the larger development issue. The author writes that drug abuse and its associated impact adversely affect the parameters of economic growth and also income distribution. The impact of drug abuse on development has been examined in terms of labour and capital on growth model. The paper examines the two-way relationship where drug abuse adversely affects development and the lack of development making youth to drug. The author feels a need to check the current pace of this phenomenon in the region otherwise an adverse impact on development index.

The paper by Sudhir is an attempt that tries to dig up the linkages between the drug abuse and development question. He analyses inherent social forces that have pushed the youth to drug addictive behaviour, geo-politics that fosters the drug environ and its social development linkage in the region. The author feels the necessity of maintaining what he describes as social security of the youth from the drug menace for a bright future. He appeals a pragmatic, holistic and culturally contextual appropriate response on collaborative partnership in trying to understand the issue.

Dr Suresh argues about opium, heroin or morphine production in Myanmar and its impact in neighboring countries. Discussion shows a brief history of opium, problem of drug scenario in the state of Manipur and its overall effect on socio- economic and demographic profile.

In this combined initiative, the authors Gurudas Das and Gyanendra supply an analysis of the sectoral character of economy of the state of Manipur. Talking about the linkage of the educated youth and unemployment problem, authors feel a need to focus on the secondary sector. Nonetheless, a stress is made on organic inter-relations among sectors of economy for a mutual growth. Given the situation of the state, there is a need for public sector to play a major role in gearing up the secondary sector but on a suggestive alternative model in collaboration with CBO rather than through the bureaucratic steel frame.

G.P Prasain's paper for convenient reading can be broadly divided into two parts. While the first part provides a glimpse of national level unemployment scene, the second section devotes the issue in the state of Manipur. The core of the discussion is the need for introducing entrepreneurship education and training in educational institutions e.g., colleges and university as an effective initiative towards responding the issue. The author is of the view that development of

entrepreneurship would contribute the generation of employment opportunities and in reducing the issue particularly among the educated youth.

This paper by Indraneel Bhowmick looks at the development perspective from the economic point of view. It attempts to identify the problems faced by youths of the region and further tries to suggest remedies at both micro and macro level. The study utilizes secondary data from different sources and the methodology adopted includes standard econometric application through standard statistical tools.

The character of the youth unrest in the northeast region including Manipur in his paper by Pradeep Phanjoubam is linked up with the totality of breaking established order. The paper sees government's fiscal mess, breaking law and order, institutionalized corruption, becoming of politics as a game of defection and floor crossing, beurocracy becoming kleptocracy, lack of merit criteria as indicative of the order against which the binding treads of the social fabric too weakened. The issue of the youth is assessed against this background.

At the moment, the brightest hope for a shift in the present geopolitics to lift the northeast out of the current blind spot of the world is a political and economic ferment in neighbouring Myanmar. Our location then, as a bridgehead between the huge South Asian market and the South East Asian market, will give it back its significance. The mess that the region is in, with myriad insurrections pulling in different directions, and a politics that has failed abjectly to be in the driver's seat, is only hastening our own decay with every ticking second. The new epoch needs new issues. The northeast must live up to this expectation and prepare to discard yesterday's slogans and set new political and economic agendas in tune with the modern.