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# Regionalism in India

(With Special Reference to North-East India)



*Edited by*  
**B. PAKEM**



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# Abbreviations

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AAPSL	: All Arunachal Pradesh Students Union
AASU	: All Assam Students Union
APC	: Arunachal People's Conference
APHLC	: All Party Hill Leaders Conference
ATPLO	: All Tripura Peoples Liberation Organization
BJP	: Bharatiya Janata Party
BLSAA	: Bonded Labour System Abolishment Act
DHM	: Democratic Hills Movement
EITU	: Eastern Indian Tribal Union
EZC	: Eastern Zonal Council
GMP	: Gana Mukti Parishad
GNP	: Gross National Product
HNF	: Hynniew-Trap National Front
HPU	: Hills People Union
HSPDP	: Hill State Peoples Democratic Party
LRC	: Land Reforms Commission
MNF	: Mizo National Front
NEC	: North Eastern Council
NEFA	: North-East Frontier Agency
NEHU	: North-Eastern Hill University
NIREF	: National Integrated Rural Employment Programme
NNC	: Naga National Council
NNMB	: National Nutritional Minatoring Bureau
NNSN	: Naga Non-state Nation
NSCN	: National Socialist Council of Nagaland
PC	: Peoples Conference
PDIC	: Public Demands Implementation Convention
PLA	: People's Liberation Army
PPA	: People's Party of Arunachal
SDP	: State Domestic Product
TNV	: Tripura National Volunteers
TSF	: Tribal Students Federation
UGC	: University Grants Commission
ULFA	: United Liberation Front of Assam
UMFO	: United Mizo Freedom Organization

## Introduction

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A national seminar on Regionalism with special reference to North-East India was sponsored by the University Grants Commission and organised by the Department of Political Science, North-Eastern Hill University during September 2-5, 1985. The Department of Political Science, North-Eastern Hill University has decided to publish selected papers of the above seminar in a book form.

Our aim is to study the issues and problems of regionalism in the Indian context with special reference to North-East India. Regionalism, being a controversial concept, required both an indepth study and a critical assessment. We seek, therefore, to identify its important features as well as understand both its negative and positive aspects. We hope that through a multi-disciplinary approach to the study of the problem we may be able to achieve our objectives.

But what is regionalism? Before we make any attempt to answer this question, let us, first of all, try to understand what we really mean by the term "region". The three traditional approaches to the definition of a region are those of homogeneity, nodality or polarisation around some central place, and programming which is concerned mainly with administrative and political coherence. On the basis of these three approaches we cannot call North-East India a region. Nor can we call it as such on the basis of a compromise between these different approaches or on the basis of any multi-factorial criteria. North-East India is a region merely through a geo-political accident. The lack of a sophisticated definition of a region for North-East India, however, does not make it a non-region. It is a region despite its varied physical features and its different economic, political and social systems.

Similarly, regionalism is a nebulous concept. It is a multi-dimensional phenomenon in terms of its components, at once

geographical, historical-cultural, economic, politico-administrative and psychic. It has both the positive and negative dimensions. The former embodies a quest for self-fulfilment on the part of a people of an area, and the latter reflects a psyche of relative deprivation on the part of a people of the area not always viable in terms of rational economic analysis, let alone prone to rationalisation.

To assure to all citizens of India, the sense of self-fulfilment and remove the psyche of relative deprivation, the Indian Constitution has made elaborate provisions for achieving the above twin objectives. During the last 40 years of the existence of the Constitution, not only a number of amendments have been made, but also a lot has been discussed about the problems of regionalism having a bearing on Centre-State relations, regional imbalance, and national integration. These problems could have been properly attended to by the powers that be had they taken into consideration the First Clause of the First Article of the India Constitution [Art.1(1)] which says: "India, that is Bharat, shall be a Union of States". Now, the word "Union" by itself does not indicate the principle of uniformity. Therefore, the authorities concerned should not, and cannot, expect that there should be uniformity of thought, aspiration, expression, and action in the country. Regionalism has to be accommodated. The old cliché that in India we have unity amidst diversity has not become worn out as yet. As such, any amount of effort to bring about any rule for or procedure of action at the expense of regionalism will be an exercise in futility. We have to realise that the struggle in India today is to make the country safe for diversity.

To save this Indian diversity, our Constitution, apart from Article 1(1), has made a number of other provisions for the existence of regionalism in the country. While Part VII relating to Part B States of the erstwhile princely States and Part IX dealing with Part D States of overseas possessions have been repealed due to the process of integration with other regional units or achieving the status of Union Territories, those of Parts VI, VIII and IX which deal with the States, Union Territories, and the Scheduled and Tribal Areas respectively stand out as monuments to the spirit of regionalism in the country. It is very significant that so far nobody has ever thought of repealing these three Parts of the Constitution.

The spirit of regionalism has been further re-inforced by the provisions of Part XI specifying the Legislative and Administrative Relations between the Union and the Units and Part XII with their Financial Relations. In addition, certain classes like the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes and Anglo-Indians have

special provisions for their administration, education, representation and reservation. Finally, Part XXI which is expected to be merely an arrangement for Temporary, Transitional and Special Provisions has been more or less of a permanent nature. For example, Article 370 for Jammu & Kashmir State forming part of Part XXI does no longer reflect the current political reality. Of course, the Article's existence has encouraged some Kashmiris to say: "Practically, we are all Indians", a statement which may mean differently to different people. Similarly, Article 371, which has been the victim of frequent amendments, confers special status, in certain matters, on a number of States ranging from Maharashtra, Gujarat, Nagaland, Assam, Manipur, Andhra Pradesh to Sikkim. Some other States may glamorize in the near future, if they have not done it already, for a special status for some kind of regional needs under that Article.

Regionalism is not a phenomenon peculiar to Indian situation alone. In fact, in the earliest society according to scriptural accounts after the Fall of Man from the Garden of Eden, there was a struggle between the agricultural sector led by Cain and the pastoral sector under the leadership of Abel, the two sons of Adam. The result of such a struggle was that the Paradise which was earlier lost to Adam was gradually regained though with much difficulty. In the secular world also we can see that when the United States was founded there was a struggle between the agricultural south led by Madison and the industrial north under the leadership of Hamilton. It was at that juncture that England and France each tried to intervene in the internal affairs of that country. However, the Americans could integrate their country by putting their public interests above narrow private interests. Even the subsequent Civil War could not break the unity that they had forged. On the other hand, in the United Kingdom, the national movements among the Scots and Welsh, just as the Basque Movements in Spain, continue to threaten the national integrity of these two countries. Then, there is also the case of the French-speaking Canadians whose attitude had nearly driven their country as under. So far, and inspite of recent out-burst on the part of the small republics, the Soviet Union has been able to maintain its cordial relations with the Soviet Republics and the Soviet Autonomous Regions though the White Russians tend to dominate the smaller communities in that country. There are other examples like the Swiss and the Yugoslavs who have practically no problem with the question of regionalism.

Inspite of the regional problems—social, administrative, economic, social and political—the different people of the various national

organisations, as in the case of international organisation, have learnt to live together in harmony due primarily to the need for providing three essential things—friendship, food and freedom. No people could live in isolation for long. True, while sharing the common essential things which bring people together they also desperately try to retain their separate identities. If this happens in the international society, it is more so in the case of national societies?

(Now coming to the North-Eastern region of India a similar pattern emerges. During the early period, there were struggles among the people of the region, thereby inviting outside forces like the Greeks, the Chinese, the Mughals, the Ahoms, and finally the British to come into the region. At different times, the region was known differently by various names such as Asalonga and Kamrupa or Pragjyotishpura. The British called it the North-East Frontier. Today, we call the area North-East India.) It could have been South-West China as well depending on how we look at it and depending on who has the political control. Academically, this region is still regarded as part of South-East Asia, at least from the cultural point of view. This confusion has arisen due mainly to the fact that North-East India is a mosaic of societies characterised by diversities of social stock, tradition of origin, social organisation, language and dialects, religion, economic pursuits, technology and pattern of resource mobilisation, productive relations and participation in the political process. In spite of these different characteristics, certain common features permitting the diversities in the region can be perceived. The region is still struggling to cling to their common features and diversities.

The attempt on the part of any subordinate system or the periphery to cling to one's common features and diversities sometimes leads to a misunderstanding on the part of the dominant system of the core area. Subsequently, this misunderstanding breeds mutual distrust until a breaking point is reached and then conflict situations occur. The resolution of such conflicts used to be a time-consuming affair unless the dominant system is willing to recognise the validity of a particular regionalism operating in an area concerned, and the subordinate system to accept the national symbols and right ordering of loyalties. The Kashmir Movement, the Punjab Movement, the Jharkhand Movement, the Telangana and Naxalite Movements, the Assam Movement on the Issue of Foreign Nationals in the State, and the various Separatist Movements of the Hill People of North-East India are illustrative of this contention. All these movements contain both the positive and negative aspects of regionalism.

(There is one main problem, if not the problem, connected with

regionalism in North-East India—the search for identity. The crisis of identity is the corner stone in the various movements in North-East India. With its highly emotional content, it may, at any time, explode into a major conflict with wrong handling. Hence, it should not be the basis for any discord. Instead various nationalities in the region may strengthen the national fabric of Indian nationhood which building process is continuing and yet to be fully completed. Through such an approach we hope that the result will not be one of disintegrating the body politic of India but the strengthening of the foundations of integration in the country. After all, integration is not confined only to political and administrative integration or national and territorial integration which had been achieved since independence. Integration also covers emotional integration which include among others, value integration, elite-mass integration, and the integration of individuals into organisations for purposive activity. This we have yet to fully achieve. It is hoped that regionalism may provide a stepping stone towards that goal. This is indeed our future perspective.)

The theme of the seminar itself has been divided into five sections each dealing with the specific problem of regionalism. Section I deals with Regionalism in India—Theories and Perspective. There are nine papers in this sections. Shanti Swarup in his paper on “Nationalism, Regionalism and Social Mobility” points out that despite all literature that has been produced, no solid theoretical perspective has been developed on the phenomenon of nationalism, or regionalism or nation-region relationship in the third World. Nor has comparative theoretical orientation developed based on comparable periods of history. After discussing about the role of the means of transportation and social communication in the development of nationalism and national consciousness he opined that one should not be terribly upset about the emergence of regionalism. Regionalism is a universal phenomenon. However, the popular explanation that regionalism has arisen out of the unevenness of the development of capitalism is not true in the case of Indian regionalism. In India, parochial consciousnesses were created or rather strengthened in the very act of a strong national movement. The author then argued that in a country like India when the mobilization of a people takes place around certain patterns, certain consequences follow as in the demand for more freedom of action for the regions. Both the centre and the regions could then enjoy power like money which can grow and where all can become rich at the same time. The only problem for regionalism is its emphasis on narrower loyalty which may cause

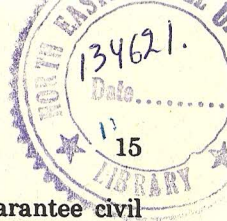
greater harm to regional interests themselves.

M.N. Karna in his paper on "Civil Liberties and Democratic Rights" is of the view that whatever democratic rights and civil liberties people have achieved by now are the result of long struggles launched by numerous political groups in the different parts of the country. Under the democratic system, people's control over government is so strong that the latter cannot function clandestinely against the interests of the common folk. However, the author is of the opinion that the unresponsive political leadership and apathetic bureaucracy have reduced the entire democratic norms to a force. This has resulted in the growing assault on civil liberties and the democratic rights of the people by the authorities of the state.

A paper on "Context of regionalism in India: Anti-people Development Strategy" by R.L. Walli highlights the fact that uneven development process at the national level, the deepening economic crisis and people's inability to have access to means of fulfilment of basic human needs tend to promote regionalism in India. The Capitalist path of development in a peripheral country like India accounts for its slow and distorted features which in turn define the limits of possibilities and potentialities of development in every part of the country. P. Nayak in his "Regionalism, National and Class Questions—Aspects of a discussion on a problematic relationship" provides a fresh focus on the exploration of the largely neglected area of inter-relationship among national, nationality, regional and class questions especially in the context of the developing world. The author opinions that in the given historical set-up into which the new States emerged independent, this problematic relationship has essentially altered into one of class-nationality question. He further contends that evolution of the nationality question in independent India has been misdirected under more compelling but distortive features of capitalist strategy of development which has been the same of contemporary political economy. Regionalism, in his view, is, therefore, an outcome of such an inter-section of modern political economy and traditional historical structuration process.

The next paper under this section is on "A Note on the impact of Regionalism on Parliamentary Democracy in India" by A.K. Baruah. In this paper, the author shows the challenges of regionalism to the hegemony of the ruling classes because it is opposed to status-quo and advocates a new arrangement in the social structure. Parliamentary democracy in India is modelled on the lines of Western liberal democracy with the existence of competitive politics. However, unlike in the West, Indian parliamentary democracy has not been

## Introduction



successful in the sense that it has not been able to guarantee civil liberties for a large majority of the population, particularly the weaker sections of the society. Both the Congress and the Janata regimes were dominated by the big business and landlords. In this context, the emergence of the regional forces is significant. In Assam, economic and cultural grievances of the Assamese middle class have eventually culminated in a strong regional movement under the leadership of the All Assam Student's Union. But since the regional forces are in an early stage of development, they need the support of the more backward section of the society in order to force an emergence of competitive politics by directly challenging the status-quoists. Thus, the author emphasised that the question of a successful functioning of the parliamentary democracy in India has become tied with the fate of regionalism in India.

In a paper on "The North-East Region and Indian civilization: A view from the East" by Gail Omvedt, the authoress attempts an analysis of the North-Eastern and Indian civilization in the backdrop of the historical links of the North-East with Asia in general and South-East Asia in particular. The various facts of the growth of the economy, civilization and culture of the region have been dealt with in an historical perspective. The writer contends that an attempt to understand a major element in the formation of Indian civilization as also the linkages between the tribal and the North-East culture with those of ancient South-East Asia. This understanding will aid the indigenous resources for liberation struggles.

Drawing upon his rich professional background of anthropological surveys, R.S.Mann in his paper on "Cultural Regionalism and Tribal India: Some observations concerning Integration", pointed out that we are committed to a policy of "interaction" of the tribal communities with the national mainstream. However, an analysis of the tribal situation in North-Eastern India, has posed some caution for the social scientists concerned. What is now urgently called for the proper understanding of the tribal situation in the region is the consideration for the great diversity of the cultural regions, the need for an overall framework of integration, and the proper stream-living of the tribal situation. Besides the need to incorporate "insider's view" about integration which in its turn, needs to be more realistic than either sheer analytical or as a statistical target has also been stressed by the author.

P.S. Datta in his "Ideological Bases of Regional Political parties of Meghalaya (Some preliminary observations)" has limited his paper to a discussion of the Meghalaya political scene. After discussing

relations between ideology and the corresponding material reality, Datta identifies the specificities of the prevailing material condition in Meghalayas within the general framework of Indian reality. He has rightly pointed out that the emerging differentiation and growing polarizations prevailing among the different communities of Meghalaya are yet to be reflected in the programmes of regional parties who instead of adopting a class line, speak in terms of preservations of the identity of the tribal people taking the tribal people as a homogenous group. In another paper On "Naga Politics: Regionalism or Non-State Nation" C.L. Imchan considers social formations and present day nation building as coterminous; one is an evolutionary process, but "frozen" by a colonial political category and the other, colonial-politicalist administrative encroachments or exogenous conditions that simultaneously created nation-state characteristics of the quasi-European kind. The author opines that nation building is closely linked with radical ethnic processes and can be taken as growing sub-national consciousness of frontier communities from a tribal base. He also discusses ethnic groups, like the Naga's claim over their resources, territorial and socio-political articulations.

The second section of the seminar deals with the question of regionalism in India and the North-East. There are eight papers in this section. A.C. Sinha in his "The structural Imperatives of the Indian core and the North-Eastern Region" while analysing the problems of regionalism in India, raises the question that given the complex spectrum of relationship between the Centre's dominance and frontier's defiance, can there be shared values, ideas, ideologies and objectives for a corporate living? He believes that the political centre and the regional sub-centres have not been able to develop a system of shared functions to the best satisfaction of everybody. Tensions can be reduced and a more satisfactory working arrangement could be arrived at if it is borne in mind that frontiers do not need paternalistic proppings, but a recognition that they are trusted to take significant decisions affecting national life, and that they are able and capable of contributing to the national common wealth as equal and proud partners.

A paper on "Centre-State Relations" by R.L.Walli states that the Constituent Assembly of India was represented by only 15 percent of the people of India. In the federal set up the Centre has more powers than the States. Article 356 is being used to get rid of any State government that proves inconvenient. As representatives of the President, the Governors have been serving the interests of the ruling party at the Centre in disregard of the federal imperative. In

order that States should gain more power, the author suggests that the inter-state Council should be used to sort out Centre-State and inter-state disputes; the State resource raising capacity be improved, and the total tax revenue of the Centre and the States be treated as a single unit where the common pool can be divided on an agreed basis between the Centre and the States.

In the "Ethnic Minorities and National Integration", V. Xaxa pointed out that the divisions in the Indian society have been viewed as posing challenges to the unity of India. Integration is a problem in a society like India which is characterised by rapid modernisation. The tribal people of North Eastern India have been integrated in the framework of socio-economic development which is happening in India. Now the process of development is not uniform throughout the region. In the North-East some regions or Zones or districts are more developed than others. The Ethnic minorities desires that their incorporation in the larger social framework should be on the basis of proper parity. On the other hand, D.R. Syiemlieh in his paper on "The Political Integration of the Khasi states into the Indian Union" is of the view that the Khasi States had become a part of Assam without any agreement of merger and disregarding the provisions of the earlier standstill agreement. He further adds that this process of integration was completed by the Constitution of India in which the local chiefs had played no part. He, however, points out that although it was done arbitrarily, it was possible only because of the divergent views within the Khasi groups.

C. Nunthara has highlighted, in his paper on "The Maintenance of Ethnic Boundary in Mizoram—A case study of Identity Politics", on some of the traditional forces of the Mizo Society in their attempt to maintain group identities. The history of the emergence of Mizo National Front is a story of Mizo middle class elite who profitably used the traditional idioms for their political end. The idea of Greater Mizoram as a romantic ideal of self-determination of the Mizos across broad sections of the Mizo society was further reinforced by the governmental mis-management of sensitive issues and the invoked (Political) support of Christianity. The paper on "Regionalism with special reference to North-East India" by U.S. Bhattacharya explores the correlates between regionalism and by empirical observations. The author thinks that the basic questions centre round the problems and prospects of various nationalities of the North-Eastern region; and the focal point should be national integration *vis-a-vis* nationality questions.

The last paper in this section is on "Regionalism and National

Integration in North-East India" by Ajit Roy. Roy points out that the academic view of regionalism is that it is both a part of the process of national integration as well as a reflection of an imperfect national integration. After analysing the ethnographic and socio-economic background of the people of North-East India both during the British period and after India's independence, the author opines that the intervention of the Centre, in the name of integration in the North-Eastern periphery had caused the process of resistance in the area. He, therefore, suggested an alternative strategy for achieving national integration which includes a formulation of a broad based egalitarian economic and social development, restoration and expansion of civil liberties and human rights, transforming of resources from more developed to less developed areas, and granting of widest autonomy to the peripheral regions.

In the third section of the Seminar there are five papers on the theme of socio-economic bases of regionalism in North-East India. J.B. Bhattacharjee in his "Socio-Economic Roots of Regionalism in North-East India" argues that the socio-economic root of regionalism in the region can be traced to the colonial period when the British planted the seeds of ethnic conflict by ignoring the aspirations of various nationalities. According to him, apprehensions of the Assamese about their cultural identity in the face of enormous increase of non-Assamese population in the area and the fear of non-Assamese indigenous groups of losing their identity in the face of Assamese expansionism coupled with economic backwardness made it a fertile ground for the growth of regionalism.

A paper on "Regionalism with special reference to North-East India" by H. Barih begins by pointing out that there has been an imperceptible transformation of the tribal society. More recently because of which the tribal identity now carries an enhanced significance. Tribe, he claims, in the context of the present development has to be reviewed from a larger perspective. He then goes into a detailed discussion of the ecology of the North-East, the migration patterns, types of languages prevalent, the social systems to be found in the different parts of the North-East as well as the rituals and the different types of arts and the economic system to be found in this region. He concludes by stating that the situation now in the North-East is very crucial and that the two problems confronted by the elite are the population structure and the multiracial composition of the region. On the other hand, Soumen Sen in his "Middle Class and Regionalism" deals with the subject in a well defined sequence. Starting with an analysis of the class formation in the tribal setting

of the North-East, with particular reference to the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, he goes on to deal with the emergence of the middle class and the growth of regionalism therein. The various stages of the rise of the middle class since the pre-independence era have also been dealt with. The author rounds up his study, with an analysis of the problem of regionalism in the context of its being a rational for middle class politics.

P.M. Passah in his paper on "Political Economy of Regionalism and National Integration in North-East India" points out that the unequal economic development, both in its territorial and ethnic dimensions, triggers the forces of regionalism. A balanced economic development in an area of multiple diversities like the North-East alone can further the prospects of national integration in this region. Another paper on "Regionalism in North-East India" "The case of Mizoram" by Lalchununga deals with the pre-conditions such as independent historical experiences, religious, ethnic, and racial pluralities, geographical isolation, rivalry of local elite and local economic interest which are responsible for regionalism. Further, the economic backwardness of the region coupled with unrealistic programmes and indifferent attitudes of the leadership at the Centre gave rise to regionalism. Economic grievances provide the ground for regional assertion or alienation and induced the people to nurture separatist movements. No doubt, there are also other imminent factors which help regionalism to draw its sustenance in the area. Among the political parties, the regional political parties are more articulate than national parties in expressing regional interests. That is why, in the case of Mizo politics, the national parties are of the view that regional parties are responsible for the growth of regionalism, which in turn gives birth to communalism, and communalism in its extreme form breeds separatism.

The fourth section of the Seminar is devoted to Regional Movement and political parties in North-East India. D.N. Majumdar in his paper on "Ethnicity and Regionalism in North-East India" refers to the ethnic-based States in the pre-British period. The ethnic situation in the region had greatly changed during the British period and organisations based on ethnic identity grew up, and some even led to freedom struggle against the British rule. It was only after India's independence that ethnic movements took a political colour. The process of political movements by ethnic groups are still continuing. These movements usually lead to an emergence of regionalism in the form of movements for accretion or separation of identity. In spite of this tendency, the author opines that the trend is, however, towards

a slow but steady growth of a national identity.

N.B. Nair, in his paper on "The Emerging Middle Class; Regional political parties and Regionalism in Meghalaya" has analysed the emergence of a land owning class and the resulting social stratification based upon private ownership of land. But the elite group emerging from such a change did not transcend its cultural moorings and the people looked up to them for guidance. That, is why the political parties under the leadership of the educated elite have not given consideration for crucial questions like changing property relations. In fact, it has aligned itself with the Indian capitalist class. But in order to consolidate their gains the educated middle class assumed the role of the protector of the tribal rights and interests by agitating for separate States. In the context of the character of the Indian nation and federal character of the Indian Union, however, regional parties are necessary elements to hold the heterogenous country as a unit.

L.S. Gassah presents an interesting scenario in his paper on "Regionalism and the HSPDP in Meghalaya: "Some Basic Issues" in which two competing regional political parties have vied for State power. In both the cases of the APHLC, a regional party with a national outlook and the HSPDP, a regional party with a regional outlook, the constraints and compulsions of elitist politics have virtually strained the prospects of politics by regionalism. In the circumstances, the show has been stolen by the Congress (I) ruling at the Centre to which the regionalist political elites have always looked up while using regionalism as an unflinching device for political mobilization in Meghalaya. Another paper on the role of a regional political party is by A.C. Talukdar on "Regional political party in Arunachal Pradesh: Its Nature and Role in State Politics". The author seeks to explain the dimensions of regionalism in Arunachal Pradesh and the role played therein by regional political parties with special reference to the People's Party of Arunachal Pradesh.

B.K. Srivastava and A.S. Guha in their paper on "Resurgence Among the Tea Garden Tribes of Assam: A Jharkhand Connection" have attempted to show how the colonial fiat of labour recruitment on a mass scale from isolable socio-cultural belts (Jharkhand cultural belt is the reference points here) has unleashed dangerous consequences of regional assertions in the post-independence India (Tea-Garden Tribes of Assam is the reference point here). Growth of Modern forms of institutions and political principles and programmes of social bargaining has given rise to counter-tendencies against national integration especially because they have also aided and

abetted resurgence of forces of tribalism on the live of group identity in specific situations and regionalism in a general way. Mabila Das Gupta in her paper on "Regionalism and Separatist forces in Tripura" puts into sharp focus the role of a regional political party, the Tripura Upajati Juba Samiti, in the growth of extremism in Tripura under the Tripura National Volunteers. The suggested solution lies in removing the root causes of the problem, namely, economic backwardness and deprivation prevalent in the State. The history of the movements for regional autonomy in North-East India has been traced by Khiren Roy in his paper on "Move for Regional Autonomy For North-East". In this paper, the author argues that the time has come for a public debate in favour of an alternative to the 1971 re-organisation of States in the region.

The last section of the Seminar deals with regionalism and future perspective. B. Pakem in his paper on "The Nationality Question in the Hill Areas of North-East India" analyses the nationality question in the backdrop of the concept of nationality at the international and the national levels. The author contends that the various nationality movements in North-East India, particularly in the Hill Areas is more political than ideological and thus argues that the final solution to the problem rests on the acceptance of the right of self-determination to all the nationalities in the country. B. Datta Ray in his paper on "Anatomy of Regionalism in North-East India Hills: Preliminary Observation" mentions that during the period of British rule as a result of the excluded area and the inner line provision the hill districts developed a special kind of identity, the spread of education and the emergence of an educated middle class are identified as means for the emergence of a larger tribal identity. He argues that the class nature of present day tribal societies, the underdevelopment of tribal economy and the scarcity of resources are the most important facts in the analysis of tribal regionalism.

I hope this volume will be useful to the social scientists and others who are deeply concerned with the current problem of regionalism in India, particularly in the north-eastern region. The views expressed in the various papers of the present volume are of the authors and do not reflect the policy of the Department of Political Science of the North-Eastern Hill University. For lack of space some of the contributions by public leaders, writers, social scientists and research scholars could not be accommodated in the present volume. I am sincerely apologetic for this lapse on my part.

I take this opportunity to thank Shri B.B. Lyngdoh, the then Leader of the Opposition of Meghalaya, who delivered the key Note

Address and Shri E.K.Mawlong, the then Speaker of Meghalaya Legislative Assembly who presided over the inaugural function. Shri Lyngdoh maintained that to talk about regionalism, separatism and communalism in the context of North-East India would be meaningful only in the sense of belonging to a human circle, as the north-eastern region is one geographical, one administrative and academic entity. North-eastern region is a connecting link of one single chain of India, and each part is essential to the whole. Shri Mawlong held that while tradition is being followed in the tribal political system of Meghalaya as well as in the other tribal societies of the North-Eastern region during the period of transition, certain innovations are also taking place within the frame work of the Indian parliamentary system to accelerate the process of integration.

I am grateful to all those who have contributed to the present volume. I am also grateful to all my colleagues in the Department of Political Science of the North-Eastern Hill University who had ungrudgingly extended their support by going through the manuscripts at every stage of this work. A word of thanks is also due to all the office staff of the Department for having extended their secretarial assistance. My thanks are also extended to the members of the Faculty for the opportunity given to me in associating myself with this work. I also thank the Publisher for agreeing to expeditiously publish this book.

**B. Pakem**

and the latter reflects a psyche of relative deprivation on the part of the people of the area not always viable in terms of rational economic analysis, let alone prone to rationalisation.

There is one main problem, if not the problem, connected with Regionalism in North-East India—the search for identity. The crisis of identity is the corner stone in the various movements in North-East India. With its highly emotional content, it may at any time, explode into a major conflict with wrong handling. Hence, it should not be the basis for any discord. Instead various nationalities in the region may strengthen the national fabric of Indian nationhood which building process is continuing and yet to be fully completed.

The volume will be useful to the social scientists and others who are deeply concerned with the current problem of regionalism in India, particularly in the North-Eastern region.

B. Pakem is the Vice-Chancellor of North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong.

social s,

Similarly, regionalism is a multi-dimensional concept. It is a multi-dimensional phenomenon in terms of its components, at once geographical, historical, cultural, economic, politico-administrative and psychic. It has both the positive and negative dimensions. The former embodies a quest for self-fulfilment on the part of a people of an area,

*Contd. on Flap II*

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