

# *The NEHU Journal*

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## Editorial

The launching of the online version of The NEHU Journal, alongside the print version, has received considerable attention and appreciation. The number of submissions for publications has considerably increased. The journal encourages teachers and research scholars to send quality research papers and book reviews.

The present issue has five articles and five book reviews. The article by A.K. Nongkynrih titled, 'Social Science Research in northeast India: The Position of Sociology', discusses the development and challenges of social science research in northeast India. In the light of developments taking place in social science research at national level, the author examines how the growth of modern education and the establishment of different universities in the northeast have facilitated research in social sciences in general and Sociology in particular. Commenting on the quality and direction of research in the discipline of Sociology, the author identifies lack of inter-disciplinary approach, the poor quality of undergraduate education in the region, the policy of reservations practiced in the admission of students in the universities and non-filling of faculty positions at higher levels as important factors inhibiting the teaching and research in the universities. He argues that lack of knowledge about regional languages and linguistic and cultural practices of the people and reluctance to identify and undertake research on emerging issues are responsible for poor quality of research in Sociology. What Nongkynrih says about Sociology is probably true for other social science disciplines as well.

In his article, 'Social Exclusion and Ethnicity in northeast India', V. Bijukumar seeks to explain ethnic conflicts in the northeast by relating them to social exclusion experienced in the region. He attributes social exclusion in the region to a variety of factors, like the limitation of liberal idea of citizenship in accommodating the aspirations of smaller ethnic communities; the process of ethnification experienced by smaller ethnic groups in nations states; competition for resources; disjunction between the forces of modernity and traditions, adverse effects of market economy; growth of indigenous elite, birth of identity politics and influence of the

ideology and politics of ethnic and separatist movements. He calls for the need to address the specificities and material needs of the communities in the region and expects the state to adopt conciliatory path to bring in the alienated sections into the mainstream.

Based on the findings of National Family Health Survey 3 (NFHS 3), Phrangstone Khongji in his paper, 'Determinants and Trends of Ideal Family Size', shows that although the desire for high number of children has decreased compared to NFHS 2, ideal number of children (INC) is still high in Meghalaya. Khongji argues that factors like, place of residence, religion, educational status, standard of living, ethnicity and working status could be the determining factors affecting the ideal family size in the state. Although the data presented in the paper does not say, the author seems to believe that the women's choice of large family size, their aversion to family planning methods and their opposition to abortions can be attributed to traditional tribal belief system and also to the views of the dominant organizations and elites in the society. The author opines that in such transitional societies, one can effect change only through a decentralized, bottom-up, holistic policy approach that has built-in safeguards to protect the rights of individuals as well as of the community.

Barbara Sagma's paper, 'From Rituals to Stage: The Journey of *A-Chik* Folk Theatre', narrates the evolution of the *A-Chik* theatre from traditional ritual performances to contemporary stage plays. The author presents interesting accounts of the forms, meanings and essence of different traditional cultural performances of the community, and the changes that have taken place in *A-chik* theatre after coming in contact with Christianity. It seems the appearance of modern stage plays did not undermine the traditional forms of *A-Chik* theatre. Hope this study encourages similar studies on the evolution of theatre in other tribal communities in the region.

Ruth Lalsiemsang Buongpui in her paper, 'Gender Relations and the Web of Traditions in northeast India', argues that although apparently the women in northeast India are more liberated than their counterparts in other parts of India, in reality the traditions and customary practices inhibit the women from enjoying freedom and rights. The paper cites different phrases and sayings in different tribal oral traditions to argue that

there are taboos among the tribal communities in the region that justify the inferior status of women. Apart from quoting general theories on patriarchy, if the scholar had undertaken empirical study of the customary practices in different tribal societies now exposed to the forces modernity, then a better theorization of the status of women in transitional societies would have been possible.

Apart from the above mentioned articles, the volume contains book reviews by V.K. Shrotriya, T. Navin, A.K. Thakur, Suparna Bhattacharjee and Binayak Dutta. The books reviewed include Gurucharan Das' book, *India Grows at Night - A Liberal Case for a Strong State*, Gladson Dungdung's *Whose Country is it Anyway – Untold stories of the Indigenous Peoples of India*, Tage Tada, Jagat C. Dutta and Nabajit Deori's *Archeological Heritage of Arunachal Pradesh*, R.K. Satapathy's *United States and Central America: The US Involvement in Nicaragua*, and Sagar Boruah's edited volume, *Historical Studies in the Context of Globalization: Rationale for Restructuring Curriculum*.

The authors and publishers who seek to get their books reviewed in the journal may send a copy of their book to the Editor, The NEHU Journal. *The NEHU Journal* looks forward to your contributions, support and encouragement.

**H. Srikanth**

Editor, *The NEHU Journal*