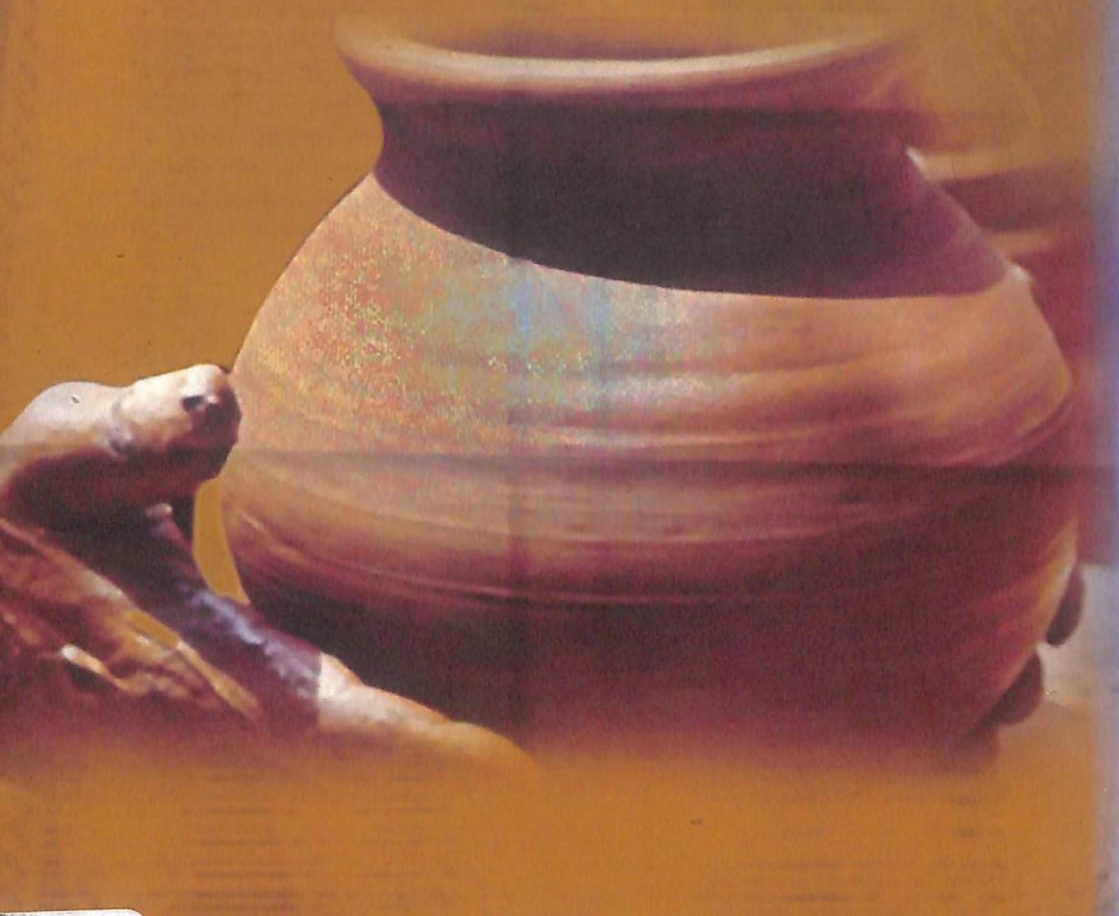


*SANSKRITI-NEICR: Decennial Year 2017*

# Social Science Researches in North East India

*Challenges and Pathways*



D/E

Edited by  
**K. Jose SVD**  
**Bhaskar Das**



Sanskriti-NEICR: Decennial Year 2017

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## Contents

Acknowledgements	
Introduction: Contemporary Social Science Researches <b>K. Jose, SVD</b>	1
Sociological Research in North East India Since 1970's <b>A. C. Sinha</b>	31
(Re)Crafting a Social Science Research: An Eastern Perspective <b>Paul Pudussery, CSC</b>	53
Researches in Sociology: Trends, Challenges and Pathways <b>Melvil Pereira</b>	76
Anthropological Research on the Indigenous People of North East India <b>Rajendra Prasad Athparia</b>	94
Structuring Prehistory and Identifying Research Priorities: Manipur in Perspective <b>Mayanglambam ManiBabu</b>	121
Participatory Action Research - A Critical Pedagogy <b>Riju Sharma</b>	157
A Brief Review of Physical Anthropology in North East India <b>Dhruba Kumar Limbu</b>	176
Physical Anthropology: It's Transformation from Descriptive to Analytical <b>Bhaskar Das</b>	187

Folklore Research Perspectives in North East India <b>Ranga Ranjan Das</b>	193
Social Science and Sociology – A Quest for Sociology in Tripura <b>Surojit Sengupta</b>	220
Anthropological Researches: A Reference to Tribal Studies in Tripura <b>Janet Florine Tellis, SSPS</b>	237
Possibilities of Vital Anthropological Researches in Tripura: A Road Map <b>Benny K. John, CSC</b>	254
Lingering Behind the Hazes: Teaching and Researching Anthropology in Arunachal Pradesh <b>Tame Ramya</b>	263
People, Societies, and Cultures in Meghalaya: A Review of Anthropological Researches from the Beginning to Recent Times <b>Queenbala Marak</b>	288
Post Script: Envisioning Social Science Researches: Critical Contexts, Complex and Challenging Concepts <b>M. Antony, SVD &amp; K. Jose, SVD</b>	313
About the Editors and Contributors	321
Index	323



Introduction

Contemporary Social Science Researches:  
Challenges and Pathways

K. Jose SVD

Social Science researches in the past received ample attention from various segments of society. An obvious reason for this happy situation was the wonderful augmentation of the academia vis-à-vis a continual patronage of the administrative machinery of the time. For this to happen there were a number of support systems that were set in place which most radically changed every challenge into a wonderful opportunity for ushering in positive change. However, all of us would like to believe that this may be one part the whole story. Then what else is another part of this wonderful story? May be, the disciplinary history of Social sciences were visited and revisited by scholars of various categories, gathering inspiration for a vital academic journey for themselves and for the institutions to which they were affiliated to. In another sense, the practitioners of any of the Social science disciplines took an envious pride in contributing to the revitalization of this stream while responding to teaching and doing research side

by side. Some of the well known personalities in the disciplines of Social Science decisively engaged in knitting together relevant syllabus for the posterity of the discipline too. No doubt, these exercises have generously contributed to the arduous task of linking knowledge, institutions and disciplinary practices. We have many instances of such wonderful collaboration when we look back at some of the departments of universities including government departments of Census Operations, Anthropological Survey of India, Indian Council of Social Science Research, Indian Council of Historical Research and a number of professional associations and professional journals (Uberoi *et al.*, 2007).

Now, while one is rather nostalgic about the accomplishments of the 'golden years' gone by, one cannot be blind to the current research scenario wherein often there is a lacuna of zest and grit in the labors of today's men and women who merely look up to the western counter parts whose professional contributions proved to be relevant for those times. For eg: Anthropology flourished in the colonial times and today some of the benchmarks of community studies are the ones undertaken by administrators about 50 years ago and more. But, can one adequately understand the concerns and aspirations of the people of today based on the data available in those hey days of colonialism? Of course, with the benefit of hindsight and the demands of political correctness, it is all too easy to be critical on anthropology's symbiotic relationship with colonial rule. Today one cannot blindly accept all those ideas without a critical thinking. For we believe Indian minds are capable to penetrate the depths and soar the heights in understanding, assimilating, analyzing, recording and interpreting with love and respect the cultures and people as anyone on the planet elsewhere can do, may be even much more. Our effort is some way towards that direction. In other words we would love to initiate and encourage discussion and debate wherein there is a possibility of garnering wisdom from a number of

dimensions. It is our modest pride that we have been in the process of net-working with some of the finest minds who dare to express their ideas sharply and vividly and thereby create a platform for original debates. We welcome you to join us in our eventful/exciting journey by contributing to - **Contemporary Social Science Researches in North East India.**

## 1

It was a decade ago when *Sanskriti* - North Eastern Institute of Cultural Research, Guwahati, Assam was visualized as a research centre with a broad vision for enhancing Social Science researches with a more focused mandate intended for spearheading anthropological research. No doubt, we have taken a cue from late Prof. Wilhelm Schmidt SVD the founder director and his team at *Anthropos* International, Germany, our international parent body in research, documentation and publication; Institute of Indian Culture, Mumbai our premier/National institute of anthropological and Sociological research which was launched under the great doyen, late Prof. Stephen Fuchs SVD and his extremely committed colleagues; Regional institutes of anthropological research in Indore, Hyderabad and Sundergarh, also involved in furthering this cause with regional specificities. Our search to rejuvenate researches in India received a fillip when academicians and researchers, during a number of our brainstorming sessions contributed to pin pointing areas of our possible involvement and supported plans for an immediate span of a decade and more in Social Science research. Moreover, in the process of our scanning through a number of well known journals and volumes of great academic standing which decisively debated on Social Science researches, we have invariably found a cautious optimism regarding the world Social Science research scenario. Though, as our gleaning through more documents acclaimed as academic yardsticks progressed over the years, it became clearer to our research fraternity that we have miles to go; yet the good news is that our journey has



begun and that too, in zealous earnestness. Our research fraternity in *Sanskriti*-NEICR was enthused to realize that Social Science research has been a long time priority of many individuals and institutions worldwide over.

Moving ahead along with other academic and research concerns *Sanskriti* organized nine major National seminars, alongside a few short yet pointed one day consultations on Research Priorities in Social Sciences with special reference to North East India. Our monographs series titled 'North East India: Land and People' pitched in another dimension of studies giving a prime time voice to the communities who were making efforts to be relevant and counted in the vast ocean of innumerable people. Often we had faced with challenges in charting out our research destiny. It was then we were re-affirmed by the inner call of the divine – to see far beyond what the eyes could normally see, to look beyond the clouds and make greater efforts to paint a rainbow ourselves – yet once again.

The fervor of the senior professors and other learned members who journeyed with us instilled in us an eagerness to involve ourselves and other scholarly fraternity in this arduous task of advancing research, leading to pertinent publications that will contribute to the corpus of knowledge in Social Science research for a long time to come. Many in our academic fraternity, with special reference to Archbishop Thomas Menamparampil time and again speak on the far reaching changes taking place in communities with special reference to that of the tribal cultures of the North East India. We remember, that it was Prof. A. C. Bhagabati, former Vice Chancellor of Arunachal University, currently the Head of Division, Indira Gandhi Centre for Arts, North Eastern Regional Centre, Guwahati reminded an academic gathering organized by *Sanskriti* –NEICR on 13<sup>th</sup> Aug. 2011 at North East Diocesan Social Forum, Kharghuli, Guwahati that on the 18<sup>th</sup> March 1993 Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development, Guwahati conducted a major consultation wherein 32 professors

and scholars participated and identified 120 major areas of research. There was a clarion call to examine the flow of themes from that consultation to the subsequent ones. In addition, he remarked that it will be interesting to observe if the priorities of those years have changed considerably or not. He did not fail to remind the scholarly gathering that we need to have priorities for a time frame, say 10 years, as priorities for the entire future cannot be set since Social Science is a discipline which deals with humans in their social and behavioral realm, encompasses multifaceted areas, taking into consideration the ever changing context of people, time and place.

## 2

Glancing through the National scene we have noteworthy instances of individual contributions both within the armpit of individual capacities and within the larger context of open and secular institutions of all categories which have borne results though intensities have varied. Often institutional contributions to knowledge creation and sharing have had far reaching consequences within the disciplines of Sociology and Anthropology (Institute of Economic Growth, 2000). It was also a long standing concern of the *Sanskriti* group of Social Science/anthropological research institutions owned and managed by the SVD International Society that in our country we need to become a beacon of hope in rejuvenating Social Science research. Institute of Indian Culture, Mumbai founded by late Prof. Stephen Fuchs SVD is a torchbearer for the past 40 years and more. Other regional centers of research, documentation and publications do their own share of vital research. *Sanskriti*-North Eastern Institute of Cultural Research, Guwahati consistently endeavour to build enthusiasm in younger research fraternity in a number of universities through organizing short term courses in research methodology. Our national seminars for the past nine years have witnessed both veteran professors and emerging scholars from various Social Science streams.



Their debates have been appreciated in various academic quarters. Our research publications based on the national seminar proceedings have become source books for various contemporary themes. In view of contributing more substantially two years ago we have also launched a research journal in line with the internationally acclaimed *Anthropos* our prestigious journal of the parent body – *Anthropos*, Germany and named the journal *Anthropos India*. This was with a singular intention of disseminating contemporary findings of the young researchers who have the talent and enthusiasm to bring their original researches into light. We have identified and assigned researchers who will contribute original and contemporary research papers for the next several years. Of course, we are also amply aware that several measures are taken by various other agencies both coming under the government initiatives and under the NGO sector, however, we choose to assert that much more remains to be achieved in the realm of the academic world with special reference to Social Science research for the benefit of humanity as a whole.

Currently, Social Sciences may be defined as the discipline which deals with humans in their social and behavioral references. Edwin, R. A. Selegian (*Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*) has defined Social Sciences as “those mental and cultural sciences, which deal with the activities of the individual as a member of a group”<sup>1</sup>. Social Sciences as we can now observe are of recent origin. The idea of Social Sciences developed from Philosophy as did many other branches of knowledge. What is now stated as Social Sciences was formerly known as Social Discipline, but with the advancement of time, due to the distinctive achievements of the scientific method on our way of life, the term “Social Discipline” was taken over by the term “Social Sciences”<sup>2</sup>. Yet, India as a nation of great potentialities needs to grow

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1 Social Science Research in India: A-State-of- Art, Chapter-III, Retrieved on 26 July from [http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/11949/10/10\\_chapter%203.pdf](http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/11949/10/10_chapter%203.pdf)

2 *ibid*

in the realm of original social science research. We earnestly believe that it is certainly time that we launch researches that may transcend sectarian interests of caste, region or religion.

“Social Science research is chiefly driven by two forces: a) interest in knowledge about the functioning of society in its diverse social, cultural, political and economic aspects and in understanding the factors that shape them; and b) the practical needs of policy makers and managers in government, civil society and the private sector for reliable information and professional analysis” (Fourth review committee report, ICSSR, 2007, p. 5). Today Social science research in India has grown manifold and as on 2016, there are more than 754 universities (Central, state, deemed, unitary and affiliating, open universities, private and so forth...) in India with more than 500 departments of social sciences as per the latest statistics from the website of India’s Human Resource Development ministry (HRD). Some Non Government Organizations (NGO) and policy research initiatives have also produced specific development focused research output, but they generally do not have longer term interest in research and the quality of research is not yet established by many of them. Therefore, *Sanskriti* as an emerging research institute in the heart-land of North East India is on the lookout for finding the major challenges of Social Science research in India. This no doubt, is also a prime concern before launching pertinent researches with far reaching consequences.

### 3

North East India has a wide spectrum of cultural and ethnic composition which is an invitation to celebrate pluri-cultural identities, which again is a unique feature in whole of the country. Today when many communities are going back to their roots to understand the comprehensive history of their existence, it is important for a variety of researches to come up with a combination of methods and its contemporary applications which will facilitate the process of dialogue

and help negotiate side by side between liberal modernity and deep rooted traditional values. The current trends of social change embracing the region provokes a nostalgic feeling of yester years while an ardent desire which seeks to integrate the new with the old, thereby birthing modernization of traditions is an inviting challenge for anyone who embraces Social Science research which must reap long term results. Undoubtedly this will involve rigorous commitment and greater optimism from scholarly fraternity.

On the other hand, as the vibrant trends of globalization has set in the various quarters of North East India one has to be amply prepared to read the signs of the times. Yes, some of the overarching negative forces of globalization are clear signals of increase in inequality and unemployment, decline in the quality of the governance engrossed in the quagmire of corruption of various intensities, rise in smuggling and hoarding of resource, trafficking in gullible people, rampant illegal immigration, sporadic insurgency, increasing intolerance of every kind, etc. All these deteriorate the cohesive sense of the communities giving way to pessimism, giving into a chalking sense of social exclusion and embarking on negative energy. The real challenge obviously is to search for what are the major concerns of the people of this vast expanse of the land. Certainly it will not be an easy task to understand the region and its people in a comprehensive way. But we earnestly believe that we can always strive our best to learn one or several aspects of the people and their culture over a longer span of time. We have no other option than to learn through hard work, perseverance and good will.

A number of scholars have unearthed some of the apparent and visible problems that are irking the region while naming ethnic conflicts, identity assertion movements, insurgency, poor governance vis a vis corruption and scores of other equally important factors (Biswas & Thomas, 2006; Baruah, 2009; Verghese, 2004). However, one should unhesitatingly say that these are not mere predicaments that may be

easily forgotten but are major concerns which need more in depth exploration/research, analysis and certainly a final possibility of amelioration as well. Thus it is also imperative to prepare a road-map for welfare measures to be undertaken within a given time frame. Today, it is necessary to enter into the arena of policy interventions that will make positive changes in the lives of people. In other words, contemporary Social Science researches should progressively respond in dealing with major challenges that the respective communities face in their every day journey on the path of development and peace. And thereby decisively restore the social health of the community and societies.

There is absolutely no denying the fact that there is a need to plunge deep into the arena of original research. It is true of the many monographs that have been done by scholars till today borrowing heavily from the praiseworthy works of 1980s and 90s and so on. It is time to debunk the myth 'only West can certify true worth and research vigour'. Our indigenous scholars have the ability to engage in more challenging and contemporary researches which have far reaching consequences. For this we need to get in touch with the actual ground realities. Disciplinary history no doubt will prove vital to this more robust journey forward, so that there is a deeper analysis based on the major gaps to be filled by the new task. Often one observes that there is either a complete neglect of the past or unwillingness to learn from the deep rooted traditions which have validity even now. What is the reason for this neglect? May be one still is so viciously caught up in the colonial way of doing things, or there is a deep rooted desire to cling on to all what is West as the one and the only agent of inspiration, accreditation, and patronage (Uberoi *et al.*, 2007). It is time for one to think – Is there not any other indigenous source to appropriate inspiration for our present day engagements?

Unless each of us commits to embrace a peaceful, pluralistic, egalitarian, moral and nationalistic vision, we shall not succeed in



reaping the fruits of a reasonably meaningful present and obviously a vibrant future. May be, we should strive to emphasize the need to promote humanitarian values in families, schools, work places and so forth, more than rely on the identity based on religions, castes and other categories. And of course, we certainly need to be committed to healthy competition and be reconciled to the idea of reaping the benefits of globalization at every stage of our involvement, without which, none of our dreams will soar high enough to make a difference. Some of our senior academic fraternity have shown us the way of perseverance by overcoming the seemingly larger challenges, may be more of them should instill motivation and enthusiasm in the younger folk.

Perhaps, we require some valiant activists who will not compromise on the wealth of intellectual pursuits. Of course, both of these – activism and intellectual acumen – are in plenty while a desirable combination is often lacking to say the least. Today, we also need to see traditions enlivened with an adequate dose of modernity where the spirit of co-existence takes priority over the narrow sectarian ideologies and fanaticism. For this we need to promote educational research in humanities and social sciences in a decisive way. Contemporary research output in many of our universities and other established research institutions might have contributed their share in the yester years; however, are they making any contribution of contemporary relevance today? Are they responding to the heart beats of the people in a decisive manner? Is their existence justified? Currently, our nation is passing through some very difficult times where in we observe that the element of fanaticism that breeds in sectarianism and the venom of violence and discord are day by day tacitly allowed to creep in and grow. Have you not come across invitations to be involved in debates on banning cow slaughter and other issues, while seldom taking a deeper look at the violations of human rights, of annihilating human beings in the name of religion,



political affiliations, narrow and sectarian ideologies and other similar categories?

Our Universities and Research institutes need to rise up to various possibilities of research and believe in their ability to do more, and do it more enthusiastically. We are aware that the funding patterns from the government and other concerned agencies are not often at its best, though in the final analysis the financial resources are not a major challenge in terms of its availability at the source. Our universities have greater role in identifying and animating original researches for the benefit of the people. Here one could pause a pertinent question. How many of them can rightly claim that they have taken adequate steps to mobilize the required finances for their researches? We too are aware of various institutions of long standing for eg; ASI, ICSSR, OKDISCD, IIC, ISI, ICHR, ICPR, ICMR, NIRD etc. . . . which have the ability to re-launch the original vision with adequate modifications for the contemporary times. Then our researches for the benefit of children, youth, women and many underprivileged sections of society will get a much needed fillip. Let us also be aware of the far reaching consequences of globalization, sporadic transition of communities, great contributions of stalwarts of yester years. And now it may be fitting for us to ask who our role models are today that instill optimism and enthusiasm to rise up to the challenges of our every day society?

Individual efforts as members of research institutions, university departments, government undertakings, NGOs etc., however enthusiastic they may be, bear fruit within a limited canvas. Though, when these seemingly small enterprises evolve into shared concerns by accepting challenges and even passionately chasing the aspirations, they gather steam for a longer duration. Therefore, it is necessary to nurture mighty dreams and undertake researches that impact larger number of people. There is also an urgent need we earnestly believe, in the context of net working with not only research institutions and leading universities but world markets which definitely need to be

driven by an overarching educational/research philosophy while embarking on industry ready talents.

Now how shall we equip ourselves to intervene today in a knowledge society, with futuristic perspectives? We need to take a considered yet, dispassionate look at the post colonial Social Science researches in India. What the major /substantial research contributions of our vast expanse of our country? Do we have the enthusiasm to contribute original researches which will provide the possible answers to the problems plaguing contemporary North East India the ethnographic works which are envisaged should have an adequate grounding on the north eastern historical realities, its cultural diversity, and political economy (John, 2013).

The establishment of Social Science research in India has not been an easy process because problems and challenges related with Social Science research continues even till date. One of the main reasons for the variable research quality is the lack of proper institutional support. Although a number of Indian social scientists have achieved eminence in the international social science community, a majority of the institutions are yet to make a mark in the international academic community. Research organizations recruit university graduates, but do not invest in further research capacity building and training. Applied research organizations and consulting firms are increasingly becoming attractive career options but there is a preference in these organizations to produce policy papers or briefs with no incentives to publish academic articles in refereed journals. While the bulk of Social Science research is undertaken in universities and public-funded research organizations, the university administration is not research friendly and there are no incentive structures – either financial or professional – to encourage teachers to undertake research. Some NGOs and policy research initiatives such as think tanks have also produced specific development focused research products but generally do not have longer term interest in research and the quality of their

research is not yet established. Thus, the future of Social Science Research depends on how we overcome these real time challenges.

The development of Social Science research in North East India can be said to be a product of three major processes: the political integration of the region under the colonial administration; the entry of modern organizations such as the Christian missions, the Ramakrishna Mission and others; and the evolution of the modern state, that is, India from 1950 onwards. Under the colonial administration, the region was directly brought under the colonial authority and control. Depending on where they live, various societies residing in the region were divided into two broad categories - the plains and the hills. Different policies related with administration were formulated for the purpose of political regulation of such areas. Colonial administrators while working in the region, had also prepared reports and documented about the life of different societies in their areas of operation. The quality of Social Science research is largely dependent on facilities and intellectual training the students receive at under-graduate and post graduate level. This has a direct bearing of the qualified faculty who are available to guide younger generation (Nongkynrih, 2013).

Today one may easily notice that there is a considerable distance between university departments and research institutes though it was intended to be working in close collaboration. There is also a notion that universities are teaching institutions and research institutes would engage in research projects, organize seminars, and undertake publications and so on. This is a major challenge in maintaining higher standards of research though there are times when funds allocated remain underutilized which were often spent on some haphazard and clumsy gathering organized at the fag-end of the academic year.



taking long standing experiences of some senior professors who have had a long term academic and research trail behind side by side rather younger yet extremely committed research fraternity who made an effort to think rather unusually though within the framework of their own areas of specialization. *Sanskriti* as a research institution is aware that in recent years there was a huge lacuna of such research output from any academic or research unit which was certainly seen as a predicament for the posterity of the discipline. Now, with such a volume in hand, however small this effort may be, it is hoped that similar and more comprehensive and radical steps will emerge and contribute a little more towards rejuvenation of Social Science researches in our region. We are aware that this endeavour of networking with a select number of professors and scholars is a very small step indeed, but we are glad this step has been decisively taken at a critical period of time when Social Science researches deserved a pat on the back for the myriad works accomplished amidst various odds and more importantly perhaps, a gentle reminder too to do much more rigorous undertakings with a greater focus and determination in the area of social responsibility in the context of immediate future.

Though the individual research papers no doubt will speak for themselves, here below we shall briefly glance through the salient features of the individual research papers you shall immediately encounter in the following pages. Though they will prove their individual merits each according to its own vision and framework it may be fitting for us to take a bird's eye view of the same here below.

**Prof. A. C. Sinha**, (*Sociological Research in North East India Since 1970's*) one of the stalwarts of Social Science Research with special reference to Sociology in North East India as an academic discipline, reminiscence his three decade long involvement in the field of teaching, writing and other animation works. While he makes a clarion call to

travel through the sociological input in North Eastern Hill University (NEHU) in detail and the output from the region at large, Sinha argues in his paper that “The academics will note that the nature of sociological inquiry in the region is dependent on the societal context of the region, the quality and commitment of its personnel and the academic environment in the universities and other higher centres of sociological researches”. He invites all the major universities of the North East India to approach that stage of maturity while undertaking original researches contributing not merely to degrees at various levels, but complete research projects and undertake publications which will prove original contributions, and which in turn name institutes of higher learning into excellent centres of training personnel and contributors of vital Social Science research.

**Dr. Paul Pudusery, CSC** (*Re-Crafting a Social Science Research: An Eastern Perspective*) with a vast experience in the field of Educational Administration rightly argues that if we want to empower Social Science, then the researcher engaged in Social Science research must drop the fruitless efforts to emulate natural science’s success in producing cumulative and predictive theory while taking up problems that matter to the local, national, and global communities and focus on issues of values, relationships and power. The researcher must effectively communicate the results of research to a wider audience so as to enable a larger community to benefit from the research. He further elucidates that there is an urgency to transform Social Science to an activity done in public for the public, sometimes to clarify, some other times to intervene, yet other times to generate new perspectives, and always to serve as eyes and ears in our ongoing efforts at understanding the present and deliberating about the future. In the broadest possible sense, the aim of the social sciences is to understand the world as it is made by human beings, the structures and institutions they produce, and the actions they take within those structures and therefore Social Science now acquires a deeper



dimension than it was understood to have in the past. The research methods adopted for the research has to devise instruments, scales, tools and techniques to get the preeminence of the immediate, extended and virtual world. The analysis of the data requires a local approach that has a global perspective. The reporting of the finding needs to be done in such a way that it is palatable to academicians, policy makers and the world at large.

**Dr. Melvil Pereira** (Research in Social Sciences: Trends, Challenges and Pathways) begins his paper by taking cognizance to some of the vital surveys conducted by institutes of social sciences with special reference to universities, research centres and independent scholars. He observes that while India's Independence and the forces of globalization have profoundly transformed the social and political structures of the region, one of the challenges encountered in India was undoubtedly the amalgamation of western thought in terms of inheriting concepts, techniques, and theories of study side by side with the topics of enquiry; and this paved way for neglecting the issues of peasant movements, migration, emergence of regional social patterns, etc. A number of publications deal with this serious predicament while taking North East India not only as a geographic entity but a peripheral region in terms of social, political, economic, psychological and other parameters. In North East India, many groups are demanding ethnic homelands on the grounds of their unique history, culture and identity. Some have taken the route of arms and violence to assert their claims for autonomy. The Government of India has responded by carving out new states or creating Sixth Scheduled districts. However the minorities are denied their citizenship rights in these newly created states and autonomous districts. Melvil argues that it is essential to take a considered research on the various trends, challenges and pathways for research in social sciences in North East India against the backdrop of two watershed moments: the colonial encounter leading to globalisation and India's Independence

in 1947. A clarion call is made to anchor contextual researches in North East India while adequately engaging with the emerging challenges in addressing ambiguities around citizenship and engaging with the political economy of North East India.

**Dr. Rajendra Prasad Athparia**, (*Research on Indigenous People of North East India: Issues and Challenges*) writes about the aspirations of indigenous people with special reference to land issues which often lead to conflicts, immigration, colonial underpinnings etc. The conditions are favourable for Participatory Action Research (PAR) in North East India because the indigenous communities demand a collaborative role for themselves in researches. International and non-Governmental agencies that employ social scientists as consultants, evaluators, qualitative researchers are compelled to PAR methodology. He dwells at some length on the real question about participant observation which gives consideration to the questions - 'how long', 'how sincere', 'how serious,' 'how active,' and so on." It is this sincerity of purpose of practices that is going to make the difference in research in North East India. Our hesitation to stand by the convictions generated from an anthropological stand point on contemporary debates be it 'unrest in North East India', implementation of 'forest rights act', 'Adivasi struggles', 'land acquisition policy', reservation policy', 'tribal conflict', and 'health and health care issues' and so on. Influence of the public opinion will go a long way to make research relevant in North East India. In the North East, the use of these criteria of culture, language and dependence on community resources would give the people of this Region the possibility of keeping a distinction between those who are indigenous to the region and those who are not.

**Prof. Mayanglambam ManiBabu** (*Structuring Prehistory and Identifying Research Priorities: Manipur in Perspective*) argues in his paper on various significant research issues in the context of Manipur with special reference to Archaeology. He observes that the vast corpus

of objects that have been left behind by the people who lived in the past are objects which are necessarily dumb and mute artefacts, and hence while defining Archaeology main emphasis is given with the study of these silent objects. Within archaeology, 'prehistoric archaeology' or simply 'prehistory' has its unique ways and means of structuring and interpreting the past. It is because of the fact that its temporality covers the longest period of the 99 per cent of human history since the time of his earliest appearance on this planet to the frontiers of written history. Prehistoric studies thus operate in those areas and periods which lack contemporary written accounts of themselves. Hence prehistoric Archaeology naturally makes a difference from that of the historical archaeology which is concerned with the study of ancient human societies with the aid of written texts. Therefore, he continues, structuring prehistory entails an academic venture of both fascinating as well as delicate task which involves hunting and unearthing the remains of the past, proper analysis of these finds through myriad scientific methods, and giving their meaning with a variety of theoretical perspectives. A general prediction by archaeologists is that population growth, economic development, growth of cities and suburbs, development of transformation systems, elite acquisitiveness, etc will pose enormous threats to the *in situ* archaeological records throughout the world during the next centuries, and Manipur is not an exception with the problem.

**Dr. Riju Sharma** (*Participatory Action Research – a Critical Pedagogy*) in her research opines that Participatory action research is gaining ground as an alternative methodology away from the dominant paradigms in social science research. It creates a sense of partnership and power sharing, negating dualism of the researcher and the researched. It provides a culture of knowledge and information sharing and promotes critical consciousness by engaging the participants throughout the research process. Participatory action research is an epistemological and methodological framework



concerned with social justice and liberation from systems of oppression. It is not intended to polarize and present participation and action research as an isolated methodology, but this author believes that a plurality of methods, operating in a multi paradigmatic space is the most adequate epistemological stand which avoids monopolization of truth. It is an open position, with no imposition of predetermined procedures, conducive to dialogue between various actors whose knowledge is different. The North East India with its diversity and ethnicity presents a troubled periphery and it is imperative to involve and actively engage the participants in the quest for information and ideas to guide their future actions considering their history, tradition, values and culture which is very often overlooked from the dominant space.

**Dr. Dhruba Kumar Limbu** (*A Brief Review of Physical Anthropology in Northeast India*) begins his discussion from the historic beginning of the Asiatic Society of Bengal after its formal inauguration by Sir William Jones in 1774. Later in 1920, the teaching of anthropology began with the establishment of the Department of Anthropology at University of Calcutta. A few eminent physical anthropologists like B.M. Das, A. K. Ghosh and R. Khongsdier have written on the history of research and development of physical anthropology in Northeast India. Though anthropological study began long back in this region but as an academic discipline, anthropology got its foothold in Northeast India only after Independence. The department of Anthropology in Northeast India was first opened in Gauhati University in 1952. Thereafter, series of universities started to include a wing of Anthropology in their academic setup. Dibrugarh University started Anthropology in 1966, North-Eastern Hill University (1983), Manipur University (1984), Rajiv Gandhi University (2001), Nagaland University (2009) and Assam University in 2010. But it is a matter of disgrace that although Northeast India advances in the researches of Anthropology, the academic circle did not flourish with the same

pace. A number of Universities in Northeast India have the subject but in colleges that teach this subject is relatively insignificant in comparison to the number of the total colleges in the Region.

**Dr. Bhaskar Das** (*Physical Anthropology: It's Transformation from Descriptive to Analytical*) elaborates on Anthropology as the study of humankind in all its forms sets it apart from other Social Science disciplines in its cross-cultural, holistic nature. Physical anthropology, (now frequently called biological anthropology), is one of the broad subfields of anthropology that study humans as biological organisms considered in an evolutionary framework. Johann Friedrich Blumenbach regarded as the father of physical anthropology for his systematic classification of mankind used the word Anthropology to denote Physical Anthropology. In the eighteenth century Anthropology meant description of the body and soul. However, after Charles Darwin published his evolutionary theory in 1859, many old debates about human origins have become irrelevant. It was now understood that human variation is the product of the interaction between the biological organisms and the environment. By the mid-twentieth century, a new Physical Anthropology emerged whose main architect is Sherwood Washburn. He embraced the dynamic view of evolution promoted by the adherents of the neo-Darwinian synthesis. As a result, a transformation in Physical Anthropology from the descriptive stage to the analytical stage has begun.

**Dr. Ranga Ranjan Das** (*Folklore Researches in North East India*) reminiscences the contributions of veteran Scholars like Birinchi Kumar Barua, Prafulla Dutta Goswami, Birendranath Datta who are considered to be the three eminent scholars who have shown the trend of folklore research perspectives in North East India during post-Independence period. They have been followed up by succeeding scholars on their own interest and line and enriched the treasure of folklore. This essay highlights the large number of folklore



studies done in the north east from the colonial period to this day and critically reviews the current research perspectives in North East India. While taking stock of the major contributions it is observed that serious Folklore studies and research was done with the coming of a separate department of Folklore research in Gauhati University. In terms of research, P. D. Goswami's work is the earliest. From then on large numbers of emerging scholars from various disciplines have come out for Folklore studies as their Ph. D research some of whom are enrolled in Tezpur and North Eastern Hill University. The research trends focus on empirical research rather than theoretical research. In the north east, Soumen Sen, Hellen Giri, Desmond Kharmawphlong, Temsula Ao is the popular name in the field of folkloristics and literature as well. For the rapid development of Folklore studies, it is the right time to look critically at the research perspectives of the region. The author rightly points out that in the last two decades the quality of research in Folklore is not up to the mark in the entire North East India. While naming some of the young scholars who passed away recently the author calls for a more rigorous launching of Folklore research in North East India with special reference to Assam.

**Dr. Surojit Sengupta** (*Social Science and Sociology – A Quest for Sociology in Tripura*) observes that the significant feature of Social Sciences is their intrinsic double dialectics. The first, epistemological, as a social scientist endeavors to formulate categories to replicate societal realities of which they themselves is a part and secondly, ethical, where a social scientist bears responsibility towards society for the uses of their knowledge which is a social product, a historical product, where the tensions of contemporaneity bear heavily upon them. The meaning of relevance in the social sciences is deeply entangled with and arises out of this double dialectics. Surojit Sengupta argues that Social Science has been undergoing a change during the past few decades. The change may be analyzed into three separate components:

first, the substance with which social science is concerned; second, the method it uses to comprehend that substance; and third, the larger social theory which serves as a frame for housing both the newer substance and the newer method of Social Science. He concludes by saying that the subject Sociology and sociological research has got a very vast scope in Tripura as the society in the state forms a major part of contemporary life patterns which is slowly encroaching upon and engulfing the existing forms of social structure.

**Dr. Janet Florine Tellis, SSps** (*Anthropological Researches with special reference to Tribal Studies in Tripura*) in her paper throws light on the issues of Social Science research in general and anthropology in particular in the context of Tripura. As the state of Tripura does not have a Department of Anthropology in the University or Colleges the author gathered information from the interactions with teachers, undergraduate and post-graduate students of Sociology from colleges and university together with available information from the few books in the library of Tribal Welfare Department, Agartala. It is amply clear from her study that there has not been any comprehensive empirical study on the development and status of Social Science with reference to the State of Tripura. Due to inadequate information it is hard to provide an all-inclusive picture. However, the author has focused on Sociology by utilizing whatever information is available. The author rightly observes that more expertise from anthropological field could be used for the socio-economic planning and betterment of life for indigenous tribal groups. It is all the more important for the scientific assessment of the public welfare measures is obligatory to enable planners and administrators to undertake development measures to lessen the gap between different sections of the people of Tripura. In order to help build the new vision, more anthropological field work is needed, to provide insights into development intervention, to challenge all that obscures development because a society without adequate knowledge of itself will never be able to

plan meaningfully to face the challenges of the future.

**Dr. Benny K. John, CSC** (*Possibilities of Vital Anthropological Researches in Tripura: A road map*) through his paper argues that ethnographic study is ever significant for knowing, promoting and preserving vital knowledge about people and their culture. He raises a very pertinent question while asking how do we bridge the large cultural and linguistic gap? Anthropology is a constituent part of Social Science that explores how people understand and act in the world. So study the qualitative aspects of people's life and culture; focus on the creation and transmission of meaning. There is a grave need to study the integrated aspect of culture; its environment – the interactions between various aspects of cultural forms and between culture and natural environment, the interaction between individual and society, the influence of economic condition and political climate. Anthropology studies how people's behaviours changes over time and how people and seemingly dissimilar cultures are different and the same. This study tries to delineate a road map for vital anthropological study and ethnographic writing of people and culture of Tripura State in North East India. Such a study would demand a historically and politically sensitive interpretative ethnography that recognizes the possibility of multiple receptions, and of relevance to several possible discourses.

**Dr. Tame Ramya** (*Lingering behind the Hazes: Teaching and Researching Anthropology in Arunachal Pradesh*) in his discussion makes a clarion call to revamp teaching and researching of Anthropology as a culture centred discipline in Arunachal Pradesh. He notes that in spite of about two decades of emergence as a university discipline, Anthropology has not been able to break through the negative pictures of colonialism and subjugation to the discipline of tribal studies. Factors accountable for the poor state of teaching and research in Anthropology in Arunachal Pradesh include institutional and structural incapability and limitations, a curriculum that fails to address both the



aspirations of the students and the role of the discipline in state and national development as well as the inability of the anthropologists themselves to rise up to the dynamic challenges of contemporary Arunachalee society. In view of the foregoing, there is need for a serious rethinking and fundamental restructuring of the discipline focusing essentially on the curriculum, professionalism, and development values of the discipline. It is only through the above that teaching and researching in Anthropology would be more fruitful to both theoretical and practical concerns as an authentic narrative and imagery of Indian cultural realities. This scenario gives us the broad picture, there are still a few Arunachalee anthropologists who are into research concerns that are indeed in tune with contemporary needs of society while still remaining undoubtedly anthropological in orientation and methodology.

**Dr. Queenbala Marak** (*People, Societies, and Cultures in Meghalaya: A Review of Anthropological Researches from the Beginning to Recent Times*) discusses the works that have been done on the tribes and people of Meghalaya from the beginning till date, and reviews the progress so far made. In terms of a study of society and culture of the region, it is understood that there will be many works in academia. However, in this chapter, only those works have been included which were undertaken with an anthropological orientation. The author dwells at some length on the Beginnings of Ethnography by the two pioneers in ethnography of the tribes of the region are Col. P. R. T. Gurdon and Major Alan Playfair who wrote ethnographies on the two major tribes during the colonial period. These monographs were prepared by persons, officials or missionaries who for a long time were in close touch with the respective tribes. The post-colonial period is marked by the entry of three trained anthropologists - Robbins Burling, Chie Nakane, and D. N. Majumdar. Burling, an American anthropologist and linguist conducted fieldwork for two years in village Rengsanggri from October 1954 to October 1956; while



Nakane, a Japanese social anthropologist conducted hers in both the Garo and Khasi Hills from October 1955 to February 1956. Another milestone is the People of India Project undertaken by the Anthropological Survey of India which launched a project on the people of India on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1985. Kinship, Matriliney, Reproductive Health, Culture Change and Continuity, Ethnicity, Identity, and Politics, etc. also is given a fair treatment by the author before she concludes saying 'at present, anthropology in Meghalaya has entered an exciting phase with a variety of works like studying different aspects of culture. The entry of "native" scholars has brought in a stimulating array of literatures % looking at one's society and culture with an insider's perspective yet maintaining an anthropological gaze'.

**M. Antony, SVD & Dr. K. Jose SVD** (*Envisioning Social Science Researches: Critical Contexts, Complex and Challenging Concepts*) in their Post Script highlights some salient features of Social Science researches for the current decade with some immediate and radical reforms as well. This write up gives a clarion call to make relevant researches while taking cues from nostalgic past but charting out our research journey with renewed passion and enthusiasm. The author continues reiterating that Social Science has to re-emerge in our context and time to be relevant. The challenge is to reach beyond the theoretical framework and become practical seeing the specific need of the place and people. And in this sense it is critical that the researchers and academia provide the spring board for the young researchers in India - to mould the young minds for a long time to come. It is indeed heartening to observe that some well meaning institutions – both universities and research institutions - have realized that much before they attack a problem they have to equip an adequate know-how of dealing with the problem, gauge the intensity of it and acquire the appropriate skills to use the most relevant tools, and necessarily a passionate desire to unearth answers to the problem under study. They conclude this write-up saying 'in the final analysis, we earnestly

hope to build up a momentum in some challenging yet critical and crucial researches today and in the days to come’.

## 5

From this above debates it is amply clear that it is essential for us to dwell on the pathways of Social Science research in our country with special reference to our region. For a vibrant yet balanced development of Social Sciences it is imperative that individuals and organizations/institutions understand the current situation viz-a-viz the path ahead in undertaking independent and diversified researches within the broad vision of the respective agencies and stakeholders drawn out considering both short and long term goals. In any case, there should be ample room for the various individual disciplines of Social sciences to be able to launch out on researches in any of the themes of their choice and within the time frame, scope and method they consider best given the context of time and resources. With the fast paced changes in any part of the globe it is imperative that scholars are guided in their own context in embarking on research themes which are on the one hand keeping with the rhythm of the time and on the other hand charting out to the topics which are diversified and challenging.

Often it is stressed that there is a great need of Social Science researches with far reaching consequences to the concerned society. The inadequate fund available together with the decline of interest in choosing some critical areas of research may dampen serious interest in pursuing research in themes of larger and long-term concerns of society. Lack of adequate funds could be one of the many reasons for a decline in Social Science research. Among other reasons one cannot overlook the fact that there is often an element of lack of goodwill in research fraternity to chart out on an inter-disciplinary research paradigm. Then, in the hierarchy of numerous problems in Social Science research, the lack of good research proposals has always ranked much higher in recent times than lack of funds per se. Yes,

funds need to be made available based on the research output however, university administration under the guidance of the research co-ordinator should also become more research friendly to encourage teaching faculties to undertake research. Here one cannot over emphasise the need to have an active collaboration between research institutes and university departments so that teachers in the universities work hand in hand with research institutes up to a great extent.

Today one would not hesitate to state that Social Science researches have to justifiably claim a more prime space in the whole academic and research enterprise in India with special reference to North East India. Various communities in the region need to carve out a more meaningful intellectual space in recording oral traditions, ethno-medicinal lore and customary practices which are recast in the original genius of the wisdom of ages. This will take communities to higher stages of welfare connecting the individuals with communities and vice versa. And obviously, modernization is the progressive process of making societies, culture, and individuals receptive to growth of tested knowledge and its employment in the ordinary business of daily living of the common folk.

There is no doubt that there are very many well meaning research institutions in various parts of our country that have made praiseworthy contributions. There are also universities which partake in major researches in spite of their financial and human resource crunch. Now, the major question which arises in anyone's mind is that irrespective of so many researches undertaken the quality of life in our country remains the same. The challenges faced by the common folk do not have any respite. Why is it so? Is it not fitting for us to ask suitable queries today and find answers from social science research tomorrow? On any count there is no denying that we require more dynamism in terms of expertise and application. A better synergy has to be imbibed between the leadership, individual practitioners and among the social scientists in the institutes. The emerging scenario



in higher education requires better opportunities for more rigorous research in Social Sciences.

Exactly a decade ago when *Sanskriti*-NEICR was born as a tiny research institute and a bit later when it became a toddler and then an emerging research centre it was on the lookout for becoming an agent of inspiration to the young research fraternity with special reference to the north eastern region of our country. For this we took some small yet daring steps and visualized that net-working with senior time tested professors of various academic disciplines with special reference to Social Sciences it was envisaged that Social Science with emphasis on anthropological research in North East India was the need of the hour. Today we celebrate a mile stone of the journey which we began with cautious optimism, moderate enthusiasm but with an ever enduring spirit. This cherished dream was fostered by a number of well meaning senior professors of wit and grit who believed in themselves and nurtured and appreciated genuine talents in others who were comparatively younger than themselves yet, enthusiastic to pass on their agility to the posterity.

We have begun to grow today because we have taken decisive and courageous steps to rejuvenate Social Science researches with special reference to Anthropological/Cultural researches in North East India. We firmly believe that small steps taken in right earnest proved vital for our futuristic imagination. We have no doubt, Social Science researches will flourish in the near future because the younger generation have both the caliber and the firm will to drive the course of action, for we believe that there is a grave need to traverse more decisively to the next momentous decade, truly to the next mile stone, yet once again gathering adequate steam. At this point of time we register our heartfelt gratitude to all those who generously and wholeheartedly became a part of our growth story, without expecting or accepting reward of any kind. Though we have scores of people to thank, certainly we shall not name anyone particularly because in

that exercise we are afraid to miss out many who we are aware walked with us both in thick and thin.

We thank the contributors of this important volume for not only addressing issues that are pertaining to North East India but to other parts of the globe as well. They have not only shared a part of their invaluable knowledge but passionately did so for the young and emerging scholars who will prove their caliber in Social Science research with a great sense of social responsibility. These invaluable insights are expected to add towards a process of evolving various vital research undertakings in the contemporary knowledge society. We certainly hope that this work will ignite passion for original research among many more scholars in our country. Of course, we are aware that much has been done yet even more remains to be done. We earnestly believe that together with you, we shall traverse the path ahead with determination and hope juxtaposed with enduring hard work. We are certainly aware that this step however small it may be will send in ripples of hope for the young friends who will take up challenging researches guided by the valiant torchbearers of the day. May all of us have the adequate determination to face the challenges and may our pathways be lighted by the grace of God.

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