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Foreword

This issue of the University Journal on ‘Northeast Indian Cultures’ carries forward its quest to delve deeper into the mosaic of cultures that our region is blessed with in an attempt to understand the sheer variety within this mosaic, and to encourage discourse and scholarship that bring about understanding and appreciation which, in turn, should give a much needed boost to cross-cultural studies that bridge voices, experiences and cultures.

If one were to put into a single phrase the over-riding narrative that runs through the wide range of themes touched upon in this issue, it would be: ‘a harmony of differences’, thus attempting to set in place what could perhaps be the dominant narrative of the region – a harmony of differences.

The very structure of such an ethnically diverse region walks one into an acute awareness of ‘the other’, of multiple others, and the consequent underlying invitation to understand the various expressions of this ‘otherness’ within an enticing display of differences that taunt the serious observer to pause, to behold, to admire, and eventually, perhaps, to participate.

This region and its ethnically diverse panorama, thus, invite openness to a variety of discourses and narratives. The reality of the North-East does not lie in one grand narrative, but in a multiplicity of narratives. This journal will continue to set such a tone for the academic study and scholarship of the region.

Fr. (Dr.) Stephen Mavelly
Vice-Chancellor
Assam Don Bosco University

Editorial

The North Eastern states (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura, Nagaland, and Sikkim) are of strategic importance to India as they share international boundaries with Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Myanmar and Nepal. Linguistically, the region is distinguished by a predominance of Tibeto-Burman languages and the racial stock characterised by an intermixture of Mongoloid, Indo-Burmese, Indo-Iranian, Dravidian, Indo-Tibetan, Aryan and other races. One of the unique glories of the North Eastern states is the mosaic of culture(s) and peoples – a garden of tribes, peoples and ethnicity. The North Eastern culture(s) are rich and exotic tapestries of the diversity found in the region. In fact, this garden of peoples of the region with its diversity is sometimes referred to as a ‘mini India.’ The North Eastern mosaic has a unique and vital place in the comity of Indian states for many reasons such as ground for dialogue, respect and acknowledgement of differences, unity with differences, inter-cultural learning, etc. This volume deals with various ethnic groups of the region and on variety of themes, which invite its readers to a discourse on the subjects presented below:

The article, *A Sociological View on Dong of Biata Society*, focuses on the households of the Biata tribe, known as *dong*, its meanings and roles. *Dong* is a physical and social entity. As a social entity it is a patriarchal household, an inclusive unit, a socialising unit, a corporate, property-owning group, and also a place of decision-making concerning the life-cycle of its members.

Marup, An Ethnic Minority Newspaper of Tripura: A Journey to Ethnic Society Revivalism deals with a widely read Manipuri weekly newspaper published in Agartala known as *Marup*. The study brings to light that *Marup* is redefining the normative structure of an ethnic

minority media in the midst of the multi-cultural, multi-ethnic state of Tripura, India.

Theravada Buddhism and Traditional Religion in Lathao, a Tai Khampti village in Arunachal Pradesh provides a descriptive and analytical account of the religious beliefs and practices of the Tai Khampti of Arunachal Pradesh. The paper addresses the co-existence of elements found in Theravada Buddhism and the animistic practices which define the religious world-view of the *Tai Khampti* village of Arunachal Pradesh.

Probity in Public Life and Corruption asserts that probity in public life is not only an avoidance of corrupt practices but it also mean to actively promote certain values in public service such as accountability, impartiality, transparency and the rule of law. The paper further reflects on the twin principles of integrity and probity in public life which are the bare minimum that society expects from those holding a public office, which have to be based on well thought out processes and practices.

Culinary Traditions, Aesthetics and Practices: Constructing the Cultural Identity of Amri Karbis of Northeast India attempts to account for the food habits – the daily as also the celebratory eating habits and traditional culinary practices of Amri Karbis of Assam and explore subsequently how their cultural identity is constructed through them.

Empowerment of Women through Self Help Groups and Credit Linkage: A Case Study of Six Self Help Groups under Ramsai Hills, Kamrup Metro, Assam tries to understand the transformation and change that have left its impact on the social and economic fronts of women engaged in Self Help Groups under the Ramsai Hills in the city of Guwahati, Assam.

Impact of Christianity on the Tamang and Lepcha Tribal Cosmologies attempts to peep into the Tamang and Lepcha cosmologies with special emphasis on their myths of creation, and makes an endeavour to consider the influence of Christianity on them. The study is limited to the Tamang and the Lepcha in Darjeeling district.

Apart from the above articles mentioned, this issue have book reviews on: i) *Mizo Narratives: Accounts from Mizoram*, and ii) *Being Mizo: Identity and Belonging in Northeast India*.

I hope that the readers will find the themes and subjects laid out in this volume informative, interesting and inviting of academic discourse to explore and understand the immense cultural diversity of the region to a wider audience, and set a narrative of the North East in a new light.

The board of editors would like to convey our appreciations and thanks to Dr. (Fr.) Paul Pudussery CSC for pioneering the *Journal of Northeast Indian Cultures* and being its first editor. Thank you and God bless you.

Dominic Meyieho