

National Seminar
on
'Equity with Special Emphasis on North Eastern Region'

Organized By:
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In collaboration with
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With its acknowledgment as a key for development, the term 'equity' turned to become a buzzword among academicians and planners towards sustainability. Yet the predicament of its fuller comprehension to be reduced into a definition remains. Probably this is due to dynamism entailed in the concept of 'equity' making it transcendental and also its entanglement with absolute ideals of 'equality' has added further obfuscation. However, there's no denial to the fact that aim of any society for true and holistic development can't materialize if it is not equitable too. Establishing 'equity' is a mindful (albeit arbitrary) act of doing as well as undoing to attain higher yet common prosperity in a given context. The context could be one or many with their demarcation still conjoint at a common horizon of human welfare.

In this way the concept of equity involves judicious distribution of available resources ensuring positive access and avoiding over and under consumption in the process. Therefore, the most prominent underlying aspect here is 'justice' a concept which itself is ever evolving since time immemorial though it has remained an essential ideal for a state marching towards peace and prosperity. Important questions that emerges here spontaneously are Justice – of what, for whom, and how. Further, it could be noted that these questions rest on a more fundamental query of 'why' at all this is needed? The hypothesis which has emerged is concentration of available resources (natural as well as created) will accentuate existing imbalance and lop-sided (undesirable) development of a state.

All the developing states fall in rudimentary and nascent stage of equitable environment due to transition phase(s) they are undergoing. India with its queer socially stratified structure on primordial lines and attuned economic as well as other development areas has become a classic example of faulty (re)distribution. Here It may also be noted that normatively assumption of primary onus on sovereign authority of state to ensure equity holds enough merit.

To cite and infer a few scholarly deliberations, 'equity' may be associated with 'fair distribution' (Rawls, 1971), capability enhancement (Sen, 1985; 1997; 2001; 2002), compensatory for untoward primordial situations (Dworkin, 1981), equal opportunity policy (Roemer, 1998), and also environment (biotic and abiotic factors pertaining to geography). Apart from environment equity which is largely related to geography, there's preponderance of social equity with broad dimensions on the lines of gender, caste, tribe, minorities, and disability. And some of the conspicuous issues that have cropped up relates to education, health, polity as well as other developmental aspects. Some of the indicative dimensions of equity in education includes equity of access, equity of results, and equity of outcome however there are influential factors as income, identity, technology, critical literacy, hidden curriculum, institutional habitus, so on and forth. Health equity is identified as basic (Sen, 2002) for its inter-relation with other aspects of human life. Health disparity is one conspicuous feature with differential availability, utilization, and affordability of health services.

Though the issue of equity is a matter of prime concern for India as a whole, comprehension of different federal states and region shall provide a relatively neat scenario at empirical level. North Eastern Region of India is peculiar in almost all terms as culture, geography, and historicity. The region has remained aloof of the fruits of development at the Centre (in Delhi) and had been integrated (instead of assimilation) to act merely as a security buffer. Only very recently after the year 2001 the government of India made some modest attempt to justify its recognition and initiated special plan of developing North Eastern Region by setting up a Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region. Apart from general issues of equity though in nuanced form from other parts of India, there are issues as of Bio-Diversity and those pertaining to ascribed sub-national identity for the people in this region.

In this context, an attempt to have confluence of ideas on equity in India in general and North Eastern Region particularly is being made by Dr. Ambedkar Chair, Tezpur University. The initiative is in the form of a national seminar for duration of two days (21st & 22nd June 2018) at Tezpur University Campus. There will be selected few presentations of eminent persons across the country, and for the benefit of the larger

academia these papers will be published in the form of edited volume. The broad themes are:

- a) Concept of 'Equity' – its dynamic linkage to various development approach
- b) Issues coming under the umbrella of Equity – Philosophical and Empirical Aspects
- c) Role of State to ensure Equity
- d) Need for Equity in North Eastern Region (demographic & other developmental profile)
- e) Suggestive Frameworks
