

What is the Spirit of the North-East?

K. K. Chakravarty

What is the spirit of the North-East? If there is, can it be defined? Where does it lie, how has it been expressed? How does it distinguish and unite Northeast with rest of India and the world? How does it vary in rhythm and tempo within Northeast and also make it one unique voice and signature in history of human civilization. What are the cognitive categories of social and natural sciences that have been created to map this spirit? In the process, has it been understood or misunderstood? Is there a possibility of uniting the enquiries in this respect in various disciplines in a historical perspective? May we, thereby, derive lessons that may help us give eco specific, culture specific turns to teleological, universal developmental strategies for the North-East? Is there an answer in culture to bring out the best in the North-East in culturally determined human and natural resource management strategies, and also to distress, replenish the amazing biocultural diversity of the North-East?

The IGNCA has been seeking answers to these questions in its ventures in the Northeast. It has been working with the communities in the remotest hills and dales, bluffs and spurs, valleys and forests of the North-East in search for answers. It has been eliciting the answers from community efforts to unite arts and life, grace and power, beauty and utility, ethos and pathos, culture and development in its self governance, dispute resolutions, and environmental management strategies, in its mental landscape, its narratives, poetry and drama.

The exhibition of photographs, objects, and multimedia material the films, the seminar, the special lectures and the cultural performances offer a very modest attempt by the IGNCA to showcase the ceaseless endeavour of North-Eastern communities to articulate and explain themselves, in their various but integral universe of tangible and intangible shapes and meanings. The celebration of the spirit of the North-East is an attempt to suggest that identities and differences in the North-East are obverse and reverse of the same coin, and that there is a luminous convergence of the diverse dimensions of the grandeur and depth of human spirit in the North-East.