PEACE IN INDIA'S NORTH-EAST
Meaning, Metaphor and Method

Essays of Concern and Commitment

Editors

Prasenjit Biswas
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ICSSR-NERC

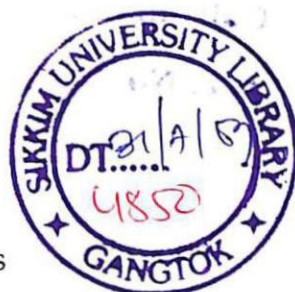# PEACE IN INDIA'S NORTH-EAST

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Shillong, July, 2006   Prasenjit Biswas
                                                              C. Joshua Thomas

Preface

The book explores many sided conflicts and their possible resolutions within the very notion of Peace. In the context of North East India, Peace has been elusive — as it never had been substantively achieved, although it had been procedurally justifiable. Moving beyond this paradigm of cessation of conflict and a limited operation of what is called 'resolution', the book for the first time unwraps the secret of peace from the politics of peace or dialogues of settlements and accords. It unwraps them from multiplicity of discursive formations, from inside and from outside. The sheer weight of such a multiplicity of interpretations and negotiations produce a many-layered critique of the very concept of peace and the implicatures to which it directs itself. The book is a simultaneous writing and erasure of peace in its ontologically unburdened sphere of 'thinking from the other side' and 'thinking against the grain'.

Discursively speaking, the book represents most of the shades of opinion and research on Peace that came from situated scholars, most of whom have developed essays of concern and commitment, instead of being guided by the fashionable diktats of Peace Studies carried out at metropolitan universities. Further, the book is also a critical distancing from the so called policy makers of peace, for whom ontological and ideological questions are subsumable under 'security issues'. In effect, the book debars from taking any short cut to Peace, rather it circuitously builds on the notion of peace by pointing out its character of perpetual suspension — a negative dialectic that is pushed under the carpet in the name of democracy and liberalism.

The book mobilizes the meaning of peace in a constitutive sense only to confront the aporia that sits at the end of the road; while it tries to something other than itself to give rise to a fractured and dissipated language of peace best expressed in the form of metaphor in lieu of better expression — in all to put to trial the assured methods that tend to forget itself in the very process of peacemaking, a true spectre of the reign of fear versus the reign of fraternity. The book posits a fundamental theoretical argument: peace is mired into a perpetual suspension of peace, it is a trial, it is instituted, it is othering and it is always without itself. A rethinking of the notions of freedom, autonomy and self-determination is conducted in a thorough manner such that the idea of peace and its original meaning can be retrieved.

The book critiques the idea of peace as a construct that have been put to pragmatic uses and abuses. Looked from a multidisciplinary angle and many layered perspective what is analyzed in the book are: the inefficacy of the conventional notion of peace as absence of conflict; the beaten track of conflict resolution in terms of accords and ceasefire and the political, economic and cultural instrumentalization of peace as 'instituted'. The book explores the ontology and the emancipatory dimension of peace by following what Foucault called "thinking of the outside" and what Galtung called 'transcendence'. The book combines diverse intellectual, practical and critical theoretical perspectives on peace keeping in mind the ground reality of North East India.

The book takes a fresh look at issues of connection between Peace and Culture and proposes an emergent order of Peace that never stabilizes into mere absence of violence. Rather it presents the dialectic between peace and violence in an obverse, cryptic and mediating manner that leaves open the question of final settlement as a matter of both dissensus and consensus, one calling the other.

The major issue for peace in the region has been an urge for halting political violence. Such violences are often symbolic of revenge and retribution. As and when the supposed goal of Justice is failed, it results into violence of a kind that limits the agency, while strengthen the acts. Political violence produces a sense of dichotomous belonging that runs through the conflict between the State and the Community. The idea of Community

emerges as a kind of resisting capability that also seeks justice, failing which it aims at establishing a regime of revenge and counter-action. The meaning of peace, therefore, often turns out to be a redemption from such a return to an outside that constitutes the very notion of identity. In fact such a redemption only heightens a rift in the heart of being and there is no exit from facing one's own self-identity as a kind of paranoia or 'fear of the other'. Such fears and concerns do construct a notion of the other that provides a metaphoric redemption to the self or even the dominant agency of Power in such a way that notions are enmeshed into a formation of collectivity that overcomes the very fear of being such and such entity. What is reproduced in this engagement with political action and its later redemptions is a performative definition of oneself that alters between possibilities and potentialities.

The book is a must read for those who want to rethink the notion of peace, especially those who want to engage in live debate and polemics on peacebuilding. It is also an interesting reading for all those who are concerned with peace studies, international relations and dialogues.

Editors

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Inaugural Address

M.M. Jacob
Governor of Megahalaya, Shillong

Distinguished audience and friends,

I am thankful to the ICSSR and NEHU for inviting me over to inaugurate on the burning problem of the present day scenario "Peace Process in North East India". Ever since India won freedom, we had noticed more than once, the absence of 'Peace' in some region or the other. India — being a true democratic nation, having all the domestic institutions for peaceful conduct, we were able to successfully handle many situations, when internal and external forces tried to disrupt 'Peace'. In the UN and other world forums, India used to appeal to all nations to fight against terrorism and insurgency. But only after the 9/11 event in America, that the world body considered the urgent need of tackling terrorism.

Several world leaders respect Mahatma Gandhi for his non-violent and peaceful methods practiced to solve the burning issues and problems concerning the country. Even Martin Luther King, while championing the cause of the American Negroes for equal rights, recalled the "Gandhian" methods of peaceful resistance instead of using violent means. Any attempt to bring about 'Peace' should be through non-political and from one whose moral stature is beyond doubt. The famous quotation from Aldous Huxly states "violence can produce only the effects of violence. These

effects can be undone by compensatory non-violence after the event. Where violence has been used for a long period, a habit of violence is formed and it becomes exceedingly difficult for the perpetrators of violence to revert their policy."

The ethnic and cultural diversity of the Northeastern region is unique in the country. It has many tribes and communities who articulate a sense of identity in cultural, linguistic and ethnic terms. Such identities are often contesting over claims of homeland, territory and share over resources. The Constitution of India, through its sixth schedule is committed to protect, preserve and promote this rich cultural diversity with a spirit of mutual coexistence and recognition. But the contemporary history of the region is replete with mutually exclusive claims over many an issue and therefore we need to think and rethink about how to intervene and help mediate contentious situations. The unity and integrity of India, which depends on the principle of harmony and fraternity, needs to be upheld in negotiating conflicting interests. The Government of India and the respective state governments have done well in bringing various struggling groups, communities and organizations in the process of dialogues and this yielded a positive result in bridging up differences.

Peace is conceived as a holistic and comprehensive state of being that is all pervasive within a polity or a society. A noted theorist of peace, Prof. Johan Galtung, who theorized about the concept called 'structural violence' as the cause of unrest and conflict also had argued about conflict transformation from a violent to a non-violent condition. What he essentially meant is the teleological resolution of conflicts by telling us that all conflicts look for an end that would give peace to one of the sides and therefore, whyn't transform a conflict to ensure wellbeing of all the sides? This internal logic of conflict itself should be utilized in settling conflicts as what ensures the ends for one of sides could be enhanced and augmented if it can also take care of other sides. Essentially the conflicting goals of a situation of discord can never be mutually exclusive possibilities, as one of the sides shall always call for the other. Conflict sets in such dialectic of inclusivity, which apparently suggests a solution that excludes the other side completely. The question for peacemakers could be, therefore, how the other should be included within a proposal for resolving a contest and difference? Inclusivity means a comprehensive

political and social programme of addressing the burning issues of their lives such that when the communities engage in a conflict, the road to peace is always open through such programmes. Another theoretician of peace, Raghavan Ayer, a follower of Gandhi has suggested that the possibility of avoiding political conflicts lie in strengthening the *parapolitical* or in the civil society methods of resolving issues through committed dialogues involving people who are not just confined to the sphere of politics but engaged in many other fields. He puts it in reverse: *Parapolitical must decide the political* and not the other way round as that would be the exclusive domain of politicians. If we take this suggestion seriously, we can avoid the pitfalls of falling into the opinionated traps of the majoritarian and dominant groups, who often speak a language of power unacceptable to the large section of the minorities and oppressed groups. Given the multiethnic and the multicultural ambience of the region, claims of superiority of one community or group over another most often impede the path of progress towards peace. How should the concerned people go about such asymmetries built in the society itself in the process of dialogues is a rather difficult question. One has to look for an example in this context. I suppose Gandhi's struggle against apartheid in South Africa can give us few lessons in dealing with the claims of superiority: no superiority can rest on exclusivity as it would cut into the supposed dominance of one and such exclusivity would also show how weak one is about the presence of others. Rather superiority should be based on morally superior acts and thoughts, which is an intellectual and moral plank of treating others as morally equal. Peace as a value can establish this plank of reason of treating others as morally equal and this in turn shall establish peace in situations of conflict. Our constitutional values embody such treatment of equality both in positive terms as well as in terms of affirmative action for the weak and the unevenly developed societies. One can take good advantage of such constitutional values that can complement the value of peace.

Another crucial aspect of peace is the respect for human life that comes only through a reasonable balance of political values and social values. Political values such as equality of representation and democratic sentiments of arriving at deliberative justice and social values such as fraternity and communal harmony

need to be balanced in order to ensure a smooth functioning of our democracy. Respect for life as a value is a combined product of all other such values, which once undermined,opens up a self-destructive path of vicious cycle of violence. Violence and counter-violence only increases risk of being annihilated and completely brings down the value of life. Constitutional democracy in India is committed to uphold life, liberty and happiness of common humans and therefore, it practices a kind of restraint on violence and attempts to restore peace and justice in situations of conflict. I suppose the parties of violence throw these basic parameters of our public life into wind and therefore, they should be restrained and refrained by the larger public and the State. Keeping full regard for human right, especially the right to life as a fundamental right as enshrined in our Constitution, one should think of ways and means of bringing down the situation of violence into some kind of 'reflective equilibrium', to use a notion by the famous political scientist and philosopher John Rawls. This requires a sincere effort on the part of the state and the civil society to expand the existing set of rights and include those who are yet to be given such rights. It is a concrete realization of human rights in the context of an unequal access to resources and powers, which civil society must ensure in a pluralist polity like ours.

Should peace be autonomous or institutions of democracy must generate it? The question can be addressed from the perspective of contemporary liberal-communitarian discourses about democracy and civil rights. From the point of view of liberals like Rawls, Sandel and Nozick, rights are not necessarily institutional by their very essence, rather they are the universal basis for justice and peace. From the point of view of communitarians like MacIntyre, Habermas and Unger, rights are culturally constituted and they are basic to the political values of liberalism. In the context of Northeast India, which is an admixture of liberal modernity and traditional values as practiced and embodied by several tribes and communities of the region, the debate rages among Political scientists whether categories of liberal-communitarianism can be applied here appropriately. For the purpose of conflict and its resolution, liberal-communitarianism is helpful in the sense that it introduces the criterion of justice as fairness (Pace Rawls) and project of a meaningful social life based upon public use of cultural reason (Pace MacIntyre) that alters narrow views of conflict

to a wider discourse of rationality and democracy. This discourse of rationality is an outcome of our focus on issues of common concern that makes every community dependent on others and the good of others appears as their own good. As collectivities turn out to be more emotional about their group identity and group rights, the very conception of such rights cannot preclude the good of the other. Therefore, it cannot be conceivable that 'the good that appears to be other's is not as mine', as that would make one's own good inconceivable. Most often communities think of their own good in a manner that 'what is good for us is not and cannot be good for others'; but liberal-communitarian discourse tells us that it is precisely the other way round, 'what is conceived to be good for us is good because that is thought to be good by others'. Therefore, as we design our own good, we are morally bound to recognize the good of the other. This precise understanding of the liberal-communitarian doctrine helps us to ensure justice in the context of a pluralist polity and society.

This brings us to a *plural meaning of peace*, where claims of peace become reasonable by way of its public and common juridicality within the framework of a liberal and plural state. Without such sharing of a common ontology of peaceful coexistence, struggles for attaining group rights become meaningless. Within the limits of reason posed by a plural and multicultural society, right claims can operate on the condition of peace and mutual understanding. The conflictual grounds of democratic pluralism can be negotiated through these claims of rights that operate within the condition of peace. In a situation of crisis, this will enable a certain amount of political forgetfulness and reconciliation that are essential to bring reason in the course of settling the issues. Large-scale political violence, be it by the state or by groups opposed to it is both detrimental to foregrounding plural meanings of peace and therefore, coercion adds to undermining of moral and constitutional values. In fact, this crisis of right and values in the realm of public interaction has resulted into unresolvable conflicts.

Peace crucially depends on the commitment to engage in a dialogue with the other party with which one is in conflict. This necessitates mutual respect and toleration. In dialogue one should not assume that his or her interpretation of concepts is the best and should be accepted by his or her opponents. On the contrary,

one should lay out for scrutiny one's reasons for claims alongside those of other parties. Each party must recognize that the claims of the other side cannot be wished away, as these need to be addressed with reason and toleration. Belonging to this or that community should not rob one of a critical evaluation of one's own claims in the light of other's. This would reduce those kinds of reasons that prompt purely expressive intentional reasons and actions, which amounts to turning one's back to the other. This reminds me two principles of objectivity of reason, namely that *one cannot criticize something with nothing* and *we cannot escape relying on reason* that helps us not to arrive at an incommensurable position. The crucial question is, of course, does incommensurability render reasons optional? Competing reasons do not necessarily defeat each other; rather their incommensurability is an explanation for their optional character. Competing reasons further create a condition for exploring better reasons without getting embroiled into reasons of the competing sides. Within the limits of reason drawn by the criterion of legitimacy, the adjudication of claims of rights and entitlements must *explain* the basic abilities of a community or a group, which is best explained in terms of a rational means-ends relationship. The availability of reasons to back one's claim makes possible an attainment of peace for itself. If a community is in peace, it ensures peace for others as well.

I would draw your attention to the security aspect of peace. In moments of violent conflict, as we often witness in Northeastern region, the fall in human security is a major concern. The transnational linkages of various insurgent outfits, rampant acts of terror and extortion make the functioning of a civil society impossible. In fact all these signify facets of stateless societies, but stateless societies, even if they are there cannot become the rule and reason of the state. The identity of a large number of victims of insurgency related violence in the region has often been blurred by a stigma of belonging or not belonging to this or that group. The rule of law, which establishes equal citizenship, which especially secures rights of smaller ethnic groups and communities cannot be destabilized in this manner as this would endanger the community itself. I agree that violation of human rights committed by any group or any agency of the state is unacceptable, but one should not create a situation of conflict in which such things

take place. Purposive violation of human rights by groups engaged in conflicts is another feature of rights violation that needs to be addressed seriously in this seminar.

I would also like to emphasize the importance of peace studies that could be taken up by various universities of the region. It is a systematic, research oriented and disciplined approach to peace. The task lies with the university, as the Government alone cannot promote such a sensibility. As universities are meant to promote humanism, they should take up the matter of how urgently they can devote their studies for building up a dedicated army of intellectuals who would lead the path in dispelling misconception that result into violations of peace. In fact, in such an enterprise, a combined interdisciplinary move to integrate culture and politics with the inherited values of civilization should be put into practice. This also needs teaching and practice of responsibility as opposed to 'parochial knowledge'. A question like, "Is parochial knowledge possible?" could be a good question to ask as a beginning and how an answer to such a question could be of great importance could be realized in the course of study and research. The validity of such an enterprise lies in extending culturally conditioned access to a set of values that only provides an ethnocentric knowledge to something universal will possibly be the only way to restore peace and tranquility in the region. I, therefore, would like to propose compulsory peace studies program in the universities of the region, for which NEHU could make an auspicious beginning.

Looking at the current dialogue process that have facilitated peace between state and insurgents opens up a lesson for us. How committed dialogue could be the best source for establishing better understanding? As a practice, the possibility of dialogue should be emphasized and on how to establish dialogue should be focused upon as part of any peace studies programme. The fact that dialogue necessarily assumes a change from one's own fixed mindset; rather it invites one to see reason from other's point of view makes us understand the crucial balancing of one's own worldview with other's worldviews. This is a kind of cultural and civilizational convergence that might gradually remove the possibility of clash of civilizations. In the context of Northeast, the practice and culture of dialogue need to be strengthened as part of a disciplinary intervention in peace studies from

universities of the region. Even for those who are engaged in using 'underground operations to promote violence, I have a word from Che Guevera, the guerilla leader, "where a government has come into power through some form of popular vote, fraudulent or otherwise and maintains at least an appearance of constitutional legality, the guerilla outbreak cannot be promoted since the possibility of peaceful struggle have not yet been exhausted." I end up by quoting Prof. Galtung once again, who says that *peace is the condition for nonviolent development*, which we all should collectively usher in.

JAI HIND ::: THANK YOU ::: KHUBLEI ::: MITHELA

Presidential Address

Professor Pramod Tandon
Vice-Chancellor, North Eastern Hill University, Shillong

This gives me great pleasure to welcome you all in this very important national seminar on peace process in India's Northeast. It is also very significant to speak on this momentous issue of peace in Northeast, which is a distinct possibility now. With the efforts taken by the Central and State governments of the region and an equally responsible reciprocation from insurgents, civil societies and other concerned citizens, the possibility of peace is fast becoming a reality. I exhort all of them in their attempts to reach a resolution of all impending issues pertaining to peace for Northeast as a whole.

Peace must be a holistic, all comprehensive package that addresses not just the conflict but builds up a sustainable human relationship in all frontiers of life. Such a relationship between ethnic, cultural, religious, linguistic groups should not be viewed as a strategic action, but it should be nurtured from a point of view of equal respect and mutual understanding. In the conflict zones of the Northeast, I think, more than political and military action, what is needed is this building up of human relationship from ruins and rubbles. My firm faith is that humanity speaks in a more humane and fraternal voices and the task of scientists and social scientists is to discover these voices. Peace as a process will entail lending voice to these humane individuals and groups, who

dare to speak in the name of peace amidst torments and trauma. What turns out to be a mere rehearsing of violence in troubled times could be rehumanized if we do not fail to note the inside voices of brotherhood and sisterhood that operate beyond the fragmentary and disruptive discourses of hatred and violence. What is to be remembered is the quintessential humanizing aspect of peace that can overcome any hurdle on the way to peace.

Without going into the nitty gritties of how peace should be achieved and sustained, I would like to focus more on the theme of the seminar, which is Peace as a Process. What do we really mean by a process? Processes might enhance the event or they may dampen it. If processes come from behind to affect the event, it may be dampened; but if it comes from the front the way events affect the processes, it might succeed in scoring a brownie point. In contemporary peace studies, synergies between events and processes are considered very important. In the context of North-east India, Events like cease-fire and processes like mainstreaming and participation in democratic system affect peace process in a synergetic way. The interface between events and processes can give rise to a holistic and unified paradigm for peace that may be satisfactory to all the conflicting parties. It would be very ideal if the conflicting parties themselves come forward and give rise to such synergies.

At the global level, peace revolves around issues of shared decision making and mutual confidence building. In democratic societies and countries, peace also is built around an internal mechanism of conflict resolution, which does not follow a fixed trajectory of administrative and judicial pathway, but keeps developing new categories of understanding. How peace studies can formulate such categories in the context of Northeast is a daunting question. The most important element, as per my belief, is the transformation of conflicts into modes of negotiation that strengthens mutual confidence and self-respect. What I mean to say is that a sense of defeat or humiliation has no place in peace building. One also needs to transcend the categories of specific belonging to identities in order to arrive at a *universalizable* notion of peace. Contemporary social theory seems to be suggesting an alternative to this universalizability aspect of peace by formulating a particular notion of power relationship, which still needs to be tested in contexts across cultures and situations.

One necessary area of understanding is the inter-relationship between the state and the civil society. In matters of peace, it is a dynamic exchange of ideas between the two that decides the shape of peace. Keeping the precious ideal of permanent peace in mind, one would suggest that responses of the civil society are much more important than possibly the role of state in matters of peace. Although the civil society that we have is itself afflicted with deep divisions within, nevertheless a process of deliberation and discussion can bridge up many a difference to arrive at a consensus about peace. In situations, where such consensus is a distant dream, the already existing character of solidarity needs to be taken into account to gather clues that can smoothen the road to peace. In extreme cases like communal fanaticism and ethnic chauvinism, it is easier said than done. But in the moment of despair, one would possibly tread a path of minimizing the conflicts within civil society in order to stabilize the impact of conflicts on state and various other institutions. As far as democratic peace is concerned, it is always possible to achieve it, if parties involved in conflict are ready to undertake an exercise of understanding the other point of view. Such an exercise is less political and its more moral, spiritual and cultural. It is in this sense that those who are culturally alien to the civil society or state should always be yielded a place of deliberation and if they could be engaged in such deliberations, I am sure, results are not always negative. The task of the State is to facilitate such an exchange within civil society without playing the role of an arbiter, but by playing the role of a rappoteur.

I affirm here my conviction that peace is meaningful only if it guarantees participation of all concerned in the very decision of peace and not just at the stage of implementation. This would effectively mean involvement of diverse institutions that are a part and parcel of a democracy. These institutions need to be made effective in terms of cross-cultural and multi-ethnic representations so that any effort at the political level finds an appropriate support or ground. There is no gainsaying to the fact that public institutions in the context of democratic societies play a very special role in establishing social justice by accommodating diverse interests and hence opinions mobilized from these institutions make the task of peacemakers far more easier. Possibly what we as a collective need to do is to strengthen these

institutions that are at the core of a democratic system of rule. The challenge of peace in a pragmatic sense is this challenge of building appropriate institutions at all levels; which can start from traditional institutions at the grassroots upto University and the highest decision making bodies. Living in a democracy we should develop a sensitive mindset to the problems of institutions so that any effort to mediate or break ground in conflict situations becomes much easier. The vision enshrined in Indian constitution about a just and egalitarian social order, I think, actually means building up institutions of responsibility, moral, political and otherwise that can solve half the problem right at its inception. For a lasting democratic and peaceful coexistence between modern and ethnocentric communities, I think institutions can play a great role in removing mistrust and lack of confidence, if they are truly representing the wishes and aspirations of people. Therefore one needs to treat the root cause of problems of peace instead of merely treating the symptoms of conflict at a superficial level.

Before we actually go for resolving conflict, a great deal should be done in understanding the problem. Without an adequate understanding of the ground reality, suggestions for solution would be like leading us nowhere. Social sciences and Humanities can play the role of torchbearers in understanding complexity of human relations in all its diverse forms and the more we widen our perspective on the human condition, more we will be capable in handling problems at various levels. I am aware that this distinguished gathering of scholars not only have contributed to our horizon of understanding the social realities, but they have also built up a method of critical analysis that does not only satisfy the demands of intellect but makes us proactive in a situation of conflict. That our whole enterprise is towards understanding a problem from a larger perspective actually unburdens us from the narrow walls drawn around us; it aspires for an unlimited intellectual freedom to discuss and deliberate on contentious issues such that we do not lag in terms of knowledge. Only if we have a rich knowledge of history and culture of peoples who have entered in a stage of conflict, we can possibly qualify ourselves as peacemakers. I, therefore, appreciate the possibility that academicians, scholars and journalists like you can contribute to the already

advanced processes of peacemaking for a region like this. *What role can the university play in such an enterprise?*

Well, it is difficult to exhaustively describe the entire possibility of universities of the region playing a substantial role in mitigating problems of peace. With our limited mandate on research and academics, we should need to play a responsible social role by way of producing ideas and by leading moral action, of which such conferences and discussions definitely play a major role. We should not feel unheard and unrecognized, as our intervention makes the difference in terms of making everyone aware about the dynamics of a conflict, which most of the people cannot so easily get at. Therefore, we present heterogeneous points of view, which taken together can form a totality of possible viewpoints on a situation of conflict. Apart from this, Universities can promote peace education and can involve students, youths and other sections of citizens in disseminating the knowledge of peace with all its practical aspects of doing things for peacemaking. In this context the incisive role of social research and that of educators of peace could be very significant. The voices of peace can really be built up from the universities of the region by promoting peace education in its most advanced form. In order to attain this, the contemporary peace initiatives in the globe have to be taken into account by an academic programme on peace, in which research into origins and development of conflicts of all kinds with the larger possibility of mediation and resolution is the need of the hour. We as a university in the region have been contributing in this area through our research at various levels, but much needs to be done in this direction, keeping in mind the contemporary national and international situation.

Coming back to the Northeastern situation once again, an intensive focus on specificities of conflict needs to be recognized from a retrospective as well as from a prospective point of view. I hope that the seminar would be an important initiative in this direction. The recent progress made in talks between center and the insurgents needs to be supported with innovative economic, social and political ideas. I think the seminar could make a beginning in this direction. It needs to be followed up with a more direct initiative to develop a process of learning from experiences of dialogue and current advances in peacemaking. But all these need

a holistic vision and not a piece meal one. A holistic vision could be arrived at only by way of documenting the ways and means of such an advance and it needs to be correlated to the curriculum in various departments of humanities and social sciences. This, I know is a creative engagement and it will also prove to be very productive. I would call upon all my fellow colleagues to think about making such a roadmap for future creativity so that peace is conceived in a more realistic manner. This needs a little romanticism of heart and courage of intellect. *Unless we are able to show this through our academic initiatives, universities as institutions of higher learning will remain answerable to the posterity.* This kind of a vision shall move towards providing an alternative to contemporary approaches to peace building in a larger and holistic sense and therefore any step towards this shall be welcome.

Another area of deliberation that needs to be highlighted is the connection between peace and development. I think for a healthy development of the region, peace is a must. As we know from Mizoram experience, peace is a prime mover of development and the least that conditions of peace do is to set up a regime of free decision-making on development related matters by the communities themselves. Keeping this goal of peaceful development process in the region, I would emphasize the need for a better understanding of the self as well as the other and only that will provide steps toward solving some of the mind boggling issues of conflict in the region.

PEACE IN INDIA'S NORTH-EAST

Meaning, Metaphor and Method
Essays of Concern and Commitment

Prasenjit Biswas and *C. Joshua Thomas* (eds.)

Thomas Hobbes very famously said that the State may not be *at war* at any given time, but it is always in a "state of war". Hobbes may or may not be right about this; but it does seem as though there has been for quite sometime now a state of war in India's northeast. *Peace in India's North-East . . .* is one of the most serious explorations of the possibilities of peace in this unfortunate region of our country. The contributors consist mostly of young intellectuals from the region who come together in a rare exchange of ideas and points of view. The result is an exciting mix of fresh theoretical insights and historico-cultural dialogue. It must be read by everybody who is interested in a fair and authentic articulation of India's nationhood and the place that the northeast must have in it.

— Mrinal Miri