

We need to contribute together for portraying Northeast India



Comments 3



moushumibhattacharya 28 August 2007 15776 views

The North East: Unknown, remote, exotic and barbaric. Land of the dog-eating, half naked, gun-toting tribal. And the best of all is that, it is a region to be regarded as a museum piece, a subject for anthropological study. Landing at Delhi, I was bombarded with many humiliating clinches: Do you live in tree houses? Do you worship the same Gods as us? Are your Women promiscuous? Do you also take drugs? For all students coming to Delhi from North-East, the branding is almost automatic. It was quite a shock to me. The first thing people must recognise is that the North East comprises not one but several cultures. Each state has its own rich and distinct cultures. The rest of the country has still not awoken to the subtleties and nuances of it. There's no denying the undercurrent of alienation which springs from years of neglect. The region's main grievances are that there is a sense of being wronged of being outsiders to the rest of the country which cares little about knowing the region better. According to me, the historical, physical, political and emotional sense of distance has worked together for this alienation which is purely a result of basic lack of understanding and interest. With thousands of students streaming out of the region to virtually every corner of India, misconception are melting and both sides can claim to be better informed. Yet the us-versus-them feeling refuses to go away completely. When you open the travel pages of any leading dailies, there are series of advertisements talking of tours, packaged tours, discounted tours etc etc. for any South East countries. To the best of my knowledge, all those tour operators are overbooked for the various tours they offer for Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam etc. Why can't the tourism ministry look into converting North East

as a major International Tourist destination? Yes, tourism is yet another missed opportunity. What do we have in the name of tourism? There are some luxury boats along the Brahmaputra and a handful of high-quality resorts, some packaged tours to Shillong-Cherrapunji, Kajiranga etc etc.... We need a better tourist friendly approach. In other parts of India, one can see, bus full of Bengalis, Gujratis, Tamils etc.. travelling in conducted group tours. Have we ever witnessed it in North East (barring Darjeeling)? Take for languages: forget French or Spanish, do we even have trained Telugu or Tamil guides? Orchids from Bangkok reach Amsterdam within hours whereas no one has ever given it a thought about the availability of orchids in North Eastern States. How many people know the mystery of Jatinga where Salim Ali spent months together to know the mystery of the suicidal birds? How many people know that a state was formed (Mizoram) when famine struck after the bamboo flowering caused devastation in the crops? Personalities like Singhajit Singh, Indira Goswami, Bhupen Hazarika, Jahnu Barua have contributed much to make others aware of the importance of North East states. I feel, now its our turn to join hands with them to promote North east and contribute in its economy and tourism and make the other parts of the country realise that it is much beyond a gun-toting, dog eating regions....

moushumibhattacharya

BY MOUSHUMIBHATTACHARYA

Barak Valley

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