

**Two-Day**  
**National Seminar**  
**On**  
**Democracy, Ethnicity and Governance in North East India**

Organized by: Department of Political Science  
Indira Gandhi National Tribal University,  
Regional Campus, Manipur

Sponsored by: Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), New Delhi

**Date: 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> September, 2015**  
**Venue: Conference Hall, Indira Gandhi National Tribal University,**  
**Regional Campus, Manipur**  
**Adimjati Complex, Chingmeirong, Imphal-795001**

Concept Note:

Contemporary North East India has marked a tense and contested terrain of political claims and counterclaims with its cultural overtones. The claims of people belonging to the ethnic and cultural settings of the North East, and a consequent national identity of their own, posited against the Indian national identity has generated considerable debate and controversy among scholars, intellectuals, social activists and others. There is quite a bit of indecisiveness in finally settling claims of specific ethnic and cultural identities that defy the dominant logic of identity. The dominant logic is that of construction of an identity that consents to an inclusion within the Indian national identity and thereby lives in agreement with the territorial and constitutional authority of the Indian state. Most of the identities in North East India assume a space of difference for realization of their own aspirations, cultural and political, with all other economic and social ramifications.

While colonial power emerged from constructing and deducing knowledge and forms of authority, post colonial nations altered and developed the discourse on existing

knowledge stores. Post-colonialism continues to reproduce collective meanings around groups, places, and representations. Such meanings are framed in constitutional and policy regulations, which result in the construction of citizenship discourses, security issues, and the task of monitoring these institutions. Such a linear knowledge structure from colonialism to post-colonialism exists in modern institutions such as the judiciary and police forces in order to enable them to negotiate ambiguous constructions and restless categories.

In North East India, ethnicity is an important element and is employed both by the administrators and tribal elite for different purposes, one for administrative convenience and the other to build up an expanded identity formation. The constitutional and administrative changes were evolved to meet the ethnic aspiration. However, the failure to accommodate the various ethnic communities in the constitutional framework of India's nation-building created an atmosphere of distrust, and a historical suspicion. The successive heavy militarization in the region in the guise of containing ethnic conflict and separatist tendency has led to the substantial deterioration of the civilian population. There is fear and anxiety among the various ethnic groups: one being the fear of the Indian armed forces; the other being the militarization of civilians among the ethnic communities.

The state is also becoming an increasingly heated site of ideological contestation in North East India, in which the forces promoting democratic values based on freedom and equality are counterposed to those seeking to preserve bureaucratic power and discretion within the state apparatus. The main source of contestation is the failure of the state to guarantee the rights and entitlements to the people, and to prevent their economic rights from being infringed by state sponsored developmental schemes and projects. The people have sought to complement mass-based struggles against the failure of the state by garnering public opinion. The growing international emphasis on good governance provided ideological succor to their activities. Mass mobilization within civil society has resulted in some success, but the state continued to be autocratic leaving little space for

democratic experiment. Such situation does not only deteriorate the lives of the common people but also the democratic institutions and processes. Besides, the road to economic development is hampered and the idea of individuals as citizens and members of a political community, and partners in governance with the state became a distant reality. Therefore, the proposed seminar will investigate the issues and problems and address them in the larger framework of state and democracy with the following sub-themes:

- State and Democracy
- State and Ethnic Conflict
- State and Civil Society
- State, Democracy and Citizens
- Ethnic Relations in North East India
- State, Democracy and Governance
- State, Armed Conflict and Separatist Movement
- State, Market and Development

Interested scholars may submit an abstract on any of the theme or similar topic related to the broad theme to the coordinator: [soihiam@yahoo.com](mailto:soihiam@yahoo.com) on or before 14<sup>th</sup> September 2015. Kindly send your phone number along with the abstract.

**(Seminar Coordinator)**

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