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**Report of the Two-Day National Seminar
On**

"The Changing Dynamics of Tribal Society in India with Special Reference to the North Eastern Region"

Dr (Mrs.) S. Khyriemujat, Convener, Two-Day National Seminar, Shillong College.

The two-day National Seminar on "The Changing Dynamics of Tribal Society in India with Special Reference to North Eastern Region", organised by the Department of Sociology and Internal Quality Assurance Cell, Shillong College was inaugurated on 5th November, 2018. The function was graced by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Meghalaya, Shri Conrad K. Sangma as the Chief Guest while Shri Kyrmen Shylla, Minister of Social Welfare, was the Guest of Honour. Professor Virginus Xaxa, Former Professor Delhi School of Economics, New Delhi and Tata Institute of Social Sciences was the keynote speaker. On the dais were Dr M. Dey, In-Charge Principal of Shillong College, Dr (Mrs.) E Kharkongor, Coordinator IQAC and Dr (Mrs.) S Khyriemujat, Convener, National Seminar and Head, Department of Sociology, Shillong College. The Inaugural programme was also graced by the presence of Dr Shah Md Tanvir Monsur, Assistant High Commissioner of Bangladesh. The hall was packed to capacity with delegates, participants, students, teachers, media persons.

The Inaugural function commenced with the felicitation of the dignitaries by Dr M.Dey, In-Charge, Principal followed by the welcome address delivered by Dr (Mrs.) E. Kharkongor, IQAC, Co-ordinator. In her welcome speech Dr (Mrs.) E. Kharkongor, mentioned how it was pertinent that leaving aside all fears and inhibitions (not unfounded) the tribal's wholeheartedly participated in the developmental plans and policies and facilitated merger with the mainstream. She highlighted the role of IQAC in initiating the much needed dialogue, debate and the exchange of ideas on the issue through its' various programmes.

Dr. M. Dey In-Charge, Principal Shillong College and Chairperson of the seminar, gave an expansive and detailed statistical distribution of tribal population in the country and the region in particular while also offering a historical perspectives on matters like migration, ethnic diversity, influence of mainstream religious faith contributing to the evolution and transformation at a later stage. The question to be taken up at the seminar he said was "Is it Neo-tribalism?" The confusion, anxiety of

fear in the face of rapid socio- cultural, political change has led to questions on broader issues like identity. He therefore added that this seminar aims at findings answers to vexed questions of change and seeks recommendations on the matter.

A brief introduction on the Two-Day National Seminar was presented by Dr (Mrs.) S. Khyriemmujaat Convener, National Seminar. In her speech she noted that the change(s) triggered by several forces has not actually been without challenges and conflicts. Further, pointing to the specific case of Meghalaya she added that the conflicts that have arisen in the past are based on the question of identity- tribal, non-tribal and interestingly inter-tribal. Referring to the seminar objective she again reiterated on the need for a study of the tribes and their cultures and the dynamics of change particularly the way their lives have been affected and the situations emerging thereon. This seminar's aim she said is to broaden the perspective and enhance the knowledge base.

Prof, Virginius Xaxa of the Delhi School of Economics, New Delhi fame in keynote address started off with the dynamics of change of the very word 'tribe' which he said had negative connotations like primitive or uncivilised. Its time he said that we discard the used of word "Tribe" and opt for word like indigenous to describe the tribal population who today have reached a state of advancement. The West he said now uses the word indigenous. Prof Virginius Xaxa while referring to this change in the North East and particularly Meghalaya said there are three key players affecting change namely the state, market and Christianity. Homogeneity gave way to and made way for heterogeneity differentiation, inequalities of opportunities .The dynamics of transformation has entailed both loss and gain. In this context he cited how in the present context of change the North East people have started, moving from the region to the other parts since 1991 which have in turn led to questions of identity and cultural loss.

After the keynote address, the Guest of Honour, Shri Kyrmen Shylla, Hon'ble Minister of Social Welfare, etc Government of Meghalaya lauded the efforts of the College at imparting value based education . The statistics of the distribution, composition, total constituent of tribal population in India was detailed out by him. Empirical reality of tribal society in the north east if studied can be an eye-opener for the people of the state. While change is inevitable the paradigm shift in the socio-cultural and economic life of the people's is a note of caution and concern.

This was followed by the inaugural address by the Chief Guest, Shri Conrad K.Sangma, Chief Minister of Meghalaya. At the outset he mentioned about his three day tour of Bangladesh including 800 kms of driving into the territory in an attempt to establish and strengthen the existing business ties between the state and the neighbouring country especially in view of the rapidly growing economy of Bangladesh. Referring to his father Late Shri P A Sangma, he portrayed himself as a proud tribal one who is keen to document and archive the achievements of the tribal population particularly those of Meghalaya. He pointed that there is however paucity of documentation which can be bridged by encouraging more research and collection of data. He informed that after repeated initiatives the Government of India Ministry of Tribal Affairs has sanctioned the setting up of a State of the Art Research Institute in Garo Hills. This he said will ensure the setting up of a centralised data base for all tribal activities both in the region and the country. Referring to the concept of dynamisms he pointed that apart from the already mentioned factors technology - social media is an important component that cannot be left out. He referred to climate change and related it to the change occurring in traditional agricultural practices such as jhumming. However concluding his speech he emphasised on the need to strike a balance between change and tradition. Finally, the programme concluded with the vote of thanks delivered by Smt. Suzanne Khongwar, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Shillong College followed by the College Anthem presented by the students of Shillong College.

Technical Sessions: 5th and 6th November 2019

The Two-Day National Seminar on "The Changing Dynamics of Tribal Society in India with Special reference To the North Eastern Region" had five technical sessions arranged to provide a forum for all presentations, dealing with 5 sub-themes and these are:

1. Understanding the tribes in the North Eastern region
2. Tradition and Modernity: The Path in Between
3. Identity: Issues and Concern
4. Dialectics of Intra and Inter-Tribal Discourse
5. Tribal Government Policies

On the 1st Day, there were 2 (Two) Business Sessions in which 14 papers were presented.

The first two parallel sessions on the theme, **Understanding the Tribes in the Region** was held in the Conference Hall, Shillong College. This session was chaired by Prof. P. M. Passah, Former Head, Department of Economics, North Eastern Hill University. The Chairperson introduced the theme and highlighted on the importance of Tribal studies and the dynamics of change. This was followed by the presentation of five papers and these are: Garo Traditional and Customary Laws, Weekly Indigenous Market: Socio-cultural Practice of the Garos/ A'chiks, Traditional and Customary Laws: Funeral and Post funeral rights and rituals in a Garo Society, A Study of missing Folk Literature with special reference to Oi-Ni:tom, Traditional Knowledge on Khasi Healing Practices and its importance.

The other parallel session on the same theme, **Understanding the Tribes in the Region** was held in the Principal's Conference Room. This session was chaired by Dr. D. Nongkynrih, Department of Economics, North Eastern Hill University. Five papers that focussed on Documentation of Indigenous Knowledge on Medicinal Plants in West Khasi Hills of Meghalaya, Traditional Childbirth Practice of the Khasis of Nongjri Bah Village, Nongri Elaka, East Kasi Hills District, Meghalaya, India, Khasi people: Inborn Ethologist who metaphorically transcribed Animal behaviour to ethical values, Does Avifaunal Diversity Differ between community managed forests? A comparative study in two sacred Groves in East Khasi Hills, Meghalaya were presented during this session.

There were 9 (Nine) papers altogether in these parallel sessions which encouraged a lot of interaction.

The papers in these two parallel sessions showcased the diversity of cultural and traditional practices in the North East Region of India. The presenters highlights that different tribes have their own rituals and customs to commemorate the momentous events of life such as birth, marriage and burial. Further, there were papers of Khasi herbal medicines which claim that indigenous knowledge is a divine gift and there is a need to sustain the knowledge, its efficiency and usefulness for posterity. Further, participants too discussed on how an indigineous curriculum can help utilise, promote and enhance awareness of indigenous traditions.

All papers in this session highlighted the oral transmission of culture in the region and stressed on the

need for preservation, conservation and documentation.

The Second Technical Session focussed on the theme **Tradition and Modernity: The Path in Between**. The session was chaired by Shri Toki Blah, Retired IAS while Prof Nikhlesh Kumar, Retired Professor and Former Head, Department of Sociology, North Eastern Hill University was the resource person. The session saw presenters who provided vital insight on the concept of tradition and culture and stated that there is no path in between. Prof Nikhlesh Kumar stated that the word 'tradition' means what is past down from one generation to the next and what are handed down are basically symbols, objects and cultures. For example, the gesture "Khublei" is a part of tradition. Tradition, he emphasised is not static and should not be taken as products of culture or replicas of it. In fact, tradition may change gradually and adapt itself to changing circumstances. Further he stated that there is no opposition between tradition and modernity. Modernity is not anti-ethical to tradition. Science and society have clearly emerged and are bound together to give rise to modernity. Modern societies form a close relationship with new realities and are subject to change.

Then five papers at this session include: Folklore in a changing world- A Khasi Perspective, Significance of Conserving and Sustaining Indigenous and Traditional knowledge of the Khasi, Textual Representation as Cultural Translation: A reading on Modernity, Orality and Memory in the Legends of Pensam, Technology and "Mimicry": A study of all the Negative impact of Technology on the Tribal youth, Khasi Orality to Literary forms: Development of Khasi Literature.

The presentations and deliberations that followed discussed on Folklore and traditional knowledge as an important part of cultural identity. In the wake of the fast growing societal norms, Folklore has not received adequate attention. Therefore a need for further research on Folklore is significant as they provide vital information of cultural extravaganza and are a reservoir of knowledge, assimilation of facts and experiences. During the deliberations, conserving and sustaining indigenous traditional knowledge was also emphasised upon. With the impact of Globalization and modern technology, tribal people have accumulated the norms of technology which perversely affect language in the tribal societies. These are challenges faced by the present tribal youth and therefore, remedial measures must be taken place in order to curb these tendencies.

On the 2nd Day of the Two-Day National Seminar, there were 3 (Three) Business Sessions in which 17 papers were presented by participants from across the North East Region of India.

Dr. (Mrs.) M.P.R. Lyngdoh, Former Principal of Shillong College, Shillong chaired the third session on the theme **Identity: Issues and Concerns**. Prof. A.K Nongkynrih, Department of Sociology, North Eastern Hill University was the resource person. While discussing on tribal identity he focussed on the claim of land and pointed that this claim is not based on individual rights but on the basis of the clan and tribe. Further, he also talked about the question of political leadership in the context of democratic politics. Political leaders are not raising issues of identity but are oriented to party based ideology. Therefore, the need for tribal-determined development in relation to nature, ecology and indigenous knowledge is the need of the hour. Papers presented in this session were as follows: The Ethnic Identity Crises of the Tribal and Tripura: A Philosophical Enquiry, Clan name and Clan identity in Khasi Society, The Role of event in preserving the Identity of the Khasi: A case of Nongkrem Festival, Exploring the Role of Genealogy in Identity Formation among the Thadokukis of Manipur, Ka Jainsem: Tracing Identity and Contextual Meanings Therein, Examining Identity, Violence and Land-human Affinities in Jacinta Kerketta and Tamsula Ao's poetry, Land use pattern in Meghalaya.

The presentations and active discussion that were held during this session clearly illustrated the issue of Identity in the changing dynamics of Tribal society. The deliberations focussed on the issues of ethnic conflicts, insurgencies, riots, autonomy movements and displacement of the tribal which are major concerns. In addition to these, other papers analysed how the Khasi traditional garment "Jainsem" conveyed the ethnic identity of the wearer, and how cultural festivals or dance forms of the Khasi tribe should be promoted and preserved as it is one of the key factors for preservation of Tribal Cultural identity.

The sub -theme of the fourth technical session was on **Dialectics of Intra and Inter-Tribal Discourse**. Prof L.S Gassah, Former Professor Department of Political Science, North Eastern Hill University chaired the session. In this session, the papers attempted to highlight the discourses that run within and between the tribes. The papers presented were: Topic – Border and (Re) production of Identity: The Garos of India and Bangladesh, Identity movement and the Crisis of Displacement of

population in Western Assam: Quest for change, Inter-ethnic Relations in Meghalaya: A study of the relations between the Tribal and the Non tribal communities, Role of exchange and trade in the social formation of the Khasis of Meghalaya. This session focussed on how political borders contribute to the formation of the Identity of tribal people. Discussions and discourses presented during this session explored the relationship between tribal communities and migrants in Meghalaya. Further, papers also dwelt on the role of exchange and trade in moulding Khasi society pointing thereby to how trade and market form an important part of tribal society and cannot be studied in isolation.

The 5th Business Session entitled Tribal Government Policies was chaired by Professor David.R.Syiemlieh, Former Vice Chancellor Rajiv Gandhi University, Itanagar and Former UPSC Chairman, Government of Meghalaya. The papers presented were on – Issues in Socio-economic Development of the Farmers with special reference in Mawkyrwat, the South-West Khasi Hills District of Meghalaya in India, The Role of the Sixth Schedule in Projecting Tribal Rights in Meghalaya: A case study of KHADC, Intrastate Disparity in Social sector development in Nagaland, Role of the Autonomous District Council in Meghalaya, Khasi Traditional Healers and the Khasi Autonomous District Council. This session focussed on the various issues of farmers In relation to their socio-economic development, intrastate disparity in social sector development viz health and education in Nagaland State, the role of the Autonomous District Councils in Meghalaya and the strategies taken up by the KHADC for promoting indigenous knowledge of the traditional healers. The presentation concluded with the Chairperson's remark commenting on the need of clarity of presentation to be expressed in the form of data, statistics and findings.

Outcome and Suggestions:

In the Two Day National seminar, 31 papers were presented by participants from within the Northeast as well as other parts of the country. The presentations which were followed by active discussions and deliberations are of great significance which have led to varied suggestions towards understanding tribes and tribal population.

A summary of the proceedings of the different technical sessions illustrate the rich customs, traditions and indigenous knowledge of the North east tribes. Tribes believe that indigenous knowledge is a divine gift and therefore there is a need to preserve this knowledge. They also show how folklore,

traditional practices and custom are an important part of cultural identity. However, tradition is not static or monolithic but should adapt itself to changing circumstances. Modernity is not anti-ethical to tradition. Modern societies form a close relationship with new realities and are subject to change therefore making way for heterogeneity, differentiation and inequalities of opportunities. Hence there exists a need to understand the empirical reality for realistic assessment of the problems of tribes in evolving a well-planned strategy for building up a platform par academic excellence is the need of the hour.

The challenges and problems that would be encountered in understanding the tribes were discussed and deliberated. These include:

- Unavailability of translated vernacular literature in English.
- Lack of Documentation of cultural practices, oral traditions, customary practices and maintenance of records.
- Poor connectivity and inability to document which sometimes arises out of suspicion and unwillingness to provide information to the researcher who is oft regarded as an outsider.
- Institutional deficiency.
- The need to generate awareness to remove the cultural lag and generation gap.
- Impinging forces of change such as technology and Innovation, demography etc.

In view of the problems encountered, a number of suggestions were discussed:-

- Setting up of Archives to preserve information and knowledge on tribal practices, customs, traditions, belief systems, art, traditional political institutions and administration etc for further reference and research.
- Need for translating the vernacular literature and conducting more research and documenting the same.
- Need to generate awareness amongst the tribal community to adapt to the written form than following the oral tradition.
- Improvement of education with emphasis on indigenous curriculum for enhancing awareness of indigenous traditions.

- Understanding change in tribal society and the need to balance development and one's root.
- Focus on technology and climate change as factors of change and further research on indigenous knowledge in combating climate change.
- Need for reforms and amendment of the Autonomous District Council Act particularly the codification of customary laws.

All the sessions concluded with the Chairpersons remarks and interaction.

Valedictory Sessions: 6th November 2019

The Two-Day National Seminar concluded with a valedictory function on the 6th November 2019 in the Conference Hall, Shillong College. The function was graced by Prof David Syiemlieh, Former UPSC Chairman, Government of Meghalaya and Former Vice Chancellor, Rajiv Gandhi University, Itanagar as the Chief Guest and Shri C P Gotmare (IAS), Secretary Education, Government of Meghalaya as the Guest of Honour. The programme was attended by 150 participants from all the States of North East India and across the country besides other prominent dignitaries, invitees, experts, resource persons and a host of others besides faculty members and students from the college.

The function commenced at 1.30 P.M. The programme began with the felicitation of the dignitaries by Dr M.Dey In-Charge Principal, Shillong College. Then the welcome address was delivered by Shri K. Roy, Vice-Principal Shillong College. While warmly welcoming the gathering he highlighted on the significance and importance of the studies on tribes and stated that tribes have transformed and change which have opened up new challenges.

The Rapportuer's report compiled by Dr (Mrs.) S Khyriemujat, Convener, National Seminar gave a brief outline on the different technical sessions of the seminar. The topics related to tribal issues were elaborately discussed. She noted that the sessions were highly interactive and thought provoking and assured that all findings would be summarised to serve as suggestions to policy makers and documented for further reference and information.

The Participants Remarks was then presented by Shri A. V Nengnong, Assistant Professor, Sociology

Department Seng Khasi College and Smt, Smti Finley Syngai, Head Department of Sociology, St Edmund's College. While congratulating the Department of Sociology and IQAC, Shillong College for conducting the Seminar the participant expressed their pleasure and gratitude to have heard from eminent sociologists such as Prof Virginius Xaxa and Prof Nikhlesh Kumar. They also expressed gratitude to the organisers for the different brain storming sessions and added that much has been gained from the different sessions that have done well to feed the intellect of the participants. Outstation participants expressed their pleasure at being able to share and exchange their knowledge on culture, traditions and ideas. The participants expressed their wish to participate in many more such programmes in future.


Dr M.Dey, In- Charge Principal, Shillong College, delivered the chairpersons remarks. He expressed that the vast deliberation on various sub- themes made during the course of the Two Day Seminar has no doubt made it a grand success. Adding that though much has been gained and learned he pointed that much is still left to be covered particularly in preserving tradition and culture in today's ever – changing society. He expressed gratitude to Dr (Mrs.) E. Kharkongor, IQAC Co-ordinator, Dr (Mrs.) S Khyriemmujaat, the Convener and entire organising for the Two-day National Seminar.

This was followed by an address from the Guest of Honour, Shri C P Gotmare (IAS), Secretary Education. The dignitary shared his experience serving in Meghalaya which he stated has given him a glimpse of the rich culture and society of the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo Tribes. He observed that tradition and history of a society is interlinked with geography. There is a similarity among the different tribes despite our differences. He emphasised that we too learned from our history; adjust our traditional knowledge to our present needs to achieve a brighter future.


This was followed by the valedictory address by the Chief Guest Prof David R Syiemlieh. In his address the Chief Guest congratulated Shillong College in all its endeavours to provide quality education and express his warm wishes to the College. He reminisced on his experiences in teaching and reminded the audience of the primary role of teachers is to teach. Among the different roles that teachers are required to play as scholars, as mentors, as researchers, a balance has to be maintained. He encouraged the teachers and participants to take up research activities and look forward to the publications on the Two-day Seminar presentations.

The function then concluded with the vote of thanks delivered by Smt K. M. A Kharsohtun Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Shillong College.

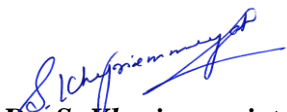
The Department of Sociology and IQAC, Shillong College had organised this Two-Day National Seminar with an intention to discuss, delve and debate on the various concerns that relate to The Changing Dynamics of tribal society in India with special reference to the North eastern region. The result of the deliberations during the two day seminar emphasized on the need to relook, rethink and co-ordinate in order to create awareness and inculcate scientific understanding for realistic assessment of the problem of tribes thereby helping in evolving a well-planned strategy.



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Principal
Shillong College



Dr. E. Kharkongor
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Dr. S. Khyriemmujaat
Convener, National Seminar
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Inaugural Function



ARRIVAL OF GUEST
SHRI DR. SHAH MD TANVIR MONSUR
ASST. HIGH COMMISSIONER OF BANGLADESH



ARRIVAL OF CHIEF GUEST
SHRI. CONRAD K. SANGMA
CHIEF MINISTER OF MEGHALAYA

FELICITATION OF DIGNITARIES



SHRI. CONRAD K. SANGMA
HON'BLE CHIEF MINISTER OF MEGHALAYA



SHRI. KYRMEN SHYLLA
CABINET MINISTER OF MEGHALAYA



PROF. VIRGINIUS XAXA
FORMER PROFESSOR,
DELHI SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND TATA INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, MUMBAI





WELCOME ADDRESS
DR. (MRS.) E. KHARKONGOR
CO-ORDINATOR, IQAC



DR. M. DEY
IN-CHARGE PRINCIPAL, SHILLONG COLLEGE
DELIVERING ADDRESS



DR. (MRS.) S. KHYRIEMMUJAT
CONVENER, NATIONAL SEMINAR
BRIEFING ABOUT THE NATIONAL SEMINAR



KEYNOTE SPEAKER
PROF. VIRGINIUS XAXA



ADDRESS BY THE GUEST OF HONOUR
SHRI KYRMEN SHYLLA



INAUGURAL ADDRESS BY THE CHIEF GUEST
SHRI CONRAD K. SANGMA



VOTE OF THANKS
SMT. S. R. J. KHONGWAR
ASST. PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

FELICITATION OF RESOURCE PERSON & CHAIRPERSON



PROF. P. M. PASSAH
CHAIRPERSON



PROF NIKLESH KUMAR



SHRI TOKI BLAH

BUSINESS SESSIONS



Sessions



DR. (MRS.) M. P. R. LYNGDOH
CHAIRPERSON



INTERACTIVE SESSION



FELICITATION OF PROF. L. S. GASSAH



FELICITATION OF THE GUEST OF HONOUR
SHRI. C. P. GOTMARE, IAS
SECRETARY OF EDUCATION
GOVT. OF MEGHALAYA



PROF. DAVID R. SYIEMLIEH
CHAIRPERSON



DR. M. DEY
IN-CHARGE PRINCIPAL, SHILLONG COLLEGE
DELIVERING CHAIRPERSON REMARKS

Valedictory Function



FELICITATION OF THE CHIEF GUEST
PROF. DAVID R. SYIEMLEIH



SHRI. K. D. ROY
VICE PRINCIPAL - SHILLONG COLLEGE
DELIVERING WELCOME ADDRESS



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DELIVERING RAPORTEUR REPORTS



PARTICIPANTS REMARKS



SHRI. G. P. GOTMARE
GUEST OF HONOUR
ADDRESSING DURING THE
VALEDICTORY FUNCTION



PROF. DAVID SYIEMLIEH
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VALEDICTORY FUNCTION



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SOCIOLOGY HONORS STUDENTS



FACULTY - DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY