



A Two-Day National Seminar on

Civilizational and Cultural Traditions of Northeast India: Exploring the Links

18th & 19th April 2018

Organized by:

Department of English
Assam University, Diphu Campus
P.O. Diphu, Karbi Anglong, Assam-782462

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Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies (MAKAIAS)
(An Autonomous Body under the Ministry of Culture)
Government of India
IB 166, Sector III, Salt Lake
Kolkata 700106

Academic Partners

ICHR, Northeast Regional Centre
Guwahati
&
North East Centre, New Delhi

About the Seminar

Northeast India has its own history, cultures, legends and myths and in spite of geographically located at the remotest corner of so-called mainland India, its presence in India's history, mythologies and literatures is very powerful. Many places of Northeast India find mentions in ancient Indian texts and particularly in the *Mahabharata*. The tales of Rukhmini, Usha, Bhagadutta, Hidimba, Chitrangada, Ulupi, Ghatotkacha, Babrubahan, Iraban etc. have been passed down through generations in the form of popular folklores in Northeast India. The anthropologists are of the view that the region was primarily inhabited by mongoloids and pre mongoloids settlers before the times of the Vedas and they were referred to as Kiratas in *Yajurveda*, *Atharvaveda* and the *Mahabharata*.

Again, there are also a group of historians and anthropologists who consider that it is purely by an accident in history that Northeast formed a part of India. The social formation in the so-called mainland India and Northeast India is far from being homogenous and it is a forceful effort to link up with one another culturally and politically.

In the literature of the Karbis, one is primarily reminded of their oral literature as Karbi literature did not have a written form till the 19th century, all elements of folklore, like social rituals, legends, historical tales, ballads of love and separation, folksongs of Ram-Ravan (*Sabin Alun*), fables etc. prove the linkage with the cultural tradition of India.

The same cultural linkage is found in the case of Dimasa, an indigenous community of people inhabiting Assam and Nagaland states in Northeast India. Dimasa mythology says that they are the children of Bangla Raja (Earthquake God) and the great divine bird Arikhidima. Ancient Dimasa tradition maintains that sixty thousand Moon months (Lunar months) ago, they left their ancestral land when it suffered a severe drought. According to a legend, the royal family descends from Ghatotkacha, the son of Bhima of the *Mahabharata* fame, and Hidimbi, a princess of the Dimasa people. According to Hindu mythology, Dimapur is said to have been named after Hidimba. Dimapur is a corruption of Hidimbapur, meaning the city of Hidimba of *Mahabharata*, who is believed to be the progenitor of the Dimasas.

Although for the last one hundred years most of the Mizo people are practicing Christians, but in the Pre-colonialist Mizos were 'animists' in the language of the colonial historians. Today, approximately 90% of Mizo are Christian, and only 10% are 'animist' in that they worship nature (e.g., the sun, the moon, rivers, and mountains) and their religious cosmology is consisting of a high God called Pathian who rules the macrocosm or the world beyond the community, and a microcosm consisting of the numerous spirits, both good and bad. Just like Shiva in Saivism or Bishnu in Vaisnavism, Pathian in pre-colonial Mizo religion "absorb the nature and functions of the rest and the other Gods become different manifestations of one supreme deity known by other different names in different aspects".

The oral narratives of Zeme Naga speak of the Myth of “Tingwang”, the supreme God who created the heavenly bodies and the son “Banglawang” who was the first ruler of the world links the ancient Indian myth of creation. The tribes of Arunachal Pradesh such as Galos, Adis, Apatanis, Nishis, Hill Miris, and Mishings follow the religion of *Donyi-Polo* which focuses on the worship of the sun and moon, considered the eternal watch deities of the supreme gods, Bo and Bomong. “A follower of Donyi-Polo believes in the oneness of all living creatures, from the tiniest of organisms to the mightiest of animals, and that every living creature has a role to play in his or her life. They believe that a spirit (or soul) resides within all men, plants, animals, and the land that nourishes them, having a strong connection with humans.” (Naina) Similar myths are also found among the other communities of Northeast India which establishes the fact that the region was never delinked from the civilizational and cultural tradition of the so-called mainland India.

So, Northeast India as wrongfully projected is not culturally delinked from the so-called mainland India in spite of having heterogeneous cultural traits. The colonial authorities adopted a policy of segregating the hills and plains people which has been continued by the wrong policies of governments after the independence of India. The oral narratives of these communities of Northeast India are great treasure houses that can challenge this hegemonic concept of unbridgeable heterogeneity and can establish linkages with the similar types of narratives, both oral and written, in other parts of India.

It is in this context the proposed seminar is envisioned to generate a constructive debate around the above theme and also the following sub-themes.

Sub-themes:

- 1) Cultural History of Northeast India and its connection with the so-called Mainland
- 2) Myths and Legends and their interconnections
- 3) Religious practices and exploring their roots with Ancient India
- 4) Shared values of different ethnic communities of Northeast India and exploring the connections with the rest of India
- 5) Indigenous cultural practices existing parallel to accepted modern religions/lifestyle.
- 6) British policy of ‘excluded areas’ or ‘partially excluded areas’ and its impact in fracturing of the Northeast
- 7) Role of Festivals and other cultural conglomerations in bridging the fracture
- 8) Common historic Past – trade, people and culture
- 9) Cultural connections in oral traditions

About MAKAIAS:

The Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian studies is a centre for research and learning with focus on social cultural, economic and political / administrative developments in Asia from the middle of the 19th Century onwards with special emphasis on their links with India, and on

the life and works of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. Till date, the emphasis had been on specialising on modern and contemporary affairs in South Asia, central Asia and West Asia, and carrying on area studies on the five Central Asia Republics of the former Soviet Union (Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan), Turkey, Iran Afghanistan and Bangladesh. The Institute now looks forward to widening its area of study to the Northeast region of India, Southeast Asia and China.

About the Department of English, AUDC:

The Department of English at Diphu Campus of Assam University had its inception in 2007 and it offers Post Graduate Course in English as well as M.Phil and Ph.D programmes by Course Work. The MA syllabus (CBCS) in addition to basic courses put special focus on contemporary theoretical development, Indian writing in English, American Literature, Postcolonial Studies and English Language Teaching. The research scholars who are pursuing Ph.D and M.Phil are working on multiple areas of research viz. Northeast Literature, Contemporary Black British Literature, Postcolonial Literature, Feminist literature, American Literature, Indian writings in English, Literatures from the Sub-continent, Drama Studies etc.

How to Reach Diphu Town:

Diphu town is well connected by road, train and by air. Diphu town is connected with two airports. The nearest airport is Dimapur (Nagaland) located about 50 kilometers and Guwahati International airport which is located about 250 kilometers from Diphu town. Train connectivity is available from Guwahati and Dimapur to Diphu. Direct train services are also available from all the major cities of the country.

Guidelines for Abstract and Full Paper:

Research Papers are invited from the teachers of colleges, universities, research institutes, professionals, academicians, research scholars from Northeast and other parts of India on the above mentioned themes. The research papers based on field study will be preferred for presentation in the seminar. The abstract and full text of the paper should be sent to the Seminar Coordinator, **Dr. Anup Kumar Dey**, Department of English, Assam University (A Central University), Diphu Campus, Diphu, Karbi Anglong (Dist), Assam-782462. The guidelines for submission of abstracts and full papers are as follows.

Abstract

- The abstract should not exceed 250 words.
- It should include title of the abstract the author's name, designation, institutional affiliation, contact address, contact number, E-mail ID.
- Authors are requested to send the abstract through E-mail to the ID: **deyanup1@gmail.com** latest by **April 10, 2018**.

Full Paper

- The length of full paper including tables, diagrams, illustrations, references, etc. should be between to 6000 to 8000 words.
- The full paper should be in English and typed in MS-Word in Times New Roman with font size 12 and 1.5 spaced.
- References/Notes should be given at the end of the text.
- The selected full version of papers should be submitted in soft copy latest through E-mail to the ID: **deyanup1@gmail.com** latest by **April 15, 2018**.

A Committee will review the abstracts and full papers and information regarding acceptance, modification, rejection and presentation shall be communicated to the authors subsequently. A limited number of selected papers presented in the seminar will be published in a reputed international publication.

Registration Fees details:

- Faculty, Professionals, Academicians: Rs.1000/
- Research Scholars: Rs. 500/

Important Dates:

- Abstract Submission: Latest by April 10, 2018
- Full Paper Submission: Latest by April 15, 2018
- Seminar Presentation: 18-19 April, 2018

Accommodation:

Accommodation will be provided on behalf of the organizer to all the selected participants if the confirmation of participation is communicated by April 13, 2018.

Organizing Committee:

- 1) Chairperson: Professor Sivasish Biswas, Pro Vice Chancellor, Assam University, Diphu Campus
- 2) Coordinator: Dr. Anup Kumar Dey, Head i/c, Department of English, Assam University, Diphu Campus
- 3) Members: Dr. B. C. Dash, Associate Professor, Department of English, Assam University, Diphu Campus
Dr. Indu Swami, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Assam University, Diphu Campus
Sri Amlanjyoti Sengupta, Department of English, Assam University, Diphu Campus
Dr. Shreyashi Mukherjee, Department of English, Assam University, Diphu Campus
Dr. Sumi Daadhora, Teaching Assistant, Department of English, Assam University, Diphu Campus