



**RGNIID Sponsored**  
**Two-Day National Seminar**

*Marginalization and Marginality in India with a focus on North Eastern Region: Multiple Contexts for State Intervention*

**Report**

**Dates: 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

**Organized By:**

**Dr. Ambedkar Chair, Tezpur University (Assam)**

**In Collaboration with OKDISCD, Guwahati (Assam)**

Discourse on development has revealed aspects of marginalization and that of marginality in a society at any given point of time. Though appears to be 'economic' a closer analysis make associated social manifestations conspicuous, and therefore the othering by dominant (social) group(s) is visible towards maintenance of status quo. As a result there's simultaneous existence of two worlds, one with group(s) occupying core position while other(s) being pushed towards margins. This process of unequal distribution of productive returns has universally continued unabated since time immemorial. But with the emergence of state as modern democratic institution on global horizon the status-quoist tendencies were questioned and thought of while traversing towards revision. Through awareness by different aggrieved groups, attempts are being made to comprehend situation of marginalized people (marginality) and formulate policies of affirmative action. Yet the process of marginalization continues thanks to involved dynamism and influence of dominant group(s) which has exacerbated in the current wave of liberalization.

Recently, due to voice of resistance by different stakeholders academic intervention to comprehend and suggest sustainable measures was thought of towards undoing this rigid framework of concentrated privileges. Being stratified on different counts as caste, tribe, gender, ethnicity, religion, and region, India presents a peculiar primordial social set up which also get manifested in economic processes of development.

North Eastern part of India unlike other states has diversity of culture due to ethnicity. Also, physical as well as political geography of states within north eastern region has added differences amongst cultures. It's noticed that within each cultural context there are elements of marginalization operating at objective and subjective level. As a result, there's a need for inclusion and integration at varied levels viz. intra culture and inter-culture within north eastern region and vis-à-vis other states of the country.

Therefore, state intervention becomes crucial to check existing concentration of power by facilitating inclusion of hitherto marginalised group(s) of people. In the present scenario, this proposition is more complex and baffling than objectively visible and therefore we witness that various development strategies for inclusion have become an instrument for further reproduction of power structure.

Considering the vitality of academic intervention towards existing marginality and marginalization in North Eastern Region particularly, and India in general, Dr. Ambedkar Chair, Tezpur University in collaboration with Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change & Development (OKDISCD), Guwahati made a humble attempt to organise erudite scholarships from selected esteemed social science institutions of the country. Apart from making academic contribution, one of the objectives of this exercise was conceived as integration of youth by instilling ideas of awareness

towards facets of marginalization in young academic scholarship of the country. It's assumed that enrichment of scholarship among the youth with issues of marginalization in India and NER shall herald the process of positive development in the region and country as a whole.

Such an attempt came up in the form of two-day national seminar on the theme 'Marginalization and Marginality in India with a focus on north eastern region: Multiple Contexts for State Intervention' which was sponsored by Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development, Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports (GoI). The seminar was divided albeit not restricted to four broad themes, a) Marginalization and Marginality: Theoretical and Conceptual Reflections, b) Marginality in the context of North East India: Differing Issues, c) Social Stratification and Marginality in India, d) Media, Development and Marginalization: Nuanced Viewpoints. Apart from these, there were keynote, valedictory, and two panel sessions comprising of well-established senior academicians and social scientists.

In terms of representation of viewpoints, expertise (on the theme) was allotted utmost priority although for practical purpose availability and willingness of the resource person was also considered. However, the seminar achieved true national character with representation from institutions like National Institute of Educational Planning & Administration (NIEPA), University of Delhi, Council for Social Development (CSD), North Eastern Hill University (NEHU), IIT-Guwahati, Assam University, Ambedkar University Delhi, North Bengal University, Nagaland University, NIT-Nagaland, Tripura University, RIE-Bhopal and Amity University along with Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change & Development (OKDISCD) and Tezpur University (TU). Apart from this, there were resource persons from two print media houses namely The Shillong Times, and The Thumbprint. As a whole, there were twenty four against twenty six anticipated presentations excluding the keynote and valedictory sessions which got extended for further academic enrichment through productive discussion with the young as well as experienced audience. The total number for readily visible beneficiaries from the seminar came to be 71 having composition from disadvantaged (SCs, STs, OBCs, and Women) and advantaged sections of Indian society here in the north eastern region.

### **Inaugural Session, 9:15 am – 10:45 am**

As per the schedule, inaugural session which was chaired by Prof. Kalyan Das, Director (i/c) OKDISCD, Guwahati began on time at 9:15 am. With a welcome address, Prof. K. Kikhi (Chair Professor, Dr. Ambedkar Chair - Tezpur University) gave a brief overview of the concept and sessions of the seminar. Referring to the theme he mentioned several dimensions of marginalization however for the seminar he pointed out four dimensions as:

- Denial to equal accesses to resources and opportunity
- Artificial hierarchy
- Legitimacy to the process of marginalization - representation
- Development strategy

He then briefly described broad divisions of seminar as eighteen invited papers for four technical sessions and eight presentations for two panel sessions. With this, he made a short description of newly opened Dr. Ambedkar Chair at Tezpur University highlighting its mandate (given by Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, GoI) to further ideas and philosophy of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in the entire north eastern region of the country. It was mentioned by him that Dr. Ambedkar Chair at Tezpur University is one of the 21 chairs in the country and only chair for the entire north eastern region. Lastly, Prof. Kikhi introduced keynote speaker, Prof. N.V. Varghese and Prof. Inderjeet Singh Sodhi who represented Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD), official sponsor of the seminar.



Prof. Sodhi gave a short speech describing aims and vision of RGNIYD. He mentioned that RGNIYD was recently established in the year 2012 and currently it has 6 departments. Describing it further, he told that apart from different forms of training these departments offer Ph.D. program. Contextualizing the national seminar he used epithet of 'cultural mosaic' for north east India due to coexistence of different cultural communities here. And therefore issues of marginalization could be peculiar and distinct for this region when compared with other parts of the country. He concluded by highlighting the emphasis on dissemination of knowledge created here through publication of seminar papers in the form of a book.



The key note address was delivered by Prof. N.V. Varghese, Vice Chancellor, National Institute of Educational Planning & Administration (NIEPA), New Delhi. At the outset he outlined his belief that inequality is a major concern of 21<sup>st</sup> century. This inequality, he mentioned is a result of state's inaction and unabated growth of market leading to corporatization of various sectors. Inequality according to him is a choice as is visible in the manifestation of state policies however this choice should be prohibited to become destiny. He mentioned that inequality results from cumulative marginalization of certain groups in the society. Elaborating his concept Prof. Varghese outlined poverty and exclusion as direct correlates of marginalization, and marginalization as under-utilization of capabilities. Therefore, with the operation of marginalization as a state policy the outcome is hierarchy of capabilities and respective returns. There are two ways in which this problem can be dealt with and they are - first one is immediate solution while other is the long term solution.

He discussed the conceptual issues relating to marginality and marginalization as well as the level of marginality. Marginalization (at the margin) is also based on the conditions (a few of) which were identified by sociologists. The marginality do not confine to social exclusion (e.g. caste) rather it can be spatial as well (e.g. northeast region) or it can be both social and spatial as well (e.g. urban location). There is a correlation between spatial and social exclusion. Marginality was centered on the notion of urban as it was first identified in urban location (e.g. black localities in the West in urban location).

When one talks of spatial groups (groups of people specific to a particular location) where there is close association between different groups but one tends to overlook the group dimension of marginality. A region as a whole can be pushed to the periphery and here marginality would be profound among various groups of people.

The peripheralization and marginalization are state initiated byproducts of state's development policies. These are continuous process which further reinforces

inequality in every aspect of life. To cite another example he referred to situation of employment. He mentioned the (actual) current reality which is casualization of employment where there's no social protection, and a simultaneous peripheralization of labor which leads to increase in the share of profit for capital invested by the entrepreneur. This lack of social protection in turn leads to capability deprivation. Prof. Varghese talked about three categories of marginalized as –

- i. Marginalized but not poor
- ii. Marginalized but poor
- iii. Not marginalized but poor

There's also mention of double deprivation where role of education was cited. He stated that educational degrees are delinked from jobs which add to further deprivation of already disadvantaged. The two broad regions within the country which are marginalized are Tribal areas and Northeast region.

Referring to state policies, he mentioned that actually these are utilized as a tool to maintain the status quo in the society for they aggravate situation of marginality. For example state promotes 'targeted universalism' (where the target could be social group or geographical region) which has led to maintenance of poverty as low quality is being served for the targeted poor group of people. In this way he highlighted the operation of vicious cycle of inequality starting from state policies supporting process of marginalization. And this process of unequal and inequitable growth is further buttressed with the policies governed by liberal/neoliberal market forces. The slogans of 1950s highlighted that "We are not growing, we are unequal" while the slogan of late 1980s outlined "We are growing, we are unequal". The latter slogan had become the reality of today's India.

Prof. Varghese highlighted some of the key aspects related to marginalization in India. One aspect was inequality and its inter-linkages with educational spread and economic growth while the other aspect was about social groups with capability deprivation along the defined developmental aspects.

Regarding education, he mentioned that considering India as a state for analysis it's found that states with more educational development (e.g. Nagaland, Mizoram, Kerala, Manipur, etc.) there's more equality in the society as gauged through Gini Index. This correlation is true irrespective of economic growth in a particular state/region. The other point to be noticed (for generalization) here for unequal development according to him was more generalized marginalization in rural areas vis-à-vis urban areas where marginalization process is found accelerated in certain pockets only. Taking the point of education further, he mentioned through findings from NSSO data for various rounds that less people from lowest quintile income group pursue higher education. This (in terms of returns) becomes an instrument of perpetuating inequality instead of equality in the society. In this he added the

dimension of 'language' or 'medium of instruction for education' as a tool for aiding marginalization. This reality is revealed from the fact that more than 73% of private schools follow English as the medium of instruction while this figure is 33% for government schools however the success of 'English medium' is quite evident in terms of learning outcomes (leading towards higher education) and employment at later stage.

Another aspect was 'social groups' where social stratification in India gets translated into social marginalization. And we find from the data that STs, SCs, OBCs, and Other Categories have held their progressive advantage in respective terms. They in this manner have access to higher levels which determines their capability and employment which yields to resultant marginalized status.

He finally concluded by emphasizing need for public (policy level) intervention, as the individual inability becomes social liability and inequality becomes destiny which however is a choice. He cited proposition of democratic state as a solution because in true form of democracy there's less tolerance towards inequality. Therefore, state intervention in this way can address the challenge of marginalization. There are several ongoing academic interventions and protests which may help in neutralizing the accentuating processes of marginalization in the country and specifically in the north eastern region. And Prof. Varghese emphasized this seminar to be a step in this direction.



## **Panel Session One, 11:00 am – 1:00 pm**

**Chairperson: Prof. Bhupen Sarmah**

**Speakers: Prof. Virginius Xaxa, Prof. N. Sukumar, Prof. A. K. Nongkynrih, Prof. J. B. G. Tilak**



The panel session began with the presentation by Prof. V. Xaxa on 'conceptualizing Marginalization and Marginality'. He mentioned that idea of marginality and marginalization overlaps with social exclusion. Therefore, in order to understand this phenomenon, we need to trace historicity where it's found that many groups have always remained on the margins. In this way, marginality was accepted as normal and as a result hierarchy and inequality became visibly unabated aspects of a society. With the onset of period after French Revolution ideas of liberty, equality, and fraternity appeared on global horizon as ideals in response to hierarchy and inequality. Today these issues have posed a problem for us. We should have been sharing power, honour etc. as a citizen but many have been deprived of these thus, leading to social inequality.

Contextualising North Eastern Region, Prof. Xaxa started with a question of locating social exclusion. This, he considered important as even in the mainland India, the tribes have been located along the margins, along the fringes. Tracing historicity, he identified emergence of the problem with the coming of market when even owners of land were reduced to marginalised status. Such populations were now termed as 'encroachers' and dubbed 'illegal'. The need is to understand the process through which they were marginalized. The idea of North East as a region, he said is not just geographical but also a political and administrative category. Also, among the social category the society here is not uniform and is very diverse in nature. Therefore, we need to question whether geography or people to be considered as the units of



analysis? It has to be taken into consideration that people need to be seen in terms of communities as well as individuals particularly, in the context of highlanders. Even within the community, marginality exists, especially in case of gender. How are minorities seen vis-a-vis the structure of governance and the state system?

A large number of people like the Adivasis, the tea plantation workers remain along the margins of education and development even today. The structure of productive relations is important to look into in order to understand their condition. Even in cases where a tribal community is dominant, the institutional structure is geared towards giving leverage to the dominant tribal community. Then, in this case, are other tribes not being marginalized from the governmental structure? Some are numerically dominant tribal community and others don't even figure in the developmental category. We need to understand how social exclusion really operates. Within the domain of economy, polity and society, are there mechanisms that dominate and exclude some groups of people? We are still very hostile in addressing issues of gender inequality.

Next panellist came in the form of Prof. N. Sukumar whose presentation was titled as 'Representing Marginality: Rosters in Reservation'. He focused upon the issue of rosters in reservation and how it would impact education in the universities and also how it would affect the North East. He mentioned that there is a battle going on despite the ordinance to move from 13 point roster to 200 point roster. According to him, we face an everyday battle with the 'Brahmanical' state. The dismantling of roster point reservation in the universities will have a huge impact upon the education system. He cited several examples as to how the roster system became an instrument of caste politics at the university level. He also cited the importance of protest movements that prevented marginality. The 200 point roster came back after the protest movements in many parts of the country. These protests would pave the way to protect further marginalization of SCs, STs and OBCs in the recruitment process in higher education. Once these groups get entry into the system of higher education, they are not allowed to enter the teaching positions. Highlighting the exclusionary politics he mentioned that there are lot of discrepancies between the 13 point and the 200 point roster.

Explaining his point, Prof. Sukumar referred to the new policy of 10% reservation to EWS and of 13 point roster in which Department and not university shall be considered as a unit according to a UGC notification of 5<sup>th</sup> March, 2018. This leads to taking away 90% of positions which was constitutionally guaranteed to SCs, STs and OBCs. Thus, lot of discrepancies occurred in the patterns of reservation. Citing examples he mentioned IITs and IIMs who have rolling advertisements in which they don't mention which post is reserved for which category. If the 13 point roster comes in, then in small departments, there won't be any kind of reservation at all.

After the notification came in, there was a huge struggle as with the announcement of judgement by Allahabad court nine universities advertised positions with no representations for disadvantaged communities.

It is ironical that even in Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, out of 52 posts advertised, 32 were for the unreserved category, 12 for OBC, 6 for SC and 2 for ST. It should have been the other way round. Hence, out of 52, 51 posts went to the unreserved category and only one post went to OBC.

Coming to the context of North East, he posed a question in this connection. He said how many Vice Chancellors do we have from the North East region? The Supreme Court judgment left it to UGC and MHRD to retrospect the matter and come up with a suitable solution. Hence, certain policies were chosen consciously to curb reservation. Therefore, it is very necessary to protest against such exclusionary policies as in the case of the North East, the implications of it are going to be severe leading to joblessness. Thus, it is important to be a part of the protest politics within the campuses.



The third panel speaker was Prof. A.K. Nongkynrih who expressed his views on 'Sustainable Development Goals and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People'. At the outset he mentioned that India is an integral part of the 2030 agenda and in setting the process of implementation. There are 17 sustainable development goals which could transform the world and countries which are part of the UN, have the mandate to carry out the agenda. On the other side, in 2007, the UN also agreed upon recognizing the rights of indigenous people. Therefore, on one side, there was a new kind of a development process that was to be carried out, while on the other hand, the member states themselves agreed upon the rights of indigenous people.

This issue was looked at by Prof. A. K. Nongkynrih and he linked it up with the North East. When we look at the UN rights of indigenous people, it also recognized and reaffirmed that indigenous individuals were entitled without discrimination to all human rights. Recognizing that the situation of indigenous people varied from region to region and from country to country, the significance of national and regional peculiarities and various historical and cultural backgrounds should be taken into consideration. Article 19 points out that the state should co-operate with the indigenous people's concerns through their representative institutions in order to obtain free prior informed consent before carrying out any implementation of legislation.

Prof. Nongkynrih questioned if democracy begins and ends with voting only because then, in that case, decisions would be mostly taken by the majority. It needs to be remembered that indigenous people are entitled to equity. They have the right to develop and evolve programmes through their institutions, use their land and resources. Thus, the UN's global developmental agenda clashes with indigenous people's rights. How exactly can we deal with the sustainable development goals in the context of rights? If this has to be implemented, then we also need to have desegregation of data. The desegregation of data is an important dimension in providing a fair and just way of dealing with this whole question of sustainable development.

There is a huge problem with the concept of 'development' itself. The development envisioned by the state clashes with the idea of development envisioned by the indigenous people. There are different perspectives on the idea of development. It is self-determined development which people demand. It is communities that should decide what is important for them.

Even the idea of 'conservation' of land, territory or forests of the indigenous people is different from the colonial idea of conservation followed by the state. Sometimes, the state associates self-determination with political gains. As far as land ownership is concerned, are the UN indicators pointing towards the promotion of individual ownership of land or is it hinting at community ownership? Such statements lack clarity. This raises questions as to whether the indigenous people a part of the development process? Are they included?

He tried to look at how far North East has progressed in achieving the global development agenda. Tremendous amount of financial support required to achieve these goals by 2030 which raises lot of scepticism. Meghalaya and Nagaland are beginning to think what could be done in the case of sustainable development goals.



The last panel speaker for the first panel session was Prof. J.B.G. Tilak who spoke on 'Widening Inequalities in Higher Education'. The speaker mentioned that there are different definitions and dimensions of marginalization, exploitation, exclusion, etc. All these terms are different from each other while they also support each other. While these are just processes, inequalities are their outcome. Inequalities are sometimes considered 'natural' or 'acceptable' while socio-economic inequalities are created. Prof. Tilak's talk concentrated in highlighting educational inequalities. With the introduction of new economic policies in different countries, inequalities have increased. For a very long time, we have been under the impression that the rise of capitalism led to inequality. Now, inequality also threatens the sustenance of the capitalist system itself.

He asked if the growth in education sector has really trickled down. Higher education is considered to be not only the engine of economic growth but also equitable sustainable development. Educational inequalities are a part of socio-economic inequalities. Unequal access to education not only affects the marginalized sections but the entire society as this would lead to unequal access to labour markets, employment opportunities etc. It leads to loss in individual welfare as well as social welfare. Inequalities can be broken down through systematic policies and programmes.

He mentioned several kinds of inequality and indicators for the same. UNESCO shows how in India, people are deprived of minimum four years of schooling. Inequalities in education in the context of gender between males and females have come down over the years and so is the case between rural and urban areas and between Dalits and advantaged classes. While these inequalities have decreased, one kind of inequality which hasn't come down is that between the richer and poorer sections of society. Instead, it has increased manifold.

One basic question that needs to be asked is that how many people have access to higher education and quality education nowadays? Low levels of inequality exist in the primary level of education compared to higher education. Growth in higher education has mostly been in the private sector and not in the state sector. Gender inequality, however, has come down in many aspects with respect to access to higher education.

There is a high degree of inequality in household expenditure. Higher the level of income, higher the household expenditure and lower the economic status of the population, lower the expenditure. The gap between the richest quintile and the bottom quintile has increased over the years.

The policy of reservation has been very effective and successful in giving the lower sections access to higher education. Therefore, a high quality university school age is important. Also significant is the policy of universal subsidies instead of targeted subsidies or else, it would further contribute towards unequal access to education for the poor. Over the years, it is not only the state run higher educational institutions but also private higher educational institutions that have grown. Publicly funded higher education is important in order to reduce the trickling of unequal access to education.

### **Technical Session I, 2:00 pm – 3:15 pm**

**Theme: *Marginalisation and Marginality: Theoretical and conceptual Reflections***

**Chairperson: Prof. A.K Nongynrih**

**Speakers: Dr. Joydeep Baruah, Dr. P. Anbarasan, Dr. Pahi Saikia, Dr. Amiya Kr. Das**



Dr. Joydeep Baruah, the first speaker presented his thoughts on the title 'Margins of Development: Towards an Understanding'. He talked about the question of 'margin' in relation to 'centre' which in some sense is dialectical, i.e. if there is the margin, there is the centre. This relation is also dynamic with no absolute 'fixity'. He then goes on to discuss the Core of Stylised Development which sees industrial and urban as Central ideas of dominant development discourse. This idea gets concretized with ideas of this growth or production. It actually produces margins as a contrast to the central idea. Therefore, lack of growth, lack of resources, investment, non-industrial, rural etc. gets constructed as margins of central theme of development.

The question now is to pose what is/remains invisible in the process of development? The dominant discourse is about seeing 'non-participation' as invisibility. For instance, poor, rural, etc, are invisible because they are not participating within the margin. Therefore, the idea of margin gets constructed around the idea of invisibility in terms of non-participation which is a typical way of looking at things. That's how we have development policies which talks about bringing the invisibles to their fold wherein they have to conform to the idea of development. However, we need to understand the process through which they remain outside the margin. For instance, the author used the "Processes of Dispossession" drawing insights from the work of Harvey. This may not be necessarily dispossessing the people in terms of their resources but for instance, education where you privatise education and dispossess people of education.

The speaker also gives the instance of how economist Prabhat Patnaik would talk about 'Encroachment'; for instance cut the reserved seats and encroach upon those entitled. The author sees these 'Encroachment' and 'Dispossession' as things which we don't normally talk about. We don't see invisibility in terms of why they remain outside; rather we see invisibility as to why they are non-participant and that's how we idealized this whole core development process. In doing so, we produce and reproduce this idea of development and we really do not question that this development policies has inherent tendencies of dispossession and encroachment. Invisibility results in idealisation of the idea of Development and, therefore, continuation of the Margin.

Therefore the speaker proposed that there is a need to recognize this invisibility not in terms of non-participation which leads to this typical idea of 'inclusive development'. He discussed Problematic notion of Inclusion as 'Broad based' and/or 'pro-poor'. We are caught in between the rights of citizens in terms of participation but also in their interest in terms of global capital. We need to think of margin as going beyond this dominant discourse of development; going against the neo-liberal model of Development.



The second speaker was Dr. P. Anbarasan whose presentation was titled as 'Marginality and Marginalisation: Examining marginalisation in everyday discursive practices using Noelle Neumann's Concept of Spiral of Silence'. The speaker discussed Marginalisation as understood in terms of communication and everyday life of culture. We are not a neutral observer but an active participant in this process of marginalisation. Someone's marginalised position is intrinsically connected to the other position of centre. He talks about how we assign meaning to things using language. He talks about everyday process of marginalisation to see how the actual construction of marginalisation occurs in everyday little acts we engaged in. He talks about the politicisation of assigning meaning to things. Language is one instrument through which we make sense of the world. Semiotic approach explains how meanings are created and constructs reality.



He draws upon the work of Saussure, while discussing about assigning meaning to things. He also discussed how Foucault talks of 'discursive practices' not simply as how meanings are made but how it has consequences/effects on people's relation with one another or identity. Therefore when public opinion is created within the context of their individual ideas vis-à-vis ideas represented in the media or the ideas in interpersonal relationships or social relationship which is acceptable and individual viewpoint which may or may not be acceptable.

Using Neumann's Concept of Spiral of Silence the speaker talks of how a person is driven to silence if he or she thinks that their views may not be acceptable in the dominant worldview. So, there is this loud minority and silent majority. The silent majority thinks that they are minority and thinks that it's better to hold their views to themselves in order not to be isolated and they end up articulating the dominant view. According to this approach, very often, public opinion is different from individual opinion.

Drawing samples of communication (through Facebook, WhatsApp) which happens every day, the speaker points out that things that happens every day might appear trivial but dialogues of periphery is loud minority which construct the marginalisation of everyday life. Through everyday communication, we come to certain conclusions; for instance, how the system is so fair or how unconsciously binaries are created in everyday life. There are number of ways in which meanings are created in everyday life and this is how marginalisation is created. Citing the recent example of 10 percent reservation initiated by the government, the speaker talks as to how things/communication which appears trivial or unimportant that happens in everyday life goes into actual policy making.

Third speaker was Dr. Pahi Saikia who spoke on 'Governance, Identities and Belonging in the Margins: Centre-periphery relations in India'. The speaker talked about Modern state reconstruction and social redevelopment. She spoke from macro level perspective backed by micro level testimonies. The research problem in this paper is located within the discourse of relocating Centre-periphery debate in democratic governance, participation and modernist. The objective is to understand three pertinent questions; what are the emerging discourse of decentralisation, power and participation in India since the late 1980s, what contributed to the process of transformation of the federal landscape in India during this period, how we examine these transformations in the context of marginality in the fringes of India's northeast. Her paper focused on micro level testimonies including narratives which informed the understanding of marginality.

The important question is how the Indian state responds to the challenges of marginality. The argument put forward is that the post-colonial modernist nation state building and social development was associated with Centralised domestic policies to control the divergent claims made by collective forces in the margins. It led to bordering in and bordering out of marginal groups for the redrawing of post-colonial states. The impact was deep, profound and lasting creating barriers and divides.

The last speaker for the first technical session was Dr. Amiya Kr. Das who presented his views on title 'Interrogating the idea of marginality in the context of Assam'. The speaker discussed the idea of marginality in the context of Assam drawing insights from portion of fieldwork that he conducted in tea gardens and outside of tea garden. In interrogating the idea of marginality the speaker posed a question on what can state do to protect the tea workers who are employed from neighbouring states like Orissa, Bihar, Jharkhand, etc.

Based on the field study, it was found that the wage rate for the tea workers are very low as it run on capitalist system of maximising profit. The speaker compares the Tea estate as glass house where they can see the outside world but not to the

extent that it can fundamentally change their situation. They survive on low income and low quality of life. This fact is backed by various studies which suggest deplorable conditions of tea garden workers. According to the speaker, they can be considered the most marginalised section of people in the world amongst the marginalised.

The perspective by Sociologist George Simmel's work on stranger and sociology of space where he talks of how the marginalised can also be at an advantaged position as they don't need to adapt to any kinds of rules and regulations do not apply in the case of tea garden workers. The speaker opines that it's difficult for them to come out of that glass house. Even Social welfare provision or government schemes cannot reach them. Tea garden workers are forced to work inside the garden resulting in vicious cycle. Upward mobility is very restricted. Staying inside boundary, they know no knowledge of governance nor do they have documents or papers which might avail them of welfare schemes. They face double deprivation or rather multi-layered deprivation. The speaker proposed that the process through which they become marginalised is something we need to explore seeing them as lawful citizen.

## **Technical Session II, 3:30 pm - 5:15 pm**

**Theme: *Marginality in the Context of NE India: Differing Issues***

**Chairperson: Prof. N. Sukumar**

**Speakers: Dr. Shailaja Menon, Dr. Visakhonu Hibo, Dr. Sumesh S. S., Dr. Prafulla Kr. Nath, Ms. Pamidi Hagjer**



The first speaker for this session was Dr. Shailaja Menon whose presentation was titled as 'Borders and the Construction of Citizenship'. She said in the context of the north eastern borders which are very malleable, marked by water and such other

elements of nature. Drawing from Rannabir Sammadar's theory worked in this part of the region, she tried to locate how the colonial regime was a period to discipline mobile population. And the legacy of which has continued in the present post-colonial regime. Citing instances of the whole hullabaloo around the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) and the National Register of Citizenship (NRC), she referred to the case of two Gorkha women who were identified as 'D' voters (doubtful citizens) and were detained in the detention camps leaving behind their families. She stressed upon the whole process of sudden criminalisation of a certain section of the population who have been living in the region since ages and who were brought to this part of the regime due to various processes of trade during the colonial regime. The plights of such stateless citizens are never recorded and are very cleverly swept under the carpet. Focussing further on the gender dynamics of marginalisation, she says about how the marginality faced by women is side-lined and their voices are muted. Citing instances of partition she stressed upon how patriarchy enforces markers on women's body. Women being the marginalised category within a marginalised community always lose the battle for resources.

She questioned the discourse of citizenship where in the last couple of years a lot of violence occurred in the space. Any movement against the state is labelled as anti-nationalist which is a practice adopted for curbing the public voices by force. Highlighting the politics revolving around in the name of citizenship and national security where high intolerance is witnessed in terms of regional diversity, she stressed upon the idea of inclusive nationalism rather than a homogeneous nationalism. Thus, critiquing the happenings around she highlighted the sensitivity of the current state where each is considered as an outsider in another's space. The whole idea of citizenship therefore, becomes fragile with the intensity with which racism is practiced openly. She ends the paper, by, asking "where do we as citizens place ourselves under such circumstances?"

Dr. Visakhonu Hibo was the second speaker who deliberated on 'Pre-emptive Criminalisation and Marginalisation of the Nagas'. She located her paper in the context of the historical account of Head Hunting and Naga Movement, where the labelling of Nagas as anti-nationals, different, barbaric stands out to be universal. Referring to Haemeindorf's work "The Naked Naga" and "Return to the Naked Naga", she says that it gives a perspective to the outsider about the Nagas but, the Nagas are far more than that and are clothed with values. Thus, she contextualised her paper in the light of an insider as well as an outsider. She expressed her dislike towards the word 'tribe' which puts them under an umbrella and further pushes them to the margins. Understanding of the tribal society is impossible without understanding its deep inherent meaning. Head hunting was a practice to secure one's own community by entering into the enemy camp. It brought glory to the community. And Naga National Movement which was started to unite the entire

tribes under the broader fold of 'Naga' was viewed with criminal eyes by the Indian state and the movement was termed as anti-national. The barbaric Armed Forces Special Power Act (AFSPA) which was a colonial construct was followed by the post-colonial state too, the brunt of which came down heavily on the people of Nagaland and specifically the women. The resilience of women was witnessed when AFSPA was implemented in Nagaland. They were raped and the next morning they started their day as if nothing had happened. The Nagas are given a 'criminal' tag without understanding the world view and the historical context which has victimised and marginalised them. Further describing how the very word 'Naga' brings negative thoughts and images in people's mind she narrates a recent incident in Nagaland University, where an international conference was to be held. Even the people from the nearest railway stations turned down the request of attending the conference. Thus, through her paper she throws light on the 'otherisation' process and the lens through which the Nagas are viewed by the society at large.



Third speaker for the session was Dr. S. S Sumesh whose title of presentation was 'Masculinities in the Margins'. Through his paper he tried to locate how masculinities undergoing changes over the years. And he attempted this empirically through two diverse contexts of Assam, one being the bhakats of the celebrate Satra (monastery) in Majuli, Assam and the other being the gays of the Guwahati city. He discussed the politics of the body in both these contexts by citing that not all margins are powerless. Critiqued the Eurocentric notion of feminism where the voice of the majority becomes the reality and the marginal voices are unheard. He underlined how gender studies always become women's studies in Sociology and things are categorised into binaries of man-woman. And these binaries are challenged by the Queer theory of feminism. The colonial masculinity has undergone many changes, it is fluid. In the present post-colonial times there are multiple ways of performing masculinity.

He looked at 'body' as an analytical category and an entry point to understand masculinity of the bhakats and the gays highlighting on the bodily reflections as well

as body regime. Stressing on the sacred and profane bodies of the bhakats and gays respectively, he discussed as to how the liminal space of body transitions from an extraordinary to ordinary being. The sacred bodies of the celebrate bhakats provides them a belief system where they control their desires and transcends human mind. And the bodily regimes to attain this are started from a very young age (childhood) at the satra, which is reflected through the food, dress, physicality of body and hair, performance and thought processes. However, these regimes are not same all throughout their life and it keeps changing in every phase of their lives. This therefore essentialises a new kind of an identity for them and it well reflects the Brahmanical essence of sacredness of the satra where the sacred body distances itself from the other. Further, discussing about the profane bodies of the gays, he highlighted how the gay communities are redefining their own beings. They are expressing a new identity for themselves through their bodies. And this body is not their physical one but their emotional one.

He thus, highlighted on the multiple masculinities through the paper. And thereby, concluded the paper by reflecting on the re-articulation of basic institution of family, kinship and marriage by these sacred and profane bodies.

The fourth presenter came in the form of Dr. Prafulla K. Nath who made presentation on the title 'Discourse of Assamese Nationalism and Marginalisation: Situating the Miyas of Assam'. He started his paper by first justifying his usage of the term 'miya', which is derogatory in the context of Assam referring to the East Bengal origin Muslims. But, with the miya poetry literature coming in the forefront the term has been highly used and the asserting of the miya identity is witnessed.

By situating the miyas in the regular Assamese nationalist discourse, he highlighted upon the facts as to how the Assamese middle class and the media portrays the miyas. Narrating incidents of eviction in Kaziranga and Sipajar and ethnic conflict in BTAD in the recent past, he mainly focussed on the reaction and opinions of the caste Hindu Assamese society on these incidents. The miyas are viewed through the common lens and are held responsible for loss of culture of the Assamese society, land alienation and so forth. Media has a great role in all this and framing of opinion of the society at large. He further, delved into the instances of regular marginalisation of the miyas and their labelling as Bangladeshis by the wider society; the practice of the local media and Hindu nationalist organisations of branding the miya construction labourers as Bangladeshis, who migrate to upper Assam districts from lower Assam districts. Such othering practice of the miya has become a common phenomenon which makes every miya of Assam susceptible to be a Bangladeshi. Sharing a few instances of the market he highlighted on the perception of the society, as to how the vegetables sold by the miyas are perceived to be full of pesticides and those sold by the tribals or an Assamese perceived to be organic. The



biased media coverage with regard to the side-lining of the plight and atrocities faced by the miyas was also highlighted in his paper.

However, he also stressed upon the fact that it would be a mere exaggeration if he claims that the entire Assamese society marginalises the miya community. Because, there are also organisations and people which are coming up with the issues of the miyas and are supporting their causes. And there also seems to be a constant effort by the miya community to be a part of the Assamese society. Further, situating the paper in the backdrop of the political developments of Assam, he discussed how the miyas are used as mere vote banks by the parties like Congress but in the last elections they were seen coming in strong support for the regional party of Assam. Again the coming up of the Assamese medium schools in char-chapori areas also reflects their urge of integration into the broader Assamese society. It is therefore, the Assamese nationalism and nationalist forces which have failed to incorporate the miyas of Assam.

Thus, the paper clearly stands out, in reflecting upon the everyday struggle of the miyas with the dominant practices of the society.

Ms. Pamidi Hagjer was the last presenter for this session and first day of the seminar. She chose to present on title 'Mothers and Midwives: Exploring Childbirth Rituals among Dimasas of Assam'. The broader aim of the paper was to analyse the interplay of gender and power relations amongst the Dimasas specifically within the religious sphere. She primarily focussed on the role of women in the construction of the Dimasa indigenous practices and the transformation of women's role as repository of these indigenous practices and knowledge. The hierarchies in observing the ritual practices were stressed upon. Her field site being Halflong and an urbanised space of Guwahati, light was thrown upon the contemporary changes in the childbirth practices where the midwives (ritual performer) comes to play its role at a later stage.

She concluded the paper by reflecting upon the fact that the Dimasa rituals cannot be understood historically. These rituals are a construct of the interaction between the indigenous Dimasa, stemming from the Hindu belief system and more contemporary expression of technology.

## **Day Two, 16<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

The sessions for the second day began on time as per the schedule. However, there's was one change in terms of total number of panel speakers. Due to some unavoidable circumstances there's last minute change of the program schedule of two resource persons namely Prof. Prabhat Kr. Datta, and Ms. Patricia Mukhim. And finally they couldn't make it to present their views in the seminar. Therefore, in the wake of such a situation there's last minute rescheduling of the time for second day of the seminar.

### **Panel Session Two, 9:15 am - 10:30 am**

**Chairperson: Prof. Virginius Xaxa**

**Speakers: Dr. Ramesh Dural & Prof. Bhupen Sarmah**

First panel speaker was Dr. Ramesh Dural who spoke on theme 'Identity and Marginalization: The Darjeeling hills in context'. Dr. Ramesh Dural began his lecture by saying that as Darjeeling is not a part of the North-east so issues related to his talk may not have direct connection to North-east but he intends to link the identity question of Darjeeling with that of the North-east. While talking about the marginalization process in Darjeeling hills he pointed out that economic deprivation, socio- cultural alienation and treating people of Darjeeling hills as the "other" by the mainstream west Bengal society and the Government led to the marginalization in the Darjeeling hills. Dr. Dural in his lecture mentioned that multi-lingual and multi-cultural states like India where all regions have been living together, ethno-lingual boundaries are drawn only after the independence. Even the 'State Re-organization Bill' couldn't satisfy the ethno lingual sentiments of different regions. Different protests were coming out in which economic deprivation was the main reason. But according to Ramesh Dural in the context of Darjeeling hills it has been the ethnic identity assertion which can be seen in the north eastern states as well.



While talking about the identity assertion in the hills of Darjeeling he pointed out that Gorkhas and Nepalese are continuing mass movement in Darjeeling. This movement has been termed as anti-national or secessionist movement by the West Bengal Government. According to Dural different tactics have been used to demoralize the mobilization by the State and outsiders.

“Aren’t you a Nepali? Go back to Nepal” this kind of insensitive question has been used as a card to demean the community and their political mobilization. In this context, Dr. Dural gave an example of a video where a MLA from Meghalaya was threatening a Nepali person to go back to Nepal which got viral recently. In this context Dural also pointed out that even the MP from Darjeeling constituency S.S Ahluwalia also asserted that Nepalese should go back to Nepal, if they really want to talk about son of the soil. Dr. Dural in his lecture also talked about the history of Darjeeling which is a contested history and it’s been entangled with Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim.

While talking about different issues related to Darjeeling hills, he highlighted the fact that Darjeeling has not been able to get economic benefits proportionate to their resources. In this context, Dr. Dural also talked about the condition of Darjeeling tea which has been neglected by the Government. According to him the concept of empowerment, concept of de-centralization doesn’t exist in the Darjeeling hills.

He also talked about the significance of education in Darjeeling hills context in which he gave credit to British but according to him presently the education in Darjeeling is in a deplorable condition.



Second and last panel speaker for the seminar was Prof. Bhupen Sarmah who presented his views on 'The Nation and its Margin: Political Economy of Making Arunachal Pradesh a Circumstantial State'. He spoke in the context of marginalisation of Arunachal Pradesh, particularly focussing on its political

marginalisation which began immediately after the colonial regime and which has been continuing in its post-colonial era. Before focussing on Arunachal Pradesh, he gave a broader idea of North East India in terms of its cartography. As to how, it was a mere land mass in 1828 immediately after the Yandaboo Treaty and how in 1893 the colonial cartographic instrumentality crept into the region and thus, gave way to political marginalisation going beyond the social, economic and cultural dimensions.

He started with the theoretical construction of William Van Schendel's idea of "Zomia" which was later adopted by James Scott in his Work "The Art of Not being governed" in order to describe the hill people and how the space of the North East belongs to Zomias. The main crux of their argument was that the Zomia resisted the construction of the state and from that perspective the North East basically constitute the non-state space. And this very argument of Schendel and Scott was taken by Prof. Sarmah and he tried to contest their idea through his paper.

Stressing on the pre-colonial state's negotiation with the hill people (referring to Arunachal Pradesh), he discussed as to how a harmonious relationship existed between the highlanders and plain people through the *posa* system, developed by the Ahom state in the later part of 16<sup>th</sup> century. With this he made the point that the hill people were not in adversity with the Brahmaputra Valley. A shared sovereignty persisted between them but with the annexation by the colonial state this relationship was dismantled and certain peculiar characteristics came to be witnessed in the region. The primary being the categorisation of the hill people as 'tribes' who are uncivilized and barbarian, which, was taken up by the people of the valley and they too started viewing the highlanders through this lens created by the colonial regime. The region was thereby, categorised in a hierarchical order by hindering the pre-colonial free mobility of people with the imposition of the Inner Line Permit (ILP). Thus with the ILP started the whole process of marginalisation, with economic subjugation of the highlanders.

Taking cues from the ILP, he reflects on the situations in the post-colonial regime by citing the instances of the Naga National Movement and compared it with the pan Indian nationalism. The indifference and ignorance of the Indian nationalist like Jawarharlal Nehru were highlighted by him and how the Naga movement was never viewed parallel to Indian nationalism. On the contrary, it was tagged as anti-nationalism. He therefore, very well reflected the poor understanding of the Indian nationalist towards the North Eastern region which hindered a holistic development of the region. The pan Indian nationalism never contested with regard to issues of reinforcement of the ILP time and again up-to 1935. And all this resulted in the categorical marginalisation of the region. The post-colonial state devised a new instrument in the form of Sixth Schedule to further push the North Eastern states

like Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh to the margins. It resulted in the creation of a political class in the respective states with the support of the nation-state. And Arunachal Pradesh is the unique example of constitutional defection, where the ruling government changes in parallel to the ruling government in the centre, which therefore has resulted in the political oppression of the state. He thus, highlighted on the double standards of the Indian nation state where on one hand, there was political integration and on the other hand, political marginalisation through the creation of the political class.

Thus, the paper gave a clear understanding that the post-colonial subjectivity is nothing but, the continuity of the colonial subjectivity and decolonisation is the need of the hour in order to understand the North Eastern region.

### **Technical Session III, 10:45 am – 12:45 pm**

**Theme: *Social Stratification and Marginality in India***

**Chairperson: Dr. P. Anbarasan**

**Speakers: Dr. Sawmya Ray, Dr. Wati Walling, Dr. Kh. Pou & Dr. V. Khobung, Dr. Rajeev Dubey & Ms. Parama Chakma, & Mr. Ajay Kr. Choubey**



The second session of the second day was the third technical session started at 11:00am. It was chaired by Dr. P. Anbarasan of Tezpur University.

The first presentation was made by Dr. Sawmya Ray of IIT, Guwahati, and the title of her paper was 'Women, Sex Industry and Policies of Protection'. She started by highlighting that her paper was about women who are in sex work out of choice or by different degrees of consent and not about women who are trafficked. She

mentioned that while dealing with narratives of the respondents she followed a feminist method by taking up the standpoints of her respondents who are women in sex work. She said India is a major source of transit and destination point where refugee camps are hunting ground for sex traffickers. She highlighted that anti-trafficking intervention are conceptualised within the framework of the three R's – Rescue, Rehabilitation and Reintegration. In order to truly empowers women in sex industry utmost care should be taken to ensure that intervention do not turn out to be yet another event of victimisation and the key to this lies in the ideology and approach that agencies themselves speak vis-a-vis sex trafficking and sex workers. She said anti-trafficking organisation definitely rescued the trafficked victims but it also lead to creating new vulnerability for the already marginalised which she said is being ignored leading to further victimising of sex workers. In conclusion she stated that any strategy not ensuring the women financial, social and legal empowerment and leaving them at the mercy of the state and society is bound to push them in a state where they are bound to choose sex work in the lacks of other alternatives.

The second presentation was done by Dr. Wati Walling of NIT, Nagaland whose paper was titled as 'Making Life Livable at the Margins: Continuum of Marginalization from Within and Without'. He started by shedding light on the status of the capital of Nagaland by stating that Kohima became the second most non-liveable place in India. He raised the question of how do one make life liveable as a margin? and proceed on with his presentation by dividing the presentation into 3 parts.

- 1) What are some of the things that one can look into given the uniqueness of the situation of Nagaland? The uniqueness that Nagaland is the only state all over India who has not produced a single women legislator. And the overarching constitutional policy and privileges enjoyed by the people of Nagaland which he was interested to know how they interact or overlapped with customary practices. He highlighted the implementation of article 371(A) and the provisions where the customary law has been given an upper hand over constitution of India.

With this background he addressed an issue that happened in Nagaland in 2018, an election of Urban Local Bodies (ULB) under the 6<sup>th</sup> schedule of India constitution which gives 33 percent reservation in ULB which led to a huge violence and arson and later the government has to declare the ULB as null and void. He said with such happening it is important to locate ourselves again in the customary law which has been given a higher status by the constitution and on the other hand where customary law doesn't allow women to have this form of reservation.

- 2) The second point he mentioned was, what are the transformational things that are happening in villages? he argued that looking from the conceptual views like Burg's idea of "memory recall" and Thompson Paul idea of "the



voice of the past" he tries to understand what are the recurring thing happening in the villages. He made a study on the Yemti village and came across the very idea of out migration in which he came out with the findings that land alienation in relate to customary practice not simply led to out migration but division of the village. He stated that juxtaposing the idea of putting customary practice at the pedestal whereas there is an issue of customary practice which side-lines a group of people.

- 3) What are the missing perspectives if there is any? How do we nuance the idea of marginality? borrowing Kimberly`s idea of intersectional where she noted that in the experienced of women and coloured women most of them fell under the crack of feminism and the racist and anti-racist discourse on the other. He put forward the question of how to look at this whole thing happening from an intersectional point of view? He said in the intersection people get disappeared and in the case of Nagaland it will be more in terms of the constitutional provision that has been given, i.e., Article 371(A) on the other hand and also have the customary practice on the other hand but these two doesn`t actually address the women population .

In conclusion, he suggested that maybe gender marginalisation in the cases like Nagaland can be nuance through the things that intersect or not intersect and to understand women it goes to doubly marginalised. There is an issue where the policy doesn`t address the women either ways, not benefitting from the constitution nor from customary practises. There is a need to critique not only the practice which comes from outside but from within the society so much as the customary practice. Thus, Marginality has to be understood from a multi-layer standpoint.

Dr. Kh. Pou, from Delhi University gave the third presentation which was on 'Corruption: Systemic Marginalization of the Tribals'. The speaker used slides to present his findings where he analysed the He begins by putting forward an argument that corruption is not merely abuse of government offices but is a systematic exploitation of the tribals. He explain the concept of corruption and said corruption is mostly about interaction between bribe taker and bribe giver which can be either from equal or unequal footing. He gives two types of corruption from bribe giver`s perspective. 1) Guthless corruption – here the agents extort private gain from weaker section of the society by taking advantage of their helpless situation. 2) Grand alliance- he mentioned that in this type of corruption the bribe giver and taker collude to extract gains at the cost of the general public.

He supplemented his presentation making a study on the Senapati district of Manipur and came out with the findings that corruption is not merely abuse of public office for private gains but direct exploitation of the weaker section. He concluded by giving a radical policy saying that corruption is an exploitation of the tribals by the

dominant class and who control over the state machinery and therefore if one wants to reduce the degree of corruption then there is a need to invoke Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989 to punish the agents and those elites involved in corruption relating to corruption Prevention Act 1988 and its Amendment Act 2018. And lastly he said bribe given by tribal should be legalised. If this is legalised the bribe takers will have a second thought and not simply take the bribe.

The fourth presentation for the session was done by Ms. Parama Chakma from Tripura University who made a presentation for the topic 'Marginalization of Scheduled Tribes in Higher Educational Institutions: A Case of Shrinking Public Space'. She stated that it is important to understand the process of marginalisation because it is often taken for granted. She proceeded with her presentation by explaining three concepts borrowed from Krishna Kumar's book 'Prejudice and Pride' to look into the context of marginality of North East.

- 1) Politics of mention –She relates it to how history textbook choose to or not to represent certain event and where she found out that though NE was also a part of the freedom struggle it was not mentioned in the history.
- 2) Concept of pacing. She said that it has been observed that history is rapidly moving from one event to another event and in that process we are missing out several cases of historical account where she pointed out that the NE region was mentioned as areas of tension in the NCERT textbook and nothing has been written about the account from 1947 to 1980 how partitioned India and the partition of Bangladesh has affected and change the demography of NE. therefore she argues that there is no connection between these events and if we do not mention those details and directly go and read about the conflict state of NE then it becomes a bias projection of NE.
- 3) Conceptualisation of the end - She highlighted that this point is related to problem of how for India the history ends with freedom struggle of 1947 but there is more which were left unaddressed on how NE was impacted in the 1960s, 80s because of migration. But what is discussed there is how India can progress through the new constitution that has been formed.

Looking from the lens of the given concepts she pointed out that the history textbook reflect the idea that tribe are hunters and NE as an isolated and backward region, ignores the role of NE in the freedom struggle and deprived of their identity in history making which were continuously internalised through text and deliver them in exam. She went on to discuss the representation of SC and ST in the higher education and said that lack of representation will not help in overcoming in the

process of marginalisation. She concluded by saying that there need to be a critical conscious having a dialogue with a critical outlook, giving a space to not only one perspective but giving space to multiple perspectives and not merely depositing ideas for other to consume it but sharing those ideas coming to a space where reason, practical reason and rationality given utmost importance irrespective of any race, religion or such other categories.



The last speaker of this session was Mr. Ajay Kr. Choubey who highlighted that his presentation focused on the educational aspect of rural area and rurality. The title of the paper is 'Rural Education: An Endemic Problem of Cultural Subordination'.

The paper began with stating that Educational Inequality, poverty and exclusion etc are the theoretic categories generally used to capture the disadvantaged and they become so integral part of the academic lexicon. Inequality is a essential discourse to understand marginalization. To the researcher, when he tried situate the issues of rurality he found that the structuralist framework of inequality that focus on structural part is not appropriate because that is unable to capture the internal demands within the categories, categorical inequality has failed to capture the social fragmentation, so the presenter has focused on excel oriented framework. Excel oriented process are produced and perpetuated through discursive processes and the researcher found that this excel oriented framework of inequality can be related to the concept of symbolic violence of Bourdieu which is used to dominate the marginalized category. Symbolic Power is a power to legitimize orders to the marginalized sections.

Rural-Urban category is a theoretic term refers to the dichotomy of human settlement. Rural- Urban also refer to the production systems of Primary Goods and Services and Secondary Goods and Services. The whole host of social dynamics is also focused by the two dichotomies. Then the researcher focussed on how functional differentiations were created in rural sectors. He discussed the relationship between rural and urban areas. Rural-Urban dichotomy is a continuum

in India and referred to Robert Redfields concept of rural-urban continuum in this regard. He also discussed about the modern developed transportation system between rural-urban areas which has changed the rural scenes totally. The researcher also said about the sociological studies of M.N. Srinivas, R.K. Mukherjee, etc. who focused on the rural urban continuum.

In the Post-Colonial era village got prime focus on rural development programme and other various development agendas and this has finally led to shrinking of rural areas as a sociological reality.

This ended with question and answer session where each participants attempted to resolve the doubts and adding clarification for remarks on their paper.

#### **Technical Session IV, 1:30 pm – 3:30 pm**

**Theme: *Media, Development and Marginalization: Nuanced Viewpoints***

**Chairperson: Dr. Visakhonu Hibo**

**Speakers: Ms. Teresa Rehman, Dr. N. Hashik, Ms. Deboleena Sengupta & Dr. Piyashi Dutta**



The fourth and last technical session titled 'Media, Development and Marginalization: Nuanced Viewpoints' started after the lunch break at around 1:55pm. The session began with a chairperson's remarks by Visakhonu Hibo from Nagaland University who then opened the floor for presenters. Ms. Teresa Rehman, a journalist from The Thumb Print magazine, was the first speaker who presented a paper titled 'Media on the Margins: An Overview of North Eastern India'.

She began her presentation by talking about the Thumb Print magazine and how she has come to established this online paperless magazine through internet. Ms. Teresa discussed about how mass media particularly the newspapers and television

programmes in NE region have only peripheral coverage and issues remained in the margins. She said that news from NE India are often left crying for attention and fairer coverage mainly because the region is not commercially viable and stories from the region do not sell. She mentioned that national media do not look issues from the NE lens regarding insurgency and war where women and girls are worst affected. She also talked about the different issues of the NE region regarding journalism and the problems and traumas faced by journalists in the region. She said that the journalists working in dangerous situations are covering trauma and also experience it themselves where sometimes a journalist is left traumatised for a long period of time without knowing who to approach. She concluded by saying that “journalists of northeast region are warriors and adventurers which took the test of time” and she invited the schools of media and social sciences of NE region to take up more research studies on media issues and how it effects people.



The second paper was presented by Dr. N. Hashik from Tezpur University. In his paper 'Geographies of Marginalization - Migration and Marginality in Petrolands', Hashik looked at home film narratives of Gulf migrants in Kerala. The points that he highlighted in the presentation are cinematic representation of Gulf migrants and migration in Malayalam films. He looked at the unskilled and semi-skilled migrants and how they become marginalised in the homeland (Kerala) as well as coastland (Gulf States). He defined home films as popular films which are watched at home. These home films narrate the real life experiences of the gulf migrants and the way in which employers or sponsors treated them and also portray the growing sense of marginalization of migrant lives. He then discussed some of the major issues which are highlighted through the new films movement. Another point that the speaker highlighted is the condition of the migrants who have come back after working more than 20 years in the Gulf States. The Gulf migrants who have return to their homeland suffer lots of problems and frustrations in terms of employment opportunities, structure of family and society which in turn leads to the concept of 'other'. He also talked about the question of belongingness and identity of the



migrants which got transformed in numerous ways when he/she first move to the petroland. He mentioned that increasing unemployment and socio economic atmosphere in Kerala compels most of the youngsters to migrate to Gulf. Hashik also highlighted that most of the home films are male centric films and the producers are aiming to create films on women migrants too as women themselves started to narrate their migrant lives. He concluded the presentation by saying that home films portrait the unnoticed life struggles of the migrant in the labour camp, the under paid migrants, the migrants who has not gone home in years and the migrant who still search for his life in the petroland.

The third speaker of the session was Deboleena Sengupta from Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development, Guwahati. She presented a paper titled 'On Home and Belongingness: Contextualizing Enclave Politics'. She began her presentation by talking about the partition of Bengal and East Pakistan (Bangladesh) and the condition of the citizen and citizenship in the partitioned areas whom she referred as enclaved residents. When India and Pakistan exchanged the enclaves on August 2015 in order to solve the long-standing border dispute between India and Bangladesh, these enclave statuses were removed and the territory where the enclave dwellers were living became their home state. While land border agreement is considered to be a solution to the enclave issue, Sengupta argued that her paper aimed to problematize the notion of home determined by state makers. Her paper tested the possibilities to develop an understanding of home and the sense of belongingness that people share in engagement with the state. And with the understanding of home, she concluded by saying that one can also theorize the enclave politics to understand the process of inclusion and exclusion inside a state territory as well.



The last presenter was from Piyashi Dutta from Amity University. Her paper was titled 'Narrating the North East: Contextualizing Media led Marginality'. She started her discussion by saying that media is one of the key perpetrators of the



multidimensional, multi-causal historical phenomena of marginalization. She argued that in the case of media, marginality in terms of binary opposition of centre and periphery is broadened further by the 'mainstream media' by talking about NE in certain picked screen or not talking about it at all which leads to misrepresentation or no representation at all. She also argued that the stories of unrest and violence are always highlighted without checking the facts which shows that NE is facing the problem of projecting authentic and credible information on the issues concerning the region. She gave certain examples which show that national media do not give attention or divert to the NE region unless there are big issues in the region. She also discussed the issues of representation of NE in mainstream media by explaining about the relationship between representation, polity and power in relation to the insignificant presence of the political powers of the region in the mainland India where media in turn disregards the region leading to marginalization and information deficit. She also talked about how money dominates the area and how mainstream media with its advertisement driven revenue model exclude the stories of socially and economically disadvantaged zones of the country like Kashmir and NE. She also highlighted two media filters, i.e. ownership profit orientation and license to do business or advertising, categorised by Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky to understand the connection between money and the media representation.

Piyashi said that NE does not contribute to the revenue generation in the media industry as a potential advertiser or as an area of investment and in many cases as a consumer which results in lopsided flow of information. She concluded her presentation by quoting American media scholar Wilbur Schramm and by posing a question about new information order from the NE region by drawing parallels from the New World Information and Communication Order that grew out of the New International Economic Order of 1970s.

## Valedictory Session, 3:30 pm

**Chairperson: Prof. P.K. Das, Dean (SHSS - Tezpur University)**



Prof. Uma Chakravarti thanked Ambedkar Chair for the invitation. She stated that the distance to Northeast is not in terms of miles but way of thinking of region. She was delighted to give the valedictory session in a seminar where she received an invitation from Ambedkar Chair and also where younger scholars would talk about marginalized regions. As a teacher for almost four decades she have interacted with young, it is something which give her certain degree of satisfaction and hope because at this point of time and in this stage of my life she had to have hope that things would actually get better and change. Because the world we are currently living in is not a pleasant one. It had been a good experience for her to be here as the range of papers that dealt with the question of marginality and margins were interesting.

She insisted that she rarely give a key note speech; rather stick with the end session. As she is mostly entrusted with the task to deliver speech on gender so she would stick with it and speak of it in this session.

She started with the note after hearing the papers from the two day seminar it could be seen that how in a way gender has become acceptable rather politically correct thing to do now a days.

Prof. Uma Chakravarti mentioned that 'Smash Brahmanical Patriarchy' trend came up now but she had written the paper in 1994. The conceptualizing Brahmanical patriarchy (1998), there was a version of it which was put in a book Gendering Caste but essentially it had been around for long time but it suddenly become a social media because of the controversy around Jack twitter (which she prefers to call him). It was a controversy around twitter that suddenly gave a second lease of life to the conceptualizing patriarchy. It is sad that we need international recognition to

take our work seriously. Gender is something that we have to respond to which is a good thing. But she thinks that we need to recognize that within that field only a certain things that circulate more than the others. Her writing made the headline for something which has been there for almost two decades. In this regard media had to be blamed.

Take for instance the case of Manorama which didn't make any ripple but Nirbhaya case did at the end of the day. The Kashmiri girls raised these questions, the rapes happening in northeast and Kashmir never made it to the ripple but the Nirbhaya case did. The sexual violence suddenly becomes noted in certain cases. In this case, the media had to be blamed as they do not narrate why particular cases get picked up and other do not.

The Vijay Chowk- central- heartland of the administrative capital of the country- we cannot take any demonstration there but people flooded there to demonstrate for nirbhaya. Our demonstration cannot move beyond jantar mantar (place to do all the demonstration), we don't have 50 yards of democracy. She had serious objection to Ramachandra Guha saying that we are 50:50 democracy, rather according to Uma it is 50 square feet democracy and that is available to us only in Jantar Mantar.

It was because the people flooded the Vijay Chowk, interrogate state's power and that is why Nirbhaya case captured attention in certain way. The administration responded quickly by sending a commission (Verma commission) after which everyone forgets and we are back to square one.

Likewise the #metoo campaign, this campaign divided the people as one group supported it while the other did not. Though it was under the limelight, the real issue surrounding the campaign got lost. She talked about Muslim women whose plight had been reduced to the question of triple talaq and such similar cases were narrated by her where the main issue gets subsumed or sidelined by other trifle issues. She also raised the question where in a market we have the right to choose but when it comes to choose our life partners we are snatched away from our fundamental right. She ends with a note that we have to fight till the end as there are cases where women rose to fight for their rights and dreams. The struggle has begun and it is us who have to bring it to the finish line.



Valedictory speech was followed by chairperson's remark by Prof. P. K. Das who outlined the importance of exploring different dimensions of marginality in the country notably gender, tribe, caste, religion and also in the context of peculiar geographical space like that of north eastern region. The two-day seminar came to a close by formal vote of thanks by Ms. Upasana of Tezpur University who on behalf of Dr. Ambedkar Chair thanked all the institutions (RGNIYD, OKDISCD, Dr. Ambedkar Foundation, and Tezpur University) and people (Resource Persons, Scholars, Students, Administrative Staff, etc.) who have contributed in their own way to make this exercise possible and to directing towards its success.



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