

**Social and Economic Status of the Marginalized Communities in
Brahmaputra Valley with special reference to the Scheduled Castes Groups**

**27th - 28th September 2013
(Friday and Saturday)**

**Organized by
Department of Sociology, Tezpur University**

**In Association with
ICSSR NERC, Shillong**

Concept Note:

The policy of Positive Discrimination has been adopted by the government of India as a constitutional safeguard to strengthen the social and economic status of the marginalized communities. The Constitution of India has taken special care to uplift certain marginalized communities in India, those who were oppressed for a long period of time. The policy of positive discrimination towards scheduled castes groups is one such measure.

The scheduled castes groups in India share a major portion of the marginalized section in India. According to 2001 census, the scheduled castes constitute about 16 per cent of the population of India. Majority of the scheduled castes (80 per cent) live in rural areas and are engaged primarily in agriculture and allied activities. Again, the majority of scheduled castes population are concentrated in states like Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and in many other states of India. The smallest concentration of the scheduled castes population belongs to the North-eastern states. About 7 per cent of the population of Assam belongs to scheduled castes.

Various government policies focusing on the upliftment of these marginalized communities and efforts being made are to improve the social, economic and political inequalities amongst the scheduled caste, scheduled tribes and the other backward classes. In spite of the policy of positive discrimination put in place for a long time, the conditions of the majority of the scheduled caste people have by and large remained the

same. This ground reality raises a number of questions: What is the impact of the policy of positive discrimination in terms of employment, education and political empowerment? Do positive discriminations help in the elimination of social stigma? With the advent of globalization, does the policy of positive discrimination lose its relevance? For that matter, whose purpose or interest does the policy of positive discrimination serve? Again, given the policy of reservation for the scheduled caste population in educational institutions, it appears that only the members of creamy layers are in a position to avail this benefit while backwardness looms large over others.

On this backdrop, the proposed national seminar intends to deliberate upon the idea of positive discrimination among schedule castes groups. The seminar aims to cover the entrenched relationship of social and economic factors affecting the conditions of scheduled castes people living in Brahmaputra valley. It will attempt to address the key issues like changes in lifestyles, changes in employment generation and the impact of governmental policies related to education, reservation of seats, and financial assistance to men vis-à-vis women belonging to scheduled castes. Considering the heterogeneous mosaic of Brahmaputra valley there are multiple points of intersections between tribes and castes groups. Thus, this seminar will also make an effort at historicizing the issue of 'scheduled castes' in Brahmaputra valley which has become a necessity in the present context. The seminar also intends to have a separate session on scheduled castes women and marginality, looking at how women are further marginalized within the community.

Objectives of the Seminar:

1. To historicize the category of scheduled castes.
2. To assess the socio-economic status of the scheduled castes.
3. To assess the impact of positive discrimination on education attainment, employment in the public sector, political representation, etc.
4. To assess the inter-generational change and social mobility, continuity and change amongst the scheduled castes groups.
5. To locate the position of women among scheduled castes.

The Sub-themes of the Seminar which is indicative but not limited to:

1. Conceptualizing scheduled castes and marginality.
2. Predicaments of being scheduled castes in Hindu society
3. Developmental policies and scheduled castes.
4. Ethnographic studies on marginalized communities with special reference to scheduled castes groups in Brahmaputra valley.
5. Current research trends on scheduled castes in Assam, particularly Brahmaputra belt.
6. Existing occupational patterns of the scheduled castes highlighting continuity and change.
7. Intergenerational change and social mobility.
8. Scheduled caste women and marginality.
9. Impact of policies on the status of scheduled castes women.

Expected outcome:

At the end of the two day seminar the organizers aim at publishing a book containing the selected papers presented at the seminar and also to have a good pool of data coming out of different parts of Brahmaputra valley of Assam.

Date of the Seminar: 27th – 28th September, 2013

Last Date for Submission of Abstract (500 words): 10th September, 2013:
sociotezu@gmail.com

Last Date for Submission of Full Paper (selected): 21st September, 2013.

For Details:

Dr. Kedilezo Kikhi / Amiya Kumar Das / Sarmistha Das
Organizers

National Seminar on “**Social and Economic Status of the Marginalized Communities in Brahmaputra Valley with special reference to the Scheduled Castes Groups**”

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