

Department of History

Rajiv Gandhi University

Rono Hills: Doimukh, Arunachal Pradesh

In Collaboration with

Institute of Distance Education, Rajiv Gandhi University

Organises

FIVE DAY FACULTY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

On

NEW PERSPECTIVES IN THE HISTORY OF NORTH EAST INDIA-II

2nd November -6th November 2020

Organizing Committee:

Chief Patron

Professor Saket Kushwaha, Vice Chancellor, Rajiv Gandhi University.

Patrons

- (a) Professor Amitava Mitra, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Rajiv Gandhi University
- (b) Professor Tana Showren, Dean Faculty of Social Sciences, Rajiv Gandhi University.
- (c) Professor Sarah Hilaly, Head, Department of History, Rajiv Gandhi University.
- (d) Professor Ashan Riddi, Director, Institute of Distance Education, Rajiv Gandhi University

Coordinator

Professor Sarah Hilaly, Head, Department of History, Rajiv Gandhi University.

Co-coordinators

- (a) Dr Tajen Dabi, Assistant Professor, Department of History, Rajiv Gandhi University.
- (b) Dr P.K.Nayak, Associate Professor Department of History, Rajiv Gandhi University.
- (c) Ms Moyir Riba, Assistant Professor, Institute of Distance Education, Rajiv Gandhi University.

Organising Committee

- (a) Professor S. K. Singh, Dean Academic Affairs, Rajiv Gandhi University.
- (b) Dr Tade Sangdo, Assistant Professor Department of History, Rajiv Gandhi University.
- (c) Mr. Sunil Koijam, Assistant Professor Department of History, Rajiv Gandhi University.
- (d) Ms. Bide Mindo, Consultant, History, Institute of Distance Education, Rajiv Gandhi University.

Technical Committee

- (a) Mr Tsering D. Megeji Joint Director, Computer Centre, Rajiv Gandhi University.
- (b) Mr Solung Sonam System Analyst, Computer Centre, Rajiv Gandhi University.
- (c) Mr Gyan Rai, Technical Assistant Computer Centre, Rajiv Gandhi University.

Acknowledgements:

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For Technical support it acknowledges the support of Ms Moyir Riba and team IDE as a special contribution.

Executive Summary:

The Five Day Faculty Development Programme, on 'New Perspectives in the History of North East India-II', sought to bring in new research from older and younger scholars from the region within the discipline of history. Building on the expertise of each scholar they not only provided a window to their own research, but offered vistas of what kind of new researches can be taken up. Based on the overwhelming response of the participants another FDP in the same series is being planned shortly.

PART I : PREFACE**1.1 ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY**

Rajiv Gandhi University (formerly Arunachal University) is the premier institution for higher education in the state of Arunachal Pradesh and has completed thirty-six years of its existence. Late Smt. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, laid the foundation stone of the university on 4th February 1984 at Rono Hills, where the present campus is located. Ever since its inception, the university has been trying to achieve excellence and fulfil the objectives as envisaged in the University Act. The University received academic recognition under section 2(f) from the University Grants Commission on 28th March, 1985 and started functioning since

1st April, 1985. It received financial recognition under section 12-B of the UGC on 25th March, 1994. Since then Rajiv Gandhi University then Arunachal University has carved a niche for itself in the educational scenario of the country following its selection as a University with potential for excellence by a high-level expert committee of University Grants Commission from among universities in India. The University was converted into a Central University with effect from 9th April 2007, according to a notification by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

The Department of History has completed 36 years of its existence till date. Since its inception it has been successfully implementing its mission of providing quality education and carrying out research activities focussed on the cultural history of Arunachal Pradesh. The Department had been functioning since 1980 in Jawaharlal Nehru Government

College at Pasighat, which was taken over by the erstwhile Arunachal University (now Rajiv Gandhi University) in 1988 from the Punjab University. Since 1988 the Department has been functioning within the present precincts of the Rajiv Gandhi University. Along with the Postgraduate programme the department also offers M. Phil. & Ph. D. programmes on regular basis Apart from conventional areas the curriculum lays special emphasises on the studies related to the borderlands, pre-colonial and colonial relations with the tribes; traditional socio-economic, political and religious history of the tribes; history of North East India, and Oral Traditions.

INSTITUTE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

The Institute of Distance Education is affiliated to Rajiv Gandhi University. The institute aims is to provide higher education opportunities to those who are unable to join regular academic and vocational education programmes in the affiliated colleges of the University and make higher education reach to the doorsteps in rural and geographically remote areas of Arunachal Pradesh in particular and North-eastern part of India in general. The education through distance mode is an alternative mode of imparting instruction to overcome the problems of access, infrastructure and socio-economic barriers. The institute offers Master's degree, Bachelor degree and Certificate programmes in the field of Arts.

1.2 About the Sponsoring Agency (if any): Rajiv Gandhi University

1.3. Background about the Issue:

Regional histories evolved during the colonial period within the framework of creating knowledge about the subject populations and the norms of periodisation introduced by them. A replication of the categories used in writing national histories was implicit in the history of regions too. In the aftermath of independence, the trajectory of history writing in the regions while continuing to replicate colonial knowledge also grew within the shadows of the frames of history writing of the nation state. Since the last decade of the twentieth century in North East India history writing has emerged out of the meta-narrative of the national frame and developed a distinct trajectory circumspect by its landscape, population, state formations in the early and medieval period, distinct experiences of the national movement, varied experiences of colonial rule across the hills and valleys, nuances of the enclave economy, the modalities of creating colonial knowledge, partition experiences etc., to outline a few areas of research. This programme seeks to bring out these emerging perspectives which have enriched the corpus of history of the entire region. It also seeks to decentre the valley centric historiography of the past.

1. 4. Objectives

1. To broadly outline the long-term historical trends in North East India.
2. To focus on new perspectives in historical research in North East India.

3. To explore new methodologies and prospects of historical research in North East India.

1.5. Expected Outcome:

1. The participants will be acquainted with historiography of North East India
2. Participants will be benefitted by the discourse on recent trends in historical research in North East India.
3. The participants shall be driven to deeper enquiry into prospective areas of research in history and historiography of North East India.

1.6 Themes and Sub-themes: None

1.7. Target Population:

1. Faculty Members in History from Colleges and Universities in India and Abroad
2. Research Scholars working on North East India in India and Abroad.
3. Social Scientists.
4. School Teachers



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on

**NEW
PERSPECTIVES IN
THE HISTORY OF
NORTH EAST INDIA II**

**2nd to 6th November
2020**

Inaugural Session
1030 hrs, 2nd November 2020
Chair



Prof. Saket Kushwaha
Honorable Vice Chancellor
Rajiv Gandhi University



Valedictory Session
1240 hrs, 6th November 2020
Chair



Prof. Amitava Mitra
Pro Vice Chancellor
Rajiv Gandhi University

LECTURE SCHEDULE



2nd November 2020

Prof. Rajib Handique
Dr. Monisankar Misra

3rd November 2020

Dr. Manjil Hazarika
Dr. Reeju Ray

4th November 2020

Dr. Pum Khan Pau
Dr Santosh Rex Hasnu

5th November 2020

Dr. John Thomas
Prof. Sarah Hilaly

6th November 2020

Prof. Ashan Riddi

INAUGURAL SESSION



- 1030 hrs Welcome Address by
Professor Ashan Riddi, Head
Department of History, RGU &
Director, Institute of Distance
Education, RGU
- 1040 hrs Introducing the FDP by
Prof. Sarah Hilaly,
Department of History, RGU &
Workshop Coordinator
- 1050 hrs Remarks by
Dr. N. T. Rikam, Registrar
Rajiv Gandhi University
- 1055 hrs Remarks from the Chair
Professor Saket Kushwaha
Vice Chancellor
Rajiv Gandhi University
- 1115 hrs Vote of Thanks by Moyir Riba,
Assistant Professor, IDE, RGU

VALEDICTORY SESSION



- 1240 hrs Welcome Address by
Prof. Sarah Hilaly,
Department of History, RGU &
Workshop Coordinator
- 1245 hrs Feedback from Participants
- 1255 hrs Remarks by
Professor Ashan Riddi, Head
Department of History, RGU &
Director, Institute of Distance
Education, RGU
- 1305 hrs Remarks by the Chair,
Prof. Amitava Mitra
Pro Vice Chancellor
Rajiv Gandhi University
- 1315 hrs Vote of Thanks by
Dr. Tajen Dabi, Assistant Professor
Department of History

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To JOIN log in to
<meet.google.com/mqx-ehyk-nrk>

PART 2: SESSION WISE DELIBERATIONS:

2. 1 Inaugural Session: (03.08.2020) 10.30 am-11.30 am

Prof. Saket Kushwaha, the Honourable Vice Chancellor, Rajiv Gandhi University, while giving his inaugural address as chair of the **Five Day Faculty Development Programme** in “**New Perspectives in the History of North East India**”, conducted by Department of History in collaboration with Institute of Distance Education, RGU, **from 3rd to 7th August**, 2020. He aptly cited the story of the “five blind men and the elephant” as an instance of how relevant it is on having variety of perspectives in the discipline of history. While commenting on the NEP 2020 he pointed to the relevance of historians and the subject history in framing a holistic view of the nation. He further stressed that most of our national history has been written by outsiders and hence it is high time for responsible historians and academicians to take it upon themselves to correct the course of history of the Indian nation, which so far has been poor, he added. He further cited an example based on the surname of Rabindranath Tagore which he construed was an mispronunciation of the word ‘Thakur’ to ‘Tagore’ by the British. This passive acceptance of a deliberate misrepresentation by the colonial force is worrisome as we ourselves are misidentifying ourselves. He hoped that with the help of the New Education Policy and the responsible guidance and leadership of historians and academicians the necessary correctives in history shall be made. He welcomed all the participants and speakers of the programme and thanked them on behalf of the University fraternity for agreeing to spare time to speak in this FDP. He also congratulated the organising team for this event and wished them success for all the days of the programme and the future endeavours.

The programme had started with an introductory remark by Prof. Sarah Hilaly, Head of Department of History, RGU and the Coordinator of the five day event. At the outset she welcomed all the dignitaries and the participants to the five day FDP. She thanked the dynamic leadership of the VC, RGU, for his constant guidance in organising these events. She also shed light on the importance of looking at and bringing into limelight the history of North-East from new perspectives with new methodologies. Prof. Tana Showren, Dean Faculty of Social Sciences, said that teaching-learning of pedagogy of history of North-East is challenging as it has a plethora of diverse and distinct cultures. The composite history of North East History across India has not been adequately represented and need to be reviewed properly. Post-Modernism strengthened the culture of oral narratives and there is a need to put stress on it and do more research in this area, he added. There is a need to have a critical understanding of North-Eastern, History.

Prof. Ashan Riddi, Director, Institute of Distance Education, expressed his happiness over the association of IDE and Department of History in conducting this

FDP. He informed to august gathering that the first representation of indigenous history started only in the 1990's. He said that this FDP will throw light on prospects of research in History in the North-East. The inaugural session ended with a Vote of Thanks by Ms. Moyir Riba, Assistant Professor IDE, who is also the Co-coordinator of the program.

There were 222 applicants for the event out of which 150 were selected for participation on first come first serve basis. Their participation of during the entire inaugural session and the technical session was very strong as on an average there were 120 participants throughout.

The e-program ended with the VC of RGU joining the once again to deliver a condolence message for the untimely death of Late Dr. R. D. Pradhan who was the former governor of Arunachal Pradesh, on the 31st of July, 2020. He was the second governor of Arunachal Pradesh,(1987-1990) and as the Chancellor of the then Arunachal University he played a crucial role in the early days of its growth. The entire RGU fraternity observed two minutes silence in respect and memory of the departed soul. All participants muted their microphones and turned off their videos for 2 minutes as a mark of respect.

2.2 Plenary Sessions (If any) : None

2.3 Technical Sessions:

Day I

Technical Session 11.30 am -12.30 pm

At the outset Prof. Sarah Hilaly introduced **Prof. Sajal Nag** an eminent scholar from the region is the Dean and Head of Department of History, Assam University. His lecture was on **New Areas of Research in North Eastern History**. He stated that there are a few attempts to integrate national and regional histories and particularly the history of North east India. He began by pointing out that though Burma essentially constituted a part of greater India from 1885-1937. It was linked through various regulatory regimes of the British linked the region to Northeast India, yet there seems to be an erasure despite so many tribes here have clan ties with those across the border. He also pointed to the absence of any discourse of this region in the subaltern collective. He pointed to new ideas and scholarship emerging among the younger generation of scholars. He pointed to a series of works discussing the history of tea, particularly drawing attention to a scholar who links ban on opium cultivation being proportional to growth of the tea industry. He pointed to the new history of landscapes that have been taken up by various scholars .He drew attention to particular sites in the landscape such as the Bhuban Hills in Cachar became an important sites from which various socio-religious movements' emanated from there. Further, he drew attention to the work on migrants who could not get power and remained at the margins and on researches on communication; medicine; economic history of the medieval period; and environmental history. He drew

attention to the kind of work being centred around the discourse of Zomia of James Scott with scholars arguing on both sides.

Technical Session 12.30 pm-1.30pm

Dr Jangkhomang Guite, Associate Professor, Manipur University, delivered a lecture on **A Geography of Violence: Locating India's Northeast Highland in History**. Using the framework of James Scott he brought into focus how violence and resistance has been embedded in any discussion of the people of the uplands in northeast India since the colonial period. This has been essentialised as the intrinsic nature of the tribes inhabiting these highlands. Many of such spaces he identifies as borderland heartland and borderland intermediate space. Through his study he seeks to centre these spaces at the margins which are spaces of hybridization and international confluence. He also agrees with James Scott that statelessness could be attributed to the hard geography.

Day II

Technical Session 10.30 am -11.30 am

Dr Chandan Sharma an Associate Professor and Head of Department of History Dibrugarh University delivered a lecture on **Linguistic Nationalism, Valley Rivalry and Sylhet in Colonial Assam**. While defining a region he brought into focus the ideas of Sudipto Kaviraj. He began by questioning the category of a region under colonial rule which had been brought into focus by the merger of Sylhet to Assam in 1874. He pointed to three major markers between 1872-1874, wherein the faint beginnings of the linguistic identity can be traced to. These were the Decennial Census of 1872 wherein the concrete idea of identity in terms of caste and language emerged. The re-introduction of Assamese as an official language and the incorporation of Sylhet into Assam. With the incorporation of Goalpara the Bengali population of Assam became dominant. Here he questioned the European model of creating homogenous regions. As Government jobs began to be an arena of contestation there emerged a discourse seeking the retransfer of Sylhet. Initially according to him the rivalry was on linguistic lines which later after including the discourse on migrants and slowly morphed into religious contests. There began a consistent demand for the transfer of Sylhet since 1924. The valley rivalry according to him impacted legislative conduct, particularly in the context of demands for setting up of a High Court and a University in the Brahmaputra. Though the rivalry was resolved by the Sylhet referendum wherein it was merged with East Pakistan, the ramifications of the extreme behaviour towards Bengalis of South Assam still persists in various forms.

Technical Session 11.30 am -12.30 pm

Dr. Sanghamitra Misra, Assistant Professor at the Department of History, University of Delhi delivered a lecture on **The 'tribe' as State Effect: The Genealogy of a Category**. She drew attention to the trope of 'tribe as state effect'

being first brought into play by anthropologist Morton Fried in his classic *The Notion of a Tribe*. She sought to historicise the word tribe in the modern context and use tropes in this region too. She draws attention to the need of not considering themes of uniqueness and isolation, while drawing thematic schemes to study across this region. She includes in her discussion not only a study of the present geography of North East India, but Chittagong Hill Tracts, Nepal and Bhutan looking at it as a transnational space. She alludes to the use of tribe as a category in greater India in Bhagalpur wherein different tribes were graded according to occupation and particularly on the basis of taxation. Though they were brought within the net of taxation through house and hearth tax, yet they were not within the revenue settlement regime. Tribes had been viewed through the four-stage civilizational frame by various philosophers and thinkers, where tribes remain at the bottom of the hierarchy wherein the project of colonialism was to raise their status to 4th stage of civilization. Tribal practices like shifting cultivation were criminalised in favour of colonial forestry while disbanded soldiers of the native states were essentialised as a criminal tribe or *Thugae*. Kukis for instance was a fluid category used for tribes on the Indo-Burma border who showed recalcitrance. H.H.Risley adopted the French tradition of craniometry did the racial profiling to show how tribes were inferior which was further used in India by W.W.Hunter and Dalton. She alluded to Arjun Appadurai who states that the tribes as a category through the works of ethnographer historians not only separated them from civilization but also temporally placed them in an antiquated time-scale. While the anthropologist seeks to erase history and brings to the fore how Renato Rosaldo historicises the production anthropology by white anthropologist and how their works while exoticising the tribe in a specific temporal framework empty history out of the tribes. For recovering their history one should read archives against the grain and also use oral traditions carefully.

Day III

Technical Session 10.30 am -11.30 am

Dr. Suryasikha Pathak is an Associate Professor in the Centre for Tribal Studies, Assam University, Diphu campus, delivered a lecture on **Mission and Missionaries: Looking at Histories of Northeast India**. She outlined the history of contestations between the East India Company and missionaries and the final rapprochement in 1813 which facilitated expansion of their activities within India. It's within this timeframe that she seeks to position the coming of Missionaries and expansion of their activities in North East India, though the earliest contacts with the missionaries in Goalpara, Cachar and Tripura where Portuguese soldiers came was recorded in the 17th-18th century. While outlining the trajectory of the advent of the missionaries and its various denominations like the Welsh Presbyterian Mission, Roman Catholics, American Baptist Mission (Shan Mission) Lutheran Mission which initially worked in the Assam and how from the foothills extended their sway over the

tribes in the uplands. She further drew attention to the trajectory of how mission history in North east India should be studied under colonial encounter; racial politics; mission and education; language and literature, mission and culture; prohibition; sartorial change; structure of housing; domesticity, patriarchy etc.

Technical Session 11.30 am -12.30 pm

Dr. Binayak Dutta is an Assistant Professor in the Department of History, North Eastern Hill University, Shillong, delivered a lecture on: **Partition Studies as an Emerging Field in North East India Studies and use of Archival Data.** He began by pointing out that in the discourse on Partition studies Punjab is first sector, Bengal in second sector and North east India is the third sector. Partition as an areas studies programme is in the domain of academia since the 1980s. This region vis-avis the nation state is in a space which connects Asia with South-East Asia. This area was the Eastern Frontier of Bengal since 1765. If boundary demarcations are taken literally the first partition took place way back in 1772 when the plain areas of Khasi-Jaintia Hills were added to Sylhet. The partition narratives have continuously focussed on Hindu-Muslim divide in Northeast India too .He urged for the decentring of the Partition narratives in this region. The Pemberton-Maxwell-Johnston Line divided India from Burma and in the process partitioned communities from Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Hills of Manipur and Mizoram. The Radcliff Line and the amalgamation of Sylhet with East Pakistan resulted in loss of territory gain by the Khasi's and Jaintia's. The McMahon Line too divided spaces between India and Tibet, particularly in the context of Arunachal Pradesh and its communities. If studies of these different community's take place it will decentre the existing studies. Currently the studies are based on relief and rehabilitation and migration which he argued can be studied in terms of violence, gender, migration, citizenship, minority management etc. While pointing to the politics of creation of archives he was against a total dependence on it as a source. Therefore he urges on an expansion of sources through oral histories and works in vernacular languages.