

CALL FOR PAPERS

Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi in collaboration with **Mao Naga Scholars Association** is organizing a Two-day National Seminar on '*Orality, Migration and Epistemology on Tribes in India's Northeast*' on 8-9 March, 2018 at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi.

Concept Note:

India's North East has always fascinated our minds and imaginations since the region is a home to numerous tribes, sub-tribes and clans residing mostly in the hills and forested area. From British colonial era onwards the region is an eye of interest to the anthropologists and ethnographers as they find abundance source at *prima facie* experiences. Nearly 96 percent of its territory shares international border with neighboring countries like China, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan connecting to the mainland India only via - 27(21/29) km "Siliguri corridor" (North Eastern Region: Vision, 2020, 2008: p.3) or popularly described as "Chicken's Neck." Earlier Anthropologists and ethnographers focused their studies on social, culture, beliefs and practices of the people. Among others, Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, J.J Hutton, J.P. Mills, and Verrier Eldwin are some of the prominent people with difference temperament did some empirical studies. In post-Independence era, the studies continue to engage its pedagogy and approaches on a similar trend, which are either based on "field view" or "book view." What typically marked off the tribes in Northeast are their philosophical views that exist within their own living communities which consists of non-written history but nonetheless thrives in their own world of ideas, sustaining them for centuries. One may wonder how then these tribes and ethnic groups in the region articulate their world-views? Do they have meaningful discourse in life in relations to the world? These questions require in depth studies to bring out a comprehensive understanding of the people.

The divide that exists between the hills tribes from the plains people based on noted questions remains as a factor of distancing itself from the mainstream. Assumedly these tribes, ethnic groups, sub-ethnic and linguistic identities found themselves excluded from political, cultural and public affairs of the mainstream. The modern Indian nation-state granted them the status of scheduled tribes through the Constitution of India (Scheduled Tribes) order, of 1950. The government orients its policy for the better understanding of these people and their views of life

in the larger spectrum of modern India. However, large section of India's North East tribes continues to be cut-off from mainstream narrative discourse. And they felt been left behind in responding to the intricate phenomenal changes occurred in the past decades.

The tribes basically have no scripts and relate their lived experiences through oral descriptions. As folklores and folktales are arguably the most enduring stratum of the collective life of any communities, the tribes in India's North East do have their own way of "telling and retelling" them to their children. It is important to investigate how such forms of knowledge are cherished for centuries and shaped their views in relations to the world. In an era of globalization, digitization and technogization the oral knowledge existing in tribal communities are getting erased from the modern state. Their narrative on migration, metaphysics, aesthetics, religious views, etc, are either submerged by the established religions or struggles to sustains in the midst of new problems –which constantly challenges the indigenous life-world.

In today's world with its dependence on print and electronic media, it is worthwhile to ask ourselves what roles the oral tradition continues to play in our society and in our lives. In what ways do our oral traditions embedded in our community and the world around us. Many cultures, including First Nation and Aboriginal cultures, the oral tradition has been the primary form of knowledge transmission and has been the way to communicate complex information about culture, politics, the environment and economics (Chief Kerry's Moose). Of late, the study of oral tradition has gained momentum across scholars particularly in the disciplines of linguistics, history, literature, anthropology, cultural studies and communication. On the one hand, the increase interest on oral tradition is due to cultural roots and historical materials, and on the other hand, it is uniquely an important factor of identity formation.

The tribal folk have indigenous knowledge in the fields of agriculture, medicine, conservation and preservation of land and resources. The traditional idea of holding land and transfer of land ownership, jurisprudence in dispute settlement etc. are uniquely found in tribal society. Living in harmony with nature gives a sense of belonging and their holistic conceptualization of Man, Nature and God relationship. Their oral tradition speaks of creation, Time-Space unity, and they are found in folklores and folktales. Their belief systems, symbols,

myths, stories and lived experiences are inter-woven and interpretation depends on folklores, folktale, and they may not validate with science and logic but there exist fundamentals principles in sustaining these communities.

We invite original research papers to discuss orality, migration and tribal epistemology in the context of India's North East broadly related to but not exclusively to the following themes:

- The question of migration and settlement – a search through oral tradition, cultural practices and folklores.
- “Orality and Literacy” in the tribal society with the emergence of print culture.
- Epistemic enquiry into the traditional forms of knowledge, meanings, references and hermeneutic.
- Diverse cultural narratives, traditions and practices including ceremonial use of attires, contractual marriage, youth dormitories, interpretation and dramatization of the legends of the Epics and so on
- Relationship between man, nature and the environmental concerns in the light of modern concept of “development”
- Understanding language as a tool for creating cognitive schemes by analysing the folklores, folktales and myths.
- Traditional conception of holding of land and transfer of land ownership
- Traditional understanding of justice and peace

Abstracts of about 300-350 words along with keywords and author's details may be submitted to kaisiikokho@gmail.com, im_neli@yahoo.co.in, akasmao@gmail.com, francisariina@gmail.com

- **Last date for submission of abstracts 15 December, 2017**
- **Announcement of selected abstracts via email 19 December, 2017**

Local hospitality and travel allowance will be provided for selected paper contributors as per the University rules.