



**Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research
Jamia Millia Islamia
New Delhi-110025**

**Two-Day Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) sponsored National Seminar
on
'Locating Marginalities within Margins: A Study of Cinemas from North East India'
26-27 November, 2025**

CALL FOR SUBMISSION OF ABSTRACTS

CONCEPT NOTE

North East (NE) India with its geography, linguistic and cultural diversity presents complex power relationships and social dynamics. Till a decade ago, the region was talked about predominantly for its marginal or peripheral position in comparison to mainstream India. However, within the NE there are different modalities of power relationships within states, communities and groups. Films could be an interesting way to investigate this relationship of 'mainstream' and 'marginalities' within the people of the region. The connection between cultural capital and film production in the NE like elsewhere reflects on complex power relationships where dominant communities often control narratives about marginalized groups. Taking this context in mind this seminar proposes to capture a comprehensive view of films from NE India to understand how films reflect on existing social hierarchies and inequalities within the region and how it reproduces multiple marginalities within the periphery.

While North East India, its landscape and as a subject has been represented in many Bollywood movies (Koyla, 1997, Dil Se, 1998, Mary Kom 2014, Anek, 2022), however the region's history of making and producing cinema has not been discussed much. Whatever little has been deliberated is often seen as a shadow of national picture (read Indian film)(Ashish Rajadhyaksha, Paul Willemen,1999) (K. Gokulsing, Wimal Dissanayake,2013), which limits its scope to study more as an independent area. Even in the studies of regional or independent film cinemas of the NE only appear as a composite category and history related to the specific state hardly comes forward (Barua,2025) (Sarma, 2022).

Of late, cinemas from North East India are gaining worldwide attention and enriching the region's cultural heritage and identity. With Aribam Syam Sharma's masterpiece *Ishanou* (1990) being restored and included in prestigious Cannes Film festival in 2023 in Cannes Classic Category and Rima Das' *Village Rockstar* (2017) entered as India's official entry to the Oscars in 2022, Cinemas from North East India have been touching the heights in the recent times.

Besides, the most striking features of these films are; how it is presenting the marginal narratives with utmost authenticity and subtle realism. Examples are; *Loktak Lairembee* (2016) by Haobam Paban Kumar from Manipur, *Nana: A Tale of Us* (2017) by Tiakumzuk from Nagaland, *Yarwng* (2018) by Joseph Pullinthananth from Tripura, *Orunasol Man*, by Nyago Ete from Arunachal Pradesh, *Maamma* by Dominic Tsangma, from Garo Hills Meghalaya). With these developments in the background, this is the ideal time to look back to the historical trajectory of Cinema in North East India, in connection to the contemporary discourses around production of films. With this intention, the initiative aims to develop a comprehensive mapping of cinemas of North East India.

Recent years, although have seen an emergence of regional cinemas in different genres from these states, however questions arise about who controls these narratives and whose stories are being told. By bringing in the question of the regional cinema industry and examining the production processes, casting choices, and narrative structures, we can understand how power relations manifest in cultural production. The role of dominant communities in shaping narratives about marginalized groups becomes particularly significant when analyzing tribes and other under-represented communities in films.

The proposed seminar will attempt to bring out/document the historical evolution, key filmmakers, and significant films, in connection to the newer terrain of regional film making in the North East. Rather than just focusing on a composite frame of North East India, the initiative would map the state wise evolution of the cinema and making of cinema in the eight states of North East India. A specific focus will be given on the marginal narratives which are finding a newer space in representing their grounded narratives (i.e. Tribal minority community).

The primary aim is to create a comprehensive mapping of films produced in NE India, categorized by state, language, and production period. This will be analysed to understand the representation patterns and power dynamics in film production. It will investigate how different communities are portrayed, how narratives are presented and who controls these portrayals. Special attention will be paid to the thematic concerns and genres prevalent in Northeastern films and their correlation with social realities.

The proposed seminar aims to bring together scholars, film makers and policy makers to explore and deliberate the following themes:

1. Historical trajectory of cinema in the states of North East India
2. Characteristics of cinema industries in the region
3. Representation of (marginal) communities, language and geography in the cinemas being produced from the region
4. Identifying the filmmakers, their production process and challenges

5. Government policies, support and opportunities through festivals
6. Contemporary state and discourse cinema in the North East

Who can participate?

1. Researchers and Academics
2. Film makers, artists and creative practitioners (preferably from or with working experience North East India)
3. Policy makers

To enable in-depth discussions and deliberations on the abovementioned themes, interested scholars and experts are invited to submit the abstract of their proposed paper. The abstract should be original work and should contain minimum 1000 words foregrounding the statement of problem, key research questions, objectives and findings.

Abstracts may be sent to kkokho@jmi.ac.in on or before **27 October, 2025**. Full paper should be submitted by **20 November, 2025** for presentation and participation in the Seminar.

Limited number of travel grants (As per the Government Rules) may be available for outstation participants. Only one author will be accommodated for paper/s with joint/co-authors.

The proceedings of the proposed Seminar will be published as an edited volume. However, this will depend on the papers that are accepted following peer review.

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