



## NATIONAL SEMINAR



ON

### **Citizenship, Identity and Conflict in North East India**

#### **Organised by:**

Centre for Community Organisation and Development Practice (CODP)

School of Social Work

Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Guwahati Campus

In collaboration with

OKD Institute of Social Change and Development (OKDISCD)

**29<sup>th</sup> February, 2020**

#### **Concept Note**

India is a multi-national and ethno-cultural plural country and especially in the context of the Northeastern region, there are many small ethnic communities with their distinct culture, identity, religion and governance system. Different parts of Northeastern region remained under different stages of administrative control, without the prospect of any common binding thread to bring them within a unified political entity. Most of the communities had self-governing village councils and tribal chiefdoms even during late British period. The region prior to independence was divided into Assam consisting of Garo, Khasi and Jaintia Hills, North Cachar and Mikir Hills, The Naga Hills, the Lushai Hills; the North-Eastern Frontier Tracts and the territories of Manipur and Tripura. However, after independence, with the North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971, the region has undergone many changes and created eight states. Different decentralised governance mechanism were formulated for protecting and promotion of the diverse ethnic identities, however, the region histo-political conflict especially by the tribals are an unending issues.

The idea of citizenship has been a contested issue in the North East that tied closely with the nation-state of the post independent era. The Constitution of India recognised citizenship within a legal/formal status; having a nationality and being member of the nation-state, and deriving rights and entitlement guaranteed by the Constitution. The notion of citizenship has been stress within the ambit of a territorial circumscribed nation-state while many denounced the idea as it failed to see citizenship beyond legal framework. T.H. Marshall's classic definition of citizenship suggests citizenship as status bestowed on those who are full

members of a community and all who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed. There has been long debate about whether citizenship necessarily entails a relationship between individuals and a state (or other territorial entity), and about whether it is associated just with the “public” and more specifically the “political” sphere (whether or not the formulation of citizenship in the society concerned entails an entitlement to a certain minimum level of welfare). In many cases, demarcation of borders and boundaries have shaped the notion of citizenship, this makes the idea of citizenship challenging when the history of the frontiers and state are overlooked. In this context, there is a strong opinion that citizenship needs to go beyond the legal or formal status of belonging within confined territory.

In the modern era with the rise of new concept such as global citizenship, the concept of citizenship mainly centred around, collective identity of citizens along the lines of shared language, religion, ethnicity, common histories and memories. Many writings has critically examined the conflicting relationship between citizenship and identity. As citizenship that denotes status and membership has been appropriated by groups to establish hegemony and imposed their view on other groups. In many cases, the practice of citizenship instead of inclusionary, it is exclusionary leaving some section of the group marginalised, which can see also result in the form of cultural politics. This notion of citizenship within a circumscribed nation-state is contested, when taken into consideration groups that were being the victim of the demarcation or drawing of the boundaries by the state. James Littleton has termed this issue as ‘clash of identities’, instead of fulfilling the political aspirations, there is a tendency to give more emphasis on their members on their cultural affiliation. It is view that this practice as weakening of national identities and emergence of new identities that dissolve membership in the territorial state, being replaced by primordial loyalties. The construction of new citizenship identities, more reasonable and satisfactory for people who live in a context of extreme social inequality, and in a world where citizenship identity as national identity is transforming as the nation-state itself is modifying its traditional role.

The North East region has seen varied kinds of conflict over the past few decades. These include insurgencies in Nagaland, Assam, Manipur, Tripura and Mizoram. In addition, there are conflicts and confrontations over land use and control as well as issues of language, identity formation, demographic change and minority and majoritarian relations. In the post colonial period, there has been an emergence of several armed insurgent groups in the region demanding political sovereignty and assertion of ethnic identity. The Indian state’s response to this, on the one hand, has been to accommodate difference through institutions of liberal democracy, whether it is through elections and law or through constitutional and administrative measures such as giving autonomy to the north-eastern tribes through tribal laws and customs. The present contentious issue revolves around the issue of citizenship with the introduction of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam and the proposed Citizenship (Amendment) Bill (CAB), 2016. It has met with fierce resistance by various groups and communities in the north-eastern states, especially Assam. There is fear psychosis especially with the CAB that the indigenous peoples of the region will lost their rights, identity and that it pose a threat to the political, economic, cultural and social affairs of the

indigenous people. This has resulted in massive protest from various civil societies across the region terming the bill is unconstitutional and communal. Beyond these legalities, there has also been conflict and ethnic tensions over granting of citizenship in tribal areas to other communities within inter-intra state, illegal migrants and internally displaced people. The crisis of two-tiered / dual citizenship issue remained contentious and debated in the region.

In the light of the above, the proposed seminar has the following broad objectives:

- to understand the current debates on citizenship and its impact on indigenous identities.
- to situate and comprehend the conflict in relations to citizenship, identities and rights of the indigenous peoples in the region.

**Sub-themes for the seminar:**

1. Debating the concept of citizenship and its elements
2. The issue of Inclusions and exclusions vis-a-vis citizenship
3. Efficacy of protective mechanism such as Inner Line Permit (ILP), National Register of Citizens (NRC), Autonomous Council, Permanent Residence Certificate, etc.
4. Locating Indigenous/Minorities Rights and Citizenship
5. The issue of Ethnic Identity, Autonomy Movement and Conflict
6. Migration, Internally Displaced Persons, Refugees and Citizenship Identity
7. Territoriality, Conflict and Citizenship
8. Gender and Citizenship

**Outcome:**

- a) The selected full papers will be published in an edited volume with ISBN number.
- b) Build a network and resource directory of development workers/practitioners, researchers, experts and academicians.

**Inaugural Lecture:** Prof. Bhupen Sarmah, former Director OKDISCD

**Venue:** Tata Institute of Social Sciences- Guwahati

**Guideline for Submission of Abstract**

1. The entire abstract (including title, author list/ affiliations, body, and any tables or figures) should be limited to 500 words and Times New Roman 12-point font (tables and figures may include font as small as 9- point)
2. Please use a structured format with subheadings (e.g. objectives, methods, results and conclusions for research-focused submissions or program/project objectives, target population, program/project description, methods/strategies, results/impacts, conclusions/key lessons learned)
3. Please submit as a Word document

**Communication** regarding submission of abstract and other queries be made through the email id: [joseph.riamei@tiss.du](mailto:joseph.riamei@tiss.du) (9957764868)

**Full Papers**, not exceeding 5000 words and, in MsWord format, are to be submitted with following guidelines:

- Only original and quality research papers will be accepted for presentation after a blind review.
- The First page contains name of the topic, name of the author (Bold, font size 14, Times New Roman), and their organisational affiliation, communication address, email and mobile / phone number (Normal font size 12, Time New Roman).
- Second page contains the name of the paper, abstract, and key words.
- With the name of the topic on the top, the whole paper will be presented in the third page onwards.
- Paper size- A4, Margin – 1 inch all sides, Font Size – 12, Font – Times new roman, Line spacing – 1.5 pt., 1 blank line after each paragraph.
- References or citations should be as per the EPW / APA style of references.

**Registration Fee (Includes breakfast, Lunch and Tea):**

**a) Rs. 500 (Academicians, professional practitioners, etc.)**

**b) Rs. 300 (Students & Scholars)**

**All the participants will have to bear own travel expenses and accommodation**

**Important Dates:**

Last date of abstract submission:	February 14, 2020
Abstract acceptance information date:	February 17, 2020
Full paper submission:	February 24, 2020
Seminar Date:	February 29, 2020