

Report on the two days national seminar on Legal Pluralism and North-east India: Transition of Traditions from Colonial Rule to present day Judiciary System, 7th - 8th November 2023.

The department of Political Science, Rangia College successfully organised the two days ICSSR-New Delhi sponsored national seminar on 7th and 8th November 2023. The seminar was welcomed by the convenor of the seminar Dr. Bhanuprabha Brahma, Assistant professor, Department of Political Science. The program included 3 plenary sessions and 4 thematic technical sessions, two of which were held in virtual mode. Altogether 45 papers were presented in the technical sessions. A few seminars on Legal Pluralism in the Northeast India have been conducted in Assam. This is one among the few where the diverse perspectives on law were discussed. I would sincerely thank ICSSR-New Delhi for the financial help.

In the inaugural session, which started at 11:00 am on 7/11/23, Dr Brajendra Saikia, Principal, Rangia College delivered the inaugural address where he elaborated the relevance of the theme of the seminar in the present context. Dr Aparajita Baruah, Guahati Univeristy, Department of Law, then delivered the keynote address and also chaired a technical session. She spoke about legal pluralism and jurisprudence and explained in details the legal co-existence in a single social field, diverse perspectives of law in Northeast India. She particularly mentions about Philosophical Foundations, Schools of Thought, Justice, Equality, Western Philosophy, National Philosophy, Vedic Period, Colonial Period, Post-Independence, Period, Philosophical Foundations, Schools of Thought, Justice, Equality, Western Philosophy, National Philosophy, Vedic Period, Colonial Period, Post -Independence Period. She spoke about how legal pluralism can foster to research in Foundations for knowledge creation bring about a Collaborative Approach, Inter/Intra/Multidisciplinary Approach, Promotion of Community Rights, Customary Laws, Reconciliation of Conflict of laws, Induction of non -legal issues in plural society and Workable solutions to the existing Problems. We have received total 45 abstracts. 20 papers were presented on the first day. Dr Aparajita Baruah chaired one technical session. We have also invited Dr Madan Chandra Boro, Registrar of Kumar Bhaskar Barma Sanskrit and Ancient Studies University to chair a

post lunch technical session with us. He mentioned how, legal awareness is also known as legal consciousness. It is the empowerment of individuals regarding issues involving the law. Legal awareness helps to promote consciousness of legal culture, participation in the formation of laws and the rule of law. Legal awareness can empower people to demand justice, accountability and effective remedies at all levels. He also mentioned about the methods of legal awareness. Legal awareness is commonly achieved through camps, lectures, and interactive workshops or crash programs on the essential and elementary legal laws. Among the general public, many wish to spend time listening to scholars on contemporary issues that have significant bearing on the rights and livelihood of ordinary people. In other methods, it is made aware by way of road shows, radio talks, street and theatre plays, as well as the publication of relevant books, periodicals, posters, and charts that deal with particular laws, the distribution of pamphlets, brochures, and stickers, the display of paintings, illustrations in comics, and other ways to ensure publicity for various legal mobilisation activities. Strategically located display boards in public places (railway stations, bus stations, market places, in front of major government offices and police stations) are also used to help government officials, police, and the public to understand the spirit of law.

On Day-2, 20 papers were present in the two technical sessions in blended mode. We have invited Dr. Bhupen Sarma, Principal, Pub Kamrup College chair a technical session with us. We had a special talk by Dr Binoy Goswami, Senior Assistant Professor, Department of economics. South Asian University. He spoke about Ownership vs User Rights of Agricultural Lands: Unwarranted Outcomes and Desired Reforms in Legal Provisions. He spoke of ownership vs user right in land reforms. The agrarian set-up in general and the land tenure systems in particular inherited from the British Raj were not conducive for agrarian development. Hence, in 1949, the Agrarian Reforms Committee was set up that set guidelines for land policy for successive Congress governments. The land reforms programme in India had four major components: abolition of intermediaries, ceiling on land holdings, consolidation of land holdings and tenancy reforms. He spoke of focus should be on user right instead of ownership right.

While the first measure is generally agreed to be relatively successful, others met with limited success. Professor M.P Bezbaruah, Gauhati University delivered the valedictory address. He spoke in details about the consequences of institutional development not keeping in tune with

lifestyle changes. Unless the socioeconomics is ready for it, enforcing a new law by mere force may not be practicable. This is however not to suggest that attempts to uniformization of laws should be held up till all sections of society are up to it. A new law itself may sometime be the catalyst of change in social perspective. So long as some community specific laws are contrary to the broad spirit of the constitution, reforming such laws may be necessary. In the ongoing debate regarding UCC, it has been argued that Muslim Personal Law allowing a man to have as many as 4 wives is contrary to gender justice and hence needs to be changed. Opponents to UCC argue that the provisions are not unconditional and that there are economic disincentives attached to prevent frequent abuse of the provisions. The argument that population growth rate among Muslims is higher because a man is allowed to have up to 4 wives is however naive and untenable. The issues need to be debated in a civilized ways: in the parliament, media and academic platforms rather than on the streets and in election rallies. But endless inconclusive debates can be frustrating. Debate must progressively narrow down differences and eventually lead to action. But while dealing with a contentious issue a gradualist approach may be more workable than enforcing drastic changes. The seminar ended with a vote of thanks from the convenor, Dr Bhanuprabha Brahma to all who made the seminar possible, especially the ICSSR-New Delhi which provided the bulk of the resource for the event.