Call for Papers

National Seminar on Conflict and Coping in Northeast India: The Role of Memory

Organised by: North Eastern Social Research Centre

Date of the seminar: 23rd-24th September, 2022

Venue: Seminar Hall, Jagriti, 3rd, GMCH Hostel Rd, Arunodoi Path, Christian Basti, Guwahati, Assam 781005

Concept Note

Over time, conflicts have occurred for diverse reasons in many regions and sub-regions of the world. There are various kinds of conflicts that play out in our day-to-day lives; however social and political conflicts have the utmost impact on people’s lives, livelihoods, and the social fabric of a particular region. Northeast India, home to diverse ethnic communities with distinct socio-cultural backgrounds, has witnessed many such conflicts post-independence.

Conflicts in the Northeast have ranged from issues related to nationalist struggles, for example, in Nagaland, Mizoram, Assam, and Manipur; to inter-ethnic conflicts, for example, the Assam agitation, Mizo-Bru conflict, and Kuki-Naga conflict. Barah¹ (2022) states when numerous ethnic groups and sub-groups coexist, the risk of conflict over threat to identity is extremely high, and this stands true for the Northeastern region of India. Here, it is also important to note that inter-ethnic conflicts in the region also have their roots in conflicts over colonial past which is mostly based around resources, for example, the Bodo-Bengali Muslim conflict. Furthermore, conflicts resulting from both internal and external migration have also occurred in the region, for example, the Tripura-Bengali dispute. These conflicts however are also laden with many complexities and multiple actors which have both direct and indirect adverse consequences over the region and their ramifications are

felt by the communities for generations. In this context, it is essential to examine the significance of these events in the lives of the individuals and communities of the region.

Memory plays a vital role when a conflict arises. Memory and conflict often are two sides of the same coin that feed off each other (Wagoner & Brescó, 2016)\(^2\). To make sense of how conflicts affect a region or its people, it is essential to comprehend the function of memory in the building and reconstruction of a past event in people's and communities' everyday realities. The loss, suffering, and trauma of a conflict entangle in the past, present, and future of individuals and communities through memory. By nature, though memory is distinctive it is yet specific; collective, and plural yet individual (Nora, 1996)\(^3\). The idea of collective memory can be manifested in how communities retain their shared memories of conflict, even if they might have not personally experienced it. For example, the observance of ‘Black Day’ on September 13\(^{th}\) by the Kukis and the commemoration of ‘Martyrs Day’ on April 13\(^{th}\) in Manipur. Individual memories, albeit, part of shared memories, are often hidden from the public narratives and are more subjective than the former. However, both collective and individual memory may preserve the narratives of a conflict-ridden past through remembering, recalling, documentation, memorialization, commemoration, and even forgetting.

While many use memory to keep the wounds alive, others have been trying to use the same memory to bring people together for reconciliation. At the same time, some others have been using the same memories to cope with the past and coexist with the community in conflict. In this context, the seminar seeks to shed light on the long-term consequences of conflicts in the Northeast and how they have affected the lives of survivors and future generations. The seminar aims to primarily focus on how memory held by communities and individuals plays a significant role in the journey toward coping and resilience. The seminar is meant to be an engagement with people who are involved in using memories as


a way forward and building a future where a post-conflict reality is viewed through the lens of peace and reconciliation.

Technical Sessions

**Technical Session I: Memory and Enduring Conflict.**

*The memories of the violent and traumatic past have the power to shape the future. The way in which the past is remembered can either contribute to the reconciliation process or be the impetus for further conflicts.*

**Technical Session II: Memory, Loss and Suffering.**

*Even when the conflict is between communities each individual has a unique memory of loss and suffering. Individuals who are direct victims of conflicts and violence need the inner strength, power, will, perseverance and resilience to cope with the agony. The individual memories shared with the community can become a coping mechanism.*

**Technical Session III: Memory, Memorialization, and Commemoration.**

*There are various methods used to keep collective memory alive. Memorials are erected and certain occasions are set apart in remembrance and in mourning for the families and relatives who were victims of some ethnic conflicts. The question asked then is, does such memorialization help in gearing towards reconciliation and peace.*

**Technical Session IV: Memory, Gender, and Conflicts.**

*Memories of conflict experiences can be looked at from the gender perspective. Both men and women are vulnerable in conflicts but in different ways. In this session, the focus will be on gendered aspects of remembering violence, loss, and coping.*

**Technical Session V: Memory and Documentation.**

*Another aspect of dealing with conflict is documentation of the event during and after in the form of reports, memoirs, manifestos, autobiographies, journalistic writings, diaries that provide a path forward and help individuals and communities to reflect on their possible future.*
Important Dates and Instructions:

Please ensure the following before abstract submission:

- Word limit: 250-300
- Mention the author/s name/s, institutional affiliation, email id and phone number.

**Deadline for submission of abstracts:** 25th July, 2022.

**Deadline for final paper submission:** 15th September, 2022.

Submit your abstracts at seminar.nesrc@gmail.com

**Contact no:** +91-8473869715