

SHILLONG



COLLEGE

Assessed and Re-Accredited in 2023 by NAAC as Grade A⁺ with CGPA of 3.33

Ref No.

Date:

**REPORT OF THE
ELEVENTH S. C. DUTTA MEMORIAL LECTURE, 2024**
on the Theme

“Occupational Diversification and Emerging Class Structure in the Context of Tribal Societies of North-East India”

Organised by
Department of Sociology, Shillong College,
In collaboration with
Internal Quality Assurance Cell, Shillong College
and sponsored by
ICSSR-NERC, North-Eastern Hill University

Held on the
22nd October, 2024 at Shillong College, Auditorium.

Introduction

The **S. C. Dutta Memorial Lecture**, held on October 22, 2024, at Shillong College, serves as a beacon of remembrance and academic reflection. Instituted in 2014 in honor of Prof. (Late) Sudhindra Chandra Dutta, a visionary and founder of Shillong College, this annual lecture commemorates his pioneering efforts in establishing one of North-East India’s most respected educational institutions. Prof. Dutta, a distinguished mathematician and alumnus of the University of Dhaka, committed his life to strengthening the public education system in Meghalaya, leading Shillong College during its formative years. Through this lecture series, Shillong College aspires to uphold his legacy by fostering critical discourse on themes relevant to the region’s socio-economic and cultural landscape.

This year's lecture, titled **“Occupational Diversification and Emerging Class Structure in the Context of Tribal Societies of North-East India,”** was organized by the Department of Sociology in collaboration with the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC). The theme reflects Shillong College’s dedication to addressing the evolving challenges faced by the tribal societies in North-East India. Tribal communities, traditionally regarded by early European anthropologists as “simple” or “primitive,” have undergone significant transformations, especially since India's independence. The lecture provided an essential platform to discuss how socio-political changes, economic diversification, and modernization impact class structures within these communities.

The objectives of the event were twofold: to explore the socio-political and economic changes influencing occupational diversification in tribal societies and to examine how these shifts contribute to the emergence of new class distinctions. Such discussions are crucial as they illuminate the dynamic balance between traditional ways of life and the pressures of modernity, inviting students

and scholars to understand and contribute to this evolving discourse.

The lecture welcomed esteemed speakers, including **Prof. Anand Kumar** from Jawaharlal Nehru University and **Prof. B. Panda** from North-Eastern Hill University, both renowned for their expertise in sociology and tribal studies. These distinguished scholars brought nuanced perspectives on class structures and occupational transitions, fostering an atmosphere of insightful and empowering dialogue. Their presence underscored the college's commitment to academic excellence and community empowerment, aligning with its vision of becoming a "Centre of Excellence for Wisdom."

Inaugural Session Summary for the S.C. Dutta Memorial Lecture

Program Commencement and Welcoming the Dignitaries

The 2024 S.C. Dutta Memorial Lecture at Shillong College began with Master of Ceremonies Kareen Kharsohtun extending a warm welcome to the dignitaries on stage. The presence of the esteemed Principal, Dr. E. Kharkongor, Head of the Department of Sociology, Dr. S. Khyriemmujat, as well as renowned speakers Prof. Anand Kumar from Jawaharlal Nehru University and Prof. B. Panda from North-Eastern Hill University, underscored the event's academic significance and commitment to discussing critical socio-economic issues.

A Warm Felicitations and Heartfelt Performance

Dr. E. Kharkongor, Principal of Shillong College, formally opened the event by felicitating the resource persons, acknowledging their contributions to the fields of sociology and tribal studies. This gesture was followed by a heartfelt musical performance by students from the Sociology Department, which set an inspiring and harmonious tone for the discussions that would follow.

Welcome Address by Dr. E. Kharkongor, Principal of Shillong College

In her address, Dr. Kharkongor emphasized the relevance of this year's theme—Occupational Diversification and Emerging Class Structure in the Context of Tribal Societies of North-East India—by connecting it to the shifting socio-economic landscapes of tribal communities. She spoke of the college's responsibility in addressing such regional issues, explaining that tribal societies, which once maintained traditional livelihoods and social hierarchies, now face pressures from globalization, economic reforms, and policy shifts. These influences lead to occupational diversification and, as a consequence, emerging class distinctions that reshape the identity and structure of indigenous communities.

Dr. Kharkongor highlighted the college's enduring commitment to accessible education,

dating back to its founding in 1956. From its humble beginnings with just 35 students at Shillong Jail Road Boys' School, Shillong College has grown into a multi-disciplinary institution known for fostering inclusivity and leadership in the region. The Principal pledged to continue working toward the betterment of students and society, drawing inspiration from S.C. Dutta's vision of empowering youth and creating opportunities for North-East India's communities.

Address by Dr. S. Khyriemujat, Head, Department of Sociology

Following the Principal's address, Dr. S. Khyriemujat warmly welcomed all present, expressing gratitude to the attendees, scholars, and colleagues who had gathered to honor the legacy of S.C. Dutta and engage in meaningful discourse. She reflected on the Department of Sociology's dedication to advancing research on tribal issues, particularly those affecting North-East India.

Dr. Khyriemujat introduced the newly released book, *Changing Dynamics of Indigenous Society with Special Reference to the North-Eastern Region*, a project initiated in a seminar held in November 2019. This volume, she explained, brings together the voices of scholars, students, and thinkers to explore the complexities of indigenous societies navigating socio-political and environmental challenges. With sections dedicated to themes such as identity crises, land and cultural preservation, and indigenous resistance through the resilient, the book compels us to draw parallels between local experiences and global indigenous movements.

In her address, Dr. Khyriemujat emphasized that the book stands as a testament to resilience, knowledge, and empowerment. She highlighted the contributions of her co-editors and the collective efforts of contributors, underscoring the importance of preserving indigenous knowledge to tackle today's profound challenges, from climate change to cultural erosion. She invited everyone to reflect upon the insights contained in the book and to view it as a call to protect, promote, and empower indigenous societies through informed action and continued research.

Rapporteur's Report for S.C. Dutta Memorial Lecture 2024

Theme: Occupational Diversification and Emerging Class Structure in Tribal Societies of North-East India
Date: October 22, 2024
Venue: Shillong College, Shillong

1. Session Overview

The 2024 S.C. Dutta Memorial Lecture, held at Shillong College, addressed the timely and complex theme of **Occupational Diversification and Emerging Class Structure in the Context of Tribal Societies of North-East India**. This theme reflects the socio-economic transformations impacting indigenous societies, especially as they navigate the forces of globalization, modernity, and evolving political dynamics.

MC Karen Kharsohtun welcomed the dignitaries to the stage, setting the tone for an impactful day of exploration and dialogue. The **Principal, Dr. E. Kharkongor**, formally opened the event, followed by the **felicitation of resource persons**—Prof. Anand Kumar and Prof. B. Panda—who shared their expertise on issues central to the region’s future.

2. Session 1:

Lecture by Prof. Anand Kumar, former faculty Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, Area of specialization Political Sociology, Media and Communication and Social Thought and Globalization,

Topic: Emerging Class Structure in the Context of Tribal Societies of North-East India

Prof. Anand Kumar’s session brought forth an in-depth analysis of class formation among North-East India’s tribal societies, contextualized within global socio-political currents.

Key Discussion Points:

- **Class Structure in Tribal Contexts:** Prof. Kumar opened by defining class structure specifically within tribal societies, explaining the “Four SSSS” of sociology—**Society, Structure, Struggle, and Stability**—as they relate to these communities.
- **Impacts of Globalization and Modernity:** He examined how globalization and modernization influence traditional tribal systems, often leading to “brain drain” and inequality that risks eroding local identities.
- **Socio-Political Changes:** As democratic practices and development policies reshape these societies, Prof. Kumar questioned the postcolonial promise—“Is it truly working, and is life genuinely better?” Using the metaphor of the “**elephant’s tail**” for the North-East, he highlighted the region's struggle for visibility in the Indian political landscape.
- **Global Comparisons:** Drawing on global examples, he compared North-East India’s journey to other tribal societies, exploring the challenges of maintaining cultural identity and integration in a homogenizing world.
- **Metaphors of Survival:** Prof. Kumar introduced the “**Tiger and Goat**” metaphor, illustrating the tension between economic survival and cultural preservation, urging policymakers to

approach tribal regions with sensitivity.

Takeaways:

- **Balanced Policy Needs:** Policies must harmonize the preservation of traditional structures with modern economic opportunities.
 - **Safeguarding Tribal Identities:** Emphasis was placed on protecting tribal identities amid rapid socio-economic changes.
 - **Conscious Leadership:** Prof. Kumar noted the need for ethical governance, pointing to concerns about criminal records among lawmakers in India and globally, questioning the ethical fabric of leadership in democracy.
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3. Session 2:

Lecture by Prof. B. Panda, *HoD, Dept of Sociology, North-Eastern Hill University*

Topic: Occupational Diversification in the Context of Tribal Societies of North-East India

Prof. Panda began his lecture by applauding Prof. Kumar's insights, underscoring the relevance of these discussions to contemporary socio-economic transformations in North-East India.

Key Discussion Points:

- **Factors in Occupational Shifts:** Prof. Panda analyzed the drivers of occupational diversification, such as education, technology, and political movements. He emphasized the **mosaic of diversity** in the North-East, cautioning against attempts to homogenize its unique cultural and ethnic landscape.
- **Metaphors and Identity:** Like Prof. Kumar, he invoked the “**elephant's tail**” metaphor to symbolize the North-East's often sidelined position. He highlighted the social exclusions arising from identity formation and ethnic competition, illustrating how neoliberalism compounds these complexities.
- **Historical and Economic Influences:** From **pre-colonial jhum cultivation practices** to the advent of agrarian capitalism, Prof. Panda traced the roots of class consciousness in the region. He explored the role of the **neo-elites** and the impact of Christianity and modernity on indigenous identity.
- **Sectoral Developments:** His discussion on diversification included sectors like manufacturing and petroleum, which play increasingly significant roles in North-East India's

economy.

Takeaways:

- **Inclusive Employment Policies:** The need to balance traditional livelihoods with new employment avenues was a prominent takeaway.
 - **Strategic Policy and Community Responsibility:** Prof. Panda urged for a strategic, inclusive approach to class-conscious policy development, emphasizing the responsibility of policymakers and civil society in fostering socio-economic resilience.
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Open Discussion / Question-and-Answer Session

A vibrant discussion followed, driven by the curiosity and engagement of the audience, especially the younger participants. Significant questions arose from students and faculty alike, covering:

- Practical strategies for integrating traditional livelihoods with modern job opportunities.
- Future research directions on class and identity formation within the context of socio-political challenges.

The speakers provided detailed responses, sparking ideas for further research and emphasizing the need for collaborative academic and governmental efforts to address these pressing issues.

5. Conclusion

Vote of Thanks by Smt. K.M.A. Kharsolutun, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, brought the session to a close. She extended heartfelt gratitude to the speakers, organizers, and attendees, reflecting on the event's success and highlighting its contributions to the ongoing discourse on tribal socio-economic issues. The programme was attended by 220 participants which included Sociology Honours students and faculty from the department of Sociology from various colleges of the state.

6. Summary of Key Insights and Recommendations


Overall Observations: The Memorial Lecture provided critical insights into the complexities of occupational diversification and class structures within North-East India's tribal societies. Both

speakers underscored the unique challenges these communities face as they encounter global forces, while also highlighting the rich potential for sustainable, community-led growth.

Key Recommendations:

- **Policy Development:** Emphasize interdisciplinary approaches in crafting policies that respect socio-cultural dynamics while fostering economic growth.
- **Future Research:** Encourage academic studies that further investigate class and identity formation within the region, ideally involving local researchers who bring contextual knowledge.
- **Community Empowerment:** Support initiatives that enhance indigenous leadership and community involvement in policy-making processes.

The **S.C. Dutta Memorial Lecture** stands as a testament to **Shillong College's mission** to cultivate leadership, inspire societal change, and strengthen the cultural fabric of the North-East. Through events like this, Shillong College not only honors its past but also champions a future marked by education, inclusivity, and resilience, fostering hope for generations to come.



Dr. S. Khongwir
Principal
Shillong College



Dr. S. Khyriemujat
HOD, Department of Sociology
Shillong College

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PHOTOS



Knowledge is Immortal

ELEVENTH S. C. DUTTA MEMORIAL LECTURE

on the theme

“ Occupational Diversification and Emerging Class Structure in the Context of Tribal Societies of North-East India ”

DATE: 22ND OF OCTOBER, 2024
VENUE: SHILLONG COLLEGE
TIME: 10:00 AM

Organised By
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY, SHILLONG COLLEGE AND
INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE CELL (IQAC), SHILLONG COLLEGE**

Funded By
ICSSR - NERC, NORTH-EASTERN HILL UNIVERSITY, SHILLONG



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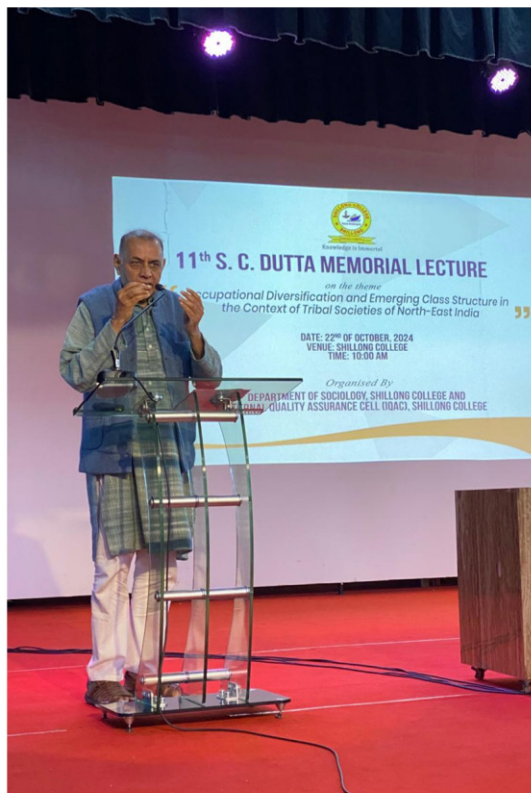
*Speech by Prof. B. Panda,
HoD, Department of
Sociology, NEHU*

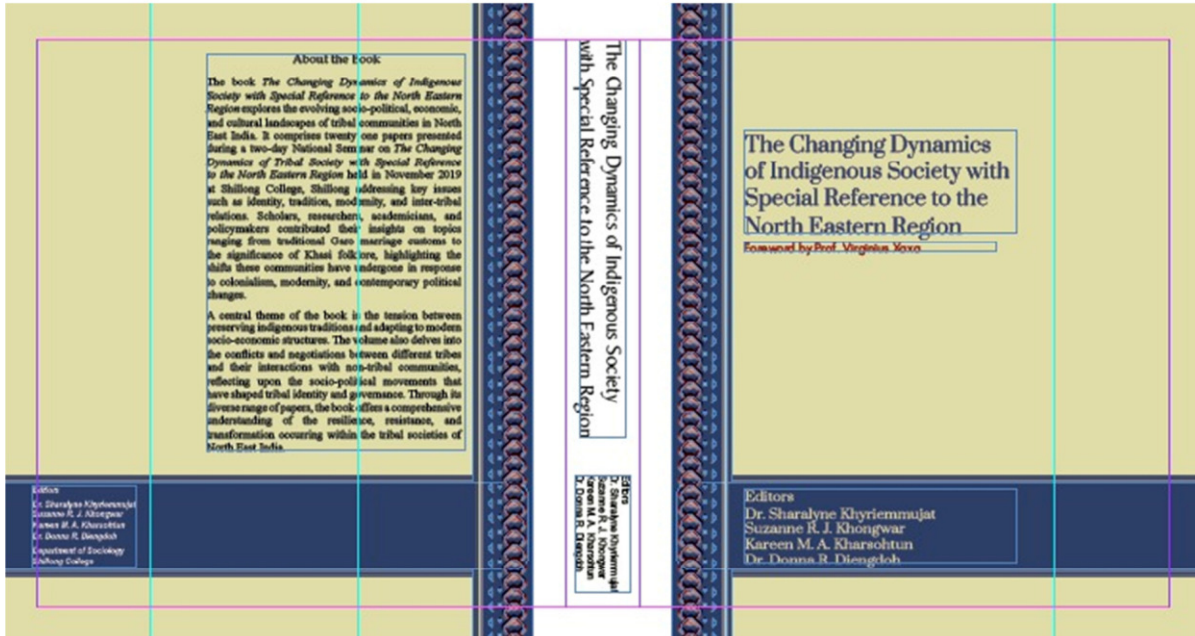


*Speech by Dr. E. Kharkongor,
Principal, Shillong College*


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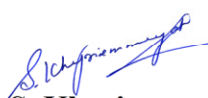
Release of the Book entitled “*The Changing Dynamics of Indigenous Society with Special Reference to the North Eastern Region*”





Cover Page of the book entitled “*The Changing Dynamics of Indigenous Society with Special Reference to the North Eastern Region*”


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