VIT-AP UNIVERSITY

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ATHENA 2023 - 3rd Annual International Conference

ATHENA

School of Social Sciences and Humanities (VISH)
VIT-AP University

Culture, Society, and Politics:
Exploring Northeast India through the
Lenses of Social Sciences and Humanities

Date: 05th to 7th December 2023
Venue: Online
Abstract Submission Link: <u>Click here to submit</u>

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Culture, Society, and Politics: Exploring Northeast India through the Lenses of Social Sciences and Humanities

The eight northeastern states in India stand as a region marked by heterogeneity and complexities. Their remarkable diversity includes over hundreds of ethnic and sub-ethnic groups speaking numerous languages and dialects, creating a unique fabric of the region's culture and society. The region's geographical terrain shows similar diversity with the mighty Himalayas in the north, the fertile lands with rich natural resource deposits at its centre, and the lush southern rainforests. This unique positioning has profoundly influenced the region's historical trajectories, socio-cultural identities, and political dynamics.

The region's distinctive terrain, often clubbed together under the umbrella term "Northeast" or North East Region (NER) by the State and the broader Indian society, belies the intricate diversity that characterises it. Popularised during the colonial period in the nineteenth century, this neologism, while expedient for administrative purposes, obscures the rich diversity and associated complexities under a veneer of uniformity. The intricate interplay of languages, ethnicity, culture, and religion has created a rich tapestry of social, cultural, political, and spiritual realities of the present. While this diversity contributes to the region's vibrancy, its parochial tendencies also fuel conflicts and tensions as manifested in the ongoing ethnic clash in Manipur.

Despite its modest population size within India, Northeast occupies a strategically paramount position at the intersection of South, East, and Southeast Asia. It shares its borders with five nations: Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Myanmar, and Nepal making it the epicenter of debates and discussions when considering it as a gateway to Southeast Asia. However, often perceived as territorially and administratively remote from the 'mainland', it exists as a separate 'other' in the broader Indian psyche. Such geographical and psychological distance has bred tumultuous borderland politics, secessionist movements and insurgencies. It has also exacerbated issues of marginalization, multi-dimensional underdevelopment, and high unemployment. Furthermore, the challenges are compounded by problems such as inadequate resource allocation, insufficient infrastructure development, and limited educational access, among others. These conditions not only fuel youth discontent but also create a fertile ground for onflict and radicalization. In addition, there is the perennial discourse of tribal versus non-tribal, insider versus outsider, and native versus immigrant which present further challenges to peaceful cohabitation and administration. That being said, the region continues to be a focal point of successive Indian Government's initiatives, including the Look East Policy, now renamed as the Act East Policy. It remains to be seen to what extent these initiatives improve conditions on the ground and whether the region will have an influence on the broader South Asian landscape during India's G20 presidency and beyond.

On the academic front, the lack of scholarly research on the region has significant implications. Crucial issues such as socio-cultural complexities, regional conflicts, economic development, governance challenges, and indigenous knowledge systems remain overlooked and undocumented. This knowledge gap not only hinders effective decision-making but also perpetuates misconceptions about the region, obstructing development efforts and a nuanced understanding of important issues. Addressing this research gap is essential for Northeastern India's advancement, necessitating initiatives to promote research in the social sciences and humanities fostering interdisciplinary collaboration to uncover the region's complexities with due scholarly interventions.

The proposed conference aims to address the dearth of scholarly research on Northeast India by assembling scholars, social scientists, and practitioners from India and abroad, focusing on the eight northeastern states. The conference also aims to provide an academic platform to facilitate an intellectual exchange and conversation between researchers from different backgrounds such as sociology, economics, history, political science, geography, literature, anthropology, linguistics, philosophy, psychology, among others. By presenting their work, participants will contribute to a deeper understanding of Northeast India's complexities, nurturing a scholarly network, facilitating comparative discussions, conceptual and theoretical debates and deliberations upon interdisciplinary exchange. Athena 2023 seeks to explore some of these ever-pertinent issues and concerns which are based on, but not limited to the following themes:

Theme 1: Culture, Society, and Identity
- Indigenous knowledge systems and practices
- Social movements and identity politics
- Gender, caste, and class relations
- Education
- Media and popular culture
- Language and Literature
- Art and cultural production
- Indigenous storytelling and folk narratives
- Research challenges and emerging themes

Theme 2: History, Politics, and Governance
- Colonialism and its legacies
- Insurgency and conflict
- Peace-building and development
- Democracy and governance
- Human rights and social justice
- Borderlands and international relations

Theme 3: Economy, Environment, and Sustainability
- Economic development and challenges
- Human development and challenges
- Sustainable development and challenges
- Natural resources, environment, and climate changes
- Migration and development
- Demography and inequality
- Urbanisation and infrastructure economics
- Rural transformation and agriculture

Abstract Submission Guidelines : We invite students, scholars, faculty, and anyone interested in researches on Northeast India to upload their abstracts (300-500 words) by clicking this link, along with a short bio-note (around 100 words). If your abstract is accepted, you'll be asked to submit a full paper (3000-5000 words). Selected papers will be published as an edited book with an ISBN number after the conference. **Three best papers will be awarded with certificates and cash prizes.** Please fill up the form even if you only wish to attend the conference. For any questions or clarifications, please contact us at athena@vitap.ac.in.

Notable Speakers

Dr. Shobhana Chelliah, Indiana University

Patricia Mukhim, Writer/ Social Activist/ Journalist

Dr. Sarah Hilaly, Rajiv Gandhi University, Arunachal Pradesh

Dr. Abani Bhagawati Guwahati University

Dr. Sutapa Sengupta, St. Mary's College, NEHU, Shillong

Prof. Charles Redmon, University of Essex

Wati Longkumer, IIT-RAM , Ahmedabad

Dr. Savio Meyase, University of Edinburgh

Dr. Rituparna Patgiri, Sociologist

Dr. Rapme Bantei Kharkongor, Sankardev College, NEHU

Dr. Dipak Kumar Sarkar, Netaji Subhas Mahavidyalaya, Tripura

Ankur Tamuli Phukan, Mittal Institute, India (Fellow)

About VIT-AP University

With a 37-year history of innovation in education and research, VIT has consistently been at the forefront of providing high-quality education. The VIT group of institutions, renowned for their commitment to knowledge and excellence, have consistently ranked among the top educational institutes in the country. At VIT-AP, our leadership embodies a dynamic blend of academic initiatives and industry partnerships with a vision to create one of the finest academic destinations globally. Our campus, poised to become one of the country's best, offers numerous opportunities to explore your interests, discover core competencies, and engage in a continuous cycle of learning and personal growth. Here, students are presented with vast opportunities for learning, practice, growth, and thriving. We encourage autonomous learning, allowing students to chart their own educational path. Through initiatives like Engineering Clinics, students engage in hands-on experiments related to program content. We also provide industrial and international exposure, fostering overall personality development through sports, clubs, chapters, and cultural activities. For more information about the institution login to the official website here.

VIT-AP School of Social Sciences and Humanities (VISH)

The VIT-AP School of Social Sciences and Humanities (VISH) has evolved into an independent School that combines the Department of Languages and the existing courses of Social Sciences that have been present at the university since its inception in 2017. The VIT-AP School of Social Sciences and Humanities (VISH) focuses on providing students with language skills and a broad perspective on the evolution of culture, society, politics, and economics. Apart from the production and dissemination of the disciplinary concerns the faculty of the School also provide students with a well-rounded education that would complement other disciplines of study offered at the University resulting in individuals who are capable of applying new knowledge and solving problems. The varied courses offered by the School enable the students to gain highly marketable skills ranging from critical thinking and problem solving, to knowledge application and evidence-based analysis. For more information please login to the School's webpage here.

Important dates:
Abstract submission deadline: 27/ 10/ 2023
Abstract Acceptance: 1/11/2023
Early Bird Registration: 12/11/2023
Late Registration: 25/11/2023
Full paper submission deadline: 30/11/23
Registration Fee: Upon acceptance of the abstract, there will be a fee of ₹200 for early bird registration and ₹450 for late registration. A payment link will be provided with the abstract acceptance email.

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