

**Minutes of the Meet of North East Resource Persons at IGNC A, New Delhi
7-8 August, 2008**

by
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Dr. Richa Negi

As desired a two-day meet of resource persons from North east was organized at IGNC A, New Delhi on August 7-8, 2008. The major objectives of the meet were to evaluate the work done by the IGNC A team in past 9-10 months; develop strategy for organizing the Spirit of North East in New Delhi on November 19, 2008; identify the projects and activities for the year 2008-09; and also to identify the institutions and individuals for implementing and coordinating the projects.

In order to expedite the above, Joint Secretary held a meeting with scholars - Dr. Richa Negi and Dr. Kailash Kumar Mishra – associated with North-east Program on 28.07.08. She asked them to prepare an agenda for the meeting and also to visit Sangeet Natak Akademi, Lalit Kala Akademi and JNU to collect a list of resource people working in North-east. She also discussed the activities listed for future activities one by one and suggested to drop some of them in order to avoid repetition.

Member Secretary's also took a meeting at his office on 29.07.2008 to discuss the parameters for 7th and 8th August and to plan the *Spirit of North-east* for November 2008 with the following members.

Joint Secretary

CAO

Dr. Malla

Dr. Richa Negi

Dr. Kailash Kumar Mishra

Member Secretary suggested that the planning of the event should be systematic so that different categories may be divided and classified thematically. He added that the 'Spirit

of North-east', must include local inputs by the people. The nature-culture relationship should be the main focus of the program.

The meeting on 7th August was chaired by Dr. K. K. Chakravarty, Member Secretary IGNCA. The day began with the introduction of the activities that the IGNCA Team has done in past 9-10 months by Dr. Richa Negi. She informed that IGNCA in collaboration with the Government Departments, institutions, community resource persons, social animators, university departments, local experts and scholars has launched several of activities in North Eastern States of India to research, document, publish, promote, preserve, revitalize and safeguard the tangible and intangible cultural resources including the human heritage of the region. More than 33 tribes are documented; around 1000 books are obtained; 1100 ethnographic items are procured; 250 Hours' audio-visual documentation is ready; about 175 forms of dance and songs are recorded; the oral history of tribes and people are getting ready in book form and the process is on with the other communities and tribes; festivals and rituals of various tribes and communities are recorded and documented; rare books and manuscripts are digitized and preserved; indigenous methods of preservation and conservation are recorded; popularized and their usefulness is evaluated using the modern techniques of preservation and conservation; customary laws are documented; unprotected and protected archaeological and heritage sites are documented; attempts are made to create the physiognomy of the folk deities and narratives and to create mental atlas accordingly. Dr Negi gave a brief introduction about all the North East States including Sikkim.

Going back to the last week of May 2007 Dr. Richa Negi said that initially a team comprising of Prof. A. C. Bhagabati, Shri P. Jha, Dr. G. Badam, Sri Virendra Bangroo, Shri Seetharamiah, Shjri Iliyas Ahmad, Dr. Richa Negi and Dr. Kailash Kumar Mishra made an extensive study tour to Assam and Arunachal Pradesh under the leadership and vision of Dr. K. K. Chakravarty organized some workshops and met institutions,

authorities of the universities, administrators, monasteries, craft persons, etc. and from that we did not look back.

As desired by the Chair, each participant introduced himself/herself with specialization and interest. After this Professor A. C. Bhagabati gave an overview of the activities done in past 10 months.

Dr. K. K. Chakravarty requested the resource persons to work on the strategy of organizing Spirit of North east on 19th November 2008 at IGNCA, New Delhi. The participants discussed the issues as mentioned in the agenda paper given below:

- 1. Spirit of North East (19 -28 November, 2008 at IGNCA, New Delhi)**
 - 1.1 Customary laws, dispute resolution and reconciliation, human and natural resource management strategies
 - 1.2 Indigenous and dying games and Sports
 - 1.3 Revisiting Colonial History
 - 1.4 Role of Women and their Contribution: freedom struggles, creativity, entrepreneurship, self governance, monasteries (e.g. Ani from Ani Gompa of Arunachal Pradesh and women from Namghar, Assam)
 - 1.5 People's intervention for preservation, promotion and documentation of cultural heritage
 - 1.6 Working with *sattradhikaris* to discuss an exhibition on the history, heritage, culture, arts, including music and architecture, and oral history of *sattras*, including *kalasattras*, *sattras* managed by women, the *namghar* tradition
 - 1.7 Bio-cultural diversity and the role of cultural practices in maintaining the bio-cultural harmony
 - 1.8 Preparation and Design of catalogue for Spirit of North East
 - 1.9 Publication of Books, Modules, CDs, etc.
- 2. Identification of areas/ cultural pockets for initiating new activities**
- 3. Identification of collaborators**
- 4. Identification of institutions and individuals who have done audiovisual documentation so that IGNCA can digitize such institutional (and individual) holdings and share products with them**

5. **Organizing capacity building workshops for the conservation of manuscripts, objects or any form of artifacts and also to access, learn and revive the traditional and indigenous methods of conservation**
6. **Explore further collaborative activities with the Government of the States of North East India to appreciate and develop culture as a constitutive element in development in consultation with officials and individuals**
7. **Discussion on MOUs**

It was unanimously decided to organize the event on Spirit of North East in a big way. It was agreed upon that it should be entirely different from other events generally organized by various institutions and agencies. The following lines of action were also discussed by the participants:

1. A multi-media presentation on exhibition of the rare and illustrated manuscripts; films by the people of North-east; ethnographic artifacts collected and acquired.
2. Textile of North East & its live presentation.
3. Various ethnic cuisines of North East India.
4. Spirit of women throughout indigenous, socio cultural lifestyle of North East region.
5. Shankari culture (the tradition initiated by Srimanta Sankardeva, a 16th century Vaisnava saint reformer of Assam) with special reference to Sattras of Assam including illustrated manuscripts.
6. Depiction of Buddhism of North East Region.
7. Rare books & manuscripts, films on North – East.
8. Traditional musical instruments of North East.
9. Performance of various priestly chanting and folk narratives.
10. Indigenous and dying sports and games
11. Bamboo based heritage and culture of North – East (including landscaping).
12. Workshop on customary laws, oral history, women issues, etc.

On August 8, 2008 the participants were asked to finalize and prioritize the projects to be undertaken in the financial year of 2008-09. A list of 83 proposals was discussed and

finally following proposals were tentatively approved by Member Secretary in consultation with the participants.

SN Name of Project

1. Spirit of North East at IGNCA, New Delhi from November 19-27, 2008
2. A 5-day workshop of the Folk and contemporary Artists of Tripura (Followed by an exhibition) at Agartalla.
3. Workshop-cum-Documentation of the Percussion and other Musical Instruments of Tripura
4. Documentation of the lifestyles and workshop on customary laws, oral history, rituals; documentation of Tani group of Tribes of East Siang, West Siang, Lower Subansiri, East Kameng and West Kameng districts of Arunachal Pradesh at Itanagar.
5. Translation and editing of the texts written in local or tribal languages
6. A 3-day seminar cum workshop on traditional cottage industry of bell metal; Indigenous stone cutters and engravers; and smoking pipes, hookah, ritual jars etc in Manipur (in collaboration with Manipur Central University)
7. Meet of traditional healers and Indigenous health practitioners of Sikkim
8. Workshop of Folk poets and bards of Sikkim.
Workshop and seminar on the ritual practices of the believers of Buddhism and the influence of local elements in the life and culture of the Buddhist of North East.
9. Preparation and publication of a Pictorial Galo-Nyishi-English Dictionary in Arunachal Pradesh.
10. Seminar on the significance of the *Mahabharata* in the life and culture of the people of Manipur (MS and JS suggested to prepare a literature survey on the work already done in this area by scholars and artists)
11. Documentation of the lifestyle and workshop on customary laws, oral history, rituals, etc of the Tribes of the Anjaw District, Arunachal Pradesh.
13. Research project on the Jewish Presence of Mizoram and surroundings: A Unique feature of multiracial mosaic of India. (By Dr. Pratibha Bhattacharya and Prof. D. K. Bhattacharya)
14. Workshop on Revisiting Colonial History by the IGNCA team

15. Seminar on Revisiting Colonial History at IGNCA in New Delhi (Under the Chairmanship of Prof. B. K. Roy Burman and in collaboration with Prof. Neeladri Bhattacharya of JNU) in January-February 2009.
16. Workshop on Women's Creativity and the role of women in the history and development of Mizoram.
17. Research and documentation of history, folklore and bio-cultural diversity of floating village of Manipur
18. Workshop, documentation and research on the folk and indigenous games of Manipur.
19. Traditional Musical instruments and their Sociological significance in the life and culture of Manipur
20. 7-day Commingle Art workshop and a 5-day exhibition of artwork in Imphal.
21. Seminar on significance of Khongjom war: Last war of Independence in 1891" with documentation and performance of oral narration of "*Khongjom Parva*"
22. Research, documentation and revival of dying form of Women's folk opera – Moirang Jati – the Teja Bai of Manipur
23. Research and documentation of the remembrance, oral history, cultural practice, festivals, rituals, community laws, root search of 35 indentured tea tribes of Assam and neighborhood states
24. Documentation and workshop on oral history, folklore, customary laws, rituals, dance forms, etc of tribes and communities of Middle Assam (Na-gong, Morigong, Darrang, Udalguri, Kamrup and Kamrup Metropolitan Districts)
25. Documentation and workshop on oral history, folklore, customary laws, rituals, dance forms, etc of tribes and communities of North Assam (Dhemaji, North Lakhimpur, Sonitpur districts)
26. Workshop and Documentation of the Folk and Indigenous games of Assam
27. Study of the mechanism and management of political and social structure of the Ahom Kingdoms to rule Assam in 600 years before the British.
28. Research and studies on vernacular housing structures of North East including Sikkim
29. Documentation of the lore, narratives and songs of 1857 in the Barak Valley of Assam

30. Conservation of Manuscripts in North East
31. Digitization of Manuscripts of North East
32. Visual and Audio-visual documentation of the protected and unprotected archaeological sites of North East including Sikkim
33. Study on the entrepreneurship development in Assam (By Prof. Abu Ahmed)
34. The Sociological Ramification of Asian Highway (Under the Chairmanship of Prof. A. C. Bhagabati)
35. Research, documentation and revival of the folk theatres (*Dhulia Bhawna, Kusanpala, Khulia Bhawna, Pala Bhawna, Hari-gaan, Dhura Bhawna, and Ankia Bhawna*) of Assam