



A SYMPOSIUM
CUM-WORKSHOP ON
'SIGNIFICANCE OF BAMBOO IN
SOCIO-CULTURAL
&
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
OF NORTH EAST INDIA'

पूर्वोत्तर भारत की वंश संस्कृति

A CELEBRATION
OF BAMBOO CULTURE

10TH - 16TH MARCH 2016





Report on

Significance of Bamboo in Socio-Cultural and Economic Development of North East India: A Celebration of Bamboo Culture

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**Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts
New Delhi**



Report on
National Symposium-cum-Workshop on ‘Significance of Bamboo in Socio-Cultural and Economic Development of North East India’, held in North Eastern Hill University, Shillong, Meghalaya

10th to 16th March 2016

The seven-day Symposium - cum - Workshop on Significance of Bamboo in Socio-Cultural and Economic Development of North East India, A Celebration of Bamboo Culture was organized by the Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts (IGNCA), New Delhi in collaboration with the Department of Cultural and Creative Studies, NEHU and Riti Academy of Visual Arts, Shillong. The Symposium – cum - Workshop drew an array of academicians and scholars from different parts of North East India.



Address by Mrs. Veena Joshi, Officiating Member Secretary, IGNCA during Inaugural Programme of Significance of Bamboo in Socio-Cultural and Economic Development of North East India: Celebration of Bamboo Culture



Thoh Shun: Marking of Auspicious Beginning



Release of Symposium Brochure



Book Release of Catalogue of Basketry by Prof. S.K. Srivastava, Vice Chancellor, NEHU

The first day witnessed the inauguration of the programme which was inaugurated by Prof. Sri Krishna Srivastava, Vice Chancellor, North Eastern Hill University (NEHU), Shillong. Smt Veena Joshi Officiating Member Secretary, IGNCA, New Delhi, graced the occasion as Guest of Honor who enlightened the gathering about the role played by IGNCA as a facilitator in the study of different folk cultures of India. The occasion also marked the release of a Basketry Catalogue by IGNCA along with the symposium brochure. Dr. Richa Negi, Coordinator, North East India programme, IGNCA gave a descriptive introduction to the entire programme encompassing the symposium on 'Significance of Bamboo in Socio-Cultural and Economic Development of North East India', exposition of art and craft, exhibition and cultural event as part of the programme. Prof. A K Das, Tagore Fellow, IGNCA, New Delhi attended the inaugural program as special guest and shared his experience of making the catalogue on IGNCA's collection of basketry objects acquired from different parts of North East India. Dr. Ramakar Pant, who was also present in the programme spoke at length about Janapada Sampada's research activities.



Introduction to the Programme by Project Director, North East India Programme IGNCA



Dr. Ramakar Pant, Introducing Janapada Sampada Division's Activities

The inaugural session was followed by the National Symposium on ‘Significance of Bamboo in Socio-Cultural and Economic Development of North East India’ which revolved around the following subthemes-



- Ecology, ethnography and scientific knowledge on bamboo and their various usages in human society. Ethno-botanical parameters of bamboo and its preservation, conservation and propagation.
- Ethnography (art and craft) and aesthetics connected to bamboo and its integrated expression in the regional cultural history.
- Significance of bamboo in socio-Cultural Development with special emphasis on material culture of tribal and non-tribal people.
- Folkloristic expressions (myths, legends, ballads, songs etc) on bamboo with emphasis on continuity of the bamboo culture in a changing human situation.
- Believes, practices, traditions associated with bamboo in different societies including totemism and taboo and its meaning.
- Socio-economic and technological parameters of bamboo and their problem and prospects in sustainable development (industry and commerce).

The inauguration programme was followed by first technical session chaired by Prof. Kharmawphlang, the Co-convener of the Symposium. First speaker of this session was Prof. S.K. Nanda, who presented a paper on ‘*Bamboo, Culture and Society: A Critical Exposition of their interrelationship in the Context of Development in Northeast India*’. He spoke about the concept of juxtaposing the bamboo and development in the socio-economic life of the people. He also emphasized on the semiotic aspect of bamboo which is embedded with several metaphors. He concluded by saying that the development of bamboo should be re-looked and the preservation of this plant is required as it is inextricably linked with the socio-economic dynamics of the North Eastern society.

Second speaker of the session was Dr. S. Simon John whose presentation was on ‘*Exploring the Symbolic Values and Practices of Bamboo among the Indigenous*



Communities of Arunachal Pradesh', where the main focus was on the semiotic role of the bamboo. Apart from being a cultural artifact, bamboo is associated with several myths, narratives, customs and beliefs.



Symposium in progress

The second technical session, chaired by Prof. A.K. Das, began with the presentation of Dr. Richa Negi, who came up with her topic beautifully entitled as '*Basketful of Stories: Field Reflections of Cultural Resource Materials of North East India*'. She spoke about bamboo's association with emotions and sentiments of the numerous North Eastern tribes and its indispensability in their daily lives. She shared her individual experience of collecting these artifacts on behalf of IGNCA and tried to create a soulful rendition of stories that are associated with each and every artifact that was collected from Arunachal Pradesh under her supervision.

The next speaker, Dr. Rembemo Odyuo, spoke on the topic entitled '*The Significance of Bamboo in Material Culture of the Naga Tribes*'. He highlighted the primary functions of bamboo among the Naga Tribes and through a display of several pictures; he tried to link bamboo with different anthropological, social, psychological, musical and historical aspects of the society. His study brilliantly portrayed the interactions between people and the manufactured objects.



The last speaker of this technical session was Aiban S. Mawkhroh, who is an architect by profession. He spoke on '*Constancy and Change: A Study of the Traditional and Colonial, Built forms of the Khasis*'. His main study was in relation to the Khasi community and the types of houses they make. His presentation focused on different types of Khasi households and how bamboo plays an integral part in it.

The second day of the symposium witnessed the presentations of nine speakers, divided into two technical sessions and chaired by Dr. Ramakar Pant. Some of the important presentations in these sessions were made by Dr. Homen Thangjam, who spoke on '*Narratives on Totem and Taboo in bamboo in Manipur*'. Through his paper, he tried to highlight the semiotic role of bamboo in terms of totems and taboo in the Manipuri society.

This was followed by Dr. Natalie Jo-Anne Diengdoh's presentation who spoke on '*U Shken U Siej: Bamboo in the Lives of the Khasis*'. Her presentation focused on the multi-dimensional role played by bamboo in a Khasi society.

Third day started with academic deliberations and discussions on presentations made by following presenters: Dr. Peacefully Kharkongor, spoke on '*Women and the Material Culture of Bamboo in Domestic and Economic Sphere*'. She explained about the significance of bamboo as material culture for the Khasi women, with particular emphasis on the War Syntein community residing in the northwest of Mawsynram.

She was followed by Prof. Bhagirathi Panda, who spoke on '*Economy of Bamboo in Northeast India and Sustainable Development*'. With a viewpoint of an economist, he projected several levels of sustainable development in North East.



He categorized sustainable development into four categories i.e. the economic, social, environmental and cultural dimensions.

This presentation was followed by a paper by Ms. Abantika Parashar, Project Assistant, North East Programme, IGNCA. She spoke on, '*Bamboo and its Cultural Manifestation: A Comparative Study of Mohoho, Bhotheli and Bahuwa Dance of Assam*'. She explained about the three dance festivals which are diminishing and adopting new techniques. These folk performances have gone through changes in the recent times, which have questioned their folk identity.

All the presentations generated interesting questions, comments and deliberations. The symposium was marked by quality research papers presented by academicians and researchers from different North Eastern states of India and concluded with a positive note by all for follow up on similar academic endeavors by IGNCA.

On this occasion, an exhibition of basketry from the archives of Janapada Sampada was also organized, which received positive responses from the visitors. The exhibition was inaugurated by Smt. Veena Joshi Officiating Member Secretary, IGNCA, New Delhi.



Basketry Exhibition by IGNCA: Dr. Richa Negi explaining to Former Chief Secretary, Govt. of Meghalaya



Display of Bamboo Art and Craft

The event was also marked by workshops on bamboo crafts and display of traditional food cuisine and culture. Indigenous artisans, who have been traditionally practicing the bamboo crafts, were invited for this workshop, which witnessed participation of people from different age groups and professions.



Craft Demonstration



Interaction with Artists and Participants



Cultural performances, which took place every evening from 10th to 16th February, 2016, was an important part of this event, which included story telling sessions, performances of folk songs dances, folk theatre etc, revolving around bamboo as a main theme. Artists from different parts of North East India performed traditional dances and songs like Chiru dance, Jabulo, Khasi and Karbi songs, Harvest dance, Phawar Beh Khiat, Pnar songs etc.; whereas theatrical performances presented enactments based on several folk myths like Ka Lei Dohkha (The Royal Mermaid), U Siej Khongpong (The Inverted Bamboo) and U Siej Kyntang (The Sacred Bamboo). The popular Khasi folk epic on Manik Raitong was also staged during this occasion.



Janapada Sampada Division's Publications on Display



Cultural Performances
Focusing on Bamboo
Culture of North East
India

