

Seminar Report: Philosophies

ICPR Sponsored National Level Seminar

Indigenous Philosophies of the Himalayan Communities

Organised by Salesian College Sonada and ICPR

**Date: 8 & 9 May 2009
Don Bosco School Malbasey**

REPORT

A two days national level seminar on Indigenous Philosophies of the Himalayan Communities was organized by Salesian College Sonada and Indian Council of Philosophical Research, New Delhi, on 8 and 9th May 2009 at Don Bosco School, Malbasey, West Sikkim. The seminar was sponsored by ICPR. Most of the participants and the resource persons arrived on 7th May 2009 and some of them arrived in the morning of 8th May 2009. The Registration began at 5 p.m. and a total of seventy participants (70) registered their names.

THE FIRST DAY (8th May 2009):

The Inaugural Session began at 10.00 am on 8th May 2009. The Chief Guest for the programme was his Lordship Bishop Stephen Lepcha, Bishop of Darjeeling. The programme began with words of welcome by Mr. Terence Mukhia, the secretary of the seminar. The Chief Guests and other special guests had a grand entry into the hall escorted by the school band and a group of scouts and guides. A welcome song followed by a prayer dance were presented by the students of Don Bosco Malbasey. Fr. T. V. George, the Rector and the Principal of Don Bosco Malbasey welcomed all the guest participants, resource persons and eminent guests with words and garlands on behalf of the host school, Don Bosco Malbasey. Fr. Tomy Augustine, the Rector of Salesian College Sonada, welcomed

all the participants and the resource persons on behalf of the organizing committee.

It was followed by the Lighting of the lamp by Rev. Bishop Stephen Lepcha, Prof. Mrinal Miri, Prof. G. Misra, Fr. T. V. George, Fr. Dr. Tomy Augustine and Fr. Dr. George Thadathil. After the lighting of the lamp Bishop Stephen Lepcha gave his message to all the participants and declared the seminar open.

The Inaugural Address of Dr. Mahendra P. Lama, the vice-chancellor of University of Sikkim was read out by his representative Shri P. V. Ravi, IAAS, Finance Officer, University of Sikkim.

The Keynote Address was delivered by Professor Mrinal Miri, Former Vice-Chancellor NEHU and Director of Indian Institute for Advanced Studies (IIAS).

Dr. G. Mishra, Member Secretary, ICPR, New Delhi addressed the gathering on behalf of ICPR, New Delhi. It was followed by a Bhutia Dance performed by the students of Don Bosco Malbasey.

Dr. Fr. George Thadathil, Convener of the seminar, too addressed the gathering and introduced the seminar. The programme ended at 12.30 p.m. with a song presented by the students of Don Bosco.

The First Session which was supposed to begin before lunch was postponed. All were requested to go for lunch.

The First Session began at 2 p.m. The session was chaired by Dr. Girish Sharma. Fr. George Plathottam, SDB, CBCI, New Delhi presented a paper entitled *One or Many: Pluralistic Identities vis-à-vis Enforced Uniformity*; Prof. Lalit Magotra, Resource Person, Jammu; Dr. Sashi Pathania, Dept of Philosophy, Dogri, Jammu Dogri presented a paper on *Dogra culture: Beliefs and Practices*, and Dr. Pranita Devi, Bajali College, Assam presented a paper on *Folk Ballad : Signifier of Social and Cultural Ethos of Dogras*. The session ended at 4 p.m. and all the participants went for a short break during which they had tea.

The Second Session began at 4.30 p.m. The session was chaired by Prof. Sujata Miri, resource person, ICPR. Fr. Thomas Vatthoth, SDB, Research Scholar, Arunachal presented a paper on *The Indigenous People of Arunachal Pradesh, with Special Reference to the Wanchos*; Dr. Xavier Mao, Dept. of Philosophy, NEHU presented a paper on *Freedom and Morality in Naga Society*; Shri Uday Gogoi, Research Scholar, Brahmaputra Valley Academy, North Lakhimpur presented a paper on *The Khamtis and their Religious Belief*; and Prof. Jogendranath, Researcher, Guwahati University presented a paper on Philosophy of Life among the *Tani Group of Tribes of Himalayas*. The session ended at 6.30 p.m. and all the participants went for supper. All the participants were given proper transportation facility to reach their places where they were supposed to spend the night. The accommodation was arranged beforehand by the host community in the houses of the local people.

THE SECOND DAY (9th May 2009)

The participants arrived at the seminar venue around 8.45 a.m. and had breakfast. Meantime a short video clipping of 20 minutes was shown.

The Third Session started at 10 a.m. Dr. Jogendranath chaired the session. Prof. Sujata Miri, Resource Person, ICPR; presented a paper on *Understanding Tribal Societies – An Illustrated Talk*. Dr. Pushpa Joseph, Dept of Christian Studies, Madras University presented a paper on *Using Indigenous Knowledge for Community Based Development*; Fr. Francis Vattoth, Loyala College presented a paper on *Impact of Missions Etrangeres de Paris on the Himalayan Communities of Pedong, Namchi, South Sikkim*; and Professor Girish Sharma, HOD, Department of Philosophy, Guwahati University presented a paper on *Sumi Nagas Concept of Man, Soul and Life after Death*. Tea was served as the session was going on. The session ended at 11.45 a.m.

A short cultural programme was performed by the students of the neighbouring schools viz. Chakong Government H. S. Shool, Timberbong Government H. S. School and Soreng Government Higher Secondary School.

The Fourth Session began at 12.15 p.m. The session was chaired by Dr. Pushpa Joseph, Associate professor, Department of Christian Studies, University of Madras. Ms. Alina Pradan, Dept. of Political Science, Govt. College, Darjeeling presented a paper on *Development of Ethnic Awareness Amongst the Lepchas of the Darjeeling*; Fr. Peter Lepcha, Researcher and Principal, St. George's H. S. School, Pedong presented a paper on *The Philosophy of the Lepcha Religion, A Critical Study*; Mr. Dennis Lepcha, assistant teacher, St. Robert's H. S. School, Darjeeling presented a paper on *Indigenous Lepchas – Philosophy of Life and World-View*; and Fr. Samuel Lepcha, Dept. of Philosophy, Morning Star College, Kolkata presented a paper on *Philosophising from the Indigenous Context of the Lepchas: with a Special Reference to Sakyu Rumfaat*. The session ended at 2.30 p.m. and all went for lunch.

The Fifth Session began at 3.15 p.m. Prof. Lalit Magotra chaired the session. Shri Terence Mukhia, Department of Philosophy, Salesian College Sonada presented a paper on *A Critical Outlook at Philosophy and Cultural Transitions of the Tamang Community*; Dr. Pratap Singh Rai, Researcher, Darjeeling presented a paper on *The Philosophy of the Thuturi Ved (Verbal Testimony of the Rais)*; and Fr. Dr. George Thadathil, Principal, Salesian College Sonada presented a paper on *Religion in Darjeeling*. The session ended at 5 p.m.

The Valedictory Session began at 5.05 p.m. The session was chaired by Prof. G. Mishra, Member Secretary, ICPR, New Delhi. Shri Terence Mukhia, Secretary, Seminar Committee presented a brief report about the two days national level seminar. Prof. N. Parthasarathy, NEHU, Shillong, who had participated in the seminar as the respondent gave his report. Prof. Mrinal Miri gave his observations regarding the seminar. Prof. G. Mishra spoke a few words on behalf of the ICPR, New Delhi. He was requested by the seminar organizing committee to give away the certificates and mementos. It was followed by the vote of thanks by Fr. T.L. Jose on behalf of the Seminar Committee, during which he thanked all the participants, resource persons, the host community, the staff and the students and all those who were instrumental in organizing this seminar. The session ended at 6.45 p.m.

Thus ended the 2 days National level seminar on the Indigenous Philosophies of the Himalayan Communities organised by Salesian College Sonada and ICPR, New Delhi.

Terence Mukhia (9th May 2009)
Secretary of the Seminar Committee