

# The St Stephen's Northeast Society

## 2021-22

Following are the events conducted by the St. Stephen's North-East Society during the academic year 2021-22:

### 1. Talks and Panel Discussions:

- *Tribal Rights and Women's Rights: Naga Women's Reservation*  
Speakers: Dr Rosemary Dzuvichu and Dr Theyiesinuo Keditu  
Date: 21 September 2021  
Platform: Google Meet

We held this talk to highlight how tribal rights and women's rights seem to be in a perennial conflict. The speakers explored how the male-headed tribal bodies have weaponized constitutional laws and special status powers to deny Naga women reservation in ULBs. Lastly, it was a good intellectual and political exercise to speculate what the future of Naga women's roles in the political realm will be. It was attended by many with all participating in it zealously.

- *Interrogating The Notion of Self, "Mind", and Personhood In Tangkhul Naga Tradition*  
Speaker: Yuimirin Kapai  
Date: 11 November 2021  
Platform: Google Meet

Prof. Kapai talked about the conceptual foundation of the self, mind, and personhood in the traditional worldview of the Tangkhul Nagas. In this talk, he also highlighted the social implications and cultural models that shaped these conceptualizations. In the Tangkhul Naga tradition, expressions associate thoughts and emotions with certain internal organs of the human body.

- *Representation Of The "Wild" Northeast In Bollywood Films and Mainland Media*  
Speakers: Amrapali Basumatary and Swikrita Dowerah  
Date: 22 January 2022  
Platform: Google Meet

The speakers talked about how in the Northeast Context, popular films like Dil Se, Tango Charlie, etc have painted very damaging pictures of the Northeast as being so "wild" and "barbaric" that it requires the intervention of the Indian state. While films like Mary Kom did a significant shift in Northeast representation by changing the discourse to proving

that the Northeast can be as patriotic and nationalist as the rest of India, it's far from being ideal.

Through this discussion, the speakers highlighted how the cultural politics of representation (via visual media) perpetuates stereotypes about the Northeast as being the "other".

- *Writing The Mizos' Memory Of The Aizawl Bombing*

Speaker: Hannah Lalhlanpuii

Date: 5 March 2022

Platform: Google Meet

This talk was about the book written by Hannah Lalhlanpuii, where she wrote a fictionalized account of the Aizawl Bombing 1966. Operation Jericho was launched by the Mizo National Front (MNF) on February 28, 1966, with the goal to throw out Indian forces stationed in Mizoram while simultaneously attacking Assam Rifles garrisons in Aizawl and Lunglei. The MNF declared independence from India the next day.

In response, the Indian Government deployed bombs to Aizawl on 5th March, 1966 and the strafing of Aizawl and other areas continued until March 13, 1966, despite the town's terrified civilian population fleeing to the hills. Aizawl was bombed by the very military which sworn to protect them. There was no warning, no time to hide or prepare. The horrors that entailed have been forgotten by the rest of India but they remain etched deeply in the minds of those who suffered.

- *Writing About Lives on the Edge: A Perspective on AFSPA in literature*

Speaker: Dr Veio Pou

Date: 5 March

Platform: Google Meet

This talk was held in light of renewed discussions around AFSPA and how it has been represented in the literature of the North-East. The event was moderated by Mr Naveen John Panicker and was followed by Dr Pou's talk and a question and answer session. Dr Pou highlighted how AFSPA continues to dictate the lives of many people in the North-East and what possibilities literature offers to engage with it.

## 2. **Melodies from The Margins**

This was a new cultural event introduced by the current council to highlight the talent of the students while also promoting the local music of the North-east through short covers posted on the Instagram handle of the society. This endeavor was ideated whilst keeping in mind the online mode of functioning, and covered all the eight states during the month of August of 2021. The short covers included vocalists and instrumentalists, with lyrics and translation for maximal accessibility. It was a success as the participants and the viewers were able to enjoy, and it also garnered attention from some of the original artists that were featured.

### 3. UNICOLOUR - The Annual Cultural Fest

The usual one-day event was turned into a two-day extravaganza held on the 18th and 19th of April, 2022. The event marks a time of celebrating the eight states of the Northeast region of India, and its various tribes and communities through cultural performances, plays, poetry, exhibition, cuisine, etc. The vision of UNICOLOUR was to educate participants and the viewers on the symbolism of the various cultural performances, which was satisfactorily done. However, the logistics also highlighted the difficulty in procuring certain attires and instruments and such which were local to the north-east due to the small number of owners along with the high risks involved in lending such valuable items. In all steps, the involved members had the opportunity to learn more about the North-east as well as the North-east community in Delhi.

- DAY 1

The first day of UNICOLOUR began with a play, written and performed by the students of the college, that touched on the incident of the Aizawl military bombing, and its victims. The college hall saw a good attendance, and marked the beginning of the festival which aims to highlight the history and culture of the north-east.

The second session was conducted in the ASLA and SCR Lawns. The ASLA Lawns was set up with a variety of stalls like Singju stall, fermented gooseberry juices stall, polaroid photo booth, a lucky draw booth, and an exhibition of handicrafts local to the north-east. Meanwhile in SCR Lawns, a line-up of poetry from Arunachal Pradesh, Inarpasual - an indigenous game from Mizoram, and Maring war dance along with traditional wrestling of Tenyimia style from Nagaland were staged for the students from within and outside the college.

- DAY 2

The second day of UNICOLOUR was conducted in the Mess Lawns, and kicked off with the President's note on remembering the historical realities and not just the colorful cultures of the north-east. After the felicitation of the staff advisor, the event began with the Poumai Naga dance from Manipur. It was followed by the Lepcha dance from Sikkim, the Khasi rock band performance from Meghalaya, Garia dance from Tripura, and Mising Gumraag performance from Assam. To conclude the event, the third year students performed the bamboo dance, in three different styles representing the Mizo, Chin, and Paite communities.

### Echoes of the Eight

Echoes of the eight is the society's annual musical event which, after a year's gap, was finally held on the 21st of February 2022. The aim of the event is to showcase various local music of the North East while also educating the participants and viewers by providing the interpretation behind each music. This year after much deliberation, it was decided to have an offline rendition of the performances. However, due to the ongoing covid pandemic and covid restrictions inside the campus, it was later decided to have an offline screening of the prerecorded performances in the college hall. The theme of this year's Echoes of the Eight was premised around the notion of "Resistance against human rights abuses in the region ". This decision was unanimously made in regards to the increasing military activity and involvement in the North East regions and the fateful incident that took place on 4th December, 2021 in the village of Oting, Mon, Nagaland. The performances covered all the eight states and were selected adhering to the theme. The participants and volunteers worked tirelessly day and night; recording audios, shooting videos, and editing the audios and videos while some were

also involved in creating Instagram posts highlighting the performances. The event saw a massive turnout and received an immense positive response from the audience. The event was concluded with a performance “No tears in heaven - Casting Crowns' ' by Yanshim Ella Ahaonao (B.Sc. Honour Mathematics - 2nd Year) and Catherine Lalmalsawmi (BA Honours English - 2nd Year).

The list of performances is elaborated as follows:

- **“Konyak Sup” - Nagaland**

Composed by EastStory Folks, the song is about the Konyak people mourning the death of their people. “Longing and missing home, the remembrance of them are the stones in the paths from home”. The project was supervised by Moachet Pongener (B.Sc. Honours Mathematics - 2nd Year).

- **“Ko Ri Baieid Jong Nga” - Meghalaya**

The song which translates to “O My Beloved Land” talks about how every person despite given circumstances, always finds their way back to their motherland. The project was supervised by Benedict B Chao (B.Sc. Honours Chemistry - 3rd Year).

- **“Dokbu” - Sikkim**

The song is in Lepcha Language with the message of protecting Motherland from outside forces. It’s all about cultural preservation, both geographically and socially. The project was supervised by Yozo Nuvocho (BA Honours English - 2nd Year).

- **“Jaduni Sumui” - Tripura**

The song poetically recounts how the Sumui’s lovely music captivates listeners to the point that they stop working and relax to the sound of the flute in peace, as if time has stood still. The song tells the story of how a woman loses concentration and stops weaving the Risha (a traditional cloth woven and worn by Tripuri Women) because she hears her beloved play the Sumui. The project was supervised by Aravind Ravi (B.Sc. Honours Chemistry - 2nd Year).

- **“Ronole Jau” - Assam**

The song describes the conversation of a martyr with his motherland as he awaits his ultimate sacrifice. He tells her not to search or shed a tear for him after he is gone as he willingly gave his life for the land that brought him up. The project was supervised by Anu Migom Panging (BA Honours Philosophy - 2nd Year).

- **“Tlawn Ve Lo Ropuiliani” - Mizoram**

The song tells the tale of Ropuiliani. After the death of her husband, Vandula Ropuiliani became the chieftainess of Denlung, which is located near Hnahthial in present-day Southern Mizoram. The project was supervised by Catherine Lalmalsawmi (BA Honours English - 2nd Year).

- **“Anyi Pingku Ngo” - Arunachal Pradesh**

The belief of Abo Tani as Father helps in unifying all the tribes of the land even if culture may differ. These folks and prayers are important basis for the existence of culture. The belief that all the tribes of Arunachal are descendants of Abo Tani has been emphasised in the song. The project was supervised by Vinolen John (BA Programme - 2nd Year).

- **”Sin In, Sem IN, Zun In” - Manipur**

The Paite song’s message is one of brotherhood. The Paites are one of the constituting tribes of the ZOMI/ZOs who inhabit India, Burma, and Bangladesh. The project was supervised by Yanshim Ella Ahaonao (B.Sc. Honours Mathematics - 2nd Year).

## Northeast Lunch

The Northeast Lunch was organised on the 30th of October 2021. It was attended by many who got to see a peek into what Northeast cuisine tastes like. The event was coordinated by Catherine Lalmalsawmi (2nd Year BA (Hons) English) and Schulu Duo (3rd Year BA (Hons) English).

## The Hills Are Alive (Blog)

It was envisioned under the presidency of Schulu Duo to create a platform in which various articles, informational pieces, book reviews, and opinion pieces from the students of the Society could be shared. It is headed by the Literary Department of the Society. Through this platform, the Society hopes to engage the North-East with a dialogue of many colours with other cultures, as well as allow for self-critique and critical reevaluation of its own ideas, principles, and inherited cultures.

## Orchid (Annual Journal)

The theme for this year’s journal is “Woven Identities”, where we aim to show the political processes involved in making the visual and material cultures of Northeast India. Orchid, the annual journal of the Society, is an enterprise undertaken by the Literary Department of the Society. It gives a platform for students to express their voices and their talent; it is headed by the Editor-in-Chief along with their team members. The journal team also features eminent academicians, office-bearers, and personalities hailing from the North-East.