

## A National Conference on Exploring the marriage and family experiences of Northeast India

Organised by

Department of Social Work,  
Assam Don Bosco University

&

Indian Council of Social Science Research (NERC)

Tapesia Gardens, Guwahati  
21<sup>st</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 2020

### **Introduction**

Family is a fundamental institution of human society. It is the starting point for human beings' nurturance, growth and development. It provides a platform for procreation and socialization of children, assigning of social roles and status to men, women and children, besides acting as a unit of economic cooperation and consumption. Family also endows human beings with spaces for intimate relationships, emotional security, rights and obligations, and support forged out of deep-seated human attributes, such as, 'love, attachment, loyalty, obligation, or guilt'.

Again, marriage is another primary social institution that comprises of a (recognized) union between two people, in which they are united sexually, cooperate economically, and may give birth to, adopt, or rear children. It is said to structure people's expectations, hopes and constraints around organised production and distribution of goods and people, set up alliances, coordinate division of labour by gender and age, and scheme out peoples' rights and obligations from sexual and social relations to inheritance of property. More recent scholarships suggest that marriage is a give and take relationship, providing space for love, intellectual respect, emotional connect and friendship.

Despite the universality of these institutions, there is much inconsonance and contradictions in terms of peoples' experiences in these spaces of intimate relationships: for some, marriage and families have been characterized by stable and loving relationships, while others experience conflict and bitterness, separations and reconfigurations. Yet again, there is much variance and complexity in these concepts when applied developmentally and cross-culturally to different situations and societies, and in different historical periods. While family and marriage institutions are of great importance, significantly large numbers of families across the world are left to suffer poverty, disability, abuse and divorce with remarkably little support. Also, demographic indicators in different nations of the world, especially the West, point to drastic changes, such as, postponement in the age of marriage, decline in the proportion of individuals who are likely to marry during their lifetime, increase in instability of marriages and divorce rates, widespread practice of cohabitation and same-sex marriages; leading some to term the present times as the era of *deinstitutionalisation* of these institutions.

## ***Family and marriage in northeast India***

North East India comprising of eight states, namely, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura, is not only a biodiversity hotspot, but also a home for over two hundred distinct ethnic groups, making it one of the most culturally diverse regions of the world.

In spite of its renowned geographical beauty, the region has been an unfortunate witness to complex and protracted socio-political conflicts, ecological disasters, infrastructural underdevelopment and socio-economic exclusion that have brought about far-reaching and adverse effects on all aspects of society; family and marriage not being exceptions in this count. Marriage and family, largely, continue to be areas within the purview of the respective socio-cultural and religious practices in the region, which brings into context the intersections, contradictions and grey areas that exist between the state's socio-legal provisions on the one hand, and the traditional-customary practices, on the other. Yet again, the large-scale socio-cultural changes in the value-systems, pertaining to marriage and family, brought about due to the processes of neoliberal economy have, by and large, remained unaccounted for. In this connection, the *lack* or *availability* of services and interventions in the context of family and marriage, too, has remained in the dark.

Presently, there is a dearth of documentation and research on the subjects of marriage and family, about its widespread variation and diversity as well as rapid change in patterns and characteristics owing to macro and micro socio-economic, political and natural changes as experienced in different communities across the region. Further, there is a scarcity of information pertaining to agencies and institutions that render service in this area: they work in isolation, thus, calling for strengthened coordination to improve the same.

### ***Broad objectives***

In this light, the unique lived experiences and ground realities of marriage and family of the north east India merit a just revisiting for purposeful examination and intervention. Within such a frame, it is proposed that we reflect and dwell upon—

- Theoretical and conceptual approaches to capture the experiences of family and marriage,
- Trajectory and trends of family and marriage as institutions in diverse settings, and among different groups and communities
- Appraising and capturing the unique intervention perspectives and practice models that would ensure improved services for marriages and families in need.

The conference also seeks to highlight key issues and reflect on interdisciplinary theories, practice, skills and values pertaining to studying, understanding and caring for families and marriages in the context of northeast India. It will be an opportune platform for academics, researchers, practitioners and care-givers to share and learn about theoretical and practical aspects of family and marriage as experienced in the region.

### ***Thematic areas***

In this regard, there will be deliberations on four broad and inter-related thematic areas underlying marriage and family in northeast India.

- **Theoretical meaning and conceptual variations of marriage and family as experienced in northeast India**
- **Marriage and family practices— socio-legal, economic, cultural and religious perspectives, and value-systems**
- **Processes and dynamics of marriage and family—gender, sex and sexualities, communication, power, conflict and intimate violence; family-life cycle, separation and divorce, and parenting**
- **Families and marriages in conflict situations and difficult circumstances, and related human services: assessment, prevention, promotion, education and intervention**

## **Outcome**

- Selected papers that meet the due requirements will be published in the “Journal of Development Practice (ISSN: 2394-0476)”
- Besides this, a platform would be created to establish a network of academics, researchers, practitioners and care-givers who are dealing with the concept, issues and practice of marriage and family for future collaborative research and work.

## **Call for papers**

Papers that deal with the abovementioned themes are invited. Please send your abstracts (300 words) by email along with your contact details (email, phone no, postal address) and current institutional affiliation to the following email ID: [victor.narzary@dbuniversity.ac.in](mailto:victor.narzary@dbuniversity.ac.in) or [riju.sharma@dbuniversity.ac.in](mailto:riju.sharma@dbuniversity.ac.in)

Details and updates also available at: <http://dbuniversity.ac.in>

## **Timeline**

- Last date for receiving abstracts: **30th of January 2020**
- Intimation regarding acceptance of abstract: **Within six days after the receipt of the abstract**
- Last date of submission of full paper: **15<sup>th</sup> of February 2020**

**Registration Fees** will be charged for the participants in the following manner:

- |   |            |
|---|------------|
| a. Students pursuing Master Degree studies        | Rs. 500/-  |
| b. Doctoral Research Scholars                     | Rs. 1000/- |
| c. Academicians, professional practitioners, etc. | Rs. 1500/- |

You may complete the registration process via our online payment

link: <https://www.payumoney.com/webfronts/#/index/NCEMFENI>

## **Hospitality and Travel**

The Organizing Committee will make arrangements, for those whose papers have been selected for presentation, modest lodging (for outstation participants) and food. Participants who are not presenting papers could also avail the accommodation facilities and food services at the university at their own expenses. Travel and other expenses will be borne by participants.

## **Contact persons**

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## About Assam Don Bosco University

The Assam Don Bosco University, set up by the world wide Don Bosco Society, was established as the first State University of Assam in the private sector by the Assam Don Bosco University Act on the 29th March 2008. The International Summer School on Human Rights: Frames and Agents for Social Development 2019 will be held on its main campus nestled in the serene Tapesia Gardens, spread over 270 acres of undulating hills, off NH 37, at Guwahati, Assam, India. The Assam Don Bosco University aims to mould intellectually competent, morally upright, socially committed and spiritually inspired persons at the service of India and the world, by imparting holistic and personalized education. It also has a mandate to be a center for culture, knowledge, research, intellectual ferment, for critical thinking, analysis and action on whatever shapes and impacts human life: a center that influences thinking, planning, policy-making and undertaking on vital aspects of social life such as culture, society, politics, governance, education, and healthcare.

## About ICSSR (NERC)

Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) was established in the year of 1969 by the Government of India to promote research in social sciences in the North East India Region. The Council is meant to:

- Review the progress of social science research and give advice to its users; Sponsor social science research programmes and projects and administer grants to institutions and individuals for research in social sciences; Institute and administer scholarships and fellowships for research in social sciences; Indicate areas in which social science research is to be promoted and adopt special measures for development of research in neglected or new areas;
- Give financial support to institutions, associations, and journals engaged in social science research; Arrange for technical training in research methodology and to provide guidance for research; Co-ordinate research activities and encourage programmes for interdisciplinary research; Develop and support centers for documentation services and supply of data;
- Organize, sponsor, and finance seminars, workshops and study groups; Undertake publication and assist publication of journals and books in social sciences;
- Advise the Government of India on all matters pertaining to social science research as may be referred to it from time to time; and take such measures generally as may be necessary from time to time to promote social science research and its utilization.

## How to reach the venue- Assam Don Bosco University

ADBU is approximately 20 km from the Guwahati Railway station, and around 20 km from the Inter State Bus Terminus, Guwahati. It is around 45 km from the Guwahati Airport. Bus-services are available from the Panbazar City Bus Stop (close to the Guwahati Railway Station). You may take a cab or an auto rickshaw, from any point in the city to reach our campus; in that case, please note that the catch word is “Don Bosco University, Tapesia, Sonapur, via Khanapara and Jorabat”. **Make sure that you mention it is NOT the Azara Campus of the University which is very close to the airport.** See map below:

