

Title: Know India's North-East

Speaker: Pankaj Saxena

Date: 26th and 27th Sep

Time: 10:00 am -- 1:30 pm on both the days

Venue: RM101

Talk 1: The Land and the People – How the North-East came to be

The talk series opens by tracing the geological history of the north-east of India, and discusses the geographical dimensions that make north-east special. It describes the history of migration of different communities in the area and also goes into the geo-political games that were played in and near the north-east by the various colonial powers and which set the region on the path that it is now.

Talk 2: Power, Identity and Religion – How British created Tribal Consciousness

The second talk traces the trajectories that started from the initiation of tea garden plantations and the discovery of coal and petroleum in the area. The colonial policies that originated from the exigencies of coal, oil and tea resulted in the policy of Inner Line permit which remains a major issue dividing the hill folks from the plains. The talk also discusses the process of identity creation and goes into the history of how tribal consciousness was invented and how Christianity molded the religious and the political and social history of the region locking the hill communities into a perpetual combat with each other. It also discusses the artificial binaries that the West keeps creating and perpetuating, leading to eternal faultlines in the north-east.

Talk 3: Missionary Harvest – How the Independent Indian State handled the North-East

This talk delves into the internal history of mainly Protestant churches of the United States of America which targeted the north-east of India in a determined push due to geo-political agendas which aligned with the goals of the Church. It also discusses the science of cartography and how it functions as a colonial conversion tool to achieve Western goals. It also explains how education, health and welfare were weaponized for colonial goals. In this talk, we will also discuss how the misguided Indian state after 1947 continued many colonial policies and how it led to the situation that the north-east is in now. It also discusses the pathways of correction if we want a better, more peaceful and more indigenous north-east in future.

Talk 4: The Sanātana Response – How the Hindu Society responded to the Crisis

The Hindu society and Sanātana Dharma did not just watch what was happening in the north-east silently. It chose to act and had been acting since ages on spreading the influence of Dharma and Indian Knowledge System (IKS) in the north-east. The final talk of the series discusses the history of Sanātana dharma in north-east and how contemporary social welfare organizations like Kalyan Ashrama worked post independence to fight the downward trends. It will conclude with a vision of the future of the north-east especially in the light of the Act East policy that the present government has implemented in the area.

Biography

Pankaj Saxena is an accomplished author and a well-known researcher dedicated to exploring the profound beauty of Sanātana Dharma through its history, art, literature, and living traditions. Driven by a deep interest in cultural anthropology, evolutionary biology, and ecology, he has field-mapped over 1,600 Hindu temples. He is the author of the highly acclaimed "Svayambodha and Shatrubodha" book. He is also the founder of Bodha, a think tank and research group, studying contemporary issues of cultural concern, to inform policy, education, and public thought with wisdom drawn from Hindu traditions. Currently, he also leads a critical research and documentation project focused on North-East India. His work explores the region's distinct tribal and dharmic cultures, and the matrices in which the region is caught due to geo-political struggles. Through detailed study, documentation, and wide dissemination, he aims to counter cultural alienation, preserve the regional cultural matrix of Bhārata, and secure its civilizational frontiers.