

## **Report on One-Day National Seminar**

### **Socio-Cultural Practices among the Buddhist Communities of the Himalayan Region and Nearby Areas**

**7 February 2026 | Kolkata**

The Institute of Social and Cultural Studies (ISCS), Kolkata, in collaboration with the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), organized a One-Day National Seminar on “Socio-Cultural Practices among the Buddhist Communities of the Himalayan Region and Nearby Areas” on 7 February 2026 in Kolkata. The seminar was conducted as part of the ongoing ICSSR-sponsored project titled “Integral Socio-cultural Practices among Buddhist Communities in Borderland Regions: A Study in Sikkim and Select Districts of Arunachal Pradesh and North Bengal.”

The primary aim of the seminar was to facilitate scholarship that highlights the integral socio-cultural practices of Buddhist communities in the context of contemporary challenges such as globalization, geopolitics, tourism, and cultural transformations in borderland regions.

The seminar commenced with a Welcome Address by Shri Arindam Mukherjee, Director, ISCS, Kolkata. In his remarks, he emphasized the importance of studying Buddhist socio-cultural practices in India’s borderland regions, underlining how these communities negotiate tradition and modernity amidst rapid socio-economic changes. He reiterated that such research is crucial for understanding cultural resilience and regional identity in sensitive geopolitical zones.

The Chief Guest, Prof. Vinay Kumar Rao (SCSNEI, Jawaharlal Nehru University), observed that Buddhism in India has not declined as often suggested in mainstream narratives. Instead, he argued that many Buddhist practices have fused with Hindu traditions, resulting in layered cultural continuities rather than disappearance. His address set the tone for rethinking the ‘decline’ thesis in Buddhist historiography.

The Keynote Address was delivered by Ven. Dr. Pooja Dabral, Assistant Professor, Department of Buddhist Studies, Philosophy and Comparative Religions, Nalanda University. She highlighted the philosophical depth and lived dimensions of Buddhist practices, especially in

Himalayan communities, and stressed their relevance in addressing ethical and ecological crises in contemporary times.

**Session I**, titled “Buddhism, its History and Contemporary Challenges: From Eastern and Northeastern India Perspectives,” was chaired by Prof. Vinay Kumar Rao. Prof. Projith Kumar Palit (Department of History, Assam University) discussed the historical trajectories of various Buddhist communities in Northeast India, with particular focus on Tripura. He traced their socio-political evolution. Dr. Jhumpa Mukherjee (Associate Professor and Head, Department of Political Science, St. Xavier’s College, Kolkata) examined the ethical and political values embedded in Buddhist thought, drawing parallels with social contract theories. Dr. Avienaash E. P, Research Assistant, ISCS-ICSSR, argued that Buddhist practices in borderland regions are deeply embedded in regional histories and the lived experiences of marginalized communities. He suggested the need for an alternative analytical framework to move beyond simplistic ‘decline and revival’ narratives of Buddhism.

**Session II**, on “Buddhism: Its Importance in Socio-Cultural Trends and Towards Sustainable Living,” was chaired by Dr. Sarup Prasad Ghosh, Director, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies (MAKAIAS), Kolkata. Shri Raj Basu, Advisor (Rural Tourism & Homestay), Government of Arunachal Pradesh, spoke about state initiatives promoting sustainable tourism rooted in local Buddhist cultural practices. Prof. Ujjwal Kumar (Department of Buddhist Studies, University of Calcutta) reflected on the Bodhi Tree as a symbolic and institutional centre of Buddhist thought, emphasizing sustainability as a core value. Dr. Ajanta Das, Research Associate, ISCS-ICSSR, presented on performance art, folklore (Tai-Khamti community) and Buddhist festivals to demonstrate how ritual practices embody principles of ecological balance and community participation and the deep mingling of Buddhism with the Buddhist community’s life and culture.

The seminar concluded with a Valedictory Address by Prof. Alok Kumar Ghosh, Former Head, Department of History, University of Kalyani, Kolkata. He offered a comprehensive overview of the deliberations and appreciated the interdisciplinary approach adopted by the seminar. He underscored the importance of sustained research on Buddhist communities in India’s Himalayan and borderland regions

