

Report—2022-2023



Current Affairs Forum

The Current Affairs Forum, St. Joseph's College, Darjeeling seeks to explore issues that are topical, contemporary and therefore relevant. The sporadic eruptions of movements and counter-movements are a phenomenon that marks the Eastern Himalayas. A critical engagement and understanding of such movement from within the community is important if the subaltern is to be allowed to speak.

For the subaltern to emerge as a voice, the Current Affairs Forum in collaboration with the Department of English organised a seminar titled *Popular Movements in the Eastern Himalayas: Representations and Contestations* on 9th of November, 2023. The speakers invited for the occasion were Dr. Bidhan Golay, Department of Political Science, Sikkim University and Dr. Satyadeep S. Chhetry, Nar Bahadur Bhandari Government College, Gangtok. The seminar focussed particularly on the movements in Darjeeling and the Dooars and the democratic movement in Sikkim that transformed a kingdom into a state of the Union. The seminar first highlighted the statist representation of both movements. The statist discourse equates the movements with violence, insurgency, and the problem of law and order and above all, the failure of development. Moving away from such statist representation, the speakers brought to focus a counter-discourse about the movement with the emergence of the native writers.

In the writings of Prajwal Parajuly, Chetan Raj Shrestha, Prerna Rai Dewan, Deepraj Rai, the Gorkhaland movements in the Darjeeling hills as well as the movement in Sikkim represent people's regional aspirations and are therefore democratic and emancipatory. In conclusion, the archive of writing found in English, translation and Nepali contests the governmental or the official narrative of the movement and gives a glimpse of a liberatory alternative.

The seminar saw an interactive and vibrant question-answer session. This confluence of counter-discourse and counter-hegemony saw the presence of students of English Honours from first year, second year and third year.

Furthermore, the Current Affairs Forum in collaboration with Scholars' Society organised a debate competition which was held between two clubs of St. Joseph's College – Accord and Scholars' Society – on November 5, 2022 in the Champion Hall. The motion was "**Brain Drain in India has more to do with ambition than with lack of opportunities**". Accord argued for



the motion and Scholars' Society argued against the motion. The debate proceeded in the following format:

SPEAKING FOR	SPEAKING AGAINST
Captain of FOR (5 mins)	Captain of AGAINST
Speaker 1 (4mins)	Speaker 1 (4mins)
Speaker 2 (4mins)	Speaker 2 (4mins)
Speaker 3 (4mins)	Speaker 3 (4mins)
Speaker 4 (4 mins)	Speaker 4 (4 mins)

- The captains of both teams will begin the debate with their initial submission. Time allotted to the captains are five minutes each.
- The four speakers from both teams will then present their cases consecutively for 4 mins each.
- After they present their cases there will be a break for eight minutes. After which there will be a rebuttal and a question-and-answer session. The time allotted to both teams for the rebuttal session will be four minutes each and two minutes for the question-and-answer session. The question-and-answer session is open to all speakers on the team.
- A moderator will be appointed to act as a neutral participant in the debate, hold participants to time limits and maintains the focus of the debate.
- Awards will be presented to the winning team as well as the best speaker.

The speakers were as follows:

Accord

1. Mirza (Captain)
2. Soham
3. Niharika
4. Muskaan
5. Pritika

Scholars' Society

1. Purav (Captain)
2. Siddhant
3. Ronald
4. Simontini
5. Nishtha



After several interesting points were brought up by both teams, the judges made their decision and Scholars' Society won by 300 points. Purav Pradhan was conferred the honour of being the Best Speaker. Certificates were distributed to all the participants and the winning team. The event came to an end with a small photo session.



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