Tiplut Nongbri will give a lecture on
"Deconstructing Masculinity: Matriliny, Fatherhood and Social Change"
on Monday, 11th February, 2013.
This lecture is being organized by Gender Studies/School of Human Studies in
CR- 10 between 2.00-4.00 pm.

Abstract
This lecture focuses on the construction of masculinity among the Khasi, a matrilineal tribe in
Northeast India. Set against the backdrop of the rising tide of the ‘men's lib' campaign (spearheaded
by some students and youth organizations) to liberate the male from ‘obscurity', a position attributed to
the matrilineal system, it seeks to closely examine men's position by looking into their identity through
their roles as brothers, fathers and husbands. Premised on the idea that gendered identities are a
product of culture, I rely heavily on indigenous categories and thought to make sense of men's roles
within the family and community at large. The discussion moves along different axes - beginning with a
critical examination of the image of the male caricatured in a poem in a little known but provocative
book, ‘Ka Main u Shynrang Khasi’ (The Personality of the Khasi Male) authored by a Khasi born
Roman Catholic priest, the paper proceeds to dissect the masculine identity as it is revealed in the
domain of language and everyday speech. This is followed by an analysis of men's place within the
matrilineal system in terms of their rights, roles and responsibilities. The discussion concludes by
looking at the current debate on matriliny, the forces of change and the attempt by a segment of men
to overthrow the system. The paper not only explodes the myth that matrilineal societies are
characterised by the domination of women but also brings to the fore the problems that men face
when confronted with the process of modernisation and change.

Professor Tiplut Nongbri is a Professor of Sociology, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Delhi. She
was also the Director, North East India Study Programme (NEISP), JNU. She has been working in the
area of the Sociology of Family and Kinship, Ethnicity, Tribes and Marginalized groups and Gender
issues. She has many articles and books to her credit. Some of her works are, Gender and the Khasi
Family Structure: Some implications of the Meghalaya Succession to Self-acquired Property Act,
1984"; "Khasi Women and Matriliny: Transformations in Gender Relations" in Gender, Technology and
Development; 'Ethnicity and Gender'; 'Family, Gender and Identity: A Comparative Study of Trans-
Himalayan Matrilineal Structures'.

Her books, Gender, Matriliny and Entrepreneurship, was published by, Zubaan in 2008. Development,
Ethnicity and Gender: Select Essays on Tribes in India, was published by Rawat Publications in 2003.