

National Seminar on
“Women Empowerment and Human Rights: special reference to North East”
18-19 May, 2018

Report

1. The two day National seminar was formally inaugurated on 18th may 2018, at 10:30 am with **Mrs. Jyotika Kalra**, Hon’ble Member, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India, as Chief Guest, Prof. Adya Prasad Pandey, Vice Chancellor, Manipur University as President and Shri Muni dev Singh Tyagi, Joint Director, NHRC as Guest of Honour.
2. Immediately after the welcome address delivered by Prof. N. Lokendra Singh, Director, Centre for Human Rights and Duties, Manipur University. Dr. S. K. Shukla, Assistant Director, NHRC gave a brief introductory note of the Seminar. Dr. Shukla, while highlighting the NHRC yearlong programme of creating Human Rights awareness in the country, stated that the current seminar is the 25th of the ongoing programme.
3. Hon’ble Member, National Human Rights Commission, Ms. Jyotika Kalra, while delivering her presidential address mentioned the significant contribution of the women from North East, to name a few; Ms. Urmila Chanam, who started global campaign for Changing the way women think and talk of menstruation, Nagaland entrepreneur Ms. Zubani Humtsoe, who was awarded with Nari Shakti Puruskar in 2016, Ms. Mamta Sakia, from Assam who has been honoured in the 100 Women Achievers of India 2015. She mentioned about Divorce & Inheritance of Property Act, 2014 in Mizoram, which liberated women from male dominated Mizo Customary laws.
4. Member Kalra also appreciated the evident rise in the female literacy in Assam to 67.27%, while Mizoram has achieved a rate of 89.4%. She mentioned that the practice of Purdah and dowry system are not existent in the North- East India, which is highly commendable. As per the data, female work participation in Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalalaya, Nagaland & Mizoram is almost 50%, which is a very vital aspect for the development of the region. She expressed concerns that although women are actively involved in work but the economy of the family still lies with the males.

5. Women in North- East have some specific problems; geographically, this area is land locked and is sharing international borders with Myanmar, China, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Nepal. These borders are generally open and unmanned. Due to this, women also become victim of insurgency and armed conflict on a regular basis. Due to corruption and poverty young girls are being exploited for trafficking; including global trafficking. As per National Family Health survey almost 60 % women are anaemic.

6. She quoted Ken Blanchard who said “None of us is as smart as all of us”, She called upon the women as a group to rise and work as a collective which will not only help their families but also the society and the nation on the whole.

7. She concluded by mentioning in manipuri maromdam lephaaraba noopidi leibakki chaokhat thourangda tang bang pee, which broadly means development of women would help in development of society.

8. In the presidential address Prof. Adya Prasad Pandey highlighted the programmes and initiatives that the government of India has been taking up for empowerment of women in the country.

9. Dr. M. D. S. Tyagi, Joint Director (Research), NHRC, in his address stated that the women empowerment is not happening in the country up to the desired level. He called for a radical shift of the focus on how empowerment should happen and how to draw road maps to achieve it. He stated that the status of women empowerment of North-East women is comparatively better than other parts of the country but the increasing rate of domestic violence in the region is a matter of concern. He also mentioned that whenever there is a conflicting situation or disturbance in any area, the women and children are the most vulnerable and sufferers. While concluding his speech, Dr. Tyagi said that women have to organize and mobilize their own women empowerment movement to reinforce their development.

10. Vote of Thanks was proposed by Shri U. N. Sarkar, Assistant Director, NHRC and the function came to an end with a National Anthem.

11. Altogether 27 paper were presented in 4 (four) academic session stretching over 2 days.

12. The first Academic Session was conducted on the theme” Violence against Women: Challenges before Law”. The session was chaired by Prof W. Nabakumar Singh, former

Dean, School of Human and Environmental Science, Manipur University with Dr. N. Pramod Singh, Associate professor, L.M.S Law College, Manipur as the moderator. Three important papers i.e. (1) *Historical aspects of women struggle in North East*, (2) *world of silence and women: Challenges before Law* and (3) *Legal Control of Female Foeticide in India – A case Study of implementation of PCPNDT Act, 1994 in India* were presented followed by detailed interaction with the delegates.

13. Ms. Hasina Kharbhih pointed out that North East has become a breeding ground of human trafficking and migrant issues. She further highlighted the importance of economic development of women along with effective intervention of the State for obtaining justice under the existing law. Dr. Y. Premanda Singh discussed the issues of female foeticide in North East India even though PNDT Act was passed by the legislature. Besides, Dr. Anuja S. while arguing the necessity of stronger implementation of domestic violence act pointed out the necessity of restorative justice system.

14. The Second session was also conducted on the first day itself on the theme “Development, Women’s rights & 21st Century”. The presentations followed by detailed interaction with the delegates were arranged in two groups comprising of six paper each. The first group was Chair by Prof. Priyankar Upadhyaya, Banaras Hindu University with Prof. Ksh. Bimola, Former Dean, School of Social Science, Manipur University as the moderator. Six academic papers i.e.(1) *Women struggle in Manipur*, (2) *Women struggle: with special reference to North East*, (3) *Problamatising Human Rights and Women’s rights*, (4) *Women empowerment and human rights with special reference to North east*, (5) *Women’s empowerment and sustainable development goals, an assessment with special reference to Manipur*, (6) *Human development & Rights of women: A study of North East India* were presented.

15. Prof. H. Subodani Devi pointed out that historically there were evidences of economic empowerment of women specially in the context of Manipur as the society was by and large egalitarian. This was clearly reflected in the First *Nupilal*(1904) and also in the Second *Nupilal* (1939) which where were essentially women’s struggle against the exploitative socio economic system imposed by the British colonial system (1891-1947). Dr. Joram Anaya Tana discussed on the issues and factors of women’s empowerment in north- east region particularly in Arunachal Pradesh. She Stated that NE women enjoy greater mobility and visibility than women of other parts of the country. Dr Kamei Samson and Sushmita Hoshi Nongmeikapam argued that the women in these regions are relatively disempowered and

enjoyed lower status than that the men of the region. They observed that the women would be empowered only when the equal access to education, health, employment and political participation are ensured. Besides, Dr. Jyotiraj Pathak and Dr. O. Ranjit Singh attempted to analyse the concept of Human Development and Womens Rights with special reference to women of Four North Eastern States of India i.e. Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Tripura by examining their respective state human development reports. However, Dr. Chinglen Maisnam argued that as the data reflects there are increasing trends of the crime against women in Manipur despite the outward image of empowerment.

16. The other group was Chaired by Prof. Ksh. Rajendra Singh, Head, Department of Sociology, Manipur University. Six paper were presented followed by detailed interaction with the delegates i.e. *(1) The role of Manipuri women in socio – economic and social political movement in Manipur, (2) Women empowerment through school education in Manipur, (3) The mairapaibi movement & women empowerment in Manipur: recent trends, (4) Role of Manipur women in protecting human rights and securities, (5) Violence against women: a scene of inequality, (6) Unequal burden and the Question of Human Rights: situating women in domestic and non-domestic work.*

17. In this session Dr. L.C Memi and Dr. Ng. Liklaileima Devi in the papers on the *MeiraPaibi (Night patrollers)* movement, highlighted that Empowerment is a process to end subordination and to empower means to give power or authority to act. The subordination of women is an end product of various social processes and institutional arrangement. Thus subordination is systematically arranged, sustained and perpetuated by different social arrangement on the basis of material, institutional and ideological factors. Dr. M. Gunamani discussed the social customs and social biases existing in our society which are making the women lead and inferior status in the society. He pointed out that Education is a major instrument for raising the status of women.

18. Dr. O. Jitendra Singh, Dr. Lilee and Mr. Khomram Surajfrenko Singh in their papers highlighted increasing trend of violence against women, particularly domestic violence in North-east in general and Manipur in Particular. It has been generally pointed out that violence against women is a manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of women's full advancement. They also pointed out that though both men and women face violence, an overwhelming majority of victims of sexual assault and domestic violence were women.

19. In the Second day of the Seminar the third academic session was conducted on the theme “Media and Women empowerment”. Altogether the following 12 (twelve) papers were presented followed by detailed discussion, (1) *Role of women, national unity & human rights*, (2) *Advertising world & women empowerment*, (3) *Role of media in women empowerment*, (4) *Empowering women through literacy programme with special reference to Manipur*, (5) *Women empowerment through judicial activism*, (6) *Empowerment of women through adult literacy programme*, (7) *Women empowerment & human rights in India*, (8) *Women rights, election and its relevance in Manipur*, (9) *India’s democracy: electoral process and women rights – the Manipur story*, (10) *Women empowerment in Manipur: Challenges & Issues*, (11) *Women empowerment & gender equality for sustainable development in Rongmei tribe in Manipur* and (12) *Role of Education in the empowerment of women in Manipur*. The said session were Chair by Prof. Arambam Lokendra Singh, Former Director, AVRC, Manipur University and moderated by Mr. Pradeep Phanjoubam, Editor, Imphal Free Press.

20. In this session Shri Snehashis Sur highlighted many issues on Commodification of Women in Advertising . He pointed out the following five trends i.e. (1) Portraying Women as an Object with Sex Appeal, (2) Portrayal of Women in Advertisement with fewer Clothes, (3) Use of Women in Advertisement of Men’s Products, (4) Advertisements of women with Fairness Creams and (5) Portrayal of Women as objects for increasing Self Esteem. Shri Nava J. Thakuria pointed out that the function of mass media is to open up the large masses in society to new information, new thoughts, new attitudes and new aspiration, which lead them to new achievement’s. He further argue that the mass media is the device that can spread the requisite knowledge and attitudes quickly and widely.

21. Besides, nine other papers related with the general issues of empowerment of women in Manipur were also presented followed by thorough discussion. Dr. Ch. Sonia Devi and Dr. Sharmila Thingbaijam highlighted that the education is the most significant instrument for changing women’s subjugated position in the society. Dr. S. Dilipkumar Singh also pointed out that the judicial activism also plays a proactive role for the empowerment of women. he further argue that sensitization programmes on issues relating to violation of women rights and its remedies not only increased the level of awareness among women but also gave positive impact on empowerment of women.

22. Dr. M. Suresh kumar Singh and Dr. Reena laitonjam highlighted that the equal participation of men and women in the electoral politics is a pre requisite for justice and democracy. Within the framework of a democratic polity, the Indian Laws, development

policies and plans etc. have targeted at women's advancement. They pointed out that until women become equal partners in the governance process, there will be gender discrimination.

23. Other papers highlighted different aspects of women empowerment i.e. relevance of 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act (1992), Women's reservation Bill in the State Legislative Assemblies and the Parliament etc. towards empowerment of women.

24. The two day National Seminar was formally concluded on 19th May, 2018 with Hon'ble Justice Shri N. Kotiswar Singh, High Court of Manipur, as Chief Guest and Prof. Adya Prasad Pandey, Vice Chancellor, Manipur University as the president.

25. The valedictory session starts with a welcome note of Dr. S. K. Shukla, Assistant Director, NHRC India, along with seminar report presented by Prof. N. Lokendra Singh, Dean, School of Social Science, Manipur University.

26. While giving the Chief Guest address Hon'ble Justice Shri N. Kotiswar Singh, High Court of Manipur dealt extensively on the concept of 'women', 'empowerment', 'Human Rights' and 'North East India' in the context of Indian Constitution.

27. He argued that Indian Constitution is a very comprehensive documents and most of the Indian Laws which cover practically almost every cardinal aspects of Indian Citizens and their life including birth and death are dealt by the Constitution. He also pointed out that the right of the Indian Citizen has been discussed right from the time and nature of its conception in the mother womb till his/her death. He gave the examples of legitimate or illegitimate child in the context of their rights over property and other customary practices.

28. Prof. Adya Prasad Pandey, Vice Chancellor, Manipur University address the presidential speech and highlighted the importance of such a National Seminar on Women Empowerment.

29. The session was concluded with a Vote of Thanks proposed by Dr. M. Sureshkumar, Manipur University.

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