

Summary Report
Two Days National Seminar on

‘Role of Women in Development of Tribal Society’
Jointly organized by HCC and Northeast Centre for Policy Dialogue, Agartala
On 1st and 2nd March 2019 at Holy cross college.

The Seminar note began with a brief but with an excellent exegesis on the theme of the Seminar by Dr. Sharmistha, Head of Department, Sociology, HCC and called for an active participation with a beautiful quotation from Benjamin Franklin

Tell me, and I forget
Teach me and I remember
Involve me and I learn

After welcoming and receiving all the participants, she wished a meaningful and successful seminar with a request to all the learned intellectuals to throw light on women empowerment for tribal development and to enlighten with diverse forms of knowledge and studies.

The seminar was graced by Prof. VL. Dharukar, Hon’ble Vice Chancellor of Tripura University as the Chief Guest of the Inaugural session.

Fr. Immanuel Kallarackal CSC, Principal of Holy Cross college as the Chief Patron and Fr. Benny CSC, Director, ASHA Holy Cross, Agartala, as the Guest of honour, and Prof. RanjuHasiniSahoo from Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Amarkantak, MP along with Dr. Sharmistha HoD, shared the dias with the Chief to grace the occasion.

Father Immanuel emphasized on educating a girl child for more quicker upliftment of tribal society on the idea of -if you educate a man, you educate an individual and if you educate a woman, you educate the whole family and nation. Father Benny also enlightened the august gathering with the danger of education without social justice which will do more harm than good.

It was followed by a powerful and mind blowing speech from the Vice Chancellor, Tripura University. He spoke in depth on the milieu and ethos of tribal life with special focus on tribal women linking to the slogan of Rabindranath Tagore’s ‘Return My Forest’ wherein lies all the rights and livelihood of the tribal people in general and women in particular. He sees Northeast India as a cultural connect and women as the reservoir of wisdom and knowledge, having the huge potential to become a superpower. Speaking elaborately on the theme of ‘Woman is Power’, he hoped that this seminar would bring a sea-change in the endeavor of women empowerment for tribal development in their own genius. Taking the opportunity, he also

pleaded with all the learned participants to bring the 'fire of knowledge' just as Prometheus bought down the fire from heaven according to Greek mythology and gave to all mankind.

Prof. RanjuHasini Sahoo as a key note speaker of the first day bombarded with gloomy statistics of the plight of tribal women and stressed on transforming the social democracy to economic democracy without which the whole concept of democracy that is followed in the country will be a catastrophic failure. With her insightful knowledge on women problems and the means for their empowerment model, she had enlightened all the participants and set tone for the seminar.

The seminar was a 'feast of ideas' in the circle of all the researchers and young dynamic scholars. A mega mind blowing thoughts and ideas came up from Prof. Goverdhaan Ram from Assam University who gave a special lecture for women empowerment. He enlightened the august members of the house with his clear cut concepts and research tools for studying women empowerment through roles and statuses. Seeing women as a bundle of multiple roles, they play in the society, we as a society fail to recognize their multiple roles. The failure to recognize their role is the reason for the lack of development in society. Their contributions are neglected as they their roles are mainly non economic household activities but without which not a single family can stand. He emphasized that economic basis should not be the only criteria for evaluating the value of a woman. He also suggested that rights, obligations, expectations, role performance and clear cut tools and concepts should be the frame to understand tribal women, based on their ecology, technology and social organization. He also noted that where authority lies, life is also organized accordingly based on patriarchy or matriarchy. He deeply lamented and empathy with all the women that they are supposed to get 'double honour' by the virtue of their involvement in the processes of 'production and reproduction' but are rather they are being exploited in double score within and without the family. The saddest part he observed was that women are being used to exploit other women in patriarchy type of authority and inheritance.

To rescue women from such disgrace for a progressive society, he gave the model for socio-economic technological transformation which will bring a sea change by empowerment through structural reformation.

On the following day, we are privileged to hear a power deliberation from Prof. Bipin Jojo, centre for social justice and governance, school of social work _Tata institute of social sciences on the technical aspect of liberating from the colonial mindset of tribe itself. If one wants to really to be empowered, we need to scratch from the colonial epitomical concept of tribe by changing its perspective location and coming up with alternative perspective. This frame of approach is required. He stressed that though we are free from colonial masters yet we not so still in colonial mindset and its hangover in the form of various educational practices, industrial infrastructures leading to re-colonization. So, who and how do one define identity is done by those has power, one who controls the state and the dominant ones. The shift in ownership of

resources was also highlighted leading to further marginalization and degradation of the weaker gender of the societies namely the women.

Apart from the special lectures and key note speakers, there were total of 21 papers presenters who were very dynamics in their approach and covered various aspects and contributed with forms of knowledge and studies, from across different parts of the country. The seminar also witnessed many emerging themes and new avenues of study including the Gender Role, Attitude and Resilience of tribal adults, comparing those psychological factors among females and males to better understand the general gender role attitudes in the both genders. Another equally interesting dimension of study was conducted and presented highlighting 'food security through women' in paddy cultivation and the correlation between land and landless women in terms of mutual economic benefit.

In addition to those, there was an interesting paper presented on 'CAPACITY BUILDING THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION AMONG THE TRIBAL STUDENTS' seeking the ways and means for poverty reduction, sustainable development and positive engagement in the global knowledge economy through investment in intellectual capital. The paper highlighted that girls face more resistance in having access to higher education due to sharing of responsibilities at family level. It also pointed out the exemplary cases of under-privileged tribal girls who are successful in empowering themselves by making use of higher education and training at Holy Cross College.

Another interesting dimension was also covered on the perceived 'stress and coping styles' of women living in rural and urban areas of Mizoram comparing on the basis of psychological variables.

Areas of Nutritional status of children comparing boys and girls from Anganwadi children in West Tripura was also covered with the objective of empowering malnourished girl child from the perspective of health and nutrition. Another dynamic paper was on 'Empowerment, Health, Nutrition and Tribal Women' underlining their food habits and their lifestyle is maintaining physical fitness and health. The paper also highlighted on various empowered status of tribal women and proposed some measurements to be taken for their educational up-gradation.

Besides, remarkable papers on women political empowerment were also presented. One interesting point that emerged was that women despite their unwillingness to take part in the political activity, they were simply compelled to join as there is women reservation. So a kind of

selection and election prevails among the women. Husbands or male members take advantage through them and the govern only in name.

Conflict between state law and customary law was also raised, highlighting how women became the victims of this conflict, as customary laws are not officially recognized by the state. There was also a commanding and interesting paper of how to see women from the perspective of eco-feminism and empowering women through water too. A 'law of imitation' in the light of Sanskritization, brahminization and westernization was also discussed.

The overall emerging theme from the two days seminar is –Women are the reservoirs of cultural heritage and by empowering them we empower ourselves. Then only our society can be on the track of progressing or positive society which August had talked about.



