

Awareness prog on gender inequality & customary laws in Arunachal Pradesh

November 20, 2016

ITANAGAR, Nov 19: An awareness programme on “gender inequality and customary laws in Arunachal Pradesh- a review” was organised by Arunachal Pradesh State Legal Services Authority (APSLSA) in association with Arunachal Pradesh State Commission for Women (APSCW) and Arunachal Pradesh Women’s Welfare Society at Banquet Hall. Itanagar on Saturday which was attended by various community based women’s organization as well branches of APWWS, Gaon Burahs and Buris, students and legal practitioners.

In his address, Justice Michael Zothankhuma said that customary laws were important in North East and there are laws to protect it but not all customs are customary laws and therefore cannot be given legal sanction. He further said that Mizoram has a law which was enacted few years ago allowing unmarried and divorced daughters to inherit parental property.

The member secretary of APSLSA Budi Habung said that women continued to be discriminated because of secondary status accorded to them due to religious and cultural practice. He further said that women tend to compromise with their rights because of various cultural issues. He said that despite all the women friendly laws and initiation by state, women continue to suffer discrimination in marriages, inheritance, succession and other rights. He further underscored the need for discussion of Uniform Civil Code while adding that many in Arunachal has no clue about it.

Women’s Right Activist Jarjum Ete said that women were not able to speak up for their own rights because of various societal and familial factors. She further said that many women were not aware of laws meant for them while adding that many were caught between Indian laws and customary rules.

She further said that there was a need to question the patriarchal practices. Ete said that traditional councils need to be strengthened. She also advocated for discussion on UCC.

Chairperson of the APSWC Mitali Tingkhatra said that rights were being deprived because of polygamy and customary practices were not women and child friendly, leading to further gender inequality. She said that customary rules in the state discriminate women and was a deterrent to gender justice as it only imposes fine and not punishment.

The president of the APWWS Dipti Bengia said that participation of women was necessary in decision making bodies. She further added that before framing of any law pertaining to welfare of women, they should be involved.

Dilip Mozumdar, senior advocate, Guwahati High Court said that to overcome gender inequality, there has to be change in attitude. Women are not getting enough chances, he said while adding that they must be part of the decision making bodies as well as fairly represented in village

council.

Dr Topi Basar, Associate Professor, National Law University, Assam said that customary laws were open to different interpretations and therefore, there is need to codify it. If there is a codified customary law in the state, women can claim their rights.

She further said that there was no clear picture yet on UCC but expressed the apprehension that dominant ideology may be imposed interfering with tribal cultural practices and traditional councils.