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SUB-DOMAIN: o. GENERAL TRACK

PANEL TITLE:

GENDER EQUALITY AND TRIBAL COMMUNITIES: MYTHS VRS REALITIES

CHAIR AND MODERATOR: PROF PADMAJA MISHRA

CONVENOR: DR SNIGDHARANI PANDA

DISCUSSANT: DR APARAJITA BISWAL

ABSTRACT

The Constitution of India has provisions for fundamental rights, which are considered as basic human rights of all citizens, irrespective of their gender, class, caste, creed, or religion. Right to equality is one amongst these. However, the customary practices in different communities, especially among some tribal communities occasionally comes in conflict with their constitutional rights. The tribal customary laws, not codified, continue, and sometimes facilitates inequality or discrimination. In this context, the gendered implications of the practices followed are critical to be examined and understood. Predominant assumption in the literature argues that tribal women enjoy greater equality and social status within their communities vis-à-vis their counterparts in non-tribal communities. But, at the same time, it is also observed that there is prevalence of strong patriarchy in many tribal communities ruled by headmen. There is no dearth of evidence of male leadership and governance along with ostracism, abuse, and assault against these women but neither documented enough nor acknowledged. Tribal women are further alienated because of challenges and complexities of life confronted by them because of fast pace of technological transformations. Tribal economic practices and the role, responsibility and rewards for men and women are changing continuously. In the process these women are likely to be the victims of the market economy and are likely to face greater exploitation. The popular perceptions and ground realities may be very different, having huge implications on the process of agency and empowerment of these women. This panel intends presentations from eminent researchers exploring the perceptions and realities on this issue and seeking appropriate policy interventions.

Keywords: Gender equality, tribal women, development, empowerment

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