

4th World Congress on Women's Mental Health

The International Association for Women's Mental Health was established in 2001, to improve women's mental health throughout the world. It is a non-profitable, non-governmental organization. The congress secretariat is in Madrid, Spain. Professor Anita Riecher-Rossler, (psychiatrist) MD is now the president of this congress. The 4th world congress was held in Madrid, Spain from 16 to 19th March, 2011.

Building on the success of the three previous congresses held in Berlin (2001), Washington (2004), and Melbourne (2008), this multidisciplinary Congress attracted psychiatrists, psychologists, mental health professionals, women's health providers, researchers, policy-makers and bureaucrats, academics, consumers and caregivers from across the globe. Thus all of them including social workers, nursing and community health care shared their knowledge on best practices and innovative developments to improve women's mental health. Almost 850 men and women from 68 countries from all continents except Antarctica were represented.

The mission of the International Association for Women's Mental Health is:

- To improve the mental health of women throughout the world,
- To expand the fund of knowledge about Women's Mental Health,
- To promotes gender-sensitive and autonomy-enhancing mental health services for women,
- To advance collaboration between Societies and Sections.

The selected area for research were – reproduction and women's mental health, etiology and prevention of medical illness in women, psychological aspects of medical illness in women, women and psychiatric disorder, women's mental health in special population, political and socio-cultural aspects of women's mental health, treatment issues for women with mental illness.

In details, it can be said the Congress' innovative program focused on the psychosocial, biological and clinical aspects of women's mental health from individual, family, community, society and global perspectives. Through a series of 17 keynote addresses, 52 symposia/workshops and over 300 posters, the programme explored the psychosocial, economic and cultural contexts of women's mental health as well as basic science aspects such as brain differences, hormonal or genetic influences. Clinicians and researchers of many disciplines contributed their knowledge on best practices and innovative developments to improve women's mental health across the lifespan. The keynote papers were presented by expert health professionals from India, Pakistan, Australia, Canada, USA, South America etc. Presenters from Muslim countries were also there such as from Saudi Arabia, UAE, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Bangladesh, etc.

Professor Unaiza Niaz, Director, the psychiatric clinic and stress research centre, Karachi, commented on women, in her paper titled, "Effects of war and insurgencies on women's mental health." She also mentioned some cases of violence against women in Pakistan. The paper titled "Perinatal mental health" was presented by Professor Prova S. Chandra, Professor of psychiatry and consultant, from Bangalore, India. She discussed women with new born babies with inadequate access to health care and their problems.

The paper, "Cult of the Body: A New Source of Mental Health Problems for Women of Latin America" was presented by Silvia Lucia Gaviria, MD, from Colombia. She mentioned how the obsession over physical appearance, was creating mental problems in some women of Latin America.

Professor Helen Herrman, MD (Melb), MBBS, FRANZCP, FPH, FAFPHM, Professor of Psychiatry, Orygen Youth Health Research Centre, (Centre for Youth Mental Health, The University of Melbourne, Director, World Health Organization Collaborating Centre in Mental Health, Melbourne, Secretary for Publications, World Psychiatric Association, Australia) presented a paper on "Preventing mental disorders in women exposed to trauma". She showed the connections between mental health and a healthy life that made the improvement of women's mental health a necessity for good health and community

development. She also wrote- In countries of all types poor mental health is associated with violence, social disadvantage, human rights abuses and poor health and productivity, as well as heightened risk of mental illnesses. Conversely, tackling important social and health problems such as violence at home, and maternal and child health requires interventions that focus on assertiveness and appropriate participation in communities, as well as empowering health workers to recognize problems and intervene effectively. Her paper highlighted the need for practical collaborations between health and non-health sectors in reducing women's exposure to violence and promoting mental health and psychosocial wellbeing.

Dr. Nasima Hasan said in her poster presentation that : Faith in God and prayer help pregnant women to cope with the mental and physical health concerns. Religion based health and health related messages are very effective to aware women of the various health concerns they face during pregnancy and delivery of the baby. Emphasis on the religious teachings and clarifications of the verses from the Quran and Hadith related to women's health may help reduce the discrimination women face in the society, especially the care and help they need as a mother. Other religious teachings can be used in the same way to improve women's health status.

During the congress sessions, social issues such as women's social roles, their upbringing and education, their relationships privately as well women's life cycle including childhood, adolescence, peripartum, menopause and aging – vital topics to understanding women's mental health were examined from interdisciplinary and multicultural perspectives. The main conclusions of the Congress were simple: women from a biological point of view are different than men, and worldwide they suffer from more discrimination and violence, which are risk factors for mental illness such as depression. Women, however, have a high resilience. Thus, although suffering differently, overall they do not suffer from mental disorders more often than men. Nevertheless, the higher rate of depression has to be taken very seriously as it has a high impact on society by influencing, for instance, health behaviour and economic performance of the whole family. Most importantly, it can adversely influence the development of children and therefore of the next

generation. Society, therefore, should take great endeavour to reduce discrimination and social disadvantages of women to ensure their mental well-being.

The President of the association Professor Anita said in a message, 'During the Madrid congress we had identified our main goal of our association for this two-year period until the next congress in Lima that is to fight violence against women. This goal has been focussed on by different activities in the mean time, such as a symposium on the rights of women psychiatric patients during the World Psychiatric Association Congress in Buenos Aires and it will be further focused on by the Committee on Policy and Ethics. Members of our association are in the process of preparing a book on "Violence against Women as a Risk Factor for Mental Health", which will be edited in the Karger series "Key Issues in Mental Health", and we are also planning symposia on the topic of violence against women during the European Congress for Social Psychiatry in July 2012 in Geneva.'

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Seminar on **Judiciary, Ethics and Justice Delivery in India**

Introduction

A two-day National Seminar titled 'Judiciary, Ethics and Justice Delivery in India' organized by the Institute of Objective Studies, New Delhi in collaboration with National Law University, Odisha, began on 21 January 2012. The occasion was graced by the august presence of Chief Guest Naveen Patnaik, the Chief Minister of Odisha, along with eminent persons like Justice Dipak Mishra of the Supreme Court of India (as the Chief Speaker) and Professor Mool Chand Sharma, former Vice-Chairman, University Grants Commission and presently Vice-Chancellor, Central University of Haryana (as the Guest of Eminence) in the inaugural session. Dr. Manzoor Alam, Chairman, Institute of Objective Studies, New Delhi gave his welcome speech in the seminar. This session was presided over by Justice Gopala Gowda, Chief Justice, High Court of Odisha and Chancellor, National Law University, Odisha.

Day I

Inaugural Session

In the inaugural session, Mr. Patnaik dwelt upon the importance of ethics governing in every aspect of life. Describing Mahatma Gandhi as the 'greatest lawyer the country ever produced', he referred to Gandhiji's remark that there should be 'no gap between truthfulness and law'. Thus there was a need to restore ethical values to India's judicial system. For that an individual should strive to lose himself/herself in something greater than himself/herself to become ethical. Stressing on the importance of ethics for a lawyer, he told the students of the university that lawyers of repute never compromised on ethics at any cost. He also stated that in order to become a great lawyer, one must have a thorough knowledge over the history of one's country.

Dr. Manzoor Alam welcomed all the participants and said that 'delay defeats justice' and therefore, our judicial system must be speedier.

Professor Dr. Mool Chand Sharma drew the attention of the gathering to a crisis that most institutions in the country were facing due to deterioration in the standards of democracy. He termed democracy as a

‘constant tension’ present in all aspects of life at all times. He also underlined the need for judges to have ‘compounded faculties of a historian, philosopher and prophet’.

Justice Dipak Mishra also deplored the dent visible in democracy today. He stressed the importance of an ‘ethical and independent judiciary’. He argued that ethics could never be static as it was an evolving, dynamic phenomenon. Personal values should never get in the way of collective values of judiciary and hence, personal values should not hamper decision making of a judge. He insisted that judicial ethics was the soul of justice.

Plenary Session of the First Day

Speaking on ‘Assessing the Performance of Judges: Search for Yardsticks’ in the Plenary Session of the first day Justice V.S. Malimath said that no matter how intelligent or productive judges former Chief Justice of Karnataka and Kerala High Courts and currently Chairman Karnataka Law Commission, and lawyers might be, everything would be inconsequential if they were not men of character and integrity. He raised an important question: Why is judicial administration concerned with quantitative performance assessment and not with qualitative assessment? According to him, it was not quite as important how many court cases were disposed of, as how effectively justice had been meted out. He raised issues like “What is the assurance that every judgment would deliver justice” and is justice whatever that comes from the highest courts.”

Business Sessions of the First Day

The first business session was Chaired by Justice D.P. Mahapatra, formerly Judge, Supreme Court of India and Chairman, Odisha Human Rights Commission and in the second session, the Chairperson was Prof (Dr.) Mool Chand Sharma. Both Mr. Das and Mr. Choudhury spoke about the importance of the mechanism of control and discipline by judges. Whereas Mr. Das felt the criteria for admission to the Bar must be more rigid and stressed the need for ‘disciplined lawyers under disciplined judges.’ Mr. Choudhury argued that a disciplined system would ensure adequate punishment for misconduct of judges which would help ensure proper accountability.

In both Business Sessions of the first day, the theme ‘Judicial Accountability: Practices and Perspectives’ was discussed by speakers Jayant Das, Senior Advocate, Supreme Court of India and President, Odisha High Court Bar Association and D.P. Choudhury, Director, Odisha Judicial Academy.

The first day of the seminar saw paper presentations by students and academicians from reputed institutions all across India like Christ College, Bangalore, most National Law Universities in the country and University of Petroleum and” Energy Studies, Dehradun.

Day II

Plenary Session of the Second Day

The second day’s plenary session, chaired by Professor Dr. P. Ishwara Bhat, Vice-Chancellor, National University of Juridical Sciences, Kolkata, featured Professor Dr. V. Vijay Kumar, Vice-Chancellor, Tamil Nadu Dr. Ambedkar Law University, Chennai, as Speaker.

Professor Vijay Kumar delivered a learned and erudite lecture on ‘Judicial Appointments: Structural and Functional Reforms.’ He prefaced it with, ‘The Indian Constitution happens to be the best-written and worst implemented Constitution.’ The functioning of state machinery had drifted from the written word, leading to miss-governance and malfunction in public life, he said.

The Constitution had made the judiciary ‘the last policeman’ who should never be slighted. Keeping in view the judges’ exalted position in view, the British and American system had fixed no retirement age for them. Now, a time had come when this last policeman had become someone beyond reproach. Even ‘impeachment’ moves ended up in failure. (Interestingly, in India it is not referred to as impeachment, but by a more neutral phrase, ‘the removal of judges.’)

‘Judges are protected by the Constitution,’ Professor Kumar said. Among the less pleasant aspects of appointment of judges of the Supreme Court was its ‘parochial’ nature in the sense that judges from all states of India must be represented at the apex court. Then, judges from all religious communities had also to be there at the Supreme Court. These considerations, Professor Kumar observed, detracted from merit. ‘How does it matter whether a judge is a Christian or a Muslim as long as he or

she is a good judge?’ he asked. In theory, as laid down by the Constitution, the Executive will have no role in the appointment of judges, while the fact remains that the Executive is involved all along in the process of appointment of judges of higher judiciary. The Ministry of Law, the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Prime Minister’s Office are crucial in such appointments. “The President of India, in consultation with the Chief Justice of India” is more clearly involved. Judicial independence is constrained by these and other related facts.

Professor Kumar said there were too many inadequacies in the process of the selection and appointment of judges that reflected in the quality and integrity of the judiciary. In India, because of the laxities, the sons, daughters, daughters-in-law, sons-in-law, nephews and nieces of judges, too, became judges. On the contrary, the US system was more strict. Another point that militated against the quality of High Court and Supreme Court judges was their low salary compared to good lawyers, who earned far more than the judges did. In his presidential address Professor Bhat summed up the remarks of Professor Kumar.

Business Session IV of the Second Day

The theme for Business Session IV, Chaired by B K Mohanty, former Advocate General of Odisha, was “Constitutional Morality: Ethics and Judicial Accountability.” The key speaker on this theme was Professor (Dr) PK Sarkar, Professor of Law at Utkal University and Chairman, PG Council, Utkal University.

Business Session V of the Second Day

The theme of this session, Chaired by Justice L. Mohapatra, Judge, High Court of Odisha, also was “Constitutional Morality: Ethics and Judicial Accountability.” The key-speaker was Professor (Dr.) V.D. Sebastian, Professor of Law, KIIT School of Law.

Business Session VI of the Second Day

The theme of this session, chaired by Professor (Dr.) Afzal Wani, Former Dean Faculty of Law, Indraprastha University and Member, Law Commission of India, was “Judicial Appointments: Structural and Functional Reforms.” The key-speaker was Professor Kumar Kartikeya,

Assistant Professor of Law, KIIT School of Law. Professor Kartikeya pointed out a series of flaws in the system and suggested corrections.

Valedictory Session

The valedictory address was delivered by Professor Dr. P. Ishwara Bhat, Vice-Chancellor, National University of Juridical Sciences, Kolkata.

The following were awarded during the two-day conference:

1. Professor MQ Khan (Former VC Behrampur University Orissa)
2. Ms. Farhat Amin
3. Syed Yusuf Iqbal, Chief Advisor, Muslim Youth Cultural Association
4. Ms. Meera Ghosh, Sr. Advocate
5. Mr. SBA Tanweer, Social Activist (Odisha Muslim Development Council, Coordinator, All India Backward & Minority Community Employees Federation)

The following resolutions were adopted at the end of the conference:

1. The Conference places on record its appreciation of the role which Indian Judiciary has played in preserving and protecting the civil liberties of poor and down-trodden sections of our society. The Conference places on record in particular commendable job done by the Indian Judiciary in expanding the ambit of Fundamental Rights particularly the 'Right to Life & Personal Liberty'. Similarly, the Seminar places on record its appreciation of Indian Judiciary in expanding the ambit of Article-12 so that the guarantees of Fundamental Rights become more widespread.
2. The Seminar also took note of sensitivity shown by the Indian Supreme Court as the Apex Constitutional Court of the country in initiating a process of good governance and accountability through implicitly reading 'Right to Information as part and parcel and Freedom of Speech & Expression' and also expanding and concretizing the rights of linguistic and religious minorities through landmark decisions.

3. The Seminar resolves that there is an urgent need for emphasizing Ethical Legal Education which should aim at inculcating ethical values in the law students who in future would become the proud members of Bench & Bar.
4. The Seminar also resolved that there is an urgent need for enhancing number of judges in the country and to attract the best talent in Judiciary, the Seminar resolves that the pay package of judges should be in the same proportion as it was in the original Constitution.
5. It was also unanimously resolved that in order to discharge the divine functions of justice delivery while the judges should not think of themselves as divine but at the same time the independence of the judges should be fully ensured and they must be protected from any kind of false and mischievous allegations.
6. It was also resolved that there is a need to do in depth research in developing various yardsticks to assess performance of judges. The yardsticks would differ on the basis of assessor such as the litigants, lawyers, the appellate Judges and above all the common man.
7. The Seminar also resolves that in the process of clearing the arrears of cases we should not over emphasize the disposal of cases as justice hurried would mean justice buried. It is also resolved that rather than emphasizing the quantity justice delivery, we should place more emphasis on the quality of our justice delivery system.
8. It is who resolved that justice delivery should not be confined to the Judiciary; we need to ensure justice at all levels of governance.

Md. Aftabuzzaman & Md. Mahfuzar Rahman
Assistant Directors of BIIT