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Editorial

Dear Readers,

It gives me immense pleasure to present yet another issue of the SU Chronicle.

I take this opportunity to congratulate Dr. Dhriti Roy, Asstt. Prof and In-charge, Dept. of Chinese on presenting a lecture on the scope of Chinese Language in Higher Education at Rhenock Govt. College on 12th of February.

This issue also highlights the orientation programme on Eco Tourism that was organised in Yangang as part of the Unnat Bharat Abhiyan of the Govt. of India.

On International Women's Day, 8th March 2020, a round table discussion was organised at Cauveri Hall on Women Empowerment. Eminent people from Sikkim were invited to be a part of the discussion on such an important issue.

I hope you enjoy reading and keep contributing articles for the SU Chronicle.

Kunjini Prakash Darnal

Scope of Chinese Language in Higher Education: Prospects and Opportunities- Dr. Dhriti Roy, Asstt. Prof. and In- Charge, Dept. of Chinese

(Invited Lecture at Government College, Rhenock, 12th of February, 2020)

As part of a lecture session on the occasion of a two week long Research Methodology workshop being conducted by Government College, Rhenock, Dr. Dhriti Roy, In-charge of the Department of Chinese was invited as a resource person to speak on the scope of Chinese Language in Higher Education on 12th of February, 2020. Principal of the College, Dr. Iyatta M. Upreti emphasised upon the need to look beyond conventional choices in the field of higher education in the present times and cited the growing significance of Chinese as a foreign language course, in her welcome address. Dr. Upreti encouraged students of all disciplines to step out of their comfort zone and attempt doing something new and innovative. Dr. Dhriti Roy began by reiterating the much acknowledged fact of China occupying a significant position in the current global political and economic arena as the second largest economy and the fastest growing major economy in the world. From innovation, efficient high end manufacturing to its emerging service sector, China's economic growth is scaling new heights. With the turn of the new millennium, China has also been seen to have strengthened its economic ties with most countries of the world and as of today, China stands out to be India's leading trade partner. It is estimated there are over fifty Chinese companies operating in India including Xiaomi, Oppo, ZTE, Huawei and twenty Indian companies serving in China, including Ashok Leyland, Essar, Tata Informations. The official working language of China or Mandarin as it is commonly known to all, has the highest number of speakers in the world and serves as the chief language of communication and correspondence during most of China's business and commercial transactions with the rest of the world. Given the scenario as it stands today, Dr. Roy explained that expertise in Chinese language is emerging as one of the most coveted skills in the global job market. Universities across the world, including those in the United States of America, United Kingdom, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Australia have been offering various short term and degree courses in Chinese Studies. Even many schools in these countries are offering Mandarin as a foreign language paper in their middle and high school curricula.

Taking stock of Chinese language courses in the Indian context, Dr. Roy mentioned that only six central universities in the country offer full-fledged degree courses in Chinese, namely Visva Bharati, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Banaras Hindu University, Central University of Gujarat, Central University of Jharkhand and Sikkim University, while Certificate, Diploma and Advanced Diploma courses are being offered by the University of Delhi, Tezpur University and EFLU. The Department of Chinese at Sikkim University is the only such centre in the whole of

contd. on page 2

In this issue:

- Editor's Note
- Scope of Chinese Language in Higher Education: Prospects and Opportunities
- Orientation Programme on Eco Tourism: Prospects and Issues
- Round Table Discussion on Women Empowerment: Issues and Perspectives

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contd. from page 1.

northeast of India which offers full degree courses in Chinese. Dr. Roy also shared with the audience a brief profile about the Department of Chinese which was founded in 2010 and at present runs a three year Bachelors programme, a two year Masters programme and a five year Ph. D programme in Chinese. The chief driving force behind promoting this language course at Sikkim University, she said, is the diverse and vast range of employment opportunities that Chinese language offers to students both at the undergraduate and post graduate levels. Apart from offering expertise in translation and interpretation, the Masters programme in Chinese at Sikkim University also equips students with much needed skill for high end research in Sinology and Sinological Studies, and trains them for UGC NET examination for lectureship. A wide range of scholarships are also available from the governments of India and China, including MHRD Scholarship, Chinese Government Scholarship, MOFCOM scholarship, Confucius Institute Scholarship and so forth, and there are already seven students from the Department of Chinese who have been granted one of the above scholarships for either high end language training or Masters programme in reputed universities across China. Dr. Roy also informed everyone that in view of inviting interested language learners from diverse disciplines and age groups, Sikkim University has already envisioned of a six month long Certificate course to benefit learners from the field of Management, Commerce, Tourism, Hospitality Management, Computer Applications, Software Information Technology as also researchers from the discipline of Sociology, History, International Relations, Political Sciences, Languages and Literature as a value addition to their curriculum vitae. The response received from students and faculty members at Government College, Rhenock was overwhelming. On that positive note, Dr. Roy hopes that Sikkim University would in the very near future be having a rich, diverse classroom of young and old enterprising individuals ready to say “Ni Hao” (Hello in Chinese).

Orientation Programme on Eco Tourism: Prospects and Issues

The Unnat Bharat Abhiyan Cell of Sikkim University organised a one day orientation programme on Eco Tourism: Prospects and Issues for young stakeholders of adopted villages of Yangang Rangang Gram Panchayat, South Sikkim. The programme was held at Gram Prashan Kendra of Yangang Rangang Gram Panchayat Unit, South Sikkim on 7th March, 2020. As participation of Sikkim University in rural reconstruction under UBA, the orientation programme aimed at motivating the youths of five adopted villages in Eco Tourism as a strategy to alternate rural livelihood for the youths in Yangang.

The programme began with the welcoming of Sikkim University team and external resource persons by the Panchayat President Mr. D.K. Rai followed by a brief introduction about the objectives of the orientation programme from the UBA Cell of Sikkim University. Three sessions of the orientation programme was conducted from 11.30am to 4.30pm by the external resource person Mr. Renzino Lepcha, Chief Operating Officer of Mevedir (Organic Ensured) and Dr. Bhoj Acharya of Sikkim University. Mr. Lepcha spoke extensively on various dynamics of Eco Tourism and its prospects in Yangang.

The UBA Cell of Sikkim University was represented by Dr. Sandhya Thapa, the UBA Co-ordinator, Dr. Bhoj Acharya (Department of Zoology) and Dr. Santosh Kumar (Department of Music) along with 31 students from four department of Sikkim University; Sociology, Music, Zoology and Tourism. The programme was attended by the Panchayat members, officials of Yangang, youths of adopted villages as well as by the students of Sikkim University.



Round Table Discussion on Women Empowerment: Issues and Perspectives

As per the directives received from the Ministry of Women and Child Development and the UGC, Sikkim University organised a round table discussion on women Empowerment: Issues and Perspectives to celebrate International Women's Day on 8th March 2020 at the Cauveri Hall of the University. The coordinator of the programme Dr. Rosy Chamling welcomed and felicitated all dignitaries and guests on the occasion. Keeping in line with the theme of this year's International Women's Day "I am gender equality", the inaugural session commenced with the welcome address delivered by the Registrar Sh. T.K. Kaul. While welcoming and thanking everyone for their presence, Sh. T.K. Kaul mentioned the occasion to be a celebration of one half of human kind and stressed upon the fact that 8th of March has always been celebrated at Sikkim University. While celebrating the cause of the day he also emphasised upon the need to harbour mutual respect by all members of society, both in the family and at the workplace.

Professor Sanchari Mukherjee from the University of North Bengal delivered the keynote address. Professor Mukherjee began her lecture by providing the historical context which has granted significance to both the event and the date, the 8th of March, touching upon topics related to the protest march by fifteen thousand American women workers who were the first to raise their voices against long hours of work, low pay and lack of voting rights for women in New York city way back in 1909, and also the protest movement launched by Russian women textile workers on the 8th of March (23rd of February in the Russian calendar) in the year 1917 at the then Russian capital of Petrograd which later resulted in Tsar Nicholas II abdicating the throne and women winning over their rights to vote. Professor Mukherjee pointed out that the year 2020 was critical in the sense that it was meant for assessing the progress that had so far been made in the field of women's rights. She categorically laid out the fundamental issues of concern that still hinder the implementation of equal rights for women; these being chiefly poverty, armed conflict, and sexual assault and harassment. Professor Mukherjee also underscored the fact that since the past few years, women's rights have started to be viewed within the larger domain and context of human rights, and therefore measures are being taken to help women and children fight their ways out through the deplorable conditions that they are in. The need of the hour then is to challenge gender norms, embrace all, irrespective of their gender orientations, and mobilize everyone for contributing in their own capacity towards forming a more equal society in all respects. In her view, such changes could only be brought about by taking small concrete and positive steps in the right direction.

The second session had a round-table discussion arranged with distinguished speakers from various fields and professions within the state of Sikkim, including Dr. Doma Bhutia, Additional Advocate General, Government of Sikkim, Mr. Anil Raj Rai, Special Secretary and Mission Director, Swacch Bharat Abhiyan, Government of Sikkim, Mr. Pema Wangchuk, Consultant Editor, Summit Times, Mrs. Usha Lachungpa, Retd. Principal Research Officer, Forest Environment and Wildlife Department, Government of Sikkim, Ms. Ongmu Bhutia, Superintendent of Police (CID), Government of Sikkim, Dr. Iyattya Uprety, Principal, Rhenock Government College of Sikkim and Dr. Swati Akshay Sachdeva, Presiding Officer of the Internal Complaints Committee, Sikkim University. Dr. Rosy Chamling, Coordinator of the programme and the moderator of the round table discussion introduced all the speakers to the audience, highlighting their forte in their specific fields. Dr. Doma Bhutia, the first woman Additional Advocate General of the State of Sikkim encouraged all members of civil society to challenge gender biases and prejudices, while emphasizing upon the fact that creating social awareness was not sufficient for promoting the rights of women, but this needed to be accompanied by concrete structural changes in the hierarchical working system. She also reiterated that owing to biological differences between men and women, it was also necessary to address and provide for the biological needs of women at all possible sectors of social engagement. The second speaker, Mr. Anil Raj Rai while addressing the audience broke the social taboo by speaking on menstrual hygiene, a topic of immense significance owing to its close association with women's health and well-being. Stressing upon the fact that women are capable of procreation, he highlighted the importance of preserving their health and maintaining hygiene. He advised all members of society to consciously focus on the concept of minimalism and switch over to the use of eco-friendly products. The third speaker of the day, Mr. Pema Wangchuk in his address underlined the fact that although the status of women and the state of women's rights in Sikkim was commendable in comparison to other regions in the country, yet there still exist certain gaps and lacunae in the social and political space within the state which need to be addressed.

The fourth speaker, Mrs. Usha Lachungpa shared her experiences of working and researching as a natural biologist amidst subtle forces of gender discrimination. In her opinion, societal constructs are largely responsible in creating inhibitions in the minds of young, talented and capable women in society and that a constant feeding in of fears of all kinds further lead to nurturing of ideas of incompetence and inadequacy in their minds.

contd. from page 3.

Having served as the principal research officer of forest environment and wild life department, an area of study rarely taken up by women in the country, Mrs. Lachungpa also pointed out that women possess an inherent quality of conservation and preservation as they are mothers in this world. Ms. Ongmu Bhutia, the fifth invited speaker shared her thoughts about gender disparity, having witnessed it from close range during her career as Special Superintendent of Police, a profession mostly dominated by men. In her address to the audience she said that it was necessary to sensitize all responsible members of society towards issues of equal rights for all human beings, transcending the clichés of gender constructs. However, she did raise her concern about the existing gender biases in society by sharing some general perceptions about female co-workers amongst her colleagues and friends; that women's achievements are rarely acknowledged and even if they are in some cases, they are hardly attributed to their talent, that their hard work mostly goes unnoticed, that their presence is found lacking in top level organizational structures, and that they are often denied access to information in fear of breaching confidentiality ethics. Dr. Iyatta Uprety, the sixth speaker of the day began her speech by stating that women can raise families and also build institutions. She called upon all young women in society to work with conviction and contribute towards society and nation building. She believes that rather than competing with one another, it is time that men and women cooperate with each other, support each other, and work together with dignity, love and compassion. As a sociologist, the seventh speaker, Dr. Swati Akshay Sachdeva put forth alternative narratives which challenge certain facts, figures and statistics that appear on paper. Despite the state of Sikkim having one of the best gender index in the country, despite a commendable presence of women in the education and government sector, and with hardly any reported cases of female infanticide, she flagged certain issues related to domestic violence and gender discrimination in the state which she argued, reflects the gender biased mindset of the people in society.

Contemplating on what all other speakers had said, Shri T. K. Kaul, Registrar, Sikkim University shared his viewpoint as the last speaker of the day. Shri Kaul underscored the fact that men and women, both within the familial and societal structures are like the two wheels of the cart, and therefore only proper coordination and cooperation amongst them can lead to a balanced and productive life together. He opined that it is time now that we addressed the gap that exists in the sphere of gender equality, that we treat each other with respect and dignity, and we support each other through thick and thin. Shri Kaul also emphasized upon the fact that change in people's mindset needs to be closely accompanied with change in the structural set up, that both these changes need to go hand in hand, without which the objective of gender equality cannot be achieved in the true sense. After the discussion and sharing of experiences, the floor was open to questions from the audience which was both interesting and engaging.

