

PANEL DISCUSSION

Sat, Jan 7, 2017

3-5 p.m

Women run societies and what can we learn from them?

Kerala has a matriarchal society and is one of the five other places in the world that practices this form of society. The term matriarchy can be used to define woman- or mother-centered societies that are based on maternal values and principles, like nurturing and care taking. Matriarchies can be found at the social, economical, political, spiritual and cultural level.

The idea of matriarchy has served to inspire a whole series of legends and myths, experiments in alternative lifestyles, feminist spirituality, and woman-centered collective. In woman run societies far greater emphasis is placed on communal participation than in societies run by men, which tend to be more hegemonic. But Kerala now is surrounded with states that have a strong culture of patriarchy, resulting in the fading of matrilineal families.

The panel will explore about the importance of matriarchies and imagined utopias of women run societies, as existed at some time in the distant past or could be re-created in a possible future, and how the definitions of gendered power themselves might have shifted in relation to varying social and historical contexts.

MODERATOR

Radhika Rajashekar, Lawyer, Raj Associates, Kochi

PANELISTS

Shailaja Menon, Head of the Department of Management, Chinmaya Vidyapeet College

Dr. Mridul Eapen, Member, Kerala State Planning Board, Trivandrum

Radhika Rajashekar is a Criminal Lawyer at Raj Associates. She has been practicing law for the last sixteen years which includes a four year stint as a prosecutor of the CBI.

Dr. Shailaja Menon, currently Head of Dept, Chinmaya Vidyapeet College, Ernakulam. She has written several articles on a wide range of topics - NLP Education in college Classrooms, Women Empowerment, Human Rights and Security perceptions, etc., out of which one has been published in "India's Foreign Policy", a book on Indian foreign policy. Articles have been published in journals including one on Women and Human Rights. Committee member of Women's Forum, Kerala Management Association, was a UGC Fellow. Ms. Menon is Nair, who feels that matriarchy and matrilineal systems represented a progressive form of social order.

Dr. Mridul Eapen is currently Member, Kerala State Planning Board, focusing on making State Plans and Budgets more sensitive to gender. In her long innings with the academia in the Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum, she worked on Rural Development, Employment and Gender Studies. Her major work in Gender studies (jointly) was titled Family Structure, Women's Education and Work: Re-examining the High Status of Women in Kerala. During 2013-15, she was a Member of the High Level Committee on the Status of Women in India, constituted by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India.