

Conference Report: National Seminar on Constitution, Democracy, and Social Justice

The Department of Political Science, St. Gregorios College, Kottarakara, in association with the Institute of Parliamentary Affairs, Government of Kerala, successfully hosted a two-day national seminar on Constitution, Democracy, and Social Justice on 9-10 January, 2025. The seminar featured 22 paper presentations across eight sessions, including the inaugural ceremony and the valedictory session.

The seminar was inaugurated by Ms. Shiny George, Secretary, Kerala State Commission for Protection of Child Rights. In her inaugural address, she emphasized the significance of democracy and social justice in human life, highlighting the importance of a constitution that ensures both democracy and justice. The Inaugural session was presided over by Dr. Sumi Alex, Principal of the college. Fr. Baby Thomas, Manager, delivered the Manager's Address. Dr. Ronie Thomas, District Coordinator of the Institute of Parliamentary Affairs, offered the felicitations. Mrs. Sreelakshmi Jayan, Head of the Department, extended a warm welcome to the gathering. Dr. Jeffin Thomas Mammen, Seminar Coordinator, proposed the vote of thanks.

Dr. Raju Narayana Swamy IAS, Principal Secretary to the Department of Parliamentary Affairs, Kerala, emphasized the significance of the constitution and the need for young minds to adopt a spirit of constitutionalism and democratic outlook in his keynote address. As a renowned anticorruption crusader and whistleblower, Dr. Swamy has been recognized for his steadfast commitment to upholding the law and promoting transparency.

Technical Sessions

The seminar comprised six technical sessions, each focusing on different aspects of democracy, constitution, and social justice.

1) Democracy, Constitution, and Justice: Realities, Experiences, and Challenges: This session, chaired by Ronie Thomas, discussed the gap between constitutional principles and democratic realities, particularly concerning gender justice.

2) Different Dimensions of Social Justice: Chaired by Dr. Siji Rachel George, this session featured four presentations on topics ranging from child-friendly local governance in Kerala to social inclusion and participatory democracy.

3) At the Digital Theatre, an online session was held for national delegates, making the seminar truly national in scope. The session, chaired by Mr. Renoj N.K., featured presentations by Dr. Linesh V.V. (Associate Professor of Political Science, Shri Ram College of Commerce, New Delhi) and Dr. Balu Sunil Raj (Assistant Professor, NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad). Dr. Linesh highlighted the challenges faced by the socialist principles enshrined in the Constitution in the post-liberalization era, with globalization creating contradictions that hinder the realization of these aspirations. Dr. Balu, along with Dr. Sarath, presented a paper titled Non-Brahminical Contestations and the Sabarimala Protests: Some Exploratory Remarks.

4) Social Justice and Democracy: Realities: This session, chaired by Dr. Leni V., covered diverse issues, including food security and the empowerment of women through the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM).

5) Federalism: Dimensions and Issues: Chaired by Dr. Anish K, this session discussed the implications of policies like One Nation, One Election on the federal framework and the role of GST in the ongoing tussle between state and central governments.

6) Challenges to Indian Pluralism: The final session, chaired by Dr. Jeffin Thomas Mammen, focused on the subjugation of religious minorities, the experiences of Nagaland with plurality, and the struggle for recognition of gender-sexual minorities in India.