

[1] The Sikkim State Legal Services Authority organized a Sensitization Programme under *NALSA (Legal Services to the Mentally Ill and Mentally Disabled Persons) Scheme, 201*, chaired by Hon'ble Shri Justice Vijai Kumar Bist, Chief Justice, High Court of Sikkim and Patron-in-Chief, Sikkim SLSA as *Chief Guest* with Hon'ble Mrs. Justice Meenakshi Madan Rai, Hon'ble Executive Chairperson, Sikkim SLSA and Hon'ble Mr. Justice Bhaskar Raj Pradhan, Judge, High Court of Sikkim as *Guests of Honour*. The Resource persons for the Programme were Dr. C. S. Sharma, HOD, Department of Psychiatry, STNM Hospital and Dr. Siddhartha Sinha, MBBS, DOM, Psychiatrist, Ranchi.

[2] The Hon'ble Chief Justice in his inaugural address informed that suicides, drug abuse and sexual assault on minors appear to be major issues in the State and efforts should be made to curb these problems. That parents and teachers play an important role in moulding children and urged parents to spend quality time with their children, encourage outdoor activities rather than confining themselves to mobile phones. Employers ought to look into the mental well-being of their employees and subordinates. Society at large should be aware of the implications of the disease.

[3] Hon'ble Mrs. Justice Meenakshi Madan Rai in her keynote address stated that silence around mental illness in society is indeed deafening and that the programme by the SLSA was an effort to educate and enable all to understand the seriousness of mental illness and how the afflicted individual requires family and societal support and professional help which otherwise can have tragic consequences. That the stigma attached to mental illness could be eradicated only by understanding the disease and how it affects the lives of persons suffering from it.

[4] Dr. Siddhartha Sinha, spoke on “*Stigma & Mental Disorders*” *its related myths and facts and Drug Abuse in the Youth* while Dr. C.S. Sharma spoke on *Common Mental Illness*, which was followed by vibrant interaction amongst the Resource Persons and participants.

[5] Also present during the programme were Registrar General, High Court of Sikkim, Member Secretary, Sikkim SLISA, Judicial Officers from all the Districts, Senior Advocates, Special Secretary, Sikkim SLISA and official from the Social Welfare, Health and Police Departments, Counselors of Rehabilitation Centres, NGOs, Teachers and students from Colleges and Schools from East Sikkim, Panel Advocates and PLVs from all the Districts, Press and Media and staff of Sikkim SLISA. Approximately 400 participants attended the said programme.

[6] The welcome address was delivered by Shri Suraj Chettri, Member Secretary while the vote of thanks was proposed by Mrs. Matilda Isaacs, Special Secretary, Sikkim SLISA.