

Women's Development and Gender Sensitisation Cell

Indraprastha College for Women

Annual Report 2019-20

SEMESTER: July-December 2019

29 August 2019: Orientation Programme

The Women's Development and Gender Sensitization Cell strives to build a platform to engage with issues that concern young women as they pursue their educational journeys. In the environs of an educational space, the aim has been to build an inclusive and unrestrained space to enable articulation of voices from diverse disciplines and corners of the college.

The WDC held its annual orientation on the 29 August, 2019 at the AV lecture theatre. The orientation programme witnessed participation of students across disciplinary backgrounds. The programme opened with an experience-sharing presentation of previous year's activities and focus areas. Representatives from the Queer Collective of the Cell further shared their insights on the role, themes and objectives of the collective. These introductory sessions were followed by ice-breaking activities with the audience members.

Members of the core team and creative team for the year 2018-19 shared insights about their experience of working with the the WDC. Faculty coordinators Dr. Minakshi Burgohain and Dr. Pragya Parmita welcomed the members and discussed the role of the Cell in the larger realm of the Indraprastha College for Women.

The event was a success and interacting with the new members paved ways to adapt fresh energies and work in solidarity for the new academic year.



1 October 2019: Lets Talk Session on the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC)

The Cell organized its first event of the academic year 2019-20 in the student activity area on the 1st of October, 2019. The talk session was centred around the

ICC and its role in relation to sexual harassment at the workplace. The cell aimed at sensitizing the students about the facets of The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 ("**POSH Act**") and ICC's sphere of authority in institutions of higher education in India.

The session-initiated discussion on how the Act was enacted as a comprehensive legislation to provide a safe and secure environment, free from sexual harassment for every woman. Under this act, an employer is legally required to comply with certain requirements, one of which is the constitution of an Internal Complaints Committee ("**ICC**"). This is a body designed to receive complaints about sexual harassment at the workplace from an aggrieved woman, as well as to inquire into and make recommendations to the employer on the actions which can be taken for the same.

The students brought to light the imperative need for addressing the patriarchal and misogynistic structure of Institutions of higher education in India. There has been a new phase of public awareness about the nature and extent of sexual violence in the country and the targeting of students more specifically, students shared their stories of harassment and eve teasing – emphasising on the pertinence of teaching self-defence across all higher education institutions.

Another significant aspect discussed was the Saksham Report, which describes gender sensitisation as the modification of behaviour by raising awareness of gender equality concerns, which necessitates the acceptance of basic rights associated with equality as well as non-discrimination to those whose gender identity places them in vulnerable positions.

The discussion laid emphasis on the need to impart gender sensitisation in colleges as it is a place of learning and knowledge acquisition. It highlights the importance of addressing complete hierarchies and inequalities that structure higher educational institutions as well as the prevalence of misogyny and heterogeneity among students. Therefore, the need to make students more gender-sensitive through short-term processes like programs, events and workshops or long-term processes like courses is vital.

The course model provided by the Saksham Report analyses contexts that shape gender in India, how power is exercised in modern democratic society and how it is gendered. These courses are intended to foster critical thinking among students and thereby, to aid systematic deconstruction of stereotypes. As the students shared their own stories, they inculcated information of the ICC which examines all situations with a view to assess shortcomings both at the level of gender sensitization and sexual harassment related redressal systems.



7th November 2019: 'Medea', a play performed by the Pandies Theatre in collaboration with UNHCR

The Cell in collaboration with Pandies Theatre group and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) organized a play titled 'Medea' on the 7th of November, 2019 at the AV Lecture Theatre. The 55 minute play was the cell's second event of the academic year 2019-20 and witnessed a huge turnout of students from different colleges of University of Delhi. 'Medea', directed by Anuradha Marwah, was in Hindusatani and was curated in a medium to reach the transcendent and subjective power of artistic expression.

The event began with the president of WDC extending a warm welcome to the artists and the audience who had gathered to witness the play. A brief

introduction about Pandies theatre group, their aims and objectives were presented. Pandies theatre was founded by Sanjay Kumar, a Professor in University of Delhi, in 1993 with the aim of providing a space for the underprivileged to indulge, express and learn art. The group is now jointly led by him and Professor Anuradha Marwah whose main focus is to create theatre for regular theatre-goers as well as for under-served communities in Kashmir, Haryana and areas around Delhi. Their plays are based on sections from proscenium performances, adaptations and original scripts in various languages such as Hindi, English, Punjabi, etc. Pandies aims to use theatre as a medium of activism; using theatre to take up rights-based issues, generate awareness as well as advocacy for legal and legislative intervention. They also aspire to use theatre as a therapeutic means, i.e., create theatre with members of the community with a view to articulate trauma, contain violence and provide a space to the marginalised groups for voicing their narratives in policy formulation.

Euripides' (460-408 BCE) tragedy 'Medea' highlights the tribal context in which Medea is an outsider to Greece and enables the audience to critique the social and political reasons for her actions. The play tells the story of a woman who wreaks terrible vengeance but Euripedes' sensitive rendering of the age old myth leads us to ask questions as to why this happened. The play received a standing ovation from the crowd. After the play, a discussion was initiated by the director in order to understand the audiences' take on 'Medea'.





JANUARY-APRIL 2020

Movie screening: 18 January 2020

(a) The Women's Development and Gender Sensitization Cell of Indraprastha College for Women organized a movie screening of two short movies- **'Bombay Talkies: Ajeeb Dastaan Hai Yeh'** and **'Bombay Talkies: Sheila ki Jawaani'** on the 18th of January 2020 (Saturday) at 2:30 pm. The screening was followed by a discussion which was moderated by Diksha Shivani, President of WDC.

The plot of the movie Ajeeb Dastaan Hai Yeh, directed by Karan Johar, revolves around the lives of Dev, Gayatri and Avinash. The movie underlines themes of love, sex, truth, homosexuality and selfhood. The movie, Sheila ki Jawaani, directed by Zoya Akhtar focuses on the life of a kid named Vicky who loves to dance around to Katrina Kaif's song Sheila ki Jawaani. The narrative highlights the existing patriarchal scenario. It illustrates predetermined gender roles and how it binds and limits the expressions and aspirations of the young and old.

The screening was 25 minute long after which the floor was open for feedback and discussion. Several themes were discussed. The students pointed out tragic outcomes that come about because of lack of awareness among the educated. Themes of intersectionality, homosexuality, toxic masculinity, expected norms of behavior, etc. were discussed. The hypocrisy in middle class homes and peoples' uneasiness with queer identities were important highlights. The need for awareness and empathy were ideas that repeatedly showed up. The screening gave the students a platform to talk about the complexities in heterosexual marriages, share their understanding of homosexuality and the binaries that define their world. The generalized idea of the role that women play in Indian families were debated and discussed.

It was an interactive discussion which went on till 5pm. The students found the discussion fruitful and wanted to be part of more such discussions in future.





Movie Screening and Discussion (Qandeel): 3 February 2020

A movie screening was organised to bring to the platform a discussion on the themes of intersectionality in gender discourse in South Asia. The film screened was Qandeel, on the life and death of a model in Pakistan. The film brought to the platform an emotional and invigorating discussion on the questions of women, honor and patriarchy in the settings of household, society and politics. Qandeel's life and killing, as portrayed in the documentary, raised pertinent questions and perspectives on the entrenchment of patriarchy in spaces as women begin to negotiate and resist through expression of their sexuality and agency. The discussion was moderated by the faculty advisor of WDC Ms. Madhulika Sonkar. Student discussants included the president of the Cell, Diksha Shivani, among others members.

Unmukt 2020 -- Rethinking Pride, Privilege and Prejudice: 13 February 2020

With a vision of having a critical engagement with the question of different identities and assertion in the context of the LGBTQ+ movement in India (and South Asia), the WDC, in collaboration with the Queer Collective, organised the third edition of Unmukt -- an annual event that celebrates inclusivity and non-heteronormative ideas of gender. Over the last two years, Unmukt has drawn attention towards the issues of structural violence and discrimination against the LGBTQ community. Unmukt 2020 opened up a larger space to talk about the differences of voice, experience and representation

within the LGBTQ+ movement. What does it mean to be a Dalit and queer at the same time? Where are the voices of Muslims within the LGBTQ+ movement? How do we explore pride parades beyond the imaginaries of 'urban' and 'upper class'? Primarily, the idea was to go beyond the construction of sexual minorities as monolithic and homogeneous.

We engaged with the vexed question of 'differences' through a range of programmes that included movie screening, photo exhibition, and open mic session including featured performances, and other activities such as face painting.





International Women's Day 2020: Launch of the Women's Calendar on 6 March 2020

(a) Relief Material Collection Drive

A series of programmes were organised in the week leading up to the International Women's Day. The programme started with a Relief material Collection drive for the conflict-hit areas of North-east Delhi on 4 March and went on till 6 March after receiving an enthusiastic response from the students. The collection drive was planned under the guidance and support of the Principal Prof. Babli Moitra Saraf. The collected material was successfully handed over to one of the voluntary organisations involved with relief aid in the affected district.

(b) Women's Calendar Launch

The WDC launched the first edition of the women's calendar -- an initiative that positioned art as a way to challenge the stereotypes associated with everyday forms of representation of gender in society. The Women's Calendar brought in focus original art works by a team of students to reimagine the spectrum of representation in the children's educational charts, widely used as pedagogic resources in schools. The artistic representations in the calendar challenge stereotypes on womanhood and sexuality across diverse thematic contexts such as science, handicrafts, occupations, notion of women's work, and family. The calendar was launched by the Principal Prof. Babli Moitra Saraf on 6 March 2020 in the Conference Room.

(c) Film screening – Azmaish (2017): Skype session with director Sabiha Sumar

The second session was a film screening of *Azmaish*, a film based on the journeys of two women across borders. In tracing the parallel journeys of India and Pakistan through two women's voices, the film gave a much needed perspective on patriarchy, nationhood and women's identity in the contemporary context. After the screening, the director Sabiha Sumar joined to take up questions and comments from the audience through a Skype session. The session was moderated by faculty from political science department Dr. Ankita Pandey.

(d) Comic-making workshop By Ita Mehrotra

The final session of the day successfully rallied the theme of art, representation and gender through a comic strip workshop by Delhi-based comic artist Ita Mehrotra. Ita's work spans across a wide range of themes such as home, gender roles and art as a form of protest. The two hour session with a group of young women students involved on-the-spot comic strip activities. The workshop served as the apt conclusion and way forward for students to challenge dominant representations of women through art and humor.



