

Annual Report 2019-2020
Parivartan, the Gender Forum
Kirori Mal College

Parivartan, The Gender Forum of Kirori Mal College continued its work on a range of issues related to gender through the year 2019-20 with students of the college and university. The forum's efforts remained focused on deepening the understanding of gender and the manner in which it operates in our lives, in public and private spaces – understanding that is essential for effective intervention in these issues. Apart from the specific activities and programmes it undertook and organized, the society continued its weekly discussion meetings on the themes and issues related to gender through the year.

Following is a brief report of its activities.

1. ORIENTATION: 21 August 2019

The orientation, attended by a large number of students, was conducted by senior student members, and involved an interactive and lively activity to establish and really understand the differences between sex and gender, and understand the role of gender norms in our lives. The work of the Gender Forum was also introduced to the students in this programme.

2. DISCUSSION- “What is Sexism?”: 29 August 2019

A discussion again facilitated by a team of student members was held to discuss ‘What is Sexism?’ Through an interactive exploration with the audience, nuances of how sexism pervades social structures, affects individual behaviour and perpetuates gender discrimination were brought out. The connection between such individual experiences and patriarchy were sought to be brought out.

3. MOVIE SCREENING AND DISCUSSION IN COLLABORATION WITH MONTAGE, THE FILM SOCIETY -“Fire” : 11 September 2019

“Fire”, a 1996 film written and directed by Deepa Mehta, was screened in collaboration with the Montage Society. An engaged and discussion on themes of desire, sexuality, patriarchy and family evoked in and through the film as well as its cinematic aspects followed. The discussion was coordinated by students of the two societies.

4. WORKSHOP-“Gender Identity, Expression Sexuality”: 18 September 2019

A workshop based on interactive activities was conducted by Parivartan members to explore the social construction of gender, understand issues around the assigning of sex and gender, interrogate the gender binary, and engage with the struggles of individuals to fit assigned gendered identity based on socially imposed definitions of gender.

5. DISCUSSION-“Things we don’t talk about”: 27 September 2019

A discussion was held to discuss the various areas of silence around gendered experiences in everyday lives, and to ask/explore questions related to such experiences that students have been unable to address and which disturbed them.

6. WORKSHOP WITH COLLEGE’S INTERNAL COMMITTEE AGAINST SEXUAL HARASSMENT: 17 October 2019

A stimulating and informative workshop on “Prevention of Sexual Harassment” was organised in collaboration with the College’s Internal Committee against Sexual Harassment to discuss the definition and nature of sexual harassment, its specificity in the University, and reiterate the importance of curbing it. It sought to inform students about the legal and institutional mechanisms to deal with it in the College but emphasised the need to do preventive work, sensitise sections of the College community against it, since sexual harassment is rooted in gendered attitudes in society. The workshop was conducted by Dr. Vinita Chandra, Gender Forum and IC, Ramjas College; Prashastika, Member, Partners for Law in Development; Advocate Pratyush, Lawyer & Founder, Lahar Foundation.

7. GENDER CONCLAVE- “Boundaries”: 22-23 October 2019

A two-day Gender Conclave was organised to explore the many ‘Boundaries’ through which Gender is constituted, and the inspiring efforts of people to negotiate it. These negotiations around gender were mediated by caste, religion, class and ethnicity and these nuances were brought out a history of these negotiations mapped in the Course of the rich and stimulating presentations and discussions in this Conclave. The Conclave was divided into four sessions. The Keynote session (on 22 October, 2019) was addressed by Dr. Uma Chakravarti, eminent feminist scholar and historian, who came back to the college after some years to address students on the issue of Gender and Space. In a clear and accessible talk she examined the complex reality of gender. She showed how the power relations that sustain gender oppression are based on an ideology that survives on love, care and emotion and manufactures consent, denying the individual an access to think for their own interests. She also discussed the history of the University’s struggles around gender over the last four decades. The second session was a panel discussion on Gender, Sex Work and Labour. The panel included representatives of the All India Network of Sex Workers (Amit Kumar, Coordinator and Kusum, President), sex worker-activists Sunita (Delhi) and Raj Kumar (transgender sex worker activist, Kolkata) and Advocate Tripti Tandon from the Lawyers’ Collective. The fascinating and lucid presentations of the panellists served to communicate the experiences of sex workers and their conceptions of consent, family, sexual violence and labour. The speakers explored the legal frameworks that govern sex work and presented the case for recognition of sex work as an economic activity. A spirited discussion followed. The third session (on 23 October 2019) was a panel discussion on Gender, Bodies and Surveillance with queer activists (Aroh Akunth, Shivangi Agarwal, Vihaan, Avali) who discussed, from personal experience and activist engagement, how social and state surveillance and controls operated along gendered and patriarchal lines - against queer bodies and how other kinds of factors - of caste and dalitness, disability etc. influenced this process. The fourth panel on Gender and Community included academics (Dr. Shailja Menon, faculty at AUD; Kaushal Bodwal, researcher and founder, Hasratein Queer Collective; and Dr. Debolina Dey, faculty, DU) who examined how social and political communities, caste and nation in particular, came to be constructed on the basis of masculinist ideas.

The Conclave was well attended and included lively and engaged discussions.

8. FOREIGN DELEGATION MEET & GROUP DISCUSSION- COMPARATIVE EXPERIENCE OF MOBILISATION AGAINST SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN UNIVERSITIES: 6 November 2019

A group discussion on sharing experiences of mobilisation against sexual harassment at Universities was organised between Parivartan members and Dr. Andrew Mushi from Mzumbe University, Tanzania and Dr. Lulu Simon Mahai of University of Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania. Future strategies of mobilisation and

common problems were discussed in this productive discussion facilitated by Nandita Bhatt from the Martha Farrell Foundation.

9. TRAINING WORKSHOP: 14 January 2020

A training workshop was conducted by Surabhi of the Martha Farrell Foundation for Parivartan core team members to help them prepare a workshop module they (Parivartan students) could conduct for high school students on Gender Sensitisation. Methodology, techniques, strategy and content and role play were all part of this practical workshop which proved very useful and helped the Parivartan members conduct the workshop with school students as planned.

10. WORKSHOP FOR SCHOOL STUDENTS CONDUCTED BY PARIVARTAN STUDENT MEMBERS: 31 January 2020

A team of four core group members of Parivartan acted as resource persons/facilitators and conducted an interactive workshop on the issue of Gender with students of Classes 8-11 of a government school - SarvodayaKanyaVidyalaya at Malkaganj. The programme was organised through Dr. Harish, a staff advisor of Parivartan and Ms. Madhu, PhD Candidate in Sanskrit in Delhi University and our ex-student. Instead of directly or only discussing sexual harassment, the Parivartan team addressed the subject through role play and examples the question of consent and other aspects of gendering in society. About 100 school students attended the workshop and the feedback from them was extremely positive. We hope to make this part of our regular activities and have got in touch with other schools to do the same in the new session.

11. CONDUCTING OF SAFETY AUDIT – TO GAUGE EXTENT AND NATURE SEXUAL HARASSMENT ON DU NORTH CAMPUS: February-March 2020

This year saw the revival of Parivartan's previous practice of conducting annual Campus 'Safety Audits' on sexual harassment on DU's North campus – a team of students completed the audit between mid Feb- early March after first working on the questionnaire. The audit is based on surveys carried out at different public places on Delhi University Campus. The results of the survey are still being analysed and will be published shortly.

12. THEATRE PERFORMANCE & WORKSHOP: 12 February 2020

A theatre performance named "Allegedly" conducted by MallikaTaneja and ShenaGamat, to explore the intersection of consent, sexual harassment and legal processes of remedy. This project was conceptualised with the support of feminist publishing house Zubaan's Stepping Stones and Body of Evidence Projects(supported by the IDRC and Goethe Institut). Mallika and Shena shared a story of a woman accusing a man of sexual harassment in the form of an interrogation conducted at the time of reporting a crime and/or seeking legal help. The performance was an instance of immersive theatre and the audience participated in the way it developed. The performance flowed quite easily into a discussion and the members of the audience/participants could explore several contradictions, confusions and irregularities pertaining to their own understanding of rape, harassment and consent. The thought provoking performance was attended/participated in by a large number of students and faculty members.

13. DISCUSSION "Consent and Sexual Violence": 21 February 2020

A follow up discussion on consent and sexual violence was organised to analyse Mallika Taneja's play and discuss the grey areas that govern a non-binary concept of consent.

14. WORKSHOP WITH CORE TEAM ON 'PATRIARCHY': 3 March 2020

An intensive workshop was conducted by Dipta Bhog, expert trainer and founder member of Nirantar Trust, A Centre for Gender and Education, an activist and advocacy group with Parivartan core group members to sharpen their own understanding and deepen their sense of purpose in the work they do as members of the Gender Forum.

15. INTERACTIVE SESSION to mark International Women's Day – "Journeys to Gender Justice": 4 March 2020

In 1992 in the heartland of Rajasthan, a woman fought against sexual assault openly, for the first time. She suffered assault because of her work – of curbing child marriage, part of her responsibility as 'saathin' – under a programme of the Rajasthan government. This woman was Bhanwari Devi, who became the flag bearer, and source of inspiration for the Indian Feminist Movement and Parivartan and Kirori Mal College was honoured that she could be there with us to mark International Women's Day 2020. Age may have wrinkled her face but her spirit, courage, and hope is infectious. Dressed in a traditional Rajasthan lehenga, 59-year-old Bhanwari Devi, stood tall as she spoke to us, speaking simply and clearly, in the academic auditorium of KMC on 4 March 2020. It has been 27 years, and her legal battle for justice still continues. She discussed all these intricacies of this case as well as how she has continued to live in the same village, where the sole surviving rapist continues to stay, and continued to fight for gender justice, undaunted. We also had with us Kavita Srivastava, civil rights activist and feminist based in Rajasthan who had been part of the group that supported Bhanwari Devi and went to court demanding legal safeguards against sexual harassment in the workplace for women. This effort was instrumental in Supreme Court issuing the first guidelines against Sexual Harassment – the Vishaka Guidelines of 1997. Parivartan and Kirori Mal College felicitated both these women and the struggle they represented and the inspiration they were – for Women's Day 2020. It was also inspirational to see how the struggle for freedom from sexual harassment at workplace which Bhanwari Devi (and Kavita Srivastava and other feminists) had initiated

16. LECTURE AND DISCUSSION-"Gender, History and Constitution": 6 March 2020

A deeply relevant and meaningful lecture, was delivered by eminent Chennai based feminist and historian V. Geetha on how gender, caste and communities have historically mediated access to rights and space and the significance of struggles for constitutional rights in history. The lecture which was well attended despite inclement weather, was followed by a very vibrant discussion.

Parivartan was hoping to release the results of the safety audit and also hold its annual festival Nazariya, when the lockdown owing to the Corona virus was announced. While we all grapple with the grim implications of this disease and lockdown, we hope that these and other activities of the college can be undertaken in the future, when normalcy is restored.

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