

Breaking the Silence

Annual Newsletter of the Women and Gender Development Cell, Vol.1, December 2023



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Scottish Church College

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I am happy that Scottish Church College has established a Women and Gender Development Cell as mandated by the U.G.C for awareness and addressing women and gender related issues, more specifically for prevention, prohibition and redressal of sexual harassment of students and staff. I appreciate and congratulate the endeavour of WGDC to bring out a Newsletter to sensitize all with the goal to ensure a safe, healthy and congenial environment in the college.

Women and Gender Studies have shown how the lives of individual women and men are shaped by broader structural forces in both historical and contemporary contexts, for example, nation-building, globalization, economic developments, and the prevalent socio-cultural system. Through this study one learns to question the gendered structure of the world. What is a norm in one culture may not be the same in another. Just because one is gendered as woman, it does not mean all women are the same!

The Women and Gender Development Cell should focus on breaking down the binary system and gendered stereotypes. Scottish Church College believes gender justice on campus is clearly not an 'isolated operation' but an exercise involving in a perspective shift that is able to set down norms of respect and non-discrimination and rejects any abuse of power. Vigorous processes of debate, discussion and dialogue should be seen as an integral part of the Cell as well as the College. In a heterogeneous and diverse student body as in our college, purely punitive approaches to ensure gender sensitization may serve little purpose. Instead educative, preventive and correctional approaches brought in through debates, iteration, workshops and seminars may yield better result.

I wish that WGDC will support in creating an enabling environment for sharing anxieties, problems and difficulties encountered by persons marginalized on account of gender and sexuality. I assure the management will stand by Dr. Esita Sur, Convener in her efforts to make WGDC a vibrant cell.

Dr. Swapan Kumar Mukhuty
Secretary
Scottish Church College Council



In earlier times the gender 'male' reigned supreme in every sphere of life as men believed they were the strongest among creation. The gender 'female' was considered for domestic purposes only and was treated as almost non-existent. She was denied her fundamental rights as a human being and was exposed to various types of injustice. She then realized that she was living in a bubble. As time evolved, the need to bring about a change to become co-existent rather than non-existent under suffocating conditions is when that bubble burst and the fresh air of a global revolution of empowerment took over. She identified her strengths and power, which made her rebellious. She soon acknowledged her rights i.e. to education, freedom from male dominance etc. Owing to this evolution, in today's world women walk side-by-side with the opposite sex. This is a great achievement as it recognized the fact that things cannot simply work in someone's favour because of their gender. Women today are given equal opportunities, which have empowered them in almost every sphere of life. In fact, they enjoy their own space in society rather than depending on their male counterpart.

We are proud that many of Scottish Church College former female students have been able to make a significant mark in the area of their specialization. To name a few:

- Chandramukhi Basu was the first woman graduate and the first Head of an Under Graduate College in South Asia
- Asima Chatterjee was the first woman to earn a Ph.D in Science. She was also the first recipient of the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize for Science & Technology and the first President of Indian Science Congress
- Evelyn Norah Shullai, the pioneer of Girl Guides Movement in India
- Sreerupa Bose was a former member of India National Women's Cricket Team
- Suchitra Mitra received the Padma Shri Award for Indian Music

Scottish Church College has a Women and Gender Development Cell for its women students and faculty members to address the complaints of sexual harassment by the students and faculty within the College campus, and to create awareness through seminars and lectures by experts to train our students on gender sensitivity. As a woman of today, I feel so proud of my gender's advancement in the orbit of global excellence. Many admit that 'It's a Woman's World'.

My sincere wishes go out to our college Women and Gender Development Cell who are doing an admirable service to our society through guidance and awareness programmes. Keep up the good work!

With best wishes

Dr. Madhumanjari Mandal

Principal

Scottish Church College, Kolkata



The Women and Gender development Cell is a mandatory body as per section 3.2 (15) of UGC Regulations 2015 (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal of Sexual Harassment of Women employees and students in higher educational institutions). Given the need to guarantee gender justice on the campus, the aforesaid cell is expected to have a good measure of responsibility and accountability. Keeping in mind that gender inequalities are varied and complex and cannot be reduced to some single and universally agreed set of priorities; the Cell has to carefully monitor the implementation of policy changes in the institution. One major task of the Cell is to promptly address the issues faced by anybody on the campus on account of gender and sexuality. I am thankful to the Women and Gender Development Cell of Scottish Church College for its round the year efforts to take on progressively the gender issues, initiate dialogue on them and promote gender awareness in the college.

Dr. Supratim Das

Vice-Principal

Scottish Church College, Kolkata



From the Desk of

IQAC Coordinator

It is really exciting to know that WGDC is launching a Newsletter. This Newsletter will have voices of students and eminent personalities from the areas of gender research, which I feel will provide a platform for expression and interchange. The Newsletter will also act as a comprehensive document for progression of the WGDC of Scottish Church College, Kolkata. I feel extremely honoured for get an opportunity to put my thoughts into words. I am thankful to the coordinator of WGDC, Dr. Esita Sur, who is wonderfully and much efficiently heading the Cell. My best wishes for the WGDC.

Dr. Samrat Bhattacharjee

IQAC Coordinator

Scottish Church College, Kolkata



The WGDC emerged in April 2022 with the idea of breaking the silence over the issues that have been considered as taboos in our minds. Since its inception, we have been addressing the less heard and discussed issues such as menstruation hygiene and the dynamics of the LGBTQI+ movements; the journey is on! The Cell is now publishing its first annual Newsletter and the theme is *Thinking Equality*. This Newsletter documents the yearlong activities of the Cell and the write-ups reinvestigate the question of equality from the socio-cultural, political and historical perspectives. The gender question has been located in the broader context of human rights and survival. It becomes relevant, especially in the times when the forces of majoritarianism and violence against minorities and the marginalised are on the rise. The question of equality gets jeopardised in ways more than one. The Cell's yearlong programmes have tried to address the dynamics of women's rights and the LGBTQI+ rights and the write-ups further revisit these questions. We plan to reach a few more milestones.

Dr. Esita Sur

Associate Professor

Department of Political Science

Coordinator, WGDC



Her Story and the Narrative of Rights and Movements

In Women's Studies we started with exploration of absences and silences in areas of knowledge once regarded as gender-neutral. We found that in established history books it was actually 'his story' that was being fore-grounded. It was for us to discover hidden spaces in them where 'her story' might have laid buried under tomes of scholarship. What was really lacking was the perspective, the 'woman's eye view'. But what we call the woman's perspective cannot be seen as a mystic/instinctive possession of the woman by definition beyond the reach of the 'non-woman'. The objective of Women's Studies cannot be achieved by exchanging one kind of bias for another. Women's Studies must find evidence for alternative views of history that it may propose. Its sources may be often unconventional, but they should be open to questioning, so that if evidence is found to the contrary, the premises may be revised.

For example, some scholars from the 1980s and 1990s have argued that in order to understand the traditional Hindu system of *Sati* or con-cremation of the wife on the husband's funeral pyre and the intense debate in the nineteenth century leading to an Act prohibiting it, it is necessary to go beyond the Westernized elite view of it. We certainly cannot deny that records of 'voluntary' *Sati* are there; it is also quite true that the subjectivity of the *Sati* in the nineteenth century or earlier cannot be constructed from a modern Western-educated perspective.

But should we not, in order to examine this thesis of choice, take several further steps backward which this kind of scholarship refuses to take? Must we not admit that if the so-called 'Westernized' view of *Sati* is a derivative construction, then the subjectivity of the nineteenth century woman who 'willingly' ascended her husband's pyre was as much a construction of consent under profound social pressure? It is only within the given social circumstances of the pre-colonial era that the authenticity of 'voluntary' *Sati* can be understood. Against this, we have records galore of women being coerced into con-cremation. In either case the con-cremated widow would be unable to speak having been socially and physically silenced.

While materials for women's history can be gathered in various ways even in this era of silence, we enter a new epoch in women's history when they attain access into the world of the letters and acquire a voice, which reaches public space directly. This comes from diaries and reminiscences and from published writings of women. Women's literacy everywhere occupies a crucial position in the evolution



of the women's question. Women's access into the world of the written letter also prepares the way for Women's Studies not merely in the sense of studies of women, but in the sense of studies by women of their own history.

This compensatory model of women's literacy may include the possibility of their absorbing the ideological bias inherent in any linguistic formation in a gender-unequal society. Literacy may become a mode of co-optation to make women consent and contribute to this inequality. However, the endeavour to find an exclusively feminist poetics or a language uncontaminated by male ideology seems to us to be Utopian; on the other hand, in Women's Studies, mastery over the critical discourse in various disciplines is crucial. It is not by rejecting the hermeneutics of specific disciplines, the linguistic tools used by them for interpretation of phenomena but by using them critically and self-critically that we could unpack the anomalies within them.

By acquiring and re-inventing this critical language, Women's Studies can open outwards to enrich the over-all scientific understanding of society vis-à-vis the women's question. The compensatory model of women's literacy is then replaced by the alternative model of Women's Studies turning linguistic tools into tools for social change. Especially through engagement with the discourse of rights, which is a necessary part of critical language, the woman as the 'silent subaltern' turns into a vocal and active participant in movements changing history. These are the roots of Women's Studies.

It may be noted that the growth of Women's Studies within the academic arena has generally been accompanied or preceded by some social-political movement. In India, the strong movement for democracy from the mid-1970s gave birth to a nation-wide movement among women and Women's Studies was inspired by it to a large extent to breach the bastions of the university campus and to make its own space in it as an inter-disciplinary project. Today however it seems that this combative politics of Women's Studies must be modified and a more canonical character imposed on it if it has to thrive within the modern campus.

Still, Women's Studies can only achieve its objective of scientific understanding by taking account the complications arising from the different aspects of social change, which entwine its gender-aspect with questions of class, caste, ethnicity etc. This is possible only when it is in touch with movements and with the history of movements. Efforts must be made to nurture these extra-mural links since the university campus these days growingly encourages isolationism and elitism. If a new life has to be given to Women's Studies the two-way engagement between movements and Women's Studies must be revived.

Dr. Malini Bhattacharya

Former Professor

Department of English

Founder of Women's Studies

Jadavpur University, Kolkata



The Militant Nationalist

Subhas Chandra Bose was not only a revolutionary and a patriot but also a social reformer, a great liberator of women. He included a women's contingent in the Congress volunteer corps, encouraged '*Mahila Rashtriya Sangha*' which established a number of '*Shakti Mandirs*' all over Bengal with training centres for women, which led country-independent political organisations for women. Here is a story of one woman who at the age of 18 became a close associate of Subhas Chandra Bose. Bimal Pratibha (1901-1978) born and brought up in Orissa got married to a rich and conservative Brahmin family of Bhawanipur, Calcutta. Her father, Surendranth Mukherjee, was a dedicated follower of '*Prabartak Sangha*' of Chandan Nagar. From her very young days, the influence of her father and later after coming to Calcutta the influence of Subhas Chandra Bose in her revolutionary mind. Bimal Pratibha's untiring unending sacrifice and dedication, her full share to the national struggle with political consciousness made her a true militant nationalist.

She joined *Nari Karma Mandir* in 1921 to prove herself a true patriot. When Bhagat Singh established the 'Left Wing Revolutionary Naujawan Bharat Sabha' in 1927, she became the President of the Bengal Branch, opened an office in Bhawanipur. She was also an active participant of the Congress Session in Calcutta in 1928. Responding to Mahatma's call, she also participated in Salt Satyagraha and made a similar organisation in Bengal '*Nari Satyagraha Samiti*'. She organised a procession to protest the hanging of Dinesh Gupta in 1930. In the same year, she was arrested in the Maniktala robbery case but released. But she was again arrested because suspected of a role in the assassination of the magistrate of Kumilla by Santi Ghosh and Suniti Chowdhury.

She attended the Students' District Conference of Tripura where 500 students attended the Conference inaugurated by Subhas Chandra Bose; writer Sarat Chandra Chatopadhyaya was the elected President. The Conference was attended by many eminent revolutionaries. After the Conference, there was a very important close-door meeting, which was attended by Bimal Pratibha and Subhas Bose. In 1938, she participated in a historic strike at the Ranigunj Paper Mill.

Dr. Purabi Roy

Former Professor of International Relations
Jadavpur University, Kolkata



Memories of the Yearlong Activities (2022-2023)

1. Webinar on Menstruation Health and Hygiene Practices

The Women and Gender Development Cell, Scottish Church College, in collaboration with Unicharm India and Global Hunt Bangalore, organised its first webinar on **Menstruation Health and Hygiene Practices** on 21st April 2022. The objective was to break out taboos on this issue and initiate a culture of debate and discussion. The resource person was Ms. Ankita Sukhwai, the CSR Executive of Unicharm India. A total number of 32 participants joined including faculty members of the College.

Outcomes of the Webinar:

a) it enhanced awareness of menstruation health and hygiene issues of the participants; the students comprehended the emotional aspects of the process. b) The resource person also explained the importance of a healthy lifestyle for our overall wellbeing and different hygiene practices during menstruation period. The webinar helped us in understanding biological reasons and break many preconceived notions on the subject.



2. First Offline Seminar of the Cell

The Cell in collaboration with the Departments of Political Science, History and Philosophy organised its first offline state-level seminar on **Breaking the Taboos and Locating the Unheard Voices: Identity Politics and the LGBTQI+ Movement in India** on 23rd September 2022. A galore of 169 students participated in the seminar from the departments of Political Science, History,

Philosophy, English and Economics including the faculty members. The seminar proposed to address the complex relationship between gender and sexuality and locate the relatively unheard voices of the LGBTQI+ community and their struggle for rights in India.





The Principal and Vice-Principal are felicitating our resource persons



The distinguished resource person is addressing the students



The resource persons is addressing our students and faculty members



The Principal and Vice-Principal in discussion with the resource persons

The faculty members and students are attending the seminar



Outcomes of the Seminar

The seminar attempted to sensitise the students about the politics of the Third Gender and the LGBTQI+ Movement in India. The resource persons explained the link between the movement, their lived experiences and struggle. They also tried to convey to students about politics, hierarchy and discrimination existing in the LGBTQI+ community and mainstream society. In the interactive sessions, students also raised questions on different aspects of the movement. Different dimensions and problems of the NALSA Judgement were also discussed.

3. A Session on Personality Development

The Cell in collaboration with Million Minds, Mumbai organised a session on personality development and hygiene for the students of the Departments of Political Science, History and Philosophy on 17th December 2022. The resource person explained the need for personal hygiene and development in our everyday life. The students also shared their anxieties and confidence-related issues with her.

Outcomes of the Programme

- The students came to know about the importance of personality development, especially while preparing for interviews.
- They also came to know about the ways through which they could address the issues of public communication and confidence. The resource person explained that good personality was a means to achieve dreams.



The resource person addressing the students



The students attending the session





4. Daylong State-Level Seminar on Women's Movements, Histories and Narratives: Revisiting the Journey

The WGDC and IQAC in collaboration with the Departments of Political Science, Philosophy, History and Department of Teacher Education organised a daylong state-level seminar on **Women' Movements, Histories and Narratives: Revisiting the Journey** on 16th March 2023. Our esteemed resource persons were Prof. Dr. Purabi Roy (Former Professor of IR, Jadavpur University) and Prof. Dr. Malini Bhattacharya (Former Professor of English and the founder of Women's Studies, Jadavpur University). Total one hundred fifty five (155) students participated from the Departments of Political Science, Philosophy, History and Department of Teacher Education Scottish Church College, Kolkata. The technical session was followed by a question and answer session in which both the students and the faculty members participated.

The second part of the programme had a students' seminar in which twenty one (21) students presented their papers; students from different colleges such as the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission Vivekananda Vidyabhavan, Victoria Institution (College) and Chandernagore College also participated and presented their papers; six students received prizes for best paper presentations (one from Political Science, one from History, one from Philosophy, two from B.Ed. Scottish Church College and one from the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission Vivekananda Vidyabhavan).





Dr. Malini Bhattacharya, Retired Professor of English
Jadavpur University, Former Director of Women's Studies



Dr. Purobi Roy, Former Professor of IR,
Jadavpur University



Felicitating of the resource person by the Principal



Felicitating of the resource person by the Vice-Principal



Our resource persons with Principal and Vice-Principal



Resource persons addressing the Q&A Session



The second half of the programme- Students' Seminar



The Judges of the Students' Seminar held on 16.03.2023





A student from Chandernagore College presented a paper



A student from the Department of Teacher Education, Scottish Church College presented a paper



A student from the Department of History, Scottish Church College presented a paper



A student from the Department of Political Science, Scottish Church College presented a paper



The student from the Department of History, Scottish Church College presented a paper



The student from the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission Vivekananda Vidyabhavan College presented a paper



Students from the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission Vivekananda Vidyabhavan College presented a joint-paper



Sanjana Dey, student from the Department of Teacher Education, Scottish Church College won a prize for the best paper





Medha Kundu, student from the Department of English from Ramakrishna Sarada Mission Vivekananda Vidyabhavan College won a prize for the best paper



Dipto Gangopadhyay, Student from the Department of History, Scottish Church College won a prize for the best paper



Sapnil Biswas, student from the Department of Political Science, Scottish Church College won a prize for the best paper



Sreeranjana Mitra, student from the Department of Teacher Education, Scottish Church College won a prize for the best paper



Rajkishore Mukherjee, student from the Department of Philosophy Scottish Church College won a prize for the best paper

Outcomes of the programme:

- the students were able to comprehend the evolution of women's movements and Women's Studies as a discipline in India and the recent challenges faced by the Women's Study Centres across India.
- Women's contribution to the national freedom struggle was also a part of the discussion.
- Students' paper presentations handled the issues such as domestic violence, phases of women's movements, politics of Hindutva and sexual harassment including the Me Too Movement in India.
- Students could altogether establish a link between the women's movement and rights and understand that women's struggle for rights is a political issue.

The seminar made an initiative to make the students aware that women's rights are political; individual as well as collective activism is required to locate the erased voices of women in history, freedom struggle and politics.



The group photo of the Students' Seminar



Gender and Human Rights

Sreeranjana Mitra

Student, Semester-IV, Department of Teacher Education, Scottish Church College, Kolkata

Gender and human rights are two interconnected concepts that have been at the forefront of discussions and debates for decades. Human rights are universal rights and freedoms that are granted to every individual regardless of their gender, race, religion, or any other characteristic. Gender, on the other hand, refers to the social, cultural, and psychological aspects of being male or female, which often shapes our understanding of ourselves and others. Human rights are the basic rights and freedoms that are entitled to every person, regardless of gender, race, religion, or any other characteristic. These rights are enshrined in international law that includes the right to life, liberty, security, education, work, healthcare and freedom from discrimination.

Despite the universality of human rights, women have historically been denied many of these rights due to their gender. Gender-based discrimination and violation of human rights occur in many parts of the world. Women, girls, and the members of the LGBTQI+ community are particularly vulnerable to such abuses. Women have faced discrimination in areas such as education, employment, healthcare, and political participation. They have also been subjected to violence, including domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) recognizes the importance of gender equality and states that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Gender discrimination takes many forms, including violence, unequal access to education, healthcare, wage inequality, and exclusion from political and economic decision-making. It is essential to understand that gender discrimination is a violation of human rights and hinders the development of society as a whole. A society that ensures gender equality and human rights is more peaceful, just, and prosperous.

The fight for gender equality and human rights has been ongoing for decades, and significant progress has been made only in some parts of the world. However, there is still much to be done to achieve full gender equality and ensure the protection of human rights for all individuals. This requires a collective effort from governments, civil society, and individuals to promote and protect gender equality and human rights. Governments have a crucial role to play in ensuring gender equality and the protection of human rights. This includes enacting laws and policies that promote gender equality and prevent



discrimination, providing adequate resources for gender-based violence prevention and response programs, and ensuring access to education and healthcare for all individuals regardless of gender. Civil society organizations also play a critical role in advancing gender equality and human rights. These organizations work to raise awareness of gender-based discrimination, advocate for policy change, and provide support and services to victims of gender-based violence. Individuals can also contribute to the fight for gender equality and human rights by challenging gender stereotypes and discrimination in their daily lives, supporting organizations working to promote gender equality, and using their voices to advocate for policy change.

In conclusion, gender equality and human rights are inextricably linked, and it is essential to recognize and address gender-based discrimination as a violation of human rights. Governments, civil society organizations, and individuals must work together to promote and protect gender equality and human rights for all individuals, regardless of their gender, race, religion, or any other characteristic. By doing so, we can create a more just, peaceful, and prosperous world.



FROM STUDENTS' CORNER

SHE CAN ACHIEVE

Sanjana De

Student, Semester-IV, Department of Teacher Education, Scottish Church College, Kolkata

Women have suffered a lot through the years in the male-dominated society. As time went on, women realized that they too had power! Women empowerment means enhancing the strength and capacity of women regardless of what challenges they face in their life. To have sustainable economic development both men and women need to work together towards the same goal for we are all one. When it comes to empowering women, there are certain areas we need to focus more such as social, educational, economic and political. We know so many empowered women throughout the world, but here is the story of two of our Alumni who have achieved their goals successfully.

Dr. Santi Saren was born in a small village Debra in Paschim Medinipur. The path of her journey was not smooth. Her struggles began when she suddenly lost her father at a very young age, After two years, her mother got a job and she took over all the responsibilities of her children. Her mother, who had inspired her to succeed in school, motivated her. However, when she wanted to pursue higher education, she encountered societal pressure because, as a woman, marriage should be your only goal and you should not need to pursue higher education or find employment. She obviously continued her studies, but once again, people began to criticize her because of the fact that she was born into a tribal society. but she persisted in her objective and succeeded. She finished her coursework and began preparing for the National Eligibility Test (NET). She is now a successful Professor in Presidency University.

Minati Hembrom was born in a remote village in Malda. In spite of the lack of support from her family and lack of cooperation from her peers, her teachers were very helpful in completing her studies to the best of her ability. She started doing something for her community when she was a student; she started teaching and started an NGO with her fellow friends where underprivileged children could get better facilities and education. Her family was not in agreement to let her go far away but she had to listen to herself and moved to Andhra Pradesh to fulfill her dream and now she is the Assistant Teacher in the Don Bosco School. As a woman one should be motivated by the success of other women because one day she will succeed in her endeavours, she will empower herself, and perhaps someone will be there to hear the tale of her voyage.



FROM STUDENTS' CORNER

And They Who's Names Have Been Forgotten

Rajkishore Mukherjee

Student, Semester-IV, Department of Philosophy, Scottish Church College, Kolkata

Noting how this gathering was most definitely spurred up from the observance of International Women's Day - this day, has poignantly evolved into a marketing opportunity, with superficial, slogan-centric, hashtag-dependent campaigns targeted at profits rather than beginning a conversation about vicious inequalities that still persist in this country. The brands are commodifying feminism, but if only they showed genuine commitment to the day and pushed for gender equality, they would actually benefit. Before moving on to the crux of my write-up, I would like to remind corporations that Women's Day is not just a slogan – it is a day when we must talk about these issues. It is time to remember the women who fought on our behalf for those rights we enjoy today. For them and our sisters, we need to take Women's Day back from the clutches of advertising and marketing brains.

Women don't need vouchers or discounts. Women need equal rights at home and at work. Women need to be heard. Women need to be included in decision-making and policy formulation. But all of it must start from our homes. Gender equality is not rocket science. Neither is it a spa voucher. It starts as a conversation at home and grows into a movement. The fact that women, by and large, are a casualty of history—that they are marginalized, diminished, and forgotten—is no revelation. It is the foundational premise of women's history, the primary aim of which has been and still remains the retrieving, recapturing, and the reconstructing of women's lives, whether they be the lives of “women worthies” or the lives of ordinary women, whose names have been obliterated by the dust of the colonial archive. It is generally from this point that women's historians begin their work of recuperation—from the foundational premise that women are marginalized or absent in the archives and then disappeared by a discipline whose grand narratives have proven stubbornly male-focused and male-centered.

My concern here, in this presentation, was that women's history may be guilty of placing African women outside the bounds of “feminist historical knowledge” by insisting on a certain kind of historical subjectivity that then must be recovered and recounted. We, being the disciples of history, philosophy and political science are inevitably entitled to the responsibility of uncovering it.



Women in Politics: An Indian Perspective

Sapnil Biswas

Student, Semester-VI, Department of Political Science, Scottish Church College, Kolkata

The term political participation has a very wide meaning. It not only includes the right to vote, but also participation in decision-making process and political activism. Political activism and voting are considered as the strongest areas of women's political participation. But they lack participation in the decision-making process. There have been efforts to reserve the seats for women in the Parliament. Unfortunately, the Women's Reservation Bill 2008 (The 108th Constitutional Amendment) is at a standstill in Lok Sabha since 2010 when the then Rajya Sabha passed it. There seems to be a lack of legislative as well as political intent to actualize the provisions of the Bill as well.

If we comprehensively look upon the push and pull factors with regard to women's participation in the field of politics, we will see that the most significant pull factors are as follows:

- a) **Universal Suffrage Rights:** In India women from the very first electoral exercise had equal rights as their male counterparts with regard to voting.
- b) **Women voters' Turnout:** Subsequent to voting rights, comes the issue of voters' turnout in elections. If we see the data from a study of Lokniti, CSDS of women's turnout, we will see that in 1962 general elections there was a gap of 16.7% between the male and female turnout percentage. But this situation bettered a lot in the subsequent elections and in the most recent 2019 General Elections 0.17% female voters voted more than male voters.
- c) **73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts of Constitution of India:** The mentioned amendments were instrumental in setting up the institutions of rural and urban local self-government in India. These amendments included a 33% reservation of seats for women in these bodies.

Now some of the push factors are:

- a) **Low Representation:** We have seen a constant intent from the major political parties to field very low number of women candidates in the elections. Example being that in 2019 general elections only



724 women candidates were fielded out of 8026 candidates in total. The phenomenon takes its origin from the embedded patriarchy in the society.

- b) Political Violence: The dreaded characteristics of violence and use of muscle power in political activities have kept this field largely unsuitable and undiscovered by women aspirants in general.
- c) Misuse of rights provided to women: we are aware about the issue of proxy representation in the reserved seats, where the women candidates are only a face but all the decisions are taken by the male counterparts of her family.

So, we see how the push and pull factors effect the participation of women. To formulate a gender sensitive and robust political environment in India, increased women's representation is not the absolute solution as we have seen with the case of Rwanda which is a country with 61.5% women parliamentarians but still lacks basic abortion and widow rights under their legal system. To achieve gender sensitization in the decision-making system, proper gender mainstreaming is required through a Bottom-Up approach. We also need an active participation of pressure groups and media to promote gender sensitivity in the society at large.



FROM STUDENTS' CORNER

Satires on Women Education in the 19th Century Bengal

Dipto Gangopadhyay

Student, Semester-IV, Department of History, Scottish Church College, Kolkata

The 19th century is marked as one of the greatest epochs of socio-cultural progress in India. We do see specifically the colonial times being responsible for emancipating women off the traditional layout from her role and duty as a "she". The Company *Bahadur* allied with some of the brightest minds had successfully banned *Sati* (1829), legalised widow remarriage (1856) and formulated a legal age of consent (1891). Not only did the marital situation for a woman change, but also her scope of getting educated by modern and Western means increased. Along with many other events, the glorification of 19th century Indian Renaissance thus, is assisted with the dealing of women's education as well. Certainly women began to get educated; the missionaries had set up schools in early 1819 for girls. The Bethune School in Calcutta was founded in 1849. But often our narration regarding women's education stops here, making a reader feel things went smooth enough to role the wheel to the extent of today. The satirical literatures on women's education degraded its benefactors without being hesitant. The works like *পাস করা মাগ* (Educated Wench), *নভেলনায়িকা বা শিক্ষিতা বউ* (A novel heroine or an educated wife), *কেয়াবাং মেয়ে* (Bravo Girl) served as a classic example for such literature.

These books were written by petty orthodox patriarchs like Radhabinod Halder, Rajkrishna Roy and Durgadas Dey, to name a few; it produced cheap materials, marketed through hawkers and read all along by the mass. The works of such genre often portrayed the female protagonist to be well read, furnished with the ideas taken from western novels, which turned them from a timid "ideal Hindoo woman" to a rebel towards her patriarchal guardians. The protagonists were satirically shown to be strong willed wench, capable enough to take their own life decisions, which included the 'blasphemous' task of choosing the partner they wished to end up with. A close survey to the daily chronicles like *Samachar Chandrika* gives us a good glimpse on the efficiency of the newspapers in "warning" the guardians of these young girls on the same pace as their cheap literary counterparts. One such issue proves to be a brilliant example on how best a few newspapers were trying to stop this "poisonous" development:

Our brothers shouldn't keep the idea in their mind for sending their fair Hindoo daughters to schools,



making them a courtesan.

Propagandas such as this, mostly were responsible why the initial years of women's education in Bengal had such fewer participants. By 1862-63, we see the 15 girl's schools in Bengal Presidency having a mere admission of 503 students, even after making every effort to have the girls brought to the edifice (like a free palanquin service for transportation). Popular mediums like *Kalighat paintings* and *battala etchings* too began portraying these "educated wenches", controlling husbands like a pet tied to its owner's string. The ideal wife, whose kin didn't take the pain to educate her, certainly made a better wife (as the etchings show), leaning down low, washing the husband's feet and submitting herself completely to his will.

Such evidences make us question today how dynamic was the response of Indian society towards the call for women's education. Was it accepted with a great pomp at all? The generally unspoken portion of this resistive movement certainly deserves a limelight to trace down and compare the miseries a woman suffers today with that of what a woman suffered a century ago.



Women's Movement: Violence Against Women & the #Me Too

Medha Kundu

Student, Semester-VI, Department of English, Ramakrishna Sarada Mission Vivekananda Vidyabhavan College, Kolkata

This write-up aims at locating the narratives of protests and struggles by women against violence. The status of women in all cultures throughout the world has remained subordinate since time immemorial. Women's struggle for rights begins with their being born into a social construct and cultural system based on inequality and discrimination. One of the most challenging and threatening manifestations of this gender inequality is rooted in the unequal power relations of men and women. Many women have voiced their protests through movements. One such very recent and impactful movement that surfaced among us is the #Me Too movement in which after the years of silence, self-loathing and suffering, women of different backgrounds talked of their rampant gender-based violence both at their workplaces and at home. When the movement was at its peak throughout the world and in India, many women gathered the courage to come forward and share incidents of sexual harassment and violation of rights by people in positions of power.

The #Me Too is a social movement against sexual abuse, harassment and rape culture, in which women shared their experiences of sexual harassment or abuse in the public. This movement has used technology to ventilate the issues of sexual harassment. Sexual assault survivor and activist Tarana Burke initially used the phrase 'Me Too' in this context on social media in 2006 on Myspace. The movement started across the globe and encouraged women to report the incidents and crimes of sexual harassment, online.

India is routinely ranked as one of the unsafe places for women. The prevalent cultural norms and practices widely oppress women and create the possibilities for violence. Since the 1970s, women's movements raised many political and legal issues including the demand for reservation in local elected bodies and the establishment of the National Women's Commission in 1990. Since the term Me Too has become popular on social media, many women have shown eagerness to punish the perpetrators who went scot-free even after being known to the victim.

The present findings from the broadcast media news and interviews offer specific implications of the movement. These offer unique opportunities to spread information and a range of outcomes. Overall, the findings show that when women who report sexual harassment, they are questioned for possible ulterior motives for their reports.



TESTIMONIALS

Testimonials on State-Level Seminar on **Women's Movements, Histories and Narratives: Revisiting the Journey** on 16.03.2023

The programme organised on Women's Day was very interesting and informative. Through other seminars, I found out how little I know about trans-women and their lives. The seminar was a window to understand the community.

Shinjini Sengupta, Student, Semester-VI, Department of Political Science, Scottish Church College Kolkata

For me, the seminar was a reminder of the strength and resilience of women, and the power of their voices. It was inspiring to hear of women who have broken through barriers and achieved success in fields where they were once underrepresented. A seminar of such kind certainly will keep on the fire within us to continue fighting for gender equality and empowering women in our own spheres.

Dipto Gangopadhyay, Student, Semester IV, Department of History, Scottish Church College Kolkata

It was a pleasure to be a part of this seminar. Tending to such a fervent cause on such an important date was something that the college gave me a platform for. I look forward to participating in further events of this stature!

Rajkishore Mukherjee,

Student, Semester-VI, Department of Philosophy, Scottish Church College Kolkata

Testimonials on the Seminar on **Breaking the Taboos and Locating the Unheard Voices: Identity Politics and LGBTQIA+ Movement in India** on 23rd September 2022

We need more interactive session.

Aishibarnaa Roy, Student, Semester-III, Department of History, Scottish Church College, Kolkata

This overall session made me spellbound. I will be expecting more seminars like this.

Elina Iyasmin, Student, Semester-III, Department of History, Scottish Church College Kolkata

The seminar was nice.

Sonal Prasad, Student, Semester-III, Department of History, Scottish Church College Kolkata

Interactive workshops and extra-curricular activities involving students would help us enjoy the process of learning about LGBTQ community. Also, an LGBTQ club should be started in our college for the purpose.

Sonia Hazra, Student, Semester-III, Department of English, Scottish Church College Kolkata



In this session we were only sensitized about the transgender community. I would like to have another session regarding the other members of the LGBTQIA+.

Sreejita Kundu, Student, Semester-III, Department of Philosophy, Scottish Church College Kolkata

Testimonials on online session on **Menstruation Health and Hygiene Practices** organised by the Women and Gender Development Cell (WGDC) in collaboration with Unicharm, India and GlobalHunt.

It was a very enlightening and informative session.

Priyanka Chattopadhyay, Student, Semester-IV, Department of Teacher Education, Scottish Church College Kolkata

It was really nice and full of awareness...thank you.

Ankita Yadav, Student, Semester-II, Department of Teacher Education, Scottish Church College Kolkata

It would be great to know about uterus related problem and how we should keep our uterus healthy.

Gyalmo Lepcha, Student, Semester-VI, Department of Political Science, Scottish Church College Kolkata

It was a great session. Would love to attend more such sessions in future.

Debashree Mondal, Student, Semester-II, Department of Zoology, Scottish Church College Kolkata

It was really beautifully organised.

Shinjini Sengupta, Student Semester-IV, Department of Political Science, Scottish Church College Kolkata

Notables and Quotables

“Just as the way we perform changes, so we our sense of “voice”. In our everyday lives we speak differently to diverse audiences. We communicate best by choosing the way of speaking that is informed by the particularity and uniqueness of whom we are speaking to and with. To teach in varied communities not only our paradigms must shift but also the way we think, write, speak. The engaged voice must never be fixed and absolute but always changing, always evolving in dialogue with a world beyond itself”.

bell hooks (1994, 11)

Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom



MEET THE EDITORIAL TEAM

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Founder of Women's Studies, Jadavpur University, Kolkata

Dr. Esita Sur

Associate Professor, Department of Political Science

Coordinator of the Women and Gender Development Cell & Editor

Scottish Church College, Kolkata



