

## Women's Development Cell

2018-19

Women's Development Cell, LSR is a group of passionate young feminists who collectively think about and work for various experiences of gender. In the academic year 2018-19, WDC organised several events including panel discussions, movie screenings and informal discussions in which we attempted to explore the intersections of gender with various other social identities, including ethnicity, sexuality, caste, etc. The WDC initiated the academic year with a vibrant panel discussion on "**Navigating Queer Identities in University Spaces**". It was centred around understanding the experiences of queer students in university spaces, concerns of intersectionality within the community, and ways to encourage a gender-sensitive and aware campus. The panel specifically steered a conversation on the multifaceted identities like caste, disability and ethnicity that intersect with one's sexuality.

In October, an interactive session was organized with Ms. Aditi Arora, Country Consultant of Girl Up, an initiative of the United Nations Foundation, is a girl-led and girl-driven initiative. The session was conducive in dealing with gender-related issues and also questions pertaining to why women must vote. The same month WDC organized a Panel Discussion on "Who is a North East Woman" as a part of the theme, "**Exploring intersections of gender, region, ethnicity and identity- A look at the North East**". The panel's aim was to understand the nature of gender relations and patriarchy in North-East, and the perceived notions of the mainland in constructing a homogenous narrative of a 'North-East woman'. The panel broke down the factors including differences in shared history in terms of language, ethnic composition, etc. to demonstrate that 'North-East' is not a homogenous category and thus affects the gender-relations accordingly. It had some brilliant speakers including Dr. Ananya Barua, an Associate Professor at Department of Philosophy, Hindu College, University of Delhi; Dr. Joy L.K Pachau, Professor at Jawaharlal Nehru, Centre for Historical Studies, School of Social Sciences; Ms. Ngurang Reena, a Ph.D. research scholar at Centre for European Studies, JNU and Dr. Nitoo Das, a poet and Assistant Professor at Department of English, Indraprastha College, University of Delhi.

This year WDC also organized a session with Dr. Punita Bhardwaj was organised as a part of the theme, '**Reproductive Rights and Justice**'. It aimed at addressing questions pertaining to female sexual health, hygiene, UTIs, self care, etc. As part of informal "Let's Talk Sessions" the members shared their personal experiences and views on different themes including "What does feminism mean to you?", personal experiences of sexism in schools, universities and other educational settings, 'Intersections of gender and exclusion', Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2018, the MeToo movement in India and sustainable menstruation, wherein we unpacked various taboos and myths associated with menstruation. WDC also conducted several movie screenings this academic year. This included, "**Juice**", a short film by Neeraj Ghaywan looking at gendered power relations, division of labour, etc. within the household, "Tales from the margins", a film that highlights the grim human rights situation in Manipur and the extraordinary protests by Manipuri women for justice and "Consent Trilogy".

Welcoming the new year 2019, the WDC conducted a panel discussion on the theme "**Sex Work in India: Understanding Challenges and Demystifying Taboos**". The session aimed at understanding the various myths associated with sex work as a profession, along with the legal, social, cultural and economic issues faced by sex workers themselves, as well as their families. A Training Workshop was organized on Child Sexual Abuse with Breakthrough India as part of the 'Gender Sensitization' sessions in several NGOs in collaboration with our National

Service Scheme (NSS) volunteers. This session aimed at providing exposure to the children in the NSS affiliated NGOs to a range of issues relating to gender justice. One of the sessions is aimed at making the children in the NGO aware of the concept of "Safe and Unsafe Touch", which includes the issue of child sexual abuse. Given the sensitive nature of this topic and the importance of not misinforming the children in any way, this year we held a training session or workshop in collaboration with Breakthrough India, led by Ms. Shubika and Mr. Ikram. The aim was to acquaint our members with information relating to what child sexual abuse is, how to report it, redressal mechanisms and other forms of social support.

The short film screening by **All India Dalit Mahila Adhikar Manch** highlighted the impunity of caste-based sexual violence and the barriers to justice Dalit women face. The screening was followed by student discussion. This was followed by a Movie Screening and Discussion of "**Please Mind The Gap**" in collaboration with Public Service Broadcasting Trust in the month of February. The film highlights how the study of the public space becomes essential, as these are important sites of conflict where individuals are judged on the basis of appearances and must find ways to retain their identity and autonomy. The screening was followed by an interactive discussion with Ms. Mitali Trivedi, the Director of the film, and Mr. Manjesh, the cinematographer.

In collaboration with the Political Science Department and Expressions, WDC held an open mic on the theme "Our Politics, Ourselves?". The aim of the event was to navigate through our layered identities and how they intersect with our politics through various art forms. We had participants for performing poetry, music, and classical dance. The Women's Development Cell in collaboration with the NSS organized a '**Gender Sensitization**' session providing exposure to the children in the NSS affiliated NGOs to a range of issues relating to gender justice, including gender roles, tackling conventional beauty ideals, etc. WDC started a fresh initiative this year of a reading group, wherein members meet periodically and discuss certain selected books, essays, poems, etc.