

## Conference Report

### **National Conference by SLC Women Development Cell**

The Women Development Cell of SLC (Shyam Lal College) successfully hosted the National Conference on “*Gender and Popular Culture: Representations and Embodiment*” on December 14-15, 2016 at Indian Law Institute, New Delhi. The presence of dignitaries, an impressive lineup of scholars from across the globe, the support of sponsors and media partners, an array of carefully selected, well-researched and well-presented papers on the subject, all came together to help Team WDC (SLC) to admirably conclude this huge endeavor. The conference was applauded for the 9 concurrent sessions, two plenary sessions, one round table discussion, a workshop, besides the Inaugural and Valedictory sessions. This Conference has, without a shade of doubt, made the academic fraternity richer, with the additional literature in form of scholarly works on the subject. This two day event offered opportunities to the participating audiences to interact with activists, academicians, scholars and experts from all over the world who deliberated upon and covered topics around the issues of created identity perceptions in mass media, social media, new media, films, advertisements, daily soaps, songs etc. The two days comprised of incisive and insightful discussions on various facets of the issue of gender as reflected and refracted through the prism of popular culture. The views expressed and explored on this platform by the resource persons and paper presenters made the audience rethink ideas which we cling on to unthinkingly in our day to day life.

The Conference owes its success to the able guidance of Principal Dr. Rabi Narayan Kar, and the hard work put in by the entire WDC team led by Dr. Alka Sharma, Dr. Kusha Tiwari, Dr. Komilla Suri and student volunteers.

The Hon’ble Chief Guest Prof Manoj Kumar Sinha, Director, ILI inaugurated the Conference, with Ms. Savita Gupta, the Chairperson of SLC Governing Body being the Chair for this session. Principal Dr. Rabi Narayan Kar in his welcome address dealt upon the need for organized engagements in gender stereo types to remove cultural binaries. Dr. Kusha Tiwari, Convenor of the conference presented the theme of the conference in a lucid manner for the understanding of the audience. Luminaries from the world of academics and business that graced the event included Prof. Ruchira Gupta, New York University, USA (Keynote Speaker), Prof. Madhu Kishwar (Founder, MANUSHI), Prof. Savita Singh (Centre for Gender and Development Studies, IGNOU), Mr. Pankaj Butalia (Filmmaker), Prof. Karen Gabriel (St. Stephen’s College), Prof. Rajkumar (University of Delhi, Delhi), Prof. Uma Chakravorti (University of Delhi, Delhi), Prof. Kshiti Bhusan Das (Utkal University, Odisha), Prof. Charu Gupta (University of Delhi, Delhi) Prof. Baran Farooqi (Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi), Dr. Lakshmi Kannan (Writer), Ms. Kamla Bhasin (Gender Activist), Ms. Madhureeta Anand (Filmmaker), Sh. S.C Prusty (Registrar, ILI), Prof. Shuchi Sinha (IIT, Delhi), Ms. Nandita Paliana (Mazars India), Ms. Sumati Sharma (BHEL), Dr. Minakshi Kar (University of Delhi). The Conference Paper Review Committee was constrained by time to accept only 40 out of the more than 60 research papers received. All the resource persons conducted very engaging and fruitful sessions. Gender activist Ms. Kamla

Bhasin conducted a highly engaging workshop that aimed primarily at the students, a Round Table session with speakers from the corporate world, writers etc. which analysed how gender stereotypes function and constrain women in different spaces and cultural settings. The paper presentations in both the concurrent and the plenary sessions looked critically at the role of films, T.V commercials etc. play in shaping/misshaping our thoughts and responses.

The valedictory addresses of Prof. Kavita A. Sharma, President, South Asian University, Delhi (Chief Guest), Sh. Sidharth Mishra, Consulting Editor, Millenium Post and Sh. Shakti Sinha, Director, Nehru Memorial Museum & Library - the Guest of Honour and Chairperson Smt. Savita Gupta offered an apt conclusion to the conference with specific summing up of the theme of the conference and the acknowledgment of the efforts of the whole WDC team, Shyam Lal College and the Principal Dr. Rabi Narayan Kar who inaugurated the valedictory session with the Power Point Presentation of the achievements of the College in the last few years that clearly stated that Brand SLC had arrived, and there is nothing to stop it from marching forward.

The Conference ended with these probable outcomes and conclusions:

- The Conference and its proceedings are a step towards making those involved and present more gender sensitive citizens of a society which needs to be jolted out of its regressive mindsets.
- The conference was highly applauded for bringing together great minds from different fields of gender studies and activism. Their views and discussions made the audience see how gender is a fluid category and can be reshaped through active questioning and participative action.
- There was also an emphasis, especially in the plenary session discussions, to make the audience realise how the whole idea of 'agency' and 'gaze' is changing with the changing perception of gender dominance and representation in the world of cinema.
- The event gave rise to discussions that looked critically at traditions and conservative rituals that have become part of the mainstream due to overexposure through representations in the popular mediums like TV, cinema.
- The conference also provided an active platform to discussions on the user centric nature of social media that apparently becomes a medium for peripheral voices to be heard and at the same it is to be seen whether it, in reality, is liberating or confining.
- The conference became first of its kind initiative by Women Development Cell of a College in showing the immense possibilities of debates, discussions, exposure to current developments in the field of women's studies and issues that can be explored through such forums.
- The Conference has shown the way as to what can be achieved through such events that are supported by organizations like Ministry of Women and Child Development, ICSSR and UGC and have the active participations from students and academics.

