

## Lady Sriram College

23<sup>rd</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> October 2007

### Sessions on 'Gender', 'Patriarchy' and 'Violence against Women'

JAGORI conducted sessions on 'Gender', 'Patriarchy' and 'Violence against Women' with students of Lady Sriram College. The sessions were of two hours duration each. The students attending the workshop were pursuing different streams of undergraduate degree and were from all three years.

#### 'Gender' - 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2007

The session began with a brief introduction to JAGORI, followed by a short introduction of each participant, to get an understanding of the kind of disciplines that the participants are coming from. The objectives of the workshop and the program schedule were shared with them. The participants were also asked to enumerate the various apprehensions and expectations they have of the workshop.

Their expectations of the workshop ranged from the general

*"To be there for the experience"*

*"To understand the links and interconnections between gender and patriarchy"*

To the more specific-

*" Why do women have to prove their femininity even when they take up jobs which need them to prove their ability?"*

*"Does feminism come in the way of having a family life?"*

*What are the different manifestations of violence?*

*What can women do to protect themselves?*



The participants were asked to draw images of the male and female body on chart paper and list all the characteristics they associate with the male and the female.

Qualities such as '*strong*', '*egoistic*', '*practical*', etc. were associated with the male body, and '*emotional*', '*sensitive*', '*caring*'... ..' etc. were associated with the female body. The exercise led to a discussion engendered within the group itself on whether these characteristics could be generalized.

This also led to a fairly significant question of the difference between 'male/female' and 'men/women'. A brief discussion followed on how 'gender' identities are different from identity of 'sex'. This gave the participants a good springboard from which to understand 'gender' as a social construct, and helped the facilitators deconstruct stereotypes of masculinity and femininity. Queries surrounding members of the third gender also came up during the discussion.

This was followed by a short exercise on intersectional, which proved that the gender identity was a constant that ran across all other identities, caste/class/religion/age/sexual orientation etc facing random/sporadic or systemic violence. This helped elucidate the relationship with power, identities and systematized violence, also.

A discussion to understand the role of the socialization process, in conveying gender-based messages, conveying the limits of gender roles and identities, and the roles and relationships that are evolved through this between men and women and amongst themselves, was done. The rigidity involved in the process was inferred.

### **'Patriarchy' - 25th October 2007**

The session began with a basic recapitulation of what was discussed in the session on 'gender'. A small exercise was done after the brief introduction where participants were asked group themselves in 4 different groups and were made to give their views on some statements like:

- *'Biology makes women weaker than men'*
- *'Women who dress or behave in culturally inappropriate ways are inviting assault'*
- *'A woman who leaves the house because her husband slaps her sometimes is over-reacting'*
- *'Women make better nurses than men'*
- *'There is a form of gender discrimination even in the animal kingdom'*
- *'Children of mothers who do not care for the child at a young age do not feel close to their mothers at a later stage in life'*



The group came up with very differing viewpoints, and it was interesting to see how different people agreed or disagreed with the various statements to different extents and added their own clauses to justify their view points.

A brief introduction of the origins of patriarchy was shared with the group. Many of the group members found this very interesting, as there had been a lot of debate on the previous day about the origins of patriarchy, which had been vague to the students.

The session ended with charting out how patriarchy manifests itself i.e. the different patriarchal practices, customs, rituals, etc, and how these are related to the different institutions, which strengthen the system of patriarchy. Further, the ideologies underlying patriarchy, which control women's mobility, productive and reproductive power and her sexuality were also enumerated and discussed. Further, the connections between patriarchy and a system of violence was also introduced to the group. There was also a lot of debate over the definition of "Violence Against Women", which set a good platform for the next day's discussion.

### **'Violence Against Women'- 26<sup>th</sup> October 2007**

This session started with an introduction to violence as a means of control, and how patriarchy perpetuates itself by justifying this kind of violence. Definition, causes and types of Violence Against Women were discussed, and this tied up with what gender-based violence is.

A PowerPoint presentation was made on the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act, 2005. Some important questions that came up were

*"What if the respondent in a particular case of sexual harassment becomes the woman, such as the mother-in-law, sister-in-law?"*

*"How does one prove that staring is a form of sexual harassment?"*

*"Are there any laws protecting this?"*

It was an eye-opener to many students that violation of rights, and denial of resources is itself a form of "violence".



This was followed by a discussion on sexual harassment. The film "Do you know how we feel?" was screened,

which the students could relate to based on their daily experiences. Another film, "Is this my city too?" which introduces the JAGORI Safe Delhi Campaign, was also screened. Most of the students were able to relate to both the films, and this was evident from their agreement with the statements being made by the girls, as well as the anger they felt at some of the declarations made by the men interviewed.

One of the questions that repeatedly came up was passing off *discrimination under the guise of "concern" or "protection"*, usually by male members of the family. *Do some forms of discrimination impinge on one's freedom? If so, can that be termed violence? Why do people discriminate against their female children and encroach on their freedom and space, when instead they should be questioning society's perceptions?*

#### **Feedback:**

Students said that they now have a lot of clarity on gender, with all its interconnections and how the patriarchal system underlies discrimination, leading to Violence Against Women. Many girls felt that getting a better grasp of the laws protecting women not only gave them a feeling of empowerment but they could also disseminate this information to other women they know. The WDC showed a lot of enthusiasm to be part of the Safe City campaign, and to also continue the relationship with JAGORI for workshops, sessions, film screenings, etc.

## Shyamlal College

October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2007

### Session o Women and Safety

Around 70 participants attended the session. They consisted of students from all three years of undergraduate studies and from various disciplines as well as some faculty members.

The students had not been exposed to issues of gender discrimination or sexual harassment in the past. There were very few girls and boys who were very verbal about the issue. However, a majority of the participants were male students who had never been exposed to the issue as such.

The participants were first engaged in dialogue about *what is it that women fear, and why do they fear walking out alone, or after sunset?* Then the issue of safety for women from sexual harassment in public places was arrived at. The 'bindi exercise' was also done. Through the exercise, it became clear that women do not access certain public spaces after sunset, and do not access some spaces at all. This helped in propelling the discussion forward and talk about the *tag of morality attached to women and in their use of spaces*, as well as the *fear* they experience on a daily basis.



Through the discussion, most of the male students held on to conventional notions of how a woman must dress, behave and live their lives. *Many of them felt that women who travel after sunset, dress in short or tight clothes or use spaces that are seen as "male", are inviting assault.* They also felt that women "enjoy" being at home and engaging in "domestic duties", and *those women who stray from this norm and like going out are "westernized" and "modern", not adhering to norms!* The facilitators tried to break these concepts and beliefs through citing counter examples and sharing experiences.

Some students also felt that neither gender is more vulnerable than the other and are equal. They felt that it is the responsibility of the person, be it a man or a woman, to protect themselves and if there are under any kind of threat, it is because they either "invited" it or were not in a position to prevent it.

Need for a lot more sessions need to be conducted in this college and with smaller groups of people was felt, in order to break through this conventional mind-set and question patriarchal practices, especially the values attached to it. However, it was extremely heartening for us when one of the male students emailed us on the next day saying that he would like to be part of the Safe Delhi Campaign.

## **Institute of Home Economics**

*14<sup>th</sup> November 2007*

### **Report on the session on Gender and discrimination**

The discussion began with the film 'Who can speak of men?'. The students had not had any prior exposure to gender issues. There were many varied responses to the film.

A lot of students were shocked that there would be women who may think of themselves as "men" and adopt masculine traits and behaviours and had strong negative attitude towards femininity. Responses ranged from "*they must celebrate being a woman and be proud that they are one*" or "*why are they running away from reality*", "*That is how they are made and that is how they must be*".

It took a long discussion to introduce concepts of masculine and the feminine and how these are social constructs. There were also an interesting round of talk on the influence of Biology and whole 'nature versus nurture' debate. This also led to a short discussion on how different institutions support and propagate patriarchal practices and how they do so. Patriarchy was introduced and links between gender and patriarchy was drawn.

The groups were willing to know more about these issues and seemed quite keen to take this further.

## **Jamia Girls Hostel**

*20<sup>th</sup> November 2007*

### **Session on Gender and Discrimination**

Jagori took a session with 45 Jamia women Hostelites on the 20<sup>th</sup> evening as part of the Gender Sensitization programme of Sarojini Naidu Women's Studies unit. After a brief introduction of Jagori, the participants were introduced to the session and also to the schedule of the next hour and half.

The session began with the screening of the movie 'Do you know how we feel?' The participants felt the movie was too real and all could relate with it. Many shared some instances in the movie where *they felt shocked like the boy talking about Eve Teasing giving him the adrenal push*, or the *older men advising that simplicity is what women should adopt to avoid being harassed* or *men having more orgasm and they not being able to control it as an explanation of the Sexual Harassment*.

The group themselves were able to relate it to gender role. The whole question of socialization, social institutions like family, media, state, law etc came as propagating the discrimination. There was a talk on male being the dominating sex. There was opposing views to the statements. Patriarchy, its origin and its underlying control were focused.

When the discussion started on sexual harassment, issues of age, dress, became a concern. The group shared their experiences and talked about their strategies to deal

with the issues. The Safe City Campaign was shared in details. There was a round of talk on the laws protecting from sexual harassment and also faulty implementation of the agencies in dealing with it.

The session ended with a favourable feedback and distribution of handouts and Helpline booklets.

## **Vivekanand College**

**13<sup>th</sup> December 2008**

### **Session on Women and Safety**

The session at Vivekanand Girls College was part of the Safe Delhi campaign in colleges and the issue taken up was that of sexual harassment at public spaces. .

The session started with deepening our understanding of what a “public space” is, followed by the screening of “Is this our city?” The students had a lot of comments and reminiscences to share. It was obvious that they could relate wholly to what was being said.



A deeper understanding of sexual harassment through discussion followed, especially in questioning why we use terms like “eve-teasing”, when what is actually happening is harassment, thus diluting the issue. Results of the Safety Audit done by JAGORI were also shared. The discussion went on to the laws relating to sexual harassment.

Some questions that the students also had been passively engaging with was  
*“do all men sexually harass women?”*

*Do men face sexual harassment too?”*

*Women don't stand up for themselves*

*Men blame women for provoking them by wearing short dresses*

Myth- breaking around *why sexual harassment happens*, and *the power struggle at play* were also discussed. Intersectionality of class, group and the scenarios in different cities was also briefly touched upon.

Students themselves provided a socio-cultural understanding of why women do not voice out their discomfort with sexual harassment. Teachers of the college were also engaging actively with the discussion and voicing out very relevant ideas and observations.

Over 120 students attended the session. Despite such a large group, the session worked very well, as the students very enthusiastic about sharing their experiences and also what proactive measures they have taken in voicing out their protest. In this context it was also a good time to discuss different strategies that could be used at different points of time depending on how much of a crisis there is, in terms of handling sexual harassment and voicing your protest.

The students also expressed that they would like to take up the initiative of doing outreach programs on the issue and asked if JAGORI could also be involved. They also thought about making everyone vocal on the issue, especially the freshers. Teachers also expressed the need to have a more active WDC within the college and to get deeper into the issues of gender and sexuality.