

CONCEPT NOTE

The #MeToo campaign that began with Tarana Burke and followed the Harvey Weinstein scandal in Hollywood led to an outpouring of testimonies on social media of women who recounted traumatic incidents of sexual abuse at workplace. In the midst of this raging controversy came a young law student Raya Sarkar's crowd sourced list of alleged sexual harassers in academia that included renowned academics from top-notch universities in India. The publication of this list on facebook was immediately followed by a statement by veteran Indian feminists damning the list with an appeal to withdraw it and to follow institutional mechanisms of 'due process'. This led to a fierce controversy and a divide with strong opinions being expressed on both sides. Despite the polarisation on feminist politics and strategies, the emerging discourses have been unanimous in noting the preponderance of sexual violence in Indian academe. Now that the debates on the list-statement controversy have abated to a certain extent it's time perhaps to move towards greater conversations on the gendered nature of our academic campuses in order to see sexual harassment in the larger academic misogyny that surrounds us, and not in isolation.

We wish to map and understand how the gender regime is constructed and reinforced on campuses through routine, taken for granted acts like manipulation of gender spaces by dominant groups, discounting women's opinions and ignoring their preferences at multiple levels, objectifying them and overriding their objections, patronising them on cells, committees and associations on campus that express misogyny and sexism to produce a systematic patriarchal order. 'That women are weaker than men is scientifically proven', 'that men's predatory behaviour is natural and biologically driven by their hormones hence women should not provoke them either through their dress or behaviour', 'that it's best for women to stay within limits and not transgress' are commonly heard refrains. Such comments produce a hegemonic system that normalises sexual transgressions and lends a certain legitimacy to it.

The list-statement controversy has enabled greater conversations around sexual harassment in academia and has forced a reflection on male power and entitlement. The challenge for us as academics is to ensure that these conversations do not go back to being mere whispers. We identify three directions for deliberations. One, we must ask how and why campuses that are meant to be enabling and emancipatory spaces become entrenched in different layers of 'casual' and benevolent sexism. How do we make safe listening spaces, virtual and physical, for sharing experiences? Is casual sexism unrelated to violent sexual assault or does it feed into the larger canvas of misogyny and patriarchy? How do we address class, caste and other privileges? Two, though 'due process' has come under the scanner for its inability to comprehend the full range of behaviours that are considered inappropriate and offensive, mustn't we strengthen institutional and structural mechanisms of redressal, prevention and prohibition of sexual harassment? How does one plug the loopholes in due process? Especially for women who are at the margins and peripheries of academic spaces and sites? Do we need to go beyond a purely legalistic view to deliver justice? Three, as academics, we recognise the deep rooted gender bias in our academic disciplines- at the theoretical, methodological and substantive levels. Linking this bias to the prevalence of sexual harassment, especially in the classroom, is a task we need to undertake. Building a collective will to work towards shifts in curriculum and pedagogical strategies across disciplines to introduce gender sensitive ideas and practices would go a long way in developing less misogynist academic cultures. Through a National Seminar on March 6th, a National Symposium on March 7th, an Outreach Day on March 8th, we wish to collectively deliberate on the #MeToo Movement in particular and Sexual Harassment at Workplace in general. We invite different constituencies of the University and the public at large to observe International Women's Day and Savitribai Phule Punyatithi Diwas. The three day programme is open to all.

To register visit: <http://goo.gl/forms/eTDUw669rfk>



Women's Development Cell, University of Mumbai

&

Gender Issues Cell, K.C. College, Mumbai

Organise

A Three Day Annual Event on the occasion of International Women's Day & Savitribai Phule Punyatithi Diwas

On

Gendered Academic Cultures & Sexual Harassment in the Academia: #MeToo & Beyond

National Seminar, National Symposium & Outreach Day 6th – 8th March, 2019

NATIONAL SEMINAR**DAY 1: WEDNESDAY, 6TH MARCH, 2019**

Venue: Pherozechah Mehta Auditorium, University of Mumbai, Kalina Campus

Theme: Reflecting on #MeToo in the Academia: Learnings from the Women's Movement and the Way Forward.

10.00 a.m. to 10.30 a.m. Registration and Breakfast

10.30 a.m. to 11.00 a.m. Morning Session

Opening Remarks: Gita Chadha, Chairperson, UWDC:

Meher Bhoot, Member secretary, UWDC

Address by: Dr Hemlata Bagla, Principal, KC College

11.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. Round Table I

Lead Speaker: V.Geetha, Co-director and Publisher, Tara Books and Feminist scholar and activist

Discussants: Gita Chadha, University of Mumbai;

Kanchana Mahadevan, University of Mumbai;

Monica Sakhrani, feminist lawyer and activist; Rowena

Robinson, IIT Mumbai; Varsha Ayyar, TISS Mumbai;

Aashika Bhargava, AUD, New Delhi

Chair: Chayanika Shah, LABIA

1.00 p.m. to 2.00 p.m. Lunch

Afternoon Session

Round Table II

2.00 p.m. to 4.00 p.m.

Lead Speaker: Mary John, CWDS, New Delhi

Discussants: Leena Pujari, K C College; Nivedita Rao, K C

College; Putul Sathe, SNDT;

Poushali Basak, TISS Mumbai; Smita Shukla, University of

Mumbai; Veena Gowda, Feminist Lawyer and activist

Chair: Chayanika Shah, LABIA

4.00 p.m. to 4.30 p.m. Tea

4.30 p.m. to 5.30 p.m.

Open Session: Sharing IC experiences: Participants'

Insights

Moderators: Gita Chadha and Meher Bhoot

5:30 p.m.

Vote of Thanks: Anuradha Majumdar, Member, UWDC

NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM**DAY 2: THURSDAY, 7TH MARCH, 2019**

Venue: K C College, Churchgate, Mumbai

Theme: #MeToo: Conversations and Expressions Beyond the Academia

9.30 a.m. to 10.00 a.m.

Registration and Breakfast

10.00 a.m. to 10.30 a.m. Morning Session

Welcome Address:

Dr.Hemlata Bagla, Principal, K.C. College, Mumbai

Opening Remarks:

Leena Pujari and Shalini R Sinha, K.C.College, Mumbai

10.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.

Panel Discussion 1: Talking Across Cultural Domains

Panelists: Bharati Kapadia, Visual Artist; Divya Kandukuri, Journalist; Mahima Kukreja, Poet and Comedian; Meena Menon, Journalist; Swarnamalya Ganesh, Classical Dancer; and Vinta Nanda, Filmmaker

Moderators: V.Geetha Co-director and Publisher, Tara Books and Feminist scholar and activist and Mary E. John, CWDS. New Delhi

12:30 p.m to 1:30 p.m

Panel Discussion 2: Students' Voices: Reflecting upon #MeToo

Student Collectives: Himani, Ambedkar University, Delhi; Shen, Ambedkar University; Pournima Yeshwant Arvel, TISS Mumbai; Akanksha Singh, TISS Mumbai

Moderators: Poushali Basak, TISS Mumbai & Ashika Bhargava, AUD Delhi

1.30 p.m. to 2.30 p.m. Lunch

Afternoon Session

2.30 p.m. to 3.30 p.m.

Performance 1: Nayika Interrupted: Exploring consent in Kathak

Beej School of Kathak followed by discussion with Sanjukta Wagh, Founder of beej

Performance 2: Open Mic Expressions

3.30 pm onwards

Led by Ruben Mascarenhas, Co-founder 'Litmus Test Project'

5.30 p.m.

Vote of Thanks: Shalini R Sinha, K C College

OUTREACH DAY**DAY 3: FRIDAY, 8TH MARCH, 2019**

Venue: Marathi Bhasha Bhavan, 2nd Floor, University of Mumbai, Kalina Campus

Theme: Upholding Women's Space and Rights at Workplace

10.00 a.m. to 10.30 a.m.

Breakfast & Tea

10.30 a.m. to 11.30 a.m. Morning Session

Welcome Address: Meher Bhoot, Member Secretary, Women's Development Cell, University of Mumbai

Panel Discussion: Challenges of Sexual Harassment at Workplace

Panelists:

Vandana Mahajan, University of Mumbai; Sanjana

Sawant, Member.UWDC; Daivata Patil, University of

Mumbai; Shefali Pandya, University of Mumbai, Swati

Medhekar, UWDC

Moderator: Shama Dalwai, UWDC

11.30 a.m. to 1.30 p.m.

Interactive Workshop on Theories, Techniques and Tools of Self Defence at the Workplace by Daiwashala Giri, Gender and Health Trainer

1.30 p.m. to 2.30 p.m. Lunch

Afternoon Session

2.30 p.m. to 5.00 p.m.

Venue: Pherozechah Mehta Auditorium

Performance: 'Sangeet Bari' directed by Savitri Medhatul and written by Bhushan Korgaonkar

5.00 p.m. to 5.30 p.m.

Open Session

Moderator: Gita Chadha, Chairperson.UWDC

5.30 p.m.

Vote of Thanks: Yogini Ghare, Member, UWDC