

REPORT ON THE TWO-DAYS NATIONAL SEMINAR ON ‘WOMEN, VIOLENCE AND LAW: AN INTIMATE INTERROGATION’

Date of the Seminar: **December 5-6, 2014**

Venue: **Seminar Hall, NSOU Head Quarters, DD 26, Sector-I, Salt Lake City, Kolkata – 700064**

Introduction

The Women Harassment Prevention Cell (WHPC) of Netaji Subhas Open University organized a Two-Days UGC-DEB Sponsored National Seminar on ‘Women, Violence and Law: An Intimate Interrogation’ on December 5-6, 2014. This brief report presents a summary of different aspects of the organization of the seminar.

The first idea of the seminar was conceived in the meeting of the WHPC after the successful holding of the National Workshop on ‘Gender Sensitization and Women Empowerment: Issues and Challenges’ in 2013. The WHPC members unanimously decided to hold a two-days national seminar to interrogate the question of violence imposed forcefully on the lives of women and the possible role of law in resisting and eradicating this violence. Two important decisions were taken to organize the seminar successfully. First an ‘Organizing Committee’ would have to be constituted; secondly, concept note along with ‘Call for Papers’ would have to be floated in the official website of the NSOU. These two decisions came to be immediately materialized after getting approval from the Vice-Chancellor.

The ‘Call for Papers’ got a very good response. The Organizing Committee received more than fifty abstracts. Following the decisions of the ‘Committee’, all the papers were reviewed twice, and the final number came down to seventeen (including the joint papers).

In order to make the effort meaningful in true sense of the term, the Organizing Committee sketched an elaborate programme of the Day – 1 and Day – 2 of the seminar. The details are given below:

Day – 1: December 5, 2014

Inaugural Session

Professor Samita Sen Vice Chancellor, Diamond Harbour Women’s University, West Bengal delivered the keynote address after the welcome address by Professor Debesh Roy, Registrar, NSOU and introduction of the theme by Professor Kajal De, Director, School of Sciences and Chairperson, WHPC, NSOU. Professor Sen elaborated critically the complex aspects of violence and role of law in eliminating it. Professor Malabika Sarkar, former Vice Chancellor, the Presidency University, West Bengal graced the occasion as Chief Guest.

In the Inaugural Session, one of the most notable events was the formal release of Edited Volume titled ‘Gender Sensitization, Women Empowerment and Distance Education: History, Society and Culture’ by Professor Malabika Sarkar. This volume may be regarded as important contribution of NSOU in the understanding of gender questions and role of education, especially distance education, in the larger context of history, society and culture.

Professor Subha Sankar Sarkar, Vice-Chancellor, NSOU delivered the presidential address highlighting the significance of the theme of the seminar.

Smt Nilanjana Chatterjee, Assistant Director, Study Centres Department proposed the formal vote of thanks.

Panel Discussion

The Organizing Committee decided to organize a panel discussion to address the issues of violence and law critically. Three eminent scholars – Dr Nandini Sahu, Associate Professor, IGNOU, Professor Pushpa Mishra, Former Principal, Bethune College and Professor Apurba Mukhopadhyaya, Netaji Institute for Asian Studies – analyzed the different aspects of the types of violence, literary expressions, role of laws, psychological aspects of violence etc. Professor Malabika Sarkar chaired the session of Panel Discussion.

Technical Session – 1

In the first technical session, Sri Champak Bhattacharya, IPS, Jt. Commissioner of Police (Orgn.), Kolkata was the invited speaker. He explained the role of police as an institute in eliminating the act of violence imposed on women. Apart from the speech of invited speaker, four paper presenters discussed the issues related to women, violence and law. Professor Amal Das, University of Kalyani chaired the session.

Day – 2: December 6, 2014

Technical Session – 2

In the second technical session, Smt Rahima Khatun, Nari-o-Sishu Kalyan Kendra, Howrah enlightened the audience about the ground reality of the condition of women, especially in the context of violence and law in the rural areas. In this session, six papers were presented and discussed. The session was chaired by Dr Santanu Rakshit, Visva Bharati University.

Technical Session – 3

In the third technical session, four papers were presented. Professor Kajal De, NSOU was the chair of the session. This session was also followed by a question-answer session.

Valedictory Session

In the valedictory session, Dr Chandan Basu, Assistant Professor of History and Organizing Secretary, Seminar Committee and Professor Kajal De, Chairperson, WHPC briefed the participants about the past activities and future programme of the WHPC. Professor Jayati Gupta, West Bengal State University delivered the valedictory address. She not only summarized the previous discussion very aptly, but also threw light on newer and rather neglected areas of research and activities, especially the issues of violence related to the handicapped or differently abled women. At the end, the certificates were distributed among the participants.

Conclusion

The WHPC team of NSOU is proud to organize this seminar successfully. However, they are aware of the fact that it has increased their responsibility. In future, this team is committed to contribute more regarding the issues of gender and women questions within its framework.