

National Seminar organized Women's Development Cell, Kalindi College, University of Delhi on "Legal Awareness Programme"

Convener: Dr. Anita Tagore

The Women's Development Cell, Kalindi College, the University of Delhi with the support of the National Commission for Women (NCW) organized a one-day National Seminar on "Legal Awareness Programme" on March 4 2020. The inaugural session was graced by Guest of Honour and Keynote Speaker Prof. Pralay Kanungo, DAAD Guest Professor, University of Heidelberg, Germany, Chief Guest Ms. Bandana Kumari, Honorable member of Legislative Assembly, Government of NCT Delhi along with Special Guest Ms. Seema Gupta, Chairperson, Delhi Social Welfare Board, Government of NCT of Delhi.

The inaugural function began with the inaugural address by Dr. Anita Tagore, Convenor, Women's Development Cell and "Legal Awareness Programme". Dr. Tagore apprised the audience of the major themes of the seminar such as violence against women and laws which pertain to rape, sexual assault, and domestic violence. Dr. Tagore further spoke of the importance to recognize the preventive and punitive measures to address this issue, and highlighted that the main aim of this program is to promote consciousness about the rule of law, and public intervention to facilitate delivery in the justice system.

The inaugural function proceeded with the welcome note by Dr. Anjula Bansal, Principal, Kalindi College. Dr. Anjula Bansal welcomed the gathering and congratulated the Convener Dr. Anita Tagore for organizing a successful event. Dr. Bansal thanked the National Commission of Women for collaborating with the Women's Development Cell, Kalindi College, in organizing the one-day seminar. She highlighted the need of the hour to address these issues of crime and violence against women and hoped that the seminar shall be able to raise awareness on such a sensitive issue. Many prominent honorable guests and experts from across disciplines addressed the gathering with their valuable perspective on the issue pertinent to the seminar. Ms. Bandana Kumari addressed the gathering ardently by bringing her own experience of working on the field and in policymaking that concerns the life of women in Delhi. She spoke of various social and cultural factors that prohibit women from being assertive and shared her own experience of dealing with various familial issues as well as remaining socially active in her political role. In his Keynote address, Prof. Paraly Kanungo highlighted the main concerns of the seminar from a historical perspective. He extensively spoke about the historical and social system of patriarchy that has always privileged men over women. The address by the Special Guest, Ms. Seema Gupta, emphatically argued for a more active engagement of common citizens and especially women to come out and expose the nature of crimes committed by men. She maintained that how the Delhi government has been instrumental in ensuring women's safety by implanting various measures and policies to prevent crimes and promote equality between men and women.

Technical sessions on Laws related to sexual Assault, Rape and Domestic Violence was organized. In the first technical session, Prof. Shaveta Gagneja and ACP Sunita Sharma, SPUWAC spoke in great details about laws related to sexual assault. The Self Defense training team of SPUWAC also demonstrated simple techniques of self-defense for the students to follow. The Second Technical Session discussed the Laws related to Rape and Domestic Violence. Dr. Vageshwari Deswal and Dr. Anita Tagore spoke on the different provisions of the laws that address the question of rape and Domestic Violence. Both the sessions were attended by large number of students, teachers and staff.

The Valedictory session also saw an august gathering of persons of law making and law enforcement agencies to engage in a meaningful discussion with students on various issues of gender justice. The first speaker of the Valedictory session was Ms. Monika Bhardwaj, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Delhi Police. She remarked that she would like to remove the category of women from vulnerable sections of society and for that to happen we should all be aware of the basics of law. She spoke about the various IPC sections that deal with women and law. She encouraged women to be courageous so that they can take responsibility for themselves and report the crime. She concluded her speech by advising everyone to download Delhi Police's Himmat Plus app, a novel venture by the police system for ensuring safety of women.

The second speaker of the session was Ms. Sarika Chaudhary, Hon'ble Member, Delhi Commission for Women. She discussed the importance of having women's development committees in institutes. She explained how there is a need to create spaces of free speech for women by coupling it with various real-life examples. The basic requirement of the hour is to ensure that equality be taught and practiced at home, only then could it become a reality in society. She commented on the fact that the country's system was such that it becomes extremely difficult for women to pursue a case in court and that it was high time that the police stop sending cases of severe physical abuse to Crime against Women cells, instead section 307 and 308 of IPC could be used in such scenarios. NCW has been active in taking rights-based awareness to local levels which has led to an increase in reporting of crimes.

The third and final speaker of the day was Shri Sanjeev Jha, Hon'ble Member of the Legislative Assembly, Govt of NCT of Delhi. He said that while it was essential to be aware of laws, laws by themselves were not a deterrent to crime. The problem exists with the mindset of people. In a patriarchal society, the dominating gender expresses its domination with repression of the other. This mentality needs to be addressed, which can be done only by raising one's voice. The government, he said, was doing its part by trying to create a sense of security by putting streetlights and cameras on roads, protection officers in buses, but the first call for change has to emanate from the grassroot voices. In conclusion he thanked the organizers and the audience for creating space for such an essential dialogue.