

**Women's Development Cell  
Annual Report (April 2020 to June 2021)**

The Women's Development Cell (WDC) at the college actively promotes gender awareness and equality through its planned activities each year, and the program budget is approved by the principal. Every year, the committee lines up a session on an topic on gender requiring awareness in the July month, celebrates the friendship day in August, conducts the Kranti Jyoti Savitri bai Lecture series in January and culminates it with the observance of the International Women's Day in March month.

WDC Committee (June 2019)

<b>Dr Prabha Tirmare-</b> Convenor
<b>Dr Renu Shah and Dr Smita Bammidi</b> – Members from teaching Staff
<b>Ms Sulabha and Mr Wilson-</b> Members from non teaching Staff
<b>Ms Asha Gaikwad (MSW II) and Ms Vaishali Singh (BSW III)</b> - Student Representatives

In the year 2020, March month saw the offline celebration of women's day week as well as the Kranti Jyoti Lecture Series at the college. The report has been submitted to the college.

In the Academic year Apr 2020 to June 2021, due to the lock down situation imposed due to COVID 19 pandemic, two events of the WDC were planned and held on an online platform. The committee met online a few times in Dec 2020, to plan the activities for the academic year and the tentative plan as well as budget was presented to the principal and staff in the college.

Each activity was taken up by delegating tasks of preparing a program schedule, an invitees list, creation of meeting link, posters for publicity, invoice to the college and the invitation letters to the speakers. The students were assigned for master of ceremonies and preparing posters and the report, while staff gave the significance of event, vote of thanks and refined the report of event.

## **The 190<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of Savitribai Phule 10th Kranti Jyoti Savitribai Phule Lecture Series**

Theme:

Women's Wisdom in Pandemic: Recalling Savitribai's Response in Crisis and towards Social Change

*Date & Time:* 25<sup>th</sup> January 2021 & 2 to 4 pm

*On Line Platform:* MS Teams

*Total No of Participants* -150

Speaker of the Lecture Series – Kamala Bhasin

### **Welcome and Start of the Event**

The lecture series program began with the Master of Ceremonies extending a warm welcome to everyone, followed by the college prayer (Chalo Jindagi Ko Azad kar de) which gave a very peaceful and inspiring start to the event.

### **Formal Welcome**

The formal welcome was delivered by Dr. Lidwin Dias, Associate Professor and Principal. She said that we all are glad to have Kamla Bhasin as the speaker for today's program. Despite the COVID 19 situation, she appreciated how the proactive Women Development Cell team have been successful in organising the lecture series in an Online mode on 25th Jan, 2021. She spoke about the great regard she and all of us hold (especially in India and also world over) for Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule and Jyotiba Phule the empowered couple, who not only started a school for the girls when education was not considered as their right, but also brought awareness against many of the social evils and mainly fought against gender based discrimination. She ended her formal welcome with a powerful saying -

“Let's be responsible human beings, and in an united way, bring change by fighting against social evil”

### **Monologue Act on Reflections of Kranti Jyoti Savitribai Phule on her learnings from her life and work (Ms. Mayuri Lad –MSW II)**

The monologue of the Kranti Jyoti Savitribai Phule conveyed the message on the emphasis for the social development of women and expressed the deep concern for those women who still struggle with hardships in their lives, especially during the pandemic crises. It is sad that they have to fight for the right to education, against the evil social practices and the discrimination

that women still face in the society. Also, she expresses the concern about the safety of the every human due to the COVID 19.

The Monologue Act ended with the singing of the motivating song “Shahu Petali Mashal”

### **Introduction of the Speaker of Lecture Series**

The Master of Ceremonies called upon Dr Prabha Tirmare, Convenor, WDC to introduce and welcome Kamla Bhasin. Bhasin has been actively engaged with issues related to social development, gender empowerment, girls education, responsible media and other socially relevant issues since 1970. Currently, she works with Sangat – A Feminist Network as Advisor as well as with JAGORI, A Women’s Resource and Training Centre and with Jagori Rural Charitable Trust, she is an active member. She is actively engaged with several initiatives at a time- she is the South Asia Coordinator of One Billion Rising, a global campaign to end violence against women and girls; Co-Chair of the Worldwide Network for Peace of Women across the Globe; and member of South Asians for Human Rights (SAHR). Prior to this, she worked with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations for 27 years.

Bhasin is deeply engaged with issues related to gender equality, men’s transformation and masculinities, feminisms, sustainable livelihoods, peace, identity politics, militarization, human rights and democracy and seeks to explore and articulate connections between these issues and to promote synergies between different movements. Her main work is at the South Asian level, and has included capacity building of South Asian and other young activists and networking amongst civil society organizations in South Asia. She has also been conducting gender sensitization workshops for senior non-governmental organization leaders and managers, government officials, police personnel, and members of Parliament in various countries in South Asia.

Bhasin has written and spoken extensively on gender, women’s Empowerment, participatory and sustainable development, participatory training, media and communication. Most of her books are written for activists and development workers. She has also written a large number of songs and slogans for the women’s movement, books for children, and has created many posters and banners for various people’s movements. She is most committed to the creation of a peaceful, democratic and pluralist South Asia.

## **Lecture on the Specified Theme of the Event**

Kamla Bhasin began her talk by saying in Hindi language- “Indian constitution Jindabad”. She conveyed that she was very happy to be invited by Nirmala Niketan College for the Lecture series, and that she always admired the institution for the longest time. She saluted the three feminist founders of the this renowned institution, which for last 65 years has trained many social work professionals to contribute to development of the Indian society in a real sense. She gave reference to the inspiring lines of the college anthem that was played at the start of the program,

*Chalo jindagi ko ajad kar de* (Lets create freedom in the life)

*pyar ki khushbu jindagi me bhar de* (Let us fill the fragrance of love in life)

She felt that when we speak about love, power of love, it should not only be at a personal level, with one’s family but more importantly, we should bring it in our neighbourhoods, school, institutions, and at our work place. Power of love is the biggest wisdom for both men and women, power of love can bloom in the mist of the difficulties.

She took time to reflect on important milestones in Savitribai’s life that can be points of learning for social work professionals like us and everyone in general. Savitribai was married at the very tender age of 9 and Jyotiba was just 13 years then. However, in reality he was not a ‘husband of Savitribai’ but he proved to be her true life partner who believed in the real equality of humans, always showed her immense respect, brought light into her life (back when women were discriminated), and he was strong support system for what Savitribai Phule believed had to be taken up, as a true Feminist thinker.

She made a point that it makes us think that if 190 years ago in spite of the higher levels of poverty, casteism, narrow minded thinking and patriarchy, Savitribai and Joytiba made such a difference in society and women’s lives through their thoughts, actions and behaviours, it gives us hopes of what can be done by us at this point of time when much progress has been made in this area over the years. They could do wonders with the support they got during their journey of social transformation from their life-long friends and supporters- Fatima Shaikh and Usman Shaikh; and this is the biggest example of secular thinking and removal of caste discrimination, when it came to for working for the community. Today we learn about the atrocities due to the caste system on a daily basis, but it is very difficult even now to actually put it in to practice as the higher caste are in a position of power. Bhasin expressed that this is why she has been very

much inspired by the two dynamic couples who influenced social transformation not only in Maharashtra but also in the Indian context.

She made an opening statement while she began to approach the theme of the lecture series, after she convincingly set up the credibility of Savitribai Phule, that the Men leaders of the nation who are in power have taken COVID 19 pandemic situation very seriously, because it is hitting the men, the rich, the higher castes, those in businesses and the elite.

She very specifically mentioned the second (and more deadly) virus and the crisis it generated since ages, that they are not at all focusing properly on, i.e. that almost 100 million of people over the years who have lost lives because of patriarchy values, ideology and its irrational and oppressive systems. Elaborating her sarcastic stream of calling out those in power, she went on to say that there are different kind of viruses which were far more dangerous, disabling and fatal than the corona virus like discrimination based on gender, caste, race of individuals, classist attitudes, effects of poverty, inequality in treatment and so on, but the leaders do not talk about it, because that is not bothering them even slightly, does not effect their lives or current quality of life status.

She emphasised that our constitution has actually gone into a lockdown and its kept only in the books or given lip service; it is therefore our responsibility, taking inspiration from the work and life of the likes of Kranti Jyoti Savitribai, to administer the treatment or vaccine to all these effected individuals who promote casteism, gender inequality, racism, power mongering etc and also to implement the constitutional values into public spaces, family, schools, institutions and that will be the only path to social transformation. Her life is an example for all social work aspirants to go out of the way and work to bring freedom, love and happiness to all as we all deserve it.

Savitribai faced all this viruses but she fought against all this viruses with intellect, strategy, firmness and complete dedication. The life of all the four members has been and shall continue to inspire each and every human being. Hence the lecture series is a reminder to follow their stride. What we forcefully learn from her life and work is- 'We should not only be the messenger but we should actually give the message'.

### **Questions and Comments**

Dr.Renu Shah lead the questions and comments session. Many of the questions were asked by students who were feeling a sense of disillusionment on current situation for the marginalised women, and what can be done as part of real social work, they also asked about what activist roles one can take in bringing focussed change. Bhasin acknowledged the anguish experienced by the student social work aspirants and advised that they have to look out not for 9 to 5 jobs, but make their life as an example for change and to make informed efforts to bring in changes requires, one by one.

The comments were mostly compliments to Bhasin for her very inspiring talk highlighting what we can learn from Savitribai's life, the importance of implementing constitution, and the need for resistance to being change, the excellent analogies made by her to drive home the point of the real issues than the pandemic crisis.

### **Vote of thanks**

A crisp vote of thanks was given by Dr. Bammidi, to thank first and foremost the esteemed Principal who was the reason that we have the valuable support and opportunity to conduct the event, the respected Convenor- WDC, and one of the most motivating speakers in India, Kamla Bhasin who has yet again transfixed and ignited the minds of student social workers and academicians in the field.

On behalf of the team she expressed thanks and gratefulness to each and everyone who played an important role in planning, streamlining and implementing the programme successful, especially, the consistent efforts of all the members of women development cell. She declared the formal close of the event.

### **International Women's Day Observance- 2021**

The Women's Development Cell at the College of Social Work Nirmala Niketan (Autonomous) organized a Panel discussion to mark the International Women's Day 2021 with the Theme- #ChooseToChallenge, to move toward an equal future.

The Theme of the Event was: Ownership, Visibility & Livelihood of Women Farmers: Achieving an Equal Future, and it was held on March 13, 2021 (Saturday) from [2.pm](#) to 4.30

pm. The Key Note Speaker was Smt Neelam Gorhe, Deputy Chairperson, Maharashtra Legislative Council, Mumbai. There was a Presentation sharing by Dr Seema Kulkarni (SOPPECOM), Pune, and the Moderation was by Ms Dipti Raut, TV Journalist and Alumni CSWNN, Mumbai.

The Program began with sharing of the experiences of students Mr. Ajinath Devade MSW 2-representative of Ahmednagar women and Ms Sonali BSW- 3 representative of Warli community women, Talasari. They experienced and witnessed the farming life first hand and their perception of the issues faced by women farmers in these locations were expressed. Both the students shared very relevant issues which women face in the rural places like not having ownership on the land, no fair wages, working for many hours in the farm, facing different health issues, most of the time doing the most difficult and hard work, managing both family and farming. After doing so much work and contributing equally as men, still women do not get recognised for their work.

The welcome address was delivered by Dr Lidwin Dias, Principal of CSWNN College, who explained the significance of observing International Women's Day and appreciated the topic chosen for this year's event organised by the WDC team i.e. women farmers and their hardships. She also hoped that the eminent speakers for the day would enlighten the student's mind and motivate them to work on this issue.

Dr Prabha Tirmare, Associate Professor and Convenor, Women's Development Cell first announced the three winners of "Caption the photograph" competition. This was followed by her reading out the last year's report of WDC activities. Then it was time to introduce each of the three guests speakers of the event.

The Keynote speaker Shri Nilima, shared about the recent budget and the various positives in the years budget for the women. The speaker, Dr Seema Kulkarni gave very enriching statistics about the various levels of contribution and the roles played by women in farming/agriculture. Their invisibility or suppression by the male counterparts in this form of livelihood was also highlighted. Ms Dipti Raut presented information and evidences highlighting the invisibility or minimising the contribution of women farmers. Lack of support, recognition, conducive environment for their involvement, of land ownership, no tailor-made literacy to retain them in

farming and no access to market their produce, & farm widows phenomenon were all highlighted.

The question and comments session that was presided over by Dr Renu Sharma was brief with important questions by the students and also the program was highly appreciated by the students as well as the faculty, as the need of the hour. The program came to formal end with the vote of thanks by Dr Smita Bammidi, who thanked all those who made the program a great success.

**Enclosures:**

Program Schedule

Invitees list

Publicity posters

Press coverage

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