

1. Title: Female Health and Hygiene—Towards Sustainable Sanitation

Organized by the IQAC, Jangipur College and Women's Cell, Jangipur College.

Date: 08.03.2019

**Goal:** One of the most pressing developmental issues is female health and hygiene especially in a country like India where about half of the population of the country constitute women who lack access to basic hygiene. The problem is severe in rural areas where girls drop out of school because of lack of proper toilets and a whole lot of stigma and embarrassment is attached to the issue of female hygiene especially menstrual hygiene. Not only the evils of poverty and qualitative difference in levels of education amongst masses play a spoilsport, the broader issues of lack of awareness and sensitization on female hygiene add on to the woes of women. Things have gone bad to worse with the passage of years and any talk on menstruation and menstrual hygiene is swept under the carpet. There are significant barriers with regard to comfortable and dignified experiences with menstrual hygiene management (MHM). Girls do not have access to appropriate sanitation facilities; in fact, many adolescent girls do not have toilets at home. Once girls reach puberty, there is significant reduction in their mobility which leads to lack of agency. Once girls start to menstruate they are ostracized, not allowed to roam freely, locked up in rooms, not allowed in kitchens and not allowed to enter temples. Many families in India still preserve such primitive norms and this is how the girls face inexplicable torture and isolation. Therefore, female health and hygiene exposes the fundamental issues of gender disparity and discriminatory norms at play. Keeping in mind such a burning issue, the IQAC, Jangipur College and Women's Cell organizes a sensitization programme.

**Context:**

A great deal of miscommunication that is already prevalent on menstrual health and hygiene creates an impression on formative minds that menstruation is taboo. Therefore, girls feel hesitant and shy to come out in the open and discuss menstrual health and hygiene. Family plays a very important role in magnifying this silence on menstruation especially mothers of girls who think that to menstruate is being "dirty." This attitude is not only a fallacy but also misleading to young kids who want to get the right information on a natural biological phenomenon. Sanitation insecurity and lack of adequate water can cause serious health problems for women who are vulnerable and face social and economic instability. The government of India launched the National Health Mission in 2011 with the aim to raise awareness among adolescent girls on menstrual hygiene. Safe use and disposal of sanitary napkins form a part of this scheme. To raise awareness May 28 of each year is observed as World Menstruation Hygiene Day.

**Practice:**

Apart from the Governing Body President, Mr Bikash Nanda, the Teacher-in-Charge, the Bursar and Convener of the Academic Sub-Committee, Mr Pritimoy Majumdar who spoke extensively on the significance of female health and hygiene, there were two eminent experts as invited speakers who graced their presence in the event. One of them, Suveccha Chakraborty drew the interest of the audience when she shared her experiences of working as an intern in Monobikshan, the first private organization in North Bengal which started comprehensive Mental Health Services comprising clinical psychology, social education, speech therapy and clinical specialties. Menstrual hygiene is inextricably intertwined mental health because period poverty leads to low self-esteem and lack of self-confidence. The speaker boosted up the morale of the young audience as they came on their own in the interactive session that focused on faculty-student interaction of life sharing experiences. The best part of the programme came in the form screening of the Oscar winning documentary short film 'Period: End of Sentence' directed by Raykan Zehtabchi about Indian women leading a quiet sexual revolution. The documentary potrays a group of local women in Hapus, India as they learn to operate a machine that makes low-cost, biodegradable sanitary pad which they sell to other women at affordable prices.

**Evidence of Success:**

Sensitization programme in a sub-urban college is a huge challenge because there are insurmountable barriers in such an ambience where there is great deal of taboos involved in everyday life. Eliciting response from such an audience who face severe restrictions in their lives is a Herculean task. However, this programme was very fruitful as evident from the interactive session where many female students came up with questions and shared their experiences that resonated with the thoughts of some others who were hesitant to speak up. The programme evoked a spontaneous response from students as they could freely speak in absence of male students and from the count of participants which was 72, it is very much clear that many attended the programme to overcome their doubts and hesitation.

## 2. Title—Awareness and Motivation Workshop for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe Students

Organized by the IQAC, Jangipur College and Equal Opportunity Centre, Jangipur College

Date: 13.03.2019—16.03.2019

Goal: Despite the vision and provisions to realise the vision of the makers of the Indian Constitution, a considerable section of the population of our country, who fall into the lowest rung of the social ladder face disinterest, prejudice, abandonment, avoidance, rejection, betrayal, abuse to bullying and unthinkable caste violence. Caste is an ascriptive identity that a person gets by birth and in India a sizeable population are discriminated against because of this identity. This discrimination takes away power and agency from these hapless people especially the scheduled castes and tribes who had nobody to turn to. The fruits of policies did not percolate down to these backward sections of society. The Constitution have provisions enshrined for them but in practice awareness about their social status and deprivation is quite low. Aiming at raising awareness and motivating people for the dismal conditions of the SCs and STs requires a hands-on demonstration of how to tackle such sections in society and how to re-orient ourselves and carve out a behavioural strategy in relation to them.

### Context:

India is a welfare state and welfare for the vulnerable sections of society is a pre-requisite for a functioning democracy committed to welfare rights. Socially disadvantaged groups have received special focus over the years for social and economic advancement. The governments both at the Centre and states have taken exemplary measures with the objective of establishing social, economic equality for SCs and STs. The Sarva Sikhsha Abhiyan is one such measure that focuses on efforts towards education of and empowerment of all children up to the age of 14 years. Therefore, it's absolutely essential to contextualize the plight of SCs and STs in India

### Practice:

The four-day workshop was very eventful with a number of speakers invited to motivate and encourage the students to showcase their inner talents. The first day of the workshop had a heady start with the life experiences shared by eminent research scholar Tulsi Charan Mondal of Chai community. On the second day of the workshop mental health awareness of students was the primary focus of discussion. Few members of Monobikshan, a private organization in West Bengal that deals with mental health and psychiatric help and speech therapy made some remarkable observations. Invited speakers for that day were Suveccha Chakraborty, an intern in Monobikshan specialized in Autistic studies and Applied Psychology. Another speaker who made notable comments was Kashtov Paraguli, who spoke extensively on mental health of students and how poor mental health can be cataclysmic for them. The third day of the programme had in-house faculty member of the college in the first half of the day. Dr Basudeb Chakrabarti, IQAC Coordinator and Associate Professor, Department of English made an ICT based presentation on caste violence and

how Dalits even after more than 70 years after independence are most vulnerable with increasing violence on them and how they witness their lives marred by discriminatory attitudes and rampant violations of human rights. His presentation was followed by the screening of 'Sadgati', a telefilm by renowned filmmaker Satyajit Ray made in 1981 based on the story of noted Indian writer Munshi Premchand. It is a scathing criticism on evils of untouchability and caste crimes. In the second half of the third day of the workshop there was a riveting talk by Mr Biswajit Ghosh, Principal, Ramakrishna Mission Blind Boys Academy, Narendrapur, Kolkata. On the fourth or last day of the workshop a cultural group named Somotot Sanskriti, associated with staging plays and conveying messages on mental health and well-being involved students in their presentation and group activity.

#### Evident of Success:

The workshop drew a rapt audience. All students present had a very enjoyable experience listening to the speakers. They received fresh insights from the speakers and their awareness level was raised. The irrevocable consequence of this workshop was evident in the student participation which was 76.