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# NABA BALLYGUNGE MAHAVIDYALAYA

(Formerly CHARUCHANDRA EVENING COLLEGE)

27E, Bosepukur Road, Kolkata - 700042

Email: nbmv2005@yahoo.co.in, Website: nbmahavidyalaya.in

Topic of the seminar: **Gender Sensitization Programme**

Organizers: **Gender Sensitization Committee, Naba Ballygunge Mahavidyalaya and Notun Parichaya**

Date: **28.03.2024**

No. of participants: **35**

Link to the seminar on Institutional Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D0ku8akpm2w>



The banner of the Gender Sensitization Committee of the college who organized the programme

The banner of Notun Parichaya who came to conduct an insightful seminar on 28.03.2024



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The seminar began with the organisers from Notun Porichoy asking the audience, the difference between gender and sex. With a very a relatable question placed to the students that what are the options in a form they fill in when they ask for sex, the students replied that it is either of the two boxes they have to tick: male and female. This is exactly the reply that the asker looked for because she said that the outcome of the seminar will be sensitizing the students to know that identities cannot be defined by a narrow word like sex and neither can they be limited to the two boxes. Informing the audience that there is a fine difference between sex and gender, that the former is anatomical, genital and reproductive while the latter is a social construct, the organisers distributed some questionnaires among the students with multiple choice questions and they were to tick only one out of it, the choices being yes, no and don't know. The questions were based on the societal differences between masculinity and femininity.

The first statement was men/boys are tough and women/girls delicate. The second statement was women can never be equal to men the in terms of strength. The third statement was it is only women or Mother's who can take care of the children. The fourth statement was, women are characterised by their tenderness and soft-spokenness. The fifth statement was women are not eligible or capable to look after their inherited property. The sixth statement was it was truly manly only if a man flares up manliness in front of public. The seventh statement was it is because of their physical differences and anatomical characteristics that a woman is weaker than a man. The eighth statement was awoman should be kept under strict control in order to be disciplined. The ninth statement was, apart from male and female, all humans are transgender. Homosexuality and bisexuality R mental diseases which are incurable, and this was the 10th statement. The eleventh statement was the passing on of a family from generation to generation is the sole responsibility of a man and a woman is born to go off to the in-laws' family. The 12th statement is that a woman should always have a smiling face, but she should never laugh out loudly. The thirteenth statement is that no matter how many degrees a woman has her first task is to do the household chores. The 14th statement is that if a woman mixes freely with a man, there is a blot on her character. The last and the 15th question was that a man should never express his emotions because that does not speak of his masculinity.



Students from Naba Ballygunge Mahavidyalaya participating in the Gender sensitization seminar on 28.03.2024

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After the questionnaire session, the speaker showed a series of pictures on the slides. Each picture had an activity performed by a person with no prominently visible identifiable masculine or feminine features, with no facial features present, and the question was to identify whether the person performing the activity was a man or a woman. There were mixed responses. Since neither masculine/feminine features were depicted nor facial, the responses were chiefly based on body-structure or performed activities, the speaker deduced that activities are thereby gendered, like the act of washing clothes or caregiving an ailing person at home or bathing an infant, are still normalised as jobs by women and this is where we need to rethink, before labelling activities. The next series of pictures presented, however, had identifiable features clearer than the previous ones. A slide showing a pair of legs was unanimously understood as that of a girl because of the heels in the shoes. A featureless face with only beard was identified as that of a man. The reason for identifying it as a male face was justified because of the "male secondary characteristics". The pictures of a figure with no facial features snake charming, of a teary eyes and of an ear with ring had mixed responses in gender identification. From all these responses, what came up is that it is usually the body structure and the actions performed suggest whether the performer is a man or a woman. It was delightful to see that the students came up with a pertinent issue that it is the family that makes a child's mind gendered and the activities are compartmentalized in the minds as masculine/feminine.



Resource person from Notun Parichaya Team, Parichiti explains the meanings of the questions in the questionnaire, in the seminar organized by Gender Sensitization Committee on 28.03.2024

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The participants listen attentively to the well delivered talk on Gender roles and gender identities and answer the questionnaire in the seminar organized by Gender Sensitization Committee on 28.03.2024

It was heartwarming to see our students coming up with very sensitive and mature responses. It was our pride to see that our students had a very clear Concept about Gender stereotyping and expressing their responsibility to break those stereotypes. Although this report is not meant to show any gender discrimination, yet the college felt proud to see some male students expressing that it is a psycho-social-cultural mistake that our brains have inherited in considering washing clothes, caregiving, feeding a child, cooking as feminine jobs and it is high time we must not pigeon hole or straitjacket work as masculine and feminine. The students said that there are certain anatomical impositions That we cannot avoid, like it is only woman who will be able to carry a child in her womb or breastfeed. But society should come forward to resist against gender stereotyping in the realm of work. Our students who were not much enlightened about the concept of gender bending were much enriched from this seminar. They came to know that Gender bending is the act of dressing and behaving in a way that goes against societal expectations of one's gender. It can also refer to a media work that features people of a different gender than expected. The difference between sex gender and sexuality was also explained using the umbrella term LGBTQ. The speaker explained that lesbianism, gayness and bisexuality are sexual orientations, while transgender is a gender.

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She also briefed the difference between gender and gender identity. "Gender" refers to the social and cultural characteristics, roles, and expectations associated with being male or female, while "gender identity" is a person's internal sense of their own gender, which may or may not align with the sex assigned at birth, meaning it can be male, female, both, or neither; essentially, how someone personally feels about their gender on a deeper level. She explained that as soon as a child is born with a particular genitalia, the society imposes gender on it, and for the rest of the life, the person is expected to perform that society-imposed gender roles. This talk was reminiscent of Judith Butler's theorization of performativity as delineated in *Gender Trouble*.



The speaker explains the terms transgender, transman and transwoman

In simple yet clear terms she explained the meanings of transgender, cisgender, transmen and transwomen. Many identities fall under the transgender umbrella. The term transsexual refers to people whose gender identity is different from their assigned sex. Often, transsexual people alter or wish to alter their bodies through hormones, surgery, and other means to make their bodies as congruent as possible with their gender identities. This process of transition through medical intervention is often referred to as sex or gender reassignment, but more recently is also referred to as gender affirmation. People who were assigned female, but identify and live as male and alter or wish to alter their bodies through medical intervention to more closely resemble their gender identity are known as transsexual men or transmen

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A few slides shown and in an interactive way it is asked to the students to identify the gender of the performing person in the picture, in the seminar organized by Gender Sensitization Committee on 28.03.2024

Conversely, people who were assigned male, but identify and live as female and alter or wish to alter their bodies through medical intervention to more closely resemble their gender identity are known as transsexual women or transwomen (also known as male-to-female or MTF). Some individuals who transition from one gender to another, prefer are to be referred to as a man or a woman, rather than as transgender, said the speaker.

There was another speaker who extensively discussed the transgender term and why are people transgender. It was illuminating seminar as the students formed a clear idea of genderqueer. The speaker said that there is no single explanation for why some people are transgender.

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The diversity of transgender expression and experiences argues against any simple or unitary explanation. Many experts believe that biological factors such as genetic influences and prenatal hormone levels, early experiences, and experiences later in adolescence or adulthood may all contribute to the development of transgender identities. Regarding genderqueer, she said that Genderqueer is a term that some people use who identify their gender as falling outside the binary constructs of “male” and “female.” They may define their gender as falling somewhere on a continuum between male and female, or they may define it as wholly different from these terms. They may also request that pronouns be used to refer to them that are neither masculine nor feminine, such as “zie” instead of “he” or “she,” or “hir” instead of “his” or “her.” Some genderqueer people do not identify as transgender. Regarding the relationship between gender identity and sexual orientation, the speaker said and sexual orientation are not the same. Sexual orientation refers to an individual’s enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to another person, whereas gender identity refers to one’s internal sense of being male, female, or something else. Transgender people may be straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, or asexual, just as nontransgender people can be. Some recent research has shown that a change or a new exploration period in partner attraction may occur during the process of transition. However, transgender people usually remain as attached to loved ones after transition as they were before transition. Transgender people usually label their sexual orientation using their gender as a reference.



The speaker interacts with the students on the term transgender in the seminar organized by Gender Sensitization Committee on 28.03.2024

## Outcomes of the seminar:

- ✓ Awareness of the necessity to break gender stereotypes.
- ✓ Understanding the difference between sex and gender, gender and sexual orientation
- ✓ Formation of perception that gender roles are society-constructed and imposed and there should be no defined pigeonholed masculine/feminine activity.
- ✓ Awareness of the fact that one’s genitalia/reproductive organs do not determine one’s gender identity.

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