

Activities of Independents' Consolidation (IC) focused on issues of gender

2018-2022

Established in the late 1980s by the students of the erstwhile Presidency College, Independents' Consolidation (IC) is a responsible students' platform, and since then it has consistently worked towards the welfare and independent existence of the general students' body. Central among the issues that IC has tried to address in its activities over the years are the politics, conflicts, inequalities and identities surrounding gender. Gender is an important aspect - often overlooked and placed secondary to other issues, but pervasive in all social, economic and political issues that demand attention. In the last several years, IC has attempted to raise awareness on various gender issues - both in conjunction with other subjects, as well as on its own, and undertaken many initiatives to improve scopes of gender equality in campus. Following are some of the initiatives taken by Independents' Consolidation dedicated to the question of gender:

Look Through event on Gender and Love, 2018

Look Through is a students' society for the visual arts (including cinema, photography and art) led by Independents' Consolidation. On the event of the decriminalization of Section 377 of the Indian Constitution (which criminalized same-sex relationships), a film screening and an art exhibition was organized by 'Look Through' at the AJC Bose Auditorium. The event was titled 'Bohe Nirantar Roop Rupantore: Love Beyond Barriers', and involved a screening of *Ebong Bewarish (and the Unclaimed)* (2013), a documentary film depicting the struggles of the LGBTQIA+ community in Bengal, directed by Debalina Majumder. The photography and painting exhibition was titled "Love Beyond Barriers", and attempted to curate efforts to mark the love beyond conventional norms on the artistic canvas. The event, aimed towards gender sensitisation, was attended by 120+ students, and received photography and painting submissions from 50+ students. The event was graced by film director Debalina Majumder.

Shemanto Periyē, 2018 and 2019

Shemanto Periyē 2018

In 2018, initiatives to organize a series of relevant events and activities surrounding gender and other relevant issues were taken by Independents' Consolidation under the banner of 'She'manto Periyē' (She-মান্ত পেরিয়ে). The focus of these initiatives has always been to overcome borders and constraints of all kinds.

A panel discussion was organized on 9 January, 2018 in the AJC Bose Auditorium on seventy years of the Indian Partition. The panelists for the session were Swapnamoy Chakraborty, Abul Bashar, Sadhan Chattopadhyay, and Sanjay Mukhopadhyay, with Mostak Ahamed. The panel discussion was followed by a screening of the film Simanta Rekha, directed by Tanvir Mokammel. The event was attended by over 80 students, with active interaction at the end of the panel discussion.

On 11 January, a debate and a paper presentation event were organised under Shemanto Periyē. These events addressed crucial issues of equality and marginality. The motion of the debate led to questions of whether economic equality could ensure social equality. The Paper Presentation event on "Marginality in social intersections" was held in AJC Bose Auditorium, and brought forward many interesting and relevant papers.

For the purpose of furthering gender equality in campus, the Shemanto Periyē Mixed Gender Sports Week was organized. The events were meant to widen the scope of individuals of all genders to participate together in sports that are traditionally gender segregated. The Sports Week included Mixed gender football, chess, kho kho, cricket, TT, Tug of war, kabaddi and vokatta (kite flying). The games saw enthusiastic participation from the students of all batches and departments, with an overwhelming number of registrations.

Shemanto Periyē, 2019

Following up with the initiatives of the earlier years, Shemanto Periyé organized a series of events oriented towards greater equality in all walks of society. Among them was an array of sports events, under the title, "Khela Bhangar Khela" - with the aim to break various barriers in society, particularly that of gender. Organized from 5-15 February 2019, the events notably included mixed gender kabaddi and mixed gender football. Both the sports events saw participation of over a hundred students.

A panel discussion was organized on 14 February, 2019 in the AJC Bose Auditorium, titled "A Time to Love, a Time to Die". The invited speakers were Kalyan Das, Mostak Ahamed, Eleena Banik, Chaitali Chattopadhyay, and Anurag Mukherjee. The discussion addressed crucial questions about the freedom to love across gender, sexuality, religion, castes and communities, and the atmosphere of surveillance and violence that modern society has repeatedly tried to impose on free voices. With academics, artists, poets and activists speaking on the subject, the event opened up multiple perspectives on approaching violence, love and freedom.

Margins and Beyond, 2020-2022

In February 2020, an initiative was taken primarily by first year students to produce and publish a magazine on issues of gender, aimed as a collective effort to help the voices of the unheard and the shunned be brought forth for all to respect and acknowledge, and echo. The magazine published over fifteen entries in its very first issues from students of all batches, which included critical articles, poetry, artworks and various other contributions.

Any further activities were stalled due to the University campus being closed from 2020 to early 2022. Continuing these efforts to increase awareness on gender and marginality among students, Margins and Beyond resumed its activities after the resumption of campus life in 2022. A call for submissions was sent out by Margins and Beyond on the themes of 'Rights, Representation and Intersectionality'. These broad themes also widened into the sub-themes of women in political crises/conflicts, indigenous movements, religion and women, imagination of women in institutional politics, Dalit and minority rights, patriarchal appropriation of feminism, trans-inclusivity in feminism, rainbow capitalism, women in science, gender, health and body autonomy, and discourses of sexual violence.

With the increased response and participation of students, Margins and Beyond expanded into a forum for celebrating voices of marginalization and resistance. With a focus on the battle of rights, representation and intersectionality especially with respect to women and gender, the publications from Margins and Beyond shifted from the printed magazine to an online platform in the mode of a website, along with offline activities on gender awareness in the physical space of the university campus.

"Resistance at the Margins: Selfhood, Identities, Communities"

The first discussion session of Margins and Beyond in 2022 was held on the 15th of September, 2022 in the A.K. Basak Auditorium. This involved the website launch event of Margins and Beyond, and a panel discussion. The panelists for the session, which was titled "Resistance at the Margins: Selfhood, Identities, Communities" were faculty members of Presidency University, Dr. Garima Dhabhai (Department of Political Science) , Dr. Antara Ray (Department of Sociology) and Debanjana Nayek (Department of English). Over 80 students were present for the event and enthusiastically attended the programme.

Margins and Beyond Orientation Programme

On 19 October, 2022, the convenors organized the orientation of Margins and Beyond with the objectives of a) expanding the forum for the active participation of a greater number of students, especially the newcomers, b) to increase gender awareness and concepts of the marginal and resistance in the younger students through dialogue and engagement. Almost 45 students were present and enthusiastically engaged in the discussion regarding marginality and resistance.

"Women in the Everyday: Voices of Freedom and Unfreedom"

On the 3rd November, 2022 Margins and Beyond organized a seminar at P.C. Mahalanobis Auditorium titled "Women in the Everyday: Voices of Freedom and Unfreedom". The panelists for the seminar were Yashodhara Ray Chaudhury (Poet), Satabdi Das (Author, Social Activist) and Dr Nabamita Das (Faculty, Department of Sociology, Presidency University). The event brought forth multiple perspectives from the speakers - who perceive women's everyday each in their own way, on how the very regular state of existence for women is filled with often

overlooked struggles. Almost 80 students and academics were present from both the university and also from other institutions.

ICON, April 2022

The first students' fest since the resuming of campus life at Presidency University after the pandemic, ICON'22 held in the month of April had a special significance for the students. But Alongside its main objective of welcoming the batches, old and new, into the campus, ICON also made efforts to foster gender equality in campus. Carrying onward with Presidency's progressive politics, the sports events were designed to be as inclusive as possible - where students of all genders could participate together to create a spectrum of new camaraderie. In addition to games like chess or carrom which allowed the participation of all genders, gender exclusive sports too were redesigned to include and promote the participation of students of all genders. Mixed gender football, mixed gender kabaddi, mixed gender cricket, mixed gender Volleyball, mixed gender Relay Race, mixed gender Tug of War with rules of having at least 40% participation from women, received overwhelming participation - with over 50 teams signing up for cricket and around 70 teams for tug of war.