



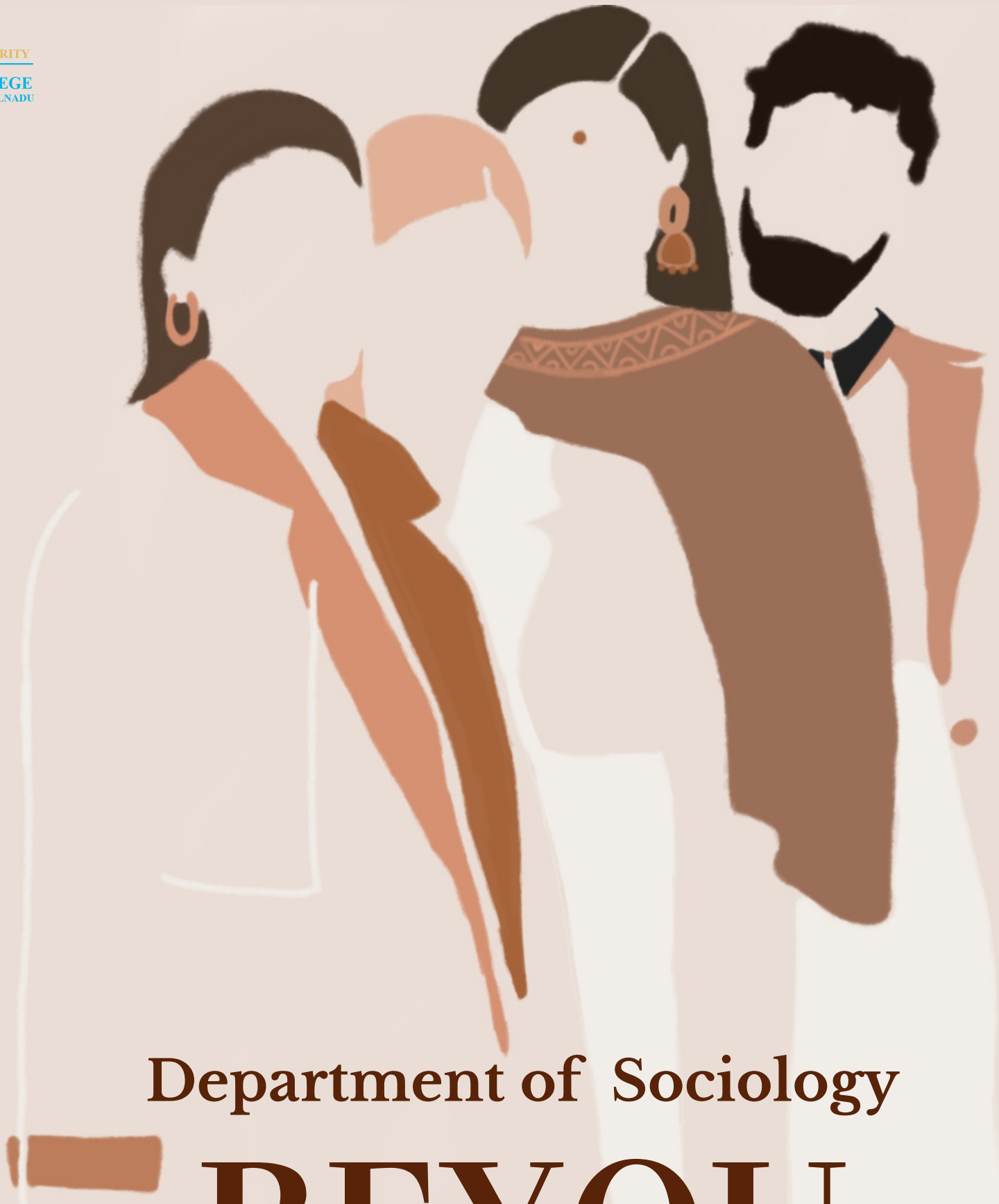
TRUTH

CHARITY

STELLA MARIS COLLEGE  
(AUTONOMOUS), CHENNAI - TAMILNADU



GENDER CENTER  
Be you!



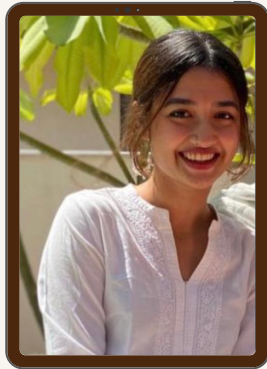
Department of Sociology

# BEYOU

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

FIRST EDITION

# SMCGC Office Bearers 2020 - 21



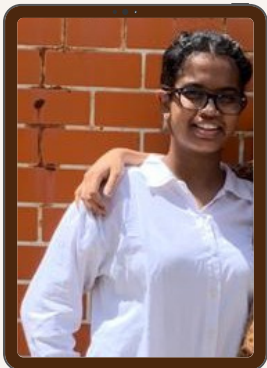
Meera Vijay  
Secretary



C M Devaprayaga  
President



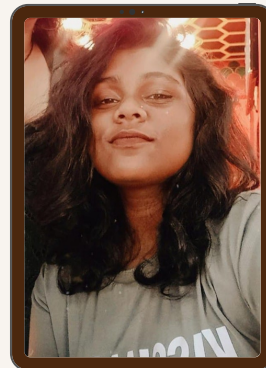
A Anupama  
Treasurer



Reeba Amos  
PRO



K T Vashenee  
Co - Secretary



R Abirami  
Vice - President



S Rithika  
Co - Treasurer

## Editor's note

*"Be yourself; everyone is already taken"*

-Oscar Wilde

We have crossed an unprecedented year, one full of challenges and discontinuities but also one equally of opportunities especially in sustaining our dialogues on matters related to gender. The fruitful outcome of these dialogues is the BeYou!

I am delighted to welcome you to our first edition of our Newsletter, BeYou, an initiative of Stella Maris College - Gender Center which aims to connect, inform and inspire you with reflections on gender and it's asymmetry in society. After grappling with severe challenges owing to the global pandemic, the office bearers of Gender Center have explored new ways in which to understand our changing world and to create an inclusive society within the new normal.



*J. Sasitha*

Director

Stella Maris College Gender Center

## Gender Center's origin

Gender Center is an initiative of the Department of Sociology instituted in the year 2018. It is a product of the collective interests of the students and the department to highlight the relevant issues and concerns in society.

Our objectives are

- to create awareness on gender, sexuality, mental health
- to challenge topics and themes that are considered taboo and disable the shame through conversation
- to shed light on these topics within the context of our country
- to host an equal and safe environment for discussion.

We wish to bring out the best in each and every individual.



# Journal

'20 - 21



*Be You*

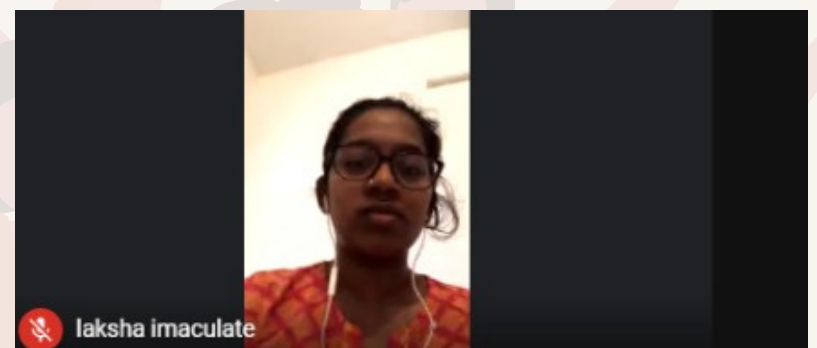
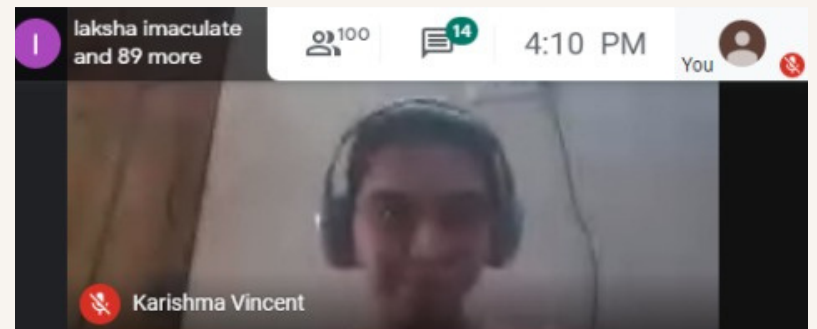


# Back to Basics Workshop

Date: August 21st, 2020

The event began with a prayer by Reeba, PRO of the SMC Gender Center, followed by a welcome address and introduction of the new members given by Head of the Department of Sociology, Dr. J Maria Agnes Sasitha. Meera, Secretary, SMC GC and Rithika, Co - Treasurer SMC GC, were the MCs for the day. The ex - office bearers of the Gender Center gave a brief account of their memories, experiences and takeaways from the Gender Center. Devaprayaga, President of the Gender Center 20-21, introduced the Gender Center, its goals and the plan of action for the upcoming year. This was followed by a menti meter activity where participants were asked to type a word or a phrase that comes to their minds when they think of gender. The event then proceeded on to a forty-minute workshop conducted by the resource person Ms. Karishma Vincent, an ex - office bearer of the Gender Center. Ms. Karishma began with an activity named the 10 second challenge; where participants had to categorize adjectives under masculine or feminine or both. She then moved on with a basic illustration of sex, gender and sexuality. Next, important terms that needed to be familiarized were talked about - Cisgender, Transgender, Intersex, Gender stereotypes, homophobia and transphobia. The talk ended with a discussion on the basics of Feminism and a conversation on the way forward. This was followed by a question and answer session. Vashenee, Co - Secretary of the Gender Center delivered the vote of thanks. Around 90 members participated in this session. The participants filled out a feedback form before leaving the session.

*Inputs: Meera Vijay, Secretary*



## Sensitization program

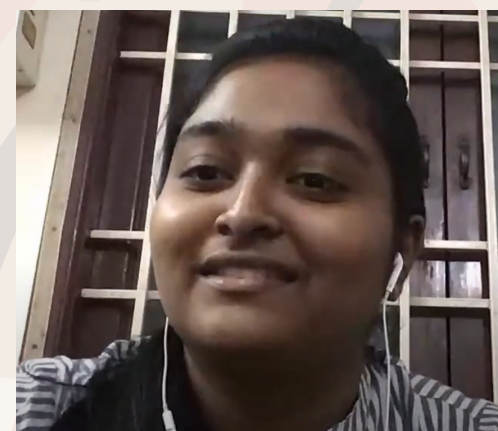
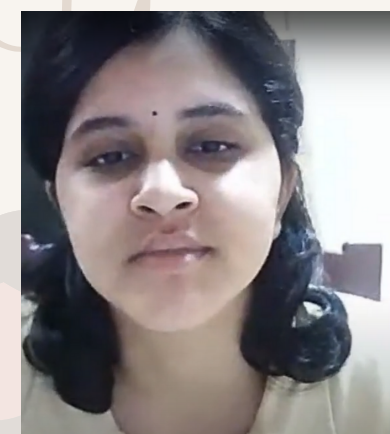
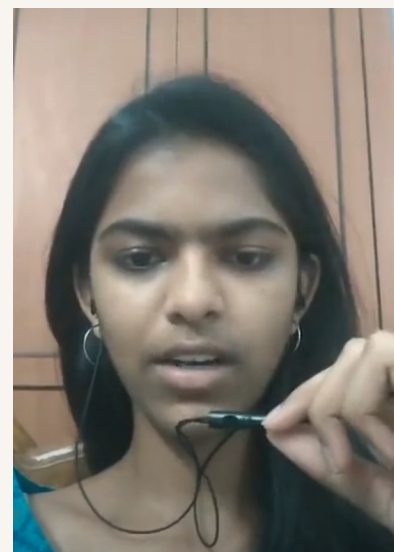
Date: September 26th, 2020

The SMC Gender Center organized a fun, informal interactive session exclusively for the members of the center on the 26th of September at 6 PM. 32 members participated in this session which lasted for 1 hour and 45 minutes. This session was held using Google Meet. The motive of this session was to promote inclusiveness, clear doubts and queries on the purpose and functioning of the center.

The session started with a welcome speech by Abirami, Vice-president of the SMC Gender Center. The session then took off with a brief explanation of the formation of the center and the previous years' happenings. The plan of action for the current academic year was presented in detail by Devaprayaga, President of the SMC Gender Center. This was followed by a question & answer session, and members were asked for their suggestions if they had any.

This was followed by the breakout sessions, where the participants were divided into smaller groups and asked to join another Meet for interactive ice-breaker sessions led by the board members of the SMC Gender Center. The members actively participated in the activities. Later, all the participants were asked to join the original meet. The session ended with positive reviews from the members who participated.

*Inputs: K T Vashenee, Co - Secretary*



# Problems faced by gender minorities in Educational settings and workplaces

Date: October 26th, 2020

SMCGC conducted the third event for the year, a panel discussion on 'Problems faced by gender minorities in Educational settings and workplaces' on 29.10.2020 from 3.30PM to 5.00PM. The event was conducted in collaboration with Nirangal and SAATHII. This also marks the second collaboration of Gender Center with Nirangal. The event was conducted on Zoom platform and was open to GC members, students of IInd year Sociology and colleges across Chennai.

The event was emceed by Vashenee, Co-secretary of Gender Center. The event began with a prayer by Rithika, Co-treasurer of Gender Center, invoking the blessing of Almighty. The welcome address was delivered by Abirami, Vice-President of Gender Center and followed by an introduction of the panelists for the discussion by Meera, Secretary of Gender Center. The event was graced by four eminent panelists; Mr.Sivakumar, Ms. Sankari, Mr. Sridhar and Dr.L.Ramakrishnan. Mr. Sivakumar is the Co-founder of Nirangal, a community based organization working on LGBTIQ+ rights and crisis support. He began the discussion by tackling the introductory concepts of gender and sexuality while Ms Sankari, Co-founder of Nirangal, shed light on the education systems and the challenges faced by minorities. She added a personal touch to the topic by recounting incidents from her own life in school as a transperson. This was followed by Mr Sridhar, who is a professional social worker, explaining his take on problems faced by gender minorities in acquiring work and tokenism in the so-called 'inclusive' workspaces. The final panelist Dr. L. Ramakrishnan discussed the legal and political aspects of gender minorities in the Indian context.

Dr. L. Ramakrishnan is an LGBTIQ+ right activist and vice president at SAATHII, an NGO that works towards stigma-free access to health, rights and social justice for communities marginalized on account of gender, sexuality and/or HIV status.

The event was graced by around 70 active participants. The question and answer session was greeted enthusiastically as students raised questions on level of sex education in Indian education system and need to include education on homosexuality and gender queerness in textbooks. The panelists patiently answered the questions raised in the chat box in detail. The event concluded with Vote of thanks by Reeba, PRO of Gender Center. The feedback link for members of other colleges and SMCGC members were posted separately. The feedbacks received proves that the event had been successful in its aim of creating awareness and encouraging a change towards gender equal educational settings and workplace.

*Inputs: C M Devaprayaga, President*





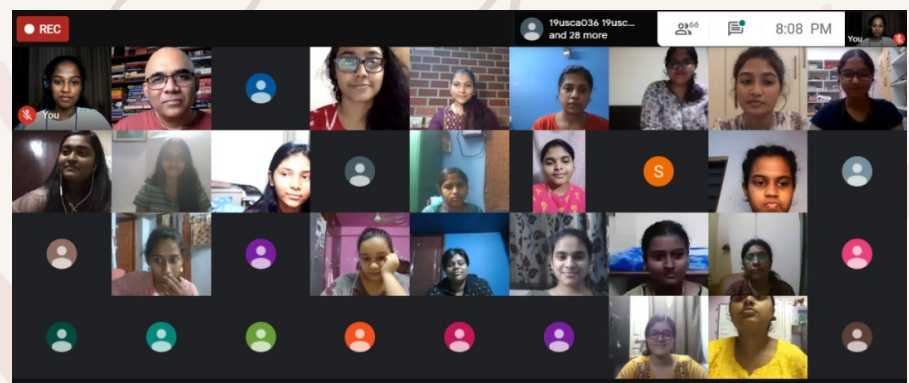
## Lights! Camera! Discussion!

Date: 19th & 20th January, 2021

The event was held over a period of two days- 19th and 20th of January, 2021. The screening of Paava Kathaigal, an anthological series on Netflix, took place on the 19th from 6 - 8pm. This was followed by a feedback discussion on the anthology. The session was moderated by Rithika, co-treasurer of the Gender center. The discussion encouraged a lot of participation from the audience, who expressed their approval and liking towards the anthology for its spectacular portrayal of characters and stories. Particularly, 'Love Panna Uttranum' episode was criticized for its ending which many felt belittled the rest of the storyline.

The movie screening was followed by a discussion on the topic 'Representation of women and gender minorities in the Media' on the next day, 20th January, 2021. The event began with a prayer by Vashenee Thiyagarajan, Co-Secretary of the Gender Centre followed by the welcome address delivered by C.M.Devaprayaga, President of the Gender Center. Meera Vijay, Secretary of the Gender Center introduced the speaker for the event, Mr. Baradwaj Rangan, an acclaimed film critic. The event was moderated by A. Anupama, Treasurer of the Gender Center. The session received a great response from the audience who came from both within and outside Stella Maris College. The participants showed great enthusiasm and were instrumental in having an insightful discussion with Mr. Baradwaj Rangan. The discussion ended with the vote of thanks delivered by R. Abhirami the Vice President of Gender Center.

*Inputs: S Rithika, Co - Treasurer*



## 'Your Honour' Legal series

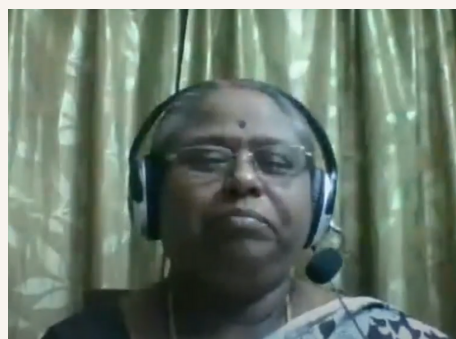
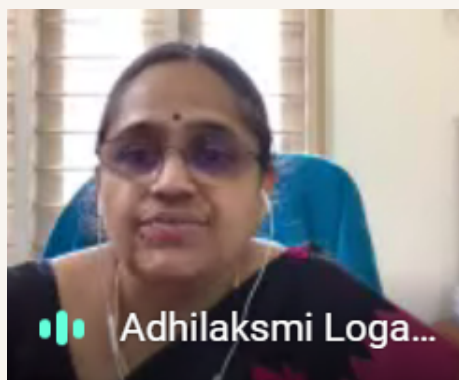
### Session 1: 'Trans-persons Rights and Laws in India'

Date: March 6th, 2021

The webinar titled Trans-persons Rights and Laws in India marked the first session in the legal series 'Your Honour'. It was held on March 6th, 2021 from 4.00 – 6.00 PM.

The event began with a prayer by Vashenee, Co-secretary of the Gender Centre followed by the welcome address by Reeba, PRO of the Gender Center. Meera, Secretary of the Gender Center, introduced the speaker, Advocate Mrs. Adhilakshmi Logomurthy. Through this webinar, the guest speaker explained her personal experience with the transgender community and the current rights and laws they are entitled to in India. Following this, a question and answer session was held moderated by Rithika, Co treasurer of the Gender Center. Finally, the vote of thanks was delivered by Rithika, Co-Treasurer of the Gender center. The session was attended by The Head of the Sociology Department, Dr. Maria Agnes Sasitha and the faculty coordinators of the Department of Sociology; along with students of Stella Maris College. The attendees' remarked that the webinar was extremely resourceful and informative.

*Inputs: C M Devaprayaga, President*



### Session 2: 'A Critical Analysis of Women Centric Laws in India'

Date: March 13th, 2021

The event was scheduled to be held on 13th of March, 2021 as the second installment in the legal series, Your Honour. The webinar, titled A Critical Analysis of Women Centric Laws in India, took place between 5:30 - 7:00 PM on Google Meet.

The event began with a prayer by Abirami, the Vice President of the Gender Centre followed by the welcome address delivered by Anupama, Treasurer of the Gender Center. Devaprayaga, President of the Gender Center, introduced the speaker, Advocate Mrs. Kavitha Balakrishnan. The session was attended by The Head of the Sociology Department, Dr. Maria Agnes Sasitha and the faculty coordinators of the Department of Sociology; along with students of Stella Maris College, Chennai. The webinar focused on the women centric laws present in India, their implications and fallacies. Following the speech by Mrs. Kavitha, the question and answer session was moderated by Rithika, Co-Treasurer of the Gender center, and received a lot of relevant and necessary questions regarding the topic. The attendees were very interactive and a very insightful discussion took place. The event came to a close with a vote of thanks by Vashenee, Co-Secretary of the Gender Centre. The session received positive reviews from the students who participated.

*Inputs: R Abirami, Vice - President*

# International Women's Day Celebration 2021

Date: 8th March, 2021

The International Women's Day Celebration event was conducted by the Gender Center, Department of Sociology and the Women Studies Center on March 8th, 2021. This event hosted five speakers who addressed the college students. The speakers for the day were - Dr. Priscilla Asirvatham, Kalaimamani Thirunangai Sudha, Ms. Sabitha, Project Manager, Thozhi organisation, Ms. Mridhula and Ms. Sakshi, students of Loyola college. The event was held in the Open Air Theatre (OAT) between 9 AM - 10:15 AM. Simultaneously, the live video was streamed in the official Youtube channel of Stella Maris College. The event began with the Tamizh Thaaai Vaazthu and an invocation through dance performed by Devaprayaga, President, Gender Center. Following this, Dr. Sr. Rosy Joseph, Principal, Stella Maris College welcomed the gathering. All speakers were then felicitated by the Principal.

Dr. Priscilla Asirvatham was the first speaker who introduced the theme for the day's celebration. The next speaker was Kalaimamani Thirunangai Sudha, who spoke on the challenges faced by members of the trans gender community, with specific reference to trans women. Ma'am elaborated on the transition process that trans women undergo and the challenges that come with it. In addition to talking about the problems and challenges faced by the transgender community, she also highlighted the achievements of members from the trans gender community.

The next speaker for the day was Ms. Sabitha, Project Manager, Thozhi organisation. She spoke to the students on how Thozhi organisation in association with the government of Tamilnadu, the Chennai police and Sahodaran foundation is actively involved in helping the transgender community gain employment, fight discrimination in society and help integrate the community in mainstream society.

The final speakers for the day were Ms. Mridhula and Ms. Sakshi, who spoke briefly on their experiences, the confusions and mistreatments they faced and how they have overcome everything to be pursuing their dreams now.

This was followed by a music performance by the students of the Light Music Club. The students performed the Malayalam song Bale, on the essence of womanhood. The vote of thanks was delivered by Devaprayaga, President, Gender Center. The emcee for the event was Anupama, Treasurer, Gender Center.

*Inputs: A Anupama, Treasurer*



## Intercollegiate panel discussion

Date: 27th March, 2021

The Gender Center conducted the intercollegiate panel discussion on Perception and Acceptance of queer literature in India on March 27th from 5.00 - 6:30 PM. The panel discussion was held online using Google Meet and attended by 25 people. The guest speaker/moderator for the day was Mr. Chandra Moulee, founder of Queer Chennai Chronicles.

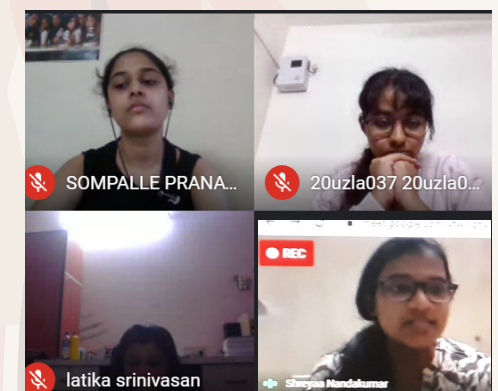
The event began with a prayer recited by Rithika, Co - Treasurer of the Gender Center. Following this, the welcome address was delivered by Abirami, Vice - President of the Gender Center.

After this, Meera, Secretary of the Gender Center introduced Mr. Chandra Moulee, guest speaker/moderator for the day. She also introduced the theme for the panel discussion - 'Queer literature'. The virtual space was then handed over to Mr. Moulee who addressed the participants. He spoke on the importance of the publishing industry in our country which decides the genres of work which reaches us. He further delved into the bias of the industry towards cis - hetero sexual males and their narratives which affected authors of all other gender and sexualities. The question of what makes a book fall under the queer genre was covered too. He spoke on how the inclusion of queer literature would enrich the language, lead to usage of more inclusive language and finally help break the patriarchal structure of the language. Finally Mr. Moulee spoke about the founding and working of Queer Chennai Chronicles, an independent publishing house for queer literature in Chennai.

The panelists were then invited to present on their chosen topics. The first panelist was Shreya CS of Stella Maris College who presented on "Queer theme in Sangam period". Pranathi from Ethiraj College for Women was next and spoke on "Media representation of queer people". She was followed by Latika Srinivasan of Stella Maris College who spoke on "Reasons for society grappling to accept queer literature". The last panelist was Shreyaa Nandakumar from the University of Hyderabad who presented her views on "The importance of fanfiction in queer representation".

Following this, Mr. Chandra Moulee was invited to share his thoughts and comments on the topics presented by the student panelists. This was followed by a question and answer session moderated by Vashenee, Co - Secretary of the Gender Center. Interesting questions were posted and Mr. Moulee patiently answered them all providing great insights. The session ended with the Vote of thanks delivered by CM Devaprayaga, President of the Gender Center. The MC for the event was Reeba, PRO of the Gender Center.

*Inputs: A Anupama, Treasurer*



# Creative Corner



*Be You*



## Validation

Running around in circles,  
clueless, with no voice.  
Seeking for approval from – outsiders  
to feel safe and secure.  
The patterns and traits we possess,  
comes from enduring trauma.  
The fiend inside our heads,  
makes us construct walls – walls  
that has us stuck inside.  
Struggling and fighting battles  
for not myself, but others  
others who hardly know you exist.  
Living based on the validation, given by the people  
people who know nothing,  
knowing for a fact you're much more – but  
accepting it and staying that way.  
Neglecting self approval and running – running  
to evolve into someone poles apart.  
Petrified at thought of mortals,  
would take leave after.  
Oblivious and forgetful about reality,  
through ebb and flow,  
all that we needed was self validation.  
Realizing that we shouldn't succumb to anguish, but  
yearn to live up to our own selves.

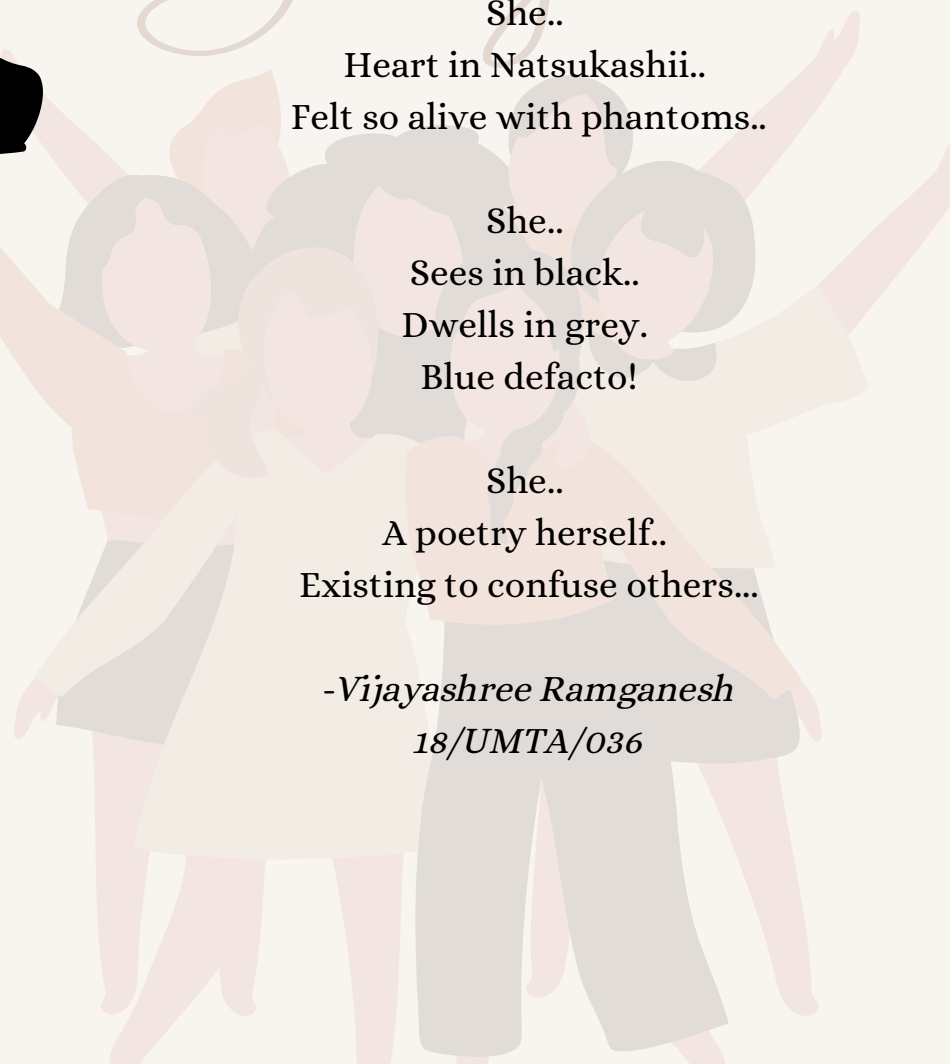
*-Reeba Amos  
19/USCA/040*

## SHE....

She...  
A kingless Queen..  
A knightless Princess..  
Twisted Branches..  
Sielvartas..  
  
She..  
A maze with no escape..  
A million masquerades  
hiding her own..  
  
She..  
Sylphlike stenachoria..  
Silent fighter though.  
  
She..  
Heart in Natsukashii..  
Felt so alive with phantoms..  
  
She..  
Sees in black..  
Dwells in grey.  
Blue defacto!  
  
She..  
A poetry herself..  
Existing to confuse others...  
  
*-Vijayashree Ramganesh  
18/UMTA/036*



*Be You*



## Caged

What if I obeyed my wings and used the key  
For all I did is to believe the heart  
Or mind or instinct or Whatever it was.

As love and Joy crept into my soul  
I wanted to fly with none but you , Of course.

I offered you freedom , Comfort and light  
You filled them in your dark cage

The cage you built for us to stay - within  
Lies the rules, the vows and the gate.

I ventured in, it's the heart's foreplay  
But then I knew my wings won't obey.

I feared for the cold nights you'd stay  
If I peeked a glimpse of the outside.

You chained my wings and locked the gate  
But why you gave the key to me anyways ?

“Fly , but not alone “ the heart again  
The urge, the fear, the trauma is setting in

All this time I obeyed the heart  
Never questioned if it is right or not

Neither opened the gate and flew outside  
While you smiled at me  
Unaware of my struggles inside.

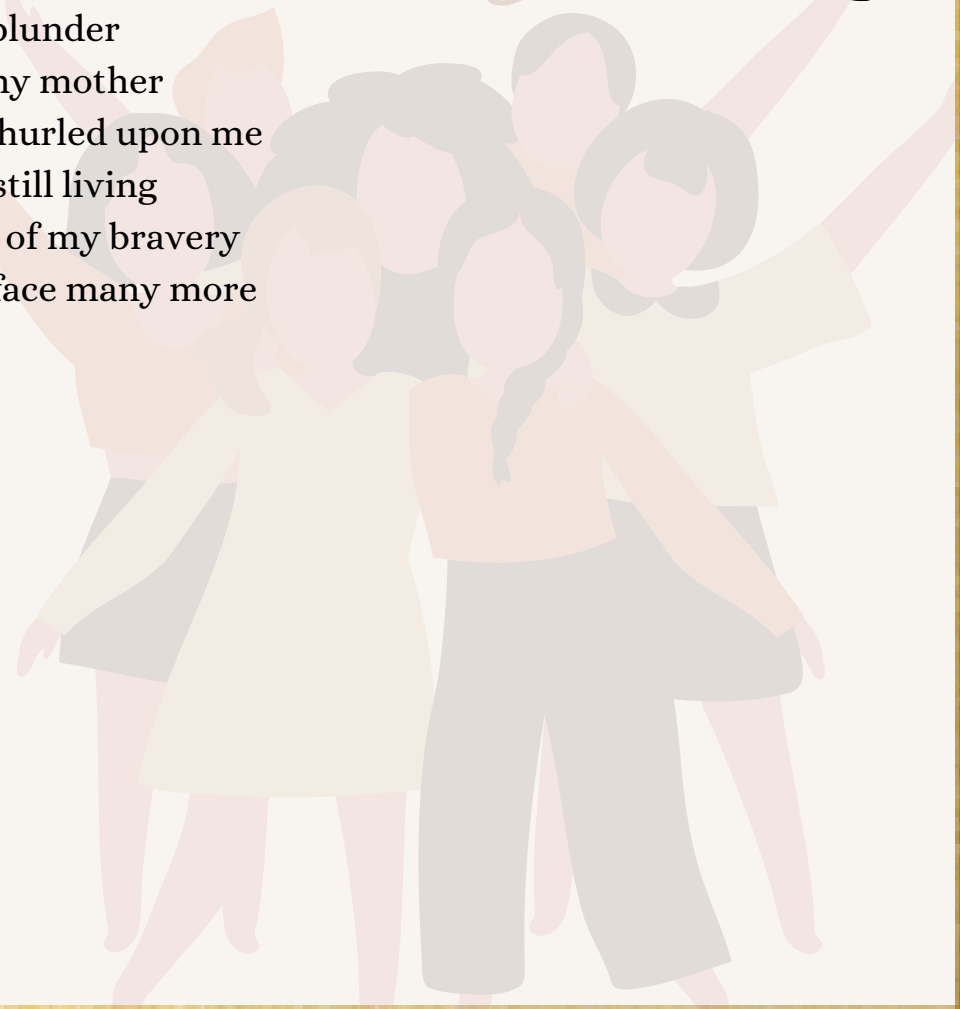
- *Aishwarya R*  
*20/UCMA/317*



## A Warrior

On a cool summer evening with the smell of spring up in the air  
I stood, barely taking anything in there;  
Little clammy hands clutched in despair; Head bowed down as if in prayer  
Sweat and tears trickling down my face; forcing my heart to calm its pace  
I stood there, for an hour, for a while, for an eternity:  
For it is etched in my mind still today  
I stood there shaking like a leaf in the breeze,  
Trying to understand what I did this time; For I was to be punished:  
Not by my foe, but by my protector  
For he was looking down upon me; towering over my little frame  
Seemingly so angry that his hands twitched to hit me; he bellowed: "Say Sorry",  
Until then I was to stand in the cold and dark  
My tears had long stopped and the mosquitoes feasted on me  
I stood there for an hour, for a while, for an eternity:  
For I knew I wouldn't say sorry  
For my little mind could distinguish right and wrong  
I stood there while my little mind tried, not helplessly, but in wonder;  
That the monsters feasting upon the weak is not my blunder  
I stood there till I was rushed in by the warm hands of my mother  
That day, my eight years old self won one of the many battles hurled upon me  
But here I am, nineteen and still fighting, still thriving, still living  
showing off the scars, for they are not shame but medallions of my bravery  
Standing tall and brave, the light in me still shining, ready to face many more  
For I am a warrior.

- Nivetha V  
18/USCA/012



*Be You*





Person in Petunia



The woman NOT in yellow



The woman erased

- Aishwarya Sai S  
19/UCEA/119



**Feedback**

*Be You*



## Members speak ..

*The Gender Center is definitely doing a great work. Through the Gender Center workshops, I came to know a lot about gender minorities, their struggles and experiences. I really enjoyed the movie screening and discussion, which made me think from various perspectives. I feel so happy and satisfied for choosing to be a part of the Gender Center.*

*Thank you.*

Dhaya A S  
20/UCMA/003

*The Gender Center helped me gain a better understanding about various gender identities and gender expressions and the struggles and issues of the gender minorities with their workshops and panel discussions. The webinars organized were always on major and most relevant topics and the discussions with the speakers were always insightful and interesting. I thank the GC for giving us such wonderful and enlightening events.*

Nivetha V  
18/USCA/012

*The center helped me immensely when it came to learning about minorities, women and LGBTQ+ persons' situation. Especially in terms of LGBTQ+ persons, I became aware of their ground reality in India. Generally I hear about the community only through international news, but I got to know about their voice, issues and problems in India and it was an eye opener.*

Hamsini Krishnan  
19/UHSA/027

## Members speak ..

*As a first year with a curious mind, I learnt more than what I expected out of the Gender Center. The exposure towards varied concepts of gender, sexuality, inclusivity and the overall functioning of the society is made possible only through the events conducted by them. Though virtual, I felt a sense of belongingness in every single event that I attended as well as learnt a lot of new perspectives that made me analyse and question many concepts of my own family and the society that I live in.*

Aishwarya R  
20/UCMA/317

*I got varied knowledge about the gender minorities through gender center. The events such as legal series helped me to analyze and understand policies better. Gender Center has been very informative and covered many unspoken topics through its various events conducted over the year.*

K.Niveditha  
19/USCA/017

## Office bearers speak ..

*Being part of Gender Center Committee provided me a platform to develop and hone my creativity, team work and leadership qualities. It helped me to share the lessons I learnt through sociology with others and sensitize the youth around me . It helped me to give back to the society through my small actions and words. The experiences that I have garnered through Gender Center would always be a great lesson in my life.*

C.M.Devaprayaga  
President, SMC-GC

*In a time where sensitization about gender and sexual orientation is the need of the hour, I feel that the GC is a great initiative towards realizing this. This year I got an opportunity to be part of the core committee of the SMC GC. I'm glad that the events held helped students learn different things and view the society through a different lens. I'm happy to have been a part of this center helping to create a more inclusive society. I hope the SMCGC comes up with more innovative events in the upcoming years and reaches a wider audience.*

A Anupama  
Treasurer, SMC-GC

*I joined the Gender Center as part of wanting to contribute, in my own small way, towards impacting positive change in our systems. As Secretary I've had the incredible opportunity to host events with inspiring voices and interact with many women and hear their unique stories. The gender center is a place of new and fresh perspectives.*

Meera Vijay  
Secretary, SMC-GC

## Office bearers speak ..

*Gender center enabled me to explore and understand the various aspect of self and personality, at the same time as the Co-Secretary of the center, it gave me a life learning experience where the interaction with individuals who have diverse ideology and different philosophies gave me a different perspective in life altogether.*

Vashenee K.T.  
Co-secretary, SMC-GC

Being a office bearer of Gender Center has really helped me to develop holistically. Not only learning more about gender sexuality interacting with people is the biggest task learnt. As office bearer Gender Center has given me the opportunity to host sessions and helped me with public speaking and managing different unpredictable situations.

S Ritika  
Co-treasurer, SMC-GC

Embrace yourself

Embrace yourself

Embrace yourself

*“To be yourself in a world  
that is constantly trying to make you  
something else is the greatest  
accomplishment.”*

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Embrace yourself

