

**CELEBRATION OF INTERNATIONAL FORTNIGHT**

**(25<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER-10<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER)**

**PROTESTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

With

**EMPHASIS ON THE PROBLEMS OF ACID ATTACK AND DOWRY TORTURE**

*Organized by: West Bengal Commission For Women*

*Jalasampad Bhavan(10<sup>th</sup> Floor)*

*Block-DF, Sector-1,Kolkata-700091*

**“Need to stop objectifying women”**

The West Bengal Commission for Women organized a seminar on 01.12.2016 from 1pm to 4 pm at Training Hall of the I & WW Department (Jalasampad Bhavan, Ground Floor),celebrated the International Fortnight (25<sup>th</sup> November to 10<sup>th</sup> December) on protesting of Violence against Women ,with Emphasis On The Problems Of Acid Attack And Dowry Torture.

**Delegates and Other Members:**

The seminar witnessed the presence of learned dignitaries viz; Smt. Sunanda Mukherjee, Chairperson, WBCW; Smt.Swati Chatterjee, Member of South Kolkata Sannidhya, NGO; Dr. Sikha Sarkar Aditya ,Member, WBCW; Prof. Chaitali Dutta, Member,WBCW ; Mrs.Papiya Ghosh Roy Choudhury, Joint Secretary, West Bengal(Department of Women & Child Development and Social Welfare);Sri Debasis Banerjee, Advocate, Kolkata High Court; Sri Narbu Wangdi Bhutia IAS,Member Secretary, WBCW & Ex-Officio Commissioner to the Government of West Bengal.And various NGOs were also present viz:-S.L.A.R.T.C;South Kolkata Sannidhya; Gana Unnayan Parshad; Swayam; Pratikar Sristy for Human Society; Paschim Banga Griha Poricharika Samity; Shramik Sahayata Kendra; Durbar

Mahila Sammanyan Committee; Sangheria Pratihar Welfare Society, and other members also.

### **INAUGURAL SESSION**

The seminar commenced with a brief introduction of the topics which were to be discussed and felicitation of dignitaries and introducing them to the audience, the Inaugural Speech was delivered by Smt. Sunanda Mukherjee, Chairperson, WBCW; she said that it is a duty of the Commission to celebrate the fortnight (25th Nov- 10th Dec) protesting violence against women. She briefed about the topics, and said that the seminar will mainly focus on two topics firstly Acid Attack and secondly Dowry Torture. Amidst of many battle and struggle gradually women's rights have been recognized, she said that during Industrial Revolution acid was discovered, it has many disadvantages and advantages but still in today's world or rather within our country acid is used to take revenge, she compared acid with the fire, it is a very brutal substance to destroy women, people mainly men use this substance to deform, destroy, and to disable a women. She also threw light on the other topic that is Dowry Torture, though marriage was a complete and a beautiful affair, but still within that beautiful vows of marriage many disputes arises, some people still consider marriage as a ceremony to collect money for their living, it has become a means to earn a living, through marriage the groom's family earn resources from the bride's family, after marriage also they continuously torture and forces the girl to bring more and more resource or money from her father's house and endow the groom's family with those. She pointed out that the Dowry Prohibition Act was amended on 1985 but it is not that effective, during this years parliament session this act was supposed to be looked into, but no advancement was observed.

**Smt. Swati Chatterjee** who briefed us on acid attack, a member of South Kolkata Sannidhya (NGO), she works mainly with deformity and burn, she have been working on acid attack for many years. She said that now a day acid are used as weapons and poison, acid are still sold in the market openly but only with a good name as "toilet cleaner", and acid is easily available at the shop in the rural areas, so it is easily obtainable by rural people. Acid attack is a heinous crime and

grievous incident, when acid is thrown it not only affects one at whom it is targeted, but to many others who are present at that time and that place besides the victim. She cited many examples of this type of incident, and also presented a power point presentation. She discussed how a woman is crushed down by this society after this attack, not only a girl is physically damaged but also her inner self is burn down, she loses her confidence, her mental stability is totally lost, she is even unable to do her personal work, the working capability of a women is totally lost, and so they are deserted from their family and loved ones. By throwing acid on a girl we not only burn down her skin, but even the facial bones get liquidified that leads to the change in the facial structure, facial hairs are lost and if it is thrown on the upper part of the face, In most cases the eye is damaged and that leads to blindness, even the opening of the mouth is disfigured and for this they are unable to have food as they can't chew the food, and even lower portions can get affected, the injury and the vulnerability depends on the place or portion of acid attack. The treatment is very costly, though the apex court have declared free treatment, and compensation of three lakhs but still many affected have not got the facilities. She remarkably pointed out the the police personel play a very disgusting role in tackling this situation. She even suggested that skin donation or transplanting method can be introduced in Bengal, because a victim has to undergo operation or plastic surgery for over three times, to atleast look better or presentable.

**Rupali Parui** (acid attack victim),Village-Halalpur,Krishnapur,PS-Dhantala,Dist-Nadia.She is a acid attack victim, she was attacked around the month of May, her condition is so vulnerable that she can't speak and even can't stand properly as her spirit is being dampened down by that incident.Then she narrated the heinous incident very painfully, she said that she and her husband was plucking flower in the garden in early hours of the morning ,at that time a person had thrown acid on her ,as she was carrying a torch she had seen the face of the attackers. She was admitted at the local hospital but the authority gave her discharge after seven days, her eye was damaged,she collected money from her well wishers and had undergone the operation,the accused had threatened her and her family that if they treat her and bring back,then they will again hurt

her. She complains that she had undergone treatment from her own money and she still has not received any help from the government or any compensation.

**Madhabi Di**, a burn survivor, she was crushed down by this incident a few years back, but slowly she regained her power and self-confidence and now a member of South Kolkata Sannidhya, she has recently completed her schooling and now she has taken admission for graduation.

**Shri Debasish Bannerjee**, advocate, High Court, Kolkata; apart from being an advocate he is also a Human Rights Activist, he first educated us about the details of each law related to dowry cases, he said that each state has its own provision or rights to change the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961; and so each state can change it according to its own wish. He said that it is not only sufficient to abide by the Dowry Act, but also 498 of IPC should be charged. He remarkably pointed out that dowry taking and giving both should be abolished and both are offences. Then again he said that in rural areas where a parent has to give dowry to get her daughter married on one hand, and on the other if dowry giving is an offence and if cases are charged for giving dowry then where will these people go? Then he also discussed Dowry Prohibition Act 3 & 4. He recommended that if it is possible we can release the bride's family from getting into cases, then more and more cases will be registered. He said that all the presents which are received during a marriage ceremony should be noted down for further use, The Dowry Prohibition (Maintenance Of Lists Of Presents To The Bride And Bride Groom) Rules, 1985. He also discussed 406, 498(A), 304(B) of IPC. He also said that "Stree Dhan" is not dowry, it is the bride's property. He also informed us that if we want to register any cases we can straight away go to the Dowry Prohibition Officer of each district i.e. the District Social Welfare Officer.

Then Smt. Papiya Ghosh Roy Choudhury, Joint Secretary, Department of Women & Child Development and Social Welfare, West Bengal; she said that there are many ways in which the government is helping a girl. Now a days the government is advertising through radio, 92.7 Big F.M., even advertisement and done in different villages and districts. Short films will be shown on different channels by Dec'16-Jan'17. Awareness is given through school and colleges. Kanyashree

Prakalpa was started to stop child marriage so that girls and their parents gets an encouragement to educate their child, and once a girl is educated she can stand on her own feet and can fight with any violence or discrimination, advertisement is also done through different fairs. She also said that joint actions against any cases should be taken by the police and the judicial department. She mentioned that acid stocking is unlawful and the message should be spread everywhere.

She cited an example of acid attack incident of Daspur, where three member of the family was attacked and all of them got compensation of about three lakhs each.

She informed us that we can or the victims can report to the DLSA/SLSA/NLSA, and if in any case the witness thinks that these bodies are working slowly then they can complain to the high court for excess help.

She promised to look into the syllabus of the police training as we find that in most of the cases the police personel are the one who misbehaves the most.

Even she informed us about D.S.W.O. where the victim can lodge their complain and also we have the Women Welfare Committee where we can go and register our problem.

As Rupali Parui complained that still she didn't receive any help from the government, madam then and there took the responsibility to look into the matter, and promised her that she will get one lakh rupees within first 15 days and the rest two lakhs within some more time.

**Prof. Chaitali Dutta**, member, WBCW, delivered a concluding speech summing up the discussion of the seminar. Among the other discussion as stated above she pointed out that, advancement of science has nowadays have become a disgrace; though the numbers of women victims are increasing, but in some cases positive and effective results have been reached. The presence of the victim gives us a clear picture of the sufferings and how their spirits are forced to be dampened, but they are the brave hearts of this heinous society. We the people are a disgrace because we are unable to offer them a velvet carpet to walk through

instead we put burning coals. It is the society that should be ashamed and not them.

The seminar ended with the vote of thanks by the Member Secretary of West Bengal Commission for Women & Ex-Officio Commissioner to the Government of West Bengal Sri Narbu Wangdi Bhutia IAS; and he also promised to support and stand with the commission in future for organizing this kind of seminars.