

Seminar: Women and Peace
Film Screenings and Discussion Organized by

**Department of French (Le Cineclub Francophone),
Department of Philosophy,
Department of Applied Psychology & Counselling Centre, and
Mahatma Gandhi Peace Centre (MGPC),**

University of Mumbai

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Report



To celebrate the occasion of International Women's Day, the Department of French (Le Cinéclub Francophone), the Department of Applied Psychology & Counselling Centre (UDAP), the Department of Philosophy and MGPC organised a cinema event focusing on the theme *Women and Peace*. The session was opened by the panelists: Dr. Satishchandra Kumar

(Prof. & Head, Dept. of Applied Psychology; Coordinator, MGPC), Dr. Vasumathi Badrinathan (Head, French Dept.), Dr. Priya Vaidya (Associate Prof., Philosophy Dept.), and Ms. Claire Puntous (Tutor, French Dept.). Dr. Badrinathan and Dr. Vaidya opened the seminar by discussing the power of arts in expression and the various perspectives that are uncovered through open discussions of powerful cinema.

Dr. Satishchandra Kumar started by tracing the history of International Women's Day. International Women's Day is observed across the world on March 8th. It is a global day that celebrates social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. The day also makes a "call of action" to increase gender equality. The roots of IWD can be traced to 1908, when 15,000 women marched through New York city demanding **voting rights, better pay and shorter working hours**. A year later, the first National Women's Day was observed in the US on February 26th, in accordance with a declaration by the Socialist Party of America.

In 1910, Clara Zetkin, the leader of the women's office for the Social Democratic Party in Germany, tabled the idea of International Women's Day (IWD) at the 2nd International Conference of Working Women in Copenhagen. The proposal received unanimous support from over 100 women representing 17 countries. In 1913, it was decided to transfer IWD to March 8th, and it has been celebrated on that day ever since. The day was only recognized by the United Nations in 1975, but ever since, it has created a theme each year for the celebration. In 2011, former US President Barack Obama proclaimed March to be "Women's History Month."

The theme of IWD-2020 is "Each for Equal", recognizing all the actions we can take as individuals to challenge stereotypes, fight prejudice and celebrate women's achievement. The year 2020 is an important one for gender equality.

Some statistics:

- According to the Global Gender Gap report of 2019, economic opportunities for women are extremely limited (35.4%).
- Women representation on company boards is merely 13.8%.
- According to the World Economic Forum, gender gap will take 99.5 years to close.
- In the Global Gender Gap report of 2019, India ranked 112 out of 153 countries.
- Political gender gap in India will take 95 years to close.

- India accounted for 37% of global suicides among women, and 24% global suicides among men (study published in Lancet Public Health Journal).
- According to the 2011 Indian Census data, there were 940 females per 1000 males. However, this ratio has gone down in the 2019 Census. The 2019 census data reports 930 females per 1000 males. In absolute terms, India has 48.20% female population, as compared to 51.80% male population.

Three films were screened on the occasion: *Chutney* (Hindi short film), *Les Chatouilles* (French feature film), *Where have you hidden my new crescent moon?* (Kashmiri documentary) – all powerful films portraying women's condition in France and India. The Hindi short film, *Chutney* is a most unassuming tale of revenge that transpires through a seemingly casual chit-chat about domestic affairs that takes place over a plate of pakodas (served with green chutney) and two glasses of soft drink. The intrigue of the film lies in its subtleties and ambiguities of small-town lives, with softly spoken words that narrate a story until it reaches its conclusion in a crescendo of surprising revelations.

Les Chatouilles (Little Tickles) is the story of Odette, starting as an 8-yr-old girl who loves to dance and draw. Once she becomes an adult, Odette realizes she was abused in her childhood, and immerses herself body and soul in her career as a dancer while trying to deal with her past with the help of her therapist. *Les Chatouilles* is Odette's journey towards finding strength, support, closure and peace. The Kashmiri documentary shows the life of Mughal Masi, an elderly woman in search of her son, a young teacher who went missing one

day without any trace.

Mughal Masi passed away without ever finding her son, but throughout her life she kept herself armed with dignity, grace and peace.



After the three movies were screened, an animated discussion

followed, where everyone shared their feelings, personal experiences and ideas to solve problems faced by women of the 21st century across the world. The entire event was very well received by the audience, who provided their valuable positive feedback. They found the films to be judiciously chosen to create awareness among the public. The films covered sociological issues, psychological trauma and legal battles for justice. The three films were beautifully connected through journeys of women of differing cultures, age, and societies, all of them fighting the societal and personal wars to finally find peace. The audience described the event as intellectually stimulating, eye-opening and thoroughly engaging. All in all, the screening of the three films proved to be an enriching experience and opened vistas for thoughts, discussion and social impact.

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