

Report on Pointblank: A Debate on Media Representations of Women and Gender Violence

December 9th saw action at Meghdoot hall of MOP Vaishnav College for women with **Pointblank: A Debate on Media Representations of Women and Gender Violence** as a part of Prajnaya's 16 day campaign against gender violence. Jointly organized by Prajnaya and the Sociology Department of the college, the debate was moderated by Sudha Ramalingam, lawyer and social activist. Eminent media professionals were the invited panelists - Advertising Professional Suguna Swamy, Cinematographer Fowzia Fatima, Senior reporter at the New Indian Express Asha Menon, Radio Mirchi RJ Devasena and Director Thiruchelvam of "Kolungal" fame.

Panelists spoke for a couple of minutes each on many issues such as the objectification of women, stereotyping of women as weak and ineffective and the propagation of unrealistic stereotypes by the media. The speakers shared their perceptions of gender discrimination drawing upon instances from their own professional experiences. Opinions expressed were deeply varied with speakers supporting and opposing the portrayal of women by the media.

The lively debate between moderator and panelists was interspersed by spontaneous applause from the attentive audience. The hall became more animated for the next 20 minutes as the floor was thrown open to members of the audience. Questions, opinions, suggestions and comments flew all over with many students being from sociology, journalism and electronic media departments who had a lot to say on the issue.

The speakers encouraged the young audience to reject products which espoused negative portrayals of women and some speakers explained market realities which make the production of these advertisements and movies necessary.

The debate concluded on a positive note that though a change in representation of women in the media was needed, attitudinal changes at the individual level were needed to make such changes permanent.



Cinematographer Fowzia Fathima speaking as Sudha Ramalingam, moderator and Suguna Swami ad professional look on



Director Thiruchelvam speaks as Asha Menon< senior reporter and RJ Deva look on



A section of the audience



RJ Deva responding to a query from moderator Sudha Ramalingam



Sudha Ramalingam, Suguna Swami, Fowzia, Asha Menon, Deva and Thiruchelvam at the debate