

Center for Women's studies was initiated in Madras Christian College by Dr. Mithra G. Augustine in 1987. The centre is primarily academic in its thrust, the action arm of the centre is the Women's Cell inaugurated on October 13, 1992. Objectives

The main objectives of the center is to:

- open minds to issues and problems relating to the status and role of women in India
- make aware differences in the treatment of the genders at home and at the work place
- tutor women on laws set up to uphold their rights to property and inheritance, to protect their person and their honour
- study the role and contribution of women to the evolution of society
- lay bare forms of oppression indulged in against women and their exploitation at different levels in society
- discuss theories which place women biologically, functionally and culturally in a subordinate position to men.

### Activities

The Centre for Women's Studies offers a one-year interdisciplinary value oriented course on "Women's studies" to the first year undergraduate students. This was a non-credit course till May 2005. It was renamed "Gender Studies" and was made a credit course under "Value Education". Regular lectures and discussions are reinforced with workshop sessions, seminars and debates on women's concerns. Faculty participate regularly in regional and national consultations for fresh insights through the exchange of views and experience.

The Women's Cell is engaged in giving support to unemployed illiterate women by providing them with means of livelihood. At the outreach centre at Durganagen, the centre helped community to start a school (Naujothi Primary School) for the underprivileged children and also to educate the women on matters of hygiene and health and on their rights and privileges. Student involvement is central to the success of these programmes.

The centre was already into academic leadership training and outreach programmes. In association with various departments/units of the college, the center organizes programs that address women's issues.

Many students have taken women's issues for their M.Phil and Ph.D program and it is a clear indication of their sensitivity to various issues facing women. The centre took up a project on "changing perception of fatherhood" on collaboration with SERFA (Service and Research Foundation of Asia on Family and Children). A pilot study was conducted. Students of Gender Studies classes were involved in the survey of families in and around Tambaram. The study shed light on specific changes in the role of the father. It was heartening to note that many fathers willingly shared household duties and responsibilities. This is viewed as a positive sign in the march to wards a gender just society.

In 1995 for the women workers of the college a three-day awareness programme was organized. From that time till today, they meet once a month and organize programmes of their own. It is heartening to find their confidence growing and then awareness rising with responsibilities they have undertaken. The faculty helped them to start fixed deposits for each of the worker. The centre organizes a sale annually for the benefit of the women workers. The proceeds from the sale is used for Medical benefit of the women workers.giving them interest free loans in June – July every year and an deducted from their salaries in 10 equal installments.organizing special programmes a massive medical camp is organized every year for all the workers of the college.The centre closely monitors the activities at Durganagar and render support to their efforts to improve their living standards.

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