

ALL INDIA STUDENTS' FEDERATION (AISF JNU UNIT)

POLITICS OF ANTI-FEMINISM & FEMINISM

9.3.97

If "91.7% of women hostlers and 85.7% of women residents were sexually harassed" (THE PIONEER, 9/3/97, p.2) in the right dominated Delhi University (North Campus), what could one expect as a result of the recent rightist upheaval in our campus? It was ironical, but natural, that on the occasion of International Women's Day, the rightist politics gave a naked demonstration of its culture. (The sexist-lumpen attitude of the Patriarch was corroborated yesterday at a semi-Mujra organised the tunes of cheap Hindi film songs in the garb of an orchestra.) Its courageous and confident outlet was confirmed in its reactions against the spontaneous protest.

There is no need to speculate about the political orientation of yesterday's display of machismo. The direct evidence of this nexus resides in the fomenting faces of these mobilisers of the showdown determined to immobilize any protest against their hegemony. It was no accident that the JNUSU Vice-President, Govind Chandra Mishra was out to display his long suppressed "charisma" with his henchmen in the whole event. What could be the rationale behind sloganing of the "sentiments" of "an a-political" entity, "the hostel-unity", in the form of anti-left slogans?

Today, when the crisis has augmented multi-facely in the society and conservatism in order to re-assert itself has acquired a militant course, crimes against womanhood, too, have increased. On the one hand, they are subjected (the majority of them) to economic exploitation as members of the working-class, and, on the other, they are forced to submit before the male superiority as sexual "objects". Increasing amount of coercion modes to subjugate the femininity is an attempt of the status quo to thwart the threat posed to it by the movement for Women Emancipation.

Friends, to see the problem of women-suppression in isolation and not as a part of a wider unequal social structure leads to an "irrational" feminism position of viewing it as an "apolitical" issue or "exclusively women's issue" - "Don't bring politics here". In fact, it is an elitist pretension of petty-bourgeois feminism, afraid of being identified with proletarian feminist movement.

AISF believes that, at this juncture, when the right reaction is mobilised at every level, the immediate task before progressive student movement is to come out of the delirium influenced by the miasmic existence of patriarch class-divided social framework, and gather its scattered strength. AISF condemns the perverted and obscene sexism being practised in the campus, in general, and its display, yesterday, in particular. Further, it demands a strongest possible action against the hooligans who were involved in targeting, chasing and beating Com. Bobby Poulse and other when they tried to register their protest.

AWAKE, ARISE AND DESTROY

sd/-
Anil Mathew
President, AISF (JNU)

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Arjumand Ara
Secretary, AISF (JNU)

SUTLEJ HOSTEL

Date: 9.3.97

Dear Friends,

With utmost grief, shock and anger, we Sullejites take strong exception to the most violent form of protest and physical disruption of Sullej Nite by some unscrupulous elements yesterday. While all Sullejites, forgetting their mutual differences, kept working tirelessly during the last fifteen days for the successful conduct of our Hostel Nite, the way the programme was physically disrupted, musical instruments destroyed, Sullej residents abused in vulgar terms, and the entire thing was sought to be politicised, it only shows the frustration and violent tendencies of certain individuals. We Sullejites caution all such elements to refrain from this and apologise publicly for this violent and unruly conduct.

If some people didn't like the conduct of the programme, they had other peaceful methods of protest. But instead they indulged in violent orgy against Sullejites. While Radheyshyam and Ashok Sharma kept on provoking a section of the audience, some outsiders such as Vaibhava Shukla and Rashid were assisting the violent disruptors. And very unfortunately five or six of our own Sullejites sided with them. Their conduct is condemnable.

These people snatched and broke Mikes uprooted music boxes and lights. In the wake of this horrifying incident an urgent Hostel GBM was called on the night of 9th March, 97 at 3.30 AM. Some 120 residents were Present in the GBM. This GBM deliberated upon the issue of disruption in full details and passed some resolutions which was followed by a Sullej unity and protest procession by all Sullej residents. The resolutions passed in this GBM are as follows:-

We condemn the violent way of disruption of our Hostel Nite.

We condemn the abusive and derogatory language ("Sullej wale Gandhi Nali Ke Keede Hain", "Bastard" etc.) used by some girl of which one was identified as Nandita Gupta against sullejites. We demand a public apology from Nandita Gupta & others.

We condemn the shameful behaviour of some Sullej residents who sided with the disruptors, (Navneet, Prem Tiwari, Bobby Poulse, Asheem, Ajay and Srinivas) GBM directs them to present their view points at 8.30 PM tonight in Hostel Mess as to why they sided with disruptors.

If they fail to do so and tender an apology we will further proceed to seek their eviction from the Hostel.

We strongly condemn Bobby Poulse a senior resident of the a Hostel for slapping a junior most resident of the Hostel Erfan Khan. GBM directs him to tender an immediate apology to Erfan Khan.

We take a strong exception to the fact that some outsiders in our Hostel taking out procession.

The JNU authority should take stringent action against those involved in the violence during Sullej Nite function.

We demand that the loss incurred by the organizers due to destruction of instruments on the podium and physical disruption of the protestors, must be compensated by those identified disruptors.

Ashrof Zamal
GBM Chairman

Gopinath Biswal
President
Sullej Hostel

WOMENS DAY '97 : SEXUAL COMMODIFICATION AND VIOLENCE AGAINST
WOMEN IN JNU!

9.3.'97

Last night, as part of Sutlej Night celebrations, an orchestra was organised on Jhelum lawns. At one point, a women performer was called onto one stage, who gyrated to a film song, and the audience greeted her with appreciative whistles and leering hoots. Some women students of JNU stopped this performance, but the compere began to justify it as an "art" form. When the protesters wished to use the mike to argue with this justification, and to explain the grounds of their protest, a section of the audience prevented them. The compere solicited audience support for the dance, and told those opposed to it to leave. The protest continued, and four of the women protesters were molested and manhandled. The hostel president refused to meet the protesters. Eventually, the warden was called, and, amid much violence, the programme was stopped.

We demand a public apology from the Sutlej hostel president for the molestation and manhandling of women which took place during an event organised by Sutlej hostel.

Since the protest met with much confusion, we would like to clarify the grounds of our protest. We object to events like last night's dance-orchestra, on the grounds that they involve a public display of sexuality, using womens sexuality, purely for the gratification of an audience. We are opposed to an institutionalised culture of spectatorship, where sexuality and women's bodies are offered to an audience as objects of consumption.

Discriminatory or violent events in JNU often end up with people culstering around sectarian identities, like hostels, regions, sexes. Last night, again, we witnessed the attempt to create a myth of "hostel solidarity", directed specifically against women. The protest demonstration was greeted by catcalls and derisive abuse specifically targeting women on several occasions. This "hostel solidarity" is only a reactionary myth, since several men from all over JNU joined the women in their protest.

In recent times, the "hostel nights" are progressively losing their original purpose of collective celebration. The dinner coupons are too expensive for some of us, who are forced to take a rebate, because we cannot afford to buy a Rs.50 dinner for ourselves and our friends. Also, increasingly, hostels are trying to generate huge resources from private sponsors, to be pumped into larger and louder non-participatory spectacles. Also, dance floors exclude women from free participation because men on the floors harass women by comments, gestures and looks, and songs are played which explicitly call for sexual violence against women. The whole

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culture, and politics of what passes for "entertainment" therefore needs to be discussed. Music, dance, food are human pleasures. The question is, how to create entertainment that allows us to enjoy these pleasures without demeaning or excluding anyone. This question can have no readymade solutions or formulas. However, for JNU, we would like to offer the following suggestions which will be a step towards allowing all JNUites to participate in happy and collective celebrations:

1. Entertainment should not involve activities which commodify sexuality or which put sexuality on display for an audience's gratification.
2. Dinner coupons should be priced more affordably, so that a good dinner is not had at the cost of excluding some students.
3. Funds should not be mobilised beyond what is officially sanctioned.
4. JNU students should initiate debates in hostel GBMs on issues like participative culture and cultural forms (like songs) which explicitly promote violence against any group.

In an adhoc meeting last night, some members of Sutlej hostel condemned those Sutlej residents who participated in the protest. We believe that any student has a right to protest, even if he/she is in a minority and we urge Sutlej residents, in their GBM tonight, to speak up against the attempt to curb this democratic right. We also urge Sutlej residents to condemn the organising of a function which demeaned women and resulted in the molestation and manhandling of women.

sd/- Kalpana, Nandini, Navneet, Meena, Mahalaxmi, Dipankar, Kumar Dhananjay, Tanveer, Amit, Avinash, Noyona, Ravindra, Richa, Bhavna, Sreerekha, Shubhra, Parnal, Kavita, Rochelle, Himanshu, Nandita, Sanghamitra, Ellora, Kalpalata, Rinky, Himanshu Pandya, Ashok Sharma.

09.03.1997

Friends,

Time has come for the students community to think about the future of our university. If it was the only thing, which distinguished JNU from all other university campuses, was its impeccable academic environment. Over the past few years we have witnessed the growth of certain trends which are about to destroy the environment of the campus.

One of the issues which merits our concern today is the form and content of the cultural functions which are held to celebrate the different hostel nights. Yesterday's incident (regarding Sutlej Hostel Night) can not be viewed in isolation, it has a degree of continuity from that very day when these functions began to be held in JNU. We hold that a cultural function is meant to serve certain purposes,

- (i) To provide for a healthy entertainment.
- (ii) To help in bringing out indigenous talents from amongst ourselves.
- (iii) To provide with a perspective which would enrich our thinking.

However, the kind of functions which we have been having would cater to none of the above purposes. The kind of entertainment such functions provide, if they do at all, is not compatible with the deserving academic environment of an university. And it is not surprising that these functions give opportunities to those elements whose vested interests lie in the disruption of the democratic environment of the campus, that is why we find incidences of violence becoming synonymous with all such cultural functions.

Functions containing vulgarity or those being sponsored by some multi-national soft drink company are meant to bring about a disjunction between academics and our thoughts. Countries all over the globe are witnessing the influx of such culture which gets assimilated with the conservative, patriarchial culture of the backward countries to bring about a very ugly and distorted synthesis.

Aren't we, the students of JNU, capable of doing any thing better than this. Why can't we find talents from ourselves who can perform for us in our cultural programmes? Why do we have to go for the sponsorship from MNCs when we can raise funds by bringing out Souveneirs? Why wouldn't we think about the progressive features of our or their culture and instead choose to mimick the most ridiculous forms of it?

These questions needs to be debated within the student community today. If yesterday's incidents are yet to open our eyes, perhaps it will be too late.

We also condemn the way yesterday's incident was manipulated by vested interests to make it an issue between Sutlej Hostel and the others. The importance of the issue can not be played down to make it a 'hostel issue'. Many students including JNUSU President Com. Battilal and Com. Bobby Poulouse were manhandled while they were trying to pacify the agitated students. These are very dangerous trends and it is the responsibility of all students to prevent such acts in the future. Along with a meaningful discourse on the question of cultural functions we also urge upon the students of all hostels to stand up against the holding of such cultural functions in their respective hostel nights. Let us endeavour to bring back the healthy and progressive cultural tradition of JNU, by rejuvenating our cultural clubs and by our active participation in cultural activities.

LONG LIVE JNU CULTURE!

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Sd/-
Aniyan P.V.