

TANA BANA: Volume 16

October 2023 to January 2024



Editor's Exclusive

LIFAFIFA: Unveiling the Female Psyche

Once again, we open our hearts and minds to you as we turn the page to a new edition of Tana Bana –Laadli's monthly newsletter.

Beyond the big picture made of statistics, we women share the essence of being through our stories. We thread these tiny moments together, crafting intricate narratives that become more than mere stories. Though our masks and histories differ, we live the lives of each other as we share the joy and pain transcending all. For in each other's stories, we truly belong.

We asked our women, *"If you could change one thing about your life, what would it be?"* to witness how their souls intertwined without being aware of each other's existence.

"I wish I were super rich so that I could do goodwill for those in pain." (Ankita, 24, from Malda, West Bengal, works in Mumbai-based Social Sector).

"I wish I had chosen a different profession when I had the choice" (Sangita, 49, works in finance, Mumbai, Maharashtra).

"I wish I could stop doing things for people when necessary." (Gulnaz, 32, works in IT, Ahmedabad, Gujrat).

"Take a career break till my child turns 3." (Revati, 32, From Pune, Maharashtra, works in the Ireland-based IT sector).

"I wish I had the wealth to live my life doing things that give me peace rather than having the pressure to earn to pay rent, EMI, debts, etc. (Ritushree, 38, Transwoman, From Padampur, Odisha, working as a Lawyer and stand-up comedian based in Mumbai).

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Ankita yearns to help others through charity, highlighting the altruistic desire to contribute to a better world. Sangita reflects on pursuing a different career path, revealing the importance of finding professional satisfaction. Gulnaz wishes to avoid overextending herself, reflecting the need for self-care and setting limits. Revati desires a career break for motherhood, showcasing the struggle to balance professional and personal aspirations. Ritushree wishes for economic freedom to pursue personal fulfillment beyond the pressures of earning, highlighting the longing for a life centered on passion and purpose.

Overall, the desires expressed by these women paint a multifaceted picture of the complex realities of their lives and dreams. Their aspirations surpass traditional stereotypes, encompassing personal fulfilment, societal impact, and work-life balance.

Laadli remains committed to challenging preconceived notions and advocating for a world where women's diverse aspirations are valued and nurtured while banishing society's outdated viewpoint towards women as mere commodities.

"For in each other's stories, we truly belong."

"Their aspirations surpass traditional stereotypes, encompassing personal fulfilment, societal impact, and work-life balance."

As we approach 2024, the event of our edition is the TATA Mumbai Marathon, raising substantial funds for countless causes and aiding millions in building a brighter future. This year, Population First continued this legacy by harnessing the power of the marathon through corporate teams and individual runners who purchased our charity bibs.

Celebrating progress, our feature article showcases the "Laadli" awards, recognizing exceptional efforts in promoting gender sensitivity across media and advertising. From regional awards to the South Asian stage, we're proud to honour outstanding work in ads, OTT platforms, literature, and journalism. This legacy continues, fostering a future with equitable representation.

Bridging the gap towards content that truly reflects our diverse society, we hosted a round table discussion on 'Gender Inclusion and Intersectionality in Content Creation,' gathering leading voices from OTT and production houses towards the creation of more gender-inclusive and sensitive content.

Exploring crucial issues of our time, this edition includes a film review by queer filmmaker, social worker, and writer Ms. Megha Chakraborty as she analyzes a film through a critical lens.

To cap off a successful 2023, we hosted diverse workshops for various audiences, including mass media students, social media influencers, and aspiring journalists delving into topics like "Women Led Development in India", "Gender sensitivity and Portrayal of women in Cinema," and "Reporting on Development Issues," all led by expert facilitators.

These events embody our shared commitment to building capacity. Do not miss out on the intellectually stimulating takeaways in "Happenings!"

I sincerely thank Dr AL Sharada, Director of Population First, for entrusting me with the editorship of this edition.

Varsha Alimchandani,
Population First.

TATA Mumbai Marathon January 2024

We have secured space in the world's most sought-after marathon and the biggest one in Asia. TATA Mumbai marathon has benefitted over 700 NGOs, supported myriad causes, and helped millions in our society for a better tomorrow since its inception as the most significant fundraising platform for NGOs.

United Way Mumbai is the official philanthropy partner of Tata Mumbai Marathon. Every year, Population First raises funds through corporate teams and individual runners who buy Population First's charity bibs.

For the past five years, the Tata Mumbai Marathon has been more than just a race for Population First – it's been a platform to champion the cause of gender equality and empower women across India. Our journey has been marked by consistent commitment, passionate participation, and considerable generosity each year.

In 2018, the marathon became a dream run for the "Laadli" team; we raised Rs.18,65,220 through sponsorships, pledges, and bib sales, establishing that even small steps can lead to giant leaps for equality.

The year 2019 saw Population First again showered with support from individual donors and corporate sponsors. This dedication even earned us a prestigious "Citation of Achievement" for being the top fundraising NGO in the Gender Equality category.

The 2020 edition of the marathon was no less remarkable. We raised Rs. 12,58,362.

The year 2023 saw Population First reach even greater heights. Our dedication to gender equality was again recognised, as we were presented with a Certificate of Achievement for being the highest fundraising NGO in the gender category.

And now, in 2024, the journey continues. A team of 40 IRB employees and nine individual runners across Maharashtra proudly ran the 6 km Dream Run, 10k open marathon, and half marathon, raising Rs. 15,92,033. Every step taken, every cheer raised, and every rupee collected is an ignitor of spirit that fuels our mission. We are grateful for their tremendous and consistent support.

The Tata Mumbai Marathon has shown us the power of collective action. It's a platform where individuals come together, united by a common goal, and every step contributes to a brighter future for women. As we look ahead to future marathons, we know the journey will be filled with challenges. Still, with the tremendous support of our runners, donors, and partners, we are confident that we can continue to reach a greater goal every step of the way.

We sincerely thank United Way (Official Philanthropy Partner of TATA Mumbai Marathon) for providing this invaluable platform. Together, let's run towards a world where every Laadli is cherished, empowered, and free to attain her full potential.



Championing Gender-Balanced Representation: Laadli Awards

Regional Laadli Media Awards – 21st Oct 2023

The 13th edition of the Regional Laadli Media & Advertising Awards for Gender Sensitivity 2023 recognized 98 stellar contributions in the media space across the nation's four regions. 87 winners and 31 Jury Appreciation Citations for promising journalists were awarded.

Continuing its successful collaboration over the past several years, the 13th edition of the regional awards was again supported by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Jaipur-based non-profit Lok Samvad Sansthan (LSS) was the collaborating partner. LSS has worked on social development, public policies, and human development for over two decades.

The award ceremony took place at the Rajasthan International Centre in Jaipur on the 21st of October at 6:30 PM.



Shri Veer Balika Higher Secondary School students, who spent 96 years educating underprivileged girl children, kicked off the event with an enchanting performance. They presented a gender-themed group dance and a song titled 'Beti Hoon, Me Tara (star) Banugi,' capturing the essence of empowerment. The event followed with powerful video messages from gender equality champions: Population First founder Mr. Bobby Sista and Laadli Media.

Advocacy Campaign leader Dr. A.L. Sharada. Both emphasized the importance of gender-sensitive communication in all public spaces.



"To see your vision turning into reality, even in small steps, is a dream come true. The jury unanimously believed that this edition's entries reflected greater gender sensitivity, nuanced understanding of the issues, and covered a much wider range of topics. We see hope in each of the entries that it is possible to have responsible and meaningful journalism even in these troubled times." said Dr. A.L.Sharada, Director of Population First.



"Laadli Media Awards continue to motivate budding journalists. This program helps them better understand and address gender-related issues and prepares them to be agents of positive change in our society," said Kalyan Singh Kothari. Lok Samvad Santhan Dr. Dev Swarup, Vice-Chancellor of Baba Amte Divyang University, Rajasthan, graced the event as the Chief Guest. Mr. Jaydeep Biswas, Chief Policy and Partnership, UNFPA, was the Guest of Honour.

Special guests included Ravi Shankar Sharma, Chairman of the Public Relations Society, and Shri Ikram Rajasthani, Chairman of Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru Bal Sahitya Academy, Rajasthan.

The evening ended with the Langa Group performing desert melodies rooted in traditional musician communities. After regaling audiences with their earthy music inspired by epic tales, folklore, and Sufi compositions, a group of Kalbelelia dancers graced the stage with their interactive and lively performance.

The event was live-streamed on the Population First YouTube channel and garnered nearly 800 views.

[Click here](#) to see the complete list of winners.

[Click here](#) to read the 13th Regional event brochure.

Link to watch the event: <https://youtube.com/live/m1gX5uRmGOW?feature=share>



Championing Gender-Balanced Representation: Laadli Awards

South Asia Laadli Media and Advertising Awards for Gender Sensitivity - 12th Dec 2023

The South Asia Laadli Media and Advertising Awards for Gender Sensitivity (SALMAAGS) held on December 12th 2023, recognised 47 stellar contributions in the media space across seven South Asian nations, including India. The event drew a distinguished crowd from cinema, media, advertising, activism, and business, making it a resounding success. SALMAAGS celebrates the media's role in shaping perceptions towards gender, aiming for a fairer society.

An initiative of Population First, a Mumbai-based social impact organisation that has been working for over two decades to promote gender sensitivity in media nationwide, these awards are part of continuing successful collaboration with UNFPA.

The event was held at the prestigious Tata Theatre, NCPA, on Tuesday, the 12th of December 2023. Noteworthy work in journalism, advertising, films, television, theatre, and books was felicitated at the function. On this occasion, Dr. A.L. Sharada shared her move to an advisory role, expressing gratitude for her esteemed colleagues' support. She warmly welcomed Mr. Yogesh Pawar as the new Programme Director, calling for continued support for Population First.

Ms. Andrea Wojnar, Country Representative, UNFPA India, was the guest of honour. Noted film actor Rasika Duggal was the chief guest. A glittering ensemble of stellar personalities attended it. Speaking on the occasion, the Country Representative for UNFPA India and the Country Director for Bhutan, Ms Andrea Wojnar, lavished fulsome praise on Population First for the Laadli initiative. She underlined its importance. "Media can be powerful in shaping public opinion and addressing discriminatory social norms. Through their storytelling, media can empower marginalised voices and promote inclusivity and equality," she added, "UNFPA India is proud to partner with Population First for engaging diverse media to create an environment where women and girls are respected and valued." She also wished Laadli would continue to achieve greater success in fostering a gender-sensitive media landscape while applauding Dr. Sharada for her efforts in making gender sensitivity an inseparable value woven into the fabric of communication.

SALMAAGS also spotlighted several exceptional women who have made significant strides in their respective fields with special awards like Laadli of the Century presented to Ms. Vimla Patil; Lifetime Achievement Award to Ms. Aruna Raje Patil ("I've had to work doubly hard to earn the respect of the men around me"); Laadli Gender Champion to Network of Women in Media, India ("We need to stand in solidarity with each other to draw strength from that support"); Laadli Women Behind the Scene



"I've had to work doubly hard to earn the respect of the men around me"

to Konkona Sen-Sharma (“Women just need to get a fair chance and they will be able to achieve”); Laadli Theatre Award to Nadira Babbar (“It feels great to be recognised by this platform”); Laadli Extraordinaire to Women in Cinema Collective (“We hope this award empowers others to speak up”).

“I want to tell all the women gathered never to lose courage and give up any fight for justice,” exhorted social worker-activist Bhanwari Devi of Rajasthan. She was speaking soon after being conferred the Laadli Iconic Rural Feminist Award at the event. As the whole auditorium rose in admiration, many were left moist-eyed.

“I want to tell all the women gathered never to lose courage and give up any fight for justice”



Asian Federation of Advertising Associations (AFAA) and the South Asian Women in Media Network (SAWM) were SALMAAGS’ collaborating partners this year. These awards recognized and celebrated 15 exceptional Indian media professionals and honored 11 outstanding journalists from the South Asia region. We are grateful for their tremendous contribution and support.

The event, which began with a performance by underprivileged children from the Sanskrita Foundation, saw its finale in B Spot Productions’ scintillating Lavani performance, where many guests, including Rasika Duggal, Dolly Thakore, Suneeta Rao, and others, joined the artists on stage, keeping beat in gusto.

[Click here](#) to see the complete list of winners.

[Click here](#) to read the 3rd South Asia Laadli Media Awards brochure.

Link to watch the event:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JvqF_vQ72kE



Gender Inclusion and Intersectionality in Content Creation

'Gender Inclusion and Intersectionality in Content Creation' was chosen for round table discussion, considering the dire need of the hour. The discussion took place on 20th Dec 2023 where various key stakeholders from OTT platforms and production houses participated.

Through this workshop, we channelled creative media, advertising, and film interventions into redefining values, gender perceptions, and equations with the two most influential platforms, OTT and social media.

Ms Dipika Kalra brought up the need for more narratives to move from the suffering of women to those which spoke of the emancipation of men.

Ms Nimisha Pandey said that the change was being driven by the fact that women head several OTT platforms, she felt more women-led narratives were now being commissioned, and there is a more nuanced portrayal of women while admitting how mindset changes can be an uphill task.

Mr Nishant Roy Bombarde highlighted how merely talking of gender-just, gender-equal relationships within the upper class and caste-privileged framework would not make a difference. Ms Insa Dariwala added, "Women are still made to feel like demanding a right is a privilege," she recounted being asked who would care for her child if she went on a shoot. "Do men get asked this question?" She underlined how our content must still reflect the familiar female characters. "For a woman's story to be told, why must she still be a hero or downtrodden and suffering?"



Ms Pubali Chaudhuri felt it was unfair to expect content creators to herald change without state patronage like in Europe. "Much of the forced, new-fangled feminism we see in today's content is superficial," as she cited the 1974 Basu Chatterjee classic Rajanigandha, calling it "real and far ahead of its times."

Ms Jyoti Kapoor said that filmmakers need to win "the game of selling whatever sells."

Ms Maira Doshi added, "Look at the struggle a woman actor has to put in to get work vis-à-vis a man. And then there is no pay parity. This happens despite it being repeatedly proven that women-centric films work," she said.

"Women are still made to feel like demanding a right is a privilege"

Ms Svetlana Sharma admitted recounted the struggle with the movie Queen and selling Dirty Picture abroad . "Though I knew this was a mainstream theatre-release film, we had to take it to several festivals to create a buzz because nobody was willing to pick up what they called a 'chick-flick.' We may need more such content to educate people.

Ms Sharma pointed out how gender-sensitive content need not always be about brazen sexism or violence against women. "Subtler films like English Vinglish or Ghoomar make that point in a way that male audiences also sit up and think."

Ms Mrinalini Khanna said, "Till men are left out of the narrative, there can't be any real change," she said while citing a dialogue from Sonchiriya that underlines how women are always Dalit irrespective of the caste they come from and always at the lowest rung of the food chain.

Ms Radhikkaa Joshii felt we need more women writers and directors around to change how women are portrayed as empowered in a gender-just manner.

Actor and filmmaker Ms. Divya Unny, felt that it will only happen when real stories of real women are out there. "The voices who tell the stories need to identify and own them," she said.



Ms Mrinalini Khanna said that , "The metric is often made the villain when all they want to do is to shut the door on diversity."

Mr Mogre said the nomenclature of calling films with a women-centric or LGBTQIA+ theme a genre was a no-go. "Genres should be action, romance, thriller, horror, etc. If we begin making films based on these, other differences will be vastly reduced if not vanishing completely."

Mr Roy-Bombarde underlined how who is watching and who is monitoring perception change made a huge difference. "Often narratives for even Dalit/tribal women are being set by savarnas women/men. I refuse to believe there are no Dalit/tribal voices around to tell their own stories." Ms Joshii linked it to "people wanting to look for readymade templates of something that works."

Mr Mogre suggested film schools should have more cis and transwomen to bring an attitudinal change at a formative stage. Ms Kapoor reminded that often women writers are not even considered and told off, saying the project needed to succeed.

Ms Joshii felt a script writers' lab needed to focus on gender-sensitive content and mobilise women writers, however, Ms Chaudhuri disagreed with unionisation on gender lines.

Ms. Unny, however, felt it would help. "I'm a writer in the industry irrespective of my genitalia," countered Ms Chaudhuri.

While Ms Kalra felt Population First with UNFPA should take up the responsibility of giving "regular and specific" feedback to production houses and content creators on gender sensitivity in content creation, Dr Sharada concluded, "It is best if both the drive for change and recognition of steps in this direction came from within the fraternity."

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Kaathal-The Core: Silent Love and Societal Deconstruction

Language: Malayalam, Genre: Drama.



Megha Chakraborty (she/he/any!) is a Queer filmmaker, Writer, Cinematographer, Marathoner, Musicaholic, and Self-proclaimed bookworm with a feminist punch.

This multifaceted film-obsessed artist explores the world through the lens of their camera and challenges social norms frame by frame.

Kaathal - The Core presents a **poignant exploration of love and loss, weaving together two contrasting narratives**. While one love story unfolds in quiet understanding, the other unravels, prompting profound reflection on societal norms.

Mathew Devassy lives in a village with his wife, Omana, daughter, Fenny, and father, Devassy. He lives a respectable life and has been allowed to run in the local village board elections, thanks to his father's contributions to the CR Party.

Mathew's world is turned upside down when he learns that Omana has filed for divorce, alleging he is gay. This revelation rocks Mathew's carefully constructed world, and he struggles to confront the severe social expectations and fragility of human relationships in his immediate surroundings. The story chronicles his journey as he and his family face these challenges.



Drawing parallels to *The Great Indian Kitchen* by Jeo Baby, "Kaathal: The Core" **sheds light without sensationalism on the hardships faced by the LGBTQ+ community**. Instead, it portrays the everyday struggles of people who have to live with a repressed identity.

The character's shame is depicted through subtle silences, which further highlights the importance of the journey towards self-acceptance. Both stories involve women who desire freedom and are confronted by a repressive system represented by their husbands. However, *Kaathal* takes a more gentle approach, **replacing anger with compassion**. It explores the intricacies of relationships in greater depth, depicting Omana's struggle against societal conventions and within the confines of an unloving marriage.

The opening sequence of *Kaathal - The Core* sets the tone for a **striking portrayal of a woman's endurance**. Salu K Thomas's camera lingers on Omana (Jyothika) in church, creating a subtle connection between her and the figure on the cross. While she exemplifies Christian principles like forgiveness and understanding, she refuses to be a victim.

Mathew's (Mammootty) political aspirations are a facade, masking his deeper turmoil. Mammootty portrays the character's ambition with conviction yet hints at the underlying anxieties fueled by his secret. This layered performance makes Mathew more than just a politician; he is a man desperately holding onto societal acceptance while longing for authenticity. Jyothika shines as Omana, embodying a woman with brimming strength and a yearning for belonging within her emotionally distant marriage.

Omana's ache and Mathew's hesitant truth reveal the pain of hidden lives. Forced into marriage and parenthood by societal pressure, Omana grapples with a life built on a lie. Mathew's nervous "Sorry" and breakdown are heartbreaking consequences, not dramatic coming-out scenes.

As news of the divorce spreads, Mathew desperately clings to societal norms, driven not just by political aspirations but also by the fear of jeopardizing the newfound acceptance of his true self. Every gesture of support becomes tinged with assumptions about his sexuality, causing discomfort. It's not about seeking approval for his orientation but rather avoiding the social ostracization it entails.

The film slowly covers the stakes for Mathew and Thankan, played by Sudhi Kozikhode, in the looming divorce (of Mathew and Omana); Thankan was subjected to street harassment and local judgments; he has no backing. He was the "other man" in the narrative still fascinated with Mathew. Omana's perspective unfolds explicitly through courtroom drama, while Mathew's remains intriguingly veiled. While we readily empathize with Omana's loveless existence, Mathew's internal struggle becomes a captivating enigma. Omana's lawyer argues in court that her (divorce) petition had to wait until Section 377 was abolished, as filing it earlier would have criminalized Mathew.

Kaathal takes a gentler approach, replacing anger with compassion.

It explores the intricacies of relationships in greater depth, depicting Omana's struggle against societal conventions and within the confines of an unloving marriage.

Unlike typical Indian films tackling LGBTQ+ themes, this one avoids overly dramatic moments, lengthy speeches, and urban settings (with exceptions like "Aligarh"). Legal arguments are presented plainly, avoiding preachiness and staying grounded.

The truth comes out with Mathew's father's unexpected testimony. He reveals a long-held secret: he knew of Mathew's true identity since childhood. Omana admits she stayed longer due to her love for her father-in-law, despite Mathew's limited communication. The film's poignant conclusion finds Mathew, amidst tears, expressing a shared regret: their lives deviated from the path his father envisioned.

Poignant moments that could have been turned into dramatic scenes are played with quiet intensity, acknowledging the characters' inner turmoil. Mammootty and Jyothika excel in conveying complex emotions through subtle expressions and silences. These silent moments are often accompanied by powerful background music, highlighting the unspoken pain and longing.



The film's beauty comes from its subtle representation of love and desire. **It avoids portraying Mathew as a villain, instead focusing on the nuances of his conflicts.** While Omana longs for a meaningful relationship, Mathew struggles with an unspoken reality, his hidden identity adding to their already tense chemistry.

Writers Adarsh Sukumaran and Paulson Skaria weave a masterful tale in Kaathal, simmering with unspoken tension that probes the depths of a fractured marriage and its ripple effects on family and society. Director Jeo Baby deftly handles a sensitive subject, infusing the narrative with understated power that resonates deeply.

Although Kathaal's central theme is the struggles of the Queer community in India, it also touches on other subjects, such as the stigma associated with divorce and the tendency of political parties to deviate from their core beliefs in favour of hyperindividualism and optics. While progressive film frequently uses its themes to alienate society or individuals, Kathaal takes a very gentle approach to its subjects, which is refreshing. Rather than casting blame, the film's compassionate treatment of each character and their problems invites the audience to sympathize.



Beyond its aesthetic, Kaathal explores the core of societal prejudice, challenging viewers to question deeply held beliefs and **push for reforms that go beyond legislative changes.** It deftly examines the nuances of love, recognizing its complex shades of grey and resisting easy classifications. Thankan's last grin represents a triumph for people who have long concealed their actual selves behind social masks. **The rainbow serves as a metaphor for a ray of hope for inclusion and acceptance in the film's stirring conclusion.**

Capacity Building to Ensure Awareness and Gender Sensitivity in the Portrayal of Women and Gender Issues

Workshop for Social Media Influencers – 17th Nov, 2023

The workshop with social media influencers - 'Empowering Women On Social Media: Gender Inclusion and Intersectionality in Content Creation', was organised as a part of Population First's Laadli media advocacy campaign to promote gender sensitivity in the portrayal of all genders in content on social media.

Social media has the power and influence which lets users interact with other members of their social

network and post updates, pictures, and videos with their followers.

Additionally, social media platforms provide multiple tools that enable communities, groups, businesses and organisations to establish new connections with their audience and consumer engagement strategies.

The four primary pillars of these strategies used are;

Influencer Mapping: Finding Indian influencers whose audiences fit the campaign's goals and specifications is the target.

Comprehensive Gender Sensitisation: Carry out workshops for specific influencers that are comprehensively gender sensitive.

Content Creation: Work with influencers to create gender-sensitive content that meets Population First's requirements while keeping the influencers in charge of creativity.

Marketing Campaign: Creating and driving the social media campaign while following up on its interaction and performance.



Anveshan: Research Paper Competition on 'Women Led Development in India: Opportunities and Challenges'

'ANVESHAN' – An Inter Collegiate Research Paper Competition on 'Women Led Development in India: Opportunities & Challenges' was held at Maniben Nanavati Women's College, organized by Smt. Kantaben Shah Research Centre, The Departments of Food & Nutrition and English; in collaboration with Laadli initiative of Population First & United Nations Population First & United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) on 2nd December 2023.

The total number of paper presenters was 39, while the total number of participants was 59 under the patronage of Dr. (Smt) Yogini Sheth: Hon. Secretary, Managing Committee, MNWC; Mrs. Angela Shah; Prof. Vibhuti Patel and Dr. Rajshree Trivedi, lead by our chief patron, Smt. Himadri Nanavati, Chairperson, Managing Committee, MNWC.

Our Executive team involved Dr. Rajshree Trivedi, Prof (Dr) Rita Patil, Ms. Shama Chavan, Dr. Cicilia C

hettiar, Dr. Anuja Deshpande, Ms. Aaliya Sayed, Ms. Pravara Sonawane, Ms. Fiza Chandieala and Ms. Muktalata Jamatia along with our partner Ms. Dolly Thakore, Dr. A.L. Sharada and Ms. Anuja Gulati, and co-ordinating members Ms. Shama Chavan & Ms. Fiza Chandiwala.

The main objective behind this yearly event is to encourage and provide opportunities to students and young researchers from different colleges around the state to share their insights and research findings through their paper presentations on a particular topic within the spectrum of the yearly theme.

The winners of this year's Competition were awarded prizes and certificates, while the rest of the participants were given participating certificates. It was a full-day event with the opening remarks by Ms. Shama Chavan – Assistant Professor of the Department of Food & Nutrition, followed by the playing of the University Song and the College Song.

Post felicitation of our honoured members, Vice Principal Madam introduced the Competition judges and briefed the audience about the Competition. The winners who secured the prizes are:

First Prize – Ms. Arshi Khan from Mithibai College of Arts, Chauhan Institute of Science & Amrutben Jivanlal College of Commerce and Economics.

Second Prize – Ms. Swara Trivedi, Ms. Unnati Dharod and Ms. Shruti Soni from Maniben Nanavati Women's College.

Third Prize– Mr. Meet Vijay Gala from Tolani College of Commerce (autonomous).

Consolation Prize – Ms. Niharika Dolas and Mr. Mohit Gohil from Ramnarain Ruia Autonomous College.

Consolation Prize – Mr. Abhijeet Raut from SVKM's Mithibai College of Arts, Chauhan Institute of Science & Amrutben Jivanlal College of Commerce and Economics.

Special prize – Ms. Vaishnavi Devadiga and Mr. Suraj Porey from Ramnarain Ruia College.



Online Masterclass on Reporting on Development Issues with P. Sainath -4th Dec 2023

An Online Master Class on reporting on development issues was conducted by Palagummi Sainath, a well-known Indian journalist, writer, and novelist, on December 4th 2023.

Mr Sainath opened with his most crucial point: he has stopped using the nomenclature 'development reporting' or 'development journalism.' He explained how development comes to mean other things instead of people's lives.



Oxfam study quantified the work done by women and adolescent girls as worth 12.5 billion hours daily working out to a whopping USD 10.8 trillion on a minimum wage rate!

He highlighted the collapse of employment that the press did not cover during COVID-19. During the COVID-19 pandemic, especially the first few months, we saw the largest migration of human beings in recorded history, far greater than that at the time of the Partition!"

He lamented the impossibility of reconstructing what happened a decade from now since there will be nothing in the newspapers and TV channels. "The corporate-owned legacy media are not interested in the poor who do not produce revenue for them.

"Just before the pandemic, the ILO came out with some numbers on unpaid work by women and girls in the care sector. He cited an Oxfam study that quantified the work done by women and adolescent girls as worth 12.5 billion hours daily, working out to a whopping USD 10.8 trillion on a minimum wage rate. That is bigger than the market value of all your four Tech Giants put together," he said and added, "If we started paying for this unpaid work and add that to the GDP, it could drastically alter the very face of Economics as we know. The quantum of such unpaid work done by women and adolescent girls increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, in the face of increased and heightened domestic violence since the men were housebound due to the lockdown."

He lamented that the Indian media has not bothered to estimate the number of lives India lost to COVID-19 credibly. "They claimed India's management of the pandemic could be a lesson for others," he reminded, calling it dangerously delusional.

Mr Sainath recalled the "hand wringing" editorials which wondered "why the migrants were heading back because there is a much better chance of getting medical assistance in the cities." He pointed out how the people who decided to walk back had made a rational and correct decision.

"Imagine if they had stayed back and had to depend on the mercies of our middle classes. In the several years they worked for us, we never bothered to get to know them."

"When you want to cover migrants or migrations, you must be a migrant yourself!"

"Indian Railways released a proud public press release about shramik trains saying they transported 91 lakh workers from May 1st to May 25th 2020." He pointed out how that figure indicates only those who bought tickets but not the others who could not afford the fare. "If you add up that with the figures released by various district administrations, we now know that the number is nothing less than two crores. These include the lakhs who walked back and travelled aboard bus rooftops, trucks, and even autorickshaws."

He lamented the denial of the deaths, the scale of migration and the passage of cruel GR, which made the movement of human beings on the highways between 7 pm and 7 am. "So the government was forcing people to walk in the hottest hours of the hottest days of India's hottest months in a scorching country instead," he said.

He sorrowfully recounted the story of a 12-year-old Jamlo, a tribal girl who was walking back to their village 200 km away when 160 km later, the young adolescent collapsed from fatigue, dehydration, and muscle failure, breathing her last in her mother's arms.

"The pandemic has become a convenient excuse to rationalize your disgust at the very sight of us coming even close to you. So, we may die on our reverse journey, but it is better to die amongst loved ones than be an unnamed corpse on the street", said a migrant.

"Agrarian Crisis destroyed tens of millions of livelihoods in the countryside, swelling the ranks of rural migrants in urban cities," he said and berated at the hypocrisy involved. "We are saying this is a good thing we've got to get more people off agriculture and pushed into manufacturing when we didn't open a damn industry with substantial employment for people of that class; that is how they ended up in cities as your nanny, driver, tailor, carpenter or whoever. And all we're bemoaning is the loss of our cheap labour! "

"When you want to cover migrants or migrations, you must be a migrant yourself!"

Since 1995, nearly 4,00,000 farmers have committed suicide; nearly 4,00,000 is a gross underestimate since it excludes large numbers of women farmers since we don't recognize women as farmers but only as farmers' wives, mothers, sisters or daughters. Ironically, over 60-65% of all labour in agriculture is done by women." He also pointed out how different departments in the various arms of the government put out their own data, often in contradicting numbers".

He reminded the class of one month during the pandemic when there was some brilliant coverage of the thousands of bodies piled up along the banks of the Ganges, the Sarayu and other rivers in UP. "It only lasted a month till the state and central government pulled the plug on government advertising in the media," he said, explaining how dependency on ad revenues made the legacy media shut up.

He recounted the scenario when he began journalism in September 1980. "Almost every newspaper had a labour reporter. Try finding me a labour reporter today in the Times of India or anywhere else. They may have an industrial relations reporter; he talks to industry PR and gets his information on labour from them." Worse, we do not have a single correspondent covering agriculture full-time today. The agriculture correspondent is very often someone who is covering the agriculture ministry, not farmers."

There was not a single-dollar billionaire in India. 608 billionaires were created during the 24 months of the pandemic and lockdowns in India. The largest billionaires are not from hi-tech manufacturing but from the health sector.

He pointed out how this phenomenal performance has made us number three globally. "And the mainstream media are very proud of it. When contrasted with how India ranks 132 in the UN Human Development Index, we immediately start attacking it, saying it is faulty and poor methodology or 'they don't know what they're talking about.' Meanwhile, the United Nations Human Development Index was originally designed by Dr Amartya Sen and Pakistani economist Dr Mahbub ul Haq."

He further pointed out how India has fallen to 107th out of 121 in the global hunger index from 94. It is also 111th out of 121 on the World Press Freedom Index and 161st out of 180 on the Environmental Performance Index. And as you know, South Asia will be a climate change hotspot.

Instead of reflection and corrective intervention, he is shocked that it was all dismissed as a "conspiracy by people jealous of India."

A captivating Q&A session followed, exploring thought-provoking topics and offering valuable insights. Watch the full [masterclass here](#).

Capacity Building of Mass Media Students on Gender-Sensitivity (Mumbai)

A workshop on Capacity Building of Mass Media Students on Gender-Sensitivity was held on 14th Dec 2023 at Vidyalankar Educational Campus. A total of 45 students were selected and trained as part of Population First's continuing initiative to build an understanding of issues related to gender, gender-based discrimination, and violence to build capacities for reporting using the gender lens.

Session I: Using a gender lens to look at advertisements

Dr Sharada inaugurated the day and took over the stage by eliciting responses from the students on the definition of Gender.

She explained how Gender is a social construct that defines the roles and images of men and women and the power equations between them. "Access to resources, institutions and spaces, the type of labour one is engaged in - reproductive or productive, agency and choice about sexual and reproductive behaviours is all decided by gender," she said, underlining, "It is not just about differences but about power."

"All the institutions of the society - be it family, education or religion, all promote gendered thinking and behaviours. Mass media, advertising, films, literature, and pop culture are the most dominant means of reinforcing the gender stereotypes in modern society," she pointed out.

"Advertising is any form of communication that informs or influences people to buy a product, a service or adopt an idea or practice," she defined and added: "It just doesn't sell products and services; but it subliminally messages and influences thinking and behaviour insidiously and feeds on and promotes insecurities and stereotypes."

Women are four times more likely than men not to have a speaking role. Women are three times more likely than men to be presented as a product user rather than an authority. Women are 3.5 times more likely than men to be given at home or in a domestic environment (than at work) and twice as likely to be associated with household products like body care and home goods.

Advertisements would have us believe a woman's goal in life is merely to attract and attain a man, always look young and attractive; She is either a mother or a sex object."In the case of the former, she is always depicted as a martyr, she pointed out.

Contrasting this with the projection of men in advertising, she pointed out examples of how they are always portrayed as virile, strong, brave, adventurous, rational, robust, and practical, with the ability to think independently and take the initiative.



Mass media, advertising, films, literature, and pop culture are the most dominant means of reinforcing the gender stereotypes in modern society

She used several ad campaigns to illustrate how advertising and media images encourage girls to focus on looks.. "The barrage of messages about thinness, dieting and beauty tells women that they are always in need of adjustment – and that the female body is an object to be perfected."
"Such imagery is linked to depression, loss of self-esteem and eating disorders like anorexia-nervosa while transitioning from adolescence to adulthood. This leads to loss of confidence – hankering of more and more external mechanisms to live up to a borrowed image."



Session II: Using a gender lens to look at cinema

Mr. Yogesh Pawar conducted the session focusing on the influence cinema has directly and intersectionally on social norms of Gender.

He began by asking about the latest release, *Animal*; quite a few hands went up. "Tough action hero image" and "great fight scenes" were some of the reasons the men cited.

Like his earlier *Kabir Singh*, Sandeep Reddy Vanga's latest *Animal* has come in for criticism for its depiction of toxic masculinity and sexism. A few sequences in the movie have appalled many, like when Ranbir's character asks a woman to lick his boot.

When women's rights advocacy groups panned *Kabir Singh* for its brazen misogyny, Vanga defended. An old interview with critic and film journo Anupama Chopra was played, where Vanga was justifying a man being abusive to women. "If she is his woman, he should be able to slap or touch her wherever he wants. This is an expression of intense love," he said on camera during the interview.

Mr Pawar added, "Whenever women question social norms, speak up, or enter public spaces, there's a violent backlash from patriarchy, which tries to repress these movements, imprison women, and force them back into its confines. This is essentially a fight for public space when men regard women as a 'danger' as women venture into previously uncharted territory," he said and added, "Patriarchy feels threatened when more and more women pursue education, strive to enter the workforce, support themselves, and recognize their proper role in society."

Upon playing a montage of the ten most offensive Bollywood scenes/dialogues on screen, several admitted that the same scenes had made them laugh, and now, when seen separately, they realize the toxicity involved.

Students were then divided into five groups to work on projecting gender roles in cinema using a film of their choice. The groups chose *Pathaan*, *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham*, *Padmavat*, *Bajirao Mastani* and *Rocky Aur Rani Ki Prem Kahaani* as the films. The group presentations followed at the end of the workshop, showcasing the culmination of their collaborative efforts.

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Celebrate Her Life

An Initiative by Population First

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