Name of the Event: Thinking about Gender Diversity in Local and Global Contexts.

Organizing Department: The Department of Sociology, Loreto College (Autonomous), Kolkata in collaboration with the Women and Gender Cell.

Date and Time: 19th August 2026, 10:45 am.

Venue: Auditorium, Loreto College (Autonomous), Kolkata.

Resource Person: Dr. Debanuj Dasgupta, Associate Professor of Feminist Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara.

EVENT DETAILS:

Loreto College (Autonomous), Kolkata, in collaboration with the Women and Gender Cell, successfully organized a one-day lecture on "Gender Diversity in Local and Global Contexts" on the college campus. The session commenced at 10:45 a.m. and continued for one hour. The lecture aimed to sensitize students to the understanding of gender as a fluid and socially constructed category, while also highlighting both local cultural perspectives and global discourses on gender diversity. We were honored to have Dr. Debanuj Dasgupta, Associate Professor of Feminist Studies at the University of California, as the resource person for the day. Dr. Dasgupta engaged the audience with insightful reflections on intersectionality, identity, and the lived experiences of gender-diverse communities across different socio-cultural contexts. The lecture witnessed enthusiastic participation from UG Semester 1 students of the Sociology Department, students from other departments, and Semester 7 students from various departments. The total number of participants was 121.

The seminar given by Dr. Debanuj Dasgupta provided a transnational and interdisciplinary approach to the subjects of gender, sexuality, and migration, based on his academic background in Sociology (at Presidency College in Kolkata), Geography and Urban Planning (at the University of Akron), and Gender Studies (at Ohio State); his area of research, which involves migration, refugee and asylum rights, and transnational gender and sexuality studies, formed the basis of the whole talk.

The session opened by outlining five "umbrella themes": how sex, gender, and the body are conceived across cultures; the unstable relationship between sex and gender; gender and sexuality studies as distinct academic projects in the US and India; the culturally specific nature

of terms such as queer, LGBTQ, Hijra, Koti, Tongzhi, and Travesti; and the intersections of migration, gender, and sexuality. He also connected the discipline to career pathways—LGBT services, health advocacy, human rights and policy work, counseling, NGO and government work, and workplace diversity.

Drawing on Nivedita Menon's work, the talk challenged the assumption that sex and gender are timeless categories, noting these concepts emerged historically (16th century Europe; 19th century South Asia, Latin America, and Africa) and are shaped by ongoing cultural processes rather than fixed at the body's surface. Feminist critiques—citing Oyewumi, Amadiume, Bhakti traditions of cross-dressing, Carol Gilligan's developmental psychology, Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, and intersex rights—were used to destabilize the "sex is biology, gender is culture" binary.

The talk shifted to global frameworks—the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Yogyakarta Principles (2006, 2017), and the Refugee Convention (1951/1968)—as sites where rights and governance intersect with sexuality. Statistics on displacement (117.8 million displaced people, 41.6 million crossing borders) illustrated globalization's link to migration through capital flows, shifting labor markets, and uneven development.

A detailed timeline traced U.S. immigration law's regulation of sexuality, from the 1917 exclusion of "psychopathic inferiors" through the 1990 repeal of the homosexuality ban, the 1993 HIV entry ban, and its 2010 repeal, to the 2013 *United States v. Windsor* ruling striking down DOMA. The seminar closed on contemporary detention politics—citing Detention Watch Network data on ICE detention (over 310,000 detained in FY2025) and deaths in custody—alongside creative and activist responses such as the play *Crossings* and the Queer Immigrant Rights Project (QuIR), emphasizing embodied trauma, coalitional LGBTQ immigrant activism, and the securitization of space at the scale of the body.

The seminar enabled the students to realise that sex and gender are influenced by culture, history and social power rather than being fixed or universal. It presented culturally specific identities such as Hijra, Koti, queer and Tongzhi, pointing out that Western LGBTQ+ frameworks are not always suitable for universal application. The session also linked these concepts to immigration laws, transgender and queer migrants, and to human rights advocacy.

It ended with a discussion, a group photograph and a vote of thanks. The seminar as a whole was informative, enriching and thought-provoking.

Geo-Tagged Photographs of the Event:



Image 1: Mr. Meghjit Sengupta, HOD, Department of Sociology, introducing the speaker to the audience.



Image 2: Dr. Dasgupta delivering his lecture.



Image 3: The audience during the talk.



Image 4: Ms. Kaushiki Banerjee felicitating the esteemed speaker.



Image 5: Group photograph of the Department of Sociology with the speaker.



Image 6: The faculties of the Department of Sociology with Dr. Debanuj Dasgupta.