

Young Academicians and Student Papers Section

Emerging Voices in Political Inquiry

The Young Academicians and Student Papers Section forms an integral part of the proceedings of *Dialego 2025–2026*. Conceived as a platform for encouraging academic engagement and critical inquiry among young scholars, this section showcases selected young scholars and student contributions presented during the conference. The papers reflect the intellectual curiosity, analytical rigor, and interdisciplinary perspectives of students engaging with contemporary debates on gender, justice, Dalit Rights, democracy, and political transformation. These contributions demonstrate the ability of emerging scholars to critically examine pressing socio-political concerns while situating their analyses within broader theoretical and empirical frameworks.

The papers included in this section have been reviewed and edited for publication purposes. Collectively, they represent the spirit of *Dialego* as a democratic academic space that values participation, inclusivity, and critical reflection.

Young Academicians:

Nirbachon Ar Iccha: Women as Subjects in the Bengali Muslim Ghoti-Bangal Divide by Bridget Teresa Joseph.

This paper examines how women's *nirbachon* (choice) and *iccha* (desire) are shaped and politicized within the Bengali Muslim Ghoti-Bangal divide. Moving beyond cultural stereotypes, it argues that women's lives become symbolic sites where communities assert modernity, piety, and moral

superiority. Based on qualitative narratives, the study reveals that choices regarding education, marriage, mobility, and veiling are socially regulated, morally evaluated, and often internalized by women themselves. Agency emerges as negotiated rather than autonomous, shaped by family and community expectations. Ultimately, the paper highlights how women's bodies and decisions sustain intra-community hierarchies while calling for a rethinking of gender justice and depoliticized autonomy.

The Ineffectiveness of UN Resolution 1325: The case of Afghanistan by Rituja Ghosh

This paper examines the limitations of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda through the case of Afghanistan. It argues that despite normative commitments to women's participation, protection, and rights, implementation remains weak due to geopolitical interests, patriarchal structures, and lack of contextual adaptation. The Taliban's return to power highlights the failure of global frameworks to ensure accountability and safeguard women's rights. Using recent data, the paper shows how Afghan women face intensified insecurity, especially during crises. It concludes that localized, context-sensitive approaches and a broader human security framework are essential for meaningful progress.

An Enquiry into Patriarchal Indian Jurisprudence in the Post-Nirbhaya Era by Samudranil Bose and Sorbani Bhowmick

The paper examines how the Indian judiciary handles rape and gender-based violence from a feminist perspective. It argues that despite post-Nirbhaya legal reforms, patriarchal attitudes persist within the justice system. Using feminist and socio-legal approaches, it highlights issues such as delayed

trials, poor investigations, and victim-blaming. Through cases like Nirbhaya, Unnao, Pollachi, and Abhaya, it shows that justice is often reactive and influenced by public pressure. The paper concludes that despite reforms, true gender justice remains limited, calling for systemic changes and a more gender-sensitive judiciary.

Kink, Crime, and the Gaze: Negotiating Gendered Power, Sexuality, Madness, and Political Resistance in Gotham's Harley Quinn and Catwoman by Srijita Banerjee

The paper examines Harley Quinn and Catwoman as political figures within comic narratives, arguing that their representations of madness, crime, and kink-coded femininity challenge patriarchal systems of control. It situates Gotham as a metaphor for gendered governance, where institutions construct female deviance as a means of discipline. Harley's madness and Catwoman's criminality emerge as forms of resistance shaped by institutional and socioeconomic inequalities. Through feminist and cultural theory, the paper shows how both characters reclaim agency by subverting the male gaze, redefining sexuality, and destabilizing normative femininity. Ultimately, their narratives transform deviance into a political tool for resistance and alternative feminist imagination.

Feminist Foreign Policy: A Comparative Analysis of The Swedish and The Indian Foreign Policies: by Tiasha Maity

This paper examines Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) through a comparative analysis of Sweden and India, highlighting how gender perspectives reshape international relations. It argues that Sweden has successfully institutionalized FFP through its Three Rs (Rights, Representation, and Resources) framework. Rights, representation, and resources embedding gender equality across diplomacy, security, and climate policy. In

contrast, India adopts a fragmented and implicit approach, constrained by patriarchal structures, security priorities, and implementation gaps. While India has made commitments through global forums and initiatives, these remain largely rhetorical. The paper concludes that despite contextual differences, integrating intersectional and inclusive gender frameworks is essential for achieving equitable and effective foreign policy outcomes.

Student Papers analyses:

Mata Hari vs the State: Inside the Androcentric Intelligence by Nasreen Sultana and Rayna Mukherjee.

The paper *Mata Hari vs the State: Inside the Androcentric Intelligence* analyses how Mata Hari's execution during World War I was less a matter of proven espionage and more a product of gendered scapegoating within androcentric state systems. It argues that intelligence institutions, media narratives, and nationalist anxieties converged to construct her as a symbolic enemy. Drawing on archival intelligence files, the study highlights the absence of concrete evidence and exposes how suspicion replaced proof. By examining literary reinterpretations, it further shows how her identity was reshaped over time, ultimately presenting Mata Hari as a victim of political necessity, gender bias, and institutional failure.

Gender Quotas and Political Representation: Successes and Paradoxes Across Democracies by Sambhavi Ghoshal and Banshika Neog.

Gender quotas have become a key mechanism to enhance women's political representation globally, addressing structural exclusion in democratic systems. Adopted in over 110 countries, quotas—such as reserved seats, legislative

mandates, and party quotas – have improved both descriptive and substantive representation. However, their effectiveness varies due to differences in political culture, institutional design, and enforcement. While democracies are more likely to adopt quotas, persistent patriarchal norms often limit their transformative potential. The study highlights comparative experiences across regions, emphasizing that quotas can advance gender equality but also produce paradoxes like tokenism, elite capture, and constrained participation.

The Aesthetics of Resistance: Digital Feminism, Visibility, and Backlash in Contemporary Gender Politics by Madhubanti Chowdhury and Snehal

This paper examines the paradox of digital feminist visibility, where online platforms simultaneously enable resistance and intensify repression, especially in the Global South. Using a transnational intersectional framework and mixed-methods analysis of 2,700 digital artifacts, it compares movements like #Labour and #MahsaAmini to reveal algorithmic bias, digital colonialism, and uneven amplification. While Western activism benefits from visibility without reprisal, Global South movements face surveillance, censorship, and backlash. The study highlights how digital spaces function as sites of power and “virtual statecraft,” advocating for equitable governance, algorithmic transparency, and decentralized platforms to transform visibility into a tool for sustained feminist resistance.

The Weaponization of Women’s Bodies: Systematic Gendered and Intersectional Violence in the Conflict-ridden Area by Aankita Roy Chowdhury and Khakshan Jahan.

This paper explores the weaponization of women’s bodies in conflict zones, arguing that gendered violence operates as a systemic tool of political and social control. Using an

intersectional framework, it connects cases such as the Partition of India, the Kunan Pashpora mass rape, the Manipur conflict, and violence against Palestinian women. It demonstrates how women's bodies become symbolic battlegrounds for asserting communal honour and dominance. The study also highlights the marginalisation of Dalit women in politics through proxy representation. By combining historical narratives and contemporary case studies, the paper underscores how caste, gender, and conflict intersect to sustain structural violence while calling for justice and recognition.

Impact of Self-Help Groups on Women: Better Economics for Better Politics by Dhruva Ganguly

The paper examines the impact of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) on women's empowerment in Kolkata, arguing that economic independence is essential for meaningful political participation. Using primary data from 50 SHGs and secondary sources, it evaluates economic, social, familial, and political dimensions of empowerment. Findings show improvements in household decision-making, financial awareness, and reduction in domestic violence, alongside confidence and mobility. However, political empowerment remains limited, with low awareness and participation in governance. The study concludes that while SHGs foster gradual transformation and solidarity, stronger policy support, training, and awareness initiatives are required to translate socio-economic gains into political empowerment.

India's LGBTQIA+ Community: A Peculiar Paradox by Abhishikta Paul

The paper argues that India's LGBTQIA+ community experiences symbolic recognition without real support. Despite legal visibility, they face policy gaps, economic hardship, and social exclusion. These issues are shaped by

politics and worsened by caste, class, and gender inequalities. It concludes that true justice requires structural reforms, resource redistribution, and genuine political representation, not just superficial inclusion.

The underrepresentation of Dalit Women in Indian Electoral Politics before Mayawati: Analyzing the social response of the general mass through the lens of casteist and patriarchal structures by Aive Chakraborty

This paper examines the historical underrepresentation of Dalit women in Indian electoral politics prior to the rise of Mayawati, situating their exclusion within entrenched casteist and patriarchal structures. It argues that Dalit women faced a “triple burden” of caste, class, and gender, which restricted their political participation through social stigma, violence, lack of education, and institutional barriers. The study highlights how political spaces were dominated by upper-caste and male actors, while even reform movements overlooked Dalit women. Ultimately, the paper positions Mayawati’s emergence as a transformative rupture that challenged these systemic exclusions and redefined possibilities for Dalit women’s political agency.

Gender and Politics: Get Real About Power, Who’s Represented, and Fighting Back by Shreya Roy Chowdhury.

This paper examines the structural links between gender and political power, arguing that women’s underrepresentation is embedded in institutions, culture, and norms. Drawing on feminist theories—liberal, radical, post-structural, and intersectional—it shows how leadership remains masculinized and exclusionary. It evaluates mechanisms like quotas and India’s constitutional reforms, noting gains alongside persistent barriers such as party gatekeeping, violence, and resource inequality. The paper highlights intersectional

exclusions across caste, class, and identity, and concludes that equality requires systemic transformation, policy reform, and sustained feminist resistance to democratize power.

Bureaucracy, Gender and State: A Critical Study of Women's Vulnerability in Assam's NRC Regime by Sujata Das

The paper argues that Assam's NRC process, though presented as neutral, disproportionately excluded women due to rigid documentation requirements and existing gender inequalities. Many women lacked essential records because of patriarchal norms, marriage migration, poverty, and environmental factors. It shows that bureaucracy reinforces structural inequalities and that gender, along with religion, class, and geography, intensified exclusion—especially for marginalized groups. The study concludes that NRC is a political mechanism that produces gendered vulnerability, highlighting the need to rethink citizenship to ensure equality and inclusion.