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Chennai hosting seminar on female sexuality

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Chennai, March 15 A Chennai-based group is hosting a two-day dialogue on women and sexuality in India here from Friday. Academics, artistes and activists will initiate a discussion on the experience, performance, representation and regulation of women's sexuality in the country.

The conference, organised by the Prakriti Foundation, is titled 'Stree Sharira: Exploring sites of women's sexuality in India today'. It is dedicated to the well-known radical dancer Chandralekha who died a few months back.

'We understand the causes and issues and the need for change in this sphere. We also realise that these changes cannot be brought about immediately, but need to be worked at in a multi-pronged manner,' the curator of the conference and founder trustee Ranvir Shah told IANS here.

Speaking on the ambit of the conference, Shah said: 'I feel that people who are opinion-makers can bring about change. The medium of art can be used to bring attention to these issues and set people thinking.'

The conference 'is looking at all the aspects of the sexuality, the law, the reproductive rights, gender bias paradigms of viewing women and, of course, empowerment as the most important point,' added Shah.

There will be lectures on gender and activism, sexuality and religious practice. Art advisor and curator Alka Pande will steer a discourse on bodily experience and personal and/or political identity.

Activist Mangai will talk about theatre as a medium for transgressing sexual roles. There will also be a critical analysis of the film 'Girlfriend'.

Women activists Ruth Vanita and Deepa Vasudevan will discuss new and emerging articulations of women's sexuality and the 'queer woman'. Violence against women as well as the emergence of the sex worker as a person will be debated.

Moral policing, the law and policy, rights, sexual experiences of institutionalised women and censorship in south India will be discussed by art critic Sadanand Menon, musician Hariharan and film star Khushboo.

The evenings will be devoted to performances by Dalit women's tappattam (dance) troupe, Sandra Chatterjee and her troupe, poetry and music by the queer collective LesBIT, and by Kanimozhi, Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi's daughter.

'Sancharram', a film about a young lesbian couple in Kerala directed by Ligy

Pullapally, will be followed by a screening of 'She Write', a documentary about female Tamil poets writing about sexuality directed by Anjali Monteiro and K.P. Jayasankar of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences.

Six months after the conference on female sexuality there will be an academic meet on 'Masculinity and metro-sexuality' and the macho archetype of the Indian male, followed by another on the Third Gender, Shah said.

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