Care, Mutuality and Fraternity
What Makes a Campus a Community?

WISCOMP

**Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace
Foundation for Universal Responsibility**
of His Holiness the Dalai Lama

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What Makes a Campus a Community?

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with
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Introduction

The Covid19 pandemic has required us to physically distance and isolate. It has required us to alter 'normal' life and compelled us to reflect on ourselves, the communities to which we belong, and the institutions with which we interact.

For students, academics, university administrators, and contracted staff, it is the university campus that is one of the primary organizers of life. They have had to contend with working from home, access to online classes, academic deadlines, and access to resources. It has been challenging to come to terms with the absence of the familiar campus, moving back to often unsafe home spaces, drastically reduced incomes, and heightened degrees of health anxiety.

Some universities, some administrators, some teachers, and some students have been able to work towards caring policies, whether at an individual or institutional level. For the most part, the university has been struggling to extend care to the people that live in, work in and engage with campus life. Fees still remain, deadlines are strict, allowances are made only grudgingly, and jobs are in peril.

This has made many of us reflect on the nature of universities and campuses from before the pandemic – was there 'care' in the everyday life of the university campus in a pre-pandemic time? Indeed, we have had to reflect on whether the campus *can*, in fact, be a community. It depends on what we understand to be a campus, and what we understand to be a community.

Is a campus a place where knowledge is imparted in one direction, from powerful teacher to supplicant student? Is it where

knowledge is produced only for those within the campus? Is it accessible – both formally and substantively – only to those with economic and cultural capital? Is it where students pay to consume education as a good or service? Is it where degree-holders are produced as in an assembly line, indistinguishable from one another?

Or can there be a more radical understanding of the campus?

Can it be a space where teachers and students are co-producers of knowledge, each able to learn from the other? Can it be a space that is embedded within society, as opposed to abstracted from it? Can it engage with and shape – and in turn be shaped by – the society within which it functions? Can it be a transformative space that foregrounds collaboration, compassion, and commitment?

The first kind of campus implies a hierarchical community, one that is exclusionary. Here, knowledge is power, transacted to 'produce' graduates. The second sees the campus as being a space for shaping people who exist within complex networks of identity, politics, and the economy. It conceives the campus as capable of both shaping people, as well as being shaped *by* people.

In the latter kind of campus, how do we reimagine care, mutuality, and community as what B.R. Ambedkar called forms of "associated living, or conjoint, communicated experience"? Given the gendered nature of all university spaces, does the responsibility of care disproportionately fall on women? How do we think with feminisms to advance this idea of fraternity on campuses? What do we make of campus life when student politics are closely watched and violently policed?

We are aware of mass-scale progressive students' mobilizations that attempt to maintain at great peril to lives and futures the spirit

of fraternity as the foundations of university community. At *Log-in Gender*, we invited reflections on the **ordinary and everyday forms of resistances, negotiations, and strategies that students and teachers use** inside classrooms, hostels, dining halls, canteens, common rooms, corridors, toilets, laboratories, among others, to practice—despite the challenges—a community life on campus marked by care, mutuality and fraternity.

This is a collection of some of those reflections, including poetry that engages with campus cultures that – to devastating effect – imagine people's private and professional lives as separate; and with educational content and pedagogic practice that is rigid and foregrounds strict binaries. This collection includes a reflection on sexual assault on college campuses – and the consequent need for safe and brave spaces in order to heal trauma and envision a safer future. One contributor reflects on the ideal of the campus, while another charts the care they received and participated in while on campus. Two others reflect on the transformative impact of the public university they attended. Above all, this collection reflects – from the perspective of students and young professionals – a belief in and a commitment to the campus as having the potential to be a community in which care is practiced and centred.

Teachers' Lessons

Palashi Das

"A college degree is not a sign of a finished product but an indication a person is prepared for life."
—Reverend Edward A. Malloy, Monk's Reflections

In a 2017 survey conducted by the American College Health Association, more than 60% of nearly 28, 000 students on 51 campuses said that they had felt "very lonely" in the previous 12 months. Nearly 30% said that they had felt that way in the two weeks preceding the survey.

No matter how prepared students think they are for college or university life, they might still feel anxious when they arrive on campus. Although most students are excited about starting their college life, the thought of leaving behind the comforts of home, high school friends, and the care of parents and family can be very stressful. The challenges of making new friends and creating a new social life can be intimidating, especially for the students who are shy, introverted, or disabled. In a sea of people, they find themselves adrift when they first arrive at their college campus.

Music, art, literature and science are some of the things that one might pick up as a passion while in college. Yet, of all these things the associated and communicated experience in a campus is the most important objective for building a sense of community. For this, care, mutuality, fraternity and friendship serve as the basic tools which help to make a campus a community.

I am reminded of my first days in a new classroom in my new college. I was looking at a sea of strangers as I sat alone on the last bench of the class, searching for a familiar face. Classes come and go and slowly a busy semester flies by. Slowly, those unknown

faces become familiar. Participating in college events, group assignments, group study, canteen *addas*, long classes, library study parties, random trips to the city, bunking classes to watch movies—these experiences made all of us students a family. Each and every part of the campus became part of our life as and that made the campus a community for us.

In fact, on the last of college, everyone was sad. We clicked teary-eyed photographs, went to meet our teachers, thanked them for their support and care. We felt nostalgic and numb at that final moment. For three years, we had sat at the same last bench. We could remember out early days vividly.

Teachers' lessons and care, and the friendships I made have shaped the person I am today. Care, mutuality, fraternity are emotions one can experience through one's college life. We all know that friendship requires people who are willing to put in the effort to show each other that they care. It connects people. Fraternity, a feeling of friendship and support that exists between the members of a group to keep the group tied together. As, Jerry Krarmer, an American footballer has beautifully said, "College was especially sweet because of the positive, hopeful atmosphere of a college campus."

Jawaharlal Nehru University:
A community of hope, fraternity and learning through acceptance

Tanika Singh and Neha Wadhwa

As Oscar Wilde had said, "The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it. Resist it and your soul grows sick with longing for the things it has forbidden to it." This piece is our attempt to do away with our temptation of writing (and getting published) a piece about the place to which we owe our heart and soul: Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU).

JNU is a world full of liberty, discussions, debates, and diverse experiences. It is a space which not only theorizes inclusion, but also practices it through its various practices such as a low fee structure and accessible infrastructure. At JNU students from marginalized section can seek admission at Rs. 260 per semester. On this campus, there are no separate rules for women students. Life at JNU is full of expression, reflected even on the walls of the campus that are covered with posters and art. These posters stand for democracy, are symbols of resistance, and reflective of a plethora of emotions for artists to negotiate a world filled with inequality, injustice and oppression through art, words, poems and paintings. Hence, these are not merely walls with posters, but voices of the community by the community.

JNU is special for it is its belief in and commitment to equality, making it able to nurture the dream of quality education of students from all sections of society. A kind of careworkvisible in is the free tuition classes conducted by JNU Students' Unions for those aspiring to study at JNU. These classes are taught by students on a voluntary basis. This expands access to preparatory

opportunities and materials, instead of limiting it to a privileged few who can afford resources.

JNU provides space not only to learn, but also to unlearn while also celebrating new kinds of learning. JNU in its campus culture – shaped by generations of students and teachers – allows students to break chains of prejudices, judgments, and dogmas. People are encouraged and supported in their attempts to practice their various rights to freedom. It provides a mirror to reality, makepeople confront and question our privileges.

It is not just an institution; it is a relationship that has been woven and carved beautifully, not only by the student community but also by its faculty with a lot of love and care. This relationship manifests itself on numerous occasions: be it supporting students in struggles, participating in protests, or having long conversations outside the classroom, and of course the dedication displayed in pedagogic practice, JNU faculty members commit to their nurturing of their students.

JNU is the soul of public funded education in India, echoing as it does the sentiments and visions of Gandhi, Ambedkar and Nehru. It allows for growth within a companionate environment and allows for the development of a radical vision against the subjugation and oppression of others. It recognizes only that education and learning is worthwhile, that is undertaken within a culture of freedom, trust and inquiry. The real learning is not only about facts and figures, but it is in the realization that true ideals of compassion, empathy and goodness does not and should not have any boundaries and education that lacks such values is not worth investing in.

To us, the real question isn't why JNU is the way it is, but instead is why aren't other universities more like JNU?

What do you want to be in the future?

Swastika Jajoo

In this poem, Swastika writes about how educational and professional spaces imagine people's personal/private selves and academic/professional selves as completely distinct, and without influence on one another. Professional and academic success is often privileged at the cost of personal physical and mental wellbeing – and is a sign of the absence of a culture of care.

Sir, I am twenty-three years old and I have no idea.
The Scientific Method demands that I at least
hypothesize. It is true; it is nearly
a quarter of a century of living and at this point,
purpose and perspective are key.

It is not enough to say
"I would like a good night of sleep"
or "I hope I no longer feel
like a traitor in my own skin"
or "I want to learn to love
with a fuller heart."

In academia, they want to know
if I will go on to get a Doctor's degree
and if I aspire to be a professor.
They don't want to know
of the deep depression that drills
into our chests, or of the black circles.
It is not part of the methodology.

It is private; it is personal,
it is not in the purview
of this cold objectivity
that plagues our 'professional' spaces.
We will be asked "What is you research question?"
We will very rarely be asked
"How are you?"

Opposites

Catharine Ananova

In this poem, Catharine writes about how 'educational' materials –
even as seemingly innocuous as grammar rules of opposites –
often establish and reinforce binaries and hierarchies for children.
Compounded by pedagogic practice that is unwilling to examine
its rules and binaries, this leaves young people who are
uncomfortable with the hierarchies, and whose lived experiences
cannot be explained by/limited to the binary, with the difficult
task of negotiating, unlearning, and dismantling these limiting
ideas.

It started in class two,
When the teacher said,
"Sit together,
You and you."

We sat hesitantly with our books,
When the teacher said,
"Read out loud."
And we shared looks.

"Opposites," you mumbled,
When the teacher said,
"You, louder!"
I grumbled.

Said, I, "Big - Small,"
When the teacher said,
"That's not it
Read them all"

"Big - Small
Happy - Sad
Strong - Weak
Short – Tall"

I was almost done,
When the teacher said,
"Go on,
Another one."

Girl - Boy,
When the teacher said,
"That's it for today"
Oh, what joy!

But that's where it started
What the teacher had not said
A slow creeping wall of difference
That still hasn't parts

You somehow got the first pick
And you confidently said,
"You get slow, weak, small
I get strong, big, quick."

And now that I think back to it
How different things would be
Had the teacher said,
"You are not opposites".

So Utterly Alone[1]

Trigger Warning: Campus sexual assault, rape, trauma

When I was a freshman in college, I was raped by a guy that I really liked. He begged me to go out with him for weeks, and I finally gave in. The first time we were together it was, well, it was okay. I could tell he was self-conscious - maybe even a little inexperienced.

I suppressed those memories, probably for too long, because I was ashamed; I couldn't believe I was naive enough to actually feel that this boy had ever cared about me or had any intentions of taking care of me. When I finally confronted the events that occurred that night in that disgusting dorm room, I started feeling uncomfortable in a lot of spaces on my campus. Every stare in the dining hall, every innocent touch at a crowded event, every person that mentioned sexual assault in a classroom - it all felt strangely personal. Everything seemed related to this one horrible event and I couldn't shake the feeling that somehow everyone knew. Quickly, this fear that someone would find out absolutely consumed my life. I was so terrified that they would never look at me the same way, or believe me, or even worse - that they would blame me. I walked around campus, suddenly feeling like I didn't belong, like nobody would ever understand or want to understand. I was so completely vulnerable and so utterly alone; it was a feeling that seemed so impenetrable and so incomparable, until it wasn't.

At first, I wasn't sure if it was because I paid attention or merely out of coincidence, but slowly more and more people around me were experiencing similar things. As horrible as it was to relate to

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[1] The author of this article currently works at a think tank in the U.S.A. and wishes to remain anonymous.

my friends, it was almost a relief; like I wasn't so utterly alone after all. Yet, it wasn't just because I paid attention and it sure wasn't out of coincidence that I learned about my friends, peers, and co-workers' experiences with assault - it was much simpler than that. It was because sexual assault happens more often than most people realize and nobody talks about it.

One night when I was attending a sorority event, nearly every person in the room opened up about a story just like mine. Although it was a hideous thing to hear, it helped me to open up more, to not feel so ashamed, to not feel so utterly alone. It finally felt like I had a place on my campus and in this world for that matter. Through spaces that were made for women, or survivors, or which simply harvested a safe environment, a community was born. Here, the care and understanding of others made me feel whole again. I was part of a family of survivors that made the bad days bearable and the good days better; and let me tell you, that makes the time and effort it takes to create spaces like this so incredibly worth it. Safe spaces aren't excessive, useless, or dispensable - they are necessary.

The Dichotomy of Campus as a Community

Aafiya Bhat

A university campus is an encouraging place to flourish, to learn, to obtain new ideas, to spread awareness, and where creativity and resourcefulness bloom. Community in its essence means a group of people living in the same place or having a particular attribute in common. It means the condition of sharing certain attitudes and interests in common. Mutuality means the relationship between two or more parties, while fraternity is brotherhood formed around common goals and aspirations. When people form a fraternity, they share their efforts, friendship and knowledge with one another. Together they learn, grow, and make the fraternity stronger. Their common experiences build ties that last a lifetime.

Students put in large amounts of time and effort students towards their studies and extracurricular activities. Institutions of higher education allocate their human and other resources, and organize learning opportunities and services to encourage students to participate in and benefit from such activities. The campus acts as a laboratory for the purpose of student success. However, if a campus is devoid of care, mutuality and fraternity, it will ultimately will fail to achieve a sense of community within which students can success and from which students can learn.

Campuses provide the environment required for knowledge production in the form of various programs like workshops, conferences, seminars, and research group discussions. These activities are proven ways to bring a higher education community closer. Academic success within the university campus is the combined effort of its faculty members and students who work together to create a comfortable learning environment.

Participative learning and student engagement will make the campus a more favorable environment for knowledge sharing. Experiences of fun inside the campus is a key requirement for students. By making learning an enjoyable process, both the campus and its students are at an advantage.

In a campus, different experiences are shared amongst students and teachers. This helps everyone learn to respect each other's point of views. They develop certain values and start listening with care to create a non-judgmental space. In such a space they may not agree with someone's opinions, but they would respect their feelings and expressions. Moreover, in a campus everyone occupies the space together and has a responsibility to make it safe and inclusive for all.

Above all, it is within a campus that students also learn various life skills which later help them live a balanced life. A liberal education is meant to incorporate elements of critical thinking, diverse experiences; and it allows students to be challenged and enriched through interactions with peers and educators. Studies have shown that that an atmosphere of mutual support has had positive effects on student well-being. Students who embrace the practices of care and mutuality enrich their college life both inside and outside the campus. Faculty advisors play an important role in shaping students' self confidence in ways that do not promote individualized thinking, but collaborative ways of learning and living.

Profiles of the Editors

Oishik Sircar is Associate Professor, Jindal Global Law School, Adjunct Fellow, University of Technology Sydney Law School and Associate Member, Institute for International Law and the Humanities, Melbourne Law School. Oishik completed an LLB from the ILS Law College, Savitribai Phule Pune University, an LLM from the Faculty of Law, University of Toronto and a PhD from Melbourne Law School, The University of Melbourne. Oishik's broad research interests are in the areas of critical jurisprudence, cultural studies of law, queer theory, postcolonial feminism, visual cultures, Marxism and, law and social movements.

Meenakshi Nair: After having studied English Literature at the Lady Shri Ram College for Women, Meenakshi has recently completed her Masters in Comparative Literature at SOAS, University of London. She is interested in the cultural imagination of the (South Asian) city and questions of English literature curriculum and pedagogy in India. Her poetry is published or forthcoming in Nether Quarterly, Qissa, and Porridge Magazine.

Diksha Poddar is associated with WISCOMP as a Consultant and has been administering *Log-in Gender* since its inception. She is currently pursuing her doctoral research at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. MPhil in South Asian Studies, Diksha has completed her Masters in Development Studies from Ambedkar University, Delhi and graduation in Political Science and Economics from Lady Shri Ram College for Women, University of Delhi.

Profiles of the Contributors

Aafiya Bhat has completed her Masters in English Literature from the University of Kashmir and her M. Ed from Institute of Advanced Studies in Education M.A. Road Srinagar. She has recently submitted a project titled "Harassment of Female Students in Secondary Schools: A Comparative Study of District Srinagar and Shopian" to the Women's Studies Centre, Government College of Education (IASE) Srinagar.

Catharine Ananova is from Ernakulam, Kerala and is in the second year of a Bachelors in English Language and Literature from St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam.

Neha Wadhwa received her Bachelors in Elementary Education (B.El.Ed) from Jesus and Mary College, University of Delhi before earning her MA in History from Jawaharlal Nehru University, an M.Ed from the University of Delhi, where her work has been on tracing the trajectories of children with disability in an inclusive educational setting as part of her M.Ed dissertation. She is currently pursuing her Ph.D. at the Department of Education (CIE), University of Delhi.

Palashi Das is a pursuing Masters in English in Literature at the Cotton University, Guwahati. She is currently in her second year of post-graduation.

Swastika Jajoo is an avid consumer of chai and poetry and is currently studying Linguistics at Tohoku University on a scholarship from the Japanese Government. She hopes to pursue her research on the intersections of language and gender.

Tanika Singh earned her Bachelor's in Elementary Education (B. El. Ed) from the Lady Shri Ram College for Women, University of Delhi. After this, she received her Masters in Modern History from Jawaharlal Nehru University. After this, she pursued another Masters Degree in Education (M.Ed) from Central Institute of Education, Delhi University. She has received the Navlekhan Prize 2017 from Jnanpith for her review on the travelogue Siyahat in the Pioneer.

About *Log-in Gender*

Log-in Gender is a unique online portal for educators and students at universities and colleges in India. It can also be read as 'Log' (Hindi word Log means people) in Gender – people who work on gender. It is envisioned as a dynamic and interactive space for dialogue for university and college communities. Discussing issues of inclusion, equity and gender justice, the portal seeks to connect leaders to help en-gender campuses, whilst also celebrating stories of courage and determination of people who have made a difference in educational spaces.

Educators, administrators and students at universities and colleges from diverse contexts across India engage with each other and with WISCOMP through the portal. Its constellation also includes the broader community of civil society members, policymakers, media professionals, researchers, artists, activists, lawyers and others. The portal was formally launched on Human Rights Day (10 December) 2018 during the '16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence'.

Over the past months, some of the initiatives and activities that the *Log-in Gender* portal has hosted include:

- **Feminist Journaling** comprising of self-reflective and discursive articles and poems by young practitioners from different academic spaces.
- *Genderlogues* — an online discussion forum — with the first dialogue on Safety Audits to highlight public and women safety on and around campuses.
- **Stories of Courage** showcasing poster stories, recovering lost narratives and amplifying voices of people who have worked for girls' education in India since the 19th century.

- **From Educators, with Love,** a letter writing series that provided space for educators to voice their concerns and opinions to policymakers for making educational spaces inclusive.
- **Photo Essay on Re-imagining Campuses** that urges students to provide a glimpse into academia using the lens of gender equity.
- **Care, Mutuality, and Fraternity:** What makes a Campus a Community, reflection articles on the idea of 'care' within higher education spaces.
- During the pandemic of COVID-19, *Log-in Gender* also began a series titled **'Quarantine Reflections'.** Here, educators and students penned down their experiences with 'virtual' education and home isolation while foregrounding their gendered impact.

Log-in Gender used various methods to reach out to the larger community such as newsletters, social media handles and update emails. Along its way, *Log-in Gender* has found resonances with many similar programs and initiatives globally. It has also partnered with various individuals, universities and organisations. These include the Women Studies Centre at Cotton University (Guwahati, India), Members of Women in International Security (USA), United Kingdom-India Education Research Initiative, and Drexel University (Philadelphia, USA). These collaborations enable the portal to constantly strive towards enriching methodological engagements and learn from diverse experiences.

For the WISCOMP team, ―*Log-in Gender* has been a serendipitous journey — it started with a lot of energy, a sense of wonder, and possibilities at what could be created collaboratively‖. The ebb and flow of its journey foregrounds that the dynamic spaces like these are always a work-in-progress. The exciting part of the portal is its creative element which provides space for constant

experimentation and innovation with themes, ideas, and methodologies. The journey of giving shape to *Log-in Gender* has been like creating a new galaxy where different elements synergize; to elicit new ideas, bring together expertise and expand constituencies that engage with the realization of gender justice on higher education campuses.

Log-in Gender: www.logingender.wiscomp.org

About HAMSA: Campus Equity Initiative

HAMSA: Campus Equity Initiative is a Pan-India initiative that seeks to address gender based violence on university and college campuses. It includes tailored capacity-building workshops for faculty, administrators and students—women, men and trans persons—at partner higher education institutes (HEIs) with the participation of institutions from other cities in the region. The workshops provide the theoretical and philosophical framework for Gender Audits of HEIs. The program also includes training on Safety Audits of campuses and an online educators' portal that connects the community of practitioners from academia to engage in dialogue on gender equality. Through the HAMSA Initiative WISCOMP seeks to facilitate and institutionalize gender-just norms and practices at HEIs across India.

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