

College students join hands to redefine 'Mardangi'

The play seeks to interrogate the idea of masculinity and gender stereotypes

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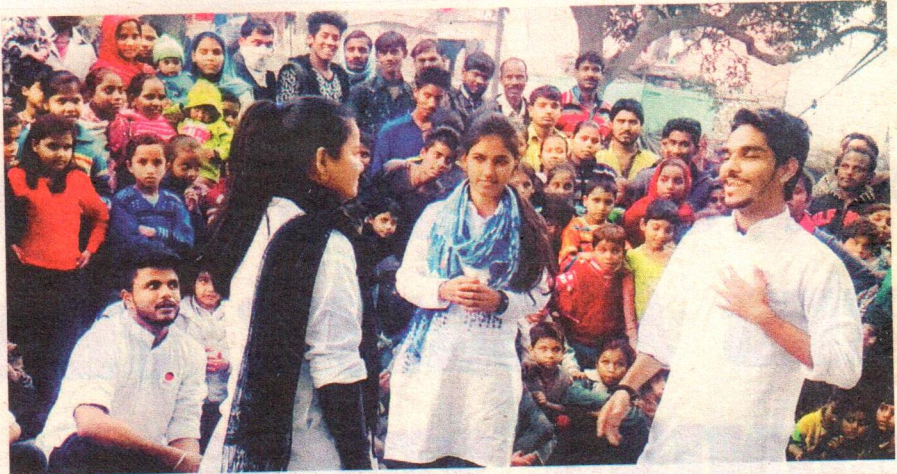
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Students from several prominent Mumbai colleges will be performing a play titled Mardangi between January 15 and 16. The play, which will be put on by students from Ruia, Government law college, SIES, will take place at various locations across the city. The play is part of a yearly initiative called 'Redefining Masculinity' by Men Against Violence and Abuse (MAVA), a social organisation that works for gender equality and the rights of people. Students, as part of this project, will interrogate ideas of masculinity and gender stereotypes through plays, elocution competitions and workshops at thirty colleges across the city.

"When we talk about sexual abuse and harassment, we need to understand where it stems from. Society has enforced on men a lot of expectations—don't cry, be dominant and strong, earn more money than women. This has two hazardous impacts; it squashes the idea of gender equality which leads to more subjugation of women and it pressures men to adhere to these norms. We want to challenge these stereotypes," said Harish Sadhani, Director, MAVA.

Twenty-one-year old Ravi Jaiswal, a first-year student from Nirmala Niketan Institute of Social Work, said, "A lot of organisations that work with women only talk about violence. They do not successfully addressing the root cause of the issue—gender roles in our society. We are taught about human anatomy but we are hardly told about our mental make-up which affects the way we behave."

Aniket Kamble, 16, a first-year student at Kirti College said, "Through these workshops we realised that a lot of women are also unaware on how to speak to their male counterparts on 'intimate' issues. There is also very little conversation on sexuality and that people can be gay and transgender. A



The Men Against Violence and Abuse artists perform the play at Raahgiri Dwarka

lot of awareness has been generated about the idea of masculinity and how it is extremely skewed in society. We all need to introspect." MAVA is expanding to more col-

leges and organisations and is also conducting several competitions where students can share their ideas about gender, sexuality and equality.