

Feminist side of Hillary vs Trump debate

By Express News Service | Published: 28th September 2016 04:28 AM Last Updated: 28th September 2016 05:07 AM

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Students engaging in the debate

CHENNAI: Close to 200 college students watched the first US Presidential debate at a special screening on Tuesday afternoon. The event was organised by the US Consulate General in Chennai in partnership with Loyola College and Athena Infonomics.

While the 'majority vote' at the end of it, as expected, went to Hillary Clinton, what most probably wasn't expected was that the talk on policy proposals and tax reform aside, the after-discussion would take a feminist turn.

"People are ready to accept Trump's bad behaviour, but would they accept the same from Hillary?" asked Roshni, a student of MOP Vaishnav College for Women, referring to Trump's unrelenting goading of his opponent through the duration of the debate.

The question was raised in response to a suggestion to observe composure, tone and body language, beyond the smart debate strategies used by both opponents. And the discussion among students on what they had witnessed after the screening was led by Ariel H Pollock, Consulate Public Affairs Officer and Commodore R S Vasan, lead advisor, Athena Infonomics and irector, Center for Asia Studies.

To be fair however, the afternoon saw rounded participation from both genders in the audience. Several male students brought out a range of pointers as diverse as 'Trump wants to run the government like one of his businesses' to 'Hillary inspires a sense of calm and leadership because she smiles more.' In fact, one male student even made a reference to Hillary's raising the standard for women in politics, just like our Amma.

However, the pattern as it were in this room seemed to be not one, but a number of young women stepping up in defense of their own. Making reference to Trump's constant dismissal of Hillary's bad temperament and lack of stamina for the job, one woman in the audience went so far as to call it 'bullying'.

"I watched the debate this morning and once again now, and what I love about it is that it can be used in teaching any Women's Studies or Political Science class to show how a woman far more educated than the man in this case, and in such an esteemed position can be talked down to this way in the public eye," said Vasundhara Sirmate-Drennan of the Hindu Centre for Politics and Public Policy.