

The National Conference : Perspectives for an Autonomous  
Women's Movement in India : December 23-26th 1985 Bombay

Hosted by Forum Against Oppression of Women, Bombay

RESOLUTIONS

1. Women & Personal Laws :

We believe that today no equality and justice is available to women of this country regardless of the religion they practice. This is an outcome of religions as well as political structures in which women have had no power. These personal laws have meant inequality and subordinate status of all women in relation to men. We, therefore, must strive for a civil code where all women get rights equal to men in matters of marriage, divorce, maintenance, custody, inheritance, property, adoption and other such matters. Women's organisations should strive to get adequate representation in framing these laws.

We also believe that such laws when enacted will not encroach on the rights of any religious community in this regard should only govern the relationship between a human being and god and should definitely not govern the relationship between man and man or man and woman. Therefore, we strongly support the demands of any woman or a group of women who are striving to bring any change for bettering the position of women in this regard. We also condemn the Hindu communal designs at making the democratic issue into a threat to minorities.

We also lodge our protest against the efforts by the state at restricting the scope of section 125 of the CPC.

This resolution was passed by majority votes i.e. 50. But the minority i.e. 22 votes expressed their opinion as follows:-

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- a. We strongly support the rights of the minorities in India and feel that any move for reform must come from within the community.
- b. We strongly condemn Justice Chandrachud's communal comments on Muslim personal law.
- c. We support the right of Shahbano and other women of all communities to maintenance as under section 125 of CPC.
- d. We strongly condemn any move to amend section 125 in a bid to deny women of any community the right of maintenance.

2. Women & Work:

We condemn the two notifications passed by the Central Govt. and the Maharashtra state government. The Central government notification excludes from the purview of the maternity Benefits Act, all those unmarried women, Similarly the State government notification excludes from the purview of the Act all those women who have not changed their names to their husband's name.

We demand that both these notifications be withdrawn with immediate and retrospective effect.

3. Women & Bhopal gas tragedy:

The M.P. Government has started collecting from all women victims, a proforma asking women victims of gas tragedy to give following information:-

Employed/unemployed/semi-skilled : Yes/No  
Skilled/highlyskilled/unskilled : Yes/No

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The motive of the government is to give compensation according to the categorisation.

They have categorised the women who are doing domestic work as self employed and hence not eligible for compensation.

The Conference condemns the government's strategy to cheat the gas victims out of the compensation due to them. So also the conference condemns the government's attitude towards women which will result in the women victims becoming absolutely dependant on family and relatives, for their existence, treatment etc.

The following points were presented as the Focus of discussions of the different workshops

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1. Women & Work

- a. Vocational training institutions for married women.
- b. Reservation of seats for training women in skilled jobs in industries
- c. The government should provide creche facility and community kitchens.

2. Women & Urban housing

Housing today is a major problem in the cities and in special reference to the women. Therefore, we appeal to all those present here to take up this issue of housing as it has severe repercussions on women, family and society and to unite and demand for the following:

- a. Oppose Supreme Court Judgement (pavement dwellers)
- b. Stop all demolitions and evictions
- c. Permanent alternate accommodation for all pavement dwellers.
- d. Ownership rights for slum dwellers.
- e. Right to cheap housing for all
- f. Basic amenities like water, toilets, electricity etc. for all.

We appeal to all women's organisations to extend their solidarity towards the cause of housing for millions by participating in their struggle.

3. Women & Prostitution

Prostitution is a very patriarchal institution whose primary assumption is that sex is a male right and sex and women's bodies are commodities to be packaged and sold in prostitution. It gives brothel managements absolute license to induce more and more women into prostitution without even the minimum of law to fight against this exploitation. The state in sanctioning legalization, only acts as a pimp sanctioning the enslavement of women in prostitution; and thus violating fundamental and human rights.

We therefore condemn legalization of prostitution, prostitution racketeers, vested interests who allow the exploitation of women in prostitution, who look upon prostitution as a convenient release for their 'so called' natural and aggressive sexuality and the double standards of male sexual morality; the active connivance of government especially in Goa to promote sex tourism.

Since in today's society prostitution likely to continue measures to be taken on three levels:-

- a. rescue
- b. voluntary
- c. prevention

Measures : Short/long term measures :

- a. Decriminalization
- b. tighten up law against brothel keepers and pimps
- c. formation of protective homes
- d. education/health/counselling facilities
- e. pressure on government

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### Long term

All the women's organisations should come together to formulate strategies to deal with the problem and suggest concrete measures to the government.

#### 4. Women & Domestic violence

Saheli (Delhi) talked about a proposed study on domestic violence that they are planning to conduct in Delhi. Others present (Chetana, Women's Centre, Women's voice, Samata) were also interested in the study. An idea was put forward whether the study can be done at various levels towns, cities, and rural areas to understand the attitude to domestic violence and the dimension of the problem. Saheli has expressed willingness to share questionnaire of their proposed study.