



Indian Association for Women's Studies

***Fifth National Conference***

***on***

***Religion, Culture & Politics***

9-12 February, 1991

Organised by :

**School of Women's Studies**

**Jadavpur University**

**CALCUTTA-700 032**



GOVERNOR OF WEST BENGAL

M E S S A G E

I am very glad to know that the Fifth National Conference of the Indian Association of Women's Studies is being hosted by the Jadavpur University and is being organised by its School of Women's Studies.

Traditionally Indians hold women in the highest esteem. Yet, in fact women have been subjected to exploitation and sometimes even brutality. Our national movement gave a special place to the advancement of women and our Constitution seeks to ensure absolute equality, of opportunity to women to develop their personality fully and to make their proper contribution to national life. Various laws have been passed and developmental activities undertaken to achieve these objectives. But we have still to go far. It is important that we continuously monitor the actual position and ensure that we achieve our objective.

I convey my best wishes for the success of the Fifth National Conference.

( S. Nurul Hasan )

Governor of West Bengal.

Raj Bhavan,  
Calcutta,  
January 31, 1991.

School of Women's Studies  
Jadavpur University  
Kolkata-700 032

CHIEF MINISTER  
WEST BENGAL



January 24 '91.

I am glad to know that the Fifth National Conference of the Indian Association for Women's Studies will be held at the Jadavpur University from February 9 to 12, 1991.

I wish the deliberations of the Conference all Success.

( Jyoti Basu )

Smt. Jasodhara Bagchi,  
Local Organising Secretary  
Fifth National Conference  
Indian Association of Women's Studies,  
Jadavpur University,  
Calcutta-700 032, India.

*From Professor Amartya Sen*

HARVARD UNIVERSITY  
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138

AMARTYA SEN  
*Lamont University Professor*  
January 17, 1991

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS  
LITTAUER CENTER  
(617) 495-1871  
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY  
EMERSON HALL  
(617) 495-1884

..... . I am really sorry  
that I shall not be able to come to the National conference on  
Women's Studies to be held in Jadavpur in February.

My commitments here will not permit me to come, but I would  
like to send my warmest best wishes to you and your colleagues for  
the success of the conference.

I have looked through, with great interest, the paper you  
gave me on the themes to be covered in the field of 'religion,  
culture and politics'. This looks like a wonderful program and  
I am very sorry to miss it.

It did occur to me to ask why not economics? Several of the  
themes do of course, have economic aspects, and the case for  
integrating Women's studies in economics with those in these  
related fields must be very Strong. However, there must be a  
good reason for the delimitation ( I suspect organizational ),  
and I am not really pressing you to give me grand reasons for  
the delimitation !

Warm regards to all.

Yours,  
AMARTYA SEN

Professor Jasodhara Bagchi  
College of Arts  
Jadavpur University  
Calcutta-32. West Bengal  
India

## FROM THE LOCAL SECRETARIES

On behalf of the local organizing committee of the Fifth National Conference of the Indian Association of Women's Studies, we extend a warm welcome to all the delegates. The Association is a relatively young body that has tried to generate some new and exciting ideas in the world of social relations and of academic research. Calcutta, with its long tradition of responsiveness to all such new challenges, is greatly looking forward to the occasion. Jadavpur University, with its anti-colonial past, has, fittingly opened its portals to this occasion in which local scholars and activists will interact creatively with delegates from outside by participating in the interesting debates that the Conference has to offer.

The theme selected for this Conference, Religion Culture and Politics- is of special concern to Indian Women at this juncture. It is the experience of women everywhere, that an upsurge of religious fervour and the resultant intolerance of other beliefs such as we are encountering at present quickly gets reflected in an increase and intensification of traditional taboos and constraints on Women. For us the few concessions and opportunities wrested from society are too precious to be surrendered to narrow political interest masquerading as religion. It is all the more urgent, therefore, that we try to understand the interaction between these forces and the impact they have on Women's lives, so that we are better prepared to fight these onslaughts.

Calcutta, with its many problems would still like to make the stay of delegates from other cities as comfortable as possible, to ensure, as far as possible, the smooth functioning of the Conference. Given the limits of our resources, we hope we can communicate the cultural and intellectual vibrancy of our city to you. We fear, however, that you will have to share with us, some of the difficulties that mark the everyday life of Calcutta.

Nirmala Banerjee

Jasodhara Bagchi

## ***Message***

I am happy to note that the Indian Association for Women Studies is holding the Fifth National Conference on Women Studies at Jadavpur University, Calcutta from 9th to 12th of February, 1991. I need not say that the theme chosen for the Conference is of great contemporary importance. I am sure that women in general and women studies in particular, would do their best to ensure that religion, culture and politics in our country do not become a handicap in the proclaimed objective of the country, which is unity in diversity. I need not add here that India appears to be suffering from several divides at the moment-the regional divide, the caste divide, the urban-rural divide and, above all, the religious divide. I am sure, however, that women have continued to and will try to get over these divides and work in a manner so that in the ultimate analysis unity get promoted and progress in the nation-building process is thereby achieved.

I wish the Fifth National Conference on Women Studies all success.

( IQBAL NARAIN )

*Vice-Chancellor* North-Eastern Hill University

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## Welcome Address

by

Professor S. K. Sen

*Vice Chancellor, Jadavpur University, Chairperson, Local Organizing Committee*

On behalf of Jadavpur University I extend to you all Dr. Kamalini Bhansali, President of the Indian Association for Women's Studies, our eminent guest Sm. Qurratalain Hyder, the eminent scholars and activists who will address the plenary sessions and contribute to the deliberations in the different sub-themes, guests and delegates from other parts of India and other neighbouring countries a most hearty welcome to the Fifth National Conference of the Indian Association for Women's Studies. It is an honour to be given the opportunity to host this prestigious gathering in our University. I understand that this is the first time such a Conference is being organized in Eastern India. Our august city of Calcutta, of which we are justly proud, has just concluded its tercentenary celebration. This Conference may be seen as a fitting climax of such a celebration.

I may humbly point out that Jadavpur University, a unitary institution has been able to carve a niche in the educational map of India. Born of the glorious anti-colonial Swadeshi movement, Jadavpur University now has the unique advantage of combining higher studies and research in the three Faculties of Engineering and Technology, Arts and Science on the same campus and under common administration. The student teacher ratio is on the lower side for an Indian University, which allows a greater degree of creative interaction on the campus. The several schools of interdisciplinary or advanced study that the University has initiated, is a witness to the dynamism and creativity on the campus.

Women's Studies, a relatively new entrant within Indian Universities is developing very rapidly. The U. G. C. has recognized two Research Centres for Women's Studies in our city, one in Calcutta University and the other in Jadavpur, Both the Centres. I am happy to note, have co-operated actively to make this occasion a success.

However, in our University we have recognized Women's Studies as one of the twelve interdisciplinary Schools. The School of Women's Studies has, indeed, made its presence felt within this unitary University. It also actively collaborates with the Adult and Continuing Education and Extension Centre. The present Conference is a witness to the spirit of teamwork and dedication generated by the Research staff of this small unit.

The theme of the Conference is highly relevant to the difficult times we are passing through. I hope the four day long deliberations will help us to locate the difficulties and suggest ways out of them. It is only appropriate that the Indian Association for Women's Studies should focus on the complex patterns thrown up by Religion Culture and Politics in the present day Indian society. I wish you all success in your deliberations and a pleasant stay here under our care and hospitality.

S. K. SEN.

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## QURRATULAIN HYDER

Qurratulain Hyder, born in 1927 in Aligarh, has a remarkable literary career of more than four decades starting from her first novel 'Mere bhi Sanamkhane' published in 1949. Her famous novel 'Aag-ka Darya' came out in 1959. This novel, translated in 14 major Indian languages, traces the evolution of the Indian personality from Vedic times to the present day. 'Patjhar-ki Awaz' brought her the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1967. Later she was honoured with the Soviet Land Nehru Award for translations in 1969, Padmashri in 1984, the Ghalib Award in 1985 and also Iqbal samman in 1987.

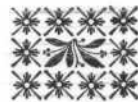
During the years relevant to the present award, her outstanding works were 'Kaar-i-jahan Daraz Hai, the first non-fictional novel in Urdu, 'Aakhir-e shab-ke Humsafar' and 'Roshni-ki Raftaar'. Her recent novel 'Gardhish-i-rang-i-chaman' and her latest work, 'Chandni Begum' place her at the forefront of modern fiction.

Qurratulain Hyder is deeply human and full of warmth and affection. So are her best drawn characters. Her rich and varied experience as writer, Journalist and public communicator both at home and abroad endowed her with a vision which she successfully translates into a mission in all her writings. Almost all her writings reflect her preoccupation with India's cultural heritage and its relevance to modern civilization, and her deep concern and anxiety for its preservation.



## Executive Committee Members Assesting Local Organizing Committee

<b>ILA PATHAK</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Organization of conference sessions Distribution</b>
<b>SUSHEELA KAUSHIK</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Sale of Papers</b>
<b>ROHINI</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Registration</b>
<b>KUMUD</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Membership</b>
<b>ILINA</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Accomodation, Creche</b>
<b>NIRMALA BANERJEE</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Food</b>





4. To organise specific action programmes for the development of Women's Studies perspectives in different disciplines and for the development of appropriate indicators for measuring women's participation in social and economic development.
5. To mobilise necessary services and resources, with a view to Strengthen and assist women scholars, writers, communicators etc. to develop their talents:
6. To assist institutions seeking to develop programmes for teaching, research and action for women's equality and development.
7. To take all such action that may be deemed necessary, to bring about a change in social values with a view "to eliminate attitudinal, conceptual and class biases that hinder understanding of the role and situation of women and their movement towards equality" ; and
8. To collaporate with institutions and agencies working for similar objectives at the national and international level.

The responsibilities for bringing the Association into existence was entrusted to the National Committee that had organised the first Conference, with the addition of a few other members. A few months after the Conference, a foundation meeting was held to decide on the structure of the Association. The Association was finally registered in 1982.

## **ACTIVITIES**

### **A. National Conferences**

Since its inception the Association has organised three National conferences in 1984 (Trivandrum), 1986 (Chandigarh), and 1988 (Waltair). The Fifth National Conference is scheduled to be held in February 1991 at the University of Jadavpur, Calcutta. Each of these Conferences focussed on a

particular theme, adopting a modality of a Series of workshops around Sub-themes. In addition, each Conference also had two or three special Plenary sessions.

Each Conferences was hosted by a University, and the number of participants have shown a gradual increase over the years. The Executive Committee of the Association has followed a convention since 1983 of Co-opting an authorised representative of the University to the Association's EC and the Conference Planning Committee that the EC constituted for each conference. Coordinators were selected for each sub-theme well in advance. They, in turn, identified some persons to write papers for the sessions to be organised under their particular sub-themes. Once the full theme of the conference along with the names of coordinators for each sub-theme is notified to all members and a large number of Universities, Colleges and activist groups, the Coordinators receive several papers offered by individuals for presentation at the conference. The themes of the various National Conferences are given below. Summary report of the presentations are enclosed.

**(i) Second National Conference, Trivandrum, 1984 - Gender Justice.**

There were three workshops planned during this conference on (a) Law and Legal Studies, (b) Work and Employment and (c) The Political Process ( See appendix A for report ).

(ii) For the Third National Conference, the theme was 'Women's Struggles and Movements' —13 sub-themes were identified for workshops. These were :

1. Women in Agrarian Struggles ;
2. Women, and the Industrial Working Class Movement ;

3. Women, Informal Sector and Forms of Struggle ;
4. Professional Women's Struggles ;
5. Women in Youth and Students' Struggles in India ;
6. Women and Indian Nationalism;
7. Regional and Sectional Movements and Women's Rights;
8. Religion, Secularism and Women's Rights;
9. Women and Violence;
10. Ideology, Political parties and Groups and the Women's Question in Post-Independence India;
11. Women's Struggles for Education with Special Reference to Weaker Sections and Minorities.
12. Women's Struggles for Health and Nutrition with Emphasis on Weaker Sections and Minorities;
13. Sexist bias in Media ( See Appendix B ).

The Fourth National Conference adopted the theme 'Rural Poverty, Survival and Struggle for Change' - with 12 sub-themes :

1. Access to Productive Resources and Social Organisation of Production ;
2. Technology Change, The Labour Process and Employment;
3. Environmental Degradation and Regeneration;
4. Education and Socialisation - the formal and the non-formal process;

5. Health, Sexuality and Reproduction;
6. Laws, Implementation and the Process of Legal Change;
7. Political Institutions, Structures and Processes;
8. Ideology, Culture and Revivalism;
9. Gender Violence - the Role of the State Community and Family;
10. Family survival mechanisms;
11. Government Policies and Programmes : Political and Economic Perspectives
12. Collective Struggles for Change; (See Appendix C).

The theme selected for the Fifth National Conference is 'Religion, Culture and Politics.'

Plenary Sessions organised at Successive National Conference are indicated below :

#### **Second National Conference (Trivandrum, 1984).**

- (i) Symposium on Status of women in Kerala, organised by the Kerala University and the Institute of Management in Government. Trivandrum, who acted as co-hosts for the Conference.
- (ii) A public lecture on Gender Justice Past, Present and Future by Justice V. R. Krishna Iyer.

#### **Third National Conference (Chandigarh, 1986)**

- (i) The Relevance of Women's Studies in the Indian Context;
- (ii) Alternative Perspectives on Women's Roles in Development;
- (iii) Symposium on Problems of Women in Punjab, organised by the Punjab University.

## Fourth National Conference (Waltair, 1988)

- (i) On Feminism and being a Feminist:
- (ii) A Decade of Research, Policy and Activist Intervention: achievements, limitations and future perspectives:
- (iii) Symposium on Women in Andhra, organised by the Andhra University.

## **B: ASIAN REGIONAL CONFERENCE**

### i. Regional Conference on Women and the Household

In January 1985 the Association organised an Asian Regional Conference on Women and the Household in collaboration with the Commission on Women of the IUAES and the Research Committee 32, on Women and Society, of the International Sociological Association. The Conference had the following sub-themes;

1. Structural and Cultural dimensions of intra-household relationship;
2. Women and Home-based Production.
3. Structures of Production, Kinship Systems, and the Household.
4. The State, the Household, and Women.
5. The Household as the Cultural Unit of Data Collection and Analysis in Research and Surveys. ( See Appendix D )

Participants at the Regional Conference included, in addition to scholars and activists from various Asian Countries, a large number of Asian studies specialists from Europe, United States, and a few from Latin America and Africa.

In all the National Conferences, participants included some representatives from neighbouring countries of South Asia, who went back to initiate similar activities in their own Countries. Many of them as well as quite a few scholars from United States have enrolled as Associate Members of the Association. The preparation for each of these conferences has thus steadily widened the members' capacity for networking with scholars and activists from various countries and to become involved in collaborative research, publication and other activities.

**ii. Regional Conference for Hindi Speaking States of Haryana, UP, Rajasthan, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh - Kanpur, 1985.**

In 1985, the Association lent support to Dr. Hemlata Swarup, Founder Member of the Association, in organising this regional conference on Women and Public Policy. Tremendous enthusiasm was generated among the participants, many of whom were being exposed for the first time to the problems and perspectives of women in policy studies. Several of the institutions participating in that conference have since taken up research and developmental action in these areas. It was, however, difficult for Dr. Swarup to follow up this mobilisation in the absence of an active regional Association.

**C. TASK FORCES, WORKING GROUPS AND SMALL WORKSHOPS/SEMINARS.**

While the conferences involved large gatherings ranging from 250 for the regional conference on the household, to nearly 500 at the Trivandrum Conference, planning each of these events had to be entrusted to a number of broad as well as specific task forces/working groups. Such groups were appointed by the Executive Committee, drawing on the basis of talent available in the Country. Some members of these groups were not initially members of the Association, but eventually enrolled as active members.



Apart from these conference related exercises, the Association also undertook, through setting up small task forces, the organisation of smaller workshops on relatively neglected areas with a view to identifying needed action and research strategies.

One such task force was appointed soon after the Trivandrum Conference on the basis of a resolution adopted by the Conference. This group sought to promote research on the Role of Women in the Indian Freedom Struggle. The Conference had identified this as a neglected area. The Task Force identified research strategies and approaches, bringing them to the attention of research funding agencies like the Indian Council of Historical Research, the Indian Council of Social Science Research and selected Universities/scholars working on the freedom struggle. As a result both the Councils have stepped up their support to research in this field and renewed interest in this theme has been noted amongst doctoral students in many Universities. At the Third National Conference, where Women and Indian Nationalism was adopted as a sub-theme, 27 papers were presented, many of them being young doctoral students.

In 1987, the Association appointed two Task Forces to examine the implications of the section titled "Education for Women's Equality" in the National Policy on Education adopted by Parliament in May 1986.

The first Task Force took up the issue of access to education for the large majority of Women who are currently victims of lack of education or discrimination in access. Small diagnostic studies were undertaken in different parts of the country on different aspects of this major problem and a workshop was held in July 1987 to identify needed areas for intervention by educational institutions as well as voluntary organisations committed to gender equality. The programmes of adult education, non-formal education and universalisation

of elementary education, training/reorientation of teachers and the use of mass media being implemented by the Government of India were subjected to extensive criticism on the basis of the evaluative and diagnostic exercise undertaken by different members of the Task Force, and recommendations were formulated for the Government as well as for the members themselves. A press conference was held immediately after the workshop to draw public attention to these findings and recommendations.

The second Task Force examined the role of Science and Technology, particularly of institutions responsible for education in this field, in promoting gender equality.

Since the previous workshop had identified discrimination in access to science education at the school level, the Task Force undertook some critical investigation of this issue in six selected states, and in the field of provisional education in Science based areas at the University level. The findings of this investigation were presented and discussed at a national workshop on Women, Science and Technology, hosted by the Indian Institute of Science, at Bangalore in November 1988.

This exercise brought in, for the first time a number of scientists-women and men - into the Association's field of activities. It has been a fruitful relationship, resulting in considerable sensitization and a feeling of concern among the senior scientists who participated in the workshop, through identification of structural and institutional biases which were found operative in women's access to education, training and employment in science based fields.

In 1989 the Association appointed two other task forces. The first was asked to prepare an approach paper to Women's Studies in the Indian context,

particularly at the University level, delineating its conceptual framework, social perceptives and operational methodologies, especially for bringing about closer links between teaching, research and action. A small workshop was held for this purpose and the paper is under preparation.

(ii) A second team was deputed to participate in the review and planning exercise being designed by the UGC on the achievements and problems experienced by the Centre for Women's studies and Development established in selected Universities/Colleges with support from UGC. The group helped to design the review exercise and participated in the national workshop of Co-ordinators/Deony. Directors of all the University Centres organised by the Research Centre for Women's Studies, SNDT Women's University, Bombay in October 1989.

The idea for this workshop was initiated during the National Conference in December 1988, in consultation with the representatives of various Centres. The UGC was approached there after and two members of the Association's Task Force volunteered to design the review. The responses received from the various Centres provided the base for discussion in the workshop, and the presence of members of the UGC's Standing Committee on Women's Studies enabled the Association members to develop an approach to further strengthening of this programme of the UGC in the VIIIth Five Year Plan.

The close interaction with the Co-ordinators of the Centre for Women's Studies also enabled the group to suggest some collectively undertaken projects by the Centres which could help them to overcome some of their major problems e. g. lack of interest on the part of the general faculty of the Universities, and relating research to action and teaching.

Since 1990 had been declared as the year of the girl child for the SAARC countries, all the Centres volunteered to participate in a joint research project

on this theme with the objective of identifying areas of intervention that their Universities (including different sections of the Faculty) could take up. While this project was identified during the UGC workshop, the entire planning, mobilisation, training and finding funds for this project has been done by the small team of the Association present at the workshop, drawing into the exercise various Centres for Women's Studies and other members of the Association. The project is being funded by the Department of Women and Child Development, Government of India, which has started looking to the Association as a mobilising body to activate educational institutions in playing an interventionist role in such major problem areas.

#### **D. PUBLICATIONS AND DISSEMINATION**

The Association's EC has been trying persistently to arrange publication of selected papers presented at its various Conferences in the hope of making such material available for teaching in Universities which are beginning to introduce change in the curriculum of different disciplines. Lack of resources to support editorial functions had proved to be a big handicap. The funds mobilised for the Asian Regional Conference had included partial support towards publication, so editing of five volumes was taken up. A similar exercise had also been initiated after the Trivandrum Conference of 1984.

In 1989 the Association's EC decided to commit the entire savings from grants obtained for the 4th National Conference, to follow up publication activities. A committee of editors was appointed to prepare 11 volumes of papers selected from those presented at the various national conferences and some support was assured to those who had been editing the volumes of papers presented at the the Regional Conferences on Women and the Household. The Association's support is confined to editorial expenses and a small honorarium for editors. The volumes are being brought out by commercial publishers. Three volumes from the Household Conference have been already published.

It is hoped to send the other 11 to publishers within 1990-91. Copyright for these volumes rest with the Association.

A summary report of the Second National Conference was published by the Association itself and a large number of copies have been already distributed. Sets of papers (cyclostyled) presented at the various national conference were bound in limited numbers and have been made available to various institutions, individuals on demand at cost price. They were also sent to the donor agencies which helped to support such confereuces.

From 1985-86 the Association started bringing out a periodic Newsletter. One member of the EC was entrusted with the job and provided with a small support to undertake this exercise twice or thrice a year. 10 issues of the Newsletter have been published so far. The third issue contained a summary report of the Third National Conference. A double issue containing Nos. 7 & 8 contained the Report of the Fourth National Conference. Since the Fifth National Conference planned for February 1991 will coincide with the conclusion of a decade from the First National Conference (held in April 1981), which gave birth to the Association, the EC has decided to bring out a decade issue in time for the Conference.

The proceedings of the various workshops conducted by the Association will also be published before that date. Most of them are already in draft shape, awaiting finalization by the Coordinators.

While publication has undoubtedly emerged as a major activity of the Association's over-commitment and multiple responsibilities of the members entrusted with these responsibilities and the absence of supportive staff who can give more time has remained a major constraint.

### **E. Providing Pressure Group for Policy Dialogue**

Between 1982-85 the Association's activities helped to promote widening interest in Women's Studies. In 1985 when the Government of India announced the beginning of an exercise to formulate a new Education Policy, the president of the Association, late Dr. Madhuri R. Shah, wrote to the Education Minister, Proposing the need to incorporate women's studies within the educational system as an instrument to bring about changes in societal values and perspectives.

In April 1985 the Association collaborated with the UGC to organise a national workshop on Organisation and Perspectives for Developing Women's Studies in the Indian University System. ( See Appendix D for report ). In November 1985 the Ministry of Education was persuaded to convene a national seminar on Education for Women's Equality in which the Association was widely represented. A draft was prepared on the basis of the national seminar's recommendations and given to the Educational Ministry A small section of this was incorporated in the National Policy on Education ( NPE ) in May 1986 Three months before the NPE's adoption by Parliament, the UGC issued Guidelines for Development of Women's Studies in Universities, in the drafting of which Association members played a leading role.

Since then the Association has taken considerable pains to mobilise faculty support within institutions to accelerate the implementation of women's Studies.

In 1988 several national women's organisations decided to organise a debate on the National Perspective Plan for Women which have just been formulated by the Government of India. The Association participated in the debate as a body.

One of the demands coming out from the above mentioned debate was for establishment of a National Commission on Women. The National Front Government introduced a Bill for establishment of the proposed Commission during the Budget Session of Parliament in 1990. Since the Bill did not satisfy the national women's organisations, Government of India decided to hold widespread consultations. The Association was co-sponsor of a consultation held in Bombay early in July and was invited by the Government to participate in the national consultation held on the 28th of July 1990, indicating its recognition, for the first time as a national body concerned with women's issues, though it is technically not a women's organisation as it has many male members.

The Department of Women and Child Development has now started looking to the Association as a mobilising body which can help identify educational institutions in different parts of the country who can contribute, in an active manner to effective development programmes involving women as partners, as well as an advisory group capable of identifying scholars who can take up research in needed areas.

#### **F. Funding :**

The Association has had to mobilise resources for each conference and some of the smaller workshops that it organised during the last eight years. However, for an all India body to function in a sustained and effective manner some core funding is essential. The Ford Foundation's generous grant has been fully utilised by March 1990. The Association has applied to the Department of Women and Child Development for a recurring organisational grant and to the ICSSR for a similar grant. If these come through, the maximum amount that the Association can expect to receive on an annual basis will be Rs. 60,000. This will be utterly inadequate to maintain activities that it has already initiated. Project support has been obtained from time to time

from some UN Agencies, but the escalation of travel costs makes it impossible for the Association to function effectively without some core funding.

Being a democratic and all India body, members of the EC are elected from different corners of the country. During the last eight years there have been repeated suggestions from members to organise more regional meetings and to assist the new members to form regional meetings and to assist the new members to form regional branches of the Association.

The present EC also feels that holding of a series of local and regional level meetings prior to a national conference would assist the process of mobilisation as well as development of perspectives for Women's Studies and its essential link with action in the future. Two such regional meetings were planned before the Fifth National Conference. However, constraints in mobilising resources has resulted in limiting it to one only.

### **SCHOOL OF WOMEN'S STUDIES, JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY**

Women's Studies is a critical understanding of social reality from a women's perspective. It is an act of looking back with a new critical insight and analysing the roots of inequality that have led to the marginalisation of women from all but the domestic sphere. It is a study of the social, historical, political and economic processes which have created this gender discrimination. It is also the developing of alternative concepts and strategies, thereby fostering an environment where invisible women can be rendered visible, silent voices can be made audible, and existing power relations can be confronted without any fears and doubts.

The School of Women's Studies, Jadavpur University was formed as a centre for developing Women's Studies in India. It began functioning in January



1988, and in February 1989 was recognised by the U. G. C. It aims at dissolving the artificial barriers between disciplines created by the traditional academic set up. It is a truly interdisciplinary centre, which does not aim to segregate Women's Studies and create a female counter canon. Rather, its objectives are to incorporate questions arising out of this new perspective into every discipline and to undertake teaching and research in a holistic way, and thereby to augment possibilities of social justice.

### **Our activities**

—We have conducted a number of seminars and lectures, attended by scholars, activists, social workers from India and abroad.

We have formed a study group, with the aim of consciousness-raising among students. The group holds discussions on significant issues relating to women.

—We aim to eventually become a storehouse of information on women and collaborate in networking with other Women's Studies research centres in India. Our main aim is to collect material relevant to the Indian situation and share these with other researchers and activists in the field. We have already acquired a substantial collection of books and non-book material. At present we are participating in the national information network on women and development, sponsored by the ICSSR and conducted by CWDS.

—In collaboration with the Adult and Continuing Education Centre and Vivek Chetana, a voluntary women's organisation, a three-month training programme on home-care and para-nursing, named "Artasangee" was completed at the Thakurpukur Cancer Research Centre. This programme aims to promote self-reliance and generate income, and will be conducted annually.

### **Our Visitors**

We have been very fortunate in getting distinguished visitors from India and abroad. Scholars like Dr. Susie Tharu, Dr. Himani Banerji, Sm. Sraboshi Ghosh, Dr. Kumkum Sangari, Dr. Elaine Jordan, and several others have read papers, given lectures and initiated discussions on various aspects of Women's Studies.

### **Projects Undertaken Completed**

—A critical directory of organisations working on women's issues within the Municipal area of Calcutta has been compiled through the questionnaire survey method.

### **Ongoing**

—Critical editions are being prepared of 19th and early 20th century Bengali Women Writers. These editions will contribute to an awareness of the significance of women's lives in the past and provide new tool for evaluating contemporary cultures. The Giribala Devi volume is complete and work in Jyotirmoyee Devi and Hemantabala Devi is fast progressing.

—A union catalogue of books on and by Women, available in Bengal is nearing completion.

—A Project on the Girl Child and the Family, as part of the national project, sponsored by the department of Women and Child, Ministry of Human Resource Development, has just commenced.

—A checklist of dissertations, completed and ongoing, on issues relating to Women's studies in the major educational institutions in Calcutta, is being prepared, in collaboration with the Women Studies Research Centre, Calcutta University.

—Research work on Bengali journals edited by Women in the 19th and 20th centuries is being conducted.

—We plan to do a bibliometric study of articles on Women published in the major political journals in West Bengal in the Women's Decade (1975-1985)

—We plan to bring out an anthology of Women's Writings in Bengal at the turn of the century, which will include fiction, memoirs, autobiographies, letters, essays, and articles, translated into English.

—A select list of the holding of Women's Studies, in the Jadavpur University Library, has been published in a mimeographed form.

—Papers presented at the National seminar (held in March 1989) on "Indian Women: Myth and Reality" were put together in a mimeographed form, and is being published by Orient Longman.

—A checklist of universities abroad which have centres or schools of Women's Studies, has been published in a mimeographed form.

—An edition of Giribala Devi's *Raibari* is being published by Dey's Publishing Company, and will be out soon.

—Papers presented at a National Seminar (held in March 1990) on Curriculum Development in Women's Studies are being compiled for publication in the Mimeographed form.

—A checklist of the current contents in the Periodical subscribed by the School is being prepared.

—To offer an interdisciplinary M. Phil programme in Women's Studies, the curriculum for which is being prepared.

—To apply to the Science and Technology department of the Government of India for a project on inducting low-cost technology among rural Women.

—To network with Women's groups as widely as possible.

### **OUR FACULTY**

Prof. Jasodhara Bagchi (Honorary Director)  
Sm. Sarbani Goswami (Research Officer)  
Dr. Shivani Banerjee Chakravorty (Research Associate)  
Sri. Abhijit Sen (Research Assistant for the Women Writers project)

Dr. Baby Das (Senior Research Investigator)  
Sm. Chandreyee Niyogi  
Sm. Ishita Chakraborty  
Sm. Piyali Sengupta  
Sm. Sarmistha De  
Sm. Sarmistha Deb  
Sm. Sarmita Chatterjee

Apart from the above, faculty members from all disciplines of humanities, social sciences, science and technology are members of our advisory, administrative and academic Committees. We function as an interdisciplinary centre with their advice and help. Some of them are co-ordinators in our projects, as Prof. Subir Roychowdhuri, Comparative Literature, who is the general editor of our Women Writers project; Prof. Jaba Guha, of Economics, who is the joint Co-ordinator of the Girl Child project; Prof. Manjula Bose, Debjani Sarkar and Jaba Guha, Economics, who have supervised the Critical Directory project; Sm. Krishna Datta, Central Library, J. U. who is supervising the Union Catalogue project; and Kavita Panjabi, Comparative Literature, who is in charge of the studygroup.

### **WOMEN'S STUDIES RESEARCH CENTRE UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA**

The Women's Studies Research Centre, University of Calcutta, was established on 1 April 1989 with support from the University Grants Commission.

Its Director is prof Bharati Ray, who is also Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs of the University.

The Centre is a multi-disciplinary research unit which studies issues relating to women from a holistic viewpoint. Thus, though our methods include research at the micro level based on field surveys and published records, we seek to never lose sight of the fact that Women's Studies belongs essentially to the humanist tradition of the social sciences. The Centre seeks to reach beyond merely academic concerns. It aims to create a general consciousness of the problems of women as well as to promote awareness among Women themselves.

The Women's Studies Research Centre seeks to promote the pursuit of Women's Studies as a rigorous discipline by encouraging all academic endeavour that seeks to rectify traditional biases and constrictions that operate against women within every branch of learning. This is because of our conviction that the genuine aspirations and achievements of women.

The issue of gender, though germane in many disciplines, is reflected in diverse ways. The Centre seeks to function as a co-ordinating body within the University by the fundamental questioning of old methodologies and orthodox parameters. We hope, by whetting analytical tools, to help in the incorporation of Women's Studies as a component in the syllabi of many subjects studied in Calcutta University. This will not only develop the corpus of learning within this new discipline, it will enrich the older and more conventional subjects and make them more relevant. We are particularly concerned with the impact of science and technology on the lives and work of women.

### **PROJECTS**

The Centre has undertaken a number of projects since its inception. Among them are :

**1. Women and Development : A Field Study of Two Villages in West Bengal,**

A hundred women in each of two villages, one in an agriculturally "advanced" district and the other in a "backward" district, were interviewed. Our structured interview schedule sought to elicit information revealing the level of awareness, the decisionmaking authority within the family, the perceptions of dowry and family violence and the health and nutrition status of the women the report, which is almost finalised, seeks to draw comparisons between the two sets of women, relating their responses to their families' landholding sizes and consequent local standing. The study questions the basic premise that development has benefited every one equally.

**2. The Bamabodhini patrika, 1863—1921.**

The Centre is engaged in a project to collate, edit, publish and, ultimately, translate selected articles from a pioneering women's journal of Bengal. Lively discussion of issues that are still alive today, such as girls' education and the respective roles of men and women in the family, provides material for research scholars, throws light on a significant phase of the women's movement in India, and makes available texts of value to diverse academic fields.

**3. Women's Treasury :**

A project to collect folk songs, proverbs, traditional remedies and other vehicles of the oral tradition through which women have handed down their rich heritage through the generations. This field-based collection is based on unstructured interviews.

**4. Women and Education in West Bengal, 1947-1990.**

This is an ongoing study of the achievements and shortfalls in a

crucial sector of educational policies since Independence. After a brief overview of the position in 1947, it examines policies (and their fall-out) to see where they have succeeded or failed, and analyses the socio-economic reasons behind the levels of achievement. This is intended to be a well-documented, thought-provoking and policy-prescriptive examination of the issue of women and education.

**5. Nutritional Status of Women in the Reproductive Age Group.**

This a collaborative project by the Women's Studies Research Centre and the All India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health and will be based on field work in Hooghly District. It will evaluate the level of nutrition of rural women between the ages of 15-45, covering a population of 20,000. We feel such a survey will be of benefit in the understanding of India's abysmal statistics for women's mortality and morbidity. The study will be funded by the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India and jointly investigated by Prof Bharati Ray and Prof Indira Chakravarty.

**6. Entrepreneurship-Awareness Programme for Women Students**

The Centre seeks to act as a coordinator between the small-scale Industries Development Programme of the Government of West Bengal and women students about to graduate from the University.

**7. Women in Panchayati Raj Institutions in West Bengal Since 1978 : A Study in Role Expectations.**

This molecular study, undertaken jointly with Prof Bangendu Ganguly of the Department of Political Science, Calcutta University, aims to

assess the role expectations and role performance of women in the rural areas of West Bengal.

#### **8. Public Expenditure and its Implications on Minority Women**

A study aimed at evaluating the socio-economic status of Muslim women to find out their share in employment, education etc. and also to examine the link between institutional finance and public expenditure in assisting self-employment schemes for minority women, This is being undertaken by Ms. Farida Hussian in collaboration with the Centre.

#### **9. Tribal Women : Development or Deqradation ?**

A major all-India project to be undertaken by the Centre and the Anthropological Survey of India, this will compare the status of women belonging to different tribes, living in diverse physiographic conditions and following various patterns of economic existence. It will seek to compare not only the relative status of tribal women but to throw light on the evolution of women's roles and positions in Indian society in general.

### **SEMINARS AND WORKSHOPS**

The WSRC has organised a number of small seminars addressed by Indian and foreign scholars. Two major seminars have been the Inaugural Seminar in March 1989 and the Seminar on women and Science held in February 1990.

The Centre has also organised, in July 1989, a workshop in a village in the 24-Parganas District, with lively participation by the local women.



## PUBLICATIONS

The Centre has published the following volumes :

1. Women's Studies in the Emergent Indian Scenario edited by Bharati Ray ( mimeo ), 1990.
2. Women and Science, edited by Bharati Ray ( mimeo ), 1990.

## DOCUMENTATION

The Centre's library has a collection of books on Women's Studies, copies of articles, seminar proceedings and reports.

We have, in collaboration with the Jadavpur University women's Studies Centre and the National Library, prepared part of the Resource Guide on women's Studies being collated by the SNTD women's University, Bombay, and the Centre for women's Development Studies, New Delhi.

## CORE FACULTY

Director (Honorary) : Prof Bharati Ray

Research Officer : Ms. Supriya Guha

Research Associates : Dr. Anjali Ghosh

Dr. Rupali Ghosh

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## JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY : *The Beginning*

"If the Congress had not been hopelessly out of date in its form and spirit, it would by this time have organized itself for work, with a department for the organization of National Education on a basis of voluntary self-taxation figuring prominently in its list of national duties." Thus wrote Sri Aurobindo in *Bande Mataram* for August 22, 1906, while urging the nationalists 'to elicit from the congress this year a solemn expression of the national will' to carry forward the movement of National Education which 'received the seal of approbation from united Bengal at the Barisal Conference.' The Bengal National Council of Education was inaugurated by Sir Gooroodass Banerjee exactly a week ago on August 15, 1906 in a meeting at the town Hall under the presidency of Sir Rash Behary Ghosh. In that inaugural address Sir Gooroodas was referring to the 'stock of thoughts and sentiments, the gift of his nation' that every student brings with him in addition to his outfit of language', which he said, 'the teacher should try to utilize and gradually improve'. This is where the then existing system of English education had failed.

Similar dissatisfaction prompted Sir Gooroodas even earlier in writing his famous note of dissent to the Report of the Indian Universities Commission of 1902. In these attempts at articulating an alternative vision must be traced the beginnings of national education in the early years of this century. An institutional expression of that vision was the foundation of the National Council of Education, Bengal which was established on 11 March, 1906, registered under Act 21 of 1860 (No. 82 of 190607, dated 23 May 1906). A sister institution was the Society for the Promotion of Technical Education in Bengal also under the presidency of Sir Rash Behary Ghosh. These were but aspects of the larger *Swadeshi* movement which was sparked off by the partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon in 1905. The political and the economic, the social and cultural all combined to make a total sense of this *Swadeshi* which must be kept in mind if the spirit of the parent Institution of this university is to

be grasped. The slogans of boycott, *swadeshi*, *swaraj* and national education became the fundamental *idee-force* of the Bengali people in this period.

The Memorandum of Association of the Bengal National Council of Education had stated that the first object was "to impart Education, Literary and Scientific as well as Technical and Professional, on national lines and exclusively under national control, not in opposition to, but standing apart from, the existing systems of Primary, Secondary and Collegiate Education, attaching special importance to a knowledge of the country, its literature, history and philosophy, and designed to incorporate with the best oriental ideas of life and thought the best assimilable ideals of the west." To attain this objective and other high ideals incorporated in the Memorandum there cooperated the landed gentry and the mercantile community, people from the legal and the medical professions and also actively associated were clerks, shopkeepers and artisans. "The sway over industrial workers was no less noticeable in certain areas. And in all these groups or communities the *personnal* was both Hindu and Muslim."

The contributions of the Dawn Society (estd. 1902) of Satish Chandra Mookherjee must be adequately recognized in any account of this period of Bengal's history. The Society has been described to be a precursor of the National Council of Education, Bengal. The atmosphere of the Dawn Society brought together personalities like Brajendranath Seal, Rabindranath Tagore, Sister Nivedita, Surendranath Banerjee, Bipinchandra Pal, Abdul Rasul, Ramendrasundar Trivedi, Motilal Ghosh, Dineshchandra Sen, Ambika Ukil, Nilkantha Goswami and Durgacharan Sankhya-Vedantatirthh, Brahmabandhab Upadhyay and Hirendranath Datta, many of whom later were directly connected with the activities of the National Council of Education, Bengal in various capacities.

A direct response of the Bengal partition was the Pabna declaration (July 1905) of boycott of British goods. This was followed by the Town Hall meeting of

August 7, 1905 under the chairmanship of Naren Sen of the *Indian Mirror* to confirm the boycott proclamation. This was followed by the repressive measures announced by the Government circular of October 10. The boycott of British goods was eventually extended to the boycott of the State-directed university which came to be nicknamed as *Golamkhana* (slave-manufacturing factories'. By November 1905 the student revolt nearly became an all-Bengal phenomenon. This was legitimated on November 14 through an open letter by Asutosh Choudhury which appealed for the establishment of a national institution for the education of students who were determined to sever all connections with the Calcutta University. This matter was discussed in a conference of leaders on November 16, 1905 under the chairmanship of Raja feary Mohan Mukherjee. The establishment of the National Council of Education, Bengal was decided through the resolutions of Surendranath Banerjee, Taraknath Palit and Motilal Ghosh.

The foundation of the National Council of Education, Bengal was made possible through generous donations of Raja Subodh Chandra Mallik of Calcutta, Brajendra Kishore Roy Chowdhury of Gouripur and Maharaja Suryakanta Acharyya Choudhury of Mymensingh. Financial support was also given later by Sir Taraknath Palit and Sir Rash Behary Ghosh. Taraknath Palit financed the founding of the Bengal Techical Institute, later known as the College of Engineering and Technology, Bengal which was established under the auspices of the Society for the Promotion of Technical Education, which itself amalgamated with the National Council of Education, Bengal in 1910. The will of Sir Rash Behary Ghosh bequeathed a fortune of Rs. 13 lakhs in 1921 which enabled the Council in 1924 to set up the present campus at Jadavpur, the land for which was leased out as a kind gesture of the Calcutta Corporation to the Council on a nominal rent.

Jadavpur University finally came into being on 24 December, 1955 through the enactment of the Jadavpur University Act in the West Bengal State legislature.

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Reprinted from the Souvenir of the Conference of the Indian Economic Association Organized by the Department of Economic, Jadavpur University Calcutta-700032 held in December 29-31-1988,

## Jadavpur University Today

From a sapling Jadavpur University has spread its branches far and wide. Now considered one of the most dynamic Universities in the country, it has successfully avoided the pitfall of being narrowed down to a mere technological University. True to the spirit of its Swadeshi founders, ably represented by the first rector of the University Dr. Triguna Sen, the University has worked towards bridging the gap between the two/three culture divide that marks the prevalent ideology of post-Independence India. Arts, Science and Technology have co-existed on the same campus amicably. We do not really know how far Humanities partakes of the Spirit of Science and Technology, but Science and Technology in Jadavpur seem to be distinctly humanised.

The present student capacity of the University is around six thousand. The Arts Faculty has nine mainstream departments, with two new departments of Sociology and Film Studies sanctioned by the U. G. C. about to take off. Science Faculty has five mainstream departments, Of these fourteen, the U. G. C. has recognised quite a few as Departments of special Assistance and Philosophy and Geology are recognised as Centres for Advanced Studies. The Engineering Faculty is ever expanding its frontier. Its mainstream departments now number fourteen, with the youngest one of Printing Engineering already doing innovative work.

The most innovative aspect of Jadavpur University has been the formation of twelve interdisciplinary Schools, of which the School of Women's Studies is one. These Schools tend to work across disciplines and act as fecundating agencies in bridging the gap between theory and practice. To name a few, The Schools of Energy Studies, Environmental Studies, Education Technology and Media Communication and Culture have produced pioneering work in their respective fields.

In this connection, one needs to mention the Jadavpur University Newsletter, which is published every year on the occasion of the Annual Convocation. The Newsletter acts as a perfect platform for keeping everybody in the University upto date with whatever happens here, encouraging mutual interest across faculties and disciplines,

The amenities provided for students include not only varieties of academic facilities, but also several extra-curricular ones. The space that the University provides to the initiative of the students may be seen in the thriving state of the Photographic Club, the Mountaineering Club, the Music Club ( Geeti Sangsad ), the Drama Club, the Debating Society and Quiz Forum, the Science and Language Club, the Art and Library Society, and - last but not the least - the Jadavpur University Film Society, which has screened some of the choicest pick of Films.

Now the University even has a Second Campus at Salt Lake, where an Engineering Degree College is run. This Second Campus is expected to develop into an independent seat of learning, equipped to meet the challenges of emerging areas of technological study. Three major areas of specialized study in this Centre are to be Energy Conversion, Environmental Technology and Bio-Medical Engineering.

Jadavpur University has produced the first woman graduate in Engineering, has been the first to have a woman Chancellor in Padmaja Naidu and has admitted distinguished women such as Ashapurna Devi or Mother Teresa, to the D. Litt. degree honoris causa. It is only fitting that this University which had originated in dissent should be the first one to host a National Conference of the Indian Association for Women's Studies in the Eastern region.

# Organizing Committee of

the Fifth National Conference of the Indian Association for Women's Studies  
held at

Jadavpur University, February 9-12, 1991.

## *Chairperson*

S. K. Sen ( Vice-Chancellor Jadavpur  
University )

## *Vice Chairpersons*

Bharati Ray

( Provice Chancellor, Calcutta University )

Bela Datta Gupta ( State Planning Board )

Nabaneeta Dev Sen ( Comparative Literature )

Anita Banerjee ( Economics )

## *Joint Secretaries*

Jasodhara Bagchi ( English, School of  
Women's Studies )

Nirmala Banerjee ( Centre for Studies in  
Social Sciences, Calcutta )

## *Treasurer*

Subha Das Gupta ( Comparative Literature)

## *Joint - Treasurer*

Bijoya Goswami ( Sanskrit )

## *Advisory Committee*

Amiya Dev ( Dean, Faculty of Arts )

Ashoke Basu ( Dean Faculty of Science )

Ajit Pal ( Dean, Faculty of Engg. & Tech. )

Dipak Chowdhury ( Dean of Students )

Manjula Bose ( Economics )

Subir Roychowdhuri (Comparative Literature)

## *Academic Sub-Committees*

### *Convenor :*

Jaba Guha ( Economics )

Malini Bhattacharya ( English )

Debesh Chakraborty ( Economics )

Sourin Bhattacharya ( Economics )

Papiya Chakraborty ( History )

Supriya Chaudhuri ( English )

Manika Nag ( Muralidhar Girls College )

Bijaya Das ( Comparative Literature )

Ashok Mukherjee ( Printing Engg. )

Paramita Banerjee ( Philosophy )

Shivani Banerjee Chakravorty ( School of  
Women's Studies )

Sucheta Ghosh ( International Relations )

Supriya Guha ( W.S.R.C., Calcutta University)

Keya Dasgupta ( Centre for Studies in Social  
Sciences, Calcutta )

Rita Banerjee ( Centre for Studies in Social  
Sciences, Calcutta )

## *Accommodation and Transport*

### *Convenor :*

Debjani Sarkar ( Economics )

Biswajit Chatterjee ( Economics )

Sunanda Roy ( Economics )

Basabi Bhattacharya ( Economics )

Dipak Ghosh ( Estate )

Sudeshna Banerjee ( History )

Manideepa Sen ( Philosophy )



*Venue and Related*

*Infrastructure*

Convenor :

Ashoke Bhattacharya ( Adult & Continuing Education )

Samir Saha ( Mechanical Engg. )

Nandita Bandyopadhyay ( Sanskrit )

Sujoy Basu ( Electrical Engg. )

*Exhibition and Stalls*

Convenor :

Shefali Maitra ( Philosophy )

Chhanda Gupta ( Philosophy )

Krishna Datta ( Central Library )

Manabendra Bandopadhyay ( Comparative Literature )

Pradip Chowdhury ( Library )

Preeti Mitra ( Library )

Abhjit Sen ( School of Women's Studies )

*Catering and Refreshment*

Convenor :

Sheila Lahiri Choudhury ( English )

Satyabati Giri ( Bengali )

Purna Chowdhury ( Comparative Literature )

Bimal Ghosh ( History )

Krishna Roy ( Philosophy )

Sukla Banerjee

*Cultural*

Convenor :

Ratnabali Chatterjee ( Calcutta University )

Jt. Convenor :

Arundhati Banerjee ( Comparative Literature )

Mihir Bhattacharya ( English )

Sanjoy Mukherjee ( Adult & Continuing Education )

Sharmila Basu Datta ( Bengali )

Kalyani Ghosh ( Basanti Debi College )

*Reception and*

*Registration*

Convenor :

Kavita Panjabi ( Comparative Literature )

Sarbani Goswami ( School of Women's Studies )

Sajni Mukherjee ( English )

Sati Chatterjee ( English )

Kunal Chattopadhyay ( History )

Sukla Das ( History )

Ipshita Chanda ( Comparative Literature )

Swagata Ganguli ( Comparative Literature )

Rajat Basu ( Comparative Literature )

Rupali Ghosh ( Calcutta University )

Tapti Basu ( Center for Studies in Social Sciences )

*Creche*

Dr. Arati Basu, Sukti Sita Bhattacharya  
( Comparative Literature )

Jhuma Chakraborty ( Philosophy )

Fifth National Conference  
of the  
Indian Association for Women's Studies  
on  
Religion Culture and Politics  
Jadavpur University  
February 9-12 1991

**PROGRAMME**

*( This is subject to last minute alteration )*

9 February 1991	Venue	
9 a.m. - 10 a.m.	.....	Registration of delegates
10.00 a.m. - 11.00 a.m.	Open Air Theatre	Inauguration PROGRAMME Opening song Composed by Malini Bhattacharya Presented by Geeti Sansad, Jadavpur University Welcome Address by Sankar Kumar Sen Introduction by Jasodhara Bagchi Presidential Address by Kamalini Bhansali Inauguration by Qurratulain Hyder Vote of Thanks by Surinder Jetley
11.00 a.m. - 11.30 a.m.	.....	Coffee Break
11.30 a.m. - 1.30 p.m.	Open Air Theatre	Plenary Session "Relevance of the Theme" Co-ordinator : Vina Mazumdar
1.30 p.m. - 2.30 p.m.	Amenitiss Centre	Lunch
2.30 p.m. - 4.00 p.m.	.....	Sub-theme Sessions
4.00 p.m. - 4.30 p.m.	In all the nine	Tea
4.30 p.m. - 5.30 p.m.	rooms/halls	Sub theme Sessions
6.00 p.m. - 8.00 p.m.	Open Air Theatre	Cultural Programme (Programme overleaf)
8.15 p.m.	Amenties Centre	Dinner

**10 February 1991**

9.30 a.m. - 11.00 a.m.	.....	Sub-theme Sessions
11.00 a.m. - 11.30 a.m.	In all the nine rooms/halls	Coffee
11.30 a.m. - 1.00 p.m.	.....	Sub-theme Sessions
1.00 p.m. - 2.00 p.m.	.....	Lunch
2.00 p.m. - 3.30 p.m.	In all the rooms/halls	Sub-theme Sessions
3.30 p.m. - 4.00 p.m.	.....	Tea
4.00 p.m. - 6.00 p.m.	Open Air Theatre	Plenary Session Women,s self identity in West Bengal Co-ordinator : Nirmala Banerjee
6.30 p.m. - 8.30 p.m.	Open Air Theatre	Cultural Programme
8.45 p.m.	Amenities Centre	Dinner

**Monday, 11 February 1991**

9.30 a.m. - 11.00 a.m.	In all the nine rooms/halls	Sub theme Sessions
11.00 a.m. - 11.30 p.m.	.....	Coffee
11.30 a.m. - 1.00 p.m.	Indian Institute of Chemical Biology	Plenary Session Comparative Perspectives Co-ordinator : Kumud Sharma
1.00 p.m - 2.00 p.m.	Amenities Centre	Lunch
2.00 p.m. - 4.00 p.m.	Indian Institute of Chemical Biology	General Body Meeting
4.00 p.m. - 5.30 p.m.	.....	Exhibition at the National Library
6.00 p.m. - 8.00 p.m.	.....	Film Show <b>Nandan</b>

**Tuesday, 12 Tuesday 1991**

9.30 a.m. - 10.30 a.m.	In all the nine rooms/halls	Adoption of reports in Separate Sub-theme groups
10.30 a.m. - 11.00 a.m.	.....	Coffee
11.00 a.m - 1.30 p.m.	Indian Institute of Chemical Biology	Reporting Session and passing of resolutions
1.30 - p.m. 2.30 p.m.	Aminities Centre	Lunch
2.0 p.m. - 5.00 pm.	Indian Institute of Chemical Biology	Valedictory Session "What needs to be done" Co-ordinator : Susheela Kaushik.
5.00 p.m. - 5,30 p.m.	Do	Tea hosted by Professor Bharati Roy

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**Cultural Programme in the Open Air Theatre**

**Saturday 9 February**

6 p.m. Folk songs of Eastern India

Presented by PRAYASEE

7 p.m. **Aranya Amrita**

Presented by Dancer's Guild

**Sunday 10 February**

6.30 p.m. **Nirnoy**

Presented by Jadavpur University Drama Club

7.15 p.m. **Bama**

Presented by Rangakarmi (Usha Ganguly)

**Monday 11 February 1991**

6 p.m. Film at **Nandan**

( Invitation by passes )



An exhibition and sale of handicrafts and snacks of Women entrepreneurs at the grass roots level will remain open on the grounds of Jadavpur University from 1-7 p.m. on all the four days.

Books and publications by Women will also be on sale

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## ***Acknowledgements***

We would like to acknowledge, with thanks, the support given to us by the following :

1. Department of Printing Engineering, Jadavpur University
2. Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta
3. Indian Statistical Institute, Calcutta
4. Government of West Bengal, Calcutta
5. State Bank of India, Calcutta Circle
6. I. C. S. S. R.
7. Department of Women and Child, Ministry of Human Resource Development, New Delhi
- 8: The student volunteers, Jadavpur University

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**Vth National Conference, Jadavpur (Kolkatta): 1991**  
*Presidential Address*

**Kamalini Bhansali**

*On The Way to Gender Justice: A Decade of Trial And Achievements*

It is a happy coincidence that the Fifth National Conference on Women's Studies organised by the Indian Association for Women's Studies is being held in Calcutta at the Jadavpur University, following the tri-centenary celebration of this great city.

In retrospect, the city can boast of political, social and cultural achievements and upheavals. However, as far as the Association is concerned, this occasion and time gain greater significance as Bengal has produced strong women who have excelled in diverse fields giving lead to the women of India. On such an occasion, one cannot but help remembering these great women. To name just a few – Sarojini Naidu, Sarla Devi Choudharani, Taru Datta, Basanti Devi – the list can go on...

Members of my Executive Committee and I are grateful to Jadavpur University for agreeing to host such a large conference which is being attended by representatives from all over India and a few neighbouring countries. On behalf of IAWS I add my welcome to all the delegates and distinguished guests.

The Association is fortunate in having Ms. Qurratulain Hyder a renowned literary scholar and Gnanpeeth awardee to inaugurate to Conference. Her contribution to the cause is through her writings on women and we consider it an honour to have a woman with us of whom we are all proud. We are also grateful to Prof. Sen, Vice-Chancellor of the host University for joining us and being so supportive to the cause.

Since the Association conceived in 1981 has completed 10 years of contribution to women's studies, for my Presidential Address, I have selected the theme : "on the way to gender justice: A decade of trial and achievements". A decade, you will agree, is a special event to take stock.

Till date, four National Conferences have been organised by IAWS, touching issues and concerns relevant to women at that point of time.

Taking a kaleidoscopic review, the first and memorable conference on women's studies was held in Bombay at SNDT University in 1981. This set the pace for the movement by giving a broad focus to Women's Studies in India to review it as a critical instrument to improve our knowledge about society. It also led to the birth of the Indian Association for Women's Studies to provide a forum for interaction amongst individuals, institutions and organisations involved in teaching, research and action for women's development and promoting women's equality through periodic conferences, specific action programmes, dissemination of information and so on.

From among active pioneers, I should say founder contributors of the Association – Leela Dube, Hemlata Swarup, Neera Desai, Vina Mazumdar, Lotika Sarkar, Lucy Jacob, Bina Roy, Devaki Jain, Phulrenu Ghua and many others – I am happy to see some of them with us to-day. This continuity of association has given added strength to the Association. I was also a party to the First National Conference.

This first convention was followed by three national conferences at Trivandrum in 1984, Chandigarh in 1986 and in Waltair in 1988 and now the current one at Calcutta. By a coincidence, the Conferences have circled the country.

You are aware, in each of the Conferences, we have focussed on a particular broad theme interlinked by sub-themes through workshops to give maximum opportunity to participants to voice their concerns, experiences and perceptions. The past and present themes of biennial gatherings indicate the effort that the Association has made in organising sessions on current and pertinent themes. The First Conference being the initial gathering discussed a wide range of issues concerning women. The Second Conference primarily focussed on women and law, political participation and work, the Third on women's movements and struggles, while the fourth Conference concentrated on one issue with multifarious dimensions, such as rural women, poverty, survival and struggle. The current conference is on religion, culture and politics.

I am sure all will agree to the relevance of the theme in the present context. The way in which three facets of society, namely, religion, culture and politics are intertwined, ultimately affecting women in adverse manner is being proved by the events not only in our country but through developments occurring at global level. The ugly face of fundamentalism goes against the norm of equality and is an assault on women's freedom and identity, I need not repeat before this enlightened gathering the tragedy of the Roop Kanwars and Shah Banos. Unfortunately, even progressive legislation has not been able to blunt the edges. Fundamentalism which corrodes the fabric of society by promoting reactionary values and practices could only be combatted by conscious efforts at awareness generation and resistance to actions of retrograde measures in the name of protecting religion or maintaining cultural identity. Further, fundamentalism operates quite often in a more subtle and covert manner. Hence, women have to be on guard, all the time, so that the precious achievements which we have made so far though still in a limited manner are not wiped off. It is necessary to build unity in groups of women of different religions for collective action to achieve social and economic justice for women. This is an area in which the Association should give leadership through the spread of secular approach and I am confident the recommendations which will emerge will pave the way for the same.

On this occasion, a retrospective review giving highlights of the contributions of the women's studies movement and role of IAWS will not be out of place.

What began 10 years back as an awareness generation activity bringing together academics, activists and researchers to develop and sustain women's studies, today has a different picture to project. The deliberations, dialogues and networking during the decade have grown wider in range as well as deeper. The beginning of women's studies was made with research, documentation and action. Today we have also encompassed the area of teaching where focus is largely on inter-disciplinary approach and integration of women's issues in the disciplines.

Currently nearly 50 Women's Studies units have been operating in the Universities and about the same number of organisations outside the University system are concerned with academic and other issues for implementing Women's Studies. More and more material on women's position, problems, perceptions, movements, and other aspects is committed to cater to the growing need. In the Eighth Plan the spread is bound to increase.

When SNTU set up the programme in 1974, pioneering in this field, it did not have advantage of experience or convention or a model to go by. The paradigm was interpreted and established as the Centre progressed and fresh dimensions were added. In the contemporary scene, the newer centres are in a way in a more advantageous position having a broad frame to go by with possibilities of experimentation of focussing on specific aspects. Take the illustration of Jadavpur University. Since it has a school structure, the focus is on interdisciplinary aspects, drawing strength from various disciplines.

Women's Studies, which started as an exercise to make women analyse deeply the complexities of the status of women in the changing social pattern, today is an academic exercise where people from different disciplines contribute making it an interdisciplinary area and an act of transformation through close liaisoning with action. The decade has witnessed debates on concepts and theoretical issues touching feminism, definition of work, role of family, analysis of women's movements, and many others, orienting knowledge to be useful to changing society. In recent times women's studies is touching new parameters. The National Workshop on 'Visibility of Women in Statistics and Indicators' held at SNTU University in 1989 by the University Research Centre for Women's Studies jointly with the Department of Women and Child Development, Government of India and International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), made participants conscious of the quality of information available and needed for fuller development of women in national policies and plans. As a consequence of the dialogues that ensued between different organisations, for the first time, the 1991 census operation will probe gender issues and quantify the work in homes and agricultural fields. This is a significant gain as it will improve the visibility of women in national statistics. It is indeed gratifying that after so much struggle and determination, gender dimension has been added in the national census.

I am happy to mention that today IAWS has been able to acquire a status as an important body representing women's interest, where its opinion and reactions are now valued by policy makers. In fact, this process was started by the Association through its President, Dr. Madhuri Shah, who as Chairperson of the apex body of higher education, the University Grants Commission, initiated women's studies at the UGC in 1985, responding to the developments occurring inside and outside the system. This has been a very major contribution. Thereafter, office-bearers and members of the Association have actively participated in the various debates concerning women at governmental and non-governmental levels.

Very recently, the Association collaborated with academic institutions and non-governmental organisations deliberating on the various clauses of the National Commission on Women Bill, 1990 and made recommendations to remove the anomalies which were considered, with recommendations from other organisations and individuals at the National Conference convened by the Department of Women and Child Development in the Ministry of Welfare. This



Department has also built links with Women's Studies centres, seeking information for assigning research projects the latest being the national project. "The Girl Child and the Family" involving nearly 25 Women's Studies departments. Women's Studies scholars, several of them belonging to IAWS are included in policy recommendation bodies, to illustrate, the National Commission for Self-Employed Women, Joint Parliamentary Committee on Special Marriage Act, National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe Women and others. That too is a positive step of achievement. Further, IAWS from the beginning has been maintaining links with international women's movements and has collaborated in conferences, panels and workshops focussed on feminist issues. This contribution gains significance on the conceptual front.

The IAWS was started with certain commitments. The conference deliberations have focussed on conceptual tasks and research orientation. New dimensions are added. I am hopeful that the same dedication to the objectives of the Association will continue. Moreover, in the present times when career is the goal of life and consumerism is a way of life, Women's Studies researchers and activists will need to provide a new model of approach and understanding.

As mentioned earlier, today's Conference is coinciding with the 10<sup>th</sup> year of the IAWS. To commemorate the decade, the Association has brought out a Special Issue tracing its development and touching selected facets related to women's studies. I am confident this occasion and the document will act not only as a historical reference when future milestones of the Association are being celebrated but will be considered a cutting point to retrospect and move forward to enrich further the activities of this national forum.

A galaxy of women – academics, researchers, activists and policy makers has contributed to the building up of the IAWS. Some of them have been pillars of strength; many have supported the cause. All categories of persons are needed for a crusade to be meaningful, relevant and effective. It is a very difficult task to identify the contributors by name as many would be missed; but on this occasion of the decade, the Association records its appreciation and gratitude to all those who have in one way or the other, helped the Association further its 'career path'.

The words sung by Poetess Jogeshwari in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Bengal became a common saying depicting typical male attitude and patriarchal values. They were: 'The boat, the horse and the women belong to whoever rides them'. Women's solidarity programmes have brought us a long way; but we have 'many promises to keep ... and miles and miles to go' and it is only through concerted action, vigilance and joint effort that we will be able to 'strengthen our strengths'. Differences will be there; this only reflects our maturity. Women's Studies have faced difficulties and will be facing further constraints; in spite of this situation, we have to take up new challenges and give a new scope to the activities through collective deliberations, collective thinking, collective action and above all collective commitment. Let this be our clarion call.

During my tenure as president of IAWS between 1989-1991, I have received excellent support from members of the Executive Committee and we have worked closely and cohesively. Whenever I have approached friends, colleagues and the family of SNTD – RCWS they have been with me in this challenge. I value this support. Finally my very sincere appreciation for the work put in by Dr. Jasodhara Bagchi and her supporting team of dedicated faculty, staff and

friends for looking after the most difficult facet of the Conference – the ‘nuts and bolts’ aspects through wonderful managerial skills.

I look forward, with all of you to an exciting debate on the various issues of the theme.

Dhonnobad .... Jai Hind