

**biennial
report
1984-85**



**REPORT OF THE WORKSHOP
ON
RELEVANCE OF LAW
TO WOMEN :
AN INTROSPECTION
OF ACTION
AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES**

**observation on
muslim women
(protection of
rights on divorce)
bill 1986**

MAHILA DAKSHATA SAMITI

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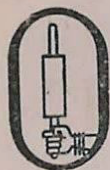
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मंत्री
विधि और न्याय
नई दिल्ली-110001 (भारत)
MINISTER
LAW AND JUSTICE
NEW DELHI-110001 (INDIA)

August 9, 1985

Message

I am glad to know that Mahila Dakshata Samiti is organizing a two-day workshop on "Relevance of Law to Women".

Since independence, we have taken various progressive steps to raise the status of women in our society. We have passed bold and beneficial measures for improving the legal rights and social status of our women and for preventing crimes against them. The Committee for Implementing Legal Aid Schemes set up by the Government of India has also focussed its attention on women and is endeavouring to build the necessary social and legal structure for their welfare. Programmes have thus been undertaken to train women as social workers for providing legal aid/legal advice to our women and various centres have been established for that purpose.

Considering the importance of improving the status of women all over the world, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the period—1976-1985 as the U. N. Decade for women and three conferences have been held to discuss their problems, the recent one having been held in Nairobi only last month.

Social awareness and a progressive outlook are absolutely essential to help our women in achieving their rightful place in society. Lawyers can undoubtedly create the necessary public opinion in favour of social reforms and for utilising the instrument of law for bringing about the welfare of women.

(A. K. Sen)

MAHILA DAKSHASTA SAMITI

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ENROL YOURSELF AS MEMBER OF MAHILA DAKSHATA SAMITI
DONATE GENEROUSLY

President's Note

The recently concluded International Conference of Women at Nairobi, marked the end of women's decade announced by the United Nations. In India, this decade witnessed numerous developments—both positive and negative. Issues related to women, especially from the poorer section became more visible as compared to the earlier decade. Contribution of women to their family, society and country was recognised. A woman, instead of remaining a passive receiver of welfare has now been recognised as an indispensable partner in development. Besides education, health and welfare, economic independence has been accepted as the pre-requisite to achieve women's equality.

These positive trends are only a silver lining to the dark cloud of persisting illiteracy, increasing unemployment and poverty, destitution, rising incidences of crimes against women in the form of dowry deaths and rapes. Protests and demonstrations by women against these atrocities have drawn peoples' attention.

The report, "Towards Equality" presented by the Committee on Status of Women in India (CSWI) in 1975, brought out glaring facts about the declining status of women in India after independence. The truth revealed by this report gave a rude shock to many who assumed that women in India had already achieved freedom and enhanced their status. Their assumptions were based on a small increase in the number of educated middle class and urban working women. From this realisation emerged a new wave of women's movement which became the instrument of organised articulation of the silent suffering of Indian women. Social scientists, educationists, media men, lawyers played a pivotal role along with womens' organisations in creating an atmosphere which influenced the policy makers and judiciary to change their attitude towards women. Film industry and other mass media also could not remain insulated from the challenges thrown by the womens' movement. Mahila Dakshata Samiti (MDS) interprets this decade as the decade of awareness of problems and potentialities of women, feels that future strategies to empower women to achieve equality could be chalked out on this basis.

MDS owes its origin to Mehengai Virodhi Mahila Samiti formed in 1974. This Samiti was formed to protect consumers' interests, to fight against price rise, corrupt trade practices and anti-people policies of the Government. The year 1975 proved to be a landmark. The call of "Total Revolution" by Lok Nayak Jayaprakash Narayan and the report of the Committee on Status of Women in India widened the horizons of the Samiti. It

identified the evil system of dowry as the root of corruption which is eating into the very fibre of the Indian society resulting in the erosion of dignity and status of women.

Vigilance on an evil such as "dowry" was in fact a preparation for the ultimate onslaught on the entire corrupt system. In 1977 M.V.M. Samiti transformed itself into MAHILA DAKSHATA SAMITI (WOMENS' VIGILANCE COMMITTEE) with a wider perspective and objective of creating a society in which all citizens will live with dignity.

MDS functions through three wings— (1) Anti-dowry and Protection of Women's Rights cell, (2) Status of Women Cell and (3) Consumer Protection Cell.

With its faith in educating masses and creating social awareness among the people about their rights and duties as citizens, MDS resorts to militant but peaceful resistance to injustice in the form of agitations and demonstrations wherever necessary.

Screening documentaries, holding seminars and exhibitions, family counselling, negotiations and legal aid form part of its activities. The Samiti has organised massive demonstrations against price rise, black marketing, hoarding, etc. So also has taken initiative in organising morchas and dharnas against bride burning and rapes. Smt. Suman Krishan Kant and Smt Suman Kurade have separately presented the reports of Anti-dowry Cell and Consumer Protection Cell respectively.

MDS has always tried to enlist cooperation of different sections of the society especially youngmen and students who are potential brides and bridegrooms. Inter-College elocution competition held every year in the memory of Loknayak Jayaprakash Narayan is one such activity. Though a number of social organisations have been functioning in the field of anti-dowry campaign for the last few years, MDS felt that concerted efforts of such organisations unless coordinated, would not have the desired result and we took the initiative in bringing together national and local organisations. "Dahej Virodhi Chetana Manch" (DVCM) is the outcome of such efforts. The largest ever demonstration against the evil of dowry was organised under the banner of Dahej Virodhi Chetana Manch on the 3rd of August 1982, which involved all sections of the society. Along with women's organisations, trade unions, students and bonded labourers joined the march in large numbers. DVCM was instrumental in generating public pressure on the government to enact the Prohibition of Dowry Act Amendment Bill 1984 and Family Court Bill. Unfortunately, in passing the bill in a haste a number of recommendations made by the Joint Committee on Dowry Prohibition Act 1961 were totally ignored thereby leaving many loopholes in the Acts. Government took so long in formulating the rules that it was only in October 1985 the Dowry Prohibition Act 1984 came into force. There is no news about the Family Court Act yet.

Criminal Law Amendment Bill dealing with physical or mental cruelty to married woman under section 498 A I.P.C. or Section 174 I.P.C. dealing with a woman's death under suspicious circumstances including suicide, within seven years of her marriage, is not as effective as it should be because of the ambiguity of the Act.

Besides legislative bodies, the judiciary has also taken note of the issues raised by various women's organisations. It has proved to be more sensitive towards women's issues, recently. The judgement on streedhan by the late Justice Murtaza Fazul Ali or on rape by Justice M.P. Thakkar, both of the Supreme Court, are pointers to the concern of the judiciary in giving justice to women. MDS considers the judgement of the Supreme Court in Sudha Goel murder case, where the accused have been sentenced to life imprisonment, a landmark in the course of women's movement. This is more so because of the earlier judgement of the Delhi High Court acquitting the husband, mother-in-law and brother-in-law of Sudha Goel. The case had first come before the Sessions Court where the accused were sentenced to death. The subsequent acquittal by the High Court generated a widespread discontent and anger among women, MDS approached the Supreme Court in cooperation with other women's organisations including National Federation of Women Lawyers. Smt. Rani Jethmalani, Smt. Frenny Fonda and Shri R.K. Garg pleaded on behalf of the organisations and brought about the historic judgement, a victory for a persistent effort of MDS.

The Supreme Court judgement in Shah Bano's case granting maintenance under Cr.P.C. 125 has created a storm in the country. A section of Muslim fundamentalists has come to the point of demanding exclusion of the Muslim community from the ambit of Section 125 of Cr.P.C.

While we appreciate and feel the necessity of safeguarding the interests of the minority communities, we strongly feel that the demand of the fundamentalists to nullify the Supreme Court Judgement is a direct attack on the rights and interests of women. Exclusion of Muslim women from the purview of the Section 125 will be a retrograde step and will be a blow to the aspirations of the Muslim women who find a ray of hope in the judgement. It will also undermine the supremacy of the judiciary and would amount to violation of the Constitution.

Shah Bano symbolises the aspirations of the oppressed Muslim women. Her fight for justice is not for herself but for the crores of Muslim women. After this judgement a number of Muslim women have approached the courts and have been granted maintenance.

We look upon this issue of maintenance under Cr.P.C. Section 125 as purely a "Womens' Issue". We condemn both Muslim fundamentalists and Hindu communalists for creating communal frenzy and warn them that any attempt to perpetrate injustice on women in the name of religion will not be tolerated. We demand Uniform Civil Code. We are clear in our mind that we do not want Hindu Code Bill to be applied to all the communities. Our concept of Uniform Civil Code is that it should be the cream of all the personal laws which would give equal justice to all the men and women irrespective of their religion.

Being secular, we consider it our duty to take up the issue of discrimination and violation of equality guaranteed under the Constitution in depth. In this direction we decided to organise a two-day Workshop on "Relevance of Law to Women: An Intro-

spection of Action and Future Perspectives" on 10th and 11th of August 1985, immediately after the Nairobi Conference. The focus of the workshop was on limitations in law, in institutions, in social and judicial attitude, and in accomplishments and strategies used by women's organisations. The thrust of the discussion was to highlight the discriminatory nature of different laws pertaining to women : discrimination between the sexes as well as discrimination between women belonging to different religions. The topics were divided under the following heads :

1. Constitutional Issues and Personal laws; Discriminatory customs and Practices among tribes.
2. Violence—Dowry Threats and Extortion;
Domestic violence—
Abortion and sexual harrassment at work
3. Land and Property
4. Maintenance and custody
 - (a) Cr.P.C. 125
 - (b) Divorce laws
 - (c) Custody and guardianship
5. Labour Laws
 - (a) Minimum wages
 - (b) Discrimination on the basis of sex
6. Supportive institutions and future strategies;
Family courts, free legal aid, shelter norms, etc.

Hon. Chief Justice of India, Mr. P.N. Bhagwati inaugurated the workshop. Chief Justice of Delhi High Court Mr. Rajendra Sachar, Justice Bahrul Islam, M.P., Justice D.A. Desai, Justice Thakkar—Prof. Upendra Baxi, Smt. Usha Mehra, Registrar of Delhi High Court Smt. and a number of legal luminaries participated in the workshop. Some of them chaired the sessions. Social organisations from different parts of the country sent their representatives to attend the workshop.

Felicitatation of Shah Bano was one of the major events of the workshop. On the August 13, I took her along with her son, Mr. Sayyadbhai and Anwar Hussain of Muslim Satyashodhak Mandal to the Prime Minister. Mrs. Kamlesh Rekhi and Mrs. Suman Krishna Kant, Vice-President and Secretary of the MDS respectively also accompanied us. A memorandum signed by hundreds of Muslim divorcees, requesting the government not to submit to the pressures of the fundamentalists and exclude Muslims from the ambit of the Cr.P.C. 125, was presented to the Prime Minister. Ms. Shah Bano in a separate letter requested the P.M. to protect her from the fundamentalists, who were harrassing and

pressurising her, to allot her a residential place in Delhi and to give her some financial assistance. Unfortunately, inspite of the assurance by the P.M. no action was taken.

Report of the workshop is incorporated in the following pages. The success of the workshop was due to the number of persons and institutions who gave whole hearted support to the venture. Without the encouragement and participation of Hon. Chief Justice of India Mr. P.N. Bhagwati, it could not have been possible to organise the workshop. Presence of Justice M.B. Thakur, Justice Rajindra Sachar, Justice D.A. Desai, Justice Bahrul Islam, MP Prof. Upendra Baxi and others who chaired the panels, panelists and participants gave weightage to the deliberations. Raporteurs and representatives of different organisations from Delhi and other States contributed greatly. But for all the assistance offered by Mr. Bapu Kaldate, M.P. Shri Ramakrishna Hegde, Chief Minister of Karnataka, Indubhai Patel, Ms. Jyotsna Chatterji of Joint Women's Action, Samajwadi Mahila Sabha, Maharashtra, Mr. Jain of Driplex, the workshop would not have materialised. I thank them all on behalf of MDS and express my gratitude for the cooperation of Smt. Manorama Bawa for writing the report and Nirmala Bawa for editing.

Mahila Dakshata Samiti has always been organising seminars and they have always borne fruit we. Follow up action has always been taken on the recommendations of the seminars. A number of bills like the Dowry Prohibition Act Amendment Bill 1980, Criminal Law Amendment Bill, Criminal Procedure Code Amendment Bill, Marriage Law Amendment Bill or Registration of Marriage Act which I could introduce in the Parliament were due to my association with MDS. Majority of my Private Member Bills were accepted by the Government in spirit and were reintroduced officially with modifications. We are not satisfied with the half-hearted efforts of the Government so we must continue to work as a pressure group to improve and radicalise the laws further.

In the absence of the knowledge of law and lack of will in its implementation, it will be reduced to a dead letter in the statute book. While law alone cannot bring about social change its importance as accelerator of the process of change cannot be under-estimated. It has been our experience that inadequate provisions in law can become a stumbling block in getting justice. Law is an expression of political will. The Samiti believes that by creating this political will, the laws will become more meaningful. It is important that the beneficiaries of the laws must understand and exercise their rights as defined.

With this conviction the Mahila Dakshata Samiti will march ahead.

—PRAMILA DANDAVATE

Mahila Dakshata Samiti

(Anti Dowry and Protection of Women's Rights Cell)

SUMAN KRISHAN KANT

1. The Organisation

Mahila Dakshata Samiti, a national women's organisation is a non-party, non-sectarian body of women representing all section of society and strives to exercise women's rights and fight against exploitation, injustice and adverse social practices affecting women in the Indian society.

2. The Status of Women in Indian Society Today

Despite all the claims, official and non-official, of women's so-called achievements their real status seems to have taken a plunge downwards, given the high rate of crimes against women, even their declining rate of employment and income. Indeed their numbers seem to have declined; they are 'the declining sex'. Despite the increase in middle class women's employment, especially in the profession of teaching, it does not seem to have raised their status. Today their incomes are treated as a part of dowry as numerous dowry deaths indicate that the women-victim is both educated and employed. It is here that the 'Mahila Dakshata Samiti' plays an important role in increasing awareness among women of their rights and tackling this serious problem of ever-growing crimes against women.

3. Samiti and its Strategy

The functioning of the Samiti is very democratic and in practice all members are equally responsible for implementing the decisions taken by the members of the organisation. The relevant issues are discussed in the General Body Meeting and decisions are arrived at for implementation. The strategy adopted by the Samiti combines both building up and mobilising public opinion and demanding deterrent laws to prevent crimes against women. The Samiti approaches women's issues not only from social and legal aspects but also functions as a coordinating body with other women's organisations as a part of sensitisation campaign.

(See the Chart)

Women's Issue Campaign

Building up social opinion		Striving for legal changes to protect women's interest			Providing service to victims of crime against women			
sensitisation campaign (seminars, debates, discussions	demonstration and direct collective action of protest	legal lite- racy progra- mmes	legal aid and assi- stance	seeking changes in the exist- ing laws	helping victim- ised women skills training for employ ment	coun- sell- ing in in- dividual cases	Prov- iding- tempo- rary she- lter	legal aid cell to ass- ist vict- ims

4. Awareness Building Campaign

(a) Inter-College debates

Making women aware of their rights is the first and foremost concern of the Samiti. We organise an 'awareness week' every year from 2nd to 11th October commencing with Gandhi Jayanti celebrations. During this week talks, discussions, debates are organised in the various colleges of Delhi University. The students of different colleges take active interest in our programme. Our approach helps to sensitise a lot of younger boys and girls towards women's issues. In the inter-college debates young students participate with enthusiasm.

(b) Kavi Goshtis

The other important feature of our 'awareness week' is the Kavi Goshtis. The poetry is a unique medium, which touches the hearts of people. We believe that along with struggle and action we also have to convert the hearts of more and more people so that they join us in our endeavour of changing the society. Hence we encourage the sensitive and concerned poets and poetesses to come and recite their poems, specially on the miseries of our women. A large number of men and women participate in such Kavi Goshtis.

(c) Exhibition

The visual media has a lasting impact. We prepared a mobile exhibition on dowry titled 'Nai Savitri'. The subject is covered in the form of photographs, sketches, paintings, which reflect dowry deaths, suffering of women, position of daughters in the family and

drawbacks in law etc. The 'Nai Savitri' was put up on many occasions during 1984 and 1985.

In 1984 Samiti took this exhibition to various parts of Delhi including the colleges of Delhi University. It was put up at Parliament House Annexe for the Members of Parliament. More than a lakh of people saw the exhibition. It was acclaimed by both the press and public. In 1985, the exhibition was taken to Bombay where thousands of people visited it. As a part of signature campaign it was put up at different railway stations. Every visitor was requested to sign a separate inland letter bearing a memorandum and pay for the postage and printing charges. The response was so great that about ten thousand letters could be posted to the then Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi. The memorandum demanded (1) Immediate enactment of Dowry Prohibition (Amendment) Act; (2) Setting up of National Commission on women with Statutory powers and (3) Creation of vigilance Committees of Social workers attached to every police station.

(d) Seminars, Discussions and Workshops

Mahila Dakshata Samiti organises many workshops, seminars and discussions. This is to provide a platform for people from all sections of society to come together and discuss the major burning issues of women. This helps in generating open debates and brings the issues into focus. Especially our discussions on lacunae in laws and inherent discrimination the against women have received the attention of the learned sections of our society.

In 1984 we organised a seminar to discuss the Amendment to Dowry Prohibition Act of 1965, another discussion was held on Law of Maintenance. We also generated a debate on IPC Section 498 A. The delebration of these discussions helped in building up public interest on existing lacunea. The Samiti played a significant role by campaigning for change in these legislations.

In 1985 a workshop was organised on 10th and 11th August on the relevance of law for women. The theme of this two-day workshop was "Relevance of Law to Women: An Introspection of Action and Future Perspective". This workshop was inaugurated by the Chief Justice of India, Justice PN Bhagawati. The workshop was attended by eminent jurists, educationists, social workers and activists. Speaking on the occasion Justice PN Bhagawati laid stress on equal legal status for women and removal of discrimination between the sexes as stated in the Indian Constitution. Also the relevance of law for women was discussed extensively during this workshop.

We felicitated Begum Shah Bano on her valiant fight for her right of maintenance and the Samiti endorsed the judgement in her favour in the case of Ahmed Khan vs Begum Shah Bano. Her case is an example of women's victory over oppressive laws. The judgement in her favour is a step towards recognition of women's right of maintenance irrespective of caste, creed and community. Shah Bano's case has sparked off a controversy regarding

Muslim women's rights of divorce and maintenance laws. We discussed the legal and social consequences of Section 125 of IPC regarding maintenance in yet another seminar in 1985.

All these debates, discussions coupled with other strategies of direct action has had many positive results. Today there is an Anti-Dowry Prohibition (Amendment) Act, though not up to our satisfaction. Also there is the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, IPC 498A regarding cruelty to women and family courts enactment.

5. The Legal Literacy Campaign

The Samiti believes that law by itself cannot change social realities. Also relevant legislation is not enough if the necessary awareness about law is absent among women. We try to bring law closer to women by organising : i) para-legal training programmes, and ii) by legal literacy campaigns. An explanation of the law to women is intended to serve two purposes : 1) to awaken women to their legal rights and constraints and help them to take action towards feasible solution to existing problems; and 2) to create a general awareness in public about law so as to evoke appropriate response towards the existing lacunae in the law and press for changes in accordance with the changing social needs.

(i) Para-legal Training Workshop

Starting from January 1st to February 28th the Samiti organised a two-month course for training the Para-legals. Men and women from different occupational groups attended this course. On completion of the course certificates were presented to the participants. Chief Justice of India Justice PN Bhagawati inaugurated the programme. Indian senior judges and lawyers formed the core group of resource persons for this training programme. A big media coverage was given to this as a result we received many requests from different parts of country to organise similar courses in other States.

(ii) Legal Literacy Campaign

As a follow up to our training course we started organising legal literacy for rural women in the outskirts of Delhi, especially a session with rural women was organised in Mehrauli. Also as an outcome of our training many Delhi colleges have taken up the legal training programme.

The training programme had a direct impact on the consequent decisions taken by the government in changing many laws regarding women. After having studied and discussed all the laws relating to women we had sent our opinion in the form of recommendations to the Government. Changes in IPC Section 498A regarding mental and physical cruelty towards women suggested by the Samiti were taken up by the government.

6. Family Counselling

Besides building up social opinion and striving for legal changes to protect women's interest, Samiti takes up family counselling. With our approach of care and concern in taking up any case we have been very successful in settling issues outside the court. As a result we receive an average 30 to 50 cases every month. Many women from Delhi, outside Delhi and even from other States came to Mahila Dakshata Samiti with their problems. The following Table will give you the record of our past two years activities.

1. Cases received by the Samiti in the year 1984

Types of Cases	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dowry deaths	18	36	8	10	9	15	14	18	14	12	6	8
Rape & Kidnap	0	0	1	2	1	1	2	4	4	0	0	0
Harassment due to dowry	21	14	36	30	15	19	22	27	20	12	6	14
Total	39	50	45	42	25	35	38	49	38	24	12	22
Reconciled	13	8	18	13	7	12	16	20	12	4	6	6
To Court Maintenance and custody of children & Police	8	6	18	17	8	7	6	7	8	8	0	8

2. Cases received by the Samiti in the year 1985

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dowry deaths	12	16	13	10	6	6	8	23	20	12	10	7
Rape	4	2	3	0	0	0	0			4	5	4
Harassment due to dowry	20	25	24	43	16	17	14	90	20	20	27	16
Total	36	43	40	53	22	23	22	113	40	36	42	27
Maintenance with Custody of child	10	13	14	22	10	7	—	—	4	—	5	3
Reconcillation	8	12	10	21	6	10	14	26	26	10	20	13
Divorce	2	0	0	0	0	0	—	—	—	—	—	—
To Police	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

7. Our Approach to the Cases

All the cases which come to us we try to discuss, visit and understand the point of view of all the parties involved. And then only we arrive at any decisions. In most of the cases the decision made were to the satisfaction of both the conflicting parties. But at times when one of the parties is not satisfied with our decision, we refer the case to the police, and try to work in close cooperation with the aggrieved women.

Majority of the cases which come to us are of mental and physical cruelty towards women. We have observed that with increased money mindedness and lust for consumer goods men are indulging in more and more cruelty towards women. Also this attitude is directly related with the dowry murders. There is an increase in dowry death cases though it may not be admitted by the government.

Cases referred to Courts for Maintenance and Divorce, etc

As compared to 1984 we have referred less number of cases to the courts in 1985. This is due to two reasons. Firstly the aggrieved parties are in no position to spend money and time in contesting these cases. Secondly, after such a long period of sustained active involvement of the Samiti in settling the cases we have been able to establish credibility with people. In many cases which come to us both the parties agree to reconcile. In fact we have solved a few major cases of settlement outside the court. To give an example, in the case of Mrs Nirmala W/o Shri Takirchand, we could manage to get her claim of Rs. 65,000 in the form of a bank draft from her husband as compensation. This she received when her marriage broke after 30 years. She also received all her dowry articles from the possession of her husband.

More encouraging is the functioning of our branch at 21 New Rohtak Road, under the competent leadership of Shri G.S. Puri, we have a group of women volunteers working every day at the Centre. The women advocate volunteers give their time everyday from 4 to 7 p.m. Many women in distress come and get relief in this Centre. A systematic record of each case is kept. All the cases are followed up till the victims get justice.

8. Sudha Goel Case : Samiti stands vindicated.

In the case of Sudha Goel—a dowry death case—the lower court delivered the historic judgement of granting capital punishment to all the culprits. But unfortunately when the case reached the high court this judgement was turned down by the eminent judges on the plea of non-availability of evidence. This turning down of the judgement by the High Court sparked off a protest amongst the conscious women's group. Mahila Dakshata Samiti in a protest demonstration criticised the judgement by the court. As a result the Samiti had to face the charge of contempt of court. But ultimately we were acquitted by the court. Later the Samiti along with other organisations filed the Sudha Goel case in the Supreme Court of India. This case was represented by Ms Freny Fonda, Mr R.K. Garg and Rani Jethmalani.

To our satisfaction this time we won this case and the mother-in-law and the husband were sentenced to life imprisonment. This was an historic judgement and provided an impetus to the efforts of women's organisations.

9. Demonstrations and Protests—Our Strategy of Collective Action

The Samiti organised a number of protest demonstrations against dowry deaths in the capital city of Delhi. These demonstrations were held to focus public attention on the plight of Indian women, who inspite of legislation are suffering due to this social evil. In 1984 we demonstrated in front of the in-laws' house of Smt Sushma. Again in Krishna Nagar we demonstrated against the burning of a newly wed bride. In 1985 we had one demonstration in October, two in September, two in July and three more in December. Our experience is that whenever we have one and demonstrated in front of the house of dowry deaths we get the support and sympathy of the neighbours and in many cases they also came and join us.

10. Relief Work

Unprecedented happenings followed the assassination of Mrs Indira Gandhi the then Prime Minister of our country. Brutal and heinous attack was systematically launched on the Sikh community. Samiti not only condemned such organised violence against a community but came forward and organised relief work for the riot victims. Members of the Samiti visited the bastis of Trilokpuri, Punjabi Bagh, Uttam Nagar, Nanak Sarai, Gurdwara, etc. They distributed essential commodities like clothes, food items, woollens, kitchen utensils, etc to the victims. They continued to visit the victims regularly and helped them in rehabilitation.

11. Communal Harmony

After the Blue Star Operation a delegation consisting of prominent women from different states of India visited Punjab under the leadership of Pramila Dandavate, M. P. President of the Samiti. Prof Lotika Sarkar, Malti Sharma, Kailash Rekhi, Smt Muttama Smt Virmani and others were the members of the delegation. The delegation visited Chandigarh, Amritsar and Jullunder. They met cross section of the people especially women of both Hindus and Sikh Communities. They met religious leaders of both the communities, besides, students, social workers and business men. It was an effort to understand the situation and find out a solution for communal harmony.

Earlier Samiti members had participated in a Shanti Manch of women hundred of different organisations on Punjab to create communal harmony. They then presented a memorandum to the then Prime Minister of India, Smt Indira Gandhi.

12. The Issue of Maintenance for Muslim Divorce Women—the Role of the Samiti.

Besides felicitating Begum Shah Bano, the Samiti has taken up the issue of Maintenance for Muslim Women in a serious way. We have met in two separate delegations to

MAHILA DAKSHATA SAMITI

Two days workshop

on

Relevance of Law to Women : An Introspection of Action and Future Perspectives

10th and 11th August 1986

Inauguration by the Chief Justice of India, Mr. Bhagwati

TIME TABLE

Date	Subject	Chair Person	Panel
10-8-85	1. Constitutional issues and Personal Laws (Discrimination) Tribal Laws	Dr. Upendra Baxi Director, Law Institute University of Delhi	Smt. Kusum Parikh Mr. Kaul, (Advocate) Mr. Ratan Prakash, (Advocate)
		Moderator	Rani Jethmalani, Advocate
	2. Maintenance Sec 125 Cr. P.C. Custody and Guardianship	Justice M.P. Thakkar	Shri P.P. Juneja, Advocate Shri Swaraj Kaushal, Advocate Urmila Kapoor President, Indian Federation of Women Lawyers Justice Baharul Islam, M.P.
		Moderator	Suman Krishan Kant
	3. Divorce Laws— Christian, Muslim Special Marriage Act Conjugal Rights	Justice Baharul Islam, M.P.	Shri Syed Shahabuddin, M.P. Dr. Sarojini Mahishi, M.P. Shri Joseph Rani Jethmalani Jyotsna Chatterji
		Moderator	Pramila Dandavate
	4. Domestic Violence and Dowry Threats	Justice Rajendra Sachar Chief Justice High Court Delhi	Mr. K.L. Sharma Sr. Advocate Mr. K.K. Sood, Advocate Mr. Kamaljeet Deol DCP (Anti-dowry cell) Dr. Jaswant Singh Psychologist
		Moderator	Pramila Dandavate

11-8-85	Subject	Chair Person	Panel
	5. Sexual Harassment at work and abortion	Mr. S.N. Kapoor Addl. Dist. Session Judge Secretary, Free Legal Aid	Prof. Lotika Sarkar P.M. Baxi, Member, Law Commission Mr. R.K. Garg, Advocate Supreme Court
		Moderator	Suman Krishan Kant
	6. Labour-Minimum Wages, Sexual discrimination	Justice D.A. Deshai (Rtd.)	Smt. Mirnal Gore, MLA Mr. R.K. Garg, Sr. Advocate Mr. P.N. Baxi, Member Law Commission
		Moderator	Rani Jethmalani
	7. Land and Property HUF, Copencenary property, streedhan succession	Rani Jethmalani	Shahanaz Anklesaria Kailash Vasudeo Smt. Poonam Pradhan, Advocate
		Moderator	Jyotsna Chatterji
	8. Family Court	Smt. Usha Mehra Registrar, High Court of Delhi	Mr. P.N. Baxi, Director Meenaxi Apte Kapila Hingorani Advocate S.C. Sudha Bagade Shri S.N. Kapoor Addl. Dist. Session Judge Secretary, Free Legal Aid
		Moderator	Pramila Dandavate
	9. Open Session Grass Root Strategies	Pramila Dandavate	Vijaya Chowk Kusum Patwardhan Mrinal Goray Kailash Rekhi
		Moderator	Ranjana Kumari
	Felicitation of Shahabano by Jyotsna Chatterji		