



**IAAWS**

Indian Association for Women's Studies

**XV National  
Conference on Women's Studies**

**Women in a Changing World:  
Restructured Inequalities, Countercurrents and Sites of Resistance**

**22 to 25 January 2017  
University of Madras, Chennai**

***BOOK OF ABSTRACTS***

**XV National  
Conference on Women's Studies**



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Women Performers of Parai Aattam, Sakthi Kalai Kuzhu,  
Dindugal district, Tamil Nadu

## **Book of Abstracts**

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**INDIAN ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN'S  
STUDIES**

XV National Conference of Women's Studies

Women in a Changing World: Restructured  
Inequalities, Countercurrents and Sites of  
Resistance

University of Madras, Chennai, 22nd to 25th January, 2017

**BOOK OF ABSTRACTS**

## DEAR PARTICIPANTS,

Welcome to the Fifteenth National Conference of the Indian Association of Women's Studies (IAWS), being held at the University of Madras, Chennai, from the 22nd to 25th January, 2017!

The theme of this Conference is "Women in a Changing World: Restructured Inequalities, Countercurrents and Sites of Resistance." This is a compilation of the Abstracts of the Papers that are being presented by participants in the various Sub Themes of the Conference. The titles of the Sub Themes reflect some of the issues and topics being debated at the current juncture, and the Abstracts offer a glimpse into the variety of research being conducted not just by academics, but also activists from the women's movement across the country. The IAWS will eventually upload the full set of papers of the presentations made during the Conference on its website, so that it becomes an archival source for researchers from different disciplines as well as activists from diverse social movements.

We have published the Abstracts with a little editing due to space constraints. The inclusion of the Hindi abstracts within each Sub Theme posed some technical problems which we have tried to overcome by aggregating them at the end of this volume.

I would specially like to thank all the Sub Theme Coordinators who worked tirelessly to put together the Abstracts, and the Team of Researchers at the Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule Women's Studies Centre of the Savtribai Phule Pune University who helped me with the editing and formatting of this volume. Any errors are squarely my responsibility.

**Kiran Moghe**

Sub Theme Coordinator  
XVth National Conference of Women's Studies, Chennai

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## SUB - THEME 1

### WOMEN'S WORK AND EMPLOYMENT

*Coordinators: N. Neetha (Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi and Praveena Kodoth (Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram)*

#### ABSTRACTS

##### **Methodological Issues in Mapping Housework**

###### **Aanchal Dhull**

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Since the emergence of Women's Studies in India, feminist scholars have been concerned with the 'invisibility' of women's labour in various data systems. Feminist scholarship challenged the conceptualisation of work which was based on wage work. The emphasis on market oriented work, overlooked women's participation in the subsistence sector where women workers were largely located. Apart from these recommendations in national data systems, there is a bulk of studies which covered different aspects women's work to counter the invisibility of women's labour. One of the popular methods to map women's work was through time use surveys. These studies highlighted women's engagement in different activities, such as agriculture and other household related tasks which did not qualify as strictly 'productive' but were essential to rural economy. Of the many tasks which women perform, housework is one of them. However, despite housework being a concern and numerous studies around it, there seems to be a very sketchy understanding of what housework encompasses and how it structures women's lives. Based on women's narratives, the paper seeks to explore the category of 'housework' which is differently organised based on class and caste locations and how it shapes the domestic space. Housework also influences women's employment options and the paper looks at the experience of double burden of differently located women. Similarly, how do 'non-working' women negotiate with household labour through their class and caste privilege. The paper also raises questions around 'routine', which often becomes the entry point in time use surveys. Given the structural entrenchment of housework in women's lives, any query on housework becomes very personal, so it is important to pay attention to which parts of household labour are shared and what is omitted as women narrate their routines. The narratives on housework therefore, have to be located within the caste-class location of the respondent as it is pertinent in

structuring their everyday routine and consequently what they see as work and 'non work'.

## **Gender, Education and Employment: An Analysis of Labour Market Outcome of Higher Educated in Kerala**

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In the context of the rising enrolment of women in higher education in Kerala, the paper examines the impact of this growth on the gender gap in labour market outcomes of higher educated in terms of work participation and unemployment. The study uses NSSO employment/unemployment data to trace the gender dimensions of labour market outcome of higher educated from 1993-94 to 2011-12. The paper shows that a rise in higher education has led to an increase in unemployment among women along with an increase in their work participation. The paper identifies two distinctive features of labour market behaviour of higher educated women. Firstly, their high job seeking behaviour and secondly, their skewed job preference pattern. The high job seeking behaviour of higher educated women in Kerala is reflected in the high unemployment among them. It appears that the main factor that affect work participation rate of higher educated women in Kerala is the existence of high unemployment rather than low labour force participation unlike the Indian situation where the labour force participation among higher educated women is very low. There is distinct job preference between higher educated men and women with women found to have high preference for teaching and clerical jobs. This adversely affects their employment prospects as there is already a high concentration of women in these occupations. Our analysis of gender segregation of occupation shows an increasing trend overtime. The existence of a highly gender segregated labour market reduces the scope of increasing female higher education being translated into higher participation in economic activity. Thus Kerala's experience shows that narrowing of gender disparities in education may not help to narrow down the gender disparities in the labour market.



# **Women Social Activists as Women Workers - How Do They Access Rights in the Workplace?**

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Advocacy for rights as a worker for women have come from both labour movements as well as feminist struggles. 'Gender equality' has entered the development discourse as reflected in the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals. The same has not translated to national or global policies affecting women workers' rights. One site where women workers and the struggle for rights intersects is the rapidly growing 'development' sector consisting of multi-national to local NGOs, govt. schemes and institutions, think tank organisations, and other such spaces.

These are women who are earning their livelihood by working for people's rights. This large workforce of women working with NGOs are almost all informal workers; most of them come from deprived economic and socio-cultural groups, to whom working in the social development sector are determined by intersections of their political drive to work for social change, economic need for livelihood, and social aspirations to break out of the labour force and enter a more 'white collar' service sector. Many of them follow a mixture of feminist, socialist, Ambedkarite, liberal, welfarist, charity and other principles, while working in tandem with capitalist/patriarchal forces that unfortunately govern the NGO and its funding sectors. How do these women workers navigate these conflicting sites? How are they perceived by the communities they work in, the authorities and systems they sometimes work against, their male peers, their colleagues, and so on? Have they themselves managed to access rights propagated by the labour movement, or the feminist movement? This paper will try to answer these questions while presenting documented instances of feminist initiatives that have expanded the understanding of women worker's rights and contributed to greater access of rights, with special focus on how these women activists have themselves accessed rights in the workplace. It will present perspectives of women working in the social development sector, and how labour rights as well as rights advocated by feminist perspective have affected them. It is the workplace that is the main site of conflicting intersections of their personal and political lives, and the paper will highlight these as important for the feminist goal of equity in the workplace.

The authors are themselves women activists working in Mumbai and neighbouring areas for people's access to their constitutional rights. During this work with local public administration, government service providers, and people's campaigns for various fundamental rights, we as young feminist workers have faced resistance and hostility affecting our work, safety and productivity. These experiences will be documented and In-depth interviews will be conducted with 5 more women activists who have been working at different sectors in the grassroots of Mumbai's development. The paper will connect them to larger national and global conflicts of women in the workforce who are not recognised as workers, whose work is not valued and therefore underpaid, and who are deprived of equity in the workplace that remains insensitive to requirements of women from different socio-economic backgrounds.

## **Standing Up to Sit**

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The labor of women has been traditionally undervalued in domestic spaces and the workspace is not different, as the tools of patriarchy works in both the spaces. In the informal labor sector, the discrimination is worse and rampant. From 1990s onwards, there is a rapid feminization of work in the textile retail sector of Kerala. The 'sales girls' who replaced the men are not only overworked and underpaid, but they have to work in inhuman working conditions without enjoying any of the social security benefits. They are unorganized and the traditional trade unions continuously ignoring their problems.

Penkoottu, a Kozhikode based collective of women workers - mainly sweepers and tailors, is the first forum that started addressing this problem. The campaign for 'Right to pee' was initiated over the lack of toilet facilities in shops and establishments of Kozhikode. The unorganised women workers under the banner of Penkoottu successfully registered a trade union Asanghaditha Mekhala Thozhilali Union (Unorganised Sector Workers Union or AMTU) on 27th January 2016. As part of this study the author has worked with AMTU for obtaining the registration.

On 8th March 2014, International Women's Day AMTU declared a strike raising the right of women workers to sit down during spare time (they are forced to stand throughout the working hours in textile shops). Sitting strikes have highlighted the 'Right to sit' as a fundamental right of the workers. Study

has been conducted among sales girls to understand the occupational health problems faced by them and a petition to National Human Rights Commission was also filed, upon which the commission has already intervened. In 2014 January, 6 women workers of Kalyan Sarees in Thrissur district of Kerala went on strike against their management with the support of AMTU. Retaliatory measures were taken by the management. The strike continued for three months. The management accepted the demands of the workers and cancelled the transfer order. In August 2015, 60 women workers of 'Seemas Textiles' in Alleppy went on strike against their management in August 2015. This researcher has analyzed the post strike scenario of these establishments as well.

Through this study, the author tries to bring out the various legal and implementation issues related to women workers in the unorganized textile retail sector focusing on Kerala. The gaps in the law mainly the Kerala Shops and Commercial Establishment Act, 1960 will be discussed. The study maps the emergence of different women trade union in the context of increasing feminization of work in the unorganized sector.

## **Wives and Workers: Persistence of Early Marriage in Bengal**

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In India the notion of unpaid work and care work is predominantly linked with family. As an economic unit, the family-household subsists on unpaid contribution from women on the basis of their familial roles – primarily as wives, daughters and daughter-in-laws. These labour equations become more complicated in the context of child marriage. In the Indian context, there have been some studies linking marriage and work, but there needs to be more exploration of regional variations since there is, as established in the 1970s and 1980s, considerable regional variation in the degree and pattern of women's workforce participation rates across the country. Moreover, Marxist Feminist debates have drawn our attention to the huge domain of unpaid work, including subsistence and household labour, which women in developing countries undertake. West Bengal has had, historically, a low rate of women's workforce participation. However, recently scholars have shown that so far as girl children are concerned, this trend is somewhat reverse. Among the states, West Bengal has a high rate of female juvenile work participation. It has, moreover, a high rate of child marriages. According to NFHS Data of 2015-2016, state average of under-

age marriage of women is 40.7 per cent in West Bengal, compared to Gujarat, which has the lowest at 35.4 per cent and Bihar, which has the highest with 68.2 per cent. In the academic literature, a link is made between child marriage, trafficking and slavery. ILO Convention No. 182, also makes the connection between child marriage and child labour.

In any case, child wives are by no means exempt from unpaid reproductive work. It is, however, often argued that child brides are more amenable to familial discipline and better able to perform the manual labour of the household and this dictates the preference for early marriage in rural society. The control over labour extends also to sexuality and procreation I explore these links in this paper. The paper is based on a survey in four districts of West Bengal, conducted in June-September 2016. We have interviewed 204 households where child marriage(s) have taken place in the last five years. The bulk of our respondents are from landless or land-poor households. Our respondents include child brides (in a few cases underage boys who have been married as well), mothers (in a few cases fathers) and mothers-in-law of brides. Thus, the attempt has been to access the perceptions of both giving and receiving families in the context of women's underage marriage. Our findings have to be placed in the context of declining rural economies, with shrinking landholding and dwindling income from agriculture. In these circumstances, there is greater dependence on women's subsistence activities as well as greater expectation of income-earning activities.

## **Including Women Entrepreneurs: Development Strategies and Diversity of Gendered Lives**

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Over the years promotion of small entrepreneurship has been highlighted by many academicians and policy-makers as an important avenue for addressing the question of hierarchy and exclusion. As a result, other than encouraging entrepreneurship in general, special focus has been laid on enabling the entry of socially marginalized into entrepreneurship. In this way, women have received certain preferential treatment over the years with reference to business. While in the beginning the effort was primarily towards delivering training to impart knowledge, skill, and acumen necessary to become entrepreneurs, over the years this has been extended to provide a range of business support services including

credit at favourable terms and development of dedicated platforms for marketing products/services. While all these are appreciable, it is important to recognize the diversity that exists among women entrepreneurs in terms of their gendered social background which often shape their lived experiences. It is critical, therefore, to understand the multiple manifestations of gender among women entrepreneurs and examine whether and how development strategies, which attempt to promote entrepreneurship among women, address these diversities. This paper is an attempt to use existing literature to explore multiple meanings of gender for women entrepreneurs and use various women entrepreneurship promotion scheme documents to understand the nature of engagement with this multiplicity. Through this avenue the paper also seeks to conceptually understand the relationship between financial inclusion and social empowerment.

## **Labour Relations within the Household: A Study of Women Domestic Workers in the NCR Region**

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The relationship between class, gender and social discrimination has formed one of the main areas of focus in recent studies on domestic work. In classical scholarship, domestic work has been seen as unpaid and unaccounted for women's work which is grounded in the traditional division of labour. Hence, the fight for domestic workers rights has largely been seen in terms of 'recognition' and the politics of recognition has become the hall mark of all fights for decent working conditions. However, with the growing informalisation of labour in the current stage of corporate capitalism, there has been an increasing domesticization of production and the conversion of the home into a workplace. This is especially true of home-based piece rated work. At another level the home is increasingly getting integrated into the larger labour market by employing domestic wage labour and thus getting converted into a workplace for a large number of women. The invisibility and non-recognition of work is also related to this integration of the home into wider commodity and labour markets.

The question of domestic work has almost always been seen from the lens of 'decent work' and the need to recognise that housework is accounted for in the larger system of national accounts. The argument is that the traditional social

division of labour ensures that domestic labour is undervalued and stigmatised in public perception. According to this theory the concentration of women workers in low wage domestic labour and the indecent conditions of work are determined by social perceptions. Within this theory, social structures are given primacy and domestic work is treated as a distinct form of work with special characteristics (Jain & Banerjee, 1985). Hence the real enemy is the social discrimination within the labour markets and not the capitalist system which systematically reproduces exploitative conditions of wage labour within the home (John, 2013; Ray & Qayum, 2009). This misunderstanding arises from the misconception that labour relations within domestic work have to be treated as a specific case and not as a part of the larger problem of informalisation of labour relations under the current stage of capitalist development.

While it may be argued that social reproduction of patriarchal structures is closely linked with the domestication of work, it is interesting to see how the formation of a class of domestic labourers is mediated by gender and caste factors (Neetha, 2013). In this sense it is possible to state that discriminatory practices are inbuilt within the processes of class formation itself and this is reflected in the social characteristics of the domestic labour force. The second point to be noted about structural features forming the context of domestic labour is the conversion of unpaid reproductive labour into wage labour through domestic labour market (Federici, 2012; Lutz, 2011). It should be noted that employment of wage labour for domestic work in fact commodifies the process of social reproduction of patriarchal relations without providing it adequate recognition. The importance of the politics of recognition also needs to be seen in this context. Another theme of significant debate has been the relationship between paid and unpaid labour in domestic work (Antonopoulos & Hirway, 2010). While reproductive labour and the social reproduction of family relations have always been seen as unpaid and unaccounted for labour, the relationship between surplus labour accumulation and wage labour has received lesser attention. In fact the process of the commodification of social reproduction into productive wage labour results in the accumulation of greater surpluses which have a high degree of unpaid element in them (Ghosh, January 2012; Custers, 2012). Therefore, the relationship between paid and unpaid labour also needs to be revisited.

This essay deals with some of these debates and questions by studying how the home as a workplace functions. It focuses on the labour relations that operate within the household and analyses the working conditions under which domestic labour is performed. This analysis is based on a survey conducted by the Delhi Committee of the All India Democratic Women's Association to

understand the conditions of work of domestic workers in Delhi. This survey was conducted in the first half of 2014 with the aim of understanding the main problems and demands of the domestic workers in the city in order to build a consciousness that will enable further organization and mobilization amongst this class of workers.

## **Socio-Economic Conditions of Female Workers in Tea Plantations: Exploring Gender and Household Dynamics**

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Taking the household as the unit 'of' and 'for' analysis, this paper analyzes the socio-economic conditions of tea plantation workers with special reference to female plantation workers in Majuli Tea Estate (name changed), situated in the Tinsukia district of Upper Assam. Since the family as an institution is marked by the patriarchal legacy of male domination on female capabilities and choices, in feminist literature, the concept of the 'household' is increasingly privileged over the 'family'. Patterns of production relations form the starting point for analyzing the intra-household gender dynamics. In a highly stratified society like India, gender is driven by class, caste, regional and religious distinctions. However, within a household while distinctions of class, caste, region and religion become less significant, gender-based inequalities emerge as an important outcome of the multiple forms of discrimination faced by women. In this context, the paper is an attempt to understand the domestic sphere of gender relations, existing patterns of inequality, and differential experiences of household members.

This study draws on empirical research consisting of household surveys, case studies and interviews with female estate workers to understand the location of women in the household economy based on the following indicators: income, land, asset ownership and types of households. Fieldwork was conducted in the Majuli Tea Estate over a period of five months from May 2014 to September 2014. Based on primary data from the field, this paper attempts to critically analyze the different forms of intra-household discrimination faced by women tea workers and how they are connected to the issues of income, land, asset ownership, and production relations. It will explore how 'gender' as an analytical category assumes importance in understanding the differential relationship that men and women have to the household and its members. The differential roles and responsibilities within a household also suggest how women experience

poverty differently than men. Hence, the structural features of a household leave little scope for women to negotiate power structures differently.

In view of the complexities discussed, this paper will attempt a detailed analysis of the multiple layers of gender oppression that exists in the household by assessing women's contribution to household income, ownership of assets, access to land and employment opportunities, and the economic phenomenon of female-led households and its relation to the incidence of poverty.

## **Changing Contours of Women's Work under Capitalism: A Case Study of a Fishing Village in Kerala**

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There has been a great deal of scholarly interest in examining the relationship between capitalist accumulation, changing production technologies, women's labor and the social relations of gender. Critiquing the tendency to homogenize women's experiences of labor under capitalism in the Third World, feminist research argues that it is necessary to situate the globally inflected processes of capital accumulation in specific local contexts and factor in the multiple mediations which shape women's work participation (Swaminathan 2012; Ong 2010; Mills 2003; Kabeer 2000). Keeping this in mind, the study tries to explore how women's labor in fishing communities has been mediated by the social relations of gender and state policies and programs. Further the study explores how it has evolved, in keeping with the needs and forms of capitalist development in the fisheries sector, examining Kerala as a case.

The capitalist development in Kerala fisheries via mechanization has changed the labor processes and sharpened the class polarization in the sector since the 1960s and this polarization has a discernable gender face. The responses and resistance to the changing labor process have been always mediated by cultural constructions of gender and the gendered social institutions of family and religion (Gulati 1984). This paper is based on the field work conducted in a coastal village in Trivandrum district of Kerala. The study employed qualitative methods of data collection - oral histories, semi-structured interviews, in-depth group interviews and case studies. The attempt is to illustrate how women's traditional occupation in a fishing village has evolved over time and how it has been mediated by the cultural constructions of gender, religious institutions as



well as state employment and livelihood generation programs. It will also map the changing dynamics of women's work in keeping with the changing needs and imperatives of capital accumulation in the fisheries sector. The analysis of this study reveals that women are active agents who negotiate and manipulate these mediations, while their responses may contribute to or conflict with the needs of capital and the dictates of patriarchy.

## **Contextualising Working Women in Urban Space: A Case Study of the Garment Industry**

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Employment it is said makes a woman financially independent and also empowers her. But hardly questions are asked beyond this point. Discriminatory labour practices are not only prevalent in terms of wages but also uneven plane in terms of 'other conditions' at work largely exists which has been overlooked by the researchers. Though the women workers have been able to create an independent (from the male labour market pattern) work space in the urban niche, the terms of job remain largely unfavourably titled towards the employers. Taking the case study of garment industry in National Capital Region an attempt is made to explore that how already marginalised communities engaged as informal labourers in giant global export houses are further segregated in the interface of gender. The study shows despite working in the export sector the conditions of the workers remain unchanged. A comparison with the domestic garment units reveals that the benefits arising out of employment in an export sector may not be much better even when compared to the workers in the domestic garment sector.

This study is based on 300 workers in the garment industry with 200 working in the export houses and 100 in the domestic units. Long hours of monotonous work with a meager monthly payment leave the workers with little or no saving. Mostly these workers are landless rural migrants from depressed caste groups. Individual workers though, manage to remit a portion of their income to their village home by minimizing his needs. Life in a metropolitan city makes them sufferings multidimensional. The sufferings get worse in the interface of gender. Though no significant differences were observed in wages across the same category of workers few points were noteworthy. Employers and labour contractors

believed that it is much easier to 'make female workers work' compared to their male counterparts as they are usually docile and sincere in general. They hardly take any break from work, never leave the factory gates before the scheduled time and even sit through their tea and lunch breaks. Women workers report often they are verbally abused by their supervisors. Not so often the men have to listen. Thus even marginalised spaces are not homogeneous. Though very few cases of sexual harassment or molestation were reported, the 'other conditions at work' virtually forces the workers into bondedness. As the nation seeks to abolish Bonded Labour practices, these new forms of bondedness should also be considered. Long duration of tedious work (more than 12 hours during peak seasons of production), tweaking the law, rights and dues of the workers, job insecurity and lack of decent work and living pushes the worker into bonded labour situation. Women workers are not entitled to any kind of maternity leave, leave aside any other maternity benefits. They are compelled to leave job and after few years of child rearing they search for employment afresh. Hardly few are promoted to the higher skill and remuneration positions (for example quality checker or supervisors in this case). Almost 30 percent (national average) of workforce engaged in the process of garment manufacturing are women and this proportion is on increase. At this juncture questions must be asked about whether this preference for female labourers are related to women being submissive, docile, cheap source of labour as viewed by the employers.

The study seeks to answer these questions and the results have important implications for policy makers in India in terms of increasing educational opportunities for women in various social groups, reducing social and economic discrimination and increasing post-implementation accountability.

## **From Domestic Work to Beauty Work: Gender, Informality and Organisation**

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My recent interaction with domestic workers and beauty workers has indicated a marked trend of domestic workers switching over to beauty work. The workers shift to the beauty sector by taking formal/informal training and through skill development with an aspiration of upward social mobility and to avoid the stigma associated with domestic work. In cases when the domestic worker cannot afford this shift themselves, they pass on the inspiration to their daughters. The newcomers usually join beauty parlours as cleaners and occupy

the most vulnerable position in these establishments. The domestic workers are themselves clients at beauty parlours as well. The paper thus focuses on three categories of workers: (i) domestic workers or their female family members who have shifted to beauty work, (ii) beauty parlour cleaners/assistants whose work has similarities with the work of domestic workers, and (iii) domestic workers who go to beauty parlours for beauty services.

The paper focuses on the ways in which the transition of women from domestic work to beauty work affects their socio-economic prospects. The objective is to study their labour practices, patterns and working conditions. It dwells into some critical question like- How do their individual beauty ideals and desires influence their choice or continuation in their occupation? What kind of aspirations do they have for their future? Do the gendered ideologies of marriage and its cultural and social structures determine their choice and terms of employment? How do they negotiate with their families in these cases? How does their transition from domestic workers to beauty workers influence their position as candidates in the marriage market? How does the presence of legal and political mediation in case of domestic workers helps their cause and ways in which its absence affects the beauty workers? What do the workers feel about the need for organization?

My paper draws extensively from the findings of a qualitative study carried out in West Bengal with beauty workers and domestic workers to investigate the research questions.

## **Feminization in Indian Manufacturing? Trends and Explanations**

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Women's employment in manufacturing is an issue that has attracted considerable attention from researchers. This issue has gained greater prominence in recent decades as trade liberalization and the changing nature of capitalist production has led to increased participation of women in manufacturing in some countries. Transnational corporations relocate labour intensive, assembly activities to countries with low wages, providing them the advantages of low labour costs and greater flexibility, and this has become central to economic growth in many countries. These low end jobs have been generally taken up by women. In India, female labour force participation has been historically low. Manufacturing sector has also not performed well over the years. The shares of manufacturing sector in gross domestic product (GDP) as well as total employment in India

are relatively low compared to the corresponding shares in other developing economies. The total number of manufacturing workers in India was 61.2 million in 2011-12, and they accounted for 12.7 percent of the total workforce in the country in that year. Out of the total manufacturing workforce in India (in 2011-12), 43 million were men and 17.2 million were women (thus women workers accounting for 28 per cent of the total). With respect to the contribution of the manufacturing sector to the economy and the participation of females in the manufacturing workforce, the East Asian countries including China have a much better record than India. In many of the now successful East Asian economies, the fast expansion of the manufacturing sector from the 1960s onwards occurred along with rising participation of women in the manufacturing workforce. In Korea, Singapore and Thailand the share of females in the manufacturing workforce was about 40-45 percent during the 1980s, when export-oriented development soared in these countries (Standing, 1989). In China, female share in manufacturing workforce was 44.8 percent during the 1990s and around 40 percent during the 2000s (Banister, 2005). Our data shows that from 2004-05 to 2011-12, 11 million female workers lost jobs. But the net decrease in female manufacturing employment was only 0.26 million. While looking at the share of male and female manufacturing workers as a percentage of all male and female workers respectively, interestingly we see that the share of female manufacturing workers among all female workers has improved from 9.9 percent in 2000 to 13.4 percent in 2011-12. The male share has more or less stagnated over the decade. But this happened not because the number of female manufacturing employees increased, but because there was a loss of about 11 million female jobs of which only 0.26 million were manufacturing jobs. In fact, over all male workers and male manufacturing workers increased from 2000 to 2011-12. Given such a context, my paper addresses the question why female participation in the manufacturing sector is relatively low in India by looking at its trends and patterns across industries, in both organized and unorganized sector during the 2000s. I use NSSO reports and ASI data for the analysis. By trying to analyse the female manufacturing employment, the paper will largely reflect on the labour flexibility argument in Indian manufacturing, closely reading it along the lines of Spivak (1985) who rightly called women as the true 'surplus army' with the changing nature of capitalistic production and international division of labour.

# Issues and Challenges of Women Migrant Workers in Unorganized Sectors in Rural Areas

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Labour Migration has been increasingly observed since the neo liberal policies have been introduced. Coupled with recurring monsoon failure and recurring drought, rural migration has become the common phenomenon. Men migrate to outside the country, state and native. Women get retained to look after whatever employment is available in agriculture. It appears as feminization of labour which is actually distressed feminization, as the work performed by the women often goes unpaid or underpaid. Disguised employment has also been the feature where a few income generating opportunities are being shared by many. In Tamil Nadu, drought hit villages have lost their sources of livelihood. The men migrated outside are not able to earn well to support the family and hence the women are pushed to identify alternative livelihood opportunities. In the absence of any non-farm employment the women migrate to neighbourhood industrial cities particularly garments and spinning industries. There are three patterns [i] Commuting everyday within 50 kms radius [ii] migrate with family to the place where work is identified [iii] join camp coolie system. In agriculture, seasonally migrate to villages during transplantation, harvesting etc associating with contract labour system. The next largest source is construction sector, where the women collectively go in group with a contractor and commute every day to different places where the contractor shows work. Such being the nature of employment in the current context, these women are confronted with the same kinds of problems in the migrated place, such as low wages, hazardous of work, insecurity, sexual harassment, suppression and oppression residing and etc. According to the NSS 64th round (2007-2008) report there has been a 46% increase in the female migration -rural-urban in India. With the backlog, the present study aims to identify the issues and challenges of women migrant workers in unorganized sectors, focusing on the reasons for migration, types of work, wage differences, issues related to working conditions, security, safety, occupational hazards, possible strategies adopted to combat such issues etc will be analysed in a gender perspective. The study covered the women migrant workers

in unorganized sectors belonging to the age group of 15 to 60 which includes child labourers who are migrated from rural to urban and explores strategies to provide a safe and secured work environment for the migrant women labourers.

## **Income Generation for Women Through CSR Initiatives – A Case Study of TVS**

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Corporate Social Responsibility(CSR) is aimed at giving back to society not only to compensate for the use of public resources but also to satisfy society's expectations. CSR has transformed from a philanthropic activity to a socially responsible exercise. Under the New Companies Act 2013, CSR mandates companies to allot 2% of the net profit in the three proceeding financial years. CSR focusses on various issues in society such as education, health, environment, infrastructure and women empowerment.

Empowerment of women is achievable only by increasing the employable skill sets and by providing the necessary economic support to women. Micro finance provides a viable and effective monetary support to women, who are otherwise excluded from the economic sphere. Need based training has also proved to be an effective path for empowering women to generate income. In the Indian context, Self Help Groups (SHGs) have successfully combined provision of micro finance and need based training.

The Case Study provided by TVS group of companies offers an interesting model. The CSR activities of the TVS group are carried out through Srinivasan Services Trust. They have initiated the formation of SHG among rural women in Padavedu, Tiruvannamalai District. Women SHGs supported by TVS run various income generating projects like Tailoring Shops, Snack and Tea Stalls, Restaurants, Grocery Shops, Dairy Farming, Bee Keeping and Honey Production, Poultry Farming, Production of Cattle Feed and Compost, Manufacturing Candles, Soaps, Handicrafts, Baskets, etc and Farming. While the women have been trained in skills and offered capacity building to seek financial support and manage micro-enterprises, no direct funding has been provided. In this model, the CSR not only increases their earning potential but also provides a model for self-reliance among women.

The present study proposes to analyse the impact of training and income generation activities offered to women by TVS. The Objectives are as follows:

- To examine the extent to which trainings provided by TVS through SHGs under their CSR activities are useful
- To study the multiple avenues used in income generation for rural women in Padavedu
- To document the capacity building provided by TVS to enable women to access micro finance and to start micro-enterprises
- To study the agency and decision making power available to women resulting out of their development

The study adopts a descriptive research design. A Non –Probability Convenience Sampling is adopted to study 50 Women SHG beneficiaries in Padavedu through administration of questionnaires following an interview schedule. Five Case Studies will be prepared to document the capacity building of women to start micro enterprises.

The study highlights the success of income generating activities offered by TVS that enable women to earn income throughout the year. Also, it is interesting that women are trained in multiple skills in order to generate multiple avenues of income. That CSR provides the ambit to combine SHGs, Micro finance and Skill training to achieve women's empowerment is the unique feature of this case study.

## **Battle for the Womb: The Story of the Invisible Women Workers**

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The present paper is an analysis of the commercial surrogacy industry in India based on my ethnography of the lives of the surrogate mothers. It argues for the need to re-conceptualize the understanding and explanation of women's work. Women's work, as against men's work in the public sphere, has always been identified with the private sphere. However, the neo-liberal era in the Indian subcontinent has led to the emergence of a new globalized and capitalist economy

which has seeped even into the intimate and personal domains. Domestic work, egg donation, care work, to name a few, have also fallen under the clutches of neoliberalism. Commercial surrogacy, also working on neoliberal principles of profit maximization, not only increases the probabilities of the women being exploited, but also blurs the dichotomies of public and private; production and reproduction. In this gendered transnational industry, the women working as surrogate mothers in India are perceived as 'disposable' victims. Based on my ethnographic journey, I draw on the narratives of the women working as surrogate mothers in India who remain at the center, and yet, at the periphery of such arrangements.

This paper is also in conversation with feminist geography as it identifies work as a social construction which is masculine and waged. Feminist geographers have been continuing to contest the limited understanding of 'work'. This is aimed at by articulating the ways spatial divisions of labour concerning 'productive' and 'reproductive' spaces lead to the creation of a series of exclusions of the various forms of work women perform. The masculine definition of work disregards the informal forms of work, domestic space, and reproductive work. Commercial surrogacy being a form of reproductive work also calls for regulation and political representation. It needs to be identified and included within the broader rubric of 'work'. The recent development of banning commercial surrogacy and allowing only its altruistic form for married Indian infertile couples alone complicates the situation further. The Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill 2016 not only slams an opening of employment for the women who agree to work as surrogate mothers, but also depicts women's reproductive roles to be limited only to the patriarchal private space.

I aim to uncover the stories of the reproductive labourers so that the nuances of the wombs for rent industry can be fetched out, where the consumer becomes 'the' citizen, and the women workers continue to be victims. It locates commercial surrogacy within the larger framework of women labour in a neoliberal market. In this attempted effort, I pay attention to the multiplicity of the experiences of the women in their everyday lives constituted in the spaces they work in.

## **Women's Paid Work: Women's Employment Choices and Work Opportunities**

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According to NCEUS (2007), 96 percentages of working women are in informal sector. Even within informal sector work, women workers are in the most unskilled and least paid category (Mohapatra 2012). It is very important to ask how this happens.

In this paper, based on my census study of 2000 household(2015) and sample survey of 250 households (2016), in a slum (Kallukuttai) which is un-notified in Perungudi area of Chennai City, I argue the following:

Firstly, we see that still patriarchal gender roles have a crucial role in influencing and limiting women's work choices (Ghosh and Chandrashekar, 2012; 2014). But in literature most of the time women's work choices are not linked to their roles in household as mostly their gender roles are taken for granted. But the choice of work is very much related to their household work (not just care work). In the context of urbanization we see that a place like Kallukuttai which is un-notified slums where basic amenities becomes a challenge (Aihwa Ong, 1999, 2006), women have to spend more time physically on household work, which reduces their choice for paid work. Lack of basic amenities like drinking and non-drinking water, sewage facilities, sanitation, child care (crèches) makes women's household work and child care time consuming. Even electricity was very recently given, many places still lack street lights and no running water connection is yet available in this area. This situation forces women to take decision or choose the kind of work which allows them to manage both their unpaid household work and paid work. We see a large number of women in this place are involved in part time work. For e.g. Among 1191 (total women work force) around 361 are doing 'paid domestic work' and 211 are doing 'House Keeping' which comes to 48 percentage of women work force choosing part-time work (If we include self-employed we could see majority of women's work is part time).

Secondly, when we try to understand women's work, we should also look into the work opportunities available to women and then link it to their work choices. This is so because the available work opportunities are very limited for women workers when compared to male workers (from my findings through census survey of Kallukuttai, 2015). Women work's choice are very limited within the available work opportunity and this directly reflect in women workers mostly concentrated in very few work categories. For e.g. when we compare work opportunity of male and female we see that men have multiple work choices compared to women. In construction sector alone we see men have various choices like Periyal, Mason, Plumber, Painter, Electrician etc, but women have only single option which is Sithaal (helper category). My study also showed that

77 percentage of women's paid work was within 9 work categories. This shows women are concentrated within a small category of works. The same is not seen among men workers though most of the male and female in this area are working in informal sector work.

Thirdly, even within the limited work opportunities they are also further limited by restriction on their spatial mobility (G Pratt, 2004), which further narrows down their work choices. Most of the women workers in my study work within the radius of 5km from the place of residence in contrast to male workers who go farther away. In women's choice of work, the work place plays a crucial role because they need to get back soon to continue with child care and household work. Most of the workers (female) depend on public service transportation or costless transportation (walking or cycle) to do so.

## **Understanding Female Employment through a Village Survey**

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The puzzle of declining women's labour force participation in India despite high economic growth has engaged a number of economists in the recent past. While there are issues related to the definition of women's work and the under-reporting in general of women's contribution [Mazumdar (2011)], the declining trend of women's labour force participation has been evident from both National Sample Survey data using usual principal status and Census of India which shows increased marginal women workers between 2001 and 2011 [Sanghi et.al. (2015), Neff, Sen and Kling (2012); Himanshu (2011), Mazumdar et.al. (2011), Srivastava et.al. (2010); Subramanian (2015)]. The NSS data shows that from 331 women per 1000 in 1993, the Rural Female Labour Force Participation Rate as per Usual Status has gone down to just 253 women per 1000 [Neff et.al. 2015]. Sector-wise trends show an increased participation rate of women as farmers in 2004-05 and as casual labour in 2009-10 (Himanshu, 2011; Sanghi et.al. 2015).

There are varying opinions as to what explains the declining trend. Neff et.al. (2012) observed the LFPR of women following a U shaped curved with MPCE and declining probability of LFP of women with increasing household wise male mean wage – which indicates a distress driven employment growth for women. Women sticking to agriculture despite a stagnating agrarian sector

has been termed as “Creeping Feminisation” (Srivastava et.al., 2010; Mathew, 2012) which is related to lower capacity of rural households to hire wage labour (Himanshu, 2011). Apart from lower income or distress driven LFP (Neff et. al., 2015, Abraham, 2009), various other explanations have been put forward relating to higher participation of women in education (Rangarajan et. al., 2011), supply side constraints and structural change in economy hindering women from finding remunerative jobs (Srivastava et.al. 2010, Sanghi et.al. 2015), withdrawal of women from the labour market as a response to improved living standards (Himanshu, 2011), greater pressure on women’s time for unpaid work (productive and reproductive) in the absence of public services etc. Even within women there are differences in trends. E.g. the effect of structural constraints has been observed to be lower in SC and ST women (Srivastava et. al., 2010). One of the limitations of research around this subject is also the absence of detailed data on women’s work that is both representative and reliable.

In this context, the present paper attempts to contribute to the understanding of factors affecting women’s workforce participation by analysing longitudinal data from the Palanpur village surveys. Village surveys have been carried out in Palanpur in western Uttar Pradesh since the 1950s. Seven rounds of panel data are now available spanning from 1956 to 2015. Although until the recent rounds there were no special efforts to capture women’s work, all the surveys collected data on education and employment of all household members. While the overall participation of women in the workforce in this village has always been very low (which is also case for this region in general), there is a recent trend observed or a larger number of women reporting as primary workers – mostly in cultivation.

This period also coincides with increasing participation of men in non-farm employment within the village and outside – both as commuters and migrants. It is seen that it is mostly women in households where men have moved out of agriculture that are now reporting as being ‘workers’. It is also interesting to note that while the trend of men diversifying out of agriculture is noted in almost all the caste groups in the village, it is only women of the lower castes and the Murao caste (traditionally a cultivators’ caste) who show greater labour force participation. On the other hand, women from the Thakur households for example, despite increasing education levels among women do not see any increase in female workforce participation. Such trends related to women’s workforce participation vis-à-vis women’s education, norms related to mobility, caste, etc. are discussed.

Finally, based on the analysis of this village data regional variations in women's workforce patterns in the country as well as in the relative importance of different drivers of women's participation in paid employment are highlighted as one of the possible areas that need further research. Just the data from one village brings out a number of different factors that determine whether a woman participates in the workforce or not, ranging from macroeconomic context which influences the nature of employment available to social norms of the particular region and caste which determines whether a woman can participate in a particular kind of employment or not. The broader question is how to these economic and social factors interact and also how do they change

## **Informalisation and Feminisation of Labour in the Era of Globalisation: A Study on Odiya Women Migrant Workers in KINFRA Apparel Industry of Kerala**

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In the era of globalisation, capital's search for cheap and flexible labour inevitably highlights the industrial reserve army — i.e. the migrant women from rural areas working in the textile industries located in the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) of southern India. These industries mostly prefer female labour with a view to establish more flexible industrial relations through the casual nature of employment contract. It resulted in the increase of women in the labour market as well as the rise in precarious forms of female employment. In other words, it leads to disguised informalisation and feminization of labour in the era of globalisation.

In Ganjam district of Odisha, the SEAM (Skills for Employment in Apparel Manufacturing) project has been working in the last eight years at Hinjicut block under Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana and National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM). Under this project, hundreds number of young women and girls receive training in stitching operations. After imparting skills from SEAM training centre, they are being sent to work in garment factories such as Texport Industries Private Limited in Kerala under the guise of an apprenticeship based occupation. These industries are located in KINFRA Apparel park of Kerala under a centrally sponsored scheme—"Apparel Parks for Exports" (APE). The employment in KINFRA textile industries is highly feminized. This feminized

workforce mostly belongs to migrant and marginalized social categories. In such context, the current paper explores the presence of Odisha's women migrant workers in the garment manufacturing industries at KINFRA International Apparel Park of Kerala in order to understand the relationships between the globalization of production and internal labour migration. It explores the living and working conditions of these women workers and also examines their labour standards.

## **Workers and Helpers – Negotiating Socio-Economic Challenges**

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A large section of women workers in the country are employed in the informal sector work under exploitative working conditions, without any social security. Public policy in our country has a constricted view of women as workers and as economic agents. It mostly views them in their role of nurture and care.

This paper looks at how the paid care work performed by the Anganwadi Workers and Helpers is perceived by the state which has a bearing on the value it accords to this work. It analyses the understanding of the state in calling them as 'volunteers' and not 'workers' and in paying them 'honorarium' and not 'wages'. Anganwadi Workers and Helpers are the grassroots level workers of the Integrated Child Development Services scheme, which is one of the flagship programmes of the Government of India.

The state which acts as an employer and virtually runs these Anganwadis is contributing to their precariousness. Its policies of fiscal prudence are not only impacting the running of the Anganwadi centres, but also the nature of work performed by Anganwadi workers. The 'informal' nature of the work adds to the existing social oppression these women face in the society, both due to their gender and social status – caste. Caste is not only influencing the appointments of these workers, but also has a say in the way services are provided to the beneficiaries. In many instances, we find caste playing a significant role in the relationship between the anganwadi workers and supervisors/CDPOs; anganwadi workers and helpers; and anganwadi workers and beneficiaries. In certain cases, caste is used by the agencies of the State to harass and threaten these workers.

There is a lot of literature on the ICDS Scheme, but not much on ICDS workers, who are predominantly women and the interplay of caste and gender in defining their workplace relationships. The paper draws on the framework that in order to understand women's work, it is necessary to situate it in the broader socio-economic milieu. Caste, which has a major influence on the everyday life of people, also has an effect on the work of the anganwadi workers and helpers. This paper attempts to analyse how the anganwadi workers and helpers are trying to cope with the interplay of class, caste and gender in shaping their socio-economic relations in the society.

The paper is based on the interviews of the Anganwadi Workers and Helpers from Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka and Delhi. The secondary sources include a study of the ICDS Manual, the documents and reports of the All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers which is a trade union of these women workers, the debates in parliament and petitions given to the Rajya Sabha Committee on Petitions on the issues of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers and various media reports.

## **The Body on the Shop-Floor: A Study of Women Employees in the Organised Retail Sector**

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The paper looks at the “spectacular” space that the shopping mall as a site of consumption provides and tries to unravel what goes towards making this space, which is largely a ramification of wider global processes. In doing that it attempts to understand the shopping mall as a place of work, focusing specifically on women retail shop floor workers, employed in the apparel and cosmetic sections of multi-national brands. The paper argues that employment in this sector requires working on one's body to produce a “presentable” body by grooming so as to fit the larger image that the mall presents. The body, in the context of retail shop floor employees, becomes both a process as well as a site. The body as a process is never a finished product and needs constant care so as to attract more customers as well as to exhibit the goodness of the products that the employees have to sell. As a site, the body is the surface on which manufacturing of a particular image, which suits the brand, takes place. This groomed body is not free from control and the paper talks about how there are managerial strategies to make sure that

these bodies behave in a particular way as well as different tactics used by the employees to show subtle resistance. This is underlined by the ever increasing importance of emotional and aesthetic labor which is a major requirement of the service oriented jobs.

## **No Respite for Maternity: ‘Work Until Labour, Then Get Back Soon’**

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The dwindling presence of women in the workforce, coupled with the unceasing informalization of women’s work, provide warning signals about the lack of social protection for women. Maternity entitlements, although mandated in the Constitution in India and codified in law, are still unavailable for 135 out of 140 million Indian working women, since they are apply to only those who are in formal employment. For the remaining 96 percent of women wage workers, there is no paid leave or cash support during pregnancy and after childbirth. They are compelled to work almost until the final day of pregnancy or actual onset of labour pains, for fear of losing employment or wages. Subsequently after childbirth women are anxious to get back within a few days or a few weeks, before their own bodies are fully recovered.

Despite health messages that urge six months of exclusive breastfeeding for babies, women have to sacrifice their own health and that of their children in order to retain their jobs and keep the family income going. For a significant proportion of our population, each episode of maternity is period of financial crisis when there is a dip in family incomes right at the time when health and social costs escalate.

Examining the current framework of legal obligations of the Indian state in ensuring maternity benefits, the paper sets out the findings from three recent field studies regarding the contemporary situation of this issue. The paper describes the last decade of struggles to ensure these rights for all women in India, based on key informant interviews among the broad alliance of closely involved women’s organizations and allied social justice platforms. Embedded within the efforts are feminist debates around the characterization of the entitlement, between the language of rights and the more instrumental discourses around supporting women in their responsibility to breastfeed and ensure healthy development of the next generation.

It analyzes the feminist contestation around the definition of women as workers, and unpacks the exclusionary classification of ‘women in employment’ that presupposes benevolent employers and limits state responsibility in ensuring social protection for maternity; thereby leaving out self-employed women including unpaid home-based workers engaged in care work. In conclusion the paper proposes a feminist consensus around rights to social protection during maternity for all women.

## **Women Entrepreneurship Development Programme and Women’s Empowerment: Empirical Findings from Gujarat**

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This paper tries to investigate the extent to which Women Entrepreneurship Development (WED) Programme has empowered women micro-entrepreneurs in Ahmedabad and Vadodara district of Gujarat. This paper discusses the profiles of these beneficiary women and compares it with the control groups. WED programmes provide training for preparing business plans, marketing, informing and helping women to access funds to develop their own enterprise have become a critical tool in development programmes aiming to empower them. The Government of India and the Government of Gujarat have pursued this programme and it is estimated that an increasing number of women are trained to start their own enterprise through various schemes. It examines the extent of the contribution of WED to household income, asset, freedom to own and use this income. It also investigates freedom of movement and awareness of injustice prevalent in the society towards women among participants and non-participants.

This paper is largely based on framework used by Women’s Empowerment Assessment used by Kabear (1998). The ethnographic field research is used for this paper and includes semi-structured interviews and participant observation. The primary survey with household and individual questionnaires, administered to a male and a female respondent in each household was piloted from June to August 2016 in Ahmedabad and Vadodara. In both these sites, the primary survey is administered to 100 households (200 individuals) where women are beneficiaries of entrepreneurship development programme. Same numbers



of non-beneficiary women are interviewed as the control groups. Qualitative interviews and case studies with individuals, as well as implementing agencies and the sponsored agencies will provide further input into the analysis.

This paper discusses various economic activities in which women of Ahmedabad and Vadodara have participated and shows that WED programme helps women to start her own business, facilitate easy access of credit and provide marketing and other business development skills and so on. Women in poor households have greater risk of being overburdened by household chores and earning to sustain her family. Moreover, her ability to generate income from her enterprise depends on the access to productive assets and her decision making capacity in the household. This study also examines the extent to which women have control over their finances. This study also found that older married women enjoy greater control over decisions and mobility than their younger counterpart. The social restrictions to travel to longer distance remain out of home for longer period hinder their work. The primary responsibilities of taking care of older members in the family and children rest only with the women. Men rarely share this responsibility despite women engaged in economic activity. These restrictions are mainly social which calls for social empowerment. Despite these physical and social limitations, compared to control groups, women beneficiaries of WED programme have gained confidence to bargain and control in the day to day situation.

## **Minority Women's Experiences in Teaching: Preliminary Findings from Qualitative Research Amongst Anglo-Indian Women Teaching in Bangalore and Goan Women Teaching in and around Panjim**

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While India has recently seen a decline in women's overall workforce participation rates, their presence in teaching has steadily increased over the 20th and 21st centuries. National level (DISE) data for 2012-2013 suggests that about fifty percent of all primary school teachers and forty percent of secondary school teachers across the country are women (data excludes contract teachers). Both government policy and societal norms support this trend. At the level of policy, recruitment of more women into school teaching is recommended to support enrolment and attendance of girls in school while the societal construction of

teaching as an extension of women's reproductive and nurturing role and of teaching as an ideal career for young woman with future caring responsibilities ensures that they opt for teacher training in significant numbers. While in higher education male teachers outnumber female teachers by nearly two to one, (about 61% of higher education teachers are men and 39% are women) women's presence is still significant in this sector and has been growing.

There has been a call for research on teachers' experiences within different contexts (rural, urban, private, public, aided and unaided institutions, higher education and school education) and for an examination of their professional identities in relation to their social identities. This paper investigates the experiences of women teachers from two minority communities in two different regions: Anglo-Indian women teaching in Bangalore and Goan women teaching in and around Panjim. Based on in-depth semi-structured interviews with serving and retired teachers, it examines how gender, community and religious identities intersect with their professional identities and the consequences of these intersecting identities for their experience of work. Cautious comparisons are made between the two regions. Particular attention is paid to continuities between paid and unpaid labour undertaken by teachers and how the unpaid (care) work of teachers is normalized and 'invisibilized' by constructing teaching as a vocation and a calling, sometimes with religious connotations. In this manner the paper attempts bring an intersectional perspective to understanding women's experiences within teaching.

## **Tangled Threads: Women in the Textile Industry of Karbianglong Assam**

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In cultures across the world women are central to the art of weaving and hence production of cloths. The technology of spinning and weaving is always created by a goddess, for example Arachne in Greek mythology, chih Niu in Chinese mythology, Nert in Egyptian mythology etc. It is perhaps not a coincidence that the word techne can be traced back to the Indo-European root teks, which means "to weave". In fact weaving is the only technology that man admits has been created by women.

The Karbis are the principal tribal community in Karbi Anglong district

of Assam, a district administered as per the provisions of the 6th schedule of the Constitution of India, having an autonomous district of their own since 17th November, 1951. Weaving has been an integral part of Karbi society and women have been using a deceptively simple looking piece of technology built of little more than sticks and string where the weaver is herself part of the loom. There are legends, folksongs and rituals which celebrate this primitive art and more importantly the surviving legends and folksongs celebrate women and their handiwork at the core of the living heritage of the Karbi society. A legend, narrated through a folk song praises Serdihun as the first woman who introduced the art of weaving to the Karbis. Romanticizing aside, there has been very little attempt to document the contribution of women to the society and economy of the district through their skill. It is the contention of this paper that for thousands of women in Karbi Anglong, weaving is not only a source of their livelihood but also a repository of their skills. The community skills, techniques involved in different stages of production are historically evolved, owned and imparted communally thus it cannot be understood only in terms of abstract demand and supply principle of the market. The weavers today are part of the unorganised sector, earning piece meal wages and their income bears no relationship to their skill in preserving a historic craft, to the hours they work, to market prices and to goods and services or to the value of the output and profits they help to produce. Using the methodology of oral history sources, this paper seeks to highlight the vulnerability of the women weavers in the changing market conditions and the exploitation of her labour.

## **Different Layers of Legality and Informality, Contradiction with Capitalist Investment: A Case Study of Beauty Work in Kolkata**

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Beauty parlours have become 'naturalized' in everyday lives across classes. Certainly, market of beauty therapy, beauty treatments have expanded. Hence it has opened huge space for trade, investment. It is considered as a major fast growing "service industry" globally. But in Indian context, it has a typical heterogeneous pattern. There is considerable multi-national capital investment by Lakme, Revlon, Reliance etc, at the same time; a significant part of the

industry is informal in terms of employment, establishment, use of technology etc. Therefore workers of the parlours are an extremely heterogeneous group, keeping in mind the various levels of operations and segmentations.

Mahapatra describes the 'beautician' as a self employed person, who has some skill of 'beauty work' like hair cut, facial, mehendi, pedicure, manicure etc. A large numbers of workers with few 'beauty skills' also work as employees in the beauty parlours. There are also beauty workers who earn by providing door-to-door beauty services. This phenomenon is relatively new. Clearly, these workers are selling their service, charging price independently.

Historically, barbers had always been men but in recent times, beauty workers are primarily women signifying a gendering of the beauty work. The beauty work has a clear departure from the traditional barber's work in many ways. There are two aspects of the influx of women workers in the industry. One is feminization of work in the informal economy and the other is the beauty work is naturalized as a feminine work and like barbers, they also suffer from poor wages, non-payment or delayed payment of wages, lack of holidays. The insecurities of losing the job are high and often they are fired without prior notice.

Though most of the beauty parlours are run informally, they are covered by the Shop and Establishment Act, 1963. Workers rights such as working hour, official appointment, vacation, special leave such as maternity leave etc can be protected through this act. But the door-to-door workers can't be accommodated within the Shop and Establishment Act.

This act does not regulate important issue like minimum wage. But minimum wage provision is the key provision that can reduce the extent of exploitation significantly. Telengana, Tamil Nadu etc have already included the beauty work in the minimum wage schedule.

This research will try to understand the impact of legal provision on the beauty workers of Kolkata in the informally run the beauty parlours. In particular, it will try to find out the changes in the informal arrangements after the legal intervention into the informal economy, keeping in mind that it is a feature of capitalist economy .

# **Migrant-Women at the Mall: The Paradoxes of Employment and Empowerment**

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The negotiation of rural to urban shifts with regard to women, and women's employment within globalized spaces such as malls and their effects remain largely unexamined. The present paper intends to contribute to this gap by focusing on women employed within the DLF Promenade Mall (New Delhi) who have migrated from remote, rural and semi-urban locales to the capital city. Drawing upon research undertaken for the recently-concluded project Mall: A Gendered Space (conducted by the Women's Studies and Development Centre, University of Delhi), the paper studies women's negotiation of social, economic and cultural shifts emerging from the rural-urban migration, their challenging of gender boundaries within familial set-up and their simultaneous accessing and managing of the Mall space.

Much research in the domain of Women and Work has already challenged the invisibility of women's work and their unacknowledged economic contributions. However, in the context of the impact of globalisation on women's work, and their assumed mobility and economic gains, the likes of Shilpa Phadke propound that the middle class woman's "success" remains primarily symbolic. Saraswati Raju in her essay "Gendered Mobility: Women Migrants and Work in Urban India" (2009) focuses specifically on migrant women, countering the myth of their migration as predominantly "parasitic". While Raju surmises that migrant women do "marginally" counter traditional norms, she concludes that factors such as marriage, reproductive responsibilities and education act as deterrent to women's mobility and opportunities of employment in salaried jobs.

It is with this backdrop of women's rural-urban migration, employment in globalized work spaces and challenging of traditional norms that the present paper looks at the way malls have emerged as workplaces for migrant women employed as salespersons, security personnel and housekeeping staff. The paper uses case studies of some of the migrant-women working at the Mall to show how employment here offers possibilities to them to close in gender-pay gaps, alter familial/social norms, build employment networks with other women and

acquire a sense of urbanity in the Capital. However, this ‘empowerment’ comes with a paradoxical restriction of their mobility (within the Mall and outside) and their reduction to stereotypes/performances of certain notions of ‘womanhood’ as part of their role and duties at the Mall.

## **Expanding Horizons: An Empirical Study of Women Artificial Insemination Technicians in Jharkhand**

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Rural women substantially contribute to their families and communities mainly through agricultural and livestock rearing. Although their contribution is around 60-70 % of total agriculture related work, most of them are primarily engaged in gender based stereo-type work, have service orientation and in a sense extension of women’s traditional role of care and support. The We News1 covering changing women’s issues has listed professions where women have dominated and they largely include secretarial and administrative or service providers and teaching. Similarly there are certain professions dominated by men and they primarily include engineering and technology application. Indian, rural women are primarily engaged in gender based stereo-type work. Although women play major role in rearing and management of livestock, the technical work of breeding or artificial insemination is largely dominated by men. During last few years; a small number of rural women are choosing it as a career/ income generating option in small and remote villages of India and they play active role as cattle breeders – inseminators. BAIF Development Research Foundation, engaged in creating livelihood for rural poor, initiated a path breaking experiment of inducting women as Artificial Insemination Technicians, a profession so far dominated by men. Out of around 4,000 men AI technicians associated with BAIF, only 14 are women AI technicians( in two states 1 in Telangana and 13 in Jharkhand). This empirical study ( July to December 2015) brings home learning on work situations, needs, social, cultural and professional challenges faced by women AI technicians operative in Jharkhand and reflects on assumptions and myths related to working of women in male dominated professions. The findings of this study indicate that the assumptions prevailing in society related to women’s work are myth such as :

1: Cattle breeding is a highly technical work and a woman cannot do this work.

- 2: Cattle breeding work demands being mobile and attending calls at odd times and odd hours of the day, which is difficult for a woman.
- 3: A woman cannot have both, family and profession.
- 4: Rural communities will not accept woman performing the work of AI.
- 5: Accepting a woman as AI worker is difficult task for male coworkers, supervisors and senior level management.

The organization provided an opportunity to these women, and they used it fully to expand their

own horizon and showed that gender stereotypes are socially created myths and those can be transcended. Having successfully demonstrated that, women can successfully work as AI technician, more women are joining this profession. It is time to replicate this experiment at large scale, within the state as well as outside the state. Key words: Rural Women, Women AI technicians, Livestock breeding, rural livelihood.

## **The Spurned Efforts: Women's Unpaid Work**

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The non-recognition of the tasks accomplished by women at domestic level does not represent their contribution to the economy. Even the choice of whether or not to take up a career outside the household is predominantly guided by the existing patriarchal structure prevalent in our society. Hence, most often women get pushed to take up unpaid domestic work within the household. The works undertaken by women for sustenance in home-based sectors are presumed to be tough to be measured and therefore not concerned. Furthermore, the unpaid work done by women is often considered as leisure. Hence, the contributions made by women are not considered as labour and kept out of national income accounting making women's work invisible. Existing literatures have recognised structural constraints, mistaken perception of the interviewers and respondents about women's work, poorly constructed questionnaires, gender and cultural biases and prejudices existing in the society as major causes leading to the invisibility of women's work. As a result women face discrimination, violence, deprivation, financial insecurity etc. In India, amongst 3, 545, 97,889 female population

belonging to 15-59 years (which is considered to the productive adult population by the Population Census of India) aged non-worker population, which covers about 62.6 percent non-workers population. This affirms that in spite of, the fact that women take up substantial burden of works, yet she is considered as non-workers in the national and international labour records. A few research studies have attempted to measure domestic works, using time-use analysis. The paper at hand is based on a review of literature available and empirical research undertaken on the women's paid and unpaid work. It discusses non-recognition of women's work by the system of national accounts and pertinent issues related to invisibility of women's work to understand the unpaid nature of their work contrasting to the real value and contribution of the same at the household level. It attempted to assign skill levels to the unpaid household activities that women undertake on daily routine by differentiation and valuation of their contribution to household economy.

## **Challenges and Negotiations of Women in the Workplace and Family: Reflections through School Teaching profession**

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Any profession or work that a woman decides to take is essentially associated with her family life and responsibilities. Choosing on a profession becomes more crucial in a woman's life especially in post marriage period. Many a time (though not necessarily) women shifts to another profession just to fulfill her family responsibilities. This is especially significant in the context of those women who take up school teaching as a career. Balancing work and family is seen as an immense challenge especially for women and hence work- family negotiation has become again as emerging issue of research in the 21st century. Amartya Sen in his *Argumentative Indian* has beautifully revealed that unequal sharing of household chores is still a part of Indian family tradition where women are primarily responsible for looking after the home, the children, managing the household and the preparation of food. It is therefore still common in many societies that women are acceptable to work outside the home if and only if they can also engage with their inescapable and unequally shared household duties.

In this context, my paper will try to understand the challenges that women



school teachers face in the changing scenario of teaching profession especially after the introduction of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) in the schools where school teaching profession is no more associated with the so-called 'relaxing' and 'easy-going' profession. CCE has made teaching more challenging in the sense that now teachers have to engage with more paper works along with the so called 'teaching'. There are always some clerical works which teachers some way or the other have to take on and many a time engaging with these paper works such as maintaining the daily diary, preparing the lesson plan in advance and to be forwarded by the principal, preparing softcopy of the marks/grades of each student of each test (FA1,FA2,SA1,SA2 etc.) for record by the teacher concerned for all the classes she/he teach, maintaining the record of all the other activities conducted by the teacher concerned etc. have actually reduced teaching to the level of secondary concern only. The nature of such system often makes teachers carry lots of paper works at home. This makes it difficult especially for women teachers to draw a line between their personal family life and professional working life the details of which would be discussed in great length in my paper.

The findings of my study are based on the field research that I carried in the schools in Delhi - both government and public schools. This field research is a part of my ongoing Ph.D. research which is primarily a qualitative one. The data were collected following in depth interviews of 20 teachers (which includes teachers from both government and private schools). It seems more fascinating when comes the question of a teacher's own career in terms of her promotion that reveal her position per se and the very profession itself in general. Whether from government school or public school mostly married women teachers are seen negotiating with her everyday life and career in many diverse ways. My paper will discuss in great length as to how women school teachers negotiate with their workplace and family responsibilities in a scenario in which women are not considered as per the male earners of the household. In other words, there is a general perception (as seen in my data) that women are the additional earners of the family, they are not seen as the main or even as the equal contributor in the financial need of the household. It is also shocking to see that many a time the earnings of women are spent on luxurious expenditure and not for the essential items of the household because the expenditure of the latter is carried out from the husband's income. It is very important to understand here the patriarchal mindset that flows through such activities. My paper will also explore the differences in terms of various challenges and negotiations that women school

teachers from government and public schools face differently and would argue as to what extent such negotiations are the matters of concerns only for the women in the household.

## **Unpaid Work and Missing Women: Reflections from Indian Labour Market**

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Low labour force participation of women in developing countries in particular, often called missing women problem, is thought to be causing potential GDP loss in these countries. It would be interesting to examine why women are not in the labour market and how are they engaged then. Studies from Time-use and Employment surveys reveal that women are engaged more in unpaid work than men, have to bear double burden of work, and are discriminated against when they venture into the labour market. This has serious implications for the Human Development pattern of the country as the average HDI rank would belie the gender (under)development and gender (in)equality situation. Identifying quantum of unpaid work and recognising it as a part of the GDP formation process would be the first step towards correcting this bias. The ambit of unpaid work should include work outside the SNA boundary but adding to the household utility, work inside the SNA boundary but as unpaid family labour and also wage work but at a lower wage rate. This paper attempts to quantify the incidence of various forms of unpaid work of women in the Indian context and explore some of its correlates. The study is based on the Employment-Unemployment Schedule of the 68th round survey of the National Sample Survey Office for the year 2011-12 that provides us with number of persons engaged in domestic duties only, those who attend domestic duties as well as are engaged in free collection of goods, tailoring, weaving, etc., for household use (extra-domestic work), and persons engaged as unpaid family labour in household enterprises. We consider all these three as components of unpaid work and seek to estimate the proportion of women engaged in unpaid work - inside and outside their households - and examine the spatial and social group variation in its incidence. Reference to wage discrimination against women is also made. Substantial regional difference is observed as domestic work burden

is much higher in the northern and eastern states compared to southern states. Possible underlying reasons behind regional/social variation in extent of unpaid female labour are also explored. Results suggest that better education, faster economic growth and higher market wages lead to lower proportion of unpaid work. There is thus a potential to create a virtuous cycle of education, inclusion in wage work, better wages and faster growth leading to a more even and gender neutral human development situation.

## **Micro Credit and its Impact on Women's Employment : A Case Study of Madanpur Khadar (Delhi)**

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This paper focuses on the relationship between micro credit and women's employment. The analysis is based on field research in the semi urban areas of Madanpur Khadar in Delhi. In this area, a study of three different types of micro-credit models was undertaken, namely, the Self Help Groups Bank Linkage Model, the Government Linkage Programme and some Self Help Groups formed by a Women's Organization. The study documents the experiences of women after they have joined the Self Help Groups and attempts to study the broader questions related with the impact of Self Help Groups on the women's employment and livelihood. It shows that where women attempt to use microcredit for employment and livelihood, their options are limited by lack of access to marketing. It further shows that NGOs and MFIs involved in micro credit do not make any real efforts to support or enable employment and livelihood for SHGs members.

The study is based on primary research. It includes a profile of the voluntary agencies and an analysis of the impact of their programme on women. Case studies of women beneficiaries are used to study the process. Coordinators and organizers of different SHGs were also interviewed for this purpose.

The area of study is semi urban Delhi. To understand the women's profile and their status, an interview schedule was used. Fifty (50) women respondents were interviewed and the opportunity was also utilized to have informal discussions. Unstructured but in – depth interviews and discussions were also held with the organizational staff of various NGOs, MFIs operating in the study area.

# **Exploring the lived experience of daily-commuting women construction workers: Vulnerabilities and resilience**

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The construction industry in India is one of the largest employers of unskilled labour. Women comprise a large section of this labour force for doing the least valued but the most strenuous tasks like head loading while men are allocated the more skilled and higher paying work.

The recruitment of construction labour is of two types – some are recruited in family groups from villages while others are recruited on a daily basis as individual workers from the local labour markets. While the working and living conditions of women workers recruited in family groups and living on the construction site for several months on a seasonal contract have been studied widely, the lone commuting female construction worker on a day-to-day contract has not been the subject of many studies. She is the most marginalized and most vulnerable worker of this sector because she is devoid of the support of men with their superior bargaining power. She has to negotiate on her own with powerful male contractors and middlemen every day.

This paper presents the findings of a phenomenological study of the migration and work experiences of female construction workers who commute daily from the rural hinterland of Kolkata to this city and are recruited for a day's work only. Entrenched patriarchal norms and gender discrimination create structural vulnerabilities that are compounded by exploitative working conditions, sexual abuse, and the risk of trafficking. Nevertheless, they exercise agency and access jobs with favourable wages through bonding and bridging relationships in a world dominated by men.

## **The Productive 'Reproductive Work': A Study on the Experiences of Female Domestic Labourers**

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Work is often bifurcated as productive and reproductive, based on the nature of income/outcome it generates. The feminization of reproductive work (which can be termed as 'domestic work' in common parlance) is an artifact made out of the deliberate dissemination of gender roles and gender division of labour, well-knit with the politics of patriarchy. Even though there are a few countries that acknowledge and reward household work now, for major part of the world, it is still invisible, unpaid and undervalued. When the same work is outsourced to domestic labourers, it becomes a paid work which is visible, yet undervalued as an unskilled labour. As Bell Hooks (1984) articulates, this tendency not only disproves the correlation between economic independence and empowerment of women, but also challenges the basic intention of the demands for 'wages for house work'<sup>1</sup>. My study begins from the premise of understanding this undervaluing as a social conception associated with the job and the belittlement of people who do the job, whether within the family or as a paid domestic worker. However, it is important to note that one distinct characteristic of Paid Domestic Work is that it creates an ambiguous convergence between the defined boundaries of dichotomies of productive work vs. reproductive work, public sphere vs. private sphere, and questions the division.

The International Labour Organization defines a 'domestic worker' as "any person engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship"<sup>2</sup>. Domestic workers consist of 83% of women workers, which again feminizes the sector. They "are at present among the most exploited and abused workers in the world"<sup>3</sup>. They face multifaceted issues depending on the nature of work and the particulars of worker, clubbed with issues such as low wage, poor working condition, critical family situation, lack of choice, lack of benefits and security, and over all exploitation. Domestic work involves with both the productive aspect of reproductive work and the reproductive aspect of productive work, and the private aspect of public sphere the public aspect of private sphere. My research aims to understand and explore domestic work from this perspective with a socialist feminist concern. It inquisitively examines how female domestic labourers conceive household work. Their work is unpaid in their own house and paid in their working place. Similarly, their working place is a house where they do household activities almost as same as they do at their home, which might question their idea of public-private division of spatiality.

For the study, I have conducted deep interview with 15 female domestic labourers belonging to Punalur municipality, Kerala. Most of these women are under-educated, unskilled and belonging to lower caste. In my interactions with them, I realized that they are unaware of any organizations and trade unions that

protect them. As Anderson (2000) categorizes as “the three C’s”<sup>4</sup>, their major works revolve around Cooking, Cleaning and Caring separately or together. They work in their employers’ houses as paid domestic helpers and go back to their respective homes where they have to ‘re-produce’ all these works all over again unpaid. Their approach to the duality of same work in different quantities, qualities, environment and facilities is analyzed for a deeper understanding. Most of them ‘clarified’ me that they are ‘helping’ their chechi (literal meaning is elder sister, but here they are referring to the female head of the household where they are working), apprehensive to indicate that they are doing a paid-work. This not only problematizes the value attached to domestic work, but also indicate how these women internalize house hold works not enough a ‘job’ to do with. Most of them have chosen the work due to their family’s economic liabilities. They talk about it as an extension of their household responsibilities, where they are economically helped by the Chechi and Sir in return. However, it is very clear that they are aware of their limitations, lack of choices and the disrespectful amount of distrust by the employers. Here, the study also considers their economic benefits, decision making power, health issues and exhaustion due to the double physical labour, along with a critical enquiry: Is paid domestic work an empowering experience in any sense or another form of marginalization?

## **Study on Vulnerability of the Women Rag Pickers at Kodungaiyur Waste Dump Yard, Chennai Corporation**

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Waste was an unavoidable by-product of human activities. Economic development, urbanization and improved living standards in cities contribute to increase in the quantity and complexity of generated solid waste. If accumulated, it leads to degradation of urban environment, stresses natural resources and leads to health problems. Here the study discuss about the vulnerable commune who depends on the waste. They are the women rag pickers who have a difficult life, working hard to clean the cities. Women Rag Pickers play an important, but usually unrecognized role in the waste management system of Indian cities. The job of rag pickers is the most dangerous and destructive of self-worth. The nature of their work and environment is most unhygienic. Usually, the women rag pickers collect the household / commercial and industrial wastes like plastics,

papers, metal wastes, electronic wastes, and hospital wastes like synergies, glass bottles etc., on streets and the dump yards. This study focuses the women rag pickers who collect the hospital wastes from the dump yards. They are the one who easily prone to several health hazards and highly dangerous diseases with high vulnerability. The women rag pickers recycle the wastes and make economy by selling them to the contractors or dealers. The Chennai Corporation has two major dumping grounds at Kodungaiyur and Perungudi around 200 acres of each. In that, the Kodungaiyur dump yard is said to be the largest dump yard. It has many harmful effects on residents in the vicinity to the dump yard, where it prone to the fatal diseases like aids and hepatitis; communicable diseases like malaria and etc., The kodungaiyur dump yard has the large number of women rag pickers who collect wastes and also they are the residents of kodungaiyur slum clearance board (a recognized JJ cluster settlement) from generations back. Basically they have no other option apart from the waste collection. With this background this paper explores the causes of their vulnerability and dependence on the waste collection with the sample of 50 women rag pickers who collect the hospital wastes and the support of empirical evidences in the site. The information has been developed through the literature review, questionnaire survey and open- ended interviews conducted to generate data on the women rag pickers of Kodungaiyur dump yard.

## **Rural Women in the Labour Markets of Ranchi**

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With the advent of industrialization and urbanization, and capital formation of Jharkhand, a good many structures are coming up in Ranchi. Ranchi is swelling and spreading up every day. Real estate market is coming up as a big industry and centre of business, where lakhs and lakhs of labours are being absorbed. These labour forces are coming from the rural and tribal areas. Tribal men and women are being engaged in greater proportion in varied labour forces. Basically, Ranchi was a settlement of tribal villages and still its vicinity is populated mostly by the tribal people. The major tribes are the Munda, Oraon Santhal, Lohra, Bedia etc. The Tribals were basically non -surplus producers and were predominantly engaged in agricultural works in rural areas in their hamlets, which was the only source of economic production, besides the forest economy. But, the forest is also dwindling today. The rural tribal people are moving to the city in search of employment. With growth of population, the agricultural land

is becoming insufficient and non-profitable. Lack of irrigation and uncertainty of rain has decreased the chances of productivity of their crops. On the lean season or at times, quitting the traditional occupation, they are bound to migrate to the city by self or by the agents present in different parts of the area. They are being attracted with the so called golden dreams shown by the agents and the lights of a modern city. Women folk are also not behind the men folk. Often, women folk are few steps in advance.

The labour markets are the place where the labours wait for their employers or agents who would take them to the working site. They start assembling at labour markets from 7 am to 10 am. The women workers come to these labour markets in groups from the rural areas. It is found that they come from 30-40 Kms distance. They come generally with their male counterparts. They come by hired auto-rickshaws, by minibuses and on the bicycles of male workers of their villages or the region. In Ranchi, the labour markets are at many places such as Lalpur Chowk, Church Road, Harmu, Doranda, Birsa Chowk etc. These labour markets are situated at different entry points of city. The workers have to wait for their clients, the employers at the markets. If they do not get job, they return to their home also after a long wait. For a large construction centre or working place, workers are often contracted for a period where jobs are secured for some time. The women workers are generally helping hands of the skilled or semi-skilled male labours, and their wages also vary from work to work, place to place and also vary with their male counterpart. They are depended upon the male workers. The women workers also work at private houses in the residential colonies. The women workers work hard but they do not get suitable remunerations, even the minimum daily wage prescribed by the government.

This paper will deal with the labour markets of Ranchi, participation of rural tribal women labours in construction work, working conditions and their problems, problems of women construction workers; the awareness of construction workers regarding wages and development schemes by the government.

## **Women Journalists' Work in Hindi Print Journalism: Context Madhya Pradesh**

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Acknowledging women as a professional has been a constant struggle in



any profession to break glass ceiling. Ellen Riordan (2002:76) has challenged feminist scholars to venture into studies of media economics in order to examine how matters of resources, labour and content are never gender neutral.

This paper contextualizes Hindi print journalism scene in Madhya Pradesh and it significantly discusses the structure of journalism which subordinates women professionals. How journalism treats women as labour while invisibilizing their work. This work elaborates how the overrated word 'passion' is used as a driving or diverting factor for journalists to ignore inequalities existing in Hindi Print journalism. Especially, how women journalists are told to be passionate for the journalistic profession neglecting their gender, professional rights under extreme work conditions. It argues how gender stereotyping is constructed when it comes to the choice of work against binaries of soft and hard beats in journalism. Moreover, as there are numerous categories of journalistic awards in vogue, this paper analyses how system of recognition, honour and awards functions in Hindi Print journalism. This paper also tries to examine the issues about women's choice of work, low or no entitlement of their work and labour. I emphasize that issues of labour are never caste – neutral too thus caste is an important factor in Hindi print journalism regulating and controlling resources and opportunities.

Understanding the location of women in journalism as workforce certainly is an effort to unwrap multiple hierarchies in execution in Hindi print journalism. Women journalists' participation as a professional is a contested sight to equally understand valuation of their work through their experiences. This paper employs qualitative research approach with an attempt to trace the socio-cultural linkages existing in Hindi print journalism based on women journalists' lived experiences tracing nuances to theorize their negotiation.

This paper is a part of my Doctoral Research and based on in-depth interviews conducted with women journalists working in four cities Indore, Bhopal, Gwalior and Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh. This work is also an attempt to understand nature and structure of Hindi print journalism in Hindi speaking state Madhya Pradesh which is academically less talked subject too.

## **The 'Other' Logistics: Women and Work in Haldia**

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Existing research points to the logistical space centring upon and surrounding a port as masculine, characterised by male labour, heavy machinery, technological control. If port logistics is understood as starting from the moment the ship enters the dock, the arrangement for unloading cargo, ensuring its despatch to various warehouses, loading into containers, unloading at the warehouse and then loading into containers that would then be despatched to different destinations, logistical actors, ranging from crane operators, truck drivers, supervisors, owners of logistical operations, port employees, manual labourers and security guards, are all men. The ability to work around the clock, the availability of labourers at all hours etc. have been shown by Nelli Kambouri et al as 'the ability to work without having family or domestic care responsibilities', determining port work as masculine work.

An year long ethnographical project, enquiring into the logistical network surrounding Haldia port at Southern West Bengal however pointed at other, considered to be marginal, actors in this logistical field, operating and sustaining 'big' logistics, procuring the same commodities, delivering and generating miniscule profit that then gets subsumed within the ideology of home making.

Haldia is, at the same time, a port city, a Dock Complex (HDC), an ancillary of Kolkata Port Trust, a space where large scale land acquisition in the 1960s were claimed to have been met with surprisingly less resistance, a narrative that is being widely challenged by both people who were removed from their lands and new research, as well as a space marked by widespread new migration, both labour and family migration, narratives of failure, imminent closure, increasing precariatization of labour and reducing employment benefits and securities.

The foci of this paper however are impoverished migrant women, new entrants into the economic space of Haldia, from neighbouring districts and villages, in accompaniment with husbands, children and older family members, populating the shanties on two sides of National Highway 41 (NH41). While HDC deals with coal, iron scrap etc., the women living along NH41 sweep up coal dust from the road, gather sedimentation from a pond adjoining HDC, sift iron scrap from construction debris and participate in and sustain an 'other' logistics: : an informal network also dependent upon the HDC, that makes the most marginal, disprivileged and displaced women continue to be impoverished, yet identify as economic actors within the space of this increasingly precariatized and short lived employment conditions.

But their work also has to be situated within a systematic undervaluation of

women's work manifested through occupational segregation, discrimination and women's unequal share in family responsibilities, as well as the realities of rural to urban migration, which means a lack of access to commons and spaces from where cooking fuel could be collected and a continuation of household chores in spite of altered living arrangements and different occupations for the male members of the family.

Through ethnographic research and photographic documentation, this paper argues for the continuation of women's work as underpaid yet never done, constructing a parallel to big business and logistics, yet not reaping any of its benefits.

## **Peripheral Livelihoods of Women across Generations in Rural Nagaland**

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This paper is based on ongoing research work on understanding productive, reproductive and community based work of single women farmers in a Chakhesang village of Nagaland. It also focuses on women's work in rural Nagaland across three generations within a tribal community context. The contextual understanding of peripheral livelihoods for rural tribal women is rooted in intersectionality of gender, skills, resource crunch, cultural codes, history of conflict and class. Oral history of women's work during World War II is another facet which defined the labour intensive traditions of women's work in the post-conflict context in rural Nagaland. Such work does not find space in formal, informal and any other sectors which defines women's work. This paper addresses the transitions of women's livelihoods which had an impact on women's choices, mobility, gender roles, community interventions and state policies. It will also include the discourse around peripheral livelihoods which disguises women's work as non-normative and deviant within the restricted domain of professional work even within project based women's organisations. The empirical evidences are drawn from feminist methods of intergenerational family interviews of women, participatory exercise with women's groups, in-depth interviews with women farmers.

## **Reviving Trends in Women's Employment in Kerala: A Survey of Household Economic Attributes**

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The paper attempts to examine the reviving trends in women's employment, drawing parallels between their decision to seek paid activities in the market and the underlying economic attributes of the households. Against the broader trends in economic growth and its distribution and social sector spending, the paper evaluates the reconfiguration and restructuring in the labour market outcomes among women in Kerala, the southernmost state in India. The paper looks at the relative role of household economic characteristics, individuals attributes in the labour market and the changing labour relations in influencing women's participation in paid work. Alongside a rise in employment rates among women in Kerala as against the dampened work participation among women in the rest of the country observed post 2004-05, the immediate rationale for assessing the labour market participation among women in the state stems from the compositional shifts in the employment outcomes. The paper hypothesises that the observed changes in the labour market are reflective of the recommodification effects of a skewed distribution of economic resources and a neglect of the state's expenditure on social sectors including education and health. This is particularly true in the case of women, whose secondary worker status enables them to enter the labour market to tide over the household crisis. The paper posits that the observed trends in women's employment are closely associated with the household economic vulnerabilities that impel women to take up paid work.

## **Female Marriage Migrants in the Workforce: Moving Past a Blind Spot in Migration Statistics**

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It has been widely noted that the two major data sources on migration data in India—the Census and the National Sample Survey (NSS)—fail to account for the complexities of migration, by according a singular reason for migration. This shortcoming is starkly visible in the bifurcation of male and female migrants and their motivations to migrate—men are largely reported to be moving for

work, while the movement of women is linked to marriage. Yet, limited attention has been paid to the question of who the women marriage migrants are. This paper interrogates the female migration phenomena from the viewpoint of the current activity status for women, with the intent to turn the gaze around. Using data from the NSS 64th round, we find that well over a quarter of women in urban areas and over half in rural areas who reported migrating due to marriage are part of the workforce. In contrast, the proportion of women who moved due to employment related reasons in relation to total women workers is a little over 1 % in rural areas, and about 10 % in urban areas. Women's marriage-related movements and their work status subsequent to migration have always been marked by a distinct rural-urban divide; while women migrants are generally seen to work post-marriage in rural areas, withdrawal of women migrants from the labour force after migration (related to marriage) is commonly observed in urban areas. What we find interesting, however, is that in both rural and urban areas, migrant women who are married are often engaged in similar or better job profiles than married, non-migrant women. Disaggregating further though, we find that the nature of these job-profiles vary spatially and socially, as is observed in a greater incidence of casual work among long-distance and socially backward women migrants. In the same vein, this also brings to the fore the contributions of female marriage migrants in sustaining a migrant workforce in contemporary India, which is segmented along caste and spatial distinctions. At a deeper level, the findings of this paper stand in contrast to popular notions of female migrants as young, unmarried workers that are typically observed in narratives of feminisation of the workforce. In addition to critically interrogating existing representations of female migrants in official statistics, the paper seeks to reconfigure the underreporting of the intensity and/or scale of female migration by piecing together seemingly separate aspects of the same dataset into a more cogent and representative narrative.

## **Regulatory Gaps, Intermediation of Supply and the Structuring of the Market for Domestic work in the NCR**

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Paid domestic work is marked by regulatory features that heighten women's vulnerability and distinguishes it from other forms of informal employment. The sector is still not recognised fully as labour in as it lacks cover under the labour

laws in the same way as other forms of wage labour. While India is still to regulate domestic work through legislation, regulation has been brought in piece meal at different levels. Not all states have prescribed minimum wages for domestic work but some have and after much struggle domestic workers were brought under the law against sexual harassment at the workplace. Though domestic workers have been brought under the Rashtriya Swashtiya BimaYojana, the coverage is negligible. Further, paid domestic work is carried out in the private spaces of households and mostly by women. Despite the ambiguities emerging from regulatory gaps, a thriving market for domestic work in the NCR, supported by large scale migration, has brought in informal institutional features that provide some security in terms of wages and contracts. This study draws from the primary survey conducted among female domestic workers and employers in National capital region. It was found that three forms of intermediation on the supply side of the market in the NCR define the terms of entry into the market and the conditions of work. These three forms of intermediation, (a) commercial for profit agencies that bring workers to Delhi mostly from the eastern region and place them in households (b) welfare organisations which affiliate workers that approach them and work to secure better terms of employment while also providing skills training and opportunities to study; and (c) social networks and personal connections which workers tap into to migrate to the city and to find employment enable them to negotiate the market. These three forms of intermediation have rather distinct implications for employment relations for the domestic workers. In the absence of regulation and supporting legislation, we found that employment relations were structured according to the forms of intermediation. Overall employment was largely contractual in nature but some elements of patronage were also observed. Work arrangements differed according to the forms of intermediation. Full time workers were mostly those who had come to the city through commercial agencies or were affiliated to social organisations. In contrast, part time workers mostly reached the city through social networks. Workers had the least bargaining power when they were supplied by commercial agencies, wages of part time workers differed according to the area of work but was structured by the market. As entry was mediated by networks, workers could find it difficult to move from one area to another unless they developed connections through prior workers. Welfare organisations on the other hand supported workers to gain better terms of work. Hence, using the field observations the study highlights the scope and need for individual agency, collectivization and Post Doctoral Associate, Division of Social Sciences, NYU, Abu Dhabi, UAE; swethaa@nyu.edu

Though the process of collectivization has

begun in the National Capital Region, it has not substantially strengthened workers' bargaining power in terms of wages but, workers professed that they feel a sense of being connected. There are instances where the association with the organisations under the Delhi unit of National Platform for Domestic Workers has enabled the workers to negotiate for their entitlements.

## **Beyond Boon, Doom and Balance: India's Elite Professional Women and the Selective Transformation of Latent Social Capital'**

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Using data from over a 130 interviews, this research highlights the empirical case of "professional elite" women in India's legal and management consulting firms. The mainstay of the literature on women and work, especially in global contexts, has been limited to low-skilled labor, gendered work or low prestige work. In contrast, a focus on this demographic of successful and economically independent professional elites, offers novel theoretical significance for several reasons. First, it explores a new segment of the population who are born into middle-class families but transform into a professional elite class following entry into these new, post- liberalization firms. Second, it offers insight to the specific ways in which these women – contrary to existing narratives of sexual promiscuity, family responsibility and austerity – access and inhabit, with relative ease, elite spaces and praxis. Finally, it suggests new directions for our understanding of intersectionality in these contexts. Women in India have traditionally been advantaged by class and caste positionality, yet this has not typically transformed to gender-agnostic workplace experiences. While these background characteristics were certainly an advantage, they were not sufficient in explaining success within these firms. Instead, I suggest specific organizational conditions that engendered this atypical transfiguration.

## **Bottlenecks to Dalit Womens' Entrepreneurship Development**

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India is the second most populous country in the world. Women comprise

48.5% of the population. More women work in Rural India than in cities. Overall, the labour force participation rate for women is falling from 37% in 2004-05 to 29% in 2009-10. In 2011-2012, women comprised 24.8 of all rural workers, down from 31.8% in 1972-73. In 2011-2012, women comprised 14.7% of all urban workers, a small increase from 13.4 in 1972-73. 13.4% of Indian working women have a regular salaried job compared to 21.2 of working men (aged 15-59). India will add 110 million people to its labour force in the next 10 years, including youth and women entering the workforce. If India can increase women's labour force participation by 10 percentage points (68 million more women by 2025, India could increase its GDP by 16%. With education, exposure, connectedness and globalization, women are getting more opportunities to be in the self-employed sector especially in the service sector. However women especially dalit women face a lot of hostilities both within their respective families, communities and in the society at large to cash on their entrepreneurial abilities. The state and central government policies have not defined exactly, who an entrepreneur is and what an enterprise is. The understanding of entrepreneurship that prevails with the mainstream financial institutions are not favorable to women especially dalit women to benefit from the government schemes either to start an enterprise or scale up the existing enterprise. One doubts whether an income generation activity by a woman can be considered as an 'enterprise' at all with the existing theories and policies related to entrepreneurship.

The definitions of who is an entrepreneur certainly suit our dalit women who are initiators, leaders in their own right, accountable, responsible and moreover willing to take risks. In this background, the paper will examine the bottlenecks that either prevent women to venture into business or scale up their existing income generation activities (which we call for our study purposes as enterprises or businesses) with the support of three case studies done in the most backward district (Villupuram) of Tamil Nadu. Unless the government recognizes the bottlenecks whether they are policy related or societal, dalit women won't be able to participate even on equal bar with their fellow women in work force. The responsibility of the government is to remove the bottlenecks so that dalit women participate increasingly in self-employment.



# **Does Gender of the Owner matter for Firm's Access to Formal Credit? Evidence from Small Firms in India**

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In this study we analyze whether gender of the owner matters in firm performance and in credit access from institutional sources. We employ unit-level dataset for the registered and unregistered enterprises, drawn from the Fourth Survey round on the Indian Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises carried out for the period, 2006-7. Unlike the existing studies, our dataset provide an opportunity to analyze gender gap in credit access using various measures of women involvement in the ownership and management of the enterprises. Our findings point to the underperformance in size, growth and efficiency of firms owned by women when compared to their male counterparts. Our empirical analysis suggests that irrespective of the extent of the women involvement in the firms, women-owned firms are more likely to be denied credit than male-owned firms. We find that male owned firms have about 15-20 per cent higher probability of obtaining a loan as compared to women entrepreneurs. Various robustness tests that we undertook support the existence of gender based discrimination in the credit market. The findings are thus consistent with the fact that women owned firms are disadvantaged against in the market for small-business credit, which would be traditionally attributed to discrimination, and any attempt at bridging the gender gap in performance should focus on addressing the gender discrimination in the small-business credit market.

## **Skills Training, Employment Possibilities and Women's 'Empowerment'**

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Several economists and policy makers have argued that 'India is on the cusp of a demographic opportunity.' It is said that today India is one of the youngest nations in the world with more than 62% of the population in the working age group (15-59 years), and more than 54% of the total population below 25 years of age. In the next 20 years the labour force in the industrialized world will

decline by 4%, while in India it will increase by 32%. This poses both a challenge and an opportunity, given that the 'demographic dividend' is neither automatic nor assured and depends on a gamut of factors like the educational, health and other aspects of the present and future workforce. To reap this 'demographic dividend' which is expected to last for the next 25 years, it has been said that India needs to equip its workforce with employable skills and knowledge, so that the youth can 'participate productively'. This is also seen as a great opportunity for women and girls to get skilled and enter the workforce at the national as well as at the global level. At another level, is an increased emphasis on and urge by women to get into education as well as skills training in order to get more empowered and to be able to determine their own lives. While relative to the earlier period, a great deal of resources have been invested in skills training by the government as well as the private sector, the task is gigantic and in order to plug into the need for a 'skilled and employable workforce', several skill training institutions and organizations have come up in the last couple of decades, especially in the last decade. There are also initiatives by NGOs and women's organizations that have as their starting point a much more comprehensive approach to either empowerment of women, especially in non-traditional skills or empowerment of Dalit or underprivileged youth. However, the approaches have been very different in the three sectors. One common element is that there is a focus on the hard skills as there is a recognition that hard skills are at the core of employment possibilities as well as the confidence of the workforce. Given the backdrop of declining employment opportunities globally as well as nationally, how these different types of skills training courses and institutions impact on the skills, the confidence, and employment or livelihood prospects and on the empowerment and autonomy of the girls and women is an important area to look at. The paper will look at experiences of 7 organizations in 5 states. These include ITIs, Government schemes, private training institutions as well as NGOs and feminist organizations with a rights-based perspective.

## **Female Employment in Kerala: Some insights from the Study of a Village in Kerala**

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Kerala provides a suitable setting to understand how far indicators such as higher literacy rate, enrolment in higher education, favourable sex ratio and small

family have translated into empowerment of women in terms of female work participation. Our study based on the micro level study of a village in central Kerala shows that the above impressive indicators have failed to translate into higher female employment. An analysis of Kudumbashree, a state sponsored woman centric community programme also shows that women's access to community programmes have failed to empower them. Such a visible paradox in female employment is explained in this article as an outcome of 'gendering' at two levels: education and employment. Also social institutions such as social norms, dowry system, patrilineal system and patrilocal residence also mediate women's entry into education and employment. The choices that a woman make regarding her education, employment and community participation are very much shaped by the social structure where a man is associated with 'outside activity' and a woman with 'inside activity'.

## **Women and Employment: Recent Crisis in Agricultural Employment and changing Patterns of Employment of women in Meghalaya, North East India**

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The global economy and employment sectors are undergoing spectacular changes over several decades consequenceing in critical scenarios of employment patterns of workers, both men and women. Globalisation, diversification of economies as well as the societal conditions deciding the wage structures, duration of working hours and access to resources are all becoming increasingly pertinent for shaping the employment patterns. The countries or regions where primary economy has the stronger hold, are viewing sharper transformation in the employment pattern and, as the studies reveal, the pattern of women employment in these regions has received a much conspicuous change, in respect of nature and status of employment and resultant social status. The instances of marginalization and economic inequalities among and between male and female workers have surfaced across the regions and countries of the world. In the north eastern region of India, as researches have confirmed, an alarmingly increasing population number and a gradually declining land-man ratio with an invariably decreasing hold of the agricultural sector to employ the workers together have a condemning effect on the occupational patterns particularly those of women. A huge increase in the rates of casual employment of women workers as well as an increasing trend of shift of women workers from primary sector vis-à-vis

from agricultural sector to the lower strata of tertiary sectors point to a situation which requires serious inquiries to realize current status of women employment in the region. Meghalaya, being one of the constituent states of North East India, showcases an almost similar scenario as regards the patterns of women employment in its economic sectors. Observing the data base of the last two decades, it becomes evident that the agrarian sector of Meghalaya as is in other states of the region has undergone a dramatic change through information and commercialization. Women, who used to play central, critical roles in agricultural sectors as for example crop selection crop rotation etc., are being marginalized to carry on lesser jobs in view of increased commercialization of farms in place of traditional practices. A generally low rate of literacy, lower life expectancy and the existing social systems have a deterring effect on the employment of women in high-end remunerative jobs rather restricting the employment of female workers in less remunerative, casual jobs specifically in the construction and personal services jobs. The present study attempts an in-depth, critical analysis of the changing employment pattern of women workers in Meghalaya along with that of the region to reflect on the current status of women workers and assess their development index as well.

## **Women, Work Migration and Social Recognition**

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From 1991, the year when sex-segregated data began to be recorded, and December 2012, the official participation of Bangladeshi women in cross-border labour migration varied from 0.2 to 6 per cent. That negligible participation belongs to the past. In 2015, women made up nearly a fifth of the migrant population (18.7%) and figures for the current year are not far behind. Badly affected by the drop in the price of petrol, the Gulf States, which have been major destinations, reduced demand for male labour while call for female labour has been stable. It even increased for Saudi Arabia after several sending countries banned that destination for their women. The Government of Bangladesh followed a different path. In February 2015, it signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Saudi kingdom promising to send 200,000 women as domestic workers, thus reversing a decades-long policy of restrictions and abandoning the claim that 'female migration is not in our culture'. The

Bangladeshi media have been critical of this MoU pointing out the poor record of Saudi employers with domestic workers and Bangladesh government inadequate protection for 'vulnerable' women. As a result of these policies, the cost of female migration to Gulf States, and especially to Saudi Arabia, has reduced. Presently, migration to these countries is 10 to 20 times less costly for women than for men. In other words, male migration is a luxury that modest families simply cannot afford while female migration is an option that many families would not have considered in the past. This is the background against which the Women in Freedom (WiF) project was implemented. Under the guidance of ILO and overseen by the Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment, NGOs offered training to potential migrant women. Positive messages dressed female migration, now legal and legitimate, with a new respectability. Talk about human rights, workers' rights and women's rights, information about procedures and costs, announcement of protective measures, etc. emboldened women. The rhetoric has been that informed women can avoid the pitfalls that ignorant women migrating through brokers face. To assess the NGO/ILO training, fieldwork was conducted in 3 sites of Narayangonj district including rural and semi-rural areas and a resettlement for displaced families established in the 1970s. The study looked into women's understanding of the messages received, the importance and credibility accorded to them and the influence these had on their decision to migrate and the procedures followed. We sought to know women's motivations, expectations and fears and their perceptions of the comparable advantages of overseas work in relation to local employment (where available). Interviews were conducted with husbands and other family members to solicit their points of view. Progress in family negotiations was observed at regular intervals. Women were followed after migration (when possible). Discovering a reality quite different from that presented at the training, the latter was re-assessed. Could women cope with employers' demands (which may entail more than domestic work)? And when unable to cope, what were the recourses? Families at home expect remittances. How did women manage pressing demands for money while keeping some control over their earnings? What leverage did they have on the way money was spent at home? Even though the NGO/ILO training dressed female migration with a new respectability, the suspicion that migrant women jeopardize their virtue is still strong. Managing this man-made 'vulnerability' is important. Women should safeguard their reputation. NGO staff engaged in the WiF program recommended to women returned early not to reveal the causes of their return as it could spoil their honor (e.g. being forcibly engaged in prostitution).The respectability of migration for women requires a kind of

purdah – some may say a lie - covering what should not be seen. To be successful at home and abroad, migrant women must learn to manage double lives and double moral references. While, for men and women, successful migration is defined in terms of earnings, there are limits to the wealth migrant women can display. A young woman earning well in a short period of time can be disgraced and expelled from the community (somaj) in the name of moral order. Male migrants are not submitted to the same moral scrutiny.

## **Adapting to ‘Status Reproduction’? Home Based Entrepreneurship amongst Middle Class Aggarwal Women in Delhi**

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Goldin’s (1951) U shaped curve helps partly explain the defeminisation of employment in some sectors through the withdrawal of middle and upper middle class women despite high levels of education, while an increasing feminization of women in certain precarious informal forms of work through the employment of women from marginalized sections of the society. Studies have documented this inverse relationship empirically in the Indian context amongst different castes. Against this macro context, I focus on micro strategies employed by middle and lower middle class urban dominant caste women (Aggarwal) who selectively participate in the new economy through Home Based Entrepreneurship (HBE). Aggarwals in Delhi are a mercantile caste, members are known for their business acumen and conservative historical negotiation of the women’s question. These women across two generations (mother-in-laws and daughter-in-laws) have either never been allowed to participate in paid employment or withdrawn to contribute to ‘status production’ after marriage. Home Based Entrepreneurship (HBE) through women’s in-depth narratives is defined as self-employment that is remunerative but non-managerial, has flexible hours and produces goods and services that are consumed in the immediate neighbourhood. Three questions are addressed: first, why and what do women choose as HBE?; second, what conditions are important for women to be successful in their enterprise?; and third, does HBE have a democratising potential in the lives of women? I argue that an increase in HBE in urban spaces in the last five years can be read as an adaptive strategy to the pressures of ‘status reproduction’ and ‘housewification’ in middle and lower middle class joint families from urban dominant castes. It allows women to maintain the perceived respectability of their class/caste status,

shoulder the 'double' burden, choose the caste and gender of their cliental and make money. The nature of the HBE that is Tupperware, insurance schemes, setting up of matrimonial agencies, selling things online, designing jewellery and teaching Reiki and women's production and consumption of it reflects the nature of the local socio-cultural market. Markets then rather than being 'hostile' to the domestic order is shown as being co-constitutive and money rather than seen as a threat to the affective is seen as a way of ordering social relationships. Families continue to be central in deciding women's education and employment choices around the larger framings of marriage and hence continue to be relevant as a site of study to understand the macro decline in women's labour participation. HBE then signals the tussles of individualisation, which despite urbanisation continues to ground women in the familial and the accompanied adaptive powers of the Hindu joint family.

## **Skilling or Building Capacities? - What Works for Empowering Livelihoods in Non- traditional Sector for Women?**

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The current Government launched its flagship programme of Skill India with the stated objective of generating livelihoods for India's youth. Recent studies show that these initiatives give only a quick-fix of skill in an extremely short period which makes it untenable for the youth, especially women to sustain in any job beyond 1-2 months. Moreover this skilling programme, like the long established Indian Technical Institutes (ITIs), perpetuate traditional gender roles in labour market with women actively discouraged to take up 'masculine' skills such as driving, garage work, electrical work, masonry etc. Certain civil society organizations with a feminist perspective have however been engaging in skill building and livelihoods programmes for urban poor women in these non- traditional livelihoods (those that were traditionally closed to women and deemed masculine professions), creating new opportunities for women outside the dominant spaces of paid domestic and care work. Gradually the Government and the private sector are taking notice of this emerging sector and offering skill training and livelihood opportunities (such as the PPP model of Gender Park in Kerala, driving training by some private players and state poverty eradication programmes in Delhi and Kolkata). However while they are beginning to take

on board the possibility of women breaking through in so called ‘masculine’ professions, the skill training is limited to minimalistic models of technical skills, and livelihoods are imagined in terms of self employment. This paper argues that challenging gendered labour markets by resource poor urban women take much more than technical skills. What is required is the lost discourse of an adult education programme, practiced by some of these civil society organizations in which training incorporates awareness on rights, self development, leadership building as well as technical skills. Some organizations, such as Azad Foundation, the case presented in this paper, take one more step ahead by linking the training programme to campaigns such as citizenship rights and violence against women. The paper argues that three crucial debates have to be revisited: the argument of scale of outreach versus the depth of outreach: need of public investment in poverty alleviation/empowerment: and wage employment versus self employment as the path out of disempowerment and poverty. If poor women from marginalized sections in urban spaces have to engage in non- traditional livelihoods such as driving in a sustainable manner, one has to work at several levels: engaging with communities and families which are often violent and abusive or where the woman is constrained by reproductive responsibilities; engaging with the women trainees to enable them unlearn gender roles, regain the confidence and identity denied through longstanding socialization; engage with the state and markets to create opportunities for livelihoods which generate stable incomes. Skill programmes by the Government or the Private sector only limit themselves to delivery of technical skills, shifting the onus of navigating hostile markets and hostile families to the women trainees, thereby leading to mass drop outs and lack of both sustainable incomes and social empowerment.

## **Driving Change: Female Chauffeurs in India; Breaking Moulds, Transforming Selves**

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While globalization has created new income earning opportunities for women, these opportunities often follow patterns of the traditional sexual division of labour, limiting women to certain occupations. Most women are accepted into the workforce in subordinate positions or at lower wages, largely within the informal sector. In the Indian context only 27% of the formal labour force is female, this figure has consistently remained at 27% since 2012, when



it fell from 28% (The World Bank 2016). Interestingly, migration to the city is a large factor with regards to women and work, with the urban population increasing at a much faster rate than the rural population. “Between 2001 and 2011, the rural population increased by 12%, while the urban population expanded by 31.8%” (Chatterjee, Murgai and Rama 2015, 7). This trend has created a job deficit in cities, causing women to drop out of the workforce or work in wage employment. This has direct consequences upon women’s access to employment and subsequently, “there will be fewer women contributing to household income over time as more women become urban [and unemployed] and as those remaining in rural areas work less.” (Chatterjee, Murgai and Rama 2015, 9). However, at the same time things are changing for women against the backdrop of the city, as new opportunities are becoming available for girls and young women; with some women breaking into jobs previously defined as “male” such as driving taxi cabs, staffing petrol pumps or driving autorickshaws. This entry into male avenues of work is challenging gender roles and expectations. While changes in the kind of occupations that young women can enter might be seen as an outcome of modern life in which gender barriers are constantly being broken, one needs to examine the negotiations involved. In this paper I examine the experiences of a young working-class woman, Shabnam, who works as a private chauffeur in Delhi after being trained by Azad Foundation an NGO that focusses on empowering women to undertake ‘livelihoods with dignity’. I explore how Shabnam chose to enter what is termed as “non-traditional” (or male-dominated) work and whether it poses a challenge to the dichotomy of masculine and feminine occupations. Further, since Indian society sees women as belonging to the “private” and not the “public” sphere of social life, how does society and family react to Shabnam entering the “public” sphere and that too in a male occupation? How does Shabnam engage with the city? How do such young women’s lives define them as being modern in their own eyes? What is the nature of their struggles in striving to live modern lives in the city?

## **Title of Sub-theme: Women’s Work and Employment**

### **Problematizing Homogenous Category of Working Class Women: Domestic and Construction Workers**

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One of the major phenomena accompanying neo-liberal - globalization affecting agrarian economy has been migration of large numbers of people from rural to urban areas for work. Amongst the migration a large percentage are women, who get absorbed in the informal sector in the cities. Situating in the context of migration to urban location and women's engagement in the informal sector, the paper tries to draw upon the life-histories of worker type women –agricultural, domestic and construction worker. The major concern of this paper is to understand the ways in which these women negotiate with their everyday realities and how they perceive their own work. Some of the questions that the paper would engage are how do these women view their own migration and way in which it has impacted their lives, work and everyday struggles? Do they identify themselves as working women? How did they perceive their work prior to their shifting to cities? Did they identify themselves as working women in their role in village, say as agriculture workers? How do domestic and construction workers view themselves as well as each other? The paper would not only try to problematize the homogenous category of working class women but would also critically engage with the question of caste, gender and labour.

## **Surrogacy and The Handmaid's Tale**

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In light of the burgeoning commercial surrogacy industry in India and South Asia, this paper attempts to review and compare the various debates that have emerged in this particular context. The idea of relieving women from the burden of reproductive labour through advances in science was considered by earlier radical feminists (such as Firestone) as emancipatory in theoretical terms. However, in practice, it has conscripted third world women into bearing first world women's reproductive labour. The generalized market understanding of surrogacy paints the issue of justice in terms of the 'choice' framework. The 'right' of the infertile to reproduce through surrogacy is often welcomed as a step towards enabling the reproductive freedom for first world women and homosexual couples. The freedom of the first world woman at the cost of the freedom of the third world woman is a gross violation of reproductive justice, and a prime example of reproductive servitude. In the larger politics of globalised labour, it is not new to find that third world women often get the short end of the stick either which way. In this paper, we argue following Amrita Pande that what is different in case of surrogacy is the fact that it does not fall squarely into either

stigma or 'dirty work', being a little bit of both and yet gaining a kind of moral upper ground. Pande argues that surrogacy is a new form of reproductive labour (in the South Asian context) that she refers to as 'sexualised care work,' and that marks it as different from other forms of bodily work that are stigmatized such as sex work and domestic work. In Margaret Atwood's classic dystopian novel 'The Handmaid's Tale', we find a lot of these work categories getting subsumed or collapsed into one big category, where the lines between surrogacy and sex work are blurred. This paper is not concerned with the ethical, moral or philosophical questions that seek to hierarchize one form of work over the other. Rather than debating whether reproductive servitude is better or worse than sex work or domestic work; or trying to look towards alienation as the problem, we choose to focus on the context within which commercial surrogacy as a form of work has emerged in South Asia and on 'who' is performing this reproductive labour. Drawing parallels from Atwood and Pande's narratives, the paper focuses on the labour performed by certain women belonging to a certain social context that makes commercial surrogacy problematic. Atwood's novel deals with tropes of motherhood, surrogacy and indoctrination of the surrogate mother; all of which bears an uncanny resemblance to the current commercial surrogacy scenario. Indeed, the idea of motherhood that surrogacy campaigns cater to is analogous to the idea of motherhood in Atwood's novel.

## **Presence of OBC Women as a Teacher in Universities and Academic institutions**

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In year 2015 partial implementation of Mandal Commission completed 25 years. As per recommendation of commission reservation for OBCs was introduced in all categories of government, semi-government and government aided institutes. The year of implementation experienced strong opposition to Mandal Commission from various sections. Scholars and academicians were struck by agitation from women college students in Delhi carrying placards written 'we don't want unemployed husband'! The clear message was that, these girls would be deprived of upper caste educated husbands. It also said that the OBC's and Dalit men who would be occupying such higher positions could never be their potential husbands. In this chaos of patriarchal imagination of reservation policy, the issue of OBC women who were to be benefited by this implementation of Mandal Commission was never at the centre of the discussion.

Approximately 25% of total population and 50% of women population of India is occupied by OBC women. The challenges and opportunities experienced by OBC women are definite factor of impact on national assessment of women's work and employment. This is the time to look into facts about OBC women benefiting by reservation, and also this is the time to appraise this affirmative action which was partially paralyzed by introduction of Creamy Layer. It is impossible to look in all the sectors, so we will concentrate on teaching positions in higher education in India. Ideally 27% positions should be occupied by OBC women out of total work force, but we see that, in 2012-13 only 12.7% OBC women could acquire positions out of total women employees in Central Universities. In the institutes of national importance, like I.I.Ts, N.I.Ts, A.I.I.M.S, I.S.Is, and some other institutes OBC women could acquire only 4.5% out of total employed female force. In State Public Universities the picture is slightly different. In this case OBC women are 24% out of total women workforce. In aggregate statistics of employment in all Universities and institutions all over India OBC women teachers in higher education are 22.79% out of total employed female workforce. (Source: <http://data.gov.in>) Statistics of employment in teaching position in Savitribai Phule Pune University also show the same pattern. In this paper, we will address experience of OBC women in particular occupation as teaching in higher education with the reference of overall reservation policy and Mandal Commission. The above statistics is drawn from open government data platform. In this paper we will disaggregate this data for examining the reasons of expected number of OBC women are not employed, whether their positions are occupied by female candidates from open category or by OBC male candidates. We will also look for data for specific case study of one or two singular units like University or I.I.T. to create empirical evidence. In this paper we will try to situate the challenges and opportunities created by implementation of Mandal Commission with pre condition of Creamy Layer.

## **A Gender Perspective on Modern Education- Employment-Empowerment Milieu for Urban Indian Women**

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This paper is based on my doctoral thesis on "Single Working Women in Urban India." The education and employment opportunities available to young

Indian women and men in fast-developing urban areas are at par with modern global standards. Recent data like Census of India, NASSCOM surveys on employment sectors indicate overall increase in the national education and employment figures in general and for urban women in particular. This paper examines status and progress of urban women in non-traditional male-dominated fields of work namely, business, management and administration. This paper also notes the gaps between women and men in aforementioned fields in terms of their access, growth, retainment, rewards and overall success rates, owing largely to the socio-cultural aspects and individual mindsets – which are still dominated by patriarchy and patriarchal practices. Moreover, areas of business and management are traditionally considered to be masculine and a man befitting the role of a good and strong manager. This gender-stereotyping reinforces glass-ceiling and automatically puts women subject to social scrutiny and disapproval. This social attitude becomes more prominent when these women entrepreneurs and managers also start claiming autonomy in their personal lives and opt out of the traditional ways of family life- thus challenging the age-old institutions and norms of marriage and possibly that of motherhood as well. In this regard, this paper takes account of single (never-married) women who are above 30 years and are single by choice. The fact that these women consciously made a choice to stay single and work in a non-traditional masculine field pose a threat to the patriarchal ideology of domination and dependence of women. As a result, these single working women face great social criticism and mostly deal with disapproval, discrimination, and negative stereotyping on an everyday basis. Interestingly, the discrimination and stereotyping often overlap personal and professional domains trying to discourage women from all possible directions. In this paper, women report to be stereotyped as androgynous, agentic, deviant, undesirable, rebel, bad influence (to others), promiscuous, and asocial. They are often viewed as less-feminine and incapable of leading a normal life- where feminine and normality are defined and propagated by patriarchy- this poses a serious patriarchal allegation which questions the self-concept, individuality and choices of these women as a person and as a professional. In this context, this paper attempts to put forward the ramifications of the choices and struggles of these women, issues in heading a household singly, dealing with gendered discrimination and stereotypes, their coping strategies and support networks available socially and virtually. To sum up, these women report to emerge as winners- dealing with negative social attitudes and adhering to their conscious choices and taking pride in being themselves. These women occupy a small yet significant place in the social fabric and it is an indicative of underlying social change.

# **Between Frying Pan and Fire: A Question of Life and Livelihood of Migrant Women, Working in Informal Sector of Jajpur District, Odisha.**

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A quest for better quality of life is one of the instincts of human beings. This is one of the reasons of both intra- and inter-state migration. Increased demand for labour in the globalized market heralds a spurt in the escalated number of migrant workers, both men and women. Low /no education, lack of skill training (work and communication) and lack of awareness coupled with gendered socio-cultural practices delimits the scope of work and earning opportunity particularly for rural women. Most easily available job opportunity for these women includes unskilled construction work, domestic helper, other labour work like stone crushing etc. Still these low paid jobs are preferred by the landless women to get rid of the perpetual poverty, unemployment, exploitation in their own village and sometimes with the thought of living together with the migrant husband at destination. They step out from their original place in search of earning and better life. But many a times, by joining in informal sectors in urban or suburban areas for their livelihood they land up in such a situation where they have to compromise their autonomy, constitutional rights and social life for a square meal a day. There seen a paradoxical relationship between labour laws /policy and security & development of these rural migrant women workers. They do not accept the unfair negotiation for recruitment process through labour contractors at destination, nor can they to return to their villages where they had already experienced the brunt of starvation and humiliation. Thus they are left to choose between frying pan and fire. The candle of their life is burnt at both the ends. With this backdrop my paper tries to unveil some of the unaddressed issues of women migrants working in the informal sector of stone crushing units in one of the suburb areas of Odisha. The paper is the outcome of a research done among the women working in the stone crushing units of Chandikhol district. Data was collected from 76 women selected from 10 such units spread between Chandikhol to Chadheidhara location through focus group discussions, non structured interviews and observation.

# Religion as a Determinant of Working Women's Well Being

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Religion plays a vital role in determining the norms of a society the roles to be performed by the individuals. This paper identifies the effect of religion in shaping the normative expectations of women regarding gender roles and family responsibilities and the resultant role conflict of working women. Religious influence on the family support in performing their multiple roles and the various coping methods adopted by these working women for their well being are also analysed. The sample consists of 150 working women selected randomly from three Universities of Kerala, which includes both teaching and non-teaching staff from various teaching departments, affiliated colleges and administrative staff of these Universities. Data regarding role conflict and family support experienced by the respondents and the coping strategies used for overcoming the role conflict were collected using specifically developed scales. A 25 point scale was used to measure the role conflict of these respondents. A fifteen point scale was used to measure the Family background and support of the respondents. Coping strategies used were analyzed using a twenty seven point scale in which order of preference of using the strategies were identified. Analysis of data revealed that the religious influence exists in the labour participation of women and that all of these women experience role conflict with variations in the extent of stress while performing their multiple roles. Incidents of both work interfering family and family interfering work were faced by these working women. Family support was a major factor influencing the role conflict of the respondents. A negative correlation was found between the family support experienced and the role conflict of these working women. Religion played a vital role in the sense that those belonging to more conservative type of religion face more role conflict due to the gender role expectations imposed upon them and less family support rendered as part of their cultural norms. Respondents were found to use the coping strategies which fall under three types according to Hall's typologies of coping behaviour viz. structural redefinition of roles, personal redefinition and reactive role behaviour. Those who use the coping methods falling under structural redefinition by sharing their responsibilities among their colleagues and family members were found to experience the lowest role conflict. Those

who use the type III coping methods by trying to perform their multiple roles by their own with perfection and acting as 'super women' were experiencing the highest role conflict. Again, selection of coping strategies varied with the religion these working women belong to. Type I coping method of sharing of household chores and family responsibilities were more widely used in Hindu religion and less popular among women from Muslim religion rather they used the Type III coping methods of performing multiple roles with perfection. This resulted in increased strain and ultimately affected the well being of working women.

## **Women in Construction Sites in Cuttack City**

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The present paper was carried with women construction workers in Cuttack city. In this study I have made an attempt to understand the nature of the work, their wage pattern, conditions they are working in and wage discrimination due to gender. Due to the rapid globalization process the construction sites has attracted a large number of women into the unorganized sector. Women are exposed to discrimination not only in the sphere of wages but in accessing rights. There are many reasons for their flow into the unorganised sector including poverty and lack of literacy and skill. From last two years the project of Jica is going on in Cuttack city. Using the stratified random sampling technique I selected 100 women mainly working under Jica project in different places in Cuttack city. They revealed several kinds of exploitation. There are large wage differences. Majority of them are the migrant workers from the districts of Ganjam, Anugul, Dhenkanal, Bolangiri etc. Due to the poor economic conditions of their family they are forced to migrate for work and despite their contributions to the household their status remains secondary.

## **The Male Spaces within the Women Movement - Women tea plantation labourer's agitation in Kerala**

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The year 2015 has witnessed a remarkable labour agitation lead by women tea plantation worker's collective called 'Pombilai Orumai' in Munnar, Kerala. More



than 5,000 women workers of the Kannan Devan Hills Plantations (KDHP) Company, who were involved in tea plucking, boycotted their work and called for agitation against generations of exploitative labour relations in the Plantation sector. What makes this agitation significant and different in the long history of labour agitations in Kerala, is its spontaneity, vibrancy and the bold decision to disassociate with established trade unions in the sector. The tea plantation labourers in Munnar are mostly Tamil in origin. They have been migrated to Munnar, four or five generations back, from various parts of Tamil Nadu for the development of Tea Plantations in this region. They no longer have any roots in Tamil Nadu and are officially recognised as natives of Kerala possessing voting rights and ration cards. Large sections of them work with Kannan Devan Hills Plantations (KDHP) Company which is the largest Tea Plantation Company in the State with more than 12,000 employees. The 'Pombilai Orumai' agitation emerged against the exploitative working conditions in KDHP Company, demanded for a hike in daily wages, which were less than 200 rupees, a hike in yearly bonus and better working conditions. These issues which are primarily concerned with lower strata of female workers, have been neglected by male-dominated trade unions for years. This agitation is to be noted as the rise of an independent women's movement, within the organised and unionised sector, where the male workers (including husbands, sons and relatives who were also workers), trade unions, and local legislators were not allowed to interfere. Labourer or worker has been considered as a universal category, which often presented as male, able bodied and unionised. The 'Pombilai Orumai' movement were instrumental in presenting multiple and complex identities embedded or associated with the universal category of labourer such as women, Tamil, migrant labourer. The movement is contributory in providing scope for a critical reading of the long history of labour agitations in Kerala. The spontaneity and wide spread attention received by the movement later resulted in contesting for local body elections in Kerala, which was followed by different political negotiations and adjustments. The movement was disintegrated into more than two fractions, one of them recently merged with Aam Admi Party. Focusing on Pombilai Orumai, the current research paper attempts to examine how the patriarchal power structures such as family, workplace, trade unions, media, society and the state interfere into the collective agency of women's movements. It tries to discuss how male dominated power structures and institutions contributed to the fragmentation of this independent movement and the process of negotiation between caste, gender and ethnicity.

# Wage Slavery: Reflections on Women's Work in the Informal Economy

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The discussions on informal economy and the role of women in the informal economy has been making rounds since the 70s when for the first time Government of India set up a committee to investigate various aspects of the status of women. The Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI) presented a rather gloomy picture of mortality rates, health, nutritional standards, employment and education and political representation. Again in 1987, the Government set up a commission to look into the plight of women in informal economy. The Shram Shakti Report of the National Commission on Self Employed Women and Women in Informal Sector highlighted the issues of women workers who despite being engrossed in various economic activities were poor and marginalized to the extent of dehumanization. The Shramjeevani Report of Special Task Force on Women in Informal economy in Bihar by SEWA Bharat (2014) pulls to fore the same questions as in Shram Shakti report as nothing much has changed since 1987 in the case of women and work. The 90s changed the course of debates to globalization and liberalization and the marginalization of women was attributed to the policies taken by the government, especially in the field of manufacturing. The slashing of jobs in the organized sector, increase of contractual work, jobless growth, etc were recognized as factors sending women behind closed doors of the household. Discourses set along these lines fail to see the historical role played by patriarchy, caste and class oppressions and such production relations which have created only unpaid work and wage slaves in the case of women. In this paper, wage slavery is defined as a condition when labour has to choose between works which is low paid or go without working. The methodology is based more on experiences gained during various studies conducted in the past 5 years working amongst women in informal economy. Quantitative data has been taken from various studies on women and work present in public domain which is substantiated with qualitative data collected from focused group discussions conducted in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. The paper is divided into four sections: first section deals with women's work in historical perspectives and the reasons leading to wage slavery; second section is on methodology;

third section presents cases establishing wage slavery amongst large section of women in the informal economy and final section deals with some examples of movements wherein women have organized for asserting rightful wages and rights over assets.

## **Depicting their Lives through Feminist Epistemology**

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The paper aims to explore the level of gender vulnerability of adolescent girls as camp laborers' in Textile industries of Tamil Nadu, which is one among the 9 security components of Composite Labour Security Index (CLSI). It also insists the importance of including Gender Vulnerability Index (GVI) while measuring Composite Labour Security Index (CLSI), illuminates the rationale behind Camp Labour Scheme only for adolescent girls and examines the driving force pushing (ie – Supply side dynamics) the adolescent girls towards it from the perspective of their experience. While the idea of constructing a Labour Security Index (LSI) in this study originated from the work by Sen and Dasgupta who adopted the work by Standing on similar lines; there is a basic difference between the approach of Standing and ours in defining labour security (Standing 2004). Thus Standing measured labour security at the aggregate country level, and this study is an attempt to do the same at micro-level. Standing relied on the broad parameters of labour security which are articulated in terms of different State policies and Institutions. In Sen and Dasgupta's study, analysis is based upon micro-level information in which macro level policy articulation and institutional effects also have a role. The present study, analysis is based on the same approach as in Sen and Dasgupta's Study.

## **Changing Gender Relations in Rice cultivation under System of Rice Intensification (SRI)**

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Livelihood strategies in farming involve employment of new technology.

However, not all rural households and farmers have equal access to assets and opportunities, engage in the same activities or experience the same livelihood outcomes. Gender is one major and useful category to unravel the differential aspects and impacts of adopting a new farming technology such as SRI. The System of Rice Intensification (SRI) is a method of growing rice that reduces requirements of water and labour especially women while at the same time generating surplus rice for improved local and national food security. The paper aims to look at this changing gender relations due to the adoption of differential roles of men and women in both conventional and SRI rice production. This gender analysis will identify the gender roles and responsibilities and also indicate how different household members devote to different tasks (and why), and show how these tasks change rice production methodology. The paper is based on an analysis of primary survey conducted in Pudukkottai district and tries to look at labour use under SRI and conventional methods of cultivation. Pudukkottai district is located in Tamil Nadu State in southern part of India. Agriculture is the main occupation. As is the case in most of India, female workforce participation rates are much lower than those of males in both rural and urban areas. The study indicated that a substantial part of work was carried out by female labour in the case of conventional farms- 86 out of 134 person-days in one acre while under SRI, the number of female labour days was 47 out of 93 person-days in an acre. Also noticeable was that total labour days had come down sharply to 93 days and under SRI there was a decline in absolute terms of 39 days (86 minus 47) and a decline in the share in total labour days by over 60 per cent in CM to just about 50 per cent in SRI. The difference in labour utilisation across gender assumes significance in the context of increasing feminisation in the agricultural sector. Freer time and new farming skills provided them with opportunities to diversify their livelihoods and employment. Increased feminisation and SRI adoption would need institutional and extension support. The paper tries to look at the policy support that would be required to sustain this increased engagement of women in agriculture and the need to provide leadership roles to female farmer promoters who successfully and continuously adopted SRI farming.

## **Analyzing Women's Participation in the Karnataka Tourism Industry**

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Tourism is one of the most vibrating sectors of the economy. It is not only a significant contributor to GDP and foreign exchange reserve of the country, but also provides widespread employment. The growth in the tourism sector emerged as a very important contributor to employment generation in various tourism-related activities. It is the longest services industry globally in terms of revenue as well as investment and employment. Karnataka government identified tourism sector as one of the key sectors propelling economic growth. Karnataka has been ranked as the 4th preferred destination among domestic tourists and 3rd preferred destination for investments in the tourism sector. Tourism industry is one of the major employers of women. It offers various job opportunities for independent income generating activities and at the same time it affects women's lives in destination. It creates paths towards the elimination of poverty among women and local communities in developing countries. In this context the present study makes an attempt to analyze the participation of women in tourism sector in Karnataka. The analysis is based on the secondary data collected from the published sources and primary data collected from tourist destinations located in three important districts of Karnataka namely Mysore, Kodagu and Hassan. These three districts contribute more than 30 percent of the revenue from tourism sector in Karnataka. The results indicate that women are participation in the tourism sector mainly as local service providers at destination in the form of selling fruits and flowers, supplying beverages, selling memorabilia etc. The income that they generate is very low compared to men because men are employed in highly remunerative services, though they are also in the unorganized sector.

## **Interrogating the Gender Dynamics of Labour in the Construction sector in Delhi NCR in the New Millennium**

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Construction Sector is one of the fastest growing industries worldwide. In India, it is the second largest employer and contributor to economic activity after agriculture and the 9th largest construction market in the world. According to the NSSO Data (2011-12) about 5 crore workers were employed in the construction activities in India. It employs approximately 11% of India's workforce and accounts for 8% of the country's GDP. Over the last two decades, massive investment in infrastructure development from both domestic and

international market players has been witnessed. Rising level of urbanisation has created demands for roadways, buildings and other infrastructural facilities leading to a rise in employment levels and output in the construction industry. Major cities across India, irrespective of their size and population have witnessed this trend towards infrastructure development and real estate expansion. This has implications for a fast growing construction and construction-linked industry in these cities. Growth in this sector has created employment opportunities for lakhs of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers, across class, gender, caste and tribe. It has attracted population from rural and semi-urban regions into urban areas for better income and work opportunities. These workers are mostly victims of distress migration and failed agricultural economy, displacement, land grab and debt trap from middlemen. Their literacy level varies according to age, gender and skills at workplace. Male workers are found to be more literate in comparison to female workers, but many lack the requisite skill for undertaking complex and mechanised tasks at workplaces such as the construction sites. Due to its high labour intensive work pattern, various unskilled and illiterate workers readily find access to opportunity for work and wage. The challenge, therefore, lies not in getting an opportunity to work (unlike skilled and specialised work) as there is ample scope for manual workforce but in the transitory and unprotected nature of work and harsh conditions at workplace with hardly any social security or organisational unity. Construction industry has been considered as one of the most exploitative in unorganised sector because of its informal nature and unregulated conditions of work. Literature from various sources like management and labour studies, informal sector, social work, development studies and trade unions have provided a comprehensive framework to understand the challenges faced by this sector of unorganised sector. To begin with, this paper highlights the nature of work, structure as well as key issues pertaining to the construction sector in general and building construction industry in particular. Further, it probes into the gender dynamics that operate within the sector. It seeks to address issues emerging as a result of policies like contractualisation and sub-contractualisation, unequal access to the work site, lack of enforcement of legal norms regarding minimum wages, equal remuneration, crèche facilities, etc with reference to the Building and Other Construction Workers Act 1996 and its associated rules. The resultant gender bias and discriminatory nature of work has led to exclusion of women from this sector. This paper also seeks to explore these practices, policies as well as experiences through an empirical assessment at selected construction sites in Delhi and National Capital Region. The objective of this paper is to critically examine the policy as well as the politics pertaining

to labour market with reference to women construction workers. Besides lack of implementation and inadequate accountability mechanisms, there are issues related to the design of policies and the manner in which they are organised at the grassroots level by the labour unions and other non-governmental organisations. Lack of gender inclusiveness is visible in this regard. Also, the struggle faced by workers at worksites and habitation has played an instrumental role in escalating their burden, henceforth reshaping the struggle beyond the workplace.

## **Women Breadwinners: A Study of Women Work Participation in the Slums of Kolkata**

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The study initially identifies socio-economic determinants of women's contribution to the total household income in the city of Kolkata, based on a primary survey of 300 households. The poor identified in our study areas were living a life of uncertainty and insecurity throughout the year, and were forced to adopt various 'survival strategies'. Diversification of income sources is, perhaps, the most important instrument for the households to escape from poverty. This implied that a sizeable portion of women were actively engaged in the labour force. The analysis highlights heterogeneity among these poor women's paid activities and the intense 'informalization' of their employment. It has also been revealed that both caste and educational attainments of the women have no statistically significant bearing on women's employment and earnings. As expected, women as head of households make bigger contribution to the households' income portfolio. It is also found that the contribution of women to the household income increases as her age rises, and also when she hails from a BPL family. However, contribution of women to the total household income diminishes if the size of the household is large.

## **Women in Indian Armed Forces: A Study on the Persisting Pattern of Gender Discrimination**

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It was in 1992 that the Indian Army recruited women under its Short Service Commission, nearly three and a half decades after India gained independence. Women's entry into the previously male hegemonic area, though might seem to have thrashed the male bastion, the real picture has a totally different story to say. After more than two decades since having made inroads into the army, women are still not being permanently commissioned, except in two branches: education and law. At the end of their Short Service Commission, women of the Armed forces are in a position when they have usually completed their 14 years of service (if not retired earlier) of serving their nation, at the zenith of their careers and mostly, despite having a first-rate track record, find themselves out of service. The situation however is different for male officers appointed under SSC. The male officers however are given a choice to join under permanent commission. Therefore, demands for equal treatment at par with their male counterparts compelled them to move to the court in 2010. The reasons for such explicit gender discrimination may be owing to the social constructivism that includes deep seated patriarchal nature in the Indian employment scenario. There seems to be some inherent politics of exclusion of women when it comes to women's employment in certain areas which are considered to be hardcore men's domain, especially the defence. This seems to make gender discrimination in the armed forces, a very natural and obvious trend. The overall functioning of the Armed forces is totally different and mostly so for security reasons. It is very secretive and a confidential area. The study shall take up a naturalistic approach as per the actual situation since there seems to be limited information on the issue so far. Therefore, case studies shall form an integral part of the paper, in an attempt to understand the ground reality, which shall be substantiated with interviews. Debates relating to women in defence service shall also form an important part of this paper. The paper tries to study the existing patterns of the armed forces with special emphasis on the varied responses, both for and against the presence of women in the armed forces at the same time trying to trace the logic behind such deep rooted biasness.

## **Women on the Move: Understanding the Female Migrant Labour**

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Population movements across the globe have been the truism for several



centuries. It is in recent years with the increased presence of the female migrants; the gender dimension of the migratory flow came to be acknowledged. The focus of the paper is to look at the terms of travel and the conditions of women who migrate from one country to another in the search of employment. An attempt is made to understand this 'feminization of migration' by delving into largely informal sectors such as the hospitality and domestic work sector and attract the largest number of migrant women. Locating these women in the transnational spaces, the paper seeks to uncover the subtle shades of illegality and legality which is bestowed on them. Some key areas that the paper will focus are retail, hospitality together with domestic work and the effect it has on the women, tracing it largely through their narratives given in the literature. An endeavour is made to understand the female migrant through the lens of the sending and receiving states. Traversing through the laws of the states and narratives from the women who are migrant workers, the paper seeks to engage with the issue of how one would approach would issue of migration and women, whether it is through the paradigm of empowerment, self sufficient individuals or victimhood.

## **Contemporary Situation of Valmiki women: A Gendered Analysis of Caste and Class**

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In India, there is Constitutional and legislation prohibition on the 'untouchability' but the caste system regulates social, economic and political life by dividing society into hierarchical social groups where assignment of rights is determined by birth, with the hierarchy being defined on the basis of 'purity' and pollution'. Caste often dictates the type of occupation a person can pursue and the social interactions that he/ she may have. Hence it is not just a division of labour but also division of laborers—it is a hierarchy in which the divisions of labourers are graded one above the other. As Gail Omvedt point out that religious sanction is unique to the caste as a exclusionary system, and it gets maintained through the rigid enforcement of social ostracism (a system of social and economic penalties) in case of any deviations. The proposed study focuses on one ex-untouchable community, which continues to be engaged in the caste based occupation of manual scavenging work. There is a stigma attached to them because the occupation is seen as dirty and as a Bhangis are treated as 'untouchable' even by the other erstwhile 'untouchable' castes in the Hindu society. Manual scavenging

is mainly done by Bhangi, Valmiki community and within that also exclusively performed by Valmiki women. As Aloysius argues, the process of globalization is characterized by decreasing government's role in economic governance and expenditure on social welfare, and by the exclusions of non-educated and non-skilled persons from diversified job opportunities. The compulsion on scavengers to continue in the profession is going to increase, as happen in case of sweepers, therefore untouchable's traditional function, namely evacuating waste to give them a near monopoly on certain salaried jobs. Today also in the government sector specifically railway and municipalities more women work as manual scavengers. There are some studies which show that in the Valmiki community there is male migration for education or for better job opportunity but women are still performing this hereditary job. Valmiki women are opting for this job when they have good education which can ideally give them good job opportunities. This paper examine how caste based occupation is being recast and reiterated in diverse ways. Generally several studies when they talked about manual scavenging they see this women as a victim of the larger structure, but through this study I want to see how the occupation affects women's self-esteem and dignity in their work.

## **Migrant Domestic Workers in Bangalore**

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India being one of the fast growing economies due to the economic reforms of 1990s, initiated the process of Globalization, a feature of this process being the emergence of IT sector which had brought about geographical and social mobility among all section of population. The impact of globalization with internal migration has altered the social structure of our society. Women have taken up to education as a tool to enhance their status in both public and private sphere, with increasing opportunities for women in employment in formal sector we also witness that there is an increase in women entering the informal sector in many cases as unskilled labor working as vegetable vendors, garment workers, construction laborers and domestic helps. Bangalore known as silicon city and Silicon capital of India, it has witnessed a high geographical and social mobility. Educated women have entered labor market and earlier we had the family supporting them in their domestic work and taking care of their young ones, but with a migrant population, patriarchal values where still society assumes that

domestic work is meant for women and nuclearization of family system these working women now are dependent on domestic helps as they have to balance their professional and personal life. Bangalore has witnessed a high rate of internal migration of women from rural communities especially from Tamil Nadu. These women mainly due to the push factors have started to get themselves employed as domestic workers. Migrant laborers are primarily engaged in the unorganized sector and women enter in domestic workers as it is easily available and no need of any specific skill. They are extremely poor and illiterate, have no fixed hour of work and work for low wages. They're very minimal support of trade unions and social security measures. The main concern is about the protection of the rights of these women and do they come under any measures undertaken by the government.

## **Working Mothers - The Everlasting Dilemma**

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Today, the economics of running a family are so complex that an additional income becomes very important. Women opt to work for various reasons. But it is not easy for a woman to balance between work at home and the work spot. This issue is unique in Indian context because of the social structure. Knowingly or unknowingly working mothers have to make a lot of compromises in their lives. The social role and experience of motherhood in India varies from other nations. In the context of patriarchal Indian social structure, the problems faced by working mothers deserve an in depth investigation. This paper examines some of the reasons for opting for employment, the problems experienced by working mothers at home and at the workplace. It also seeks to analyse the nature and extent of deprivation and compromises made by the working mothers. This study is conducted in selective pockets of Madurai city. An appropriate personal interview schedule was constructed and administered for empirical investigations. The primary data collected through personal interview was supplemented by focused group discussions and case studies. The findings of this research will be analysed in detail in this paper. Based upon the objectives and outcome of the present study, the researcher has come out with suggestions for Government, Non Governmental Organisations, Corporate - Private Sectors, Community, Academic Institutions, Family, and Working Mothers.

# Reflecting 'Gendered work' in 'Objects of Display' at Science Museums: Exploring Ahmedabad Science City and Gandhinagar Regional Science Centre in Gujarat

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The paper discusses the depiction of female at work in the science museums. There is no dispute that female and male have been identified with certain types of jobs and responsibilities in the society. In general words division of labour between women and men is known as „gendered work“. It refers to the outcome of processes whereby „work“ is defined, organized, divided, and valued in ways that reflect the patterns of relations (including those marked by advantage or disadvantage) that exist between men and women (and between groups of men and women differentiated on the basis of class, racialization, nationality, age, sexual orientation) and the meanings and identifications attached to „masculinity“ and „femininity“ in a particular socioeconomic context at a particular period in time (Chalmers, 2014; p. 2472). Chalmers (2014) further points out that the division of labour has been documented in historical context too. In case of objects of display in museums one can see such differences of division of labour between women and men. Many societal rituals follow hegemony of traditional rules. Now the time of technology and innovation but women work and their roles are always set on stereotypical mind. It will give lights on these types of difficulties which are facing by gender identity. Today women can do everything they drive train, plane and space or all types of work in our twenty first century, so why cannot she become equal in our society? Object of display is a growing field in the role of Gender in museums. New museum theory and Feminist theory will help to understand museum theorists and their practices which focus on the role of Gendered work. Therefore, the paper seeks to answer questions such as how socio, political and cultural factors played an important role in objects of display with special reference to gendered work. To answer these questions, Science City Ahmedabad and NISARG Regional Science Centre, Gandhinagar, Gujarat have been selected and ethnographic study was conducted. A modern science museum or science city shows many objects such as “man as an industrial palace”, display of famous scientist posters or banners there were not a single female scientist poster and banners, the evolution section shows major role of women in domestic cores and so on. These objects of display communicate a message of gendered work. For industries only men are required and for domestic work

women are required. The question is that why women cannot be portrayed as an industrial palace and which types of work women do to become an industrial palace? Similar questions have been further raised in this work.

## **Rethinking the Possibilities in Adolescent girls' Empowerment**

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The paper aims to question the idea of “empowerment” which have been associated with the discourse of development in the post-liberalized economy of India. It will develop its arguments drawing from the politics of women’s movement which has always envisaged “empowerment” as going beyond the traditional notions of economic empowerment. In the current discourse of development, a special focus has been on adolescent girls who are believed to be a ‘would be’ population in terms of their capacities to contribute to the country’s economy and have become tentative stakeholders in the development discourse. As a result of this phenomena, adolescent girls have emerged not only as the ‘targets’ of what is believed to be the ‘goodness’ of globalization but are also becoming subjects of tokenism in the development discourse. In the name of women’s empowerment, financial inclusion through the SHG models has been an old strategy and plethora of studies have shown that it has served little to bring substantial changes in the lives of the women in the community. The paper will enquire why even the idea of replicating this model with adolescent girls cannot be a strategy for girls’ empowerment. To this end, the paper examines the idea of forming informal SHGs particularly of adolescent girls (12 years to 18 years, as defined by the following organization) in Kutchh Mahila Vikas Sanghathan, Gujarat. The aim of the paper is not to criticize one organization and its work but to critique the idea which made the organization think about SHG of adolescent girls as one of the strategy for collectivization for their empowerment. And the paper will enquire why the idea of empowerment needs to be looked beyond economy and focused on developing the agency among girls to define their empowerment. Since SHGs are not the only means of collectivisation, the paper will engage with other forms of collectivisation, such as use of camps, tech-centres and so on which seem more effective in building negotiation skills and agency.

# **Booming Urban India, Stagnant Female labor Force Participation: Socio-Cultural Variables**

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Despite significant structural and social change, the World Bank data shows that at 53 percentage points, India has one of the worst gender gaps (disproportionate difference between the sexes) in the world when it comes to labour force participation. Not only other countries in the BRICS grouping, but peer emerging economies in Asia such as Indonesia fare much better when it comes to employing women. India's female labour force participation rate fell nearly seven percentage points to 22.5% between 2004-05 and 2011-12, according to NSSO data. While fertility decline and rising own education helped to increase women's participation, the positive impact of female graduate education on employment has fallen significantly over time. A large number of women are missing from Indian economy especially in urban India. Therefore, this paper offers empirical analysis of the relationship between socio-cultural factors and abysmal female participation in the labour market as urban educated Indian women is complete without considering their contribution to household work which goes without any national accounting. Using attitudinal variables after computation from the various data sources, the correlation between female labour market participation and aspects of culture (religion patriarchal norms, and attitudes towards working women) is analysed. The analysis would focus on how attitudes concern towards working women and shows the frequency of attendance of various services are higher there is less participation by women in the labour market. It also offers a discussion on the debate of policy discourse.

## SUB - THEME 2

### INEVITABILITY OF LAW AND THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF LAW: RESISTANCE AND RECOGNITION

**Coordinators: Rukmini Sen (Ambedkar University Delhi) and Saptarshi Mandal (Jindal Law School, Sonapat)**

#### ABSTRACTS

**Construction of Rape, Contradictory to Feminist Discourses: Evidence from Fast Track Court, Lucknow**

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This paper presents the findings from a court-room ethnography of eight weeks (April-May 2015). The study engages with the findings from the non-participant observation for eight weeks in Fast Track Court (FTC), Lucknow along with the findings from the semi-structured in-depth interviews with lawyers and Focus Group Discussions at fifteen police stations in Lucknow district. The study uses sociological methods to detail the processes of law.

The study reveals that the cases relating to crimes against women that are being registered in FTC, Lucknow are cases of rape, abduction and kidnapping. Most rape trials that are being registered and tried in FTC, Lucknow are cases of runaway marriages where the parents of the eloping woman lodge an FIR of kidnapping and/or abduction and rape against her lover with whom she elopes and gets married. Another distinct category of cases that are being tried as rape trials are cases involving 'promise of marriage'. This category of cases as per the findings can be further categorised into two: (i) cases where rape occurs and the victim is hushed on a promise of marriage. And, most often more intercourse follows on the promise of marriage, which is not fulfilled. This category of cases starts with the sexual intercourse without woman's will and further she is persuaded to not complain on promise of marriage. The woman seems to give in, due to societal and familial pressure; (ii) cases where an unwilling woman is coaxed into sexual intercourse with the promise of marriage which is not fulfilled by the man. Thus, the study points to a shift and hijack of the rape discourse by the patriarchal familial and legal forces.

The findings of this study show a paradox in feminist victories and make it pertinent to mention the argument made by Halley (2006). She uses an example

of feminists' struggles aimed at wanting to make rape easier to prove and to mandate the conclusion that where it occurs between a combatant on one side and a civilian on the other in armed conflict, it violates existing humanitarian law. This, she argues would make it easier to convict the accused, whoever he is. However, she points out how this could also make it easier to get false positive convictions as well and thus make it easier for "ideologically motivated player" to challenge the legitimacy of the process. Halley's argument could fit in well in the current legal discourse and the findings of this study, where most cases which are being tried as rape cases are cases of runaway marriages and cases involving 'promise of marriage'. This has strengthened the myth of false rape cases and misuse of rape law by women. With feminists and women's movement demanding rape laws to be more and more women centric and easier to prove it as crime, it would increase the chances of getting a conviction. This is seen happening now, where the FTC was seen to be sceptical to acquit, more willing to convict. But conviction of the woman's partner in runaway marriage cases is not what the feminists or the women's movement aimed for. Such a shift in the rape discourse could be deployed to challenge the legitimacy of the process and "sap normative energy from the rule" (Halley 2006: 377-85).

Mardorossian's (2002) suggestion also fits in very well here who is of the view that 'instead of justifying our critical discourse through an appeal to women's rape experience, for example, we should examine what the category encompasses in different spaces and times and investigate its relation to other areas of women's lives in the Public sphere' (Mardorossian 2002: 746-747). Therefore, it becomes critical to examine the category of 'rape' within the current legal discourse, which has been the aim of the researcher in the current study.

The paper concludes by stating that construction of rape as a 'crime' as is shown by the findings of this study seem to be in direct contradiction to the larger feminist discourses on sexuality, honour and chastity. Thus, emphasizing on the need of arguments made by Halley and Mardossian deserving urgent attention and discussion within the women's movement in the country.

## **Everyday Formations Of Legal Spaces: Role Of Women's Courts In Addressing Domestic Violence In A Low Income Neighbourhood In Delhi**

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The contemporary legal system in India reveals thriving legal pluralism through formal – informal, rural and urban, large and intimate options of addressing disputes. The Indian Women’s Movements’ long drawn struggle to bring violence against women in private spaces under the rubric of law led to the enactment of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA), 2005. This act opened up spaces other than the courtrooms where implementation of the law to protect women against domestic violence may take place. The ability of law to evolve through litigation- in dynamic spaces wherein lawyers, judges and litigants interact to challenge or validate the lived-in practices against the formal grain of law which leads to multiple negotiations and varied interpretations. (Agnes 2011; Basu 2015) Sen (2010) exposes the abstruse nature of legal systems which even for an educated middle class woman is not easy to negotiate, moreover the laws and procedures are far removed from the everyday suffering women undergo in the process of getting justice. This also means that a large number of women remain insulated from the sphere of legal provisions offered by the State due of their lack of awareness and inability to access the institutions providing those services.

Since every aspect of law has a spatial frame, this paper attempts to elicit the role of the Mahila Panchayats (Women’s Court) in Delhi in producing new forms of spaces within low income neighbourhoods for generating awareness about the legal provisions available to women regarding domestic violence and offering services to resolve those disputes. The legal help seekers are also women living in the same locality belonging to low echelon of education-employment attainment.

The members of the panchayat who are trained para-legal workers, ensure that women of each household of the neighbourhood are made a part of the panchayat and the everyday trials and tribulations that women experience are sympathetically and sensitively handled by the volunteers who also belong to the same social strata and share the same geographical as well as social space. The paper elucidates how women at the verge of losing their rights on their matrimonial homes, restore their claims on it by resorting to the legal entitlements. Justice delivered through the arbitration process is almost always tailor made for the woman seeking justice, as elderly women give advice hinging on common sense and practical knowledge while strictly adhering to the legal provisions too. Mahila Panchayats provide legal assistance to women through alternate dispute resolution; and whenever their arbitration process fail, they

offer support to women to approach the formal courts for seeking justice. Mahila Panchayats add new dimensions to the knowledge of 'where' of the law and 'how' the law happens.

## **Addressing Gender-Based Violence In Neoliberal Economy: An Ethnographic Study Of Responses To Workplace Harassment Legislative Reform**

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Within the realm of labour law reform in India, the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, is a landmark (albeit flawed) piece of legislation, which seeks to extend and enforce the provisions of the 1997 Vishaka Guidelines. This law directs companies to constitute Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs) that can address cases of workplace harassment through a formal complaints process, while also issuing guidelines for creating a safe and inclusive workplace environment for women.

The information technology industry projects itself as a pioneer in the area of workplace diversity and gender equality in India, with many large companies having constituted their ICCs even before the introduction of this legislation. In this paper, I will attempt to demonstrate that in spite of this trend, there is often a discrepancy between following the letter of the law and internalising its spirit. Following a brief doctrinal analysis of the 2013 legislation, I will use data from semi-structured interviews with HR managers, IT employees, diversity consultants and sexual harassment trainers collected in 2015-16 to analyse the implementation of the law by IT companies in Chennai, and to unpack the corporate agenda surrounding the law. This paper will highlight the ways in which the workings of the neoliberal economy result in unintended interpretations of the law, thereby revealing how the corporate 'public image' supersedes the interests of female employees.

## **Sexual Harassment Law As A Transformative Pedagogy: Feminist Resistance And Common Place Administrative Work In The Contemporary Universities**

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The question of sexual harassment is a prominent one in a world where gender bias is normalized by many structures, including power structures within educational systems. This paper is an attempt to discuss how universities have articulated policies on sexual harassment with the intent to minimize gender based violence. The paper attempts a critical reading of the bare text of the Sexual Harassment of Women at the Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013 via the University ordinances of Ambedkar University and Jawaharlal Nehru University on sexual harassment to theorize what different educational institutions suggest is important in the arena of the university to provide educational opportunity that is free of gendered bias. The paper suggests that the exercise of reading the law, whether in the classroom as part of curricula or syllabi, or in the forms that these universities articulate their versions of the law, can be read as pedagogical practices that transform what can be a space of aggressive gender hierarchies into a more equal, more equitable, more autonomous one for those facing gender-based oppressions.

The Internal Complaints Committees mandated by the Sexual Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2013 in many ways ruptures the boundary between justice as the sole province of the courts and of (mostly student) citizens as passive recipients of this justice in that the theatre of its enactment is the ordinary workplace, and those that carry out its workings are mostly laypersons, not lawyers. This paper sees this as an important vehicle for feminist engagement with the law, offering a new terrain of possibilities to fight against the decriminalization of sexual harassment that the Visakha guidelines willy-nilly sets afloat. At the same time, the paper shows how the current law is able to “privatize” these possibilities by leaving it to individual workplaces to nuance or interpret (or otherwise destroy) those possibilities inherent in the law.

## **History, law and Memory: Women, Massacres and the Construction of Violence**

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The construction of memory around violence that is meted out during communal riots, pogroms and the like define the manner in which history around it gets produced. However, the memorialization of such violence is not a linear process, as more often than not, the narratives that constitute a particular history around an instance of violence are reflective of the dominant memorializations of the violence. Thus, the memorialization of an event as well as the historical

constructions around it are multi-dimensional. The other side of silence” has usually to be unearthed because one has to dig deep into the constructions of memory, for whom, the violence inflicted gets inscribed on their bodies and in the silence of their actions. Apart from the physical marks of violence, micro mechanisms of violence also work their way through the bodies of these victims and are constitutive of the torture that has played both emotionally as well as psychologically, and continues to play on them. In this regard, the violence of law that protects and abdicates the perpetrator works to destroy the language in which pain and grief could be spoken about, or shared, and the constructions of memory that have been shaped as a form of resistance against the violence. It destroys the language of grief, of healing, of resistance in instances of violence.

The following paper looks at how the language of judgments work towards re-enacting violence inflicted in the lives of the survivors as well as how this violence contributes towards the construction of a particular kind of memory and history. The language of judgments which absolve the perpetrators end up normalizing the violence against the victims and survivors of the said violence. The judgments that the paper will consider include those following the massacres of 1984 and 2002 and how judicial discourse around these massacres end up justifying the acts of collective mob violence. The victimhood of the survivors (usually belonging to the minority community) of communal violence gets further perpetuated in the role of the police machinery to protect the accused as well as the refusal to file FIRs against them. While communal violence plays on the bodies of the women of the minority community in a particular way which goes unrecognized by the judicial mechanism, the violence gets further intensified in the court’s refusal to acknowledge the role of women (of the majority community) in the intensification of violence against those of the victim community. Thus, it can be said that it is not just collective conscience that shapes law, but also law as well that gets affected by the collective conscience. While nothing much changes for the perpetrators, the ghosts of the violence (of riots, pogroms) come back to haunt the memories, the resistance and the histories that are given rise to by these memories.

## **Justice delayed is justice denied: Hurdles in addressing sexual violence in North Goa**

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Goa is considered as an international holiday destination. The north of Goa

particularly attracts tourist from all over the world to its beaches, night clubs, casino, beach parties etc. Every tourist thinks that Goa is safe for them but statistics available with Goa Police reveals a different reality as sexual violence against women has been on the increase in this tourist belt of Goa. There have been political pressures to keep the figures of crime against women low. In Goa increase in number of rapes are been reported in newspapers. Goa once known for its peaceful nature is now becoming very insecure for its own Goan women. A few high profile cases such as that of Scarlett Keeling in 2008 and the recent Monika Ghurde case in (Oct 2016) have made headlines but numerous others remain mere statistics and still others go unreported. In the last 10 years many new laws and other legal provisions have been instituted. However it is a long road to realising justice. This paper will attempt at highlighting the lacunae in justice system particularly the delay in the processes involved. This paper will present a few case studies of those registered in North Goa and will try to consolidate views of lawyers, judges, police and also will find out the ways in which NGO's, social workers can be catalyst for change. Making stringent laws is necessary to ensure that the guilty in such cases get punishment that they deserve and don't walk freely due to the few loopholes in law such as delay in getting justice.

## **The Targeting of Women as Witches: A critical Perspective on Special Laws**

### **Partners for Law and Development, New Delhi**

In the last few years – from 2012 to 2016, there have been a series of special laws enacted by state governments on witch hunting, mostly at the behest of High court's directives in PIL's. Even as there is considerable push from activists for special laws, the discussions on lessons from the implementation of older on witch hunting laws (in Bihar, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh) have largely been missing. Concerns about what aspects beyond penal provisions that such special laws must address, have also not been given adequate attention. This presentation seeks to probe issues connected with the understanding that special laws are a necessary response for combating targeting of women/ persons as witches. These concerns are important, especially in light of the ready willingness of the State governments to respond to directives for legislative action on the subject.

Partners for Law in Development undertook multi-stakeholder regional consultations, field studies, review of laws and judgments on witch hunting starting in about 2009. Comprehensive field studies were carried out in Bihar, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh – where special laws have been in force since 1999-2005, as

well as in Assam, where at the time no special law existed. At the sociological level, the study busts some received understandings of witch hunting – in terms of its predominant association with single women and widows, and the tendency to link it primarily with brutal killings, which are neither the norm, nor the only form of violation. The study also explores linkages with barriers to accessing justice and administrative deficit. These linkages with structural conditions compel us to question the framing of witch hunting in terms of ‘barbarism’ or ‘others’, to accountability for exclusion and neglect. The findings in relation to the law suggest that special law rarely if ever used on their own to prevent escalation of violence. They are typically clubbed with graver offences of IPC to establish motive of crime.

These findings help evaluate laws recently enacted in Odisha, Rajasthan, Assam, as well as directions of West Bengal High Court, to explore critical issues connected with special laws. These include: how might we balance the need for recognition of particular forms of violence, without fixing their causes, meanings and solutions in a contexts shaped by shifting socio economic realities? How might a law address a particular form of violation, while being expansive enough to respond to atrocities involving ‘community shaming’ and expulsion motivated by different kinds of prejudice. More concretely, could a law on witch hunting also respond to public humiliation, ostracism and atrocities for transgressing sexual and gender norms? Further, the value of widening our demands to include reforms across the criminal justice system, even as we pursue specific changes to address gender (in) justices, because some of the barriers to legal redress are systemic and not special.

## **POCSO in Conflict with Sexual Autonomy of Adolescents**

**Sanjida Arora**

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For a long time the child rights group in India advocated for a law specific to the cases of child sexual abuse. This is considering the fact that the dynamics of child sexual abuse are very different from those of the adult sexual abuse and different process and mechanism is required for such cases. Given this, The Protection of children from sexual offences act was enacted in 2012 by the Indian government to curtail the burden of child sexual abuse. This is a comprehensive law which identifies the role of every stakeholder in responding to survivors of child sexual

abuse. However, as we know that the operationalisation of laws is intrinsically related to the social milieu in which they operate, this all-inclusive act is not free from some drawbacks. This act violates the right to bodily integrity and sexual autonomy of the adolescents by constituting consensual sexual relationships among adolescents as a criminal offence. This paper intends to look at the profile of such cases which got registered in three public hospitals of Mumbai where crisis intervention services are being provided to survivors of sexual violence by a non- government organization. It also highlights the circumstances under which incidence was reported, and the role of medical system, police and family. Further, it looks at its consequences on adolescents and the right to healthcare of the girls.

A total of 72 cases of consensual sexual relationship cases among adolescents were brought by police to these hospitals from March, 2008 to April, 2015. These cases constitute about 10% of the total cases of sexual violence (720) which were registered in these three hospitals during same time. All these cases were brought to hospitals by police following the complaint by parents of girls. Emotional distress was reported by a large number of girls and it was also found that the adolescents faced a lot of difficulties at the level of various stakeholders namely healthcare providers, police, and legal system. We found that the increase in age of consent of consensual sex also has severe consequences on rights of the adolescents to contraception and abortion. The analysis of these cases recommends reducing the age of consent from 18 to 16 years under CLA, 2013.

## **Unsafe Homes, Inadequate Laws: Rethinking Violence Within Families**

**Shalu Nigam, Advocate**

Family Violence or domestic violence has been termed differently as domestic abuse, wife battering, intimate partner violence, patriarchal terrorism etc in the national and international literature available on the subject. Domestic violence is a multifaceted issue with its many dimensions. Also in the situational context of an explicit patriarchal familial, social and cultural matrix domestic violence has different connotations and may include not only wife beating or dowry related violence but also a range of other forms of violence like honour killing, discrimination in terms of resources like access to food, health, education, sexual abuse other than marital rape, incest, female foeticide or situation where women are killed as infants, are forcefully married at an early age, denied sexual and reproductive choices or autonomy, coerced to upkeep patriarchal traditions,

tortured, attacked, forced to undergo abortions, sold, trafficked, hunted as witches, thrown out of the house, denied property rights and are abused in numerous other ways. However, all such forms of violence are excluded under the purview of the law.

The criminal law contextualized specific forms of violence like there are provisions relating to miscarriage, rape which excludes marital rape, cruelty against married women and so on. The restricted construction of 'cruelty within marriage' cease to see the fact that women are discriminated, exploited, sold, abused, brutalized or murdered both within natal or marital families besides being violated by the larger kinship and community networks and are bound by socio-economic as well as cultural compulsions from which escape is almost impossible. The civil laws deal with marriage, custody, property and the related issues but could not punish the violence which takes place say because of property dispute between male and female members within families. The Protection of Women Against Domestic Violence Act which was enacted in 2005 after a long struggle defines domestic violence in detail and include physical, mental, emotional, social and economic violence however it is a civil law and provides for civil remedies rather than punishing the guilty for his criminal acts. Though a woman has a right to invoke criminal provisions under Section 498A IPC, however, often the accused is let off as 'preserving family' is prioritized over safety of women and children.

In fact, several judgements pronounced by the apex court recently reflect that the tendency to subvert women's rights. *Arnesh Kumar v State of Bihar* is one such case where the Supreme Court erroneously concluded that the law against domestic violence is misused and abused. Similarly, more recently in the matter of the *Narendra v K Meena* (Civil Appeal No. 3253 of 2008 decided on October 6, 2016) the Supreme Court held that, "It is not a common practice or desirable culture for a Hindu son in India to get separated from the parents upon getting married at the instance of the wife, especially when the son is the only earning member in the family. A son, brought up and given education by his parents, has a moral and legal obligation to take care and maintain the parents, when they become old and when they have either no income or have a meagre income.... As stated hereinabove, in a Hindu society, it is a pious obligation of the son to



maintain the parents. If a wife makes an attempt to deviate from the normal practice and normal custom of the society, she must have some justifiable reason for that and in this case, we do not find any justifiable reason, except monetary consideration of the Respondent wife. In our opinion, normally, no husband would tolerate this and no son would like to be separated from his old parents and other family members, who are also dependent upon his income. The persistent effort of the Respondent wife to constrain the Appellant to be separated from the family would be torturous for the husband and in our opinion, the trial Court was right when it came to the conclusion that this constitutes an act of 'cruelty'. The narrow repressive mentality reflects when the court upheld male privilege and reinforced subordinate position of women in a Hindu family while reiterating women as second class citizens and considering women as an appendage to men. The court upheld women's traditional conservative roles within a family while reinterpreting hegemonic understanding of Hinduism.

Special laws like the Dowry Prohibition Act or the PCPNDT Act further address specific issues while ignoring the overall context in which violence takes place. Also, the law has failed to address the issue of children harmed within families because of exposure to violence. Moreover, the law has failed to recognize the fact that violence within homes is qualitatively different from all other forms of violence women face within public spaces as it occurs in intimate relationship in private spaces by the person one is supposed to trust or love. A woman in the case of family violence in a patriarchal society has to live in abusive situation over prolonged period and is expected to tolerate pain and suffering in order to 'save the reputation of the institution of family'. The law thus has ignored the ground realities relating to the situation of 'violence within homes' in a comprehensive manner. Rather, the law treats violence against women within homes as 'social evil' and not a serious crime and therefore adopts softer approach. Further, the social, economic and political actions that should have accompanied legal reforms have not been taken up by the state.

This paper reflects on the situation of violence against women in homes in its broader aspect and examines it from the perspective of the survivors of the abuse. Family as a social institution has been glorified by the state yet no steps have been taken to provide safety to women. Why is family violence considered as a lesser crime by the state, society and the law? Why the perpetrator of this crime is not held accountable for his actions? Why are different parameters and standards of justice utilized when a woman is abused within families? Why the civil or criminal remedies provided under the laws have failed to make any dent

on the ground realities? Why has the criminal or the civil justice system failed to deliver justice to the victims or the survivors of family violence? How effective is the women's movement strategy in India which places the heavy emphasis on legal reforms to achieve the goal of gender equity and justice? Why has the state failed to see women as independent individual citizens outside the construct of family or kinship? Why the remedies beyond law like provisions of shelter homes or material and economic support for women could not be implemented? This paper examines these questions while using both primary as well as the secondary data from the perspectives of the survivors of violence and focuses on the 'bubble up' approach rather than the 'top down' style of documenting the understanding on the issue of family violence.

## **Framing Women's Rights For Nationalism And Development**

**Albertina Almeida**

*Lawyer and Researcher, Goa*

Nationalism as is manifesting itself in India breeds a certain hegemonical construct of an Indian and more so of an Indian woman. Women who do not fit within this hegemonical construct are excluded from the ambit of being rights-holders, with their nationalism, or that of the communities to which they belong to, being under challenge.

The other side of the same coin is the construction of a development agenda with a certain hegemonical construct of who constitutes the reference point for shaping and benefitting from development.

Women's rights are increasingly being obfuscated under these nationalist and development agendas. This can be seen in the posturing on triple talaq and uniform civil code, for instance. Or in framing what should be the dominant agenda of women's rights struggles. Or, for that matter, in proposing spatial development or the sources for revenue generation or in the acceptance of legal conditionalities for free trade policies or loans from international financial institutions. As a result, rights remain a chimera for most women, when set against the backdrop of nationalism and the dominant development paradigm.

The paper will analyse the posturing around women's rights with a view to understand how rights language may need to be restructured in the din of the sound bytes around development and nationalism, to ensure realization of real rights for women.

## **‘To bounce like a ball’ that has been hit: Family in Fact and in Law:**

**Kalpana Kannabiran**

*Council for Social Development, Hyderabad*

The key feminist construct in the movements for women’s rights beginning in the late 1970s in India was ‘the personal is the political.’ This assertion was at once universal and particular. While it drew on the experience of feminist movements in the west, it was turned inwards to look at the specific context-specific ways in which women were oppressed in India – class, caste, religion, tribe, region, and political formation providing distinctive refractions of the problem of women’s subordination. A critical arena where the politics of belonging plays out in complex and knotted ways, and indeed an arena where the feminist construct ‘the personal is the political’ makes most meaning is the family. I will attempt in this paper to address questions of feminist method through a close look at family as an idea in India - through an examination of specific texts and histories to open out intersectional perspectives on the family – pointing to the different notations of ‘the personal is the political’ in fact and in law.

### **Gender, Informality and Law**

**Samita Sen**

*School of Women’s Studies, Jadavpur University, Kolkata*

The presentation will address three issues regarding gender and labour laws in the context of India. It will briefly discuss protective legislation pertaining to the formal sector in the period of the making of the ‘formal’ sector. It will then move on to discuss issues of informal workers and their relationship with legality. The third section will focus on domestic workers and demands for legislation in that sector.

### **Gender And Religion: The Judicial Response To Women’s Access To Places Of Religious Worship**

**Saumya Uma**

*Maharashtra National Law University, Mumbai*

The paper will address the issue of entry of women into places of worship - the Haji Ali case, the Shani Shingnapur case, the Shabarimala case to highlight the interplay between gender equality and freedom of religion, both of which are guaranteed by the Indian Constitution. The paper would also analyse the role

of the judiciary in balancing between the two sets of fundamental rights, while making inroads into patriarchal assertions of exclusion of women from places of religious worship on grounds of freedom of religion.

## **Citizenship, Criminalisation And Sexuality: Transgender Rights In India**

**Namrata Choudhury**

This paper through an intensive study based on primary (ethnography, interviews, and focused group discussions) and secondary research over a year in Delhi- NCR, brings forth the real situation and everyday lived experiences of the transgender community in the aftermath of the recent legal developments, especially the two contradictory Supreme Court verdicts which affirmed the constitutional rights and stated the legal identity of all transgender persons as the third gender, thus granting them a space in the socio-political arena (the much celebrated *NALSA v. the Union of India* (2014 5 SCC 438)) whilst simultaneously criminalising this space by the criminalisation of non-heteronormative sexual expression (*Suresh Kumar Koushal and Anr. v. NAZ Foundation and Anr.* (Koushal Judgment)). This paper engages with the question of how the law straightjackets identities through recognition of certain communities while the identification and recognition also renders them particularly vulnerable due to the criminalising of an essential part of their rights and existence. It also problematizes the various basic and unquestioned assumptions in the *NALSA* judgment, most of which are based on the insufficiency of the characterisation of the term 'transgender'. With its focus on the hijra community, the judgment tends to exclude other groups of people with non-conforming gender identities. The ideal of self-identification of one's gender is the focus of the *NALSA* judgment, an issue which conflates the versions of the two judges in the same verdict. This paper highlights the problems both in its conceptualisation in the verdict, as well as in its implementation. Thus what gained bravado as a victory for queer-feminist resistance and struggle can be seen as a top-down move which was brought about without the requisite ground work of sensitising the general masses. The failure in creating the necessary public knowledge and specific information about the legal and human rights of transgender persons deems the recognition to be merely symbolic. In this regard, this paper employs intersectionality as a conceptual lens to better analyse the specific problems of the implementation of transgender rights in a community which is heterogeneous in terms of the varying types of gender identification, social class and caste among other factors. Moreover this paper also analyses the limitations of judicial intervention as

compared to legislative action or an act of parliament on the issue of granting equal civil rights and the implementation of an otherwise progressive judgment like that of the NALSA judgment. The paper concludes with a reflection on the interface between law and everyday life of the transgender persons which present various conflicts as well as convergences between the legal and the socio-political together with raising certain questions about the way forward.

## **The State and it's 'Women': Questions of Citizenship**

**Anuradha**

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'I began to think about Antigone a few years ago as I wondered what happened to those feminist efforts to confront and defy the state. It seemed to me that Antigone might work as a counter figure to the trend championed by recent feminists to seek the backing and authority of the state to implement feminist policy aims. The legacy of Antigone's defiance appeared to be lost in the contemporary efforts to recast political opposition as legal plaint and to seek the legitimacy of the state in the espousal of feminist claims' – Judith Butler, *Antigone's claim* (2000)

The women's movement undoubtedly shares a complex relationship with the State. While the movement highlights the gender imbalance in the structure, it seeks policies and laws from the same structure to correct the imbalances caused by it. The anomaly does not only end with that one reading, the State in turn articulates a certain kind of a citizen, an identity which does not have any layered nuances. The State, therefore, by its laws and policies defines the kind of citizen it seeks to empower and protect, in this particular case; I am talking about the articulation of a homogenous category of women in the mapping of citizenship. As is clear from the trajectory of the women's movement, that there is in fact no one women's movement - there are movements. How are these ruptures represented in the legal reforms that the movement seeks? Which 'women' are the existing laws empowering and protecting?

Citizenship, an idea which was gender blind prior to the women's movement, and which continues to be caste and class blind, is an important identity which articulates much of our 'experience' of being a part of the society. The very 'experience' which helps us assert ourselves and our rights in the grammar of the Indian constitution.

The paper that I seek to submit will interrogate the idea of citizenship as articulated within the domains of law and policy with regards to the homogenous category of women. Who is recognized as a citizen? Who struggles to be recognized as a citizen? When the identity is homogenous, and when a particular law seeks to 'protect all women', what are the conditions under which the State wishes to protect its citizen? And how do we negotiate when the State perpetrates the same kind of violence, against which it has a set of laws to protect the very category of women?

## **Gender and Customary Law in Naga Society**

**Chumthunglo Yanthan**

*Research Scholar Centre for Women's Studies, JNU*

Under article 371A Nagaland state have been accorded with constitutional provisions to protect and uphold their customary law and practices. However, the institution of customary law plays a contrary role towards women empowerment. Under the practice of customary law that include people's beliefs, customs, social mores, precepts, rites and usages practiced are not always conducive to the interest of women. The practice of customary law is based on inequality between men and women, for instances most of the customary laws or personal laws, particularly those relating to property and marriage are highly oppressive to women. Women are not given the right to inheritance especially immovable property, to take part in decision making body, to initiate divorce, guardianship and adoption, custody of children and so on.

The different roles that are ascribed to men and women are socially and culturally determined and are influenced by traditional practices, institutions, customs and beliefs. Naga society is a patriarchal society where men dominate and exercise control over most of the resources and are considered superior to women. A woman faces an overwhelming subjection, marginalisation and systematic disempowerment. One major cause factor of gender disparity is mainly due to product of customs and traditional practices which is highly patriarchal in culture and has been embedded and rooted under societal order for many centuries. The customs controlled the code of conduct and became the binding force for the members in the society. According to Krishna the operation of customary laws acts as a powerful tool to define the roles of men and women and dictate acceptable standards of behaviour. Women's social and economic status continues to be influenced by customary rules (Krishna, 2005)

The implication of customary law is therefore widely seen even in present time which is inextricably oppressive to women's advancement in political, social, and economic arena. For instances till present time there is not a single woman member in the legislative assembly and council in Nagaland because of customary law and practice which prohibits woman to take decision in higher position in the society.

Therefore, this present paper seeks to explore the idea of gender that is enmeshed within the structure and to contextualise the role of women from contemporary time. Also this paper will attempt to provide an insight and alternate way of how women should negotiate and bargain their rights or build an identity under the practice of customary law. Since it is the constitutional law that provides provision for the protection of customary law and practices, it is also the responsibility and right of the constitutional law to protect and uphold the right of women in the society under the given article 14 of the Indian constitution that everyone is equal before the law. In this juncture, constitutional law is drawn to dedicate and address the issue of women's rights in the arena of socio- economic and political field.

## **A Case For Identification Of Dalit Woman As A Distinct Category For Reservation**

**Arpita Sarkar**

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Catherine McKinnon, the renowned feminist scholar faced criticism for using the concept of "We, the Women" because universalizing women's experience through the lens of White women alone, often sidelines the struggle of Black women. The situation of Dalit women in India is no different though the societal structure in India may differ from the US where Black movement gained prominence.

The Constitution of India provides for non-discrimination both on the ground of sex and caste. However, instead of being secured against discrimination on both the grounds, Dalit, Adivasi women and women from backward communities get excluded on both counts.

In the landmark decision of the Supreme Court of India, *Indra Sawhney v. Union of India*, the Court laid down the percentage of seats for each community- the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and the Other Backward Classes, that could be reserved. Undoubtedly, the upholding of constitutional validity of reservation

in government employment and admission in educational institutions, by the Supreme Court has resulted in the upliftment of many oppressed and vulnerable communities. Yet The Court in this case, did not classify the number of women within these vulnerable communities who could avail reservation. While recent Indian politics has witnessed political merger of caste, class and gender against upper caste patriarchal state and societal dominance, such merger on legal front may yield different results for women from vulnerable communities.

The hierarchy of caste system and discrimination on the basis of the same is antithetical to equality guaranteed as fundamental right under the Indian Constitution. However, patriarchy prevails even within the 'lower caste' communities. The experience of Dalit women, as a result, is different from experiences of Dalit men and both the genders from these communities therefore, should not be seen as homogenous unit.

The struggle for 33% reservation for women in government employment and in electoral posts have brought in some favourable results for women. Despite the rejection of the Women Reservation Bill in the Lok Sabha, its approval in Rajya Sabha combined with the continuing struggle by various bodies have kept the issue alive. It is however doubtful as to how many Dalit, Adivasi and backward community women would be benefitted from this law.

Legally, this dilemma of Dalit women, to include or not to include Dalit men or upper caste women in their legal claim of representation often resemble the dilemma of Black women in the US. In one of the District Court of Missouri decision in US, *De Graffenreid v. General Motors*, the claim of racial discrimination by Black women against the policy of firing most junior people could not stand since the Court took into consideration the number of Black men still in employment despite the policy ignoring the nuanced struggle of Black women in employment sector. Similarly, in the decision of *Moore v. Hughes Helicopters*, the claim of Black women to be represented as a class, was rejected by the Ninth Circuit Court of the US Court of Appeals, since White women were not represented in the legal claim.

This paper intends to explore the possible ways in which women from the oppressed communities therefore may avail guaranteed legal and constitutional protection of representation in the Indian scene by taking lessons from other legal systems where women from vulnerable communities face similar difficulties in representation.



# **OBC Women and Mandal Commission: A Gendered Appraisal**

**Asha Singh**

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Last year marked the twenty fifth anniversary of the partial implementation of Mandal Commission and consequent OBC reservations in government jobs and higher education. Mandal Commission along with SCs and STs Prevention of Atrocities Act, 1989 mark a watershed in the history of democracy in India. They have irrevocably changed (and continue to change) political and academic discourses on caste and gender. It is time to evaluate the significance of Mandal Commission for OBC women or 'women enlisted in the OBC lists'. There can be a multitude of ways to approach such an evaluation. This essay would try to present a gendered reading of the context and content of Mandal Commission report. It would also refer to debates over creamy layer and trying to place the OBC women's questions in those debates. At the very outset of such an exercise, it is important to acknowledge the complex nature of 'Backward Classes' as a governmental category. It accommodates more than 3000 castes and communities of various religions, regions, genders and social status. The absence of any comprehensive or near accurate data on individual castes and communities makes any academic endeavour on OBC 'castes' short of macro-insights at regional or national level. This 'data deprivation' is a matter of major concern for OBC women, both politically and academically. Since OBC women form the single largest heterogeneous category of women in India it would be meaningful to revisit the responses and positions of mainstream women's movements on OBC reservation and OBC women's questions in the past twenty five years. This essay would at least partially attempt such a review.

## **Colonial Law As An Instrument Of Subject Formation: The Case Of Hijras, Courtesans And Bar Dancers**

**Tanya Burman**

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Law plays an intrinsic role in nation-formation. Legal documents like the constitution not only officiate a nation's birth but also determine its course of action. In India, law has been an instrument of colonization, used specifically to bring the natives within the folds of colonial rule, making them 'subject' to colonial power, 'subject' of a British colony. On the other hand, law has also been the space for articulation of an anti-colonial nationalistic identity. One of the

things common in both these ends envisioned to be achieved through law, is the means used, i.e. sexuality (and more specifically women's bodies) as the space for these discussions.

The following paper shall attempt to understand law as a space of subject-formation, as an instrument of concretization and circulation of certain identities through a genealogical study of the engagement of law with sexuality. For this purpose, I look into

1) the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871, setup by the British officers as an attempt to standardize the public spaces by criminalising certain tribes and communities, specifically the 'Hijras' and 2) the Anti-Nautch movement stressed on by the new-middle class Bengalis that banned the Devadasi and Courtesan practices in an attempt to sanitize public spaces. I contrast these acts with the 3) the Maharashtra Police (Amendment) Act of 2005 which bans dance bars on grounds of obscenity, in an attempt to trace the genealogy of the discourse around sexuality, obscenity and labour that governs contemporary legal actions. While in the first instance, law seems to create difference and perpetuates discrimination, in the second instance, it is forced to work according to cultural claims, and in contrast, in the third instance, judiciary takes a (seemingly) progressive stance against the state's repetitive assertions.

The research aims to move beyond the assumption that law is chiefly a site of oppression. Rather, it stresses that law acts as "a discursive site where different visions of the world are fought out and normative assumptions about gender, sex and culture are consolidated, universalized and naturalized". I argue that legal action, institutions and the vast body of law as such, must be understood through its contextual location, inquiring into its claims of neutrality and impartiality. This move in no sense attempts to discredit our engagements with law but rather, shall provide a rich basis for future critique, one that is based on a deeper understanding of the situatedness of law in the contemporary discourse.

## **Who Can Play Mother? Answers In Parental Leave Provisions**

**Amrita Nandy and Sneha Banerjee**

*Independent research scholar*

*SAMA resource Group for Women and Health*

The notion that child care is an essential duty of women has remarkable longevity and presence--it continues to define private and public roles for men

and women, and establish gendered citizenship. This paper examines how the Indian State's parental leave provisions -- premised on gendered performances of motherhood -- naturalize the maternal, gate-keep the ideal (patriarchal) family and, thereby, institutionalize the gendered terrain of citizenship. The paper uses policy documents, official records accessed through a Right to Information (RTI) application and court judgements to examine the State's essentialist construction of the birthing and caring body.

Specifically, the paper focuses on two leave provisions for female government employees: (a) the pre-amended Maternity Leave that has been an apparent entitlement of the birth-giver and (b) the Child Care Leave (CCL) meant evidently to address child-care responsibilities. It examines the pre-amended Maternity Leave and the CCL provisions through the lens of non-normative claimants: commissioning mothers (who have children through commercial surrogacy) whose request for Maternity Leave is either rejected or delayed and a range of single fathers who are denied the CCL. Although the Indian government decided to ban commercial surrogacy in August 2016, the arguments in this paper draw upon the situation before the ban when Indian and foreign married couples as well as single individuals could hire gestational surrogates for a fee. In the case of commissioning mothers, the paper focuses on the way they articulate the 'legitimacy' of their motherhood, how the State as an employer envisions them and how the courts make sense of claims to the leave. For the case of single fathers, the paper draws upon their written submissions to the State employers, accessed through a RTI application by Nandy.

The State seems to reinscribe biological motherhood, compromise women's public roles and discourage men's care-giving, even as Assisted Reproductive Technologies complicate parental relatedness and naturalization of childcare. Accounts of these male and female 'mothers' carry the potential to expose the performativity of care, de-naturalize the identity of the caregiver as well as reimagine roles. Why then did the State deny these parents the performance of their care-giving role, despite their genetic links to their children and the legal legitimacy such kinship carries?

## **Indian Feminism and the Right to Pleasure**

**Esther Moraes**

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The most consistent actor in the history of feminism in India, it would

seem, is the legal system. Looking at the trajectory of Indian feminism from the 19th century onwards, the highlights revolve around legal reform. We see this also in the discussion around rape, following December 2012, and most recently, the Farooqui case in 2015-16. The law continues to be the primary battle ground for the Indian feminist movement.

This has been much critiqued within the movement. Feminist movements across the world recognised the futility of reforming the law, itself an agent of the patriarchal system it exists within. The focus on the law as a space of reform, some argue, has led to the development of a 'dominance feminism', which portrays women's sexuality in terms of victimhood; every other kind of formulation is pushed out. There has, therefore, been a call to shift away from the law, and an increasing emphasis upon challenging and "transform[ing] social values" (Menon, 2004: 5).

This paper attempts to point out that this shift in the feminist movement can be achieved through recognition, and further development, of the existing feminist articulation of sexuality. Historically, the feminist influence on the rape discourse has been in terms of amending laws to address the different kinds of violence that come under the category of 'rape'. These changes have been fundamental in changing both the treatment of rape and the perception of rape victims as well.

However, the almost exclusive focus on sexual violence when talking about women and sexuality does not allow room to discuss the complexities of consent and desire and how it is articulated in a given context. The Farooqui incident is one such example of a turning point – while this was historic for the state recognition of a broader idea of rape, it was also a moment that could have opened up public discussion on consent and its gendered nature. Within the feminist movement, discussion could have opened up on why heterosex continues to be seen as fundamentally violent.

However, these discussions did not occur in any substantial manner. Meanwhile, social movements of the 2000s such as the Besharmi Morcha, the Pink Chaddi Campaign, the Why Loiter? movement, and others attempt to address this vacuum and put forward a new formulation of women as agential beings, but are instead written off as 'feminism lite' and lacking revolutionary foundations. Consequently, the connection between agitation for development of the law (particularly around violence against women) and new-age, younger agitations against social mores, continue to be weak. Disjunctures in the feminist

movement continue to exist along generational and political lines.

This paper argues that there is a need to recognise the various articulations of sexuality by women to develop a celebratory, positive understanding of sex and desire within feminism, countering the discourse around rape that consistently victimises women. There needs to be an acknowledgement that women have a right to pleasure, and it is necessary for the feminist movement to embrace this right – not only to offset the rape discourse that sees rape as ‘worse than death’, but also to drive home the fact that rape, or the fear of rape, cannot and should not be the defining feature of a woman’s life.

The acknowledgement of women as agential beings can simultaneously perhaps open up new ways of understanding sexuality at multiple levels and in various contexts. By recognising the potential for change in all of these areas, we can also contribute to a radical questioning and reformulation of the social organisation of our communities.

## **Rethinking Bodies through Law**

### **Dyuti**

Through the paper an attempt is being made to examine the colonial construction of the body and its postcolonial legal trajectory. The paper comes out of my MPhil dissertation under the same name. I locate these bodies in the categories of the SC/ST person and the ‘queer’ person. On the face of it they seem unrelated categories however through my paper I seek to point out that they have more in common than one tends to think.

The colonial administration created the ‘categories’ of the SC/ST subject and implicitly the queer subject. The former, a result of the emergence of the census that highlighted the need for colonial administration to classify people into categories and the latter of governance, i.e. the adoption of the IPC Section 377 which criminalised sexual offences against the order of nature. It is these two categories of people/ community as emerged are marginalised bodies, realities that I seek to interrogate.

For the purpose of the argument, I extend Veena Das’s concept of ‘Critical Event’, and treat SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989 and Delhi High Court Judgment on Section 377 of Indian Penal Code 2009 as critical events. I draw out the limitations of these documents and propose a basic realignment.

# **An Analysis Of Colonial State And Women's Issues: Questions Of Marriage And Legitimacy In 19th And 20th Century**

**Tauseef Fatima**

*Assistant Professor, Women's Studies, Aligarh Muslim University*

Women's identities and existential realities are crucially determined and linked with the citizenship debate in the Indian nation-state. How does the Indian Nation-state identify and deal with women's issues has been a subject of inquiry among the scholars of the field. This paper attempts to question the ways how judiciary in colonial India, which acted as an important apparatus for institutionalizing and strengthening colonial rule in India, treated women's issues? The present paper seeks to investigate the claims made by women in the courts in colonial India regarding the presumption in favour of marriage and legitimacy of their children. Most of the time these contentions were made to avail proprietary rights. The paper has gone through sixteen case laws of the nineteenth and early twentieth century colonial India where an attempt is made to analyze the intricacies of the process of adjudication, and what impact it has led to the status of women. An attempt has been made to analyze the attitude of judiciary towards women's issues and causes in the process of adjudication. Question of women's agency and invocation of customary practices is another dimension that has been dealt with, in the present analysis.

Through the examination of a specific area, the objective is to examine that how far and to what extent the claims of 'justice, equity and good conscience' are practiced within the colonial courts. As these courts actually became the site to validate and perpetuate the civilizing mission, so it becomes important to inquire their functioning with regard to women's issues. An investigation into our past is always essential to provide us a more clear understanding of our present so that we could create better spaces for women where law will not be a site of despair, rather of hope and possibility.

## **Continued Attempts A Regulating Surrogacy In India: A Feminist Critique**

**SAMA, New Delhi**

This paper analyses the trajectory of regulating commercial surrogacy in India through the various versions of the Draft Assisted Reproductive Technologies (Regulation) Bills since 2008-2015 and the recent Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill

2016. It examines: how does the law understand and seek to regulate the practice of surrogacy, how are the rights and parental status of surrogates envisaged and the policy response to surrogacy for foreigners. The recent Surrogacy Bill seeks to ban commercial surrogacy and allows only 'altruistic' arrangements among 'close relatives'. However, since the Bill is not available in the public domain yet, it is unclear if it institutes adequate safeguards to protect the rights of women who act as surrogates – particularly, their right to health that includes issues of informed consent about intrusive technological interventions in their body. Sama's research over a decade shows that the surrogacy industry in India is driven by various 'agencies' which act as facilitators for clinics and commissioning parents; and as recruiters and supervisors for the surrogates. The ban on commercial surrogacy in India necessitates a discussion on the efficacy of bans on thriving markets and the need to ensure that black markets do not emerge. It is important to note that the new Bill does not ban surrogacy, per se, but only those arrangements where the woman acting as a surrogate receives remuneration. In addition, it restricts surrogacy only for childless heterosexual couples married for five years. The regulatory approach towards the phenomenon demonstrates that the law grants uncritical legitimacy to the use of ARTs and surrogacy as a mode of reproduction. However, it is discriminatory in doing so by situating them exclusively in the realm of heteronormative marriage. This paper, through a historical analysis of the evolution of a regulatory framework for surrogacy in India, analyses how the law seeks to construct and legitimise 'ideal' families and co-opts potentially subversive use of technology within the ambit of hetero-patriarchy. The paper argues that while regulating surrogacy arrangements is critical, the government must also proactively legislate towards establishing robust regulations regarding intrusive technological interventions in women's bodies through ARTs.

## **Infertility, A Curse To Women In Patriarchal Culture: Surrogacy Draft Bill And Its Implications On Women's Rights**

**Ramija Bee,**

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Science and technology are quite supporting the human lives in several ways. Reproductive technology has grown to its heights in the medical advancement context where the women can hired out her uterus to bear a child and help the infertile couples to have a biological child. Infertile women are put to extreme stress and abuse in the patriarchal cultural context. Assisted Reproductive

Technology has really become a boon to such childless couple. Surrogacy is one form of ART which helps the childless duos through the mean of external duos by carrying their foetus beyond the Indian cultural bandage both as service and corporate motive. There has been a huge commercial market particularly for the foreigners who come and stay to get a child which is relatively costly in their own countries. It is highly an exploitative market where the mediators get benefitted to a large extent by taking advantage of the desperate requirement of the child by the childless couples. There are number of issues and harassment faced by the surrogate mothers and their rights are not protected. The dynamics of the market for surrogacy really push the surrogates to extreme vulnerability where the payment fixed at the time of agreement is often gone in air. The amount agreed is not actually paid in time, or pay less then what is being agreed upon, the surrogates who come from economically backward households are forced to convince the family and relatives, lack of post-maternal care particularly the kind of medicines consumed, foregoing breast feeding etc seriously cause several physical and health issues, for which further artificial medicines given contributing to further side effects etc go silent and surrogates do not have any space to report to anyone for the above issues. On the demand side, the mediators, the infertility clinics, the agents or brokers do not maintain transparency, lack of direct contact between surrogate and the commissioning couples, complete detachment to doctors of the payment fixed for the surrogates etc force the surrogate mothers to suffer. There are several other issues in the surrogacy market dynamics, where each agent washoff their hands in making the surrogate mothers to genuinely reach their rights. With the out-social customary practices followed by implications, the Indian Government has recently banned such practices for foreigners. The recent draft surrogacy bill aspires to safeguard the women from victimization and exploitation from present commercial surrogacy ecosystem. The draft bill is being analyzed critically in Women's Studies Perspective, raising certain fundamental questions based on the Indian constitution, as to how does banning of commercial surrogacy violate and discriminate the rights of woman and human? And how does the banning of surrogacy lead to encourage underground illegal multi crore businesses? And analyze whether banning of surrogacy really protects women from victimization and vulnerable exploitation. The survey being conducted with various stakeholders including doctors, the public from different cross section on the draft bill and the results will be presented in this paper.



## **Interplay of law and society: perspectives on Empowerment of unwed mothers of India**

**Poojashree Mishra**

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Being a woman and single in India after attaining specific age is viewed as a stigma by the society. The stigma associated with this category intensifies if the woman is a divorcee or a widow. The stigma assisted by uncomfortable sympathy in case of rape victims. A woman is ridiculed and considered as a social outcaste if she is an unwed mother by choice. Women in Indian society are coming forward by breaking the glass ceiling of orthodox society in the era of modernization and globalization. The movement for positive rights took momentum with the increasing participation of women in higher education and intensification of liberal ideology. A reflection of it can be seen as an attitudinal change among the women in Indian society which compels rest of the society to move in that direction. The landmark judgement of Supreme Court of India says “An unwed mother in India can become the sole legal guardian of a child without the consent of the father.” It is an important shift in identifying the legal guardian which restores the right, pride and dignity of a single and unwed woman as a mother. It has brought significant changes in the attitude of rape victims and the society which stigmatize their life. The victims also fight for their identity of being a woman and a mother. But, it is mostly seen among the well-educated women from the higher income groups of urban areas but not among the less-educated and poor women from rural areas. Being single and mother is a challenging task for the unwed mothers. The degree of difficulty depends on the intersectionality of caste, class, region and religion. In this context, it is necessary to understand the causes and consequences of being an unwed and single mother. Also, there is a need to explore what empowers those unwed and single mothers to be in the same status and taking care of their children despite the economic difficulties and social stigma. In connection to this, the present paper would explore the existing empowerment mechanisms and the way they have been used by the unwed and single mothers in India.

# **Domestic Violence, Institutions and Women's Rights: A Study of Contradictions in PWDVA 2005**

**Swarnamayee Tripathy**

*Professor, School of Women's Studies, Utkal University, Odisha*

Domestic Violence against women and girl child is endemic in India. 70% of women in India experience domestic violence in any form. It has brought human rights issues of such women and girl child into intellectual discourse. Viewed in this context, existing laws and their implementation need serious analysis. This research study makes an attempt to analyse the contradictions in Protection of Women against Domestic Violence Act, 2005 and its implementation.

Violence in any form, both overt and covert, physical and non-physical has an overwhelming influence on feminine identity formation. The ubiquity of gender-specific violence, both within the home and in public spaces has led to the emergence of alternative discourses where the 'truth' and validity of established structures, norms and roles are called into question.

Among all the forms of violence committed against women, domestic violence is one of the most dangerous form of violence committed in the so-called safest environment i.e; 'the home'. Such violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women in the household, community and society. Moreover, domestic violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared to men in an equal relationship.

Domestic Violence against women and girls is a problem of pandemic proportion. The violent acts can be physical, sexual, psychological and emotional. The human rights approach recognizes domestic violence as a violation of many human rights: the rights to life, liberty, autonomy and security of women, the rights to equality and non-discrimination; the rights to be free from torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment; the right to privacy; and the right to the highest attainable standard of health.

Keeping all these in view, the Indian state came out with a progressive law, Protection of Women against Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA) in 2005 in order to protect the 'Self' of women. It was implemented throughout India except J&K with effect from 26th October 2006. The state Governments devised mechanisms to implement the Act in its true spirit. Odisha is one of those states which made

efforts to implement the law in its true spirit due to persistent advocacy by Civil Society Organizations. Inspire of this, domestic violence against women continues unabated. Therefore, this paper makes an attempt to explore the contradictions in the Act and its implementation in the state of Odisha.

The paper has been divided into four parts. The first section will analyse the nature of domestic violence. The second part will analyse the provisions of the PWDV Act. The third part will explore the inherent contradictions in the implementation of the legislation. The fourth part will conclude.

## SUB-THEME 3

### WOMEN, PEACE AND THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

**Coordinators: Asha Hans (Co-Chair, Pakistan India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy) and Swarna Rajagopalan (Prajnya Trust, Chennai)**

#### ABSTRACTS

##### **Marriage and Maoism: 'Revolutionary' Practices during the People's War of Nepal**

**Name of Author: Kavita**

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Nepal witnessed ten years of Peoples' war from the year 1996 to 2006. It started against the monarchy and autocratic Nepali State. It carries a long history and legacy of Communist Movement in Nepal. The time period is important because the communist party started their armed movement during this time. It was a distinctively significant movement because many women took part in this movement. The participation of women was not just symbolic as they were not just passive sympathizers or supporters of the movement. They were not mere producers of 'brave sons' who will protect them during the conflict but they actively participated as guerrilla fighters in the battle field. According to the official document of the Maoists party there were 30 percent and more women in the Red Army. It is interesting to see that the reasons of women's participation and their roles in the movement differed according to their caste, class and ethnic background, women not being a homogenous category in Nepali society, as in any other society. This paper tries to delve into understanding the marriage and remarriage practices within the organisation that had a heterogeneous composition in terms of class and caste. It looks into the intricacies and complexities of the rules governing the practice of marriage within the organization especially with reference to those women whose partners had been 'martyred' during the war. The war had impinged on the social and cultural customs of the people and it manifested itself in various interesting ways. Using unstructured interviews as primary source, this paper particularly looks into how stories are discursively narrated and how through the form of stories a narrative is constructed. The interaction of emotional and political is one of thrusts of this paper. It looks into the idea of marriage in Magar community and tries to explicate the similarities and dissimilarities with the idea of a revolutionary marriage within the Marxist context.

# **Women in Conflict and Peace: a Case of the Naga Women's Peace Building Movement and Looking Beyond**

**Bhargab Dev Sarmah**

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Women's questions have become very significant and complex in today's world. It can be discussed in both domestic and international context, which seems to be an unending chimera. The magnitude of human tragedy is enormous, has brought women's issues into the core debate of social science research, feminist movement and other related circles in the contemporary world scenario. Women are often portrayed as victims of conflict in many ways. Their experiences during conflicts are very painful due to various kinds of women's right violations, gender based violence, over militarization, imposition of neo-liberal social trend, arm conflicts. In this situation of conflicts, women's conditions become widely vulnerable and inhuman in manner that leads women's movement for peace and security across the world. To critically examine women's role in conflict and peace, this study will consider the Naga women's experiences in home land conflict and their struggle for peace building in the region as an example. It is one of the significant cases of women's movement for peace and security in India during the late 20th and early 21st century. There are some intriguing questions such as: what do women in peace and conflict mean? What are the factors that lead Naga women to struggle for peace building in the region? How has this peace building struggle drawn Naga women in contemporary scenario? To discuss critically, this paper will examine the case of Naga women peace building movement toward understanding conflict, women's peace movement and security. It will conclude arguing on the importance of women's role in peace, security and recognition of women from marginalized communities as stakeholders in peace and as well as state-building activities. This study will be based on both theoretical and case study method, to explore the whole study with a critical analysis.

## **From Victim to Peace Maker: Women, Insurgency and Northeast India**

**Piyali Dutta**

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The insurgency movements in Northeast India sharply demonstrate the continuum of violence that women face in modern society. Rape, physical abuse, sexual assault, mental trauma in the context of the insurgency has been the focus

of many women's rights and human rights groups. Women have to suffer untold pain as mothers, sisters, daughters, caregivers and victims during such situation which has till date brought great destruction and despair amongst the people. Women position in insurgency Movements can be divided in to three phases i.e. pre, during and after. In the pre Insurgency Movements women struggled as a victim, during insurgency movements the threat of violence is extremely high: fear and insecurity, the destruction of livelihoods, expulsion, loss of family and death are just some examples of violence that women face. Women also joined the movements as combatants but their support has been valued differently than that of men and viewed as part of infrastructure rather than agency. In the post insurgency Movements women played the role of peace maker. In spite of being the worst victim, women also plays the role of protector of women rights and human rights in general There are many women's organisations in Northeast India like Meria Paibi, Naga Mother's association, Bodo Women's Justice Forum etc which are playing an active role as peace activist. Under this background the present paper will focus on the role of women's organisations during difference situation of insurgency Movements in Northeast India. The paper will put special focus on the role of the two women's organisation i.e. All Bodo Women's welfare Federation, Bodo Women's Justice Forum in BTC (Bodoland Territorial Council Region) of Assam. The paper will explore the role of these organisations towards protecting the rights of women as well as in bringing peace in the region.

## **Role of women in Peace and Women's Movement of Manipur**

### **S. Sakhitombi Devi**

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Sustainable peace requires the full participation of women at all stages of the peace process – yet they have been largely excluded from efforts to develop and implement fresh, workable solutions to seemingly intractable struggles. Their involvement in these mechanisms, which prevent conflict, stop war, and stabilize regions damaged by warfare, is essential.

Women are often at the centre of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), popular protests, electoral referendums, and other citizen-empowering movements whose influence has grown with the global spread of democracy. Because women frequently outnumber men after conflict, they often drive the on-the-ground implementation of any peace agreement; they therefore have a responsibility to be an integral part of the peace process.

Living and working close to the roots of conflict, they are well positioned to provide essential information about activities leading up to armed conflict and to record events during war, including gathering evidence at scenes of atrocities. Women can thus play a critical role in mobilizing their communities to begin the process of reconciliation and rebuilding once hostilities end. In Manipur, women's activism is extremely strong. Women are usually in peace building processes due to their own initiative. Even when the state does involve them, it is to be the go between, to play the role of the healer or the pacifier. There has been not effort either on the side of the state or the non-state agencies to involve women in the actual negotiations. This merely goes to re-emphasise the lack of understanding of peace in terms of mutuality and equality and of viewing the peace process as a kind of 'settlement'.

In Manipur, the role of women in social movement can be traced back to the Pre-British period when Manipur was under monarchical system. But women's movement emerged in an organised manner from the early part of the 20th century. Women's movement in Manipur is norm oriented type and connected with reformations. One women's movement was in 1904, which was popularly known as the first "Nupilal" (women's war). It was against the unjust British administration. In 1925, a movement was launched by the women against the increase of the water tax rate. In this movement, the main leadership and participation was always from the side of the market women. In 1939, Anisuba NupiLal, which translates as the Second Women's War and the chain of events commenced had all the characteristic of a Civil War. The excessive export of rice which culminated in a near famine situation kind let the fire to a population of discontented elements of Feudal and Colonial expression. In fact, much beyond the immediate cause of the movement there was deep rooted historical causes which erupted at the opportune movement of the history. In this paper, an attempt is made to analyse the role of the Manipuri women participation in women's movement for peace building process.

## **Women and Peace: An Internalised Cultural Construct**

**Mamta Lukram**

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Manipur maintains a glorious history of its past. Historians even described this land as a constant war zone, at time waging wars with the Ahoms, Burmese, and British while many times waging war amongst themselves. It has a distinct history of social movements. Some worth mentioning movements are the

movement for independence against the British, the tribal movement and the women's movement etc. History accepts the presence of women's upsurges and women's movement in different point of time. The history of the two 'Nupi Lan' or the women's war in 1904 and 1939 consecutively testifies the fact that women have been taking frontal roles in the fight for justice against the colonialism.

The presence of the 'Meira Paibi' or the Women Torch Bearers movement validates the presence of women's movement in Manipur. The cognizance of the women leaders as the human right defenders testifies that women are the architect of conflict resolution and peace restoration in the state. Women through the 'Meira Paibi' or the Women's Torch Bearers Movement have been shouldering the responsibility to maintain law and order in the state. The depiction of women as the human right defenders has an implicit meaning of women as the catalysts in peace building.

However the depiction of women as peace lover can sometimes be a matter of 'wise excuse' of spontaneous internalisation of women to be selfless strivers. The hegemonic patriarchy has its model of 'Men are war mongers and women are peace lovers.' This is the stereotypic conceptual framework of the traditional society where women have minimal participation in decision making process. This is an excellent excuse of the hegemonic patriarchy over the exclusion of women from directly involving in the decision making processes, though women were made a part in the movement as catalyst in decelerating the conflicts.

Numerous peaceful ways of conflict resolution is adopted by the women solidarity in the state. The 'Wakat Meepham' or the sit-in-protest of the Manipuri women is a dignified way of silent protest in its unique style. Women in collectivity dressed in a social uniform bearing melancholic and lamenting expressions would be sitting in silence where the placards and banners carrying strong messages. Such silent protest stir the minds of the onlookers and the whole state is alerted when women carried out these types of protest. A satyagraha model in its own style. However at present scenario Manipur is a landlock in the Northeastern region of India known for its fragile law and order situation. Whenever asked to portray, filled with preconception one would absolutely portrayed Manipur as land with dark shades of frequent upheavals with concentric circles of brutal human right violations. Engineering a way out for peaceful conflict resolution has become everyone's aspiration in the state.

The paper will be a plain attempt to discover the gender construct in the connotation 'women as peace lovers' underlies deep interpretations of why only



women are perceived as peace lovers. Why are they symbolised as icons of peace in the world? Is it the biological innate fact of women being emotional by nature or is there any irony associated in labelling women as peace lovers? A thorough sectional scanning of the gender and social structure fabrics will unravel the myths of the eulogised women's reflection in the state.

## **Women Organisations in Churachandpur District of Manipur: Their Role in Peace Processes**

**Deborah Darlianmawii**

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This paper portrays the role of women organisations in Manipur and their roles in peacekeeping. It outlines the extent to which women studies have contributed in studying the role of women in peacekeeping. It examines the important platform created by women organisations for women to express their grievances and concerns. It analyses the various ways in which women organisations are taking part in peacekeeping and also draw attention to certain problems faced by women in decision making. The paper emphasises on the activities of women organisations like Hmar Women's Association and Kuki Women's Union in Churachandpur district of Manipur, and the problems faced by these organisations due to cultural norms.

The first section of this paper looks into the role of women in times of conflict, both as victims and peace-builders. The second section consists of various activities or work undertaken by women organisations in bringing peace. The third section particularly looks into the works of women organisations in Churachandpur district, namely Hmar Women's Association and Kuki Women's Union; these organisations have undeniably occupied an important space for women in the society. The fourth section highlights the problems faced by the women organisations in terms of decision making due to social and cultural norms of the people, which is patriarchal in nature. The paper concludes by advocating the need to include women in decision making in government bodies so that women can play a more effective role in peacemaking.

## **Peace from the Womb for Women – An Unresolved Challenge**

**T. Poongkothai**

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Nature is peace. Humans for want accumulation, progress, and development, etc has been slowly destroying the nature. Such destruction does affect the people and those who are vulnerable to lose their habitat or native often end up in conflicts primarily to regain the lost status. The distribution of the natural resources is not equal. There have been class, caste, racial, ethnic, religion and gender inequalities. In such conflict contexts, the women often pushed to an extreme form of exploitation including economic, social, political and sexual vulnerabilities. In such a situation, the women often have fewer resources to protect themselves and children. The women frequently make up the majority of displaced and refugee populations. War tactics such as sexual violence specifically target the women irrespective of the region and the nature of the conflict. Issues around health in conflict-affected areas have received very little analysis and focus. There has been negligence on the part of both the State and Market to extend support. This paper examines the main factors that threaten the Tamil community women's reproductive health which leads to genocide. Women are forced to abort by medication and other factors after post war 2009 in Sri Lanka. Confidential data will mirror out from the analysis for academic purpose only.

### **Initiatives towards Peace Process: Narratives of Kashmiri Pandit Women**

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The need for women to come together to work for peace and exercise their agency whether through movement, activism or any other form of resistance, participation or protest are considered imperative initiatives in situations of conflict as in the state of Jammu and Kashmir in India. Irrespective of their region, caste, class, religion or language, the common factor that binds women together is their suffering and pain and therefore, their yearning for peace and development. Kashmiri Pandit women's voices filtered through such experiences of turmoil in Kashmir since last more than twenty-five years, though filled with remorse and mistrust, speak of their willingness in actively participating in decision-making and peace-building processes. Though women's movement in Jammu and

Kashmir has appeared to be fragmented on the issues that concern women and society at large, some Kashmiri women were willing to look beyond the regional and religious divide and turn back to the cordial times of mutual coexistence and living together. It is in this little space that one finds hope for taking steps towards peace building or engaging women in peace activism, as independent women's groups and also as a part of larger organizations. This paper is an attempt to bring out such strands of initiatives based on the narratives of Kashmiri Pandit women who were a part and parcel of society in Kashmir and were forced to leave their places of origin as the conflict escalated in the Valley.

## **Armed Forces Special Power Act (AFSPA) in the State of Jammu and Kashmir: Women's Voices from Kashmir**

**Mehnaz Tabassum**

*Ph.D. Research Scholar*

The discourse on 'Armed Forces Special Power Act' (AFSPA) implemented in the state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) since 5th July 1990 has revolved around two almost opposite views, one in support of its continuation and the other for its revocation. The Central government, the security forces, some political parties and organizations favour the former opinion; while the section comprising of mainly the separatists, certain human rights groups and some members of civil society take the latter point of view. Women in Kashmir belonging to these categories largely speak in the voices of their respective groups. This paper focuses on understanding the perceptions of women in Kashmir through their own voices on AFSPA collected through interviews with them. By analysing the genesis, causes and consequences of implementation of AFSPA in J&K, the paper tries to bring out some pragmatic issues of concern for the people of J&K and suggest a middle consensual path and involvement of women in its discourse for the restoration of peace in the state.

## **Idea of Self-determination and the Women's Question: Imperative for Peace Building in J&K**

**Karan Maini**

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The idea of Self-determination is what provides the vantage point for the Kashmir's struggle for freedom. The utilization of this concept varies as per the socio-political context surrounding the agent, that is, at a given instance it could translate itself in the form of an individual self-assertion or it may take

the shape of a collective self-assertion. In the context of Kashmir this concept, however, often translates itself in the form of a collective self-determination with strong communitarian overtones at times. To put it differently, one of the major aspects that constitutes the identity of the 'Kashmiri Nation' is mediated through its patriarchal context. The issues related to women, therefore, form an important part of the Kashmiri discourse of self-determination. However, much of this discourse approaches these issues from the perspective of 'honour' of the 'community/nation' rather than from the perspective of the 'rights' of the women. However, like every other community, the identity of the Kashmiri community/nation is written on the bodies of women. Taking few examples like that of the Kunan Poshpora, the paper will explain as to how women are doubly victimised - first because of the violence that they faced in the hands of the security forces and then because of the stigma attached with this violence and their isolation by the society. The political narrative of freedom in Kashmir does invoke the horrors of en masse rapes committed by security forces in Kunan Poshpora to represent the victimisation of Kashmiris. More than anything else, it is the 'defiling' of the women and loss of their 'honour' that gets to be highlighted. The paper will also focus on various similar cases where women's question rather than being treated from the gender angle of rights and justice, is seen from a perspective which subsumes women's identity within the community identity. The controversial issue of married women's right to acquire the status of permanent state resident in their own right and its loss in case of marrying an 'outsider' - forms another case study in this paper. The paper will also be dwelling on other similar situations where in case of conflict between the gender identity and the community identity, it is the latter identity that has taken a clear precedence over the former.

## **The Question of Women's Political Participation and Implications for their role in Peace Process**

**Nisha Jain**

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The paper will deal with the question of women's political participation in Jammu and Kashmir and analyse its implications for their participation in the peace process. Using the electoral data, the paper will show as to how women in J&K remain underrepresented in the decision making positions and have a very poor record of their visibility at the level of leadership. Very few women contest elections and still fewer women are elected and are part of the process of governance. In fact the situation is so precarious that the electoral politics of

the state can be termed as completely in the control of men. This is despite the fact that the state had a gender-friendly ideological base of its politics. The New Kashmir Manifesto which represents the ideological ethos of not only of National Conference but of the Kashmiri society as a whole, made special mention of rights of women and had incorporated a separate charter for women with forward looking agenda for them. The Constitution of the state had even incorporated the principle of reservation for women in the state Legislative Assembly and over and above the normal strength of the Legislature had provided for representation of two women. However, despite this kind of progressive beginning, the question of women's representation has remained unaddressed. Although every political party has a women's wing, the presence of women is minimal in the decision making committees. There are few individual women who play some role in electoral politics. Since 1999, Ms Mehboba Mufti has been leading the PDP. However, her presence also has not made much impact on the prevalent political culture which inhibits the participation of women in leadership positions. Other than Mehbooba Mufti, there is not a very big presence of women even in the PDP. Similar has been the situation of NC which had Begam Abdullah as patron of the party and also as MP. However, on the whole, the NC also has remained a male dominated party. While analysing the limited role of women leaders in the electoral politics, the paper would pose the question of their role in peace making processes. It will also analyse the peace building initiatives so far and the role of local women in these initiatives.

## **Gender, Conflict and Border in J&K**

**Sanded Singh**

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By means of women's narratives, participant observations, official record, focus group approach, and author's sizable observation of the area, this article explores the impact of the multiple dimensions of conflict on the 'fenced out' villages along the Line of Control (LoC) in the state of Jammu & Kashmir. The LoC which is 758 Km long and having 285 villages all along it are caught up in the prolonged situation of conflict. The impact of conflict on the lives of the people along the border (LoC) in Jammu & Kashmir is complex and gets further complicated when comprehended through the lens of gender. The implications of conflict on women are very severe and can easily be marked by the number of causalities and amputations all along the border (LoC). Apart from these, women suffer from various other problems, most important being - lack of quality of life. In the study, it has been observed that there is marked marginalization

and hardship faced by the women in the area of education and health and it gets worsen with the added proportion of border violence which is perpetual. Therefore, with the focus on indicators of social infrastructure in the villages around the LoC, the paper would raise the question related to the ownership and the intent of the state with regards to its people. While the 'national' narratives are constructed around the 'militarization', 'aggression' and 'violence' to defend the dignity of the nation, the cost is borne by these marginalised people, particularly the women. Any peace effort, the paper will argue, will not only have to take into consideration the problems faced by these women but also treat them as the major stakeholders of the peace process.

## **Women in Peace Process (Official and Non-Official) Kashmiri Women and Peace Process: The Top Down and the Bottom Up Analysis**

**Arish Javari**

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This paper tries to look at the women in the peace-building process in both official and non-official capacities within the context of Kashmir. Given the nature of the Kashmir conflict, peace building has to cut across multiple layers of conflict and also address the divisive agendas of various actors involved. By placing women's subjective experience of peace-building at the centre of the analytical frame, this paper seeks to establish the link between peace-building processes and the role women play in it.

It would further look at how top-down and bottom-up model of the peace-building have worked and contributed towards the processes of justice and deliverance. It would elaborate on how top-down peace building process has reproduced a nascent hierarchy within women and reproduced the global template based on the experiences elsewhere. It would examine how such processes churn out a monolithic understanding of the women in peace process. Additionally the paper would contrast the experience with that of bottom up peace-building and how it deals with the questions of representation and diversity. It would understand its sphere of inclusiveness and the processes of social accommodation it accompanies. The paper would bridge theoretical and practical perspective that inform and expand knowledge on women in peace process

# **Women, Peace and Security: Issues and Challenges**

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The question of the almost invisibility of Women in International Relations, so poignantly raised by feminist scholars in their perceptive essays like “where are the Women in International Relations”, “You just Dont Understand” etc., has, as a consequence brought to light the issue of ‘peace potential’ of women’s involvement in international politics. The UNSC Resolution 1325, for example, is an important illustration of this acknowledgement. In this paper, therefore, an attempt will be made to explore the peace potential of women as an identity group not only in the mitigation of conflicts but also in the sustenance of the post-Conflict societies. cursorily surveying the strategic role of women during and post conflicts at representative places of the world, an attempt will be made to understand the issue in its entirety. The paper will primarily aim at locating women in peace research

## **Feminist Peace Building and Conflict Transformation – Challenges And Questions Around UNSCR 1325.**

**Roshmi Goswami**

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The historic adoption of UNSCR 1325 in October 2000 was unprecedented as it marked an important international political recognition that women and gender are relevant and central to peace and security. The recognition included acknowledgment of the unique and disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women, the undervaluing of women’s contribution to conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peace building and the need to ensure women’s equal and active participation and leadership in peace building processes. Over the years as agencies and the UN got engaged in operationalizing UNSCR! 325 much of the initial commitment and feminist vision got progressively diluted. Reviews at different moments brought out the continued focus on political arrangements and conflict management rather than conflict transformation, of National action plans getting mired in cumbersome bureaucracies and delaying actual action. But most of all it was critiqued that the transformative potential of the core message of UNSCR 1325 i.e. “women build peace” which conveys women’s strength and capacity went totally missing. The 2015 High Level Global Review to mark the 15

year anniversary was therefore an important moment for a critical reflection. The review in attempting to capture the voices and concerns of women and realities from the ground was a significant departure from the usual UN assessments. The proposed panel will pick up a few of the key issues raised by the women review.

## **Would World Affairs Be More Peaceful If Women Dominated Politics?**

**Rhea Bose**

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The research paper is based on the topic 'Women and World Politics'. The paper focuses on Francis Fukuyama's article, which was published in the Foreign Affairs (Fukuyama, 1998) by the name 'Evolution of women in world politics'. In this article, he tactfully presents his view on gender relations, effectively associating males with aggression and females with emotional sentiment. Thereafter, he concludes that women are incapable of venturing into the field of international politics, as they would not be able to handle the challenges posed to them by the 'hot-headed aggressive' males, who still dominate international politics. This paper, thus, seeks to appraise Fukuyama's main contentions in the article and critique on it using arguments of some feminist scholars, who find his views 'grossly untenable'

## **A Case Study on Young Adivasis Women (Sahariyas) in Western Madhya Pradesh Struggling for Justice Nonviolently: Linking Conflict Reduction and Peace building to Land Rights.**

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Young women from the Sahariya community that have been offered the opportunity to study at higher secondary levels in Sheopur Kala are interested to take up peacebuilding in their communities. The Sahariya Adivasis, one of the poorest populations in India and known as one of the particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs) in India, and they are slowly being displaced or annihilated. These young Sahariya women are being educated with the support of a people's organization, Ekta Parishad, a land rights movement. The nonviolent social organizing is working to change the local power dynamics in favour of the Adivasis population and is doing this with the engagement of the young people



such as these students.

The Sahariyas, like many other Adivasis populations in India, are facing the full force of Punjabi farmers and state agencies that are wrenching control of their land and natural resources away from them making their livelihoods difficult to sustain and even risking their survival. The young people are learning that the vested interests are deliberately creating conflict (and violence) as a way to predominate. In response, the Adivasis populations are looking for nonviolent strategies to be able maintain their resource access and control and to achieve their land rights. This is being carried out in various pockets of Chambal region. The research is based on ten interviews from young women who are in school or just completed their studies, as to how they see the situation in their village and how they are dealing with the conflicts over livelihood resources. This research references the work of Ekta Parishad in the region, especially in relation to organizing young women. The conclusions sought from such research is to show that globalization is creating conflict at the local level, and that this structural violence can be opposed by youth who understand the way conflict is instrumentalized to extract land resources unjustly. In contrast, nonviolence can be a tool for interrupting those using land grabbing and endless cycles of violence, and peace building remains a way to advance a more just society over the long term.

## SUB - THEME 4

### CASTE: A SITE OF INEQUALITY, DISCRIMINATION, VIOLENCE AND RESISTANCE

**Coordinators: S. Suba (Department of Women's Studies, Bharathidasan University) and J. Christy Subathra (Tamil Nadu Women's Coordination Committee, Trichy)**

#### ABSTRACTS

##### **Religious Labour in Modern India: Study of Murali from the Gender and Caste Perspective**

**Kanchan Jadhav**

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Religious practices like Devdasi, Jogatin, Potraj and Vaghya-Murali are symbols of holy bondage. These are major obstacles for Hindu culture in marching towards human liberty. Various rituals and religious practices and some folk forms persevere to exploit and subordinate women from lower castes. We can observe stratification in the beginning of religious practices in religious labour on basis of caste as well as gender. Devdasi, Jogatin and Murali are such gendered practices in Hindu culture which continue exploiting and subordinating women from lower caste for ages under the veil of folk art.

Many scholars have underlined inter relationship between caste, class, gender with labour, sexuality and exploitation at the core of these ritual practices and folk arts. Tamasha is a popular folk art in Maharashtra. Women from Kolhati caste are in majority in folk art performance. Rege (1996:152) says that as labour division was on the basis of caste, similarly sexual services were also divided on the basis of the caste. This resulted in to disparity among women of higher caste and lower caste and righteous and immoral. When art of Lavani was commercialized and Kolhati women were re-sexualized. Lavani was de-graded as art and (such artists) were made available for sexual labour in market (Guru 2010:21).

Sex work is granted social standing by the means of religious practice like Devdasi in the name of the religion, covering contradiction between sexuality and labour of elite women and Devdasi women. This creates a new stratified hierarchical order. Referring above studies on such religious practice in our paper

we would be looking at one such practice “Murali”. Practice of “Murali” has been studied in anthropological perspective. This subject needs to be interrogated by gender perspective. “Vaghya-Murali” is one of the Hindu religious practices observed in some parts of Maharashtra and Karnataka. We can locate some similarities in practice of Murali and Devdasi.

In practice of “Vaghya-Murali” first born child is pledged in the name of God, if this child is born due to blessing of demy God “Khandoba” to the childless couple. Male child becomes “Vaghya” and female child become “Murali”. “Murali” has no right to marry for her life where as male child Vaghya can marry. It is observed that “Murali”’s hail from Middle order caste but not from un-touchable caste like Mahar and Mang. “Murali” sing and dance in ritual folk performance of Jagaran and Gondhal which is performed for calling gods for well-being of family. Life of Murali is similar to life of Devdasi. “Murali”’s are used for sexual pleasure by upper caste males similar to Devdasis. We intend to elaborate this phenomenon in this study. For this we will interview some “Murali”’s from Pune district.

## **Kopardi and Maratha Morchas/Rallies: A Caste-Gender Analysis**

**Ashwini More**

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The whole Maharashtra is witnessing a strange unrest by the Maratha morchas/rallies. Kopardi rape and murder case became the immediate cause for these Maratha Morchas. Lakhs of people are participating in these Maratha Morchas in almost all districts of Maharashtra. Though the Maratha Morchas are for demanding severe punishment to the Kopardi culprits, their real demands are very different.

A fifteen year girl was raped and brutally killed at the small village Kopardi in Ahmednagar district on 13th July 2016. The raped girl is an upper caste and the culprits are lower caste dalits from the village. The girl was raped and humiliated and killed, the incident is condemned by all the progressive organizations and people in the Maharashtra. Maratha caste organized the Maratha Muk Morcha on 9 August 2016 at Aurangabad to condemn the incident. A large number of Maratha women came out and participated in the Martha Morchas and started speaking about the incident and also other issues like giving reservation to

Marathas, make changes in the Atrocity Act etc. Thus, in this backdrop of Kopardi case and Maratha Morchas an attempt will be made in the paper to understand these incidents in a comprehensive way from caste-gender perspective. An attempt will also be made to study the following points: are truly the Maratha men against violence against women? are the women being used by the Maratha Morchas/rallies?, Have the women got a self –consciousness to fight against Caste-patriarchy?, Is the Kopardi case is being used? This paper will study the Kopardi case in the background of present political scenario.

## **Dalit Women's Writings in Hindi: Challenging Caste, Challenging Patriarchy**

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Whenever we talk about caste we talk about inequalities, we talk about the hierarchical social system which exists in our society. But it is very rare when we see caste as a supporting element of patriarchy. The patriarchy which we call Brahmanical Patriarchy has a very strong connection with caste. Due to this caste system both women from upper castes and women from lower castes, have suffered. In this paper I have underlined the requirement of recognizing caste always as a tool of patriarchy. Without the annihilation of caste no woman can be emancipated and without the freedom of women there can be no annihilation of caste. In this connection I have analysed dalit women's literature in Hindi in this paper. Dalit women in Hindi public sphere have started writing frequently in the last two decades with claiming their both (caste and gender) identities. It is very interesting to see how they handle the question of caste apart from their dalit male counterparts and their non-dalit female counterparts.

In this paper I feel that dalit women's way towards annihilation of caste and fighting patriarchy should be our way of struggle. Because caste and patriarchy have the same elements in their roots and both must be fought together. For writing this paper I have chosen five Dalit women writers (Anita Bharti, SushilaTakbhaure, HemlataMahishwar, Rajni Tilak and Rajat Rani Meenu). Going through their stories and Poems shows a way to see the problems of caste in a different way. It is very interesting to see their dreams, their expectations, and their hope in their writings which altogether want a peaceful, egalitarian society where there is no boundary of caste or gender.

# Dalit Women Writing in Bengal: Focus on Life and Writings of Kalyani Thakur

**Debasmita Deb**

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The Dalit Literature Movement in Bengal is relatively 'new' in comparison to their counterparts in states like Maharashtra. Manohar Mouli Biswas, one of the most prominent writers from Bengal has linked the Dalit women's movement with their writings. In this paper, I will explore the life and writings of Kalyani Thakur, one of the most prominent contemporary Dalit women writers from Bengal. As Sharmila Rege has argued in her work, the Dalit Feminist assertions, who challenged conceptualizing 'genderless caste' and 'casteless gender'. Few scholars of Women's Studies seriously engaged with Dalit Feminist critiques. This cannot be justified by savarna women 'frozen in guilt', assuming caste as sole concern of Dalit women. The complex histories of caste and gender oppression get lost in it. The guiding question of Sharmila Rege's book "Writing Caste/ Writing Gender: Narrating Dalit Women's Testimonios" is: how can 'private' lived experiences and the 'public' practices of anti-caste struggles be brought into analysis of caste and gender? Following the lines of her methodology, I would do the same in trying to analyze the life and writings of Kalyani Thakur. She identifies herself as Dalit activist who voices pains of suffering and oppression in writings. She has been anthologized widely. She writes as she wants to create a space for herself and her disadvantaged community.

Being born in a poor Dalit family, she had experienced casteism and poverty since her childhood. As a result her poems are critique of Marxism and Manuwaad. As she notes in one of her interviews, her writings are the poetics of age-old oppression against the Dalits. More recently she is involved in non-violent activism on issues like right to reservation and other rights for the Dalits. In one of her poems she brings together issues of labourers and Dalits. In the same poem she is cynical of opportunists who fake to be Dalit sympathizer. Other poems in the same collection are equally critical of Marxism and Manuwaad. She skeptically writes how Marxism and Manuwaad hand in gloves with each other to continue oppressing, which was beneficial for both. For her, Manuwaad is the dominant ideology and Marxism is the resistant ideology. Manuwaad was responsible for continuous oppression of Dalits, especially Dalit women. However she also thinks that Marxism did not help in addressing it. Her poems also address various

forms of casteism including newer forms of untouchability. Her essays deal with about Dalit issues, Matuas, about Ambedkar and Dalit women. Time and again she goes back to the history of Namashudra Movement, the contribution of Guruchand and Harichand in women's progress. She has also written on status of Namashudra women. One of her most significant essay is on role of Buddha and Babasaheb Ambedkar in establishing women's rights. Thus this paper will be an attempt to find linkages between the life of Kalyani Thakur, her politics, activism and writings. By doing so, I will also try to find the common themes across her writings.

## **Water as a Site of Discrimination for Dalit Women**

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Water is the life sustaining source. It is essential for all forms of life and crucial for human development. Even though water is treated as common resource, countries like India accessing water is still a problem for dalits because water is connected with caste. Caste hierarchy determines all the aspect of life across class, religion and gender. Dalits or Scheduled Caste women are facing the multiple deprivation, discrimination, humiliation and oppression due to their lower status in social hierarchy in generally; in particular while accessing village's natural resources, common property resources and public infrastructures. Moreover as concerning water resources like public wells, ponds, stand posts, hand pumps are located mainly in center of the village which is the prime living locality of dominant caste. Since the hierarchical arrangement of living spaces of village i.e., dominant castes households are situated in central parts of village and dalits' households are located in outskirts of main village also completely secluded the dalits access to water resource. In Hindu socio-cultural order of society water is considered as symbol of purity and prosperity meanwhile Hindu culture is treating dalits are impure, this made dalits especially dalit women to prevent access water resource mainly drinking water. Irrespective of caste domestic water is assigned as primary role of women, in this task dalit women are more vulnerable than other caste women. Due to the notion of purity-pollution in drinking water sector is one of the critical domains which are practicing untouchability and discrimination severely. During the process in water collection sites dalit women are facing multiple forms of discriminations and humiliations in the name of their caste, sex identity by both upper caste men and women though there citizenship

rights are guaranteed constitutionally. With this background this paper explores the forms of discrimination faced by dalit women in water collection sites and its impacts of rural areas in the name of caste identity with the support of empirical evidences.

## **Contemporary Situation of Valmiki Women: A Gendered Analysis of Caste and Class**

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In India there is Constitutional and legislation prohibition on the 'untouchability', But in India the social, economic and political life get regulated by the caste system. It operates by dividing society into hierarchical social groups where assignment of rights is determined by birth, with the hierarchy being defined on the basis of 'purity' and pollution'. Caste often dictates the type of occupation a person can pursue and the social interactions that he/ she may have. Hence it is not just a division of labour but also division of laborers—it is a hierarchy in which the divisions of labourers are graded one above the other. As Gail Omvedt point out that Religious sanction is unique to the caste as a exclusionary system, and it get maintained through the rigid enforcement of social ostracism (a system of social and economic penalties) in case of any deviations, therefore in the 20th century also caste is still continuing as mode of operation.

The proposed study want to focus one of the ex-untouchable community, who are still indulging into caste based occupation which is a manual scavenging work. There is a stigma attached to their occupation which seen as dirty, hence constitutes their status as stigmatised and permanently polluted. As a consequence Bhangis are treated as 'untouchable' even by the other erstwhile 'untouchable' castes in the Hindu society.

In all over India manual scavenging work is mainly done by Bhangi, Valmiki community and within that also exclusively performed by Valmiki women. As Aloysius argues The process of globalization is characterized by decreasing government's role in economic governance and expenditure on social welfare, and by the exclusions of non-educated and non-skilled persons from diversified job opportunities, the compulsion of scavengers to stick to their only profession is going to increase, as happen in case of sweepers, therefore untouchable's traditional function, namely evacuating waste to give them a near monopoly on certain salaried jobs.

Today also in the government sector specifically railway and municipalities more women work as manual scavenger. There are some studies who point out that in the Valmiki community there is male migration for education or for better job opportunity but women are still performing this hereditary job and few women who are opting for education. There are many issues like government policy which ensure permanency of job and household with changing political economy which creating environment which difficult to sustained. Valmiki women are opting for this job when they have good education which can ideally give them good job opportunities.

In this context the proposed study therefore will try to look at how caste based occupation is being recast and reiterated in diverse ways. Generally several studies when they talked about manual scavenging they see this women as a victim of the larger structure, but through this study I want to see how this women see themselves and their work. As feminist argues women are not homogeneous category on this same thought line I want explore Valmiki women who are working in a different sector how they see the complex relationship between caste, class and gender. On this background the paper seeks to take detailed interviews with Valmiki women's at the local level. These narratives help us to understand the contemporary situation of Valmiki women.

## **Casting the Castaway**

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Blunt in his book, *The Caste System of North India*, says: A caste is an endogamous group or collection of endogamous groups, bearing a common name, membership of which is heredity, arising from birth alone and imposing on its members certain restrictions in the matter of social intercourse either- (a) Following a common tradition, occupation; (b) claiming a common origin; (c) both following such occupation and claiming such origin and generally regarded as forming single homogenous community (Blunt 5). Ambedkar writes that caste system involves attempt to appoint takes to individuals in advance, selected not on the basis of trained original capacities but that on the social status of the parents.

The most outstanding example of caste violence and its horrendous practices can be understood in reference to the Dalit's of India. Their never-ending struggle to be a part of the so called society, to be considered as human beings definitely



needs discussion. So what exactly do we mean by the word Dalit. The word 'Dalit' comes from the Sanskrit language and means 'ground', 'suppressed', 'crushed' or 'broken to pieces'. It was first coined by Jyotirao Phule in the nineteenth century, in the context of the oppressions faced by the erstwhile "untouchable" castes of the twice-born Hindus. The term 'Dalit literature' can be traced back to the first Dalit Literary conference in 1958, which almost went unnoticed. As Arjun Dangle, the Marathi Dalit writer, editor and activist states, "It is no coincidence that the Dalit literary movement began in Maharashtra, the birthplace of Dr. Ambedkar's movement." The Dalit writers give vivid self-experienced expressions of sufferings, humiliation, pains, agonies, trauma, miseries, poverty, and atrocities into their own writing. At the same time by their literary creations they wish to bring the total change in society, i.e. equality in social, political and economic fields. Moreover, the Dalit writers ask and dream for casteless, egalitarian society in their writings. Arjun Dangle offers a definition of Dalit literature: "Dalit literature is one which acquaints people with the caste system and untouchability in India, its appalling nature and its system of exploitation. Dalit literature not only subverts the old canons but also believes in creating new ones. It seeks to reject those conventions and cultural norms which not only marginalised the dalit voice and the voice of other oppressed communities including women. It attempts to create a new paradigm, a new set of value adding up to the cultural scenario.

As we have always known that Literature is said to be the mirror on which life's realities are reflected thus I would discuss caste violence and gender inequalities faced by the Dalit people especially women through a few literary pieces. In this paper I would discuss how Namdeo Dhasal through his active participation in the Progressive Writers Association, attracted people's attention to the caste problems faced by Dalit people. His poem 'Kamatipura' and 'Golpitha' talk about the brutality and the absolutely inhuman flesh trade that the women's body is subjected to. Well if Dalits are the downtrodden then Dalit women are victim of what we call double 'Sangati', Baby Kamble's "The Prison We Broke" and Urmila Pawar's memoir 'The Weave of Life or Aaydan' would be the most appropriate example to explore Dalit women's creative use of existing linguistic forms to challenge both upper caste and Dalit patriarchy. Emergence of Dalit women as revolutionary, constantly trying to sustain their culture while revolting against oppressive society, converting to other religions to seek refuge from the torturous life. Hence I want to put forth the self determination of Dalit women who fight to live life amidst daily misery and agony and also holding up caste and its workings within the Dalit sphere through the above mentioned works.

# **Exclusion in Inclusive School: A Case Study in Delhi, India**

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With the adoption of the Right to Education Act (RTE, 2009), Kendriya Vidyalayas changed their enrolment norms and reserved 25 percent seats for students from disadvantaged section of society. In light of this, a larger case study was undertaken to explore the educational experience of students from disadvantaged sections studying in a Kendriya Vidyalaya in New Delhi. Data was collected through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with students and teachers of grade 5. Drawing from this study, the present paper focuses on findings which show the negative pre-conceived perceptions teachers have of these students. The paper also highlights the exclusion these students experience in regular and co-curricular activities in the school which manifests itself as differential treatment within the school. During the course of research, it became apparent that inclusion in this school was only on paper and hence reflected a superficial implementation of the RTE Act. It was found to not be reflected in practices. The paper concludes by showing implications of these exclusionary practices that impede students' self-confidence, self-perception and academic performance.

## **Justice or Fiction? Dalit Women in Post-1947 India**

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The recent spate of violent acts against the Dalits in India yet again has brought to the fore the deep schism that has since time immemorial divided society. Discrimination against the lower castes, and their rampant criminalisation, rife during the colonial rule, has not dwindled in the decades after independence. The simple trope of marginalisation— though analytically useful— does not exhaust the enormity of violence through which this marginalisation is effected. Dalit women, who are of course already-always marginalised as women in a hetero-patriarchal society, are therefore subjects facing double marginalisation—as women, as Dalits. It is this violently-enforced double marginalisation that is at the heart of my paper. More specifically, though, the paper will endeavour to look into how this double marginalisation is formally imposed on Dalit women through differential dispensation of justice in courts of law as well as in the field of social justice in comparison to their upper-caste counterparts.

To take one example: consider the case of the Khairlanji massacre of a Dalit family. Four members of the Bhotmange family were murdered in a village called Khairlanji in Maharashtra. The women of the family, Surekha and Priyanka, were paraded naked in public and sexually abused before being murdered by members of the politically dominant Kunbi caste. The incident took place on 29 September 2006. A decade has elapsed since, yet the guilty have not been brought to justice. Through several sentences and commutations of the severity of those sentences, acquittals of at least three of the accused, and at least one judicial bench ruling that the murders were motivated by revenge and not caste hatred, the matter continues to be sub judice even as its memory fades from popular consciousness.

While the quantum of impunity enjoyed by the upper caste is evident from the example (it is just one of a legion of such incidents), one feels like pushing the envelope to suggest that the very judicial system has evolved as congealed casteist violence. My paper proposes to investigate the extent to which justice can be hard to get, tardy and discriminatory for Dalit women, through examining newspaper reports, media follow ups. It will try to find out how differential are the treatment of upper-caste victims from their lower-caste counterparts under the Indian rule of law. Also, it will explore how a dominant casteist popular opinion creates a climate of hatred towards the victims in which such discriminatory dispensations of justice can thrive.

The tentative questions that animate the paper are as follows:

Is the Dalit female victim treated differently from her upper-caste counterpart by law? What role does patriarchal upper-caste popular opinion play in creating an anti-Dalit-woman climate in this country? Is the idea of social justice, often expressed through mob violence against an alleged criminal or offender, heavily biased against Dalits and women, particularly Dalit women?

In spite of the laudable component of positive discrimination/ affirmative action incorporated into our Constitution at the behest of the visionary politician and social reformer, 'Babasaheb' Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, how is it that our judiciary has continued to remain mired in casteist mores? Is this because of the dominantly upper-caste composition of the judiciary? One will have to investigate the statistics related to this. Finally, does the growing feeling that casteist as well as sexist violence has been experiencing an upward spiral in the recent decades have any evidentiary basis? Or is the feeling a result of the greater circulation and quicker reaction to such incidents that has been made possible by the explosion

of social media in the country? In that case, what might be the future role of the 'citizen journalist' towards eradication of anti-Dalit, anti-women crimes?

## **Writing? Sculpting Lives: Methodological and Historiographical Challenges of a Social History Study**

**Elizabeth Abraham**

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The paper would like to record certain quintessential methodological and historiographical challenges that emerged while trying to create social history through a life narrative study from Kerala. The question is whether feminist narrative analysis and life history method can successfully capture the social history of women of the particular community.

With one of the major thematic focus of representing 'female experience', the study records the life experiences of women from dalit community in Kerala. The writings based on self-representations intended to broaden the sites and location of knowledge on women subjectivities. The study intended beyond simply inverting dominant notions of subjectivity, to map women's negotiation with their own history and their representation.

The life narratives have established as distinct genre and have opened the possibilities of creating new reading in the social history. The particular issue that emerged through the study was the problem of representing the lives of the dalit women in Kerala. Is a true representation of lives of women possible through Life History method? Who moves the thread of the 'auto'/biography? Though it is the lives of the women of the particular community that is represented who decides what is important to be represented? The question was whether authorial intent gets reconstituted in the process of relating with people. This happens through re-prioritizing on themes; dismissing or reshaping.

Another important process is the emergence of new linguistic rhetoric which the researcher documents. This linguistic rhetoric is the natural expression of the person who is interviewed, where the expressions, diction and cultural political intonations may remain unknown or unintelligible to a person of different time and sources of understanding. Linguistic possibilities such as this are also important to suggest, especially when histories of the subalterns are concerned, the social worlds of meanings in sayings, proverbs, rhymes and so on.

Like any larger narrative, historical and sociological accounts on situations may encode an error of avoiding or ignorant of credible local narrations. Methodology of recreating memory can illuminate such less important/popular versions into credible intellectual junctures, which can revisit the hitherto unchallenged versions.

## **Politics of Misrecognition: Case Study of Puthirai Vannan Caste Women in Tamil Nadu**

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“Vannan” is a specific caste group in Tamil Nadu which is primarily engaged by the caste society washing clothes and other related work (Ko. Ragubathy, 2012). There are various sub-castes within Vannan community. One such is the “Puthirai Vannan”. Vannan (Washer) generally wash the clothes of other dominant caste groups, but “puthiraivannan” are made to wash the clothes of Dalit community like Parayan and Pallan. So they are even called “Para vannan” colloquially. “Puthirai Vannan” caste group has been undergoing various forms of social exploitation. The work they are made to do are to wash and clean the clothes of all kinds, colouring of dress materials, cleaning the clothes of blood stained dress of women both during puberty, during pregnancy etc. They are also made to carry fire-lamps during temple festivals. Puthirai Vannan are made to carry out many ritual practices in the caste society, as those practices are part of tradition for caste groups, which are many times exploitative, degrading and against their self-respect. . Dr. Ambedkar in his classic article, “Annihilation of Caste (1936)”, writes about the social situation of castes like “Puthirai Vannan”. There was the situation that even in Chennai Presidency; it was a bad omen to see “Puthirai Vannan”. So they were not supposed to be out in day light. So the community was forced to do all their cleaning work in the night times. So they leave their dwelling at the night times, finish their and their communities work in the night like water dogs and foxes and have to return back to their places before the sunrise. Such was the state of these communities.

There are various forms of atrocities committed against them. Most of it is very much directly connected with the work they are forced to do. If there has been any delay in washing the clothes; if the clothes are not cleaned according to the expectation of the dominant caste within Dalit Community (in this case Parayar and Pallar who themselves are Dalit); if they are late for the customary

ritual practices or commit any mistake during the ritual practices, they are subjected to serious punishments. Most of the time they would not be allowed to eat food i.e. not provided “Oorsoru”. They would be made to ask sorry in front of the village and even made to fall at the feet of the village head to beg for mercy. Many times, they would be made to do work for free for the complainant. They are also sometimes subjected to physical violence. They have been continuously suppressed by violence for raising their voice against exploitation inflicted on them. Hence, it continues to prevail in many places. We could see that violence been lashed out to this community in general and women of this community in particular. The women of this community are forced to indulge in sexual relation with dominant caste men. If not, they and their family would be tortured continuously. With this background paper explores the factors leading to non-recognition and challenges of Puthirai Vannan Caste Women.

## **Education, Assertion and the Restructuring of the Self: The Case of Dalit Women’s Narratives**

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Dalits are an ethnic group in India that was regarded as untouchables. Placed traditionally at the lowest rungs of the Indian social order, Dalits today are a force to reckon with, given their political consciousness and constant attempts at empowering the Dalit community, pan-India. This paper attempts to look at literature by Dalit women, in the form of self-narratives, as a means of education and assertion. Based on literary narratives of four Dalit women (two from Maharashtra and two from Tamil Nadu), this study proposes to undertake content and narrative analysis using feminist epistemology to understand the role that a renewed critical consciousness acquired through education and writing plays in helping Dalit women negotiate their positioning in their social milieu. It has been observed that literature by Dalits, especially that by Dalit women has hitherto not been seen as a ‘serious’ means of studying Dalit women’s issues. They are both, sites of resistance and assertion. The nature of Dalit life narratives is such that they are both literary and empirical at the same time, and it is felt that this unique contribution of Dalit life narratives has been accorded due centrality in neither literature nor social science discourse. This paper posits the significance of literary self-narratives of Dalit women and the act of penning these as a transformative experience that leads to a process of conscientization (Friere, 1970) which may lead to education and assertion. The paper argues that this significance works at

two planes: a) the act of writing these self-narratives becomes an act of education for the Dalit woman herself, through identity identification and looking at the self as an entity separate from.

## **Discrimination faced by Dalit Women to Access Health Services at Public Health Sector: A Study from Select Slums of Bangalore Urban District**

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Dalit women differ from rest of the women in so far as their performance with regard to human development indicators is lower as compared to the rest of the women, and also due to the fact that the causes of a high degree of deprivation suffered by these women lies in their social exclusion. (Vani K. Betal; 2015). Discriminatory access to primary health services by Dalit women leads to lower utilization of health services (Acharya; 2010). Discrimination in various forms during access to health influences health seeking behaviour and health status.

Bangalore city in recent times has grown significantly in size and density of its population. Proportionately the local administration could not match up with the necessary infrastructure, health services and other basic services that are required for the population especially the urban poor in the slums. City Corporation with the current population of 10.1 million is grappling with inherent problems (bbmp.gov.in).The slum population accounting for 30% of the city population, which is spread out in 778 slums bears the brunt of this situation (<http://ksdb.kar.nic.in/slums.asp>).

There are enough studies to indicate that there is higher morbidity, lower life expectancy, and higher infant mortality among Dalit women compared to women from general population.

- Gender discrimination operates very strongly in issues related to health. Women enjoy poorer nutritional status and are last to receive medical care in case of illness.

- Lack of awareness on the rights and ability to mobilize and assert their rights in the families or in public space further curtail their ability.

This paper will provide evidence of discrimination faced by Dalit women in select slums of Bangalore while accessing health care in public sector.

The Methodology adopted in this study is descriptive in nature. Primary Data will be based on interviews with 100 respondents in select 3 slums connecting two primary health centre and two Maternity hospitals in Bangalore urban district. Case studies will be included on various forms of discrimination faced by dalit women while accessing health care and maternity services. Secondary Data will be collected from NGO-SPAD working for the health rights of Dalit women living in slums of Bangalore.

## **Tradition versus Modernity: Caste, Patriarchy and Women Empowerment in Haryana**

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The Haryana society is mostly a caste based traditional patriarchal society where the status of women is much poor in comparison to men. However, after independence the government of India has taken various initiatives and institutional measures towards the empowerment of women in Haryana. At the same time Haryana government and various non-state actors like civil societies and various NGOs work against the backward and degraded status of women in Haryana. There is no doubt that these efforts of the government and various non-state actors have influenced the traditional status and position of women. One can observe its positive impact on the life of women within the household and outside the household in Haryana. Now, we can observe that the Haryana society is going through the process of transition. Works of scholars such as Prem Choudhury, Patricia Uberio, and Ralph Retzlaff suggest that the old traditional institution is being replaced by the new one with respect to women's position and their changing roles in the society. On the other hand we can find that still women in Haryana are not free from the long standing traditional problems and sufferings. The problems like domestic violence, rape, honor killing, purdah system still remain and it is increasing day by day. In this context, it is significant to study these issues.

My paper is attempting to understand the ongoing atrocities, violence and degraded status of women in Haryana. It will try to understand as to how the process of women empowerment is going on and how the patriarchal structure is responding to this. This paper would also throw a glance on the relationship between castes as an institution and how it is responding the increasing status of women in Haryana. Again the paper would look at as to how the changing



status of woman in Haryana is influencing the socio-economic life of women particularly the traditional social institutions. Here, this study would also discuss briefly about the historicity of Indian society with relation to caste, patriarchy and status of women. Then it will emphasize the socio-historical and cultural overview of women empowerment in Haryana.

There after the subsequent section will look at the changing status of women in Haryana which would include the measures taken by various institutions and organizations towards women empowerment. The paper will also critically look at the response of various institutions mostly caste and patriarchy towards women empowerment and the changing status of women in Haryana. Finally the paper would throw a light as to how these institutions have been influenced by the changing status of women in Haryana.

## **Speaking of the Subaltern in Rabindranath Tagore's Dance Drama Chandalika and Nagraj Manjule's Movie Fandry**

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Chandalika, the well acclaimed dance-drama by Rabindranath Tagore was first published in Bengali in 1933 and translated in English by K.R Kripalani in 1938. The plot is a representation of the age old struggle of the marginalized section of the Indian society which is beautifully portrayed through the protagonist, Prakriti, a Chandal girl. On the other hand, Fandry, is also a movie that depicts the plight of the Dalits in our society. This is a 2013 Indian-Marathi film written and directed by Nagraj Manjule and is well appreciated by the masses. Both the protagonists of the literary works are of opposite sex but face the same discrimination on the basis of caste, class as well as gender; just because they belong to the lowest strata of our caste hierarchy. Thus, the prime focus of this paper is to compare the two texts from the subaltern standpoint using Ranajit Guha, Gayatri Spivak Chakraborty and Dipesh Chakraborty's theories on subaltern Studies. We will also address the issues of caste, class and gender prevalent in both Chandalika and Fandry and how they are very much interlinked in those respects though the two literary pieces were published with a gap of 75 years.

## **Women the Double Proxy: Gender, Caste and Decentralized Political Process**

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A democratic political process implies the extension of democracy at the grass-root level. The aim of the very de-concentration of power is to assure the local people's positive participation in their own affairs. In extension to this gender and caste based reservation can be seen as a process of advanced democratization of a democratic state. But the very process of democratization is not an easy task in a society like Haryana where caste is still in its stringent form. We are well aware off the dominance of khap Panchayat and Jati Panchayats in Haryana. After the implementation of 33% reservation for women in Gram Panchayat women's participation in politics has been increased at higher rate. There is no dearth of literature on the assessment of the impact of reservation in political empowerment of women. Some scholars have tried to understand the nature of participation of women in Panchayat with different perspective of caste class and Gender also.

Most of the studies have concluded that women from the affluent section of society lack the ability to assert and are Dummy/Proxy representatives who are controlled by their male counterparts, whereas women from lower socio economic have been emerging as effective leaders of Panchayats. Many scholars have attempted to analyse this phenomena by relating it to caste structure and the social and moral norms associated with the different caste groups of our society. It has also been pin point that due to livelihood issue lower caste's women transcend patriarchy and avail more freedom than upper caste women as they remain confined within the domestic boundaries.

In contrary to the above argument this paper attempts to explain how caste influences the dynamics of power and alienate women of lower strata from the decision making power structure which in this case is Gram Panchayat, making them 'Double Proxy/ Dummy candidate'. On one hand In terms of mobility, sexuality and accessing public spheres women of lower strata are more empowered than women from upper caste but at the same time in terms of sharing power in decision making institutions they are doubly marginalised. This phenomenon of marginalization of women gives specific understanding of intersectionality of gender, caste and power. This paper is based on the primary study conducted in 24 Village of Kurukshetra district of Haryana.

# Maratha Morchas: Tensions between Gender, Caste and Atrocity Act?

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On 17 July, 2016, a teenage girl belonging to the Maratha caste-community was brutally raped and murdered in Kopardi village, Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra. The accused were allegedly young Dalit boys. In recent times, Ahmednagar had become infamous as site of some of the most brutal caste atrocities against Dalits in the state. In the wake of Kopardi, it has transformed into the site of a counter-movement against Dalits in general and the Prevention of Atrocities Act, 1989 in particular.

An entirely new phenomena of Maratha Kranti Muk Morchas (Maratha Revolutionary Silent Demonstrations) has sprung up in nearly every other district of Maharashtra over the past three months with an average attendance of 2-2.5 lakh people. The demands of the protestors included capital punishment for the accused in the Kopardi case, reservations for Marathas and abolition/amendments to the Atrocities Act among other things. Protestors claim that the Atrocities Act is being misused by Dalits, mostly against Marathas. 21 of 26 districts where these rallies have taken place are officially listed as atrocity prone areas in State records.

The protests have seen an unprecedented participation of young women who have also been made the face and voice of the movement. Young teenage girls have provided voiceovers for social media appeals to join the movement, placed at the helm of the marches, asked to address audiences and press, and also submit written memorandums to the State. The demands of the movement too are articulated through the frames of gender: securing Maratha women threatened by errant Dalit masculinities seeking refuge in Atrocities Act; securing their (Maratha male) prospects in marriage threatened by college seats and jobs lost to Dalits with reservations; arrest the loss of male patrons to farmer suicides/penury by addressing the agrarian crisis. Such posturing achieves the twin goals of vilifying Dalit assertion and reigning in Maratha women's mobility. While contradictions and differences abound among the Marathas, there is dissent in the Dalit movement in Maharashtra too with certain sections suggesting that there is misuse of the Atrocities Act among other things.

This paper seeks to unpack the staged debate of gender versus caste at the heart of the Maratha morchas underway in Maharashtra. I argue that the lack of an intersectional inquiry will fail to yield any critical understanding of the changing political economy of caste and gender relations, and specifically atrocities in rural Maharashtra. I will draw from my MPhil fieldwork on atrocities against Dalit women in Marathwada, which was conducted in the same timeframe as also the site where the Morchas first emerged. This study is guided by a structural analysis rooted in aspects of materiality that takes into account experience focusing on the interwoven and dynamic interrelationships between caste, class and gender.

Given the caste amnesia pervasive in Indian mainstream it is necessary to preserve the atrocity law to foreground and establish the motive of caste hatred in acts of violence against Dalits. This is particularly true for Dalit women whose intersectional identities are conveniently erased under generic laws as seen in Khairlanji. Changing power relations in the social scape of rural Maharashtra solicit a deeper inquiry into new forms of caste/gender domination and retribution.

## **Interplay of Caste and Gender in Higher Education: A Reflection**

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Women for long have been victims of oppression, domination and deprived of opportunities in several areas. Nevertheless, they have come a long way in asserting for themselves a place in education, employment, etc., but the reality of gender inequality continues in various spheres, e.g., as seen in the scanty representation of women at high levels of decision making bodies and the area of Higher Education being no exception. To bridge this gap is all the more challenging for women of marginalized communities namely, the STs and SCs. Despite initiatives by the State, they are still under-represented in academic leadership positions or as educators in Higher Education due to various socio-economic, cultural and political reasons. In this backdrop, the paper attempts to highlight the different forms of discrimination, challenges and the resilience of these women serving in Higher Educational Institutions particularly in Colleges and Universities from across the country and contends that even when having a degree or higher education or occupying respectable positions in their respective

fields, the battle against undercover or overt caste and gender discrimination is still a long struggle. Pertinent questions on causes of under representation of women in Higher Education, harassment, educators as mentors for young people, etc are addressed which were elicited through an open ended questionnaire administered to women of marginalized communities (SCs, STs) serving in Educational Institutions. It also unearths fundamental questions on, the positive facets and challenges of these women, and the enabling factors towards their resilience or 'winner' attitude though living in a caste and gender constrictive environment, intersecting oppressions, and the role of support systems such as family, mentors, teachers and institutions which play a crucial role in breaking caste and gender barriers.

## **Caste Identity and Women: Reconstruction of Caste Patriarchy in Public Sphere**

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The construction of caste identity always has a gender aspect. Women are always seen as the site of identity for their castes. Caste associations play an important role in constructing caste identity and in establishing the caste identity in the public sphere by portraying Women's images especially historical women figure's image that help in serving their interests. Women are always expected to play an important role in social reproduction, in upholding the caste patriarchal values of a community and in nurturing its culture. In periods of public assertion of caste identities these expectations are increased. The aggressively masculine ethos of caste self-assertion leading to what we have termed the "masculinisation of public spaces" as well as the use of "ideal woman" symbols, all lead to a tightening of restrictions on women and also an increase in violence against women both in the private and the public sphere. An excellent example of this process can be seen in the way in which the Maratha Seva Sangh (MSS) – a Maratha caste association in Maharashtra, promoted the image of Jijabai a mother of Chhatrapati Shivaji. Jijabai nurtured the values of religious tolerance and opposition to caste discrimination in Shivaji, which contributed to his success in gaining the support of different castes in building his own independent kingdom. Her achievements are not limited to this; she participated in the affairs of state and took important decisions on several occasions. She pronounced judgments on disputes. But the Maratha Seva Sangh through its posters and framed pictures

promotes an image of an aristocratic Maratha woman wearing rich jewels and her sari pallav always covering her head. This image of Jijabai is impressed not only on persons of the Maratha caste but also other castes. Thus the Maratha lady Jijabai's image is projected as an ideal for other non-Brahmin castes. The MSS cultivates this model of an 'ideal Maratha lady' and indirectly Imposes on Maratha women stepping outside their homes the compulsion to protect their own 'aristocratic' character. In this paper I will discuss in detail the activities of caste association by which they try to establish an image or role model for their women through the study of Maratha Seva Sangh and its Projection of Jijabai's Image. I will also try to analyse how they shape the formation and re-formation of caste identities as well as its impact on the social structure of caste.

## **Dalit Women's Political Experience**

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The paper intends to look at the political participation of dalit (untouchable caste) women in Uttar Pradesh, one of the largest states of India. It is the state where the political experiments of Bahujan Samaj Party's (a Dalit political party) mentor Kanshi Ram (considered as the father of dalit political movement in UP) was a success and it was here that a dalit woman Mayawati succeeded to become the Chief Minister for the first time with full majority in 2006. Dalit women are discriminated against three times over: they are poor, they are women, and they are Dalits. They are discriminated not only by people of higher castes, but also within their own communities. Men are dominant in Dalit communities like in others. They also have less power within the Dalit movement itself. Though women are active in the movement but except Mayawati most leadership positions in the organisations, local bodies and associations have until now been held by men. Even Dalit movement fails to provide proper representation to them. Presently, there are hardly any women politicians in Bahujan Samaj Party.

Dalit women is almost absent from the activities going on among the men of their community. This doesn't mean that they are left untouched by fermentation going on within the Dalit communities. They have their independent thinking in matters when it comes to voting for Mayawati though it is a different thing that they are guided and monitored by the men constantly. They have dreams for themselves, many aspire to study and become independent. They don't want their next generation be like them especially their daughter. It is rare to see Dalit women in the position of leadership, whether at home, at work or in a social or

political institution. Even if she manages to attain such positions, it is the most venerable position.

The paper intends to explore the political experiences of dalit women in a dalit based party, BSP. There are some women activists in BSP but they are not involved in the decision making process in the party. Through the narratives of dalit women activists I intend to bring out their experiences in politics and their challenges, if any, to the patriarchal structure both inside the party and outside it to the society. This is to explore the amount of liberation they attained for themselves and for other dalit women and how difficult it is for a dalit women to make her place in a political party even if it is a dalit based party like BSP because when the question of dalit women is concerned, the struggle is completely different from the Upper Caste men and women, and even it is different from that of a Dalit men.

## **Brahmin Bride, Dalit Groom: Vishakanya and Other Debates**

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“To destroy the Phuley Ambedkarite movement, arya brahmins assimilated with us and conspiracy (sneakily) propagated inter-caste marriage theory in the name of Dr.Ambedkar. To flourish the poisonous ladies scheme, they had conspirically (sneakily) propagated that Dr. Ambedkar had given the concept of inter-caste marriage and inter-dining activity. Brahmins thought that the poisonous ladies can't be sent into every religious home so they targeted our MPs.”Waman Meshram, National President, BAMCEF ([www.ambedkar.org](http://www.ambedkar.org))

In India, throughout the history of ancient and medieval period, Vishakanya theory cited by Kautilya in his Arthshastra, is invoked at different sites and at different times. According to Arthshastra, the Vishakanyas ('Poisonous girls') are young women reportedly used as assassins, often against powerful enemies. Vishakanya has been a popular theme in Indian literature and folklore, and apart from appearing in classical Sanskrit texts, it has appeared repeatedly in various works like Vishkanya by Shivani Gaura Pant and Ek Aur VishKanya? (One more Vishakanya?) by Om Prakash Sharma, who use Vishakanya as an archetype in their stories—a beautiful girl who kills when she comes too close. Recently, the archetype has taken a new form in the HIV/AIDS discourse, in Vishakanya, a

2007 novel, based on the AIDS epidemic in society. In European context, French phrase *femme fatale* is a stock character of a mysterious and seductive woman whose charms ensnare her lovers, often leading them into compromising, dangerous and deadly situations.

In 2009, Vibha Rahi, a woman writer coming from lower castes has written a book 'Vishakanya : Untold Secrets' in Marathi, in which she portrays how upper caste women form intimate relationships with lower caste men of high profile, and destroy their families and social relationships. BAMSEF and Mulnavasi Sangh propagated the theory of Vishakanya in Dalit movement through various booklets, pamphlets, speeches, VCDs etc. These organisations propagated that Brahmin girls are Vishakanyas (Poisonous girls) who deviate Dalit intellectuals from their movement. These organisations also believe that Ambedkar's death was a conspiracy of Brahmins with the help of his Chitpavan Brahmin wife. I am going to analyse the discourse of Vishakanya theory in the context of hypogamous marriage.

Interestingly, the supporters of Vishakanya theory like those supporting Love jihad use 'numbers' to promote their theories. Politics of numbers and population started around 1920s. Charu Gupta points out how the discussion of Love Jihad was started in 1920s by Arya Samajists. Interestingly this is also the decade when non- Brahmin movement thrived on one hand and the Hindu right wing organisations like Hindu Mahasabha and R.S.S. were launched on the other. Significantly the politics of 'numbers' in this period needs to be seen in the context of coming of two acts, Mont-Ford, 1919 and before that Morley-Minto, 1909 which brought out separate electorates for backward classes . BAMSEF can be seen as drawing from this phase of non-Brahmin movement.

## **Intersection of Gender and Caste: Its Consequences on Crime and Violence against Women**

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Violence against women takes a unique form when gender and caste intersect. The gender-and-caste discrimination that Dalit women face is the outcome of severely imbalanced social, economic and political power equations. This undermines not only their dignity and self-respect, but also their rights to equal access to services and political participation. Violence and inhuman treatment



serve as a social mechanism to maintain Dalit women's subordinate position in society. Their socio-economic vulnerability and lack of political voice, when combined with the dominant risk factors of being Dalit and female, increase their exposure to potentially violent situations while simultaneously reducing their ability to escape. Dalit women's life stories tell of physical and verbal abuse, forced labour and slavery, trafficking, abduction, and sexual violence, which give insight into how their social position make them vulnerable to these human rights violations. With regard to sexual assaults, Dalit women are more vulnerable to sexual assaults like gang-rape, dowry-related killings, and naked parading and other aggravated forms of sexual violence based on gender and caste. Hence, violence, which serves as a crucial social mechanism to maintain Dalit women's subordinate position in society, is the core outcome of gender-based inequalities shaped and intensified by the caste system.

In order to understand, therefore, the reality of Indian society in general, and the Dalit community and Dalit women in particular, an analysis of caste-class-gender dynamics is imperative. It is only by adopting this three-fold lens focusing on the cultural and material dimensions of the intersection of gender and caste discrimination that a true comprehension of key social relations and social inequalities in India emerges. An intersectional caste-class-gender analysis also fulfils the need to make Dalit women visible to the public eye through exposing their reality of violence and disempowerment intrinsically related to their social position, in recognition of their selfhood and human dignity.

This paper attempts to understand critical issues pertaining to the issues of gender and caste intersectionality and violence within the ambit of 'human right violation and social justice'. Some specific objectives are: (i) Patterns of violence against women with a special focus on lower caste women; (ii) Factors that allow 'continued cultures of violence'; and (iii) Responses of state machineries towards such intersectional violence. The methodological approaches are both quantitative and qualitative in nature. Evidence are drawn from the National Crimes Records Bureau, a few fact finding reports and case studies, recent media reports, and official documents. It is revealed that the intersection of gender and caste compound the problems of lower caste women. As a rule, they remain 'soft target' to counter recent assertions of lower caste groups, create a culture of silence, make the community subjugated, maintain the oppression, reinforce continued social dominance over the community. Because of this, the lower caste women remain vulnerable to 'cycle of violence'. The paper highlights several issues for consideration at the level implementation of the laws and reforms in the criminal justice system.

# Indian Scavenger Women: At the Crossroads of Caste, Gender, and Stigma

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In India Historically, Scavenger community people are primarily engaged to work in informal sector especially in manual scavenging or domestic sweeping. Within Dalits who are considered to be lowest in caste hierarchy, Scavengers (known as Valmiki, Bhangi, and Mehtar in north) are positioned at the bottom since they are involved in menial jobs such as toilet cleaners, manual scavenging, road cleaners, cleaning public or private spaces etc. This paper deals with the general condition of the domestic sweepers and their stigmatized work, and impact of their work on their life? It throws lights on caste based occupation stigma associated with work, which is blot on our society. This article explores the possible functions performed by Scavenger community on the basis of caste based occupation and stigma. It also presents the obstacles in between caste, occupation and their life experiences.

## Food as a Site of Politics on Campus

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In this paper, we wish to look at food as the site of campus politics by looking at Savitribai Phule Pune University (State University) as our unit of analysis. This is because being the students of the same university we have observed the shared discontent amongst students regarding the issue of food.

Recent incidences on campus have confirmed that amongst various issues, food becomes the major site where the conflicts between the administration and the students are highlighted and articulated. These incidences of resistances and dissent are, however, translated into depoliticized issues. Food becomes a common site because it is assumed as a depoliticized issue, unlike caste or reservation, and thus students become comfortable in expressing their opinions.

There is also the assumption of imagined 'standard' food by university authorities that represents the hegemonic idea of staple food culture. Again the assumption being what is considered as staple for one dominant section gets represented as the universal standard food for all the students on the campus.

Though there is diversity within food culture, there is also hierarchy in it, which promotes brahmanical food practices as hegemonic, dominant, every day, 'staple' whereas invisibilizing and marginalizing other caste food practices. Again, the assumption behind the idea of student as homogenous category; overlooking the diverse composition of students in terms of caste, class, region, religion and gender. We are trying to question these assumptions and problematize the idea behind it, by looking at the policies formed around budget allocation, food subsidies, labour practices, architecture and placement of various canteens and mess on the campus.

Looking from above, food as imagined by university administration, looking from below, food as experienced by the students we seek to analyse different kinds of exclusions in terms of food culture on the campus. In Pune University, due to the absence of students' elections, food can become a useful analytical site to explore student political mobilization and organization on campus.

In this paper we would like to look at idea behind food as a site of assertion of power by the authority as well as the agential space that is available to students for resistance, where food becomes a shared experience, it not only create possibilities of resistances but also legitimizes certain hegemonic food practices and excludes the 'other' food practices.

## **Dalit Women and International Migration: Negotiating, Caste Rewriting Gender Roles**

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Migration has well been established as a livelihood strategy. There is also evidence of a larger trend of growing feminisation of migration, globally. Many women have started to migrate alone, leaving their families behind. Dalit Women from Andhra Pradesh have been migration for decades to work as Domestic Maids in gulf countries. They leave behind young children in the care of spouses or other family members.

The paper is based in ethnographic data which was collected as part of M.Phil in Women's Studies at Tata Institute of Social Sciences. The research data has been collected near Bhimavaram located in coastal Andhra Pradesh in 2013. Drawing on qualitative research methods the paper will seek to examine the way in which single female domestic migration has led to changes with the family

and community, focussing on: Changes in family roles, especially gender roles; Role of remittances in restructuring the Dalit economy vis-a-vis the larger village community; Class aspirations and achievements; Upbringing of Children and long distance parenting; Religious negotiations and hierarchies of womanhood; Changes in “image” of an “ideal woman”, from one who is docile and secondary to one who can go and work abroad on her own; Negotiations of caste in terms of intersecting class, caste, gender and religious identities; Political negotiations of caste within the community arising from class mobility.

The findings of the study show that families where women have migrated to the gulf to work do better economically, children are more educated, are able to invest in assets such as houses/land, provide for the initial investment and contribute towards the class mobility of the family. While, migration has had substantial positive economic and material benefits for the family and community, there is a huge emotional toll on the women as they live away from their families, sacrificing their youth. They go through guilt for being unable to take care of their children, but look at migration as the only way they could have provided for their children.

In conclusion, the paper will highlight the negotiations and resistances that take place within the intersecting identities of caste, class and gender within Dalit Communities as a result of high rates of international migration among women.

## **Gender Division in Sharing the Space: A Study of Space for Women with Special Reference to Satras and Namghars of Assam.**

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Social space is the common space for everyone in the society, irrespective of class, community, age and gender. Traditional institutions provide that social space where everyone can come, share, interact and entertain. Such institutions fulfill different social purposes-religious, social, political and cultural. By principal, they should be inclusive, accessible, participatory hence democratic. However reality, traditional institutions often turn out to be biased space, in most cases supporting the male supremacy. Satras and Namghars are two major traditional institutions of Assam, playing a vital role in the socio-cultural life of the state. Though established for religious objectives, both the institutions turn out to be major catalysts in the socio-cultural life of the Assamese society. Namghars and

the Satras provide a common platform for the community's desire in all spheres of their lives. While projected as an equal space provider for the men and women of the Assamese Race, Namghars and Satras hardly offer equal sharing of this space between men and women. Most of the religious activities (Sakam, Barsabha), social functions (Tithis, Raijmel) and cultural occasions (Bhaona, Rashleea) are controlled by men folk. Women experience deprivation even in sharing the physical space in these institutions. Thus women are frequently denied of their rights and space in these institutions which are integral parts of their lives. The proposed paper deals with the issue of gender diversion in sharing the social space with special reference to the institutions of Satras and Namghars of Assam. The paper would examine the historical process of intentional exclusion of the women in these institutions, along with the strategies adopted and their legitimization process. How has it been justified and how has it been implemented would be an interesting area to look into. It will be a qualitative study supported with the data collected from a pilot study undertaken in Majuli and Secondary sources.

## **Recasting Brahminical Patriarchy in Contemporary Maharashtra through Hindu Festivals and Women**

**Ashlesha Jadhav**

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In this Research Essay I have tried to highlight as to how the Brahminical Patriarchal Capitalist System is Recasting and getting stronger day by day in the prevailing Indian Society through the Hindu festivals with women participation. In this Research Essay, Maharashtra in Particular has been considered as a case study wherein new cultural political setup is giving rise to the Brahminical Patriarchal System. The Most famous Hindu God/Goddess Festivals in Maharashtra such as Ganesh Festival, Navratri Festival etc. have taken a very broad shape in the recent past. As per the Brahminical Religious Rules the responsibility of observing fast, performing certain religious rituals is given upon to the women at home. And therefore the women participation in almost all Brahminical Religious festivals is visibly more in all Hindu Families.

However due to the recent political change the Brahminical Patriarchal Ideology which has been supported by the State as well as the Capitalist Market Economy has played a pivotal role in spreading such Hindu Festivals being celebrated on a large public platform which until recent past were limited to private practice and celebrations by body of individuals. Especially The women

participation in the Public Celebration of Hindu Festivals has been remarkably a stunner.

In the fundamentalist known places like Pune it is seen that during the festival of Ganapati the Women gather in large numbers in traditional attire, colourful saree to be specific in a public place early in the morning to recite chants in chorus, the recitals of Ganapati Atharvashirsa which is described to be same as other Hindu Gods, as ultimate truth and reality (Brahman), as Satictananda, as the soul in oneself (Atman) and in every living being, as Om. During last Ganapati Festival almost 21000 women dressed in their traditional sarees gathered early in the morning in front of the famous Dagadusheth Halwaai Ganesh Temple to chant the recitals of Ganapati Atharvashirsa. Likewise the Hindu women in other parts of Maharashtra have also started to follow the suit by Gathering in large numbers at public places and chant the recitals of Ganapati Atharvashirsa. Although these being Hindu Religious Festivals, the Government Machinery is also seen to take keen interest in such Religious Events by deputing their respective Guardian Ministers, Police Officers to participate in such Public Religious Hindu Festivals. The Media also has been quite proactive in covering these Hindu Religious Festivals and sport such as Bhondlya, Mangalagouri, Musical Chair which are being celebrated publicly on a large scale because such events are being organised by people from the elite class housing societies to the local social organisations in various parts of Maharashtra.

In this Research Essay I shall bring to light as to how the Hindu Brahminical Patriarchal System is made stronger by using the Upper Caste, Upper Class Hindu Women as a Catalyst and how they are being used as the Carriers/Movers of the Discriminative and Exploitative Hindu Religious System.

Besides the reference of V Geetha and TV Jayanthi's Research Essay Titled Women, Hindutva and the Politics of Caste in Tamil Nadu I shall also refer to the research work of Tanika Sarkar and Paola Bacchetta for this Research Essay.

## **Reproductive Health: Knowledge and Attitude of Adolescent Girls of Vulnerable Communities**

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Status of women is dependent on many factors like gender, caste, class, and

ethnic identity that impact their health and access to healthcare. Women face double discrimination being members of specific caste, class or ethnic group apart from experiencing gendered vulnerabilities. They have little control on the resources and on important decisions related to their lives. Besides, early marriage and childbearing affects women's health adversely.

The International Conference on Population and Development draws a clear connection between reproductive health, human rights and sustainable development. When sexual and reproductive health needs are not met, individuals are deprived of the right to make crucial choices about their own bodies and future generations. And because women bear children, and also often bear the responsibility for nurturing them, sexual and reproductive health and rights issues cannot be separated from gender equality. Cumulatively, the denial of these rights aggravates poverty and gender inequality.

Issues affecting adolescent reproductive and sexual health are similar to those of adults, but may include additional concerns about teenage pregnancy and lack of adequate access to information and health services especially when they hail from socially vulnerable sections. Worldwide, around 16 million adolescent girls give birth every year, mostly in low- and middle-income countries.

Despite of many efforts by the Government and nongovernmental organizations, about 28 per cent of girls in India get married below the legal age and experience pregnancy. These have serious repercussions on the health of women. A large proportion of women are reported to have received no antenatal care. In India, institutional delivery is lowest among women from the lower economic class as against those from the higher class. Even though children are getting educated, it does not have any impact on their knowledge related to their reproductive health. In order to understand the level of understanding about reproductive health and rights of adolescent girls, a descriptive study was undertaken, covering 100 adolescent girls belong to SC/ST community, staying in welfare hostel. The respondents were interviewed using structured questionnaire. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the respondents.

## **Atrocities against Dalit Women in Indian Society: A Continue Process in Changing World**

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Violence has many forms physical, verbal, mental etc. Gender violation has been used to confine women's freedom under male supremacy in the world. But Violence against Dalit women in Indian society is very unique and strategically formulated. The forms of caste violations are very much in previous shapes. There are legal laws but no employ of it because caste has been used as a tool to dominate lower caste to maintain hierarchy and structure of inequalities alive.

Dalit women have been subjected to pre-design belligerence, which is exceptional for them in Indian society. The caste class and gender scenario triple down their human identity. They have to bear lot of aggression and cruelty through other upper caste people. Since origin Indian villages have been witnesses for this structure. And still there is no concern has been paid towards the reporting of rape cases from different state. Like other example Dalit house burning is sole issue in Indian states. In recent years the Dalit women have been show interest in education but still very few of them have an access on mobility. They have been restricted by the family, society due to fear of being harassed, raped etc. The issues of gender and caste identity are much more challenging for these women. They have been dominated on several points as women, being as women from untouchable caste, poor women. Rege noticed that triple exclusion in terms of caste, class and gender of Dalit women is unique for lower caste women. Due to their caste identity they are easy target for sexual brutality. States like Haryana and Rajasthan reported continuously countless numbers of rapes and molestation cases against these women. Recently cases have been reported in which women from these lower caste were getting empower themselves through higher education. The social denial for empowerment is still exist and restricted by the caste. The caste atrocities restricted them in to limited periphery of society. Dalit women have been subjected to sexual violence. Their sexuality is used as a tool to organize and maintain the domination of caste active in changing world.

Gender is problematic category even within the same community .Women from these groups are most vulnerable and deprived from their human rights. These lower caste women are lowest sub category of lower castes in India and brutally victim of caste untouchability. This restriction has located them in vicious cycle of socio- economic poverty, socio-economic vulnerability and socio-economic isolation. Being as women form lower caste these vulnerabilities becomes much more challenging and concrete to break down for them. The question several time popup in minds that what caste do with gender? This paper explores the nexus of the role of caste and gender in oppressing dalit women.



# **Dialectics of Anti-Rape Movement in Maharashtra: with reference of Khairlanji and Kopardi Rape Cases**

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In present whole Maharashtra state is facing very hot and critical socio-political situation because of the Kopardi rape case incidence. An upper caste school girl raped and murdered by four dalit men in the village of Kopardi. 'Upper caste victim and dalit rapist' it's different or rear incidence because rape on dalit women its general social reality in India that is the cause of angry, powerful protests are happening in Maharashtra. According to feminist perspective that, 'rape is not about sex, it is about power'. Kopardi anti-rape movements are losing or neglecting that power relation which was articulated through cast-class-gender. It's always happen all over India, all the anti-rape campaign lunched without understanding caste-class reality, it is very big challenge for movement of anti-caste-class-patriarchy in India. This paper is discussing the following issues: 1) caste-patriarchal system and institutionalization of rape, 2) anti-rape campaign, protests and casteist 3) feminism, feminist movements in Maharashtra and anti-rape movements.

## **Discrimination against Dalit Women in Sivaganga District – An Analysis**

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Dalit women include a section of women in Indian society, who come from the lower castes, particularly the untouchable and beside gender discrimination, have also suffered from the prescribed customary provisions in the institution of caste. The reality of Dalit women is one of exclusion and marginalization, which perpetuates their subordinate position in society and increases their vulnerability, throughout generations. Dalit women are one of the most marginalised segments in the society. Dalit women are considered greater Dalit among Dalits. The condition of dalit women is more vulnerable than non-dalit women. They are suffering from multiple disadvantages. Human rights violation of the Dalit women has a close interconnection between the status of women in general and

Dalit women in particular as prescribed by Hindu social order. Discrimination against Dalit women is a part of the violence of normal times. Their problem comprises triple deprivation – gender – poverty – caste. This combination makes millions of Dalit women extremely vulnerable to discrimination and violence. Thus Dalit women's problem encompasses not only gender deprivation and economic deprivation, but also discrimination associated with religion, caste and untouchability – resulting in to denial of economic, social, cultural and political rights. Dalit-women-centric perspective argued that Dalit women suffered not only from male domination resulting in lack of equal rights, and lack of economic rights, but also from unequal treatment in society due to their caste identity governed by the institution of caste and untouchability. There is need to explore these and other crucial issues and discuss basic facts concerning the vulnerable situation of dalit women.

- To analyse the socio economic status of the Dalit women
- To examine the forms of discrimination faced by of the respondents
- To analyse the factors (or) caused for discrimination
- To suggest remedies to improve the status of the respondents

Primary data will be collected by interview schedule. Statistical tools will be used for analysis.

## **Dominance and Masculinity: A Case Study of Tamil Nadu**

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Indian foundationalist inputs into the discursive field of dominance and masculinity have opened up an in-depth understanding of gender by highlighting the culturally constructed character of both dominance and subjugation along with masculine and feminine identities. The term Gender used as a generic term in academic discourses, particularly in India, it is always seen synonymous with women's status and as having originated out of the dominant feministic perspective. Such foundationalist constructed approaches of viewing women and men either as social, cultural constructs or biological categories and any history based on these realizations should be subject to an alternative research out-look or go beyond these two approaches for reconstruction. The epistemological crisis, it has created might be evident from such unilineal out puts.

The present paper tries to bring out the range of available narratives that pervaded and then vitiated an alternative anthropological perspective by exploring the functional relationship between the dominant and subjugated communities in Tamil Nadu. It brings out the existing ground reality and the dominant women's attitude towards the subjugated community as a whole without making biological variation. Rosaldo (1974) points out that in a male-dominated society, it is powerful women who are conceived of as witches, but in a caste dominated society, the women of the dominant community perceive the subjugated community as a whole in a derogatory feminine sense. Such gamut of ground reality affirms the day to day life of the subjugated communities and endorses the contemporary caste/community existence in a hierarchical India. The study shows an alternative perspective of masculine identity. The paper is an outcome of the author's empirical understanding about the dominance and masculine attitude of the women from dominant community towards the subjugated community as a whole. The subjugated community is a 'dalit community' in Tamil Nadu.

## **Politicization of Caste, Gender and Sexuality**

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This paper attempts to explore the complex discourse of caste, gender and the sexuality of women. It largely deals with the mobilization of women by OBC leaders' dominated political parties across Maharashtra. Further, it analyses the relations of Brahmanical patriarchy and masculinity. However, an effort has been made to read the mass participation of Maratha / OBC women in the context of Kopardi rape case from Ahmadnagar district of Maharashtra. Polarisation on these lines will be examined in the context of role of non-dalit/dalit voices within the ruling and opposition parties.

# **Caste and Gender Discrimination: Walking on a Double Edged Sword**

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From time immemorial, women have been treated like a second sex throughout the world. In India, we have an extra set of problems which cause suppression at an agonising level. At the bottom of the caste pyramid are women of the oppressed class called 'Dalit women.' Their situation is like a grain in between two grinding stones. Autobiographies written by Dalit women writers are a testimony of the pain and anguish that they're forced to suffer from, not only at a physical level, but also at the emotional and mental level.

Kaushalya Baisantry dared to give voice to the suppressed expression that dominated her arduous life journey after being subject to abject inhumanity for forty long years. Her childhood is a bundle of painful memories which had to face caste discrimination at every step of the way. There was no respite after marriage either; rather it was a herald for doom. Cuts hurt deeper when inflicted upon by one's supposed protector. She was mercilessly abused physically and emotionally, and deprived economically by her husband. In the twilight of her life, she was able to gather the courage to divorce her husband, and work towards the cause of uplifting other subjugated women of her society.

Susheela Takbhaure is from the most oppressed amongst the oppressed section of the society called 'Bhangis'. Caste discrimination and the curse of untouchability were perennial ghosts haunting her school life. Her childhood was drowned in the shadow of scarcity. She had dreams of a happy married life, but her reality turned out to be a harsh nightmare. Her 'better half' and her in-laws tormented her in all ways possible. She did not have the right to spend a single penny even from her own hard earned money. Extreme pain and suffering often give one the strength to protest. Susheela protested and all tyrants had to submit. This paper traces and documents the pains and struggles of Bhangi woman Susheela Takbhaure.

## **Dalit Girls in Higher Education: Images and Negotiations**

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Over the years, higher education institutions in India has evolved as site for strong inter-caste contestations with increasing number of Dalit students entering this space (often using the benefits of caste-based positive discrimination entitlements) and claiming their rights over it. Many upper castes in campus attempt to belittle these claims by constructing derogatory images about the Dalit students. These images, of course, do not go uncontested, although the strategies of negotiations differ. In this context it is important to look at the distinct experiences of Dalit girls who are pursuing higher education. While images that they have to continuously deal with are primarily caste-based, some also exists at the intersection of caste and gender. However, what makes Dalit girls' engagement with these caste images unique is their need to constantly abide by rigid gender norms set by their family and community. Family often insist on these norms and make it a condition for allowing girls to pursue higher education. Therefore, negotiation with derogatory images also needs to take place within the boundaries of gender norms. Negotiations are further bounded for Dalit girls who are from underprivileged family background. They are even subject to stereotyped by Dalit girls from better off families. All these make the process of image formation about Dalit girls and negotiations around it an extremely complex process. Using qualitative data collected from University of Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India this paper attempts to unravel this complexity by examining the different intersections where Dalit girls in higher education are situated.

## SUB - THEME 5

### CULTURES OF RESISTANCE

**Coordinators: A. Mangai (Stella Maris College, Chennai) and Swati Dehadray (Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule Women's Studies Centre, University of Pune)**

#### ABSTRACTS

##### **Re-reading the Gorkhaland Movement: Narratives of the Women Within**

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In 2013, a newspaper article spoke about eight women shaving their heads for the demand for Gorkhaland. 'Gorkhaland' is a demand for a separate state by the people in the region of Darjeeling and its subdivisions, against the existing Bengali dominance in the state of West Bengal. The movement is a means through which the people are asserting their identity as an equal citizen of the Nation. The women shaving their heads were not just seen as an act of defiance but also as shattering the gender binary. While the demand for separation from the dominance of the Bengali elite has been growing since the British colonial period, the movement gained momentum in 1986 and not only has become a means to assert the identity of the Indian Nepali/Gorkha community but also has become a tool to ensure the security of the people from being termed as foreigners. Within the political demand of statehood, lies the search of the homeland where the people of the region have the right to govern the land they live in. The present study intends to the question the existing literature on the movement which has focused on the men's role in the movement and thereby sidelined the role of the women. Therefore, the study intends to re-tell the movement through the narratives of the women who have been a part of it. As the movement is still on-going, the study will focus on two phases of the movement-1986 and 2007- as these have witnessed strong voices of defiance against the existing Bengali hegemony. Moreover, these two phases also witnessed the rise and the assertion of the Gorkha identity that united the region under the banner of Gorkhaland. While the 2007 phase of the movement saw a very visible presence of the women participants within the movement, the study seeks to look at both these phases in order to understand if there has been a change in the role of its women participants. The focus is on who these women were and how they became a

part of the movement will enable a critical reading of the movement. The re-examination of the existing materials through the lens of gender will bring forth different readings of the movement. The diversity within the category of women participant on the basis of intersecting identities of gender, occupation and class, further breaks down that interpretation. As a qualitative study, it intends to follow an ethnographic method where the life-history of the women participant will be recorded. As the women come from different socio-economic and political strata, the interviews, focus-group discussion and the participant observation conducted will provide a multiple reading of the movement. Further secondary materials like newspaper archives, political pamphlets, and the existing literature on the movement which will include fictional or literary works will also be read.

## **Humour As A Tool Of Feminist Resistance: Stand-up Comedy in India**

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The following paper begins by foregrounding the premise that patriarchy has succeeded in inflicting itself upon us by using any means it has primarily to stifle expression. This implies that every form of resistance employed has been to move towards reclaiming our freedom of expression as gendered and sexual minorities.

If we consider cultural forms of expression that have been used extensively to fight against the same, there is literature, art, theatre, dance, music and more which come to mind as the primary forms. However, one such form of cultural expression which has not been tapped into for its potential of feminist resistance is humour. The myriad sociological and cultural implications made possible through the study of humour have been relatively neglected in India.

Humourology, or the study of humour, is well on its way to become a legitimate discipline within the academics (Carrell 2008). However, this field has not found many researchers in India. The study of humour as a tool of feminist resistance, thus, I hope, would begin the much needed enquiry into the serious business that is humour.

Humour, within feminism, holds much appeal since it is the stimulus to which laughter is the reaction. Laughter which implies brazenness, wildness, unsexiness, in a woman that indulges in it. Laughter is not a feminine trait.

More importantly, not a desirable trait. Hence, the person indulging in it may not be “woman enough.” Is the laughing woman then subverting our normative understanding of gender?

This paper has chosen to specifically look at stand-up comedy in India performed by women. Stand-up comedy offers several possibilities of enquiry for the purpose of this paper. Globally, stand-up has been a predominantly male dominated field of entertainment. Primarily because it involves performance, having the courage to “put yourself out there” in front of an audience who will judge you real-time. If laughing is considered unfeminine, writing your own material to make someone else laugh is even more so. Being judged for the way one dresses and looks is certainly a given, but the subjects that they choose to speak on also bear importance to how well they do. While we see successful stand-up comediennes in America going “mainstream”, hosting prestigious award shows, where do our comediennes stand in relation to becoming popular? What does mainstream mean with respect to India in the first place?

In addition, what kind of subjects do the Indian stand-up comediennes choose? Why? Do they make conscious wardrobe choices when performing? What is the process they follow when writing a set for their performance? How much does the audience influence the material they write?

Apart from these questions, this paper aims to conclude while reflecting on the extent to which humour in general and comedy in particular, can be considered a tool of resistance, as a means to work toward transformative feminist politics. Can the use of humour as feminist resistance work towards a framework of gender justice?

## **IS IT JUST ABOUT THE MOVES?**

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In a completely stratified country like India, social segregations are very prominent and underlined. Social divisions based on caste, class, gender, race, language, religion, geographical spaces are highly accentuated. This divided existence amongst the people has made way for the creation of two major sections i.e. the majorities and the minorities within the society. Patriarchy proved itself to be one of the persistent and imperative power sources that had forever fueled such bigotries. Patriarchy had forever derided, criticized and side-



lined performative art such as Dance, as an art of the 'fallen' used mainly to attract the 'male gaze'. Performers largely comprising of women such as the courtesans and devdasis have forever been stigmatized, excommunicated and considered as repugnant by the society at a time when India was undergoing a major Nation construction process in the post 1947 era. There launched several anti-nautch movements that hailed high the colonial policies of 'purity' nationwide and discarded the 'disreputable' female performers. Quite like that of the caste system, the realm of performing arts especially Dance and dancing women, were subjected to massive segregations on the basis of 'purity' and 'pollution'; like that of religion it felt clasps of orthodoxy; like that of class it underwent the labeling of 'classified' and 'declassified' forms of art. Over the decades, Dance has emerged out of these polar differences, traversed from the art of 'fallen' to that of the 'respectable' as it slowly spread amongst the middle class sections of the society. It is no more just an 'entertainment' but has become the weapon of resistance and defiance, confronting various social 'dead habits' and the overt patriarchal 'male gaze'. This paper aims to look at the genre of Bollywood movies analyzing three screen dance sequences from three of the epic Bollywood movies *Sholay* (1975), *Devdas* (2002) and *Baji Rao Mastani* (2015) and try to explore how the Dance sequences of these movies such as 'Jab Tak hai jaan', 'Dola re Dola' and 'Pinga' are not just about the moves but portray a culture of resistance and defy the patriarchy as well as the deep seated 'narrow domestic walls' of the society through the performances.

## **Cherishing the Ceramic Cosmos: An Ecosemiotic Reading of Select poems of Jyothsna Phanija**

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Ecoliterature is gaining momentum owing to its temperament to blend the emotional essence of existence with the physical environment. Therefore, any study on ecoliterature liberally provides both an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary scope for a better understanding of our ecology. The language used to describe nature, environment and ecology in literature, driven to move from serving an aesthetic purpose to 'articulating' emotions of their own, has been subjected to much debate, since 'The Ecocriticism Reader' by Cheryll Glotfelty and the contribution towards eco-sensitivity from various sources continues to grow steadily. Sensitivity is at the core of ecoliterature. It intends to assimilate more marginalised and ignored voices, the voice of the differently abled,

offering a tender platform, to reflect and express beyond alleged misfortunes of an individual or a medical condition requiring immediate attention. Hence, standing testament to the nature of ecology, which interlaces everything, 'An Ecosemiotic Study of Jyothsna Phaniya's Poetry' seeks to explore the possibility of permeating interdisciplinary fields of semiotics and disability studies within the framework of ecoliterature. Poetry by Jyothsna Phaniya, an enterprising visually challenged scholar and academician, is replete with intense emotions of a perplexing life in a confined and confining environment. Thus, select poems of Jyothsna Phaniya are considered for the proposed research paper, where the cautious use of images from nature, offer space for complex interpretation in the backdrop of conventional semiotic frameworks.

## **Role of Women in the Funerary House Industry in Khandesh Region**

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Tradition of conditioning affirms that the funerary house industry had belonging of exploitation. The possible explanation of the belonging in relationship of this industry is nonetheless but caste. In Maharashtra the Mahar and Mang (Scheduled caste) communities are closely known for the historical evidences regards to it. Mangs have to do all the pre-post preparation of the burning and bury today also. Mahars have to do town crying for the incident. In the age of neoliberalism and digital evolution noted acts held on the base of caste.

It is a morality for the women that they should not see dead body at the last moment. Funerary house is disposal public space for dead bodies where Brahmanism ruled in a way to construct the religious light and identified the bottommost of the bottom.

The huge time it takes to burning or bury the human dead body, the process of 'disposal of dead bodies' is an industry where women has to play their role, forcefully or willingly. What is behind these processes which makes women to play ritual of singing songs, crying and wake them up whole night or till the disposal of dead body? The process of bury or burning in a funerary house is one of the resource of an industry and it is does not only a space of burning and bury but the space of politics too.

Singing song, playing drums, crying and dead bodies preparation is become impure but these funeral rites Mahar and Mangs have to do, they have elect by

the caste based varna system. The 'fear' they have seen becomes the example and they have broken and made offensive against the rules that ruled over the years.

Dead body connotes the two dimensional 'fear', one is 'lost of something' and the other one is mysterious philosophy according to Charvak. The misleading generalisation and the stereotype of 'women' that they scared more than the 'men' is become false when we have the women of Mangs and Mahars in front of us, visually, verbally or through the oral history.

The historical imbalance between forward caste to shudra or shudra to the untouchables has their own codification and confirmation. Women from all castes are not allowed to the funerary houses. The study I am attempting to explain is lived experience and ethnography of Khandesh region of Maharashtra and trying to look at the 'offence' that done by the Mahars and Mangs especially women entering funerary house.

## **Women on the Road: Mapping 'Road Narratives' in some popular Indian Cinema**

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Road as a space unarguably holds an engaging presence in both socio-cultural and literary representations. As a constitutive element of topographical dynamics, road has been extensively theorised across academic discourses and cultural studies. What does a road signify? How does one discern the ways through which any scholarship on road offers interesting commentaries on specific histories, cultures and meanings? More than often road represents a deeply loaded site for playing out the subtleties and ambiguities inherent in our understandings of the structural relationship between spatiality and mobility. In this connection it is important to note that a lot of critical debates have emerged in the recent decades over the fact that most of the road narratives underpin hegemonic male/female, public/private dualism. Should road be merely be looked upon as a masculine terrain that reiterates the exclusion of women from experiences of mobility and travels? The discursive formation of road as a gendered space invariably embraces complex encounters between symbolic and real domination and hierarchy. Feminist studies have focussed on the perpetuation of our readings and representations of road as dangerous for women and challenged the validity of such contestations. Such feminist claims effectively bring forth the gendered

dimensions of geopolitical narratives.

Space, places, roads and concomitant journeys constitute long standing themes in Indian literary and cultural traditions. Stories, written and oral, are replete with tropes of road and generic tradition of parallel journeys of internal and external discoveries of identity and destinations. In the Indian context too the aesthetics of road are conditioned by differences in terms of gender, social positions and lived situations. Cinema as a narrative is adequately suited to stage the dynamics of such representations. In the recent past, a few mainstream Hindi films have engaged with road motif in many interesting forms and manners. It is not a monolithic representation; multiple perspectives emerge through these cinematic texts. Popular films like *Chalo Dilli*, *Highway*, *NH10*. These films offer interesting avenues for analysing man-woman subject positions in the public space. This paper proposes to examine the ways in which these films offer alternative discourse on women's mobility. Through a nuanced analysis of these films the paper aims to show how mobility outside conventionally assigned life trajectories constitutes different understanding of woman's place in the society. Various critical questions would be raised in the discussion as to whether these representations disentangle road journey from its masculine logic. The paper would also question whether the female characters inhabit an emancipatory space within the populist mould of film narrative or they are cast within a conventional structure. The paper would also focus how in these films road becomes the discursive social arena of visibility in which multiple differences are contested and negotiated.

## **Digital Voices of Resistance: Sexual Expression in the Online Space**

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In the current world, the internet is an ever-growing space which is being accessed by more and more people every day. When the digital space accommodates diverse opinions, views and arguments, it has also inherited the offline power structures. For example, the gender gap between the users in India is huge, with men accounting for 79% of the users whereas only 21% are women, and women who express their opinions online are often subjected to harassment, rape threats etc. But the same space is also a site of resistance, where the oppressed in the power structure can speak out against the oppressors.

More and more women, sexual and gender minorities, those belonging to oppressed castes and classes, survivors of abuse etc. are using the Internet to speak tell their stories. This is especially welcome with regards to sexuality, possibly one of the biggest taboo topics. There are online publications, blogs, Facebook groups etc. from India which talk about affirmative sexuality, breaking the silence around the topic of sexuality, especially women's sexual expression and non-heteronormative sexualities. All these are instances where the digital medium has aided cultures of resistance. They have allowed people to challenge the dominant paradigm. This paper aims to look at the growing resistance online against the conservative norms around sexuality, which form an important part of the counter culture narratives as they empower by allowing reclamation of spaces as well as voices against the hegemonic power structure.

## **Motherhood and Abortion in the Times of Sex Selection: Reading a Popular Marathi Television Serial**

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This paper attempts to analyse cultural discourses on questions of abortion and motherhood in the context of debates around sex selection, compulsory tracking of pregnancies and limiting access to abortion. The medical termination of Pregnancy (henceforth MTP) Act was introduced in India not in the context of demands by the women's movement as has been the case in many other countries, but rather in the context of dilemmas around 'development', particularly the issue of population. Abortion was seen by the Indian state as a possible means of contraception and population control and was also aligned with goals of bettering child and maternal mortality rates, better maternal health in general. It is because the Act was framed in this context, that abortion is not a right in India, it is legalized if certain conditions are met. Due to this there has been little debate and discussion around abortion within the feminist movement until recently.

The act of abortion has in the recent years been visibilized, in rather problematic ways, in the context of the declining child sex ratios. In this discussion, abortion has come to be equated with sex-selective abortions, leading to attempts for greater control and surveillance over women's bodies, though there is clearly

no point of overlap between the MTP and the PCPNDT Acts. Much of the opposition to “sex selection” is coded in terms of “murder” of girls, achieving a collapse between the act of sex selection/ determination and the act of abortion. The paper argues that there is a discourse being created around abortion which marks it as a sin and problematically making the woman (read “mother”) responsible, a sinner, while attempting to either invisibilize the medical fraternity or at best marking doctors as benevolent and unwilling partners.

In this context, this paper will attempt to read a popular Marathi television serial “Khulta Kali Khulena” to understand the discourses being created around motherhood, pregnancy and abortion. The paper argues that it is vital to look at this representation in the context of the public action and speech by doctors’ associations, particularly of radiologists and gynecologists in the context of the PCPNDT Act. The paper argues that new discourses are sought to be articulated in the context of the critique of the medical establishment and of doctors by feminists and other groups and that it is important to understand these cultural discourses in order to imagine a feminist politics that argues for opposition to sex selection without further compromising on women’s bodily autonomy.

## **Singing Freely of Revolution**

### **RAAG**

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RAAG – Revolution, Azaadi and Aman ke Geet - (songs of revolution, freedom and peace) is a collective of feminists who got together to sing. We are from different spheres of life whose perspectives and interests bring us together to voice concerns, demands, dreams and desires. We find activism in each song and a melody in every gesture of activism.

Historically, writing and singing songs have been a part and parcel of resistance within various movements. What is a better way to reach out to people than music and singing to express solidarity, love, grief and pain? As feminists, we at RAAG love to create and sing songs. Through this, we try to engage with people on different issues. Our songs are inspired by songs from people’s movements, women’s movements and – yes -- Bollywood! Singing is a subversive act which gives us the strength to stand through dark times, to discuss and challenge. Just as importantly, music gives us hope and optimism. To illustrate, one of our favourite renditions is an Urdu nazm ‘Hum Dekhenge’ written by Faiz Ahmed Faiz. This song is a promise of dreams coming true, of peace and of faith ruling people.

We sing to add to the culture of activism and the belief in ourselves to rise and resist, build and cultivate, love and live in freedom and peace.

**We try to embody what Bertolt Brecht famously said,**

**“In the dark times,**

**Will there also be singing?**

**Yes, there will also be singing.**

**About the dark times”**

## **Commodification of Women in Advertisements: It's Impact on Societal Psyche**

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At present, advertisements have become an indispensable part of our economic, political and social existence. Ideals of family, work, success, sexuality, love, and normalcy are based on advertisements and models. The traditional image of wife, mother, house wife is now being replaced by images of sexually assertive, confident and ambitious women who express their freedom, gain control through the commodification of their appearance, that is by acquiring a particular 'look' by using fairness cream, make up, jeans, lingerie, accessories to obtain power. Every day innumerable advertisements are available to the viewers in India and majority of these viewers are committed consumers who devotedly follow the dictates of advertisements. The paper based on advertisements appearing in the print and electronic media in India highlights that women no longer identify themselves with qualities like submissiveness, coyness, home making and mothering skills. The shift from passive to active, from smile to frown from submissiveness to empowerment has replaced local cultural ethos. However, the new image of independent, emancipated, confident women is not psychologically acceptable as equal partner but a new image for sexual gratification. The present paper will attempt to investigate the causes and impact of select presentation of women in advertisements in adversely affecting the societal Psyche.

# Invisible Deaths: Poetry of Resistance by Tamil Women in Sri Lanka

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In the three decade long civil war between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government terrible atrocities were committed on the minority Tamil community by both the parties involved. During the conflict, visibility emerged as a fraught concept that had implications for the lived everyday as well as for the hegemonic construction of the Tamil nation through selective memorialization. The nation does not recognize all lives and there is a continuous negotiation for recognition. In these negotiations, certain lives and deaths are rendered as unrecognizable and invisible. The paper starts by looking at how certain deaths are hypervisibilised as it fits in the narrative of the Tamil nation, through the construction of martyrs and deaths that have to be celebrated. But in the violent process of nation making, there are other kinds of deaths as well, deaths that haunt a liminal space between memory and forgetting.

The paper, through a close reading of poetry written by Sivaramani, Sanmarga, Sankari, Sumathi Sivamohan and Ilaneetha, aims to look at how poetry becomes a medium of resistance where the seemingly rigid confines of the Tamil nation are diluted by remembering deaths that are otherwise invisible in the lens of nation. It aims to look at deaths that are either unrecognizable because it ruptures the logic of the nation in itself, for example the death of traitor or because it strains the existing known modes of mourning. In this context the paper also looks at the death of a poet and the work that it does as the death travels through another poet's work. The paper ends by looking at the difficult task of mourning of the unknown and people deemed marginal. When there are protocols and restraints on the act of mourning and remembering, the poetry written by these women act as a space of resistance through the act of remembering and the refusal to forget difficult truths about nation.



# **Fiction as Resistance: Perspectives from Colonial and Contemporary Bengal**

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The proposed paper will focus on fictional literature penned by women in colonial and contemporary Bengal and see such fiction as resistance to patriarchy. It will examine the practice and practicalities of writing in a milieu that was and to a great extent still is inhospitable to women's intellectual development and creativity and reveal the diverse strategies adopted by women to subvert patriarchal attempts to constrict their creativity and control their lives and leisure. Writing fiction moreover, appears to serve for women the purpose of a safety valve for the release of the pent-up frustrations, agonies and unfulfilled cravings. Though their fiction they have sought to resolve their inner dilemmas and the questions that plague them. Finally, women novelists often tend to write their own lives into their fiction, merging their own selves with those of their women protagonists, their protagonists becoming their alter ego. Their fiction then becomes the vehicle through which they protest the oppression that they had been subjected to in their personal lives and also tell the world how they either chose the path of compromise and subservience or overcame odds, broke shackles, and eventually assumed control of their own lives. The paper will especially focus on Ashalata Singha's Jeevan Dhara, Mandakranta Sen's Jhanptaal, Tilottoma Majumdar's Ektara, and Sangeeta Bandyopadhyay's Sankhini and will see how these novelists sought to pen a bildungsroman of the woman writer whose creativity was dialectically linked to a turbulent and oppressive marital life, recording the eventual surrender to or triumph over patriarchal mores.

## **Studying Jogava as Regional Marathi Cinema To Understand Cultural Traditions / Practices**

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In social sciences for research purpose cinema is used as a text to understand society and it can be used as a tool to study social history. Cinema is used for studying the different aspects of society like social history, nation, and different

practices related to different caste and cultures. I am using cinema to study the cultural traditions /practices and its implications on gender and caste. India is divided into many regions and languages. Bollywood Cinema is known as Indian cinema but there are many other regions that produce movies in their languages. Cinema at a general level is understood as an entertainment for people. So there is a demand for popular entertaining cinema in their own language which provides entertainment for them. In India cinema is produced in Marathi, Telugu, Malayalam, Bhojpuri and many other languages. In this paper I am studying Marathi cinema as a regional cinema and have selected Jogava Marathi film for my research paper. Jogava is a Marathi film directed by Rajeev Patil which was released in 2009.

Indian society is itself hierarchal in nature. The relationships between communities and people are based on hierarchy. In this paper I am studying the hierarchy of cultures. The upper caste people (men and women) are engaged in holy and sacred cultural practices. The lower caste people (men and women) are engaged in the work which generally noted as dirty and impure.

Jogava shows particular cultural practice in society. Jogata refers to a man and Jogatin refers to a woman. Jogava depicts a person who has given some duties to do in his daily life. Both Jogata and Jogatin are forced by society to give up everything and serve the god. Jogata has to give up his male character and act as a woman and for a Jogatin marriage is not allowed. This tradition is still followed in some parts of India in different forms.

In this research paper through this movie I will try to understand how lower caste men and women and their sexuality are exploited through such practices and does the film Jogava address these issues or not?

## **Refiguring (Cyber) Feminism: How to be (not) present online?**

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A Graphic Narrative titled 'Personal (Cyber) space, hosted by south Asian collective Kadak, narrates the experience of a young female internet user. They write, 'If one says something, there's the fear of hateful response. But if one doesn't say something. Isn't that silence counterproductive?' only to end with the question 'So what does one say?' In 1991, VNS Matrix, an artist collective

formed in Australia, launched itself with its manifesto that stated them to be the 'modern cunts ...unbounded, unleashed etc. Two decades later, another cyber feminist collective, called Deep Lab collective organized a series of lectures where the participants were reluctant to announce cyberspace as this platform that allows such unbounded disruption accepting that 'there is something about the Internet that is not working anymore.'

A change in focus of the two collectives presents to us the problem of answering the above stated question. Unfortunately, a straightforward response to the question 'so what does one say?' takes the shape of censorship, government regulation and increased surveillance. This counter discourse of managing the internet has become so strong that one needs to revisit the intersection of feminism and technology to see where one's loyalties lie.

The paper enters this debate through the work of Donna Haraway who insisted upon a critical yet affirmative feminist engagement with technology. Her work was appropriated by (cyber) feminists to describe fluidity and disruption as essential characteristics of the cyberspace. However, the sheer monstrous materiality of the internet along with its very material consequences is coming back into the picture with the need of understanding it. While these issues are gaining much momentum, I intend to address these issues specifically through the node of feminism which now has a long history of 'coming out', making your presence felt, talking back, voicing your concern, engaging with the other etc. Keeping this history and its politics at the center, my paper aims to ask how do we understand larger concerns of internet activists around 'big data', issues of surveillance vis-à-vis the feminist concerns such as online harassment, misogyny, hate-speech etc and the counter strategies of maintaining anonymity, silence, and non-engagement vis-a-vis feminist strategies. Haraway's figure of the 'cyborg' is reconfigured to understand these new dilemmas where the choice between anonymity and making your marginal presence felt in 'public' online spaces, real or virtual are not easy choices anymore. Thus, the paper aims to understand this encounter between feminist politics and internet, and the possible ways to entangle them together without one being antagonistic to each other. Briefly, it argues that today the choice between anonymity and presence is not just a strategic choice but has a potential to initiate a debate around the nature of both feminist politics and its subjects.

# Migration of Young Women to Cities for Higher Education: Revisiting the Dynamics of Development and Education

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The paper is about the migration of young women from rural areas to cities for higher education and how it is changing the dynamics of centre (urban) and margin (rural). Migration is not a new phenomenon but in the post-liberalisation period, the process of migration has not only intensified but also, its pattern has changed a lot. Initially, it was assumed that inter-state migration is a male centric phenomenon. However, in recent times this myth has been broken by various feminist researches that made it quite clear that women are no longer passive movers; women from all socio-economic backgrounds migrate that too, independently, and women's migration is now taking place increasingly for educational purposes. This act in itself can be seen as an 'act of resistance' because in our society, women's mobility (if it is not happening for marriage purpose) has always been restricted; she needs to seek permission from the male members of the family to even go outside the house. In a scenario like this if a girl from rural area is coming to a city in search of education which can lead to 'better life' then it needs to be acknowledged. The aim of the paper will be to interrogate this 'act of resistance' in context of changing relation between urban and rural. How this 'act of resistance' is being produced and reproduced within the political economy of development is the central question that animates this paper. The paper will focus on the experience of young women who migrate to city in search of new life, new identity, freedom and hope. Based on this, the paper will be to explore the changing relationship of rural-urban where urban emerges as a site of modernity and development and rural, on the other hand, rural becomes the site of death and hopelessness. The paper will raise the questions that how and in what ways and why city becomes a symbol of modernity and development for them and how rural emerges as a site of hopelessness for young women? Who can have access to the city? Or, who can have access to modernity and development that the city offers? And, where is this new achieved identity leading us to? Will the journey that had started as an 'act of resistance' be able to change the relationship between centre and margin? Or, will it lead to the formation of another cycle of centre and margin?

# Modernity's Nightmares: Narrating Sexuality in Kerala

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This paper aims to explore the formal practices through which the body and sexuality are configured in disruptive ways within the field of literary and cinematic productions in Malayalam. Published in October 1947, after the declaration of Indian independence and prior to the formation of the Kerala state, the noted writer Vaikom Mohammad Basheer's novella, *Shabdangal* (Noises), is the first well-known text in the history of modern Malayalam literature to bring into the public sphere questions of non-normative sexuality. *Shabdangal* remains a significant intervention in Indian literature, on the representational practices around queer sexuality, because it produces a fragmented narrative form that captures the unresolvable tensions in the scene of sex. The impetus of the text is not to create boundaries between the licit and illicit; rather it dislodges the structuring logic of morality itself. In doing so it produces a landscape that is haunted and feverish, populated by disembodied figures and voices that reverberate in a nightmarish world.

Using *Shabdangal* as a starting point, this paper will assemble a set of literary and filmic texts from Malayalam that are centrally concerned with the representational practices of gender and sexuality. These are iconic texts, often adapted in new mediums, and thus play a formative role in the popular imagination of Kerala. These texts include: the short story by Kamala Das on lesbian desire 'Stree' (1947) republished after her death in 2009; Basheer's short story 'Neela Velicham' (1952) remade into the first horror film in Malayalam *Bhargavi Nilayam* (1964, Dir. A. Vincent); the psychological thriller novel by Malayattor Ramakrishnan Yakshi (1967) and its two filmic adaptations *Yakshi* (1968, Dir. K.S. Sethumadhavan) and *Akkam* (2013, Dir. Shalini Usha Nair). These cultural texts undertake the task of giving shape and form to bodies and desires that are rendered ghostly through modernity's normative ordering of gender and sexuality.

I will analyze how and why the literary form of the ghost story, the narrative trope of dream sequences, tales of possession, and stories that feature mythical creatures such as the yakshi, becomes the cultural forms through which the crisis of modernity with regard to the disciplining of sexuality can be staged. How do

these thrilling narratives trouble the boundaries between the possible and the impossible, fantasy and realism? Why are these 'irrational' forms often deployed within regional cultural production to flesh out the contours of transgressive desires? The threatening and unnerving quality of these texts shows how the project of modernity is constantly obsessed by sexual figures that disturb the foundational architecture of the reproductive family and contained models of masculinity and femininity. The eruption of fantasies and nightmares into the rational fabric, within these fictional worlds, points to how what dominant structures of power seeks to erase comes back as spectral bodies that refuse to disappear. These texts signal towards the long history of cultural contestations on gendered bodies and sexuality in Kerala's public sphere.

## **The Culture of Land Ownership: Women's Claim-making and Resistance Strategies**

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Women's organizations and feminist analyses have shown that the structural causes of gender-based discrimination result in high inequalities for women in social, political and economic spheres. According to Agricultural Census of India 2011, less than 13 percent of operational holders are women, while a significant number of women (79 percent of women workforce) are engaged in agriculture. These gender-based inequalities are maintained and reinforced through socio-cultural norms that are stated to be slow-moving institutions as compared with legal and technological changes. An analysis of land reforms policies in the state of Uttar Pradesh shows that the state agencies speak simultaneously to two groups: the political elite nurtured with gendered norms of power who exercise power through access to political and economic institutions, and the political constituency of organized rural women and men who wield influence through the voting rights. This contradictory power base of these two groups tend to result in policy-making and the implementation gradualism wrapped in the limits of social norms. This study explores policy changes and women's claim-making and resistance strategies in the diverse socio-political context of Uttar Pradesh. While the Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act of 2005 (HSAA) guarantees equal inheritance rights to women in agricultural land and other property, several provisions of the recently enacted Revenue Code is in contradiction to the HSAA, 2005. For example, the contradictory terms of inheritance rights in UP shows that earlier an unmarried daughter was the third priority followed by a married daughter as the fourth. In the Revenue Code of 2016, the unmarried daughter

has been elevated to first priority equivalent to a son. While the policy intention might be to give equal rights to a daughter, but as a natural consequence of this change that in the given gendered social norms around landownership, it is likely that the son would pressure the daughters to get married as soon as possible. Of the 15 succession lines in priority, the daughter of a daughter doesn't find any place in the Revenue Code, however a son's daughter figures in as 5th in the succession line. Notwithstanding the enactment of the Revenue Code, women in their collective capacities have made claims to their right to land through hidden and unhidden forms of resistance.

## **Culture of Reading Sanskrit Texts from Feminist Perspective: Challenging Gender and Sexuality Notions**

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In the review of the broad area of Sanskrit language and texts it underlines that feminist scholars have interrogated sexuality and gender relations in various Sanskrit texts. In this paper I will try to examine how feminist scholars have explored the topic of sexuality in ancient Sanskrit texts and also elaborated the gender relations in socio- economic and cultural contexts.

Social norms and regulations around women's sexuality are rooted from early historical era as well as get stronger along with the development of patriarchal society. From ancient period till thirteenth century many Sanskrit texts represent the contemporary scenario of women's sexuality and gender relations. In this research paper I am going to take a review of works done by feminists in the same context. Sanskrit literature in the particular historical period is significant. Through the literature written by poet Kalidasa, it represents gender relations in early India. Kumkum Roy argues that his three famous classical plays are very useful to seek the contemporary social structures. It explains the power relations in gender through the medium of language politics like the access to use Sanskrit language which is popular as 'the Language of God' was determined by gender.

Along with Gender, Sexuality is a major subject of analysis while analyzing Sanskrit texts. Sukumari Bhattacharjee writes about women's sexuality in the context of prostitution and socio-economic system in ancient India. Vedic literature is a very peculiar source through which one can historically analyze the

gender relations along with power relations in ancient social lives. The definition of 'Ideal Women' belongs to her sexual chastity and this can actually show how sexuality was the matter of discussion in Vedic literature not only in the context of conjugal relationships but also prostitution. Sanskrit text 'Kamasutra' became a mile stone while interrogating the sexuality in ancient India. The remarkable work done by feminists on this text ends the silence about sexuality in the context of women or homosexuality by exploring very important evidences. It not only breaks the silence around sexuality but also reinforced the rules and regulations around heterosexuality.

Other than above some other important subjects like property right of women are also discussed through gender lenses. Scholar like T. S. Rukmani tries to find out the spaces which represent the possibilities of agency or voices for women. From Sanskrit texts begin from Vedic period she gives the references to argue that women were confined into patriarchal society still we can also examine that whether they found the space for themselves. Drawing from all the above and other important works I am going to try to show that use of texts from Sanskrit language can put forth the hidden realities regarding sexuality and gender relations in early India. And feminist interventions put those into light.

## **The Dilemma of Rajbanshis: when they became Outsiders in their own Land.**

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Traditions-culture emerges and formulate through incidents, situations of change or during the fall of crisis such as migration. This process of remembering events, building traditions has never been just passive transmitter but played a very important role in identity formations by being active creator of family ethos through filtering remembrance, selecting memories that formulate traditions between generations.

Revolving around this understanding this study would basically look at how Rajbanshis built their identity through reclaiming various cultural practices in North Bengal during the Partition of Bengal. North Bengal, primarily known as 'Barendrabhumi' has been inhabited by various settlers at different period of time. In the history of various settlers, the Rajbanshis have been the most notable autochthonous. The anthropological and identity turmoil in North Bengal started



during the colonial period itself when British rulers started reclaiming this rich thick forest cover. Increase in settlement in this less populated area changed the social and economy of the area totally attracting a lot of people from East Bengal to settle here, henceforth this influx of population led to series of issues like land alienation, exploitation, displacement and discrimination of Rajbanshis cropped in the survival of the autonomous identity. The question of autochthons respect became more crucial with the Partition of Bengal when huge migrated population from east Bengal settled here. The major identified issues of dispute or resistance were: Firstly, changes in the mode of cultivation during colonial period. Secondly, with the end of Jotedari system Rajbanshis suffered the most with the loss of the only livelihood .Rajbanshis were solely land dependent unlike other Zamindars of Bengal. Thirdly, the educated, clever Bhatiyas( people from the ebb-tide) here slowly with their wit and might had established well in north Bengal narrowing down the opportunities of indigenous Rajbanshis and increasing pressure for their survival. Several poems, narrations captured by Rajbanshis scholars and other educated scholars describe how the simple, uneducated Rajbanshis easily lost their land and became servants at the house of the migrated population. Fourthly, the immigrants settled here treated Rajbanshis contemptuously as inferior, ridiculing them as ‘bahe’ or ‘banku’ and degrading their culture, dress.

The humiliations attributed to Rajbanshis at every step made them struggle for their survival and identity. The culture portrayed as North Bengal culture did not represent North Bengal, the cultural hegemony and assimilation brought about a distinct identity crisis for them and Rajbanshis fought against this hegemony and stigmatization. They resorted to claim their respect through education, joining the movement for claiming to be ‘kshatriyas’(Hinduisation) so that have a respect as Aryans and not criminalized being Mongoloid and non-Bengali community, they even wore sacred thread that is worn by upper caste Hindus and adopted Brahmanical practices to claim their superiority in the caste hierarchy. Further, they even revolted against giving citizenship rights to the migrated population as their ‘othering’ had dissolved their own language, culture, literature and folk culture.

# Exploring Patriarchal Politics of Adapting Literature into the Films (Special Study of the Hindi Film *Maya Memsaab*)

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There is a strong male dominance in the Hindi film Industry. The male dominance can be seen in almost all parts of the industry. Women have been depicted in the binary- She is depicted either as an ideal Sati Savitri or as a vamp. Besides this strong stereotyped binary depiction of woman, there is an image of resisting, questioning, modern feminist New Woman. It's a distressing fact of Hindi film industry that this feminist, resisting New woman is portrayed mostly in negative way. The Hindi film Industry has a strong influence on Indian mind and this stereotyped depiction of women inculcate and strengthens the Brahmanical patriarchal ideals of womanhood.

*Maya Memsaab* (1993) is a Hindi film directed by Ketan Mehta. The film is based on Gustave Flaubert's novel *Madame Bovary*. It's supposed to be a classic and master piece of the author. *Maya* is a protagonist of the film. She is married to a doctor but finds herself seeking more than mere marriage. She has more than one affair and eventually kills herself leaving behind the suspicion who killed *Maya*, whether it was a suicide or a murder.

The present paper will try to make conceptual study of the adaptation of literature into films take a brief historical review of the depiction of women especially women with independent voice and resistance in the Hindi film Industry. In the present paper an attempt will be made to study the adaptation of the novel into the film and what changes have been done in the adaptation. The present paper will try to study how the modern, feminist aspects like getting higher education by women, having an independent opinion, habits of reading, writing, dressing in western attire by women are portrayed in negative way and are counter positioned to the traditional so called obedient sacrificing Brahmanical patriarchal womanhood to show how these resisting, modern, feminist, western thoughts will lead to the destruction of the whole family and also to the self destruction of that woman, thus, finally to uphold the traditional Brahmanical patriarchal submissive values of Indian womanhood.

# **Multiple Cultures / Multiple Meanings: Gendered Transformations in Popular Bhojpuri Music**

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This paper underlines the need to examine how and in what ways Popular Bhojpuri music transform? Are these gendered transformations? It suggests that unlike most studies on popular culture notice that transformations are taking place, it necessitates to analyse the trajectory of such transformations and how it creates multiple cultures and meanings.

In so doing, one confronts the general assumption that these cultural practices create binaries. Rather this research seeks to investigate the available binaries and how they are overlapping which is also deeply rooted in modernity, state, politics, market, patriarchy, caste class, region and so on. The main aim of this paper is to highlight these binaries and it's overlapping in popular Bhojpuri music.

So, this paper also tries to explore the processes of the shifts of transformations in which popular Bhojpuri music creates multiple meanings as an 'art' and also argues that it has strong relations with 'sexuality'. This paper highlights that how both make/ unmake each other.

Thus, this research focuses the shifts of gendered transformations of popular Bhojpuri music in Bihar and also how they construct/reconstruct multiple cultures and multiple meanings in general and how these cultures create the binaries of sexuality and the notions of body particularly in popular Bhojpuri music. This could be better grasped by methodologically integrating the lives of the singers, their texts, their performance and also combining it with its social history and political economy.

## **Navigating the city: Women's experiences of independent living in Hyderabad**

*By City and Sexuality: A Study with Youth Living and Working in Hyderabad City - A project by Anveshi Research Centre for Women's Studies*

*Team Members: Mithun Som, Madhavi Mirappa, Madhurima Majumder, Rani Rohini Raman, Riyaz Unnisa*

While critiquing Henri Lefebvre's idea of "right to city", Tovi Fenster had argued that "right to city" had overlooked the patriarchal power control which stops women from accessing public spaces of a city. Liz Bondi and Linda McDowell had unearthed the loopholes in urban planning and geographies, where the gendered perspective to plan a city have always been overlooked by the planners. These gendered critiques on urban spaces were part of the larger debates going on, on the threat being perceived by women's appearance in public spaces. Linking city and sexuality, Phil Hubbard has critically tried to understand the perceived threat that sexualities pose to the functioning and imaginations of cities. Hubbard also argues about the ways in which the cities are put in order by controlling the sexualities. On such similar lines Doreen Massey, Donald Mitchell and Linda McDowell have presented their observations on the ways in which interaction of cities and sexualities can be seen from different perspectives of urban planning, cultural geography and spatial relation.

In Indian context Shilpa Phadke (et.al)'s *Why Loiter?* help us in visualising the constraints and continuous control that women in Mumbai experiences while accessing public spaces on their own. Ritty Lukose's work *Liberalization's Children* mapped a similar terrain in Kerala where colleges and hostel spaces are increasingly becoming the sites of such cultural exchanges which are shaping up different views on relationships and sexuality among the youths.

The Pinjra Tod movement started as a form of resistance by female students of Delhi to reclaim their equal rights to access the city. They brought out the issues and anxieties faced by young women who stay in institutions like hostels.

At the time when more and more women are coming to cities individually in search of education, jobs, and other opportunities, this paper tries to map women's interactions with the city of Hyderabad. Such women range from students, sales women, entrepreneurs, nurses, corporate workers and those who are in search of different other such opportunities. When women from well-controlled spaces of home travel to a bigger city, do they get the freedom of being away from home and not being controlled? How they perceive these control measures being imposed by hostels, institutions and workplaces? Do they have the vocabulary to address these controls as a means to control their sexuality? Does the city change their notions of appropriate dressing, of self and self care, relationships (romantic and familial), aspirations and sexuality and if so, how? These are few of the questions with which this research project is trying to highlight the 'unrest' being caused by young women staying alone in a city.

This paper will discuss some of the findings of the in-depth interviews being conducted as part of the ongoing project on “City and Sexuality- Study with Youth Living and Working in Hyderabad City” at Anveshi Research Centre for Women’s Studies. The perceptual changes that accompany migration to the city among diverse women from different socio-economic background, articulate shifts in the cultural universe which may not always fall within the given understanding of resistance, but nevertheless assume importance in the emerging urban cultures of resistance.

## **Theyyam: A Tool for the Construction of Masculinity of the Subaltern**

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Theyyam is a customary practice and a ritual dance form in North Malabar of Kerala. Theyyam has an important role to shape the social, political, economic, and cultural environment of North Malabar (Damodaran, 2008). Lower caste men are the performers of Theyyam. The hierarchical caste system and untouchability made the society rigid as well as the life of the lower caste become peril. At this point Theyyam acts as a defensive mechanism against the cruelty of the upper caste. When a person comes in Theyyam attire everybody has to worship him irrespective of age, caste and gender. According to a former Theyyam performer the upper caste also believed in Theyyam and they were scared of the wrath of the spirits. In Theyyam we see the “humanization of god and defiance of human” (Singleton, 2001). While performing, a Theyyam performer becomes a god for everyone. This gives the lower caste man a status different from what he is used to in his society, although temporarily. Through this project I would like to examine how Theyyam helps to create the masculine identity of the lower castes.

Masculinity studies have gained importance these days. When Beauvoir says a woman is not born rather becomes one, it can also be true that men are made by the same society (Vanita, 2014). The idea of effeminized Hindu is closely related to the upper caste men and subaltern masculinity has offered a partial escape for the lower caste men’s identification with the mainstream Hindu hierarchies. People from lower castes have been eliminated from the mainstream modern masculinity as well as the upper caste Hindu masculinity (Osella & Osella, 2006). Charu Gupta argues that in India masculinity was constructed under the British rule and juxtaposed it with femininity. Earlier studies on Indian masculinity have

focused on upper caste Hindu masculinity and did not mention how it affected the identity construction of Dalit masculinity. Religious identity has continued as an important criterion for masculinity studies. Both Dalit body and identity was socially constructed by the colonial rule and caste Hindus. The upper castes depicted the Dalit image in contradictory ways which as “stupid and strong who is always ready to serve their masters” and on the other hand they were represented as “criminals, violent and threatening” . They stand out of the Hindu masculine norms. British portrayed Indian masculinity as weak and lack manliness while the same way the superior upper caste constructed the Dalit masculinity as weak and stupid. Hindu nationalism has marked a surprising growth in India and abroad in the last few decades. After the emergence of feminist movements and the growth of Dalit movements, the Brahmanical masculine hegemony changed its strategies to continue to rule the nation and resource (Vijayan, 2012).

## **Comrade/Sister/Martyr/Muse: The Many metaphors of 'Akka'**

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The 'left' politics has produced images for popular cultural imagination across the world. This is also true of cinema in the Indian context. This paper is drawn from the representation in Telugu language cinema where a section of the texts featuring left politics also depart from the dominant narrative tendency of patriarchy to portray women in the roles of rebels fighting injustice and inequality against the state. While the cinema alludes to the anti-state left politics in the region where rebels are a reality their images in cinema are but plastic and kitschy. Outside of cinema, representation of the rebel figure is mostly male. This cinema, hardly the critically acclaimed variety produces images of women powerful enough to generate an affective sphere through such representation. The rebel figure as 'Akka' produces an imagination of a comrade, a sister a martyr and a muse. This imagery aids to resist the imposition by the dominant through counter memory in spite of the violence that is history.

This paper is based on the analysis of a selection of film texts and ethnography of audiences interested in this cinema.

## From Award Wapsi to Award Wapsis

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This paper seeks to analyse the discourse around the return of awards (Award Wapsi) by different artists in recent times. Since independence this is the first time we are witnessing this symbolic protest by artists on such a large scale. This campaign of Award Wapsi emerged in the context of protesting the events of intolerance that occurred in the recent times.

The Award Wapsi means giving back the awards to the state that were received by the artists from the state earlier. These national awards have certain value and honour attached to them since they are given by the state. Accepting these awards means accepting the legitimacy of the state and hence returning the same awards becomes challenging the legitimacy of the state. Thus Award Wapsi is significant in this way that it opened a platform for a debate on nationalism, where not only the artists but also the state and the common citizens did participate.

Why we are calling Award Wapsi as Cultural Resistance? This is because one, the resistance occurs in art & culture sphere; two, the resistance, to a certain extent, had become a “trend” or a “fashion” and three, whether to support it or to denounce it, it made everyone to comment on it.

What was so distinctive about this resistance? Was it just about asking questions about ‘intolerance’ to the state or was it more than that? Why this resistance did get covered by ‘national’ media? How did this resistance get response from the artists throughout the nation? Why did this resistance get acknowledgement throughout the nation? These are some interesting question we seek answers for.

What was even more interesting was that this discourse around ‘Award Wapsi’ also shows that not all the Award Returns were appreciated. Some of them were supported but some of them were criticised for different reasons. Also, different artists returned their awards for different causes. Who are these artists? Where are they located in social, cultural, political and economic structure of the nation? By placing the award wapsi in the broader framework of above questions, our

paper views these artists as socially and politically embedded persons whose politics is drawn from different legacies, contexts.

The paper argues for the need to look at this individual politics within the cultural politics of Award Wapsi. It argues that by looking at their location within state and society we can get different possible ways of understanding this returning of awards.

## **The Politics of ‘Seeing’ Resistance: A Case of Bhojpuri Women’s Folksongs**

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This essay would try to critically analyse academic/political attempts to ‘see’ resistance in Bhojpuri women’s folksongs based on my doctoral thesis and fieldwork. My doctoral thesis primarily looked at Bhojpuri women’s folksongs in the context of migration. I utilized songs documented by well-established folklorists and also collected songs during my fieldwork in three villages of Bhojpur, Bihar. The process of documenting folksongs in settings / contexts where they are shaped and performed is a sociological exercise. This is evident in the notes that often accompany anthologies of folksongs. The works of Krishnadev Upadhyaya, a well-known folklorist is an example of the same. His anthologies include vivid descriptions of the contexts. Similarly, he seems fully aware (not reflexive) of his own caste-location in these explanatory notes. Far from being an impersonal, mechanical exercise of ‘just collecting songs’, documentation becomes a meaningful sociological act which can be studied independently. One can often discern the ideological moorings and imagined audience which inspire and sustain such documentations. This essay would at least briefly look at the journey of documenting Bhojpuri folksongs to contextualize academic claims of resistance in these songs. I will try to ask the following questions- what is identified and framed as resistance by a largely savarna masculine academic space? Are the performance contexts of folksongs, especially Bhojpuri women’s folksongs well thought-out in such conceptualizations of resistance?

I would argue that songs cannot be divorced from the socio-cultural and material realities which produce them. ‘Seeing’ resistance is cultures which are largely compromised within interlocking oppressive structures of caste and gender is an act which oils status quo. However, this is not to say that folksongs do not provide windows of dissent. I only argue for a cautious and critical appraisal of folksongs without emptying out the places and people which produce them.



# **Dalit women writing: Theorizing Violence and Resistance**

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In this paper, I am exploring connections of act of writing and caste cultures of the non- savarna women's literature. There is a class and gender divide among literary genres that are being produced and caste has emerged as one of the major defining-creating factors of Dalit literature. I would be looking into the aspects of caste and gender in defining these writings as a literary canon in an Indian context. And also, to understand whether class contributes in cultures of writings among marginalized sections, I would be speaking through instances of Dalit women literary writers from Maharashtra. Texts in production by Dalit women writers and the writing act itself a resistance to the mainstream feminist articulations where the notions of sisterhood are to be sustained as well as to the Dalit male dominance in the area of literary production.

The idea of Dalit women writing autobiographies are actually testimonies (Rege) of their communities and to have that consciousness of one oppressed community which Veena Naregal articulates as "...the idea of a political community as an imaginary construct can be used as a starting point for how boundaries of inclusion and exclusion underlie definitions of community and hierarchies in premodern contexts. Alongside Anderson, work on the emergence of modern reading communities and audiences has shown how special uses of language, particularly those valorized as 'literary', along with the production and circulation of printed texts, have formed means of advancing ideas of subjectivity and community."

Maharashtra has strong Dalit socio-literary (Boite) movement back ground against caste and gender discrimination, but till today Dalit women writers are on the periphery of Dalit and feminist literary domain. Exploring the genre/ arena specific reasons behind the caste and gender marginalization in literature will be helpful to understand the process of theory building based on analysis of the socio-cultural structures of Dalit literature and literary feminism. In terms of literary theories and feminist discourse of women's studies the issues of Dalit women writers are to be seen intersectionally or into larger framework of Dalit studies which in literature it is mostly under the cannon of alternative literature or Dalit literature. It is also important to comprehend theorization processes

in the social sciences and marginalization in knowledge building on the Dalit womanhood in literature. The processes of expression, violence and resistance articulated through their literature. This would be an attempt to find linkages between literature and the women's studies with feminist understanding of Dalit women's writing.

## **Emergence of Mahila Khap Panchayat in Haryana**

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One of the primary agendas of the feminist scholarship has been to recuperate/recast voices of women (though not woman as a homogenous category) which the patriarchal structure doesn't allow. Such an agenda faces a dilemma while encountering voices which might be coming out of an assertion of one's identity as a woman but eventually reconstitute the already present hierarchical structures (of caste, patriarchy etc.). For example, women's role in Hindu right wing organisations like Durga Vahini or Sevika Samiti jeopardises the rhetoric that all assertion(s) coming from an excluded category (in this case women) are acceptable.

Another such phenomenon has sprung up in Haryana, called 'Mahila Khap Panchayat', which is trying to carve out a space for women which has hitherto been not given to them. Khap Panchayats, are caste based (constitutes primarily the Jat community) extra-judicial bodies, working to preserve patrilineal structures of the region. Khap Panchayats are highly masculine spaces where women's absence is almost naturalised. It has recently been under the brunt of public ire for cases of 'honour killing' as well it's extremely conservative attitude toward women/dalits etc. The emergence of Mahila Khap Panchayat which again constitutes primarily women from the Jat community could be seen in two ways— Firstly, Khap Panchayats, in order to justify its existence have created this jargon so as to blunt any critique of it as a patriarchal-casteist body.

Such an inclusionary practice could be seen as a form of exclusion, since the terms on which the 'Other' is being included is problematic which eventually would do nothing to undermine the hierarchies involved within the two binaries. Secondly, if women have tried carving out the space for themselves by resisting the hierarchies then several questions emerge— for example, Does their notion of 'Mahila' or women include only Jat women or women belonging to other

castes as well? Does their claim for rights for women which are at par with men translates to the 'household' as well or remains restricted to the public sphere only? Do they see themselves as only the Oppressed or as an Oppressor as well, a privilege inherent in their belonging to a particular caste in Haryana. Do they use the identity of women as an excluded category to assert their rights while simultaneously preserving their privileges as Jat women? If yes, then how does then one understand the binary of Oppressed and Oppressor because these women seem to be floating between the two? The primary aim of the paper would be to unravel/unpack this phenomenon by scrutinising the forms/language of resistance used by members of Mahila Khap Panchayat and understanding the way in which members play with the categories of being an Oppressed as well as an Oppressor.

## **Autonomy and the Times: The Changing Contours of Resistance**

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It is acutely evident that these present times, marked as they are with increasing communal and caste based polarisation, institutionalised misogyny, state violence, street censorship, surveillance, repression, and the decimation of rights and safeguards enshrined in the Constitution, are painfully similar to the Emergency in the aftermath of which many autonomous feminist collectives like Saheli came into being.

35 years later, we look back (and forward) at the importance of remaining autonomous. The idea of political autonomy has historically been understood in various ways across movements. For us at Saheli, it has meant the conscious decision to maintain a critical distance from the state, political parties, and of course, institutional funding. Along with this has been our feminist commitment to creating organisational structures that attempt to confront and challenge many hierarchies, even those that exist among us.

But our belief in working towards a just society by forging alliances with anti-caste, queer, environmental, disability, sex workers', civil, democratic and workers' rights movements, among others compels us to engage with other kinds of resistance, other ways of negotiating autonomy. Drawing on a 2-day inter-movement dialogue titled 'Autonomous Politics: Kal, Aaj aur Kal' organised

to mark our 35 years, we reflect on the voices of friends and comrades from different movements –collectives, community based groups, unions – some with long histories of autonomous organising, some newer formations still thinking through their strategies, and some from whom non-funded, non-party affiliated, non-institutionally supported activism and movements may be challenging because of their historical, social, economic and political marginalisation. We will discuss specific challenges we face from the state, as well as the space for non-funded work in a landscape of increasing NGOisation, even as we recognize the systematic attack on NGOs by the state. And of course, how autonomy manifests itself/struggles in the face of conflict, community assertions, and corporate assaults on land, people and resources.

As we reflect on our own changing strategies and positions and those of movements we work in solidarity/partnership with, our presentation will underscore the need to re-think, re-configure and re-imagine the politics of autonomy in times of repression.

## **Feminism in the Time of NGO-ization: Voices of Feminist-Identified Persons working with/ in ‘Feminist NGOs’**

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This paper seeks to examine the discourse of ‘NGO (ized) sexuality activism’ as it is emerging in many parts of India, with special attention to the work of a Delhi- based NGO (Non- governmental organization) that seeks to “advance the rights of women and girls and the sexual and reproductive freedoms of all people” (as is officially stated by the NGO). Since the paper looks at the work of a single NGO located in the capital city, it makes no claims of being exhaustive or representative of various kinds of activism around sexuality but is indicative of the politics of organizing around sexuality rights in and by NGOs, especially because the NGO in question is one of the frontrunners in India in the context of conversations around what has come to be known as Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and informs various developments in the field. With a brief reference to various kinds of literature produced by the organization, I wish to reflect on what it means for an NGO to perform sexuality activism- what are the modes of engagement and intervention? What are the many discursive networks that constitute the ‘political’, if at all, and what is the nature of this ‘political’? What kind of feminist activism and feminist subjects are produced

in the discourse around 'NGO- based sexuality activism' and what does it tell us about the way in which a politics around sexuality can be imagined? These questions are placed against the larger backdrop of NGO- ization and the ways in which NGOs situate themselves as (a) political actors.

## **Inside Prison Walls: Resistance, Subversions, Negotiations**

**Name of Panelists: Professor Uma Chakravarti, Delhi**

**Dr. Mahuya Bandyopadhyay, TISS, Mumbai**

*Sundari, Activist, Koodankulam Struggle*

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The proposed panel seeks to look at the experiences of women in prison and the prison as a site of resistance. The culture of violence and constant surveillance provides a context for resistive practises and modes of negotiating emotions and relationships. In the prison space, where they are stripped of all their belongings, they only possess their 'body' as a material resource to move on with in their everyday life. Relationships, emotions, everyday communications and space take on a new meaning in the prison. Papers in this panel will discuss the ways in which the camaraderie that develops among women political prisoners sustains them emotionally in the prison and afterwards, the ways in which Bangladeshi women prisoners use space and time to make meaning of their everyday life in a prison far away from their 'home'. It also provides a space where the prison experience can be transformatory, a place to read, think and reflect upon.

The panel will also provide the broad framework in which these negotiations can be understood- in the context of the way power operates in the family, society and state and is extended to the 'insides' of the prison. The discussion on the negotiations made by women prisoners, in a quest to depict them as survivors and not label them as victims, allows us to look at the experiences of women which refuse to be contained within narrow straight jacketed terms. Through the use of audio visual material, discussions and stories of women prisoners, the panel will discuss the lives of women prisoners in jails in metropolitan cites and in district towns across India.

# What Does Feminist Digital Praxis Say For An Emancipatory Politics?

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At the cusp of the digital revolution, there was tremendous optimism among feminists about the emancipatory promise of digital technologies. Networked communication technologies that transcended time and space barriers were seen as breaking down the chasm between the public and private, enabling new cultures of feminist resistance to emerge (Mernissi 2005). Feminist organising within the gender and development framework seemed full of hope in the potential of ICTs to further “women’s ... full participation on the basis on equality in all spheres of society and in all decision-making processes” (WSIS Declaration 2003).

A decade later, technological diffusion seems to have outpaced feminist praxis, and we seem to be playing catch-up. To begin with, the ‘ICTs for Development’ agenda has remained a specific historical project that is endogenic to capital (Parthasarathy 2016), one that is largely about capturing new ‘bottom-of-the-pyramid’ markets through frugal innovation and win-win collaboration between historically antagonistic players (multinationals and non-profit organisations, for instance). Against this backdrop, the gender and ICTD agenda has been reduced to a ‘give access, get empowerment’ formula driven by funding strategies, often led by corporate interventions. Even as the agency of women is sought to be mobilised in the name of ‘empowerment’, these initiatives fail to account for underlying socio-structural inequalities. For example, Google’s How to Get Women Online campaign in India has focused on providing Internet through tablet PCs to rural women’s collectives, in partnership with local CBOs – celebrating women accessing recipes and searching for images of temples as small steps towards empowerment. While this expansion of the space for exploration is not to be pooh-poohed, the flattening out of the idea of empowerment in this narrative is quite problematic. Is the Google experiment equivalent to an initiative that aims to build women’s digital capabilities for active citizenship, in a dedicated and systematic way? If all expression and information-seeking is ostensibly ‘empowering’, what happens to the politics of resistance?

In fact, global policy spaces (such as the Women and ICT4D forum 2013) have tended to mirror this corporate celebration of women’s digital access as empowering in and of itself, pushing out feminist voices urging a more critical evaluation (Buskens 2015). Meanwhile, the widening spheres of knowledge

on ICTs and Development, the citadels of scholarship (research institutions, conferences etc), are heavily backed by corporate resources. Feminist practice online is also in a bind – in the unfolding information society, platform monopolies edge out voices that are too critical/confrontational. As a recent study by Arrow for change highlights, when sexual and reproductive rights activists try to expand their repertoire of contestation in online platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Youtube, they are up against the hard brick wall of moral censorship – in the forms of Terms of Service that equate nudity with pornography and posts on sexual rights with obscenity! Clearly, platforms don't want to side with any attempt to upset the applecart of status-quoist gender orders, as this can be inimical to their business interests in specific markets. Against this macro-picture of depoliticised resistance and the hollowing out of the radical potential of online expression, this paper examines the following questions.

- As feminists and women's rights practitioners, how reflexive are our cultures within? Are we cognisant of the new legitimacies, hegemonies and meanings generated by grassroots intervention through technologies?

- What key challenges arise in building and nurturing cultures of resistance through feminist intervention using digital technologies?

To answer these questions and unpack the above hypothesis, we propose to undertake a state of the art review of women's empowerment projects supported in the past 10 years and of research on gender and ICTs for Development. Additionally, we will also interview feminist organisations and practitioners who have attempted to leverage the 'digital' in their interventions to create new information and knowledge cultures with marginalised women's groups.

## **Mystical Musicians—Tracing and Reinventing Qawwali traditions**

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Qawwali is an extremely popular yet resistive genre in South Asian music tradition. This genre has a freedom to be interpreted in any way by the audience; this in turn empowers them, and brings out the potential subversive nature. The primary beauty of qawwali is the strange coalescing of 'courtly' and 'quotidian' forms. What gives qawwali its special place within Indo-Islamic musical culture

is, according to Regula Qureshi, “...only qawwali is properly considered “musical,” for it includes the instrumental accompaniment [which] goes beyond the literal application of textual primacy” (Qureshi 1993), which shows that the music does not only limit itself to esoteric Sufi knowledge that has been largely an exclusive affair. It gives the space for interpretation of its ‘performativity’ that doesn’t remain a context-specific musical genre, transcending beyond orthodox ideologies.

Typically only men can perform qawwali but there have been some all-women qawwal groups, for example, the Nooran Sisters from India and Manwa Sisters from Pakistan. When women perform qawwali does this make the tradition lack in legitimacy and purity? Has there also been an active “de-sacredisation” of the genre with qawwali becoming more popular, i.e. its use in Bollywood? According to Jacoviello “the spiritual concert is something that opens a fracture in time and space and reorders space according to a new system: so it defines a place where Man can encounter the sacred” (Jacoviello 1998), by this logic, the ‘sacredness’ of the music is preserved because the context-specific grammar identifies the ingenuity of qawwalis.

This paper will track the emergence of how the world of qawwali became more “morally wholesome”, and how musicians (qawwals) across India and Pakistan have ‘performed’ their versions brining in contextualization through autonomy. It will also try to understand the idea of authenticity in spiritual musical traditions through a gendered lens, as in, what ways do women maintain sacredness (if that is important at all), and subvert the genre in their own uniquely resistive ways through live and other recorded performances, to attain a more political flavour.

## **Performing Revolution**

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For my paper I will attempt to understand the ways in which music and theatre was used in the protest movement in Andhra Pradesh, India in the 1940s and 1950s.

Under the leadership of the Communist Party of India, the Telangana movement from 1948-1951 worked for the rights of peasants in a revolutionary way. In over two thousand five hundred villages, they liberated peasants by



cancelling their debts, redistributing land and ending rent payments. Ram (1973) says that the Telangana armed struggle was the first 'independent trend in the Indian communist movement'. The movement was often carried out without the support and approval of the central leadership in the country.

Women played an integral role in the left movements in the state of Andhra Pradesh. The struggles of the peasantry and the 'lower classes' were amplified for women because of the gendered nature of oppression they faced. The struggle as such was one which mobilized large masses of people. Many women from the 'upper classes' joined the movement because of the support of their family members. The Telangana struggle saw mass participation of women even though it was led by men. Women were however not allowed to join the guerrillas and were given other tasks such as making the safe houses, carrying messages or providing food. There were women who did manage to transcend these roles and restrictions.

The left led movements in the state had a strong cultural element to them. According to Ramakrishna (2012), these cultural elements could be understood through two distinct yet related threads. The first being literature and the second being performative theatre. These cultural movements were in sync and also drew from the rest of the cultural resistance movements happening across the country.

These cultural processes till that point were exclusive to the elite bourgeoisie and were made entirely inaccessible to the masses. Theatre for example had involved elaborate sets and productions which meant that only a certain section of people could afford to 'create' theatre. With the rise of the cultural movement in the left, these art forms were hugely improvised. Theatre performances were done on makeshift stages which were created by tying together two bullock carts. The focus was on creating content which would draw the people and yet engage them with the politics of the movement. Similarly, songs of revolution and performances of a form of folk theatre called 'burra katha' were widely used processes.

Through this paper I would attempt to explore how women found space in mass movements through these 'cultural' processes. In doing so they subverted notions of morality as well as found ways of affirming their political participation. I will be basing this paper on interviews with five women who were a part of the movement from the 1940s. Through the interviews I have attempted to explore how women remember the movement through the medium of songs and theatre.

# **Beauty Parlour Culture: Underlying Norms of Beauty as a Result of Patriarchy That in Turn Leads to Unnatural Modifications of Appearances by Women**

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Beauty parlours and the societal gendered norms surrounding them have been prevalent for quite some time and more so in contemporary society, with consumerism on the rise and with the media playing one of the major roles of socialization in reinforcing gender roles and norms onto women to the point that hegemonic notions and rules of beauty seem inevitable and natural to them. This paper sets out to study what may have led to the ubiquity of such a culture, the reasons for an increasingly large demand by women to visit beauty parlours and if there are societal pressures or anxieties that drive women to adhere to these norms of beauty and femininity along with trying to understand what possible factors may be leading to the creation of such beauty norms. This study shall also analyse the concept of the Male Gaze which may also be one of the reasons that women strive to maintain certain kinds of socially acceptable appearances with regards to their body and face. This paper shall also try to see why the phenomenon of the Male Gaze may have brought about the creation of beauty ideals regarding women's bodies and appearances and strive to analyse how Patriarchy may also be a large contributing factor to the birth and continuing existence of such norms.

Another aspect of this study is also to look at how and why women may be objectified in social structures but nevertheless still seek to comply to the objectification of their body. It would also therefore bring out the underlying reasons for their compliance. The data for this study will be derived through interviews with women from different subgroups. The first subgroup would be the female customers ranging from age 18-40 years who visit beauty parlours and what the frequency of their visits may be along with their average or approximate expenditure on these parlours. This sub group would be further divided into one category of working and non working women and their religious and economic background will also be taken into consideration. The second subgroup would be the beauticians who offer their services and they would be interviewed on the kinds of beauty treatments women go for and approximately how much do they earn from these women customers.

Apart from the above the study will also attempt to investigate whether there

are women who do not adhere to the norms of beauty and the beauty parlour culture either completely or partially and thereby use this culture as a site of resistance to deny patriarchal norms and objectification of women and whether they seek to redefine the societal norms of beauty for women

## **The Women Oracles of Kodungallur: Unraveling Faith and Resistance**

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Kurumba Bhagavati sacred grove popularly known as Kodungallur Bhagavati temple is located in Thrissur district of Kerala. The temple is most known for the annual Kodungallur Bharani festival which occurs in the Malayalam month of Meenam (March-April). The legend goes that the Chera king built the temple in his capital Vanchi, present day Kodungallur in honour of Kannaki, the main protagonist of Elango Adikal's Tamil classic epic Silappathikaram. Studies claim that it was a site of an ancient Buddhist monastery of the Pattini cult, history of which was driven away with the Brahmin - Buddhist conflict in the region and victory of former. However the most popular belief on the origin of the temple is based on the myth of Parasurama building the temple for Kali for protection from the demon Darikan.

The Kodungallur Meena Bharani festival is marked by velichapads (oracles), Dalits and predominantly women, dressed in red with swords in hands, anklets and aramani (waist anklets) singing earthy songs, dancing and circling the temple and nearby area in trance. Male oracles are dressed in sarees and the songs are marked by the extensive use of sexual innuendos. Insatiable sexual desire of the Goddess is expressed through songs in the otherwise sexually repressive public sphere of Kerala. It is seen as the fight of the devotees against attempts to civilize and annihilate emotions that are so essential to existence. It becomes a celebration of resistance. The site becomes a public theatre of performance wherein Dalit women bodies perform in resistance not for anyone but for the deity. This defies the template of public expectations of a caste women's behavior and what the dominant defines as the noisy spirituality of the subaltern. The temple is then closed for a week and opened for the public after the 'purification' rituals.

The temple festival blurs the boundaries between the sacred purity and the profane raising questions of the Dalit resistances in the spaces of Brahminical

purity. Scholars see this as the upper caste strategy to replace the Buddhist centre and values. The rituals portrayed as celebration of Dalit community is embedded in the idea of caste pollution. But then is it really resistance? Isn't it another safety valve that the dominant culture offers to contain resistance? From whose experience do we understand such spaces? Can the question of agency be evoked to understand the negotiation of such spaces by Dalit women and the performance of Dalit women bodies in such public theatre? The paper tries to explore cultural formations around gender and caste with focus on the aforementioned questions.

## SUB - THEME 6

### WOMEN FARMERS: LABOUR, LIVELIHOODS AND RESOURCE RIGHTS

Cooordinators: Sejal Dand (ANANDI, Gujarat) and Usha Seethalakshmi (Rythu Swarajya Vedika, Telangana)

#### ABSTRACTS

##### **Personal Turns Political: The Proletarian Environmentalism of Fisher Women**

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“This land belongs to a Public Trust, the Trust of People whose generations had been living here since time immemorial. Neither does it belong to the government nor to any individual. Abandon this callous plan to rampage their milieu. Make it a daily practice to fight against the globalization policies that connive to sell off all what is left for the future generations” - Justice V.R Krishna Iyer.

Kerala is known for its 570 km long coastline as one of world’s most potential fishing ground with unique biodiversity and also as the abundant source of some of the rarest minerals in the globe, especially its southern coast. It is one of the ten ‘Paradises found’ by the National Geographic Traveler, for its diverse geography and overwhelming greenery, in which, fall some of the sandy beaches and backwaters. Sand dunes of the southern Kerala coast are enriched with six “prescribed substances” viz. ilmenite, rutile, zircon, monazite, leucoxene (brown ilmenite), sillimanite and garnet. The most potential source of these mineral deposits is the coastline of the districts of Kollam and Alappuzha that stretches about 150 km. Mining in the Kollam coast started in 1922 and still continues, undisrupted. As the minerals mined contain potential atomic fuel, Central Government laid strict mining rules and regulations (Atomic Energy Act, 1962), which prohibited individuals or private enterprises from undertaking such mining activity. These rules and regulation were relaxed recently. ‘Under the Industrial Policy Statement of 1991 the mining and production of minerals classified as “prescribed substances” is reserved for the public sector. However, the Policy Statement also allows selective entry of the private sector’ (DAE. GoI, Oct. 1998). With the legal cover of this statement in the act, Kerala State Government, in a much

controversial move decided to lease out a 17-km stretch of state owned land from Valiyazhikkal to Thottappilly in Alappuzha district to Kerala Rare Earths and Minerals Limited (hereafter KREML), a joint venture company, in which a Kochi-based private sector company holds majority stake to conduct mineral sand mining for twenty years. The government decision met with criticism from many corners. The proposal created much havoc in the society there, which resulted in a mass movement. Kerala has a history of environmental social movements, which has won victories many a times against the iron hands of the powers that be. The historic Silent Valley movement, the ongoing Chaliyar River movement, the movement against Coca Cola factory in Palakkad, now the Anti Beach-Sand Mining movement, other environmental movements, smaller but not of lesser importance, all led by local communities and supported by social activists, are golden pages in the history of people's movements. The authors, as environmental activists had been supporting the anti beach sand mining movement scientifically and intellectually right from the initial stages onwards.

People in Arattupuzha- Thrikkunnapuzha panchayats launched a life and death struggle against the proposed mining on 2002 itself. The agents of the mining companies tried to buy acres of land in coastal area. But as the result of the awareness campaign of the volunteers of Janakeeya Prathirodha Samithi and All India Mahila Sanskratik Sanghatan the people in coastal area realized that their lives were going to be broken away by these capitals. Along with the fisher men a large number of women joined the movement at the very outset itself. Their workplaces and common refreshment places were turned as the meeting venues of their resistance forums. Ayyalkootamsand Kudumbasrees were turned to protest groups. This paper goes through the chronological, political and ideological development of the movement which was largely constituted by illiterate women of fishing community.

## **Peasants Women Speak from the Battle Field**

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Participation of dalit (landless) women in the Naxalite movement that started in 1960s has hardly been looked at from a gender perspective in academic literatures. Most of these literatures, which look at the issue as class war or caste war, sometimes included women in Naxalite literature in the form of tokenism, as stories of heroic women struggle. The gender dimension and its intersections

with class and caste are crucial for a holistic understanding of the issue. Only a few works by women/feminist writers on the issue deal with the issue in substantive terms. The struggle of dalit landless women in the 1980s under the CPI (ML) liberation and the Party Unity was against Brahmanical patriarchal landlord force in rural Bihar. It was a struggle for minimum wage, and against sexual and caste oppression. From its inception both these parties mobilized dalit poor women for democratic rights of women's. But unfortunately, the responses of the state and the upper caste have been violent that came in the forms of police and military crackdown or violence of the private caste militia. One of the main concerns here is how the poor dalit women have not only survived but also fought back, especially those women who had faced tragic loss of family members in those violence. In this paper, I shall examine the experiences and struggle of dalit women against the landlords and the state repression on the one side on the one hand, and how parties like the CPI (ML) liberation and the Maoist party have addressed the women question on the other. Both achievements and contradictions of such both the parties are examined through the experiences of women whom I had interviewed during 2015, especially on their experiences of having been involved in the radical left movement.

## **Dispossession and the Depletion of Social Reproduction**

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Gender is largely under-theorised in the now well-developed literature on dispossession; this paper contributes to the analysis of the gender dimensions of dispossession by bringing the literature on dispossession into conversation with the feminist literature on social reproduction, specifically, depletion of social reproduction. Drawing on qualitative field research, the paper provides a gendered analysis of the multiple vectors of dispossession affecting the Miyana, a Muslim community living in the Little Rann of Kutch, an estuarine zone in central Gujarat within which prawn harvesting and salt production are their symbiotic seasonal livelihood activities. The paper argues that the theorization and empirical analysis of dispossession must consider social reproduction as a central axis of analysis, and identify whether and to what extent dispossession is a) contingent on the appropriation of socially reproductive labour and b) results in the depletion of capacities for social reproduction. Using the concept

of depletion as a diagnostic tool, I argue that the assessment of depletion due to dispossession requires investigation of the levels of mitigation, replenishment or transformation available to individuals, households and communities within the circuits of production and social reproduction.

## **Forests, Women and Resistance: Transformations in Attappady Hills, South India**

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In this paper, I argue indigenous Irula women and the forests become political allies shaping an ecosophy of resistance. The women in their interactions with land (as farmers, forest healers, development workers and nature enthusiasts) are extricating themselves from coloniality of power and in this they contribute to a new understanding that is a lived pulsating ecofeminism. They do this by reinforcing indigenous culture, protecting their biodiversity and critiquing the project ushered in by the British and continued by settler colonialism. Using ethnographic methods, I demonstrate how the indigenous Irula women force a rethink of standard understandings of women, nature and culture. Instead I suggest their experience point towards an integrating ecological feminism that is transformative.

## **Challenges and Opportunities for Mainstreaming Gender in Farmer Producer Organisations: A Case Study of Farmer Producer Organisation in Dindugul District of Tamil Nadu**

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Women account for 70 % of the labour force in agriculture. They are responsible for the majority of the farming operations. In spite of extensive lobbying by various organisations and interest group at the local and the national level, women, till date have not been recognised as farmers. Hence, they are invisible to the official agriculture extension machinery. Access to modern agriculture techniques and knowledge, including weather based agro advisories disseminated through these official systems is still a challenge to a large majority of women farmers. It is in this socio political context, the gender inclusive farmer



producer organisations (FPOs) become relevant as an intermediary. The National Policy for promotion of Farmer Producer Organisations-2013 (FPOs) recognises FPOs –member-owned grass root institutions- as most effective pathways for strengthening agricultural livelihoods and building sustainable agriculture sector. Though this is viewed as important ‘bottom-up’ strategy of governance reforms in agriculture, whether all sections of the farming community will have equal partaking in the outcomes of this process, is largely dictated by the organisational structure and form of the FPOs. The policy led promotion of FPOs, if pursued in a ‘gender-blind’ manner, may result in exacerbating the gender gap in agriculture. A large section of the farming community- the women farmers- will stand devoid of a forum to voice their concerns. Our experience in the field indicates that FPOs should facilitate equal opportunities for women’s participation in shareholding, accessing weather forecast information and decision making roles to make farming more productive and sustainable. This paper elaborates to understand the existing gender roles that restricts or favours women’s agency for decision making in FPO in Dindigul district of Tamil Nadu. The study outcome is expected to provide valuable insights for gender mainstreaming of FPOs and thereby bridging the gender gap in agriculture sector.

## **Women Farmers Struggle For Livelihood And Social Identity: A Study Of Farmers Widows Of Wardha (Maharashtra)**

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Rural India is gripped by several crises. Commercialization and capitalization of agriculture has increased the debt burden of the small and marginal farmers, resulting in to farmer’s suicides. The farmers of Vidarbha are facing hostile conditions; this has significant impact on farm households, especially on the widows, which are doing farming but not recognized as ‘farmers’. Widows are facing multiple problems, often conflicting, and social expectations. This paper deals with the struggle of farmer’s widows for the livelihood and societal respect. This paper also explore the positive interventions at different levels

This research paper is based on empirical study. The field work for this study took place during 2013-2015.in Wardha district of Maharashtra. There are various issues of the farm widows, which needs attention. Though they are not much organized, but many of them are fighting solely with the government

machinery. 'Vidarbha Jan Andolan Samiti,' which has been keeping track of farm suicides in Vidarbha region and working for empowerment of hundreds farm widows, is the key intervention. Their main demands is disbursement fresh crop loan and relief aid every hailstorm and drought hit farmers, food security and family pension all Vidarbha farm widows. 'Kisan Adhikar Abhiyan' is also giving strength to the issues of farm widows. Supporting Anna Hazare's movement in 2014, or farm widow contesting the assembly elections to raise the voice are the inception of the big movement. Academia need to study this in the light of development process.

## **Secure and Long-term Land Leasing for Empowerment of Women in Agriculture**

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Rural livelihoods can be enhanced through access to land, the ownership and control of which were earlier denied to women across cultures owing to discriminatory inheritance laws across socio-cultural groups. Notwithstanding changes to many of these laws including amendment to the Hindu Succession Act in 2005 which enabled women's inheritance of family agricultural land, the land ownership by women continue to remain around ten per cent of the total agricultural holdings. While our constitutional mandate ensure equality, women remain resource poor, very few own land, and even for those who own land, ownership rarely translates into control and income from it (Mukund, 1999; Agarwal, 1994; Deere and Leon, 2001).

Historically land distribution was highly unequal and followed inefficient and unjust ownership structures which lead to its concentration in the hands of few. Post-independence, feudal agrarian structures were abolished and many state governments passed land reform laws, which lead to abolition of intermediaries, abolition or regulation of tenancy and, imposition of ceilings on land holdings and redistribution of ceiling surplus land. The main objective was to create conditions for an agrarian economy with high levels of efficiency and equity. But over time, these restrictions only resulted in barriers to efficient utilisation of land and lowered its availability for land deprived, particularly small and marginal farmers and agricultural wage labourers.

In recent decades, there has been a pronounced movement out of agriculture. The underlying reason may be that the tiny and fragmented land holdings operated by majority of rural households can at best provide bare means for subsistence in

years when the harvest is good. The migration of men to other sectors for propping up precarious rural incomes has resulted in increasing feminization of agriculture over time. But rural women from economically marginalised sections when engaged as primary cultivators suffer from inequality of disproportionate nature, stemming from their disadvantage in accessing productive assets including land, labour and capital, inputs and services in addition to technological knowledge and credit access and availability. These disadvantages to some extent may be surmounted through collectives and group farming. Some states in India have supported and encouraged collective farming by lifting land leasing restrictions which have made available larger parcels of land for cultivation to self-help groups (SHG) of women from landless as well as small and marginal land owning categories.

This paper brings out barriers and enablers to women's collective farming on lease lands facilitated under Kudumbashree programme in Kerala. It briefly discusses land ownership status of rural households in the country and in the state of Kerala, history of tenancy relations in the state, land reforms and its impact on women. The paper brings out the role of the state in the promotion of women's collective farming and the working of 20 Joint Liability Groups (JLG) from two randomly selected gram panchayats and discusses the challenges/barriers that the women face. It further looks into the prevalent terms of leasing and leasing restrictions across states and examines the model Agricultural land leasing Act 2016 and how it could positively impact overall lease land farming in states where opaque and restrictive lease arrangements distort land lease markets. The final section concludes the paper and suggests policy implications.

## **Gender Disparity in Information Research for Agriculture Innovations**

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Women are extensively involved in agricultural activities. As it was pointed out by M.S. Swaminathan, the famous agricultural scientist, "some historians believe that it was woman who first domesticated crop plants and thereby initiated the art and science of farming". Thus women have played and continue to play a key role in the conservation of basic life support systems such as land, water, flora and fauna. They have been protecting the health of the soil through organic recycling, promoting crop security, and maintaining varietal diversity and genetic resistance.

Therefore without their intellectual and physical participation of women, it is very difficult to introduce alternative systems of land management, crop pattern, arrest gene and soil erosion. Except ploughing, women are involved in all farm activities like processing, storage, husking, winnowing, par boiling, harvesting, digging etc., significantly. Thus women's participation is higher than men and her partnership/ involvement in protection of environment and agriculture can be described as a manager, decision maker and laborer.

Despite their importance to agricultural production, women face several handicaps in the form of low access to extension services and latest information on the introduction of innovative techniques for the development of farm sector especially in developing nations. Women's visibility was completely neglected with persistence of gender based discrimination, over burden of household and outside work, double day in single day, less exposure and inconvenient time intervals for exposure visits/meetings/ demonstrations, lack of female extension workers, cultural restrictions etc.

The experiences has shown that innovative technology and its dissemination is not gender neutral, it have a divesting impact on women's access to it. On the other hand, latest improved technology has been recognized as a prime force for development of agricultural productivity as well as an engine for accelerating of rural economic growth.

An attempt is made in this paper to evaluate how far rural women in the grass roots are contributing for the development of agriculture sector with inherent gender disparities. It tries to formulate the latest devices for information reach to overcome the problem of women's invisibility towards the application of appropriate innovations on the farm sector to sustain gender neutrality. Further it also tries to formulate necessary policy interventions for sustaining women friendly agro-based technology.

## **Livelihood Status of Women Agricultural Labourers in Madurai**

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In today's world there is none of the areas in which there is nil participation of women. Among those areas agriculture is the traditional area in which women are employed either directly or indirectly and whether paid or unpaid.

It is imperative to make a study on the livelihood status of women agricultural labourers. Agriculture in India defines familial tradition, social relations and gender roles. Female in the agricultural sector, whether through traditional means or industrial, for subsistence or as an agricultural labourer, represents a momentous demographic group. Agriculture is directly tied to issues such as economic independence, decision-making abilities, agency and access to education and health services and this manner has created externalities such as poverty and marginalization, and compounded issues of gender inequality. In rural India, the percentage of women who depend on agriculture for their livelihood is as high as 84%. Women make up about 33% of cultivators and about 47% percent of agricultural labourers. In India, the typical work of the female agricultural labourer or cultivator is limited to less skilled jobs, such as sowing, transplanting, weeding and harvesting, that often fit well within the framework of domestic life and child-rearing. Many women also participate in agricultural work as unpaid subsistence labour. According to United Nations Human Development Report only 32.8% of Indian women formally participate in the labour force, a rate that has remained steady since 2009 statistics. This study is an attempt to bring forth the livelihood status of women agricultural labourers in Madurai district.

Key Words: agriculture, livelihood, independence, poverty, gender inequality

## **Creating an access to productive resources in strengthening the livelihoods of Coastal Fisher Women in Nagapattinam district, Tamil Nadu**

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Women from fishing community play a vital role in ensuring household food safety and economic activities. After the fishermen bring fish catch from the sea to shore, it is then the task of women, especially in processing, storing and marketing. However, in the absence of adequate hygienic storage, processing and drying facilities for processing and drying in nearby areas of fish landing centers, women are always under stress to market all fishes. This means that they are forced to market all products and return late in the night and meet multiple risks. Also they have to face the issues individually which makes them more vulnerable and inadequate quantity of products discourage them further to use

high end technologies for value addition. In order to address the issues faced by the fisherwomen, a modest attempt is taken to mobilize and organize them in to collectives and build their capacity on different technologies in different phases of value chain. The purpose is to gain economy of scale to access high value technologies and markets for fisherwomen. It made them to pool their products to achieve the scale of production and diversify their products through value addition. The paper will detail the processes involved in creating an access to high end processing technologies and market links to fishing women in Nagapattinam district in Tamil Nadu.

## **Factors Influencing Women Participation in Agriculture: Evidence from Rural India**

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The role of women in Indian agriculture is commonly conceptualized in terms of an increasingly harsh, double-burden of activities in the midst of relatively powerlessness in terms of decision-making agency. Women's participation in the agricultural workforce is increasing, while expectations of their roles in own-cultivation, livestock rearing and in the domestic spheres of caring, cooking and cleaning remain undiminished; and they continue to be the bearers of traditional gender roles that accord them relatively narrow input in agricultural and household decision-making. Yet evidently, manifestations of this double-burden of activity and absence of decision-making agency are not distributed evenly across different social and economic categories in rural India. Variables including household income, the type of agriculture practiced, the size and structure of the household in which women live, their caste and religion, their age and the relative availability of agricultural and economic support services would all appear as relevant determinants of women's economic activity portfolios and decision-making arrangements.

In these contexts, this paper uses data from a household survey of 800 women respondents in the states of Gujarat and West Bengal to systematically assess the extent to which a broad range of social, economic and demographic factors appear to be associated with women's participation and decision-making agency in agriculture. By identifying the variables that appear to be associated with increased or decreased incidence of agricultural participation and decision-making agency, this paper will aid theory-creation when it comes to explaining

the changing character of women's lives in rural India. The selection of Gujarat and West Bengal as the sites for this study was due to their diverse socio-cultural and agro climatic one. Though the land reform was successful in both the states, like in West Bengal the land reform was one of the success stories whereas the Sausrastra region of Gujarat has also has better land reform. The agricultural model of Gujarat is completely different from that of West Bengal.

The specific research questions that the paper wishes to address are, whether participation in agriculture (including livestock rearing) by men and women changing? Is the control and access on the assets and decision making changing? Do women play a role in decision making? What are the socio-economic & cultural-demographic factors that influence women's participation in agriculture? Do women's roles vary across class, caste & regions?

## **Development and women farmers: Insights from Konyak Naga Village**

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The Nagas dwell between the Chindwin and the Brahmaputra. They inhabit the contiguous hill tract of Barail in India to parts of Arakanyoma in present day Myanmar. As a result they encompass the states of Nagaland, Manipur Arunachal Pradesh and Assam (Kikon 2010). Arkotong Longkumer argues that "It is an area interspersed with a mosaic of ethnic, religious and linguistic constellations." The term "farmer" tends to evoke the image of a male farmer while women farmers remain largely invisible to society. So, in this context this paper looks into the situation of women farmers of the Konyak Naga tribe of India. This paper would use the narratives of the Konyak women as farmers and try to understand the gender implication or the changes in the gender relations that is happening due to the changes in agriculture and land ownership pattern of the Konyak Nagas.

## **Tribal Women and Land rights: A Case Study of Bodo Women in the Bodo Land in Assam**

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With the discourse on gender equality and rights of women, one of the important areas opened up in the academia is the gender equality in tribal

societies. Studies on women in tribal communities on various topics such as customs, inheritance, property rights etc. have been critical about the myth of gender equality in tribal society. The paper is an attempt to understand the gender asymmetries and marginalisation of women in terms of land rights in the contemporary Bodo society in Bodo Territorial Area Districts (BTAD), Assam. The Bodo is a tribal community of Assam that practices customary norms within their community. The community is recognised under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India and is given the autonomous administrative unit, Bodo Territorial Council (BTC). The area that comes under the BTC administration is known as BTAD.

Given the dominance of patriarchal and patrilineal culture in Bodo society, this paper would like to analyse how the societal norms and customs affect the land rights of women causing impediment towards gender equality. It analyses how rights of women are undermined in terms of land ownership, control and access, affecting the livelihoods and socio-economic position of women. While the sixth schedule provides protective measures to retain their own customs and culture without being interfered, it has been observed that the customary norms affect the land rights of women as they are not permitted to have land ownership and inheritance rights. Thus, it clashes with the Constitutional provision for women's equal property and inheritance rights violating the rights of women. The engagement with the issue of women's ownership, control over and access to land is critical to understand the means of livelihoods and power relationship between men and women in both private and public realm. This paper attempts to understand the internal border issues plaguing gender equality engraved in the mindscapes backed by customary norms. Taking account of these, it analyses the role of land rights in the bargaining power within and outside the household/family; how it shapes the identities of women; and withal on women's productivity. With an object of analysing power, identity, and rights, this paper is critical of how the Bodo women negotiate their space in public and private domain; and also try to assert identities of their own.

The paper is based on ethnographic research substantiated by structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews, participatory and non-participatory observation, and discussions with the community to understand the issue with an attempt to bring into account the lived experiences of women.



# Land Rights of Women Farmers in Punjab.

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As an agrarian state, Punjab is and has been strongly influenced by land relations which in turn influence the socio-cultural, economic and political dimensions of the state. The history of land reforms clearly point towards their poor implementation and reveal a strong gender and class bias, marked by highly unequal land distribution. Landlordism and feudalism, a classic characteristic of the state, still.

Efforts to even out this distribution have been made in the form of laws like the Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005 but in parallel laws like the Land Acquisition Bill have posed hurdles in this process.

This paper seeks to look at the Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005 and its implications which is in the 11th year of its implementation and has been hailed as a 'landmark judgement'. Within it would be located the question of women land rights and the present agricultural scenario in Punjab, focusing on Patiala district, the field of the research. Linkages will be drawn to the question of women's labour, their access and ownership to land and the interplay of market and legal forces in all of this.

The research was qualitative and exploratory in nature and was carried out using the following tools.

**Interviews:** In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with women who had filed property cases against their natal household and members of the natal households. Key informant interviews were also conducted with lawyers handling property cases as well as with judges presiding over such matters. To get an understanding of the background and to contextualize the history of land rights and the agricultural situation of Punjab, interactions with other stakeholders, i.e., comrades, sarpanches of villages, the legal mediation and counseling centre were also included.

**Participant Observations:** Participant observation was a pertinent part of this research as the idea was to interview both the parties of a case and to develop a holistic understanding of the issue of women's access to property.

**Analysis of court documentation:** Court documents revealed the lens through

which law looks at the issue of women property rights and they were analysed to understand if the arguments placed within the purview of legal framework.

Taking from Billings and Singh (1970) study on the employment pattern of women, it shows how they are governed by concepts of social value and status and form a sort of a 'sub culture' which in turn differs from region to region and is determined by community traditions that define the code of conduct for women. In the case of Punjab, the cultural ethos of the state has largely dictated women's participation in various spheres and has lead to the low count of women in what are categorized as 'primary' agricultural activities, which were further intensified by green revolution.

It brought with it a highly mechanized form and capital-intensive agricultural practices where neither the small farmer nor did the woman find a place, pushing them to the margins.

## **Political Economy of Landholding: Exploring Family, Kinship, Caste and Gender Trough Ethnography**

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Land being the mainstay of the rural Indian economy around which socio-economic privilege and deprivation revolve, any change in its structure is likely to have a corresponding impact on the existing pattern of social inequality. Also it has become an event in local politics which is related to caste, class and gender. Indian agriculture and land holding system has experienced a series of substantial changes since the British raj days. According to this overview in sociological research agricultural studies became a major field, in this paper researcher has focused on political economy of landholding within family, kinship and caste, class, gender and state.

Present study tries to attempt to examine the nature of and extent of social inequality and political economy of landholding in rural Maharashtra in the context of agriculture modernization with the reference to Ahmednagar district. The main objective of this study is to examine the nature of extent of agricultural modernization in historical perspective; to analyses the impact of modernization measures on various categories of the rural population; to find out the pattern and trend about landholding in family, kinship and caste.

For doing this, methodologically the researcher has selected Ahmednagar tahasil in Maharashtra as the unit of analysis and using ethnography method has studied and analyzed day to day practices of peasants, landowners, and women related to landholding across castes and classes. For this study stratified sampling has been used to select above units and to understand their everyday practices in their own culture.

Through the possible findings the study focuses on the political economy of landholding -related family, kinship, and gender and caste power relation. The study outlines to map how land became a sign of prestige in family, kinship, caste and tackles of politics in rural area.

In the conclusion thus research would try to focus on how the process of modernization and globalization underwent changes in field of agriculture and land holding system. How the new government policy make land as a market icon and how this change in turn make family, kinship and caste as a field of politics. The study also points that though women are at the margins in the decision-making process the political economy of landholding is the main factor in family, kinship and caste.

## **Jal, Jangal, Jamin, Jaankari, Data! – A roadmap for building an information, knowledge and data commons for women farmers in the digital age**

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In 2014, at the launch of the flagship Digital India programme, Prime Minister Modi highlighted how this blueprint for transforming India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy intended to impact farmers' lives: " I dream of a Digital India where farmers are empowered with real-time information to be connected with global markets." Two years down the line, this promise seems to be materialising with the 2016 Budget announcements on e-market portals to be initiated using the unique identification number as the base platform. The integration of this 'Technology for Farmers' track in Digital India is of course the culmination of a series of developments over the past 5-6 years, which has seen agricultural agencies increasingly deploying digital affordances for providing integrated informational services for farmers – with the Farmers' (web) portal and the Kisan mobile information service being the most well-known. Further, this acknowledgment of the transformatory

potential of ICTs in strengthening information outreach and knowledge dissemination has percolated into even the guiding documents of women-directed schemes such as the Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana.

When examining these developments from the standpoint of promoting and protecting women farmers' rights, the thought that first flashes across one's mind is that they leave a lot to be desired with respect to creating a gender-inclusive information and knowledge commons in agriculture. To begin with, the content of these informational outreach services is largely technical. The majority of women farmers, however, need assistance in entitlement-facilitation. Secondly, informational networking is designed as a one-way street where expert knowledge is transferred to farmers, rather than as a collaborative endeavour where knowledge is co-created. As a result of this design limitation, the potential that online platforms offer for horizontal collaboration in the creation of a women's information commons has gone completely unutilized. Thirdly, the barriers to rural marginalised women's access and uptake of new technologies has not been factored in: affordability and accessibility issues, restrictive gender norms, and the lack of last mile support structures for facilitation/information intermediation. This is a serious lacuna in a context where over 81% of women farmers are from dalit and adivasi groups. Finally, the move to integrate such agricultural outreach and extension services onto an Aadhaar platform creates a host of new challenges for women farmers' rights. The Aadhaar platform is already under fire for creating a system that enables the accumulation and accrual of personal data of citizens that are scattered across different data bases without underlying data protection safeguards, and then allowing private companies to build apps on top of this platform for individual profiling-based services. Considering that in the current context of 'Big Data in agriculture', where the fight for monopoly of agricultural markets in developing countries is essentially about the fight to control data about agricultural input use, historic cropping patterns, and weather cycles, a personal database of farmers' informational needs that is linked to an Aadhaar platform and is up for commercial exploitation poses a huge threat of alienating women farmers from the information and knowledge resources in the agricultural sector, by enabling its privatisation and corporatisation. At this juncture, what can we do to ensure that digital technologies are effectively leveraged for furthering women farmers' rights? Building on IT for Change's engagement with the Mahila Kisan Adhikar Manch's process of evolving a Charter of Demands for Women Farmers in 2015-16, the paper outlines a concrete roadmap of policy and programming measures to effectively leverage the Internet and other digital platforms for creating a gender-responsive information, knowledge and data commons in

agriculture. In specific, the paper will discuss the need for guaranteeing women farmers a right to data that includes:

- right to a minimum amount of free data (broadband) through a monthly data allowance fully/partly subsidised by the state, including the right to access public information on a zero rating channel

- right to access all data held by state agencies, subject only to the limits and restrictions imposed by the existing right to information legislation

- right to control one’s personal data and its use and re-use (as data autonomy is an integral part of one’s informational rights)

## **Impact of Reduced drudgery of women in production and post-harvest processing of small millets**

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Historically, women play a crucial role in the on-farm production and processing of millets. At the small and marginal farm holdings and households, women’s drudgery in production and post-harvest processing is one of the reasons for the neglect of millets cultivation. Besides, lower profitability of millets compared to alternative crops, the demand of women labour for agronomic practices especially weeding and harvesting, drudgery in pounding and lack of processing machines especially for little millet and Italian millet species are the other reasons for neglecting them in farming as well as its use as food. In Kolli Hills, apart from maintenance of inter specific millet diversity, the communities also evolved different cropping systems appropriate for these millets. The small millet grains, unlike the principal cereal grains, have superior nutritional profile for more than one dietary component. So in order to revive the growing of millets, the M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation have been facilitating development programmes to ease women’s work burden. This research seeks answers to “what extent simplified farm implements and post harvest technologies reduced the drudgery of women in on farm and off farm activities in millets”? The paper explains about the millet specific production and post-harvesting constraints faced by women and the effect of use of farm implements and machineries in reducing drudgery and saving time for women in the millet production systems.

# Women Farmers in India: An Overview

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India is a land of villages. Being a land of villages, nearly 70 percent of the population is still living in rural areas with agriculture as its main occupation. Economic development of developing countries largely depends upon agriculture. Agriculture contributes to 32% of the national income. It is the main source of food and supplier of raw materials to industries. The development of agriculture largely depends upon development of rural communities and rural people especially peasants. In rural India, the percentage of women who depend on agriculture for their livelihood is as high as 84%. Out of 84%, 33% are cultivators and about 47% percent are agricultural labourers.

Agriculture in India defines familial tradition, social relations and gender roles. Female in the agricultural sector, whether through traditional means or industrial, for subsistence or as an agricultural labourer, represents a momentous demographic group. Women perform important roles in the farms all around the world, and farming is important for their survival. Yet, they are neither recognized as farmers, nor do they own the productive assets such as land or machines. As large numbers of working age males migrate steadily out of the farm sector, more women are left behind to care for agriculture. Hence present study will be made an attempt to study women farmers in India. Objectives of present study will be to know the socio-economic background of women farmers in India and to study policies and programmes for women farmers in India. The present study will be based on secondary data.

## **A Study on Role of Rural Women in Sustainable Agro-based Enterprise Development**

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Although men still have the most privileges with regard to access to land, credits and other agricultural inputs, women play a central and leadership role in the agriculture all over the world. Data reveals that there are 500 million small scale farm families around the world, and 70% of the agricultural work on these farms is done by women. FAO Data illustrates that women could increase their

productivity by up to 30% if they had the same access as men to productive resources. The present study is on Sustainable Agro-based Enterprise Development in Salumber and Sarada blocks of Udaipur. Objective of the study was to assess and evaluate role of rural women in enterprise development along with throwing light of issues and challenges of sustainable livelihood and development. Field survey of 524 producers was conducted using structured questionnaire method in 10 villages of Salumber and Sarada blocks of Udaipur using simple random sampling method during month of February and March 2015. Study reveals that 80% of the population is rural, while 49% are Scheduled Tribes. About 70% of poor tribal farmers were cultivating tomato through irrigation by wells. Poor Rural women decided to form producer company and intervene in order to train women towards effective supply chain management and enhance production efficiency by introducing water saving organic seeds of tomato into their existing farming practices. Jaisamand Agro Producer Company was established on 7th March 2014 by women and till date 1436 producers are associated with it. The company is managed by 15 board member and all are women. Their planned intervention taught them improved cultivation practices of use of organic seed, organic fertilizer, line sowing and keeping a distance between plants. Application of all these technique resulted in increase in production of Tomato by 20% and enhanced income of poor tribal farmers by 30-40%. Rural tribal women have used innovative way of marketing through collectivization at the village level which was new in that region. This lead to increment in income which impacts their life in terms of enhancement of their standard of living, social status, food and nutrition status, access to better education and health care facilities. These innovative agriculture practices and marketing can be replicated in other regions for fruitful results.

## **Wonder weaves: A Study of Self Reliant women workers with special reference to Kouna, (Scirpuslacustris. Linn.) mat making from Manipur**

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Mats are important household articles which are used for variety of purposes. For hundreds of years, mats of various sizes have been used for eating, sitting and sleeping and ceremonial purposes. Mat-weaving is one of the women's main occupations. They weave mats for home as well as for sale in order to generate

a small family income that usually contributes to the ridiculously high school fees they must pay for their children each year. Women mass have actively taking part in the home economic programmes and they could learn the importance of personal hygiene, surrounding, quality of food preparation, balanced diet, meals and eagerness and interest in doing and adopting the advance development of their consciousness about the various activities which could also be counted as their per day earnings. Weaving is a time honoured occupation in Manipur and Mat making from rush is indigenous (traditional) to Manipur which is closely associated with the legendary divine God “Pakhangba” (which is also regarded as Snake God). Weaving in Manipuri society is a women’s specialty and every woman from the lowest o the highest family are taught the technique of weaving from their childhood. Manipuri young girls were initiated the art of weaving at an early age where weaving is considered an essential qualifications of every women, besides practicing other economic activities, almost every house wife of Manipur was capable of weaving all the clothes needed by the family.

The objective of this paper will look into the country’s basic craft which is of great cultural, health and economic importance with the tradition of the Meitei community and a very important part of every house of the community, Cultivation and promotion of matting rush which have been taken up as a gainful economic activity, poverty alleviation and uplift the socio-economic condition of their family and enhance employment opportunity by the Meetei women artisans and entrepreneurs in the State Manipur due to having high market demands, commonly known as matting rush and Kouna locally by the Manipuris. The plants grow wildly in the shallow lakes and marshy land, ponds, canals, along the river and lake beaches of Manipur Valley where paddy cultivation is not suited at all. Kauna (*Scripuslecustris*) craft has the potential for large scale plantation, production and marketing. Kauna products have both domestic and export market demands. The surging demands surpass the current production of kauna in the State.

This study will look upon the report about a person, group, or situation, this ethnographic study will highlight and embrace the method of generalizing cases both case studies of individuals and organization, event, or action, existing in a specific time and place. This research study will be useful for analysis the major transformations in the art of Weaving as practiced by the women in Manipur. The crafts of Manipur showcase the creativity of its people.



# **Gender in agricultural planning processes of South Asian governments: Attention or Neglect?**

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The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 1979 and the Beijing Platform for Action, 1995 called for rural women's equal rights to land, common property resources, credit, extension, technologies, markets and collective institutions. They also emphasized reduction in drudgery of women's work. The Sustainable Development Goals continues some of this emphasis. On the other hand, a situation analysis of women in agriculture plans in South Asia reveals that these goals are still a distant dream. Apart from exclusions at household, community and market level, national development plans of the eight South Asian governments suggests that the objectives of the agriculture section of seven are gender-blind. The context and strategies sections of only two plans (one being Bangladesh) analyse and address gender issues in agriculture comprehensively. At the same time, the Chapters on women's development or empowerment pay little attention to agriculture issues. It is hence important to engender agriculture plans and strengthen attention to agricultural within plans pertaining to women's development/empowerment, and from a rights lens. Possible strategies to address these gaps are discussed, and it will be argued that the strategies need to challenge the neoliberal paradigm of development

## **Impacts of Home Gardening in Agro biodiversity Hotspots among Small and Marginal Farm Households**

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Dietary diversity and consequent nutritional security are vital for a healthy life. Changes in socio-economic conditions and commercialization of agriculture have led long lasting changes in the land use pattern and gradual decline of home gardens in Kerala. Present paper illustrates the strategies adopted to revive home gardening in Wayanad district of Kerala. With the support of quantitative and qualitative data, this paper analyses the impacts of home gardening on small and marginal farm households in terms of ensuring dietary diversity, quality

vegetables and fruits, and exercising choice of people. Study shows that home gardening increased women's status in terms of increased consumption of vegetables, exchanging seeds and vegetables with neighbours and relatives, and increased their capacity in household decision making pertained to food and diet of the family members.

Keywords: Dietary diversity, gender, social network, nutritional security, marginal farmers, agrobiodiversity.

## **Understanding the Commons: Issues of Gender and Livelihood**

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The Common Property Resources (CPRs) are community assets that provide livelihood. These resources mostly include: land used for cultivation and grazing, forests for collection of food, fodder, herbs and fuel, waste lands, rivers, ponds and other community assets. CPRs or the Commons have been an important part of community life, where sharing of resources strengthens the solidarity of the people. Especially those with few or no individual resource highly depend on such common resources as a supplementary source of livelihood. Its usage and importance, however, has been decreasing as the society as well as the community undergoes change. Nonetheless, it continues to affect rural lives which vary across class, caste and gender.

Especially women have an all-round relationship with CPRs. Although CPRs are open and accessible to all, women, entrusted with household works have traditionally depended on these resources for collection of fuel and fodder and drinking water, etc. It is therefore, interesting to trace if such relationship is diminishing and if so then what are the factors affecting it. Moreover, women are not a homogenous category. The usage and access of the CPRs therefore is not uniform. It varies according to the intersections of class and caste. Therefore, in a multi caste village setting the complexities of the relationship between women and CPRs get accentuated. Religion as well as the religious institutions also holds an important position in influencing the status of women in a village. Particularly the village under study being a 'satra' (Vaishnava Monastery) village has its own specificity as it has CPRs associated with it. And it would be interesting to study, to what extent women can access these resources or whether they are marginalised based on the idea of 'purity and pollution' as propagated by the satra.

The state has also been an important agency in negotiating the use of CPRs in the village. It is important to understand how the state enters into the scene through various schemes and drives and how it penetrates the management of the CPRs. Whether its intervention helps the marginalised or accelerates the appropriation of the CPRs by the powerful by measures such as levying taxes, leasing out CPRs on tenders, etc. Moreover, various developmental projects initiated by the government as well as manmade changes have triggered ecological changes. This also leads us to the question of degradation of the CPRs and its effect on women cutting across different class and caste. The study is based on a village named Dakhinpat Satrain Central Assam.

Keywords: Commons, Gender, Livelihood

## **Land Rights and Tribal Laws: A study of Deori women's Land Rights in Rural Upper Assam**

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Land constitutes the very sense of identity that one holds in his/her life as land is the most valued form of property for its economic as well as its political and symbolic importance. Agricultural land among the tribal rural areas remains to be one of the important means of livelihood for the people living there which symbolized life and their sustenance. Rights over land become a controversial topic to debate as it is highly unequal when it comes to the ownership of land entitlement to its individual. In most of the tribal communities in India property rights over land is patriarchal in nature and women are not entitled to inherit land though they are the equal contributor with men in the production process. Land relations in tribal areas are generally governed by customary land laws that are often encoded.

In consideration of above the present paper entitled 'Land Rights and Tribal Laws: A study of Deori women's land rights in Rural Upper Assam' attempts to understand the particular tribe who has been involved in agricultural activities with men but still do not have land ownership. It becomes important to understand the aspirations, perceptions and experiences of the women in relation to agricultural activities and their related problems that they face in their day today life. As the nature of patriarchy is different in different societies the paper tries to understand how patriarchy operates in this particular tribal community in relation to women's position of land ownership in the household. In other words,

an attempt would be made to understand Deori woman's access to property and inheritance rights particularly on the issue of land rights.

This paper will also try to understand as to how Deori women relate themselves to the agricultural land and the major challenges or problems faced by women in rural areas. Here an attempt will be made to explore how a gender relation in tribal communities operates in relations to land rights and to examine the interface of tribal laws and customs with modernity. The study will also explore the position of both women and men and how gender relations are maintained within the community. It also tries to look at how members are adhering to their customs, beliefs, and practices.

## **Exclusive Commons: Erosion of Women's Agency in North East India**

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This paper is a reflection on women's agency which remains limited to exclusive platforms within rural communities in North East India. It also draws attention to locating women's agency within common resources which defines the essence of women's socio-cultural identities. The exclusiveness of common knowledge, skills, practices, property resources, financial support and social security measures have excluded women farmers specifically from the equitable power sharing, strategic decision making and disrobed their authority in these areas. Communization and institutionalization of common service delivery, common resources and common development policies have located women as objects of social practice. Women's agency within common institutions is getting structurally marginalised where customary norms and state authorities endorse patriarchal practices. Exclusiveness cannot replace empowerment outside common village level institutions. Somehow women's agency within the exclusive institutional spaces is also getting restricted due to pressures of forced conformity to existing patriarchal norms within a closed community structure. Women are being positioned as the agents of moral reformation and criteria fulfillment for various women specific economic and social development schemes. This paper attempts to reflect upon the emergence of exclusive strategy to exclude women's perspectives within the larger context of sustainability, policy formulation, political assertion and ecological regeneration. It engages with the experience of women farmers and women's institutions in the rural context of Nagaland and Manipur.

# Land Rights for Women in India: Confronting Patriarchy and Neo-liberal Policies

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The Paper argues that there is a tendency in development discourse to reduce the question of women's land rights to ownership of privately held property alone. This ignores a most important aspect of the patriarchal gender based division of labour as well as survival strategies of poor households' –the use, collection, gathering and processing of land based resources (critical for household subsistence), an extension of women's unpaid household work. If these public or common property resources deplete or are fenced, women's burden increases. NSS data is used to demonstrate this unpaid burden.

Common property and public lands are crucial in determining women's land rights: firstly, a vast section of poor working women are dependent on the collection and processing of public/common land resources; secondly, increasing dispossession and displacement undermines petty holdings placing a huge burden on women responsible for family reproduction; thirdly, widespread eco-degradation has meant that women's drudgery has increased and access reduced; finally, high and growing landlessness is accompanied by dwindling availability of alternative remunerative employment.

Thus, the understanding of women's land rights has to be widened. The women's movement has to democratize the discourse and struggle for land rights by stressing redistributive land reforms (in a consciously gendered manner), joint titles and also resist the annexation and degradation of public and common resources. Even as women from the working classes and oppressed sections fight to access and control the commons, they also struggle to hold on to or get a plot, a home, and a roof.

The Paper warns against the mistake that is often made of posing the land question only as a rural or agrarian issue. In fact, the Paper establishes with data that even as urban populations increase and migration due to the agrarian distress rises, urban commons and spaces to live shrink and conflict and contestation over these grow.

Examining the agrarian reforms under state-led redistributive efforts in the 'golden age' of land reform, the Paper concludes that they were largely gender-

blind. These reforms were often based on an implicit assumption that assets allocated to households typically to the male 'head'-would benefit all members equitably. Not only did such assumptions ignore the well-being of women, they were also blind to the fact that household ownership of land can more deeply exploit women's labor through heavier workloads in the form of unpaid family labour.

The Paper examines recent movements where common property resources are not pure ideals but themselves an arena of struggle. Common property is tended and collected overwhelmingly by women, who exercise little control over its management. Customary practices discriminate against women despite the fact that they are the bulk of the Indian farmers, the main producers of food and they perform the majority of agricultural tasks.

Therefore there are worrying repercussions from a gender perspective in the recent uncritical endorsement of 'customary' systems by policy makers. This is not to suggest that 'customary' practices are entirely adverse for women, or that statutory rights alone can further their interests. It is nevertheless difficult to insert gender equality concerns into processes where traditional institutions have a patriarchal character.

The Paper concludes by arguing that when the question of women's land rights includes but moves beyond ownership of private plots, and extends to protection and access to commons, gender-sensitive redistributive land reforms in urban and rural areas, environmental regeneration and determination of land use policies – struggles for land rights will have to confront both patriarchy and neo-liberalism.

## **Women's rights over land and other resources: emerging issues from Maharashtra**

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In most developing countries women are primary agricultural producers, cultivating 60 to 80 percent of the food. But the percentage of land owned by women is disproportionately small considering their crucial contribution. Women are denied equal rights not only to land but also to other forms of resources. The laws and policies are often not conducive for promoting property rights of women, and when they are favorable, their implementation remains a

problem. Maharashtra has been a state where some notable work on land rights among marginalised communities has taken place but little concerted effort is seen across the state in terms of women's access to property rights.

SOPPECOM, along with Women's Studies Centre of ILS Law College conducted a study to understand the current situation and explore the possibilities for work in Maharashtra on the question of women's land rights. This paper will be based on the insights gained through various regional meetings conducted in different parts of Maharashtra, interviews with the leaders or organisations and movements working on this issue, and a state level consultation conducted during this study.

The paper will discuss the different context specific land and agriculture related issues that came up during the regional meetings. Throughout these discussions two issues regarding women's right over land emerged: women's right over private property and the right over state owned/public resources. The paper will discuss emerging issues in both these contexts. One thing that distinctly emerged from all these discussions was the experiences of women's collectives who are taking up cultivation of either family owned, or leased in land. The paper will talk about such experiments, and their constraining and facilitating factors. Finally the paper will conclude with the demands, and possible activities around the issues of women's land rights that emerged from these discussions.

## **Innovation in Income Generation by Rural Women: A Case Study of Villupuram District of Tamil Nadu**

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Women belonging to the households in the rural sections mostly engage in agriculture and its allied occupations. They play both the roles of a cultivator and that of an agricultural laborer. In most rural areas the main source of income is through agricultural practices ranging from small scale to large scale. Factors such as gender discriminative wages and lack of access to resources propel women to invent new ways to generate income and support the family. One of the innovative ways found by them is the setting up of road side shops to sell vegetables, fruits and cereals produced in own farms. Through this practice they manage to market their products without using any transportation, warehousing facility and middle man in order to generate additional income for the family. The study aims to explore the limited opportunities and resources made available for

women who are engaged in these road side shops and earning their livelihoods in rural areas of Villupuram district. It also seeks to identify the means by which they innovatively create additional income sources. For the purpose of the study purposive sampling method will be employed to identify the samples and data will be collected from fifty samples. Beside, case study method will also be employed to realize the objective of the study. The study seeks to understand and identify innovative income generation practices of women in rural sections of Villupuram.

## **Lives, livelihoods and action scapes of resistance in transitional gender scapes**

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Women have depended on the commons, including forest commons for sustenance of household livelihoods needs since centuries.

With the inroads of development and development policies in the neo-liberal paradigm, however, common lands and resources have increasingly been placed under the control of the state to be diverted to state and private parties. Consequently women have been nudged into situations of increasing time and resource scarcity. What are the means and processes that women and communities have adopted to contend with these challenges within the prevailing hegemonies of state and market? How does resistance create action scapes of subversive transformation in the midst of enclaved spatialities.

These questions are explored in this paper, based on the research undertaken by the author in complex 'transitory' terrains of Southern Rajasthan, where the patterns of migration, settlement transition and resource contestations create conflicts between multiple communities in Sirohi district of South Rajasthan.

## **Women Farmers, Agricultural Value Chains and Food Insecurity**

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The value chain approach has gained immense currency in sectoral development initiatives as it provides a framework to comprehend and evaluate the sequence of activities that extend right from mobilizing inputs till



the final product reaches the consumer. More importantly, it helps map the multidimensional relationships that underlie the links in the chain and monitor how specific value accrues to each such link. The framework is increasingly advocated as critical instrument to oversee the flow and management of financial resources and extension services to distinct sectors so as to enhance their overall efficiency, productivity and competitiveness, especially in urban and global markets. In the agri-food systems in developing countries significant initiatives have been introduced to replace the traditional agricultural value chains organized by social relationships and operationlised through multitude of small and local traders with highly vertically coordinated modern chains.

An important aspect of India's agricultural reform initiatives is development of competitive and well- functioning markets for farmers, often using the mechanism of value chain development. Given the predominance of small and marginal holders in the country's agricultural production system, the state, development agencies and private companies are increasingly taking to value chain mechanism to promote their engagement in market development. The available, though limited, evidence indicates that the re-organization of agricultural commodity production in the framework of value chains has resulted in streamlining the complex relationships among the several market players (farmer, trader, input provider, final buyer) and enhancing the value accrued to each of them. However, there is also evidence that value chains are not 'sure-fire success' when it comes to engaging smallholders. "The spectrum reaches from projects that successfully help farmers improve productivity and incomes complying with international buyer requirements to initiatives where only few smallholders make the race, and without reasonable benefits" (Frank, 2012). As Ramamurthy (2000) argues in the context of cotton in Andhra Pradesh, there are instances where working of commodity chains has led to more of the social product going to domestic and overseas consumers, pesticide companies, agro-business producers of hybrid seeds, moneylenders, and large landowners, while the risk and debt of small cultivators increased making them vulnerable to market vagaries.

The proposed paper would focus on another grave gap in the ongoing value chain development initiatives – neglect of the efforts and interests of women farmers, who contribute significantly to the agricultural sector as unpaid family workers, and increasingly, as cultivators in several pockets in the country. This neglect works on three fronts – (1) complete bypassing of women farmers from the formal arrangements and contracts as in smallholder contract-farming schemes mainly because of their lack of land ownership; (2) women farmers' exclusion from access to the support services (credit, training, extension and

market support) provided by public and private agencies; and (3) over-emphasis on commercial crops and the consequent shrinking of space for women, who have traditionally been engaged in farming crops like millets, pulses, and vegetables that are quite central to household level food security. Though the term 'farmer' has been defined (National Policy for Farmers, 2007) to include all persons actively engaged in the economic and/or livelihood activity of growing crops and producing other primary agricultural commodities, it is still interpreted quite narrowly in practice. Many primary activities where women play predominant role as producers (for instance, sericulture, vermiculture, and collection/use/sale of minor and non-timber forest produce) do not receive adequate attention in the discussion on agricultural value chains or in support services being promoted through development agencies. Moreover, the indiscriminate incorporation of local primary production systems into the circuits of capitalist agriculture has the long term effect of complete decimation of local knowledge about relevant varieties of crops that provide food and nutritional security. All these mean that women farmers would lose out fast in the already contracting rural and agricultural employment scene. Analysis of employment trends using the recent reports of the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) does suggest that sizeable population of rural women have disappeared from employment and gone back to domestic work (Kannan and Raveendran, 2012; Nair, 2014).

The paper would argue for the incorporation of non-monetary value propositions in the discussion on value chains to diffuse their economic preoccupation. There are important alternative value propositions –nutritional value, environmental value, cultural value – that sustainable agricultural development should necessarily address and that the current view of value chain completely ignores. The view is also gender-blind in that it overlooks the fact that much of what women do in agriculture does not enter the circuit of capital.

Finally, the paper advocates the need for policies to focus on development of local value chains to promote sustainable local economic development and food security not only for consumers, but for small holder families too. There are serious institutional gaps in terms of linking local farm economies with appropriate alternative markets (not what is dictated by the remotely located large buyers), technology support, or finance, which depresses agricultural and allied sectors, in backward and ecologically fragile regions. By addressing such gaps both food security and women's participation in the farm economy can be enhanced.

# **Agricultural Transformation and Changing Gendered Crop Rights in Hilly District, Wayanad, Kerala**

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Cropping differences are there between men and women apart from gender labour roles in all agricultural systems. In traditional agricultural communities we could see an evident distinction between 'Men's and Women's Crops'. This paper explains the changes happened in the agriculture scenario of a geographical unit, Wayanad in Western ghats and the corresponding changes in gendered crop rights of three different communities of the region over three generations (75 years). This paper argues that the main crop(s) deciding the economy of each community is always controlled by men with ethnographic evidences.

The study was conducted in Wayanad one of the agrarian districts of Kerala. The study documented the changing gendered crop rights patterns of two landed Adivasi communities Kurichya, Kuruma and a migrant Christian community for a period of one year. The research was informed through ethnographic field study including interviews, field observations and Participatory Research tools. It analyses the gendered differences in accesses control over and right of men and women on different crops inside the agrarian families from three different cultural settings in a feminist perspective.

This study reveals how men benefited the rights over crops that have more economic value over the years. Food crops such as Rice, Tapioca and Yam were the realm of men before sixty years, and vegetables such as Cucumber, Pumpkin, Cow pea and minor tubers were an exclusive business of women. When the agriculture pattern in Wayanad changed from Food crops to cash crops, Pepper, Coffee, Cardamom, Banana, Rubber, Ginger, Vanilla, etc got attention of men in the family and Rice, Tapioca, Yam etc loosed their status and becoming women's crops. When agriculture is a family business vegetables were always women's crop. When it became large scale commercial cultivation with improved seeds, it turns in to men's domain. Major portion of the family land is always allocated for men's crops. Unpaid Women labour is extensively using in men's crops while cultivation of women's crop is always a secret business of women.

The structure of each agrarian system is evolved around a principle crop which is centre to that economic organisation. That principal crop is always

comes under the control of men and the resource organisation for agriculture is always supporting cultivation of this principal crop(s). The macro and micro changes in agriculture economy and politics tend to replace the principal crops. As powerless and voiceless women's crops are the left over crops by men. This study argues that gendered crop rights in each community are dynamic and influenced by the larger agricultural politics along with the power relations inside the family.

It is interesting to see that rice as grain and seeds were the sole property of men when food production was the main economic activity of the community. It remains still so with those communities who are still dependant on food crop cultivation as their main economic activity.

## **Adaptations of Sustainable Agriculture Practices By the Mahila Kisans in the Tribal Region of Koraput Enhancing Their Socio-Economic Status and Ensuring Food and Nutrition Security**

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The paper discusses the varied experiences of women farmers as a consequence of their participation in the programme, Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana. Agriculture all over the country has become highly resource intensive. The tribal region of Koraput in Odisha is an agrarian District and agriculture pattern is mainly based on traditional farming. Now a day's farmers are shifting to modern agriculture practices using chemical fertilizer for higher yield and also applying chemical pesticides for pest control. Farmers have limited knowledge on the consequences of applying chemical fertilizers and pesticides for different crops. Farmers are also not adequately informed on soil health and nutrition management, ground water contamination, environmental pollution etc. As per the bench mark survey report conducted in the year 2014 in 45 villages, 87% of the 2552 farm households in the villages use chemical fertilizers and chemical pesticides. The other major issue in the region is malnourishment and anemia among children and women. It is noticed that about 53% women mainly pregnant and lactating mothers are anemic (Sources- ICDS). Even though many welfare schemes are implemented by Government especially for poor and vulnerable sections, significant changes are not witnessed in the region. The Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP) is a women centric program being implemented by M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation in 45 tribal dominated villages under

Kundra and Boipariguda blocks of Koraput District, Odisha. The program is mainly focused on promoting sustainable agriculture especially to reduce application of chemical fertilizer and chemical pesticides and also to enhance food and nutrition security. The programme has been fairly successful in bringing about a change in cultivation practices by the women farmers. Out of 2552 farming households, 1678 farmers are practicing sustainable agriculture in 1843 acres of land where they grow paddy, vegetables and pulses. Under Sustainable agriculture practices they adopt non pesticide management, application of bio-fertilizers and bio-pesticides, integrated pest and disease management, integrated nutrient management, soil health and nutrition management, post harvesting technology, seed storage and preservation etc. Women farmers have realized that application of bio fertilizers have helped in enhancing the soil health quality and in fetching higher price for their inorganic and hybrid produce, to the tune of 10 to 15% more. Input cost in different crops reduced by 20 to 30% when sustainable agriculture practices are followed while yield doesn't get hampered. In MKSP, 214 Annadata model kitchen gardens (structured with a diversity of nutritious crops) and 857 backyard kitchen gardens have been established that have not only enhanced the nutrition security of farm households but have also resulted in economic benefit as surplus vegetables are sold in the market. The Mahila Kisans are organized under 62 producer groups and are selling their produce collectively in the market.

## **Farm and family: Women, Work and Marriage in Rural West Bengal**

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The rural, particularly agricultural sector is in decline for the last two decades in West Bengal. Even though there is a considerable migration of men from the countryside, how far the usual arguments about feminization of agriculture apply to this state remains an open question. There is little doubt that the bulk of peasant families, and women in them, are suffering declining returns from small and marginal plots and are unable to find supplementary work, even of agricultural work, to make ends meet. The NREGA schemes have failed to alleviate the crisis of livelihood.

It has been argued by scholars that the situation of rural women have to be understood within the context of the family, since the absence of opportunities of wage labour, rural women are more dependent on resources, to which their

access is entirely mediated by their families. In this paper I shall try to understand the implications of this on the basis of a survey carried out in four districts of West Bengal, South 24 Parganas, Purva Medinipur, Birbhum and Jalpaiguri (2016).

There can be no doubt the marriage system remains the most important determinant of women's familial roles and positions. It is their capacity as wives and daughters-in law that women define their rights as well as their duties and obligations – that is to say, they have these defined for them according to dominant norms, which may differ according to caste, regional location and social position. Access to even basic resources for survival such as shelter and food presume the role of the woman-in family.

Our survey confirms the evidence that age of marriage has indeed increased in recent decades, but in West Bengal still, nearly half the female population is married before the legal age of 18 years.

Our survey also throws up interesting evidence of early love marriage which is often perceived as a social problem as it challenges the normative control over a woman's body, labour and sexuality which is considered to be a foundation stone for the social order. The paper will explore these contradictions. In these marriages it has often been noted that the "eloping bride" is transferred as in the case of any other marriage from the natal home to the marital home. Unless her parents have accepted the marriage and fulfilled the expectations of a social marriage, dowry and post marital gift exchange including economic and emotional support her position is much worse than brides married by arrangement. These young women become particularly vulnerable to the labour demands of the marital family. Given the increasing importance of unpaid family labour for small farmers, such intensification of labour may be perceived by marital families as the only condition upon which they will receive the bride. Indeed, we have found some cases where the bride was returned to their natal homes when they failed to meet the labour expectations of the marital family.

The interplay of family and work, production and reproduction is at the heart of the marriage system and these are structured by class and caste. There is a perception that elopements challenge not only family authority but also class caste, community and economic structures. It struck us that in rural West Bengal; parents are struggling with the very idea of an adolescent girl, since she has no designated role in her natal family. Her labour and sexuality are harnessed only by marriage. My paper will try to explore these emerging problems, not yet noted in the scholarship on gender in relation to the agrarian economy.

# **Women's Farming Collectives: an Inquiry into the Resource Sharing Patterns across 3 Districts of Maharashtra**

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India is an agrarian country where more than 60% of its agricultural labour is performed by women. Yet, the identity of women as 'farmers' is missing as being a farmer is synonymous to owning agricultural land. And owning land for women in India accounts for only 12% of the operational land holding and 15% in the state of Maharashtra. This study of women's farming collectives in the 3 districts of Ratnagiri, Sindhudurg and Bid, Maharashtra, provides insights into the functioning, resource sharing patterns with respect to land, labour, seeds and water, puts forward a case for collective action and its benefits in the times of a natural resource crisis. The study in the larger context highlights the interesting experiments in growing organic produce, by women, as they create an economic as well as a social collective space for themselves. Ecological sustainability, economic democracy, social well-being are manifested in the nature of these collectives itself. The main aim of this work is to ensure recognition of women as farmers and provide a platform for them to access land rights collectively.

## SUB - THEME 7

# INTERROGATING AND EXPANDING FEMINIST QUESTIONS ON SEXUALITY AND GENDER

**Coordinators: Meena Gopal and Asha Achuthan (Advanced Centre for Women's Studies, TISS, Mumbai)**

## ABSTRACTS

### **Transition, Transformation or Transcendence: Understanding Transbodies and Translives through a Feminist Lens**

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This paper will aim at understanding the lived experiences of transgender individuals by taking 'transbodies' as the focal point. When a child is born, the doctor after examining the sex organ informs the family whether the child is a 'girl' or a 'boy' and from that very moment the family members start tracing the course of life of the child based on their gender identity ascribed from the primary sex organs. The baby is 'sexually marked' for the rest of their life. The baby is never asked or given an option to live their life on their own terms and preference. We bear some stereotypical thought in our mind and limit our thoughts between the boundaries of 'male-female' binary. The domain of gender expression is vast, and hence cannot be defined and made limited. The transgender individuals often wish to transform their anatomy in an effort to harmonize their gender identity with their physical existence, to come out of the painful existence of being "trapped in the wrong body". Again there are transgender individuals who want to live their transgender identity, without any need of changing the body, through living their preferred gender on their own terms, by breaking the linear relationship between sex and the ascribed gender. Transsexual individuals who have already gone through 'Sex Reassignment Surgery' (henceforth SRS) have to adjust to the 'new desired body'. Does this mean that through this reconstruction of the 'body' body essentialism is being reinforced? This paper will delve into the experiences of the transgender and transsexual people and try to understand their opinion and experience with respect to the various options they adopt and explore to bridge the gap between their preferred gender and bodily existence. It will also try to understand the sex/gender distinction as perceived through their lived experiences. The paper will be based on empirical field work in and around Kolkata through FGDs and in-depth interviews.



Though second-wave feminism argued for the sex and gender distinction, some feminists believed there was a conflict between transgender identity and the feminist cause. From this perspective it seems that the bodily transitions embraced traditional gender roles and stereotypes. Many transgender feminists, however, viewed themselves as contributing positively to feminism by questioning and subverting gender norms. Third wave and contemporary feminism have tended to be more accepting of transgender people. With an understanding of sex, gender and sexuality from a feminist perspective this paper will explore the lived experiences of the transpersons for understanding the concept of reconstruction of the 'body' through sex reassignment surgery with the central focus being whether this reconstruction is leading towards reaffirmation of the gender stereotyping and the unilinear relationship between sex and gender or transcending to something beyond?

## **'Searching Alternatives: Bonding among Homosexual Men in Kolkata'**

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Recently, in urban India, there has been a quiet trend of 'coming out' by people of alternate sexuality. These men and women are opting out of hetero-normative marriage and thus the normative family-kinship. It must be said that some practitioners of different sexualities are also opting to remain within the ambit of the hetero-normative family, including marriage. Individuals, who are not willing to enter into heterosexual marital relationships are facing crisis in their thirties onward. With the help of dating sites and availability of space in urban areas, random sex dates are no longer rare occurrence in the gay community. But with the passage of time, when a gay individual enters into his thirties, the frequency of getting good sex dates reduces. Moreover, in their peer group, other men enter marriages and become involved in setting up their own families. Even those single gay men, who remain close to their own natal family, begin to feel a sense of alienation. The 'deviation' from mainstream practices might be a reason for the crisis. I have used the term 'deviation' only because the heterosexual marriage and family is the frame of reference in this case. For last few years I have interacted with 40 homosexual men in Kolkata to investigate whether this is really a quandary for them and how they are handling this crisis.

Gay men who are heading towards middle age, i.e. 30 onward, are more concerned about 'uncertainty' in terms of their association or closeness within

their kinship. During my interaction with homosexual men in Kolkata, over a period of three years, I have found that, men, who were enthusiastic for ‘no string attached’ sex dates are leaning towards ‘partnership’ or ‘grouping’. The two prior mentioned words, i.e. partnership and grouping are close to each other in the context of search for alternative bonding. By the term ‘partnership’, I mean, a bonding between two gay men, where they are apparently committed, either mentally or both mentally and physically, to each other and plan to live the rest of their life together. The term ‘grouping’ is used to indicate those attempts, where more than one men of the gay/bi-sexual community are trying to forge complex living arrangements with their friends. These groups pose the possibility of an alternative to the hetero-normative family. Both these initiatives are visible in the gay population in Kolkata.

The paper will focus on two questions, a) how homosexual men attempt to create associations alternate to hetero-normative family and marriage and b) whether those initiatives are imitation of the hetero-normative family and marriage. Do they challenge the moral ethical structure of the hetero-normative family? My research indicates both possibilities.

## **Engendering Medical Education: Addressing Issues of Sexual Minorities with Gender Lens**

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Health of an individual or a community is often predicated on social structures with prescriptive gender identities and associated power relations. Gender’s interaction with health is witnessed in the variation in access to health systems and services for men, women and intersexed persons/transgender.

Heterosexuality has been historically promoted as the only acceptable sexuality and has led to social bias and stigmatization of non - heterosexual people. These biases have also found its way in medical textbooks. Health professionals are also a part of the social milieu, thereby reflecting the biased attitudes against non-heterosexuals. Such attitudes can discourage people from seeking health services. Till 1974, psychiatry classified homosexuality as a mental disorder. Medical professionals have always viewed gender in ‘binaries,’ excluding individuals falling out of heterosexual ambit from most of the medical discourse – like identifying their specific vulnerabilities to certain illnesses, issue of their admission in a male or female ward, not recognising that LGBT community can also be a victim of gender based and sexual violence.

The Integration of Gender in Medical Education (GME) project implemented by Centre for Enquiry in Health and Allied themes (CEHAT) aims to achieve gender sensitization and awareness on public health issues. The GME project has taken a feminist approach to integrate gender in medicine across five disciplines of MBBS curriculum – Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Community Medicine, Forensic Medicine and Toxicology, Internal Medicine and Psychiatry.

All the modules in the initial lectures make a clear distinction between concept of ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ which are otherwise used and understood alternately by medical community. The content challenges the understanding of gender in binaries stressing the point that gender is on continuum. The gender integrated modules, address issues of intersex people, where sexuality is highly medicalized, there is use of misleading and inappropriate language like “anomaly” or “hermaphrodite”, the integration recommends use of appropriate and sensitive language like “variation”, creating respectful environment for marginalized gender groups who access health services. The content intends to create a sensitive attitude among medical students in case of children with ambiguous genitalia, that parents should be involved in deferring the immediate sex reassignment. The content highlights the therapeutic role of doctors in case of intersex persons, stating that care should be more focused on addressing stigma not solely gender assignment and genital appearance. The modules also throws light on sex determination tests, it critic the wrong use of terminology as ‘gender verification tests’, as there is no single marker that allows for the classification of people as “male” or “female”, the content questions the veracity of these test which focus only on women and not on men. The modules also talk about the stigma faced by LGBT community and how it affects their access to health care and need to be sensitive towards their specific health needs. The GME project thus aims to create an understanding about the issues and barriers faced by people from sexual minorities and develop sensitive attitude among medical students towards health issues and treatments required by sexual minorities.

## **Transforming Politics: Negotiating Non-Normative Lives With(In) Movements**

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There is enough literature by feminist activists and scholars such as Ilina Sen, Gabriel Dietrich, Svati Shah, to suggest that the organised left, trade unions and land rights struggles in the country, haven’t been historically very inclusive

of issues of gender and sexuality. In fact, the rise of the autonomous women's movement in India can be traced, among other things, to the discrimination and dissatisfaction that women experienced in traditional left spaces, forcing many to leave and start movements of their own.

As two young trans\*feminists who stand on the shoulders of several decades of feminist struggles against hetero-patriarchy -- both in society at large and within mass movements -- we realize that the collision (and perhaps, collusion) of the two: movements and queer subjects, lend to complex consequences. We write this paper to better understand some of these complexities, which might, in turn, enable us to handle crises better and create more space for those who break rules, within movements.

This paper is divided into two parts. In the first, we discuss us being part of New Social Movements and what that means for negotiating the self, desire, relationships and politics as two queer, polyamorous, savarna, middle class persons assigned gender female at birth (PAGFABs). In the second section, we will examine specific instances from our work in Bihar, Chhattisgarh and elsewhere, when movements have had to respond to people with non-normative identities and choices. For example, how have these rights-based movements engaged with the lesbian, the inter-caste couple, the single woman, the trans\* person and other such 'deviants'? Consequently, how do these subjects assert themselves and manoeuvre their lives, amidst larger collective struggles?

This paper, using a combination of personal narratives, interviews with other PAGFABs in the field and informal discussions within the movement, attempts to answer these questions.

## **Private and Confidential: Re-examining Safety**

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Societal pressures have ensured that the disenfranchised rely on anonymity and confidentiality as survival strategies, leading to an uninterrogated view of anonymity and confidentiality as directly translating into safety.

Through this paper, the author proposes a re-examination of the conditions of anonymity and confidentiality for—and as a—feminist(s) and queer-identified person(s). In a world that exposes us through real and virtual means,

can we consider anonymity and confidentiality as also conditions that make us vulnerable? That they do not always protect? And if they do not protect us, that the struggle is also against that which forces us to hide? This is not to dismiss anonymity and confidentiality or to undermine their value in protecting stigmatised identities from violence but to examine how enforced silence can also make us vulnerable in very serious ways.

The violence of exposure is well understood, along with its direct consequences. This paper discusses the violence of secrecy and the ways in which it can render a person vulnerable.

In *Dialogue with Self, History and Culture: Objectifying Identity in Mahesh Dattani's*

## **The Girl who Touched the Stars**

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Identity, conventionally speaking, is related to resemblance or identicalness – something that one can identify with; which means that there is always a fixed group/class/species one belongs to. Thus, identity is treated as a fixed element, with very little possibility of any kind of change.

Judith Butler challenges this view of identity when she relates it to the theory of performativity. Under Foucault's influence Butler also questions the common idea that sex is a biological entity and therefore natural, while gender is cultural. She sustains and develops Foucault's view that even sexuality is a social construct. In almost all her works she maintains that both sex and gender are not the cause, but effects of social and cultural traditions and sexed and gendered identities are performative. Thus, according to Butler, identity is formed through performativity, it is not 'real' (if real exists) but it's an illusion or rather representation of a self. At the same time, she also maintains that there is no possibility of exact re-enactment. As a result, she refutes the prospect of fixed or stable gender identity and suggests that identity, in fact is fluid and performed.

Based on this discourse on identity formation Queer Theory rejects the defined binary categories as male/female and heterosexual/homosexual. And in doing so, it also denaturalizes the categories of sex, gender and sexuality, and argues that homosexuality is not a 'different' identity from heterosexuality.

Taking into account the discourses of queer theory and identity politics, I aim to examine Mahesh Dattani's *The Girl who Touched the Stars*. Though Vijay Tendulkar is considered to be the first playwright to bring in the 'non-normative' theme of homosexuality/lesbianism in his play *Friend's Story*, it is Dattani, who is known to have a recurrent theme of non-normative sexuality in most of his plays. Not only that, gender performativity also remains a major issue in his plays like *Muggy Night in Mumbai*, *Bravely Fought the Queen*, *Seven Steps round the Fire*, *Tara*, *Final Solutions* and of course, *The Girl who Touched the Stars*. The play deals with the gender binaries in which the society has conveniently structured itself, how it eventually leads to a vicious power circle followed by stereotyping, and what this structure does to the people who do not fit into these binaries. The play shows two selves of a single character – Bhavna and Bhuvan, and the dialogue between these two selves that transcends the boundaries of time and space. While Bhavna is in the outer space (on her way to Mars), Bhuvan exists in the inner space – in her own mind, in her father's mind.

Taking the case of the text, I intend to discuss the fluid nature of identity, and the discourse on queer politics arising from the identity formation. I argue that in Dattani's plays, stage is a space that reveals the nature of the performative, the aspects usually taken for granted as 'real' and that relates to queer 'identities' as they are performed. To go one step further, this stage, which is both model and medium of performance, becomes a critique of the cultural politics of performing normativity.

## **Understanding Divergent Streams in Sexuality Discourse In India (Based On Nirantar's Sexuality Mapping Report)**

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The paper, based on the findings of the Sexuality Mapping Research conducted by Nirantar, is based on a 'coming together' of different conversations around sexuality in India. The paper spans from the marginalization of gender and sexual identities to understanding the broader links of sexuality and gender transgression with social, economic and political structures of caste, religion and class, and the ways in these interact with law, education and health.

This paper will focus on the ways in which binaries are constructed in the traditional sexuality and gender based conversation, exploring particularly in the ways centres and margins are formed, especially along the lines of caste, class and religion. An examination of the centre vs margin dynamic allows us an insight

into the interactions of these groups and the constellations they form. There is a crucial need to better facilitate dialogue between the centre and the margins, as well as within and between various marginal groups in order to build a truly transcendent solidarity based on a holistic understanding of the sexuality lens. The two key areas that will be explored will be the way the margins impact the centre, understanding how those at the margins contribute to the understanding about sexuality or gender more broadly, not only to an understanding about sexuality or gender as it relates to them. For example, a respondent commented, as an upper class, upper caste, urban, highly educated young woman, it was from sex workers that she learnt her important lessons in sexuality. Her experience is significant in that it highlights that working for the rights of those occupying the margins not only contributes to the realisation of rights, but also crucially presents others opportunities to learn from. As another respondent articulated “Whenever voices grow from the margins, the discourse of the majority changes... It’s always like that whether it is in feminism ... any place, any movement. I feel that the more voices that push and join together, the more any movement’s understanding about the issue will evolve.”

The other key learning is the way in which spaces can be claimed from the margins and debunking the myth that those in the margins have to ask to be ‘let in’ rather, there was a realisation that they claim space in highly effective ways, often inviting others to jointly occupy it.

There are several questions to be asked and conversations to be had to further unpack the interactions of the centre and margin, and arrive at strategies to integrate the two or optimise their interaction. This paper tries to locate who occupies the centre and who is relegated to the margins of movements around sexuality? What are the spaces for the centre and margin to speak to and learn from one another? An examination of these and other explorations around how the centre and margin relate to one another could be a crucial first step sharpening our thinking around movement building.

## **Emancipation Of Sexuality: The Youth Of Bangladesh In The Time Of “Glocalization”**

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Bangladesh is one of the foremost developing countries. In 2008, when the world economy was turned down and developing countries faced problems due to recession, Bangladesh was the least suffered amongst all. The secret behind the resilient success was the empowerment of women in the country. Bangladesh stood on the 8th position as a women-centric political nation. Here, women are no more only dependent house wives but also taking part in the policy making and economic developments, putting religious and cultural challenges behind. This study will focus on how with rapid advancement of the global market, mostly local, urban educated, young middle class women are espousing their social and sexual choices. It will study the contribution of “glocalization” and market economy in supposedly expanding and increasingly adventurous sexual choice of upper and middle class urban young women of Bangladesh.

“Glocalization” has been used in the marketing journals as a post-capitalist term which means globalizing and facilitating products in such a way that will address all cultural barriers in terms of commercialization (Ponzio and Petrilli, 2004). Glocalization, thus has been picked up as term to show the social context that, refers to the development of technology through globalization and localization of cultures and activities, which are shaping up, reflecting and negotiating with our functionality and identity in the society. This process is transforming the society from the glory of the sexual subjectivity of women in a conservative patriarchal society. Empowered, economically independent women are pushing gender dignity as a social phenomenon turning it into a language of global marketing.

The purpose of this study is firstly, to make a clear understanding of the dynamics of the ambivalent (when local becomes global) lifestyle that is enforcing women to take such decisions. Secondly, to reflect on the identity politics and standard based on western culture which is offering them such standard of living sometimes even at the cost of risking life. Thirdly explore the Bangladeshi women’s experiences of sex and sexuality in the time of change when Bangladesh is reforming its identity as a digital land.

This essay will try to engender questions on pleasure, risk, giving consent, reputation, values, reasonability and dignity of identity, women’s sexual desire and physical safety for clarification. The study becomes interesting and significant when this apparent liberty will be juxtaposed against the fundamentalist values of a conservative nation.



This research is based on secondary data and qualitative case studies which designed to explore the experiences of young, urban, heterosexual, middle-class women. It projects specifically at middle-class young women because arguably they are the desirable gendered subject on whose bodies discourses of familial responsibilities; community honor and axis of modernity are sought to be written. This writing will try to understand the thin line that lies between pleasure and risk and finally the role played by media/new media in conveying different identities/ideologies of young Bangladeshi women.

## **Performing Sexuality: Living with Caste and Violence of Stigma in Cultural Economy**

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Of late, there are explosion of work related to sexuality triggered by rights based movements of sexual minorities, HIV/AIDS discourse, moral policing, etc. However, despite the volume of work produced on sexuality, relatively little attention is paid to theorizing the link between caste, cultural economy and gender. This paper purports to narrate the experiences of lower caste women performing their sexuality i.e. as junior artists in Telugu movies, record dance programmes and Bhogum Mela – in cultural/sexual economy in Rajahmundry, East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh. Performing sexuality is literally a gendered performance in which the women present themselves as sensual through a language of poses, actions or expressions as part of their occupation (Bhattacharya 2010). Drawing from Elizabeth Grosz’s concept of “refiguring bodies” wherein she brought the harmonious relationship between the sex/body and mind on one hand and emphasized the uncontainable character of sexuality on the other, it posits lower caste women’s performing sexuality as act of agency – rather than sexual objectification of women under globalization– yet these practices are constrained by social circumstances. In other words, performativity of sexuality of lower caste women was the effect of a specific historical development where Devadasi tradition was constructed as illegal and immoral while simultaneously cultural performances of Devadasis were appropriated by non-Devadasis or upper caste women which assumed a “devotional” and classical status. Unlike studies on globalization, which focuses on the power of transnational corporations and global communication, this paper is centered on practices of disadvantaged actors. By analyzing practices, it reads lower

caste women's participation in culture industry as a coping mechanism that the disenfranchised women evolve to manage the challenges like displacement due to real estate development industry, joblessness, etc under globalized economy. So, the performativity is produced as a result of social structure while at the same time it is structuring as the structure itself emerged out of performance and practice. Performing sexuality in such spaces reflects both uncontrollable character of corporality as well as the way it is conditioned by social processes like caste, state and globalization. In this context, an attempt is made to discern how lower caste women withstand the "stigma" associated with their work, at the same time affected by it. For instance, many respondents refer themselves as Kalavanthulu in order to assert their identity as performing artists rather than 'sex workers' despite the disrepute or whore stigma associated with the word "Kalavanthulu". Interestingly, this facet is in continuation of the past. During the reform period too, Kalavanthulu women resisted the word, Devadasi which implies the servants or slaves of the god and instead preferred to be called as dancers or artists (Lalitha and Reddy 2007). Secondly, it looks at these stigmas as not merely "whore stigma" but also stigma associated with their caste.

## **Can there be a Queer Politics of Hesitation?**

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When Swapna and Sucheta committed suicide together in February 2011, their deaths were claimed by Sappho for Equality, an organization working for LBT rights in Kolkata. Because of their interventions, and due to their fact-finding investigations, there is now a documentary (Ebong Bewarish ...) that familiarizes us with Swapna and Sucheta's circumstances and surroundings, and the sheer violence of heterosexuality on their lives. The suicide note left by Swapna, now in the archives of Sappho for Equality, is further proof that these women were systemically and structurally forced to commit suicide, because it was the only way they could be together. In a way that seems obvious, theirs is yet another case of lesbian suicide.

While Swapna and Sucheta's representation by Sappho for Equality has allowed for a telling and re-telling of their story, has made possible an enunciation of violence faced by queer and lesbian women in India, it has also necessarily appropriated this story. In the very act of representing Swapna and Sucheta as lesbian women has allowed them to be remembered, but at the expense of

forgetting that they were not only lesbian – they were also poor, they were also scheduled caste. In this paper, I would like to hypothesize that this emphasis on sexuality, over markers of class or caste for example, in Swapna and Sucheta’s narrative as told by Sappho for Equality, was necessary. This paper then arrives at the question – what makes representation in this mode necessary for Sappho for Equality?

The paper focuses on answering precisely this question. Using my own work and interviews with members of Sappho for Equality, I aim to demonstrate in this paper that this representation – or rather mis-representation – of Swapna and Sucheta emerges not on the part of Sappho for Equality’s members, but becomes the only way to articulate one’s politics in a structure that is inclined towards equal human rights, emphasizing marginality on the basis of authentic and unmediated experience. In other words, in a discourse of queer politics that revolves around inclusion and human rights predicated on suffering, there is no alternative but to claim identity as the basis of one’s politics. And in such identity politics, there is no alternative but to highlight Swapna and Sucheta’s marginality as lesbian women, compounded by the added suffering of being poor, being lower caste. This is perhaps a necessary straightening of queer politics.

However, what if, instead of this certain narrative of marginality and lesbian suicide, we relied on our hesitations? In my interviews with members of Sappho for Equality, numerous moments of such hesitations reveal themselves, only to quickly be relegated to the realm of the personal, whereas the political seems to be that which we remain sure of, as if it emerges only at the end of the process of self-questioning, when we have already arrived at our conclusions, however provisional. In the last segment of this paper, I highlight these hesitations as significant moments of doing politics. I end by offering that it is these hesitations that can resignify what it means to be queerly political, it is these hesitations that can perhaps offer another way to imagine queer politics. Here, in these hesitations, I find that there may be hope of a politics that transcends differences, moves beyond identity.

## **Challenging Marriage: Singleness as a Queer life Practice**

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The proposed paper will explore some of the experiences of conducting an action research project on mobilizing single women (widows, divorced, separated, never married) in West Bengal. The project, housed in Sappho for Equality, attempted to examine singleness as a queer life practice which could be seen as challenging the hegemony and privileges of heterosexual marriage. The single women's movement in India has so far largely focused on the marginality of single women in a society which confers huge social premium, economic privileges and cultural capital on marriage. However in our work, we attempted to envisage singleness not just as a form of disenfranchisement, but also as an opportunity for women to question the often oppressive yet socially mandatory institution of marriage and explore ways of forging an independent citizen identity and an autonomous life not tied to their marital status. Particularly in a state like West Bengal which has alarming rates of early and child marriage, an organized single women's movement could help to question the high value placed on marriage.

Although the Indian women's movement has critiqued marriage and family through its sustained campaigns against dowry and domestic violence, it has not fundamentally contested these institutions (Menon, 2007). The challenge to marriage came from queer feminists who have examined women's lives lived outside marriage and have sought to define women's identities beyond the marital and familial ones. The framing of romance and intimacy, sexuality, love and care almost exclusively through marriage and family has made it impossible to conceive of sexual rights for single women as it is for queer persons. As such there is an affinity of interests between the queer and single women's movements which the project sought to explore.

With the rising demand for marriage by lesbian and gay couples, it is more urgent to examine singleness as challenging the hegemony of marriage. The December 2013 Supreme Court judgement on Article 377 recriminalising "unnatural sex", has made compulsory heteronormativity within marriage and procreation, a legal and State imperative. In these circumstances it is also strategically important to resist institutions like marriage and family which enable the delegitimisation of "unnatural sex" by upholding the supposed "order of nature".

In the current discursive environment it is particularly relevant to explore the implications of women's singleness, both as a conceptual category and as everyday lived practice, for queer feminist politics in India. It is within the complex context of marriage equality debates, early and child marriage practices, rising levels of marital violence, migration induced separations that we locate our

paper which will examine several in-depth interviews of single women in our two fields, Howrah and Darjiling districts of West Bengal. These interviews explore questions of single women's sexualities, their loneliness, anxieties and fractious desires, their negotiations with their communities, friendships and affective and care relationships as well their attempts to redefine structures of families and collectives. Through a reading of these narratives the paper will explore both the possibilities and limits of conceiving singleness as a queer practice. It will also address to what extent a single women's collectivisation can play a critical and interventionist role in the women's movement.

## **Lack of Social Recognition Of Transmasculine Nonbinary Individuals With Gynephilia**

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Broadly transgender identities can be classified as transfeminine (those transitioning toward a feminine identity) and transmasculine (those transitioning toward a masculine identity). Historically, there has been greater recognition of transfeminine identities in comparison with transmasculine identities. For example, in the state of Tamil Nadu, Kothi (transfeminine people who might present themselves in either masculine or feminine attire) and Aravani (a cultural identity corresponding to transwoman) have considerable social acceptance while there is lack of visibility of transmasculine identities.

Individuals who are assigned female gender at birth and choose not to live with that identity face additional challenges typically not experienced by others. In the first place, these individuals have major challenges understanding their own identity and coming in terms with it as there is no depiction of such lifestyles in media, popular culture and tradition. While transfeminine individuals are also often ridiculed, discriminated against, and subject to harassment, at least their existence is acknowledged by society. Words like Kothi and Aravani exist in the vernacular languages of India to talk about transfeminine communities, but there are no such indigenous terms to refer to people in the transmasculine spectrum. In Tamil, the word "thirunangai" was coined to provide an exact translation of "transwomen," free of cultural or religious stereotypes. Taking that as a model, activists have now coined the term "thirunambi" to translate "transman" but it is still not as widely understood as the former term.

Typically, a person who is assigned male gender at birth and has androphilia

can choose to use a cultural identity, for example, the Kothi identity in Tamil Nadu, without being boxed into the categories of “transwoman” or a “gay man.” Although often they experience peer pressure to undergo unnecessary feminization procedures including sex reassignment surgery, many transfeminine individuals are able to successfully resist them and still remain integrated with the community. On the other hand, there is no community support for transmasculine individuals. In larger cities like Chennai, some support groups exist for lesbian woman. Some rights-based organizations and individual activists have taken the initiative to create support spaces for transmen.

A transmasculine person is not often accepted into the lesbian group if they don't identify as a woman. Even if the person was assigned female gender at birth and shares the sexual identity of gynephilia with other members, lesbian woman are often not comfortable with including someone who does not identify as a women into their closed group. They are also not readily accepted by transmen as they feel the person is not masculine enough to be one of them. This forces nonbinary transmasculine individuals to either live as woman and confirm to all restrictions society imposes on women, or to transition to a male identity often undergoing unnecessary medical procedures. I submit that this can be addressed only by uniting feminists and LGBT activists to join together to fight patriarchy and heteronormativity.

## **‘Her Experiences of her Body: Puberty and after’**

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Phenomenological approaches share a concern with collecting and collating the understandings of experiences found amongst various populations. The resulting second order constraints can be used in various ways. In conventional social science literature this is usually expressed as in relation to some theoretical paradigm. When feminists engaged in the exploration of their own or other women's experiences either in the form of consciousness raising or as formal research it is with the explicit aim of understanding better how and why women are oppressed. The stereotypes of female biological processes imply a lesser worthy because men and women learn to adapt to such cultural beliefs as part of nature. Male reproductive physiology is evaluated differently. Female sheds only one single gamete each month but the seminiferous tubules produce hundreds of millions of sperms each day. It is surely no accident that the process of making sperms involves precisely what menstruation does not, i.e. production

of something deemed valuable. The mystery lies here that male's vast production of sperm is not seen as wasteful. A man wastes more than one trillion sperm for every baby man produces whereas for every baby that a woman produces she wastes only around two hundred eggs!

The cultures of adolescence are somewhat complex based on the stereotype that is taken for granted to be naturally hierarchical. In India these experiences are shaped by class, gender, religion, educational status and marriage. The educationally advantaged women is simultaneously part of tradition, ritual and customary practices and also experiences the contemporary world through education she receives, diverse images and visuals presented to her through various medium, peer group culture she is part of. This gives rise to conflicting sets of expectations about her identity as young woman in relation to familial and socio-cultural factors and in relation to her peers.

This paper would explore how early experiences of the body with puberty shape women's identity and sexual orientations in adult life. This paper will be based on first hand recorded voices of women who will talk about their first such experiences and the factors that shaped their understanding of a transforming body in adolescence.

## **Interrogating gender and sexuality: has the end of gender arrived?**

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Gender became an important category of analysis since the 70s and 80s for feminists across many parts of the global south and north who wanted to critically understand the social attributes of the distinctions made on the basis of sex as well as the relational texture of the man/woman divide. Feminism as a political project was invested in fighting a certain sexism that was being institutionalized through the gender binary. Then, gender signified many things: a certain socialization process of naturally sexed bodies that brought forth a neat disposition of masculinity and femininity in binary oppositions; a certain analysis of power that operated in keeping this binary fixed and tilted in favour of men; a deliberate regimentation of bodies, beings and practices in the service of heterosexuality; the social organization of meaning that not only produced binary psychological dispositions but codified bodies as well, in their naturalness and essence, etc.

Today is a time when genders, on both sides of the 'binary', are lived in fluidity, sexes are being 'mixed and matched' and pronouns are gaining new signifiers. The familiar feminist insight spelled out in the catch phrase, sex/gender distinction, has taken a back seat. Gender as we knew is almost being given a quiet burial. We have moved from "gender binary" to "gender fluidity"; we have moved from "sex determining gender" to "sex being as constructed and as regulatory a norm as gender". The known categories in sexuality have also undergone spins ins and spin outs, sometimes, but not always, as a consequence of the shifts occurring in the realm of gender. On the other end, while gender has been understood as constructed, as well as operating as a regulatory ideal, expressed performatively and resignified incessantly, the LGBT movement has also provided currency to the notion that gender and sexuality are lived and expressed through a certain innateness, an inner call so to speak, that escapes all biological determinations or discursive churning. Gender as it is emerging today is getting more and more mapped out in a different choreography of shaping bodies, beings and relationalities, much of which is gathering momentum through the trans\*movement.

Given this brief background, the paper grounds itself in a certain self-reflexive exercise: Is there a new gender politics coming to be performed within the category of woman? As the sex-gender-sexuality spectrum gets more complex and adventurous do we see a different gender war being honed? Sexism (another commonly used synonym being misogyny) if earlier signified negative bias against women, is today being increasingly resignified as cissexism. Feminism (now vertically split in terms of cisfeminism and transfeminism) is being seen as the new institutionalized form of cissexism with cis women and cis feminists seen as trivializing and undermining the lives and politics of transwomen and transfeminists as inauthentic and therefore apolitical. What insights can feminists across various splits gain faced with this new political binary created by the cis vs trans in contrast to the earlier axis of man vs woman.

## **Cultural Politics of Breast and Breast Augmentation as Represented through the Film Shunyo e Bukey (Empty Canvas)**

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The female body as we see it is both a construction and a resource. While the construction has been social and historical the resource is often cultural. And



we can very well say that breast augmentation –the enhancement of the size of breasts by surgery leads to the cultural construction of homogeneous femininity. And here, we come to Foucault. For Foucault, modern power as opposed to the sovereign power is non authoritarian, non conspiratorial yet produces and normalizes the body to serve prevailing relations of dominance and subordination. Then there is much hype about the normalized body: the body that would cater to the aesthetic sense perception of a rational man, the ideal body of a female that is an artist's fancy, a man's ideal bed partner, which is breastful and thus normal. Through my paper, I would question the prevailing norms of sexuality, and show through the film *Shunyo e Bukey (Empty Canvas)*, how the accepted female body itself becomes questionable and how the prevailing norms of sexuality remains questionable as is depicted in the film.

My paper would look at the film *Shunyo e Bukey (Empty Canvas)* and thus question and interrogate the established and “normal” categories and specifications related to the body and breast. Is body breastful, always body beautiful? To fit in, is it necessary to either naturally have a pair of well nourished breasts or surgically acquire it? Can breast augmentation be witnessed as the normative disciplinary politics against the natural, feminine body and hence reproducing the sexist culture? It is a training of the unexploited female body towards the dominant culture of female docility and obedience and thus making it normal, submissive, making it -a body beautiful. Patriarchal ideology produces patriarchal subjects; it invests in creating subjects and maintains the same. I say this so as to shed light on the politics behind augmentation. When I talk of augmentation a question often haunts my imagination: new paradigms of normalized disciplined, well nourished breasted bodies' emerge that merely reproduce the dominant culture or it is an empowerment for the woman who chooses her way towards a body beautiful?

Replicating the social norm as witnessed in a middle class house where a woman's bra is dried in the open space under the sun yet much hidden under a petticoat, discussions regarding the cultural politics of breast and augmentation even is a hush hush thing. This symbolizes the gendered open space of a globalized world where a female experience like body, the breast is kept in the margins and the cat is only taken out when it expected to fulfill male lust and desire. This is again one of the tenets of patriarchy, keeping the female experiences' hidden in the closet. This paper, thus, would question that stereotype and attempt at questioning the established female sexuality.

# Personal as Political: Through the lens of Fantasy

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In this paper I would like to look at Personal is Political through the lens of fantasy. As someone who is part of the autonomous women's movement, I believe that for us, while the political has deeply influenced the personal, there is great potential for the personal to inform the political in ways that it has not done so far. I also believe that reflecting on the play of fantasies in our personal/political lives can help in this process. The way I'm using fantasy here is in two senses. One is in terms of sexual fantasy or imagined sexual scenarios. The other way in which I am using the term is fantasy as that which in our unconscious underlies all desire, ranging from which person we attract to which political ideology we subscribe to.

I want to focus on sexual fantasies that don't sit so well with feminism, in fact fantasies that fly in the face of our politics. Even in these times where sexuality is talked about more than it ever has been within the autonomous women's movement, including about pleasure, and not just danger, acknowledging our fantasies isn't easy, particularly if they are of the kind that seem to defy our feminist politics.

I do believe that there is no place for political correctness in fantasies. It is ok to fantasize about anything. Yet, it remains true that fantasies that run counter to our feminist politics can make us judge ourselves and each other. This however is also a productive tension. The first argument I will be making in this paper is that an engagement with the disjuncture between our politics and our fantasies will help challenge the overly rational framework of feminist research and activism. Connecting with this disjuncture, we will be better able to understand and address the 'messiness' of the realities we seek to study and impact.

An engagement with fantasy in the second sense of that in our unconscious which underlies all desire, relates to political scenarios, including religious extremism. For example, might the fascist leader represent for some "the Big Daddy"? The second argument in the paper, therefore, that I will be making is that an engagement with fantasy will enable us to understand the play of the unconscious in politics at large. This lens of 'personal is political' could constitute a critical feminist contribution to research and activism related to such politics.

My paper will locate itself in the framework of what feminisms can and learn from the ‘margins’. Not just in terms of the marginalized ‘other’, such as LGBTQ, but in terms of those desires that barely exist even at the margins because they threaten the coherence of our politics. I will seek to share what I think there is to be learnt by us as feminists from the marginality of the desires within us.

## **Kink and Feminism – Breaking the Binaries**

**Jaya Sharma and Kaushik Gupta (for The Kinky Collective)**

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In this paper we would like to share what Bondage-Domination-Sado-Masochism/Kink might offer to feminist understandings of sexuality, gender and power. We in the Kinky Collective, a group which seeks to raise awareness about BDSM in India, believe that kink brings to feminist understandings rich insights. In sharp contrast to the assumption in some quarters that BDSM is inherently patriarchal, we will point to the space that kink offers for the subversion of gender and sexual norms - for wide and deep explorations of female sexual agency - for example how women Dominants are completely in control erotically of the sexual dynamics, women submissives are in the BDSM community precisely because they are proactively exploring and asserting their sexuality, male submissives are able to free themselves at least in the BDSM space of the severe pressures of patriarchy. A kink-positive, feminist exploration of desire and sexuality pushes the boundaries of normative understandings of desires and sexuality and enables one to experience awareness of oneself - as a journey of “unbecoming oneself” and how empowering this can be. Kink teaches one to see one’s desires as healthy expression of self and not as a taboo. Other than offering these important illustrations of how kink creates such spaces, the paper will also argue that the kink body problematizes the question of gender in a sense that gender is fluid, destabilizing, and evolving. It pushes the boundaries of the categories that feminist theories have usually been based on.

Kink can also contribute to feminist understanding/approaches to consent. Consent is usually seen through the lens of harm prevention. Kink shows potential of consent as enabling of pleasure and exploration of desires. Kink offers a framework of how proactive, enthusiastic consent can be actualized. This is praxis – the theory and practice of consent.

With respect to power, kink illustrates how in a framework of consent, the seeming binary of powerful and powerlessness is challenged. Power is examined

in terms of power exchange – a flow of power and dynamics which are productive. Power exchange is examined as a process of empowering oneself as well as the other (e.g., when playing with someone who has just started their exploration of their desires and fantasies, we first supply the tools for negotiating consent and exploring their desires before engaging in real life play thereby bringing the two people to as equal a platform as possible to make consequence aware negotiation of consent possible). Power is further examined in terms of surrender of power to another in the practice of kink. Within a framework of affirmative consent, submission is experienced as powerful to the person surrendering the control, and both the submission of control (by the submissivsen\_sle) and the taking up of control (by the Dominant) is seen as valuable. If the submissive does not submit, the Dominant cannot dominate. The Dominant is also vulnerable in their disclosure of their desires. Support and Control, the two chief component of power dynamics within kink lifestyle are negotiated in a participatory manner, keeping the focus on fulfillment of emotional needs of all persons involved.

## **Nikhil as my Wife: The Violence of Misgendering**

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Although India has never legalized any form of same sex marriages, dated 25th March (Thursday) 2010, the 'first' 'gay' 'marriage' of Manipur took place at Imphal between groom Sanpeed Soibam and bride Nikhil Hidangmayum . The 'marriage' ended after two days in 'divorced' forced by the police due to complains from local authorities. Many popular daily newspapers published in Manipur and outside (including the World Wide Web ) printed the event. While this public performance of same sex marriage is a big step for the Nupi Manbi - loosely translated as Transgender - community of Meitei society in Manipur, it is also important to critic such 'news'. Firstly, to label such social performances as 'same-sex marriage' makes us understand that the marker of a Nupi Manbi's body is the biological essence of having been born a male i.e. nupa (male, boy or men). Nikhil is a Nupi Manbi and to label her 'gay' is to strip her of her womanhood, an act of violence. Secondly, how does one read the sexual identity of Sanpeed i.e the groom? What are the terms used to identify persons who sexually desire transgender women or local identities such as Nupi Manbi or Nupi Sabi? Acknowledging identities as crucial essential fictions, this paper celebrates the importance of sexual diversity, redefinition of gender and the ongoing fight for sexual justice.

## **Fanfiction as a site for Deviant Aspirations**

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This study would like to engage with the fan community in India that consume and produce fanfiction. Through this study I would like to explore the relationship between the fan and their favoured fanfiction. I propose to do this through textual analysis of fanfiction specifically of the fan community of the BBC series Sherlock and the Harry Potter book and film fan community. I will also be engaging with the fans who read slash fanfiction specifically. Slash refers to a romantic and/or sexual relationship between two characters of same sex. For this study I will look at Johnlock (Sherlock/John) and Drarry (Draco/Harry). Theories of fanfiction studies view fanfiction as either subversive or affirmative of patriarchy, or locate fanfiction as women's pornography. This study will try to understand how Indian fans engage and further normalisation of deviance in these online spaces through the production and consumption of fanfiction. It will explore the context of fanfiction sites as safe spaces for understanding sexual desires and gender expressions. It will look into the creation, politics and consumption of sexual orientation and gender identities in online fan communities with specific reference to fans located in India. I am an avid fanfiction reader and fanfiction made me acutely aware of my negotiations and widened my appreciation and understanding of gender and sexuality. Fanculture is an integral part of the groups I move in and discussions of fanfiction lead inevitably to conversations on sexuality and gender norms prevalent in the Indian context. Fanfiction readers who I have come across use fan fiction to bridge the discordance between their patriarchal living contexts and their deviant aspirations. It is this discordance and deviant aspirations that I would like to pursue and record in this study.

## **Queer Groups as Safe Spaces for Subaltern Counterpublics in India: A Case Study of Nigah and Qashti Queer Collective**

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The 90s in India has seen the emergence of the political assertion of the 'private realm of sexuality' (Narain, 2004: 1). The decade was significant

for its shift in feminist ideologies as the 'third wave' feminism emphasized on 'individual choices' rather than that of community or collective. The emphasis on 'choices' and 'agency' was exhibited especially by the newly emerging middle class, which led them to be touted as the 'new consumers' in this economy. While non-normative sexuality remained to be a contentious issue with Section 377 in place, the landmark judgment delivered by the Delhi High on 11th December, 2013 made homosexuality a punishable offense again and, seemed to spearhead the need for creating safe spaces for the members of the community in India. This paper attempts at studying different forms of political mobilization and participation in these supposedly safe spaces.

The paper would emphasize on two queer collectives namely Nigah Queer Collective and recently formed Qashti- a space for queer women and trans\* people. The purpose of taking these two spaces is to discuss ideas of inclusion-exclusion of members on the basis of caste, class, race, gender and sexuality. While Nigah Queer Collective is popular amongst upper-middle class gay and bisexual men, Qashti is one of the few 'safe' spaces for queer women and trans\*women to interact with each other. Through this paper, an attempt is made to understand what one calls 'queer spaces', as most of the collectives and groups discussed here exhibit a degree of social control by the queer community as queer spaces which further create the perception of being 'safe spaces'.

## **Reconfiguring the 'Indian Woman': Sexuality and Corporeality in 'Margarita, with a Straw'**

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In my paper, I draw upon the concepts of 'compulsory heterosexuality' (Adrienne Rich) and 'compulsory able-bodiedness' (Robert McRuer) that have been coined by feminist and queer theorists respectively, to bring under scrutiny the structural configurations that normalize certain types of bodies and sexualities to the exclusion of others. I use these concepts to extend the discourse to the idea of 'Nation' and its links to (ideal) Indian womanhood. The cultural materials I bring under scrutiny are filmic texts from Hindi cinema; the key text against which the other films are challenged will be 'Margarita, with a Straw'. Hindi films have traditionally presented us with iconic constructs of ideal femininity – able-bodied, with sexual continence – useful to the purposes of nationalism. 'Margarita, with a Straw', though, deploys the female body as the sight of counter-resistance to the Nation's appropriation of the feminine, and challenges notions of

normativity. The thrust of my essay will be to analyse how films, as representation, construct or dismantle the project of nation building through the deployment of women's bodies. For my analysis, I use Crip Theory, which questions normativity from the twin lenses of Disability Studies and Queer Theory. As a departure from earlier filmic constructions of Indian femininity, 'Margarita, with a Straw' suggests a transnational femininity for the new Indian woman. Also in the film, the disabled body becomes the perfect site for experimentation and exploration. The disabled body takes the radical step of creating for itself new mappings of desire. The slippages in the film reveal the superficialities of able-bodiedness on which the heterosexual family is based. The film also allows for us to open up discussions around the 'unusual social situations' that create possibilities of a sexual encounter; situations and areas of sexuality that are not discussed in the 'compulsory heterosexual' and 'compulsory able-bodiedness' narratives. I explore these ideas using women's studies, queer theory, disability studies, film theory and the discourses that superimpose the idea of national identity over corporeality.

## **"Safe" Political Spaces**

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Many discourses surrounding definitions and expression of queerness in present times have focused on "Being Queer" as not merely an identity defined by one's gender or sexuality but as a position of marginality in specific contexts of the individual/community/population which again is subject to retrospection. In the specific context of India, the terminology that has surfaced along with the politics of "being queer" have effectively also worked towards demonising a few other identities on the basis of their privileges. Though it is necessary to problematize certain terms and categories of social, personal and political existence, there should be an equal effort to make language accessible and in the process of problematizing the same it should be ensured that we do not alienate Individuals/communities/populations. The need to reclaim terminology and realign our politics to be inclusive of debate, discussion and gradual negotiations wherever possible should be considered pro-actively. In seeking to destroy power structures which have been oppressive for centuries, we must also be continuously critical of the hegemonies we create while fighting the same. In this context, we need to envision "Safe" political spaces which do not on one hand apoliticise identities, but at the same time do not create oppressive hegemonies of their own.

## Femininity and the Indian Transwoman

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Draped in colourful sarees, braided locks decked with strands of jasmine, hand gestures and movements that scream an exaggerated femininity. This is the template imprinted in the Indian imagination when it comes to transwomen. Hijras and Thirunangais, the single most visible sub-community within the transgender spectrum, have embellished this template with pride.

An increasingly globalised economy, expanding access to the internet and social media, and higher disposable incomes, have catalyzed the feminist movements in India and elsewhere. Ideas of how a woman should look and behave have evolved considerably over the last two decades, especially among ciswomen belonging to historically privileged castes and upper classes. Progressive change is welcome, especially when consciously linked with introspection around privilege, and non-tokenistic moves to broaden the class-caste dimensions of the movements. But though our feminist movements have, by and large, helped society in acknowledging the different lifestyle choices of women in terms of career, family options and even sexuality, they remain one-dimensional when it comes to notions of how transwomen ought to perform gender.

The same society that associates ciswomen's empowerment with a shedding of stereotypically feminine traits, expects a transwoman to be ultra-feminine to be considered a woman. Notions of transwomen having to be feminine enough to belong exist even in progressive feminist spaces. These tend to be associated with anxieties around anatomy (operative vs. non-operative status), non-binary identity, pre and in-transition periods, and are manifest even in simple matters of gender expression such as clothing and hairstyle. These very notions of being 'feminine enough' are internalised by some sections of the transwomen's community who act as gatekeepers, requiring individuals to perform (hyper) femininity to claim a legitimate trans identity. Our paper will explore feminist understandings of gender construction and performance and examine the double standards when it comes to expectations of femininity in cis- versus transwomen.



# The Biopolitics of Inclusion

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“Nobody is wired wrong, because there’s no wrong and right in the way we are” –Hannah Hart

While several countries are moving forward to accept and legalize homosexuality, India still remains among the ones that considers it to be against the order of nature. Not only is it criminalized by the state as “carnal intercourse against the order of nature”, but is also still a taboo in our society. Although homosexuality was decriminalized in 2009 by the Delhi High Court, the Supreme Court overturned the ruling on 11th December, 2013, thereby, recriminalizing homosexuality.

Heteronormativity still defines our everyday lives. Non-conforming individuals are stigmatized or excluded from the mainstream and preventive measures are taken through prohibition. Therefore control is exercised in multi-pronged ways: the law prohibits homosexuality and the social norms label it as a taboo. Starting from social ostracization to corrective rapes, homophobia has led to numerous reported as well as unreported crimes and violence. The situation is still grim, but fight against such injustices have gained momentum over the years.

However, one can notice sudden overt acceptance of homosexuality in the market through ‘progressive’ advertisements which are flashed all over social media. The flourishing gay tourism in our country gives us an instance of how pink capitalism works. There are various gay tourism websites that invite foreigner gay couples to India, which has ‘apparently’ become a very ‘gay-friendly’ country for gay travelers.

Also, several clothing lines and famous brands have started designing clothes for sexual minorities, thereby voicing their support for the LGBT community by endorsing products for them. These again may ‘seem progressive’, but is it so? What lies under this apparent garb of acceptance? Are these mechanisms working to ‘include’ them into the mainstream or is it a way to subsume them into the ‘system’ by turning them into mere ‘means of production’ for its own benefit?

Yet another instance that has made me question this ‘acceptance’ is ARTS (Assisted Reproductive Technologies). India excludes gay couples from using

the help of ARTS. However, even though it is not yet a flourishing industry in India, it officially flourishes in several other countries and hence wanted to explore whether ARTS is only a progressive tool to help gay couples become parents or is it also another way of regulating them into a 'family' unit, especially because procreation is necessary to keep producing 'labor', which is a means of production in a capitalist society?

Thereby, several factors like sexualities, market, society and state come into play as we talk about this 'inclusion.' My paper explores the capitalist and patriarchal politics that lie within and work their way to manipulate and appropriate sexuality into a system sanctioned by the state. The emergence of such instances as observed by me through advertisements and the social media led me into questioning such apparent progressive attempts of acceptance on the part of the consumer markets. In this paper, I will focus on the Indian gay tourism websites, several clothing lines and websites advertising clothes for homosexuals, as well as ARTS. My paper in no way tries to undermine their struggle, discrimination or the 'positive' changes that they have been working towards. However, I would like to explore the possibility of these 'inclusions' as a means to coopt them within the patriarchal capitalist state to produce docile, normative bodies.

In order to understand this 'inclusion', I have taken up Michel Foucault's concept of 'biopower' as my theoretical base. I have made an attempt to understand the constant effort that is made to silence their sexuality through 'homonormativity', and their strategic 'inclusion' into the social realm and also how the 'queer body' is strategically included to become a consumer in the capitalist society. I will also explore how class and race become important elements in this process of 'inclusion.'

## **Imagining Ambedkar as a Queer Subject: Assertions, Contestations and Questions within India's Queer Dalit Struggle**

**Dhiren Borisa, Akhil Kang and Dhruvo Jyoti**

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The paper offers a queer lens to anti-caste struggles in contemporary India by looking at the assertions and behaviour of queer Dalit people and arguing that

Ambedkarite movements are not just resistance – where the terms of engagement are set by structures of power – but a fundamentally queer project that creates horizontal relationships as spaces of political assertion and imagination.

It attempts to do so by three modes.

First, by juxtaposing historical instances of Ambedkarite politics with the contemporary movement where a transgressive movement has released itself from the imperatives of Constitutionalism as the sole site of anti-caste struggles. The paper looks at student political formations coming into being through the rupture created by the political act of Rohith Vemula's suicide and their irreverence and unruliness – their politics isn't just a listen-to-marginalised-voices project but rather anti-caste movements themselves being a queer struggle.

Second, by interrogating the nature of these contestations and so-called safe spaces, especially by queer Dalit folks. The paper argues that much of this resistance and assertion happens in the virtual world – which offers room for anonymity, fantasy and play – as opposed to the physical world marked by caste humiliation and oppression.

But memory and power don't die and nurture the desire to be an insider – so when a Dalit person creates a fake social media account, they use upper-caste names, photoshop middle-class locations. The trigger is double – can I be of another caste, but also, can I forget my own (because in the “real world”, I cannot)

Third, by interrogating the sites of these contestations which are increasingly new forms of culture such as online and social media videos, hook-up and dating apps and the comments section of websites as avenues for both inflicting violence and resisting hierarchy.

The paper looks at the lives of young queer folks at the sites of culture that see engagement, assertion, violence and resistance from other queer folks from Dalit or other marginalized backgrounds. So when a Dalit gay person is open about his caste status on Grindr or Tinder, he faces a barrage of hate messages and explicit rejection from dominant caste people who reject him sexually. But, at the same time, in his acknowledgment of his caste – or messaging people on Grindr saying “Yes I am Dalit” is an assertion enabled by the specific site.

Finally, the paper attempts to raise – if not dare to answer – some queries:

1. What does it mean to leave out something as constructive of south Asian personhood as caste when entering new cultural media? Is caste a medium of

continuity between the physical and virtual? What are legitimate and illegitimate selves such spaces produce and how through caste?

2. Physical materiality: Who has a smart phone or have the resources to be on Grindr or WhatsApp – or have the resources to transact or negotiate desire through these new sites of culture? Who has the ability to offer a coherent self for transaction on these platforms? What happens to the space itself, is it a private sexual space for articulating desire or is it a public, political space?

## **Rethinking Bodies through Law (1989/2009)**

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Through the paper an attempt is being made to examine the colonial construction of the body and its postcolonial legal trajectory. The paper comes out of my MPhil dissertation under the same name. I locate these bodies in the categories of the SC/ST person and the 'queer' person. On the face of it they seem unrelated categories however through my paper I seek to point out that they have more in common than one tends to think.

The colonial administration created the 'categories' of the SC/ST subject and implicitly the queer subject. The former, a result of the emergence of the census that highlighted the need for colonial administration to classify people into categories and the latter of governance, i.e. the adoption of the IPC Section 377 which criminalised sexual offences against the order of nature. It is these two categories of people/ community as emerged are marginalised bodies, realities that I seek to interrogate.

For the purpose of the argument, I extend Veena Das's concept of 'Critical Event', and treat SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989 and Delhi High Court Judgment on Section 377 of Indian Penal Code 2009 as critical events. I draw out the limitations of these documents and propose a basic realignment.

## **Waking Dreams: Reflections On Queering Social Reproduction, Affective (In)Equalities And The Ethics Of Care**

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The impetus for this paper is two-fold: on the one hand, my immersion in academic thinking about social reproduction and care labour, and on the other, a personal response that engages with (some) of the reflections on queer experiences of intimacy, love, care and solidarity shared at the National Seminar on Feminist Queer Activism in India in December 2015. The paper seeks to first, query the heteronormative, racialized, classed, sexualized and familial assumptions embedded in the literature on social reproduction and care. Second, the paper interrogates the impulse towards the production of homonormative citizens and happy families implicit in LGBTI struggles that tend to mirror the same assumptions. The paper then explores the possibilities of queering our understanding of the three domains of social reproduction (biological reproduction, care labour and reproduction of labour as a social class), which are key sites of normative practices and power relations. Central to the analysis of how these sites may be queered is the consideration of an ethics of care in the affective domain that is concerned with providing and sustaining relationships of love, care and solidarity. The waking dream is to combine a broader sense of life-making relationships with a transformative queer politics.

## **Tomboys, or ‘Growing Sideways’ in Urban India**

**Ketaki Chowkhani**

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Little has been said, much less theorised about the ways in which gendered identities and performances may be constituted through adolescence. To think about this I would like to examine ‘tomboy’ as a category that not only troubles our ideas of girlhood, but might also exist within that grey area between girl, trans-boy and boy. While Judith Halberstam (1998) in her seminal study of female masculinity notes the futility of the tomboy narrative (p 8) and concentrates on “queer female masculinity almost to the exclusion of heterosexual female masculinity” since the latter “represents an acceptable degree of female masculinity as compared to the excessive masculinity of the dyke” (p 28), I argue that the category of the tomboy is productive since it troubles our ideas of girlhood, desire, gender relations and heteronormativity.

Borrowing from Kathryn Bond Stockton (2009), I understand tomboys as an act of ‘growing sideways’ which delays ‘proper femininity’ which might or might not arrive. This would mean that the tomboy might or might not grow up to be a cis-woman. I conceptualise the tomboy as a queer figure, and consequently tomboyism as a form of queer childhood/queer adolescence, since tomboys are

non-normative, non-dualistic in terms of gender and highlight zones of fluidity. In my understanding tomboys exist in the liminal zone between cis-woman and transgendered person. While both cis-femininity and cis-masculinity are not untroubled or fixed categories, and the tomboy could easily slip into being another form of cis-femininity, it might still be useful to think of tomboys as a category of in-between-ness and see where that leads us. Tomboys have also been historically understood in a number of ways which might often be self-contradictory: as empowered, as feminist, as strong, as masculine, as non-girly, as having girl power, as girls who climb trees, as sporty/athletic, as butch, as lesbian, as one-of-the-boys and so on. Each of these definitions, while legitimate on its own, also has a history.

But there are other contemporary understandings of tomboys that I want to engage with here. Halberstam discusses the categories of 'good tomboys'- those with a queer childhood and heteronormative future, and 'bad tomboys'- those with a queer childhood and queer future (in Renold, 2008: 134). In this study, I trouble the dualistic nature of the 'good tomboy' and 'bad tomboy' holding open a space in between. Overall, there doesn't seem to be much consensus as to how to conceptualise or define tomboys, be it as female masculinity, or gender non-conforming, or as a form of girlhood.

Related to the question of the tomboy is the relationship between tomboyism and adulthood. What is the transition from an adolescent tomboy to an adult like? What does it say about queer adolescence and adulthood? As Jen Gilbert maintains, we must be open to the "possibility that childhoods do not predict adulthoods and that queer sexuality, if untethered from the verticality of development, may not settle down into legible LGBTQ identities" (Gilbert 2014, 14). It is this statement which informs a large part of my understanding of tomboyism.

What I attempt in this paper is a tentative beginning of an inquiry into the idea of the tomboy. Given that the project is in its nascent form, the endeavour here is to put forward a few tentative questions and articulate some of the complexities related to the project. To this effect I seek to ask larger questions of the category of tomboys, who might not always be same-sex desiring, specifically in the middle class urban Indian context. The paper is divided into two sections, one examines some of the complexities of identifying as a tomboy and the other unpacks the question of desire for tomboys.

# The Universe of Sexual Transactions Online: A Content Analysis of Websites Advertising Escort Services for Mumbai

**Author: Dr. Manjima Bhattacharjya**

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Elizabeth Benedict, author of ‘The Joy of Writing Sex’, writes about her encounters with ‘sex’ online in a period of her life where she is quite off sex offline. She finds that Google throws up a whopping 733,000,000 results when she searches for ‘sex’ and her head soon begins to reel with the variety of websites she encounters – ranging from a religious groups’ views on (anal) sex in the Bible to sexual subcultures to ads for sex toys to sex workers’ outreach programmes to pages dedicated to American TV series ‘Sex and the City’ and pop group Sex Pistols, among others. 733 million websites may look like ‘sex’ overwhelms the internet, but she puts it in perspective when she writes: “Actually ‘money’ and ‘war; both beat ‘sex’ by a mile. Tonight ‘war’ kicks out 1.02 billion websites; ‘money’ 1.3 billion. ‘Sex’ is chump change.” (p.64) Chump change it may be but sex on the internet has changed sexual practices worldwide and had a deep impact on how people around the world access sex and actualize their sexuality rights at the broader level and at the everyday level provides them with a source of information, intimacy and entertainment.

The online world is made up of many universes relating to different aspects of sex, and much depends on what you are looking for. I begin with looking for a subset of the ‘sex’ online universe that has seen little attention in the Indian context: that of sexual transactions, manifested commonly as the online escort services industry. Through a content analysis of 105 websites that came up in an online search for key words (including: “escorts in Mumbai”, “sexual services” “sex for money in Mumbai”, “escort agency” and “escort girls in Mumbai”) I attempt to make sense of the local universe of sexual transactions online and what they tell us about class, caste, masculinities and sexuality in the new India. In the absence of any studies on escort services in India, I attempt to map the “discourse” that exists in the space of online sexual commerce in the Indian and in particular Mumbai context.

This paper is part of a monograph “Sex Work Geographies” written during my term as a post doctoral Fellow in 2012-2013 at the Urban Aspirations Project, a joint initiative of Tata Institute of Social Sciences, the Max Planck Institute and PUKAR, Mumbai.

# Gendering Sports: A study of construction of Gender in Indian Sports

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In commonsensical perception, sports is considered as an arena of merely physical exercises and fun; sports are hardly taken seriously. More often, it is argued that one should not play politics in sports. This research paper would like to challenge this commonsensical assumption and would like to argue that gender politics has been always inherent in all sports. Gender is constructed in particular dominant ways in sports, both in traditional sports and in modern sports. This paper aims to examine and understand the gender, particularly masculinity construction through sports and by analyzing some of the recent cases that mark this enforced construction of gender in sports. For example, we can take the infamous examples of Duttee Chand and Pinki Pramanik.

Sport is always viewed as male domain and the viewpoint is constantly evoked in a heterosexual male dominated society. In grammatical theorization of gender we find male come in the first categories of this sequence whose qualities are recognized as strong physical muscles, argumentative mind and so on; it is believe that sports need masculine body, which is only have with male counterparts. Women and other gender always come in the second category whose traditionalist identities have been purveyed as someone who cannot run like man. Moreover, she cannot be competitive, argumentative and cannot take important decision required for sports. In Indian society, women are often regarded as psychologically and physically weaker than men. Her personalities are framed into the delicate, weak, and beautiful body, which do not stand for the perfect norms for sports and physical exercises. It is often argued that girl\ women cannot participate in sports. And if this is the case with women, then it would be difficult to think about other gender identities such as Hijara or other gender categories. They are still fighting and struggling for their basic fundamental rights to be recognized as equal gender. In hierarchy, it looks quite unthinkable to accommodate them in a racialized and marked field of sports. However, the problematic of gender in sports does not end here. In the last three decades, gender debate has changed some of our popular perceptions and receptions of gender. The debate has brought out the existence of different gender categories who have been perceived as incomplete gender categories. Then the question comes that how to resolve such paradoxes in sports? Should we make sports 'gender-free' or



should be ask for 'different-abled gendered sports'? there is a need go through all these gender identities who are part of various kinds of discrimination and in fact they face these gendered based discriminations in sports. They constantly suffer from various physical violence and discrimination because of their different sexual identities and orientations. It is significant that the arena of sports, which has not been taken seriously, should be interrogated in a more nuanced way. Men are most dominated creature of sports field whereas women or other sexual oriented people are still on marginalized position. Masculinity comes in a powerful way in the sport centre activities.

## **Thinking Of Queer Citizenship from A Feminist Queer Political Imagination**

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The LGBTIQKHA\* organising and activism in its multiple levels and fractures in India cannot be homogenised into a singular socio-political standpoint. It has always had a steady connection with the neo-liberalisation post 1990s that have unfurled new paths of LGBTIQKHA\* expressions, visibility and political activism. While the legal battles centering around IPC 377 aims at decriminalisation of non-normative sexual expressions and NALSA verdict, culminating in the Transgender Bill 2016 aims at certain claims of citizenship rights for transgender and gender non-conforming individuals, the lived experiences, struggles of the queer community, its socio-political activism stumbles at the impossibility of politico-legislative 'recognition' and 'redistribution'. In this legal and socio-political activism, certain political fractions of the queer populace are quite apprehensive of the capital driven tendencies of the nation state that under international pressure, can anytime start incentives for building homonormative nuclear families in the name of progress and modernisation.

Here it becomes crucial to constantly question and churn our politics, aspirations and dreams of queer 'as a way of life'. In this paper, speaking from a feminist queer standpoint, I will like to re-interrogate the state of queer political formations in the neo-liberal, privatised, globalised Indian landscape and try to locate voices and expressions that have been constantly invisibilised, or find it very difficult to lay claim to a queer political imagination. Citizenship rights of queer bodies become a contentious terrain in the neo-liberal, capitalist, fundamentalist approach of the Indian State. Who are the queer subjects formed in the State's

vision, who can lay claim to life and desire and how become important questions. Is there a sexual subaltern? What happens to the landless, religion and ethnic minorities and socio-economically marginalised queer bodies? What kinds of rights and demands do we imagine that challenge notions of property rights, partnership rights and re-interpretations of families, communities and individual lives? Is legal battle enough and where does it fall out? What vulnerabilities can the queer subject face in the present 'global homocapitalism' where IFIs and market controls common imagination and lives? Is State directed 'gay marriage' the next agenda in queer citizenship? How are trans\* identities and their citizenship being imagined? Is queer political struggle and intimacies founded more on friendships than monolithic romantic relationships? Are we going to fight for individual human rights or do we look at a much broader horizon – perhaps a shared, communitarian future based on radical feminist queer politics? Can we imagine this through our diverse lived experiences, differences in oppression, our camaraderie, friendships and intimacies? Can these political imaginations ever be translated in the discourse of rights and citizenship?

## **Listening to Vulgar / Non-vulgar Genres: Analyzing Gender and Sexuality in Popular Bhojpuri Music**

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This paper underlines the need to examine the broad categorization of the available genres: vulgar and non-vulgar found in popular Bhojpuri music in Bihar after the advent of the cassettes (CDs). It tries to investigate how and in what ways are these categorized? It seeks to examine that is the lyric only define this categorization or are there other factors which make this categorization? This paper tries to analyse that is market only which make this division or a combination of many things like: the singer's social positions, sellers, buyers, tone, picturization, CD covers and lyrics all together define this categorization? This paper also tries to highlight that this classification is mainly based on the social locations of the singers.

This paper also tries to underline that how vulgar and non-vulgar genres further categorize the singers positions as vulgar and non-vulgar? This research argues that there is a deep relation among the social locations of the singers, their texts, production, consumption, space, patriarchy, the genres and sexuality. It also argues that we could understand in a better way only by reconciling all

these together. This paper further discusses that how vulgar and non-vulgar genres shapes the texts of the songs, the singer's lives, production and consumption and in turn shaped by all these at the same time.

Another tangent of this paper is to find out that how the lyric of the songs and patriarchy is interlinked which in turn make these genres? This paper tries to draw the deeper link between patriarchy and the lyric of the songs which define the singer's sexualities and their positioning in popular Bhojpuri music and also in the hearts of the people of Bihar. It tries to understand that how vulgar and non-vulgar genres constitute and reconstituted by the above said factors.

Thus, this research focuses the two genres: vulgar and non-vulgar in popular Bhojpuri music in Bihar after the advent of the cassettes and emphasizes to study how it shapes and shaped by many factors (the texts of the songs, singer's social locations, the CD covers, their production, consumption and so on). This research also highlights that how the vulgar and non-vulgar genres further shapes the singer's positions as vulgar and non-vulgar. So, it highlights that how both the genres and singer's sexuality makes/ unmakes each other. This paper further argues that it could be better understood by methodologically integrating the lives of the singers, their texts, production, consumption and patriarchy together which this research will be trying to incorporate.

## **Homosocial Desire in Malayalam Horror Cinema**

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Same sex desire is a constitutive element determines gender and sexuality. In the histories of gender women were defined in relation to men. In this paper I am specifically focused on same sex desires in Malayalam cinema. Muraleedharan(2010) argued in his work, "Malayalam cinema is undoubtedly a male-centered space, where the conventional concepts of masculinities and femininities are reiterated. However, the female romantic friendship is significant and has an inconspicuous presence in the Malayalam cinema." Do these representations of same sex relationships subvert the conventional gender, sexual normativity? Cinema as a space of constructs often represents dominant values, norms and ideologies. Even though cinema as a complex space represents the dominant modes of expression of desires and pleasures, it also makes possible multiple meanings. This paper explores the subtexts that make possible queer imaginations in Malayalam cinema.

The paper looks into the non-normativeness within the heterosexual matrix. Using the term 'homosociality', to better understand the different kinds of relations. I look at the representation of female homosociality and its interchangeability with the homoerotic and the homosexual in Malayalam cinema. Homosociality is not necessarily dichotomous with homosexuality. Rather, the lines between the two categories are blurred and at times even fluid.

I explore the complex range of slippages that allow readings of queerness in select Malayalam films, which prominently carry elements of horror. I explore queerness in the cinema settings within the frame, and the complex expressions of queerness that circulate through and around the figure of the Yakshi (female spirit). In the folk tales yakshi is represented as one who survived death to transform to yakshi, in order to accomplish certain unfulfilled tasks, to tell some stories, and to give some explanation to revenge. Here I discuss mainly two Malayalam films namely, *Manichitrathazhu* (The Ornate Lock, 1993) and *Ennu Swantham Janakikutty* (Your's Janakikutty, 1997). My paper analyses how certain romantic/visual codes operate in these films so as to express queer desires.

Here it is noticeable that how homosexuality presents itself in the horror genre through sub-textual or connotative way. The representation of same sex desire is allusive and it presents itself at the edges of the text and the characters rather than presenting directly. Same sex desire is subtle but undoubtedly present as a signifier.

## SUB - THEME 8

### WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

**Coordinators: Poonam Natarajan (Vidyasagar, Chennai) and Meenakshi Balasubramaniam (EQUALS, Chennai)**

#### ABSTRACTS

##### **Finding Footholds: Understanding Paid and unpaid work-lives of Women with Disabilities**

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That women with disabilities bear the double burden of being women in a pre-dominantly patriarchal society and as persons with disabilities with corresponding disadvantages is now well-established. In addition, a personal tragedy based perspective stemming out of a medicalised and therefore individualistic understanding of disability is pervasive. These factors conflate with the existing norms around work - paid and unpaid, undertaken by women with disabilities. Indeed, in a scenario where work and disability are often not seen as going together, perceiving women with disabilities as worker is possibly intriguing. Historically, however, categories such as women and those with disabilities were often brought in the work settings where there was a need, such as during the world wars, implying several possibilities and opportunities for persons with disabilities to engage in work. Indeed the social model of disability argues that exclusion from public life and work is more a function of the environment that is intolerant of diversity. Needless to say, the social environment is further closed for women with disabilities with restriction on mobility taking both physical and socio-cultural manifestation.

Based out of ethnographic work undertaken in Mandirbazar block of 24 Parganas south, a district in West Bengal, the present paper challenges the perceptions around the work undertaken by women with disabilities. Focusing on the work lives of women with disabilities in a rural setup, the study develops in depth case studies to document their experiences of work that often intersect vulnerabilities arising out of caste, class, religion and rural location. The study asserts that while persons with disabilities are in general considered economically dependent, there is enough evidence to demonstrate not just their agency but also their economic contributions to their families. This is all the more true for women with disabilities as they are expected to be only further dependent and therefore further burdensome.

Contrary to such expectations, the study captures the many ways in which women with disabilities try to optimise the opportunities available for work. In doing so, it brings to fore the enormous range of economic and skill based activities that women with disabilities engage with. In addition, it also demonstrates the contributions of women with disabilities in terms of a range of unpaid care work at home that not only is inherently valuable but actually opens up possibilities for other women to work. However, in both the cases, women are failed by the society and its institutions. On one hand, poorly designed livelihood enhancement programmes thwart possibilities of economic activities. On the other, the social perception of women with disabilities being biologically flawed and culturally unacceptable, make their position within the family precarious.

In this context, the study therefore interrogates the notion of work and within it, the work undertaken by women with disabilities as it is undermined on the double counts. Based on the case studies, it emphasises on the need to move out of the tragedy model and steer gaze at the agency of women as they explore options to gain an economic and social foothold.

## **Disabled Women and Employment: A Survey of Government Offices in Aurangabad (Maharashtra) City.**

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Though it is true, that disable persons have to face several problems and discriminations in their daily lives. But it is not that the disabled are treated as marginalized, hateful, compassions and overlooked by society only because they are marginalized it can also be seen according to their caste, class and sex. Though, the experiences of 'disability' are similar to the person in some extent in inequality strata of the society. But in comparison to disabled men- disabled women are more victimized and ignored. These women receive discriminated treatment in the society. They have to face more critical conditions. Although, they have competency but they are not given an opportunity which is universal. The reason behind this is they are double victimized of being women and that into disabled make them marginalized. Those women get less amount of salary for same work in compare to men, inequality in payment, discrimination in promotion, unequal opportunities in education and training, neglecting their

rehabilitation. Marriage percentage is less of these women compare to disabled men because they are not consisted in the definitions of aesthetics patriarchy. Further, disable women are victims of physical, mental assaults out of and within domestics/ family even rapes evidences are also more than general women.

Indian government had made a few attempts to improve their conditions such as: the separate school for blind and deaf students, to promote physically challenged equal education along with other students. The aim behind such attempt was a charity it could not achieved considerable effect in the lives of these disabled students. But recently there is considerable improvement in the lives of these people with the negotiation of international organizations. UNO has declared 1981 as international year and 1983-92 as a decade for the disabled. Welfare view transformed into the fundamental human rights. Like others disabled brought into the frame of law and brought considerable changes in their lives by giving rights to actively participating in political, social, economical and cultural domains. By giving this rights government has stress on their empowerment.

Indian government started Employment Exchange Centre, Vocational Rehabilitation Centers (VRCs), National Handicapped Finance and Development Corporation (NHFDC) etc. Organizations established in the all states of the country during 1992 to 1999 for disabled. It is also important to mention that, to get equal opportunities, protection of rights and full participation The Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995 has passed for them. Significance of this act is in the life of disabled is that they received 3% reservation in the post of government and non-government institutes.

The primary aim of this research paper is to closely examine 3% reservation provided by The Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995 in the feminist point of view. To continue this examination 40 Governmental and non-governmental offices from Aurangabad (Maharashtra) city will be selected as a sample. It will attempt to examine some questions as: how many numbers of staff in these 40 offices? How many numbers of male and female staff? What is total number of persons with disability in staff? How many of females with disability on the basis of caste and category? The qualification of disabled women, types of disability, official grade of the employees? Monthly salary/payment, marital status, promotions, economic independence the problems in their lives etc. will be provided in the statistics.

# Importance of Relationships For Women With Psychosocial Disabilities

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This presentation intends to determine the extent to which women that has psychosocial disability and the disability interferes with sexual health and its repercussions on relationships. So the women are doubly marginalised. The primary focus is while there is a medical intervention or alternative therapies, which is also important, no one talks about the importance of love and relationships, a conducive environment which can empower a woman with psychosocial disabilities and be on road to recovery.

Sexual and reproductive health (SRH) is an essential component of the universal right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in other international human rights conventions, declarations, and consensus agreements. It talks on sexual health information, education, and counselling, to enhance personal relationships and quality of life.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) addresses gender-based discrimination. Adopted in 1979, CEDAW is the only human rights treaty that specifically affirms the reproductive rights of women.

CEDAW advances the right to sexual and reproductive health in many ways, including by requiring States parties to challenge harmful traditional norms and modify social and cultural patterns that arise from and perpetuate the notion that women are inferior to men; the right to exercise one's sexuality free from discrimination, coercion, are all part of reproductive rights. When these rights are denied to women, the rights of all people everywhere are threatened. Working to protect reproductive rights recognizes the equality and dignity of women and the universality of human rights.

While there is work going on regarding awareness raising for decision making in spacing children, to stop unwanted pregnancies and violence which is laudable. The need to understand the relationships and the meaning it gives to women with psychosocial disabilities are yet to be done in large. Relationships are perhaps the most important part of our lives, bringing much meaning and happiness. When we reach the end of our lives and look back, it is usually the connections we have formed with others that we remember and define ourselves with.



Good relationships are something we all strive for. They can provide love, support, happiness, friendship, advice and guidance. This presentation throws light that if relationships which disappear after a woman has psychosocial disability, it doesn't allow the person to be the part of community and make the person spiral deep down. If community understands that a woman with psychosocial disability needs more than treatment, then insight can be built and more women would come for treatment voluntarily.

## **Gender, Disability and the Notion of Relational Autonomy; A Study of Autobiographies of Women with Disabilities in India**

**Suchaita**

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This paper explores the notion of relational autonomy with respect to the lives and agency of women with disabilities in India as is reflected in three seminal autobiographies—Malini Chib's *One Little Finger* (2011), Shivani Gupta's *No Looking Back* (2014) and ReshmaValliappan's *Fallen, Standing: My Life as a Schizophrenist* (2015). The notion of relational autonomy is borrowed from feminist conceptions of the same as well as criticisms of neo-liberal and hyper individual conceptions of the self in modern times as reflected in the works of MacKenzie and Stoljar (2002), Christman (2004), Walter and Ross (2014), Morris (1991) and Ells and others (2011). Relational conceptions of autonomy are premised on the shared sense of self where an individual's identity and agency are closely interwoven with a complex web of social relationships that enable their realization of selfhood and the structural positionalities that channelize social relations. In opposition to the Enlightenment and the present neo-liberal valorization of the individual as one endowed with permanent self-sufficiency and in constant control of one's surroundings and circumstances, relational notions of autonomy take into account substantive experiences and human relationships and have a greater focus on embodiment and affective experiences and relations.

As the three autobiographies reveal, the notion of relational autonomy acquires particular significance when applied to the lives of people with disabilities who face immense challenges in realizing the static neo-liberal notion of a purely autonomous self-hood. Moreover, the intersection of gender and disability plays a crucial role in determining the authors' access to autonomous agency and their writings of the self reveal the close network of human relations including family, friends, classmates, teachers, doctors and others who shaped their

realization of selfhood. Notably, the three authors explore the often paradoxical and multi-layered relationships that they experienced with respect to people around them—the same relationships being enabling at times and disabling at others. This is especially true in discussions pertaining to the disabled body, the hegemony of medical sciences and the realization of the self through a holistic understanding of embodiment. Even the family becomes a source of immense love, support and confidence that fosters agency and an institution of alienation and self-abnegation at other times. It is through their various relationships that the authors shift between notions of the “docile body” (Foucault, 1977) and the radical body that results from conscientization and an emancipatory discourse of disability. Moreover, their relationships both challenge the “stigma” that comes to be associated with their disability and reinforce stigma at the other times (Goffman, 1963).

Thus, this paper explores the construction of selfhood and the realization of agency by the three authors with respect to their network of relationships and, in doing so, attempts to foreground the importance of a consideration of the relational mode of autonomy while analysing the lives of people, especially women, with disabilities. Moreover, the paper shall also include a discussion on the nature of subaltern autobiographies and the manner in which the relational notions of self enable the construction of marginalized autobiographies, thus placing self-writing of writing with disabilities in the wider context of bringing the “rejected body” (Wendell, 1996) into existence through writings of the marginalized.

## **The (Dis)abled Body: A Study on Gender Volatile through the Body in R. Abhilash’s Kaalgal**

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Feministontologists consider the body as an important cite for understanding gender experience. At the nexus between the able body and the disabled body gender operates as a volatile phenomenon. Gender volatile elucidates that body performances are fluid and sublime. A disabled body in particular performs and understands gender as a volatile phenomenon. The study seeks to explore the concept offender Volatile through Elizabeth Grosz’s Corporeal feminism in the novel Kaalgal. Merleau Ponty’s habit body and Bourdieu’s Habitus associated with phenomenology further expands the range of Grosz’s view of the gender volatile in an able/disabled body. The text presents the experience of disability

as described by a male writer through a female protagonist named Madhu. Madhu views the world through her disabled body. She also views her own body through the lens of her family and the society. The 'double view' of the body in disability pervades gender categories. Gender therefore functions as a volatile phenomenon with the author's representation of Macho's perception of her body. The condition of gender volatile operates throughout the text highlighting the different dimensions of positioning a able/disable body by considering factors such asexuality, positionality and physiology. In Kaalgal the gender volatile is experienced both within and outside the body. Gender volatile shifts in the narrative disrupt the able/disable dichotomy of the body. Frictions in the narrative mirror the condition of disability that is experienced by both the physical and the extra physical body. The volatile gender shifts formulate a continuum of categories between the dichotomies of the male/female and the able body/disable body. The study seeks to understand the various ways by which the gender volatile through a narrative, represents and re-represents a body in disability.

## **“Touch” The Language of The Visually Impaired**

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The poet Richard Wilbur's phrases say “Loving things for reasons” the human relationships cultivating with the support of family, friendship and love. Disability is a human rights issue! Women with disabilities face the irony of being denied sexual agency and being deemed asexual, while simultaneously facing extreme vulnerability to violence and sexual abuse.

In this article I examine the sexual health issues and coping strategies to handle the visually impaired women sexual needs. The needs fulfilled by the tool of “touch”. Here touch was understood as a language of the woman experience and strategies to understand their life and disability. In the context of the society common question, do visually impaired women run their life with touch? The “touch” is a communicable language of visually impaired. The technical of an operational definition of “touch” comes under their culture of practices to manage with family and friends. This study covers the gender and disability as a women voice from the family and entails face to face interview and observation at their residents including her family members. The findings suggest that visually impaired women sexual needs and their quality of life.

# **Listen to the Untold Tales of the Female “Disabled” Students studying at an Institute for Higher Education in India**

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This research project was adopted with the keen interest to listen to the untold tales of the female “disabled” students studying at an institute for higher education in India and diffuse their pluralistic voices into a singular narrative. I embarked upon a critical reading of the institutions of family, peer group, educational establishments and the larger society, and their role, attitude and the degree of inclusion and exclusion exercised by them. Although the academic institution promises to be egalitarian yet it falls into the trap of dominant “able-bodied” discursive notion by securing their interests and prioritizing their demands. The disabled students are invisibilized from the public space within the institution through exclusion from student bodies, decision making committees at the community level, lacunae in infrastructural facilities and subscribing to the ideology that pleasure and leisure are not the rightful domains of disabled students. The disabled students detest the terminology disabled as they perceive it as disempowering and an erosion of their agency. These “disabled” students challenge the label of victimhood conferred upon them and deconstructs it through a reliable support system of peer group and family. Despite the exclusionary principle of the mainstream society what drive them on are their parents who form an impenetrable wall on which they can recline without second thoughts. But when it comes to extended family members or the ‘generalized others’ the situation is not that merry! Peer-group becomes the support-system on which they can turn to during travails and trepidations. There also exists the view that a “disabled” person is at a better position to empathize with another disabled person as they are located on the “same critical plane”. Marriage remains a possibility but not at the cost of sacrificing the career. It is interesting that most of them want “able-bodied” spouses who would be able to cater to their ‘special’ needs. They are aware of the multiple challenges that occurs during the conversation between an “able-bodied” and a “disabled” person but they believe that it is an absence of sensitization in the former that leads to such situations. They expressed their disapproval against the anti-disability structure of the Institute yet were quick to confess that it was better than their past experiences. They strongly

feel that their present address of formal education needs to urgently address the issues encountered upon by the “disabled” students and translate it into reality through sustainable measures. Being an “able-bodied” feminist researcher I was conscious of my embodied hierarchy with the participants. Sharing my personal stories created a situation of mutual vulnerability; if my participants underwent a sense of pathos through the recollection of everyday discrimination, I was equally vulnerable as I shared slices of intimate incidents of my life. This mutual vulnerability fused connectivity and triggered an introspective exercise.

## **Stereotypical Approach of Society towards Women with Disabilities**

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A disability is a state judged to be considerably impaired relative to the unusual standard of an individual or group of people. The term is used to refer to individual functioning of physical impairment, sensory impairment, cognitive impairment, intellectual impairment, mental illness and other kind of chronic disease. Disability is conceptualized as being multidimensional experiences for the person; they may be affected on organs of body parts and they may be affected on the level of participation in the different area of life due to any kind of disability. Disable persons are not able to avail political, social, economical and cultural rights because of their marginal status in society. There are number of constraints in the life of disable people, regarding educational, economical, legal, health issues and architectural complexities, which restrict them to go ahead.

As per census 2011, the disabled account for 2.21% of India's population, or 26.8 million people. Of these 11.8 million are women. The world Health Organization, which uses a wider definition of disability including conditions such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease, estimates that 6 -10% of the population suffers from identifiable physical or mental disability.

Disable women have in general been silenced within society, and they are forced to deny their rights and equal economical social opportunities due to prejudice, and poverty. These women are rarely considered as human beings due to the ignore attitude of family and society. They are commonly perceived as

asexual, which means that they are denied the possibility of intimate relationship and they are not eligible to enter in the marriage institution. It is a very common perception that, these women are incapable of handling the maternal role, so these women are often forced to live in the condition of sterilization. Sexual violence and abuse are serious problems for person with disabilities, especially for women with disabilities; they always live in greater isolation in a society, where they are forced to face imposed stigma and prejudices without any certain base. When girls with disabilities reach puberty, parents look for ways to protect them from sexual abuse and unwanted pregnancy. Sexual violence against disabled women is a silent act in our country.

Although there is a world-wide trend towards women with disabilities attempting to establish their own identity in this complex society, their condition remains very different in the developing countries particularly, India. The plight of women with disabilities is very depressing as they face a triple handicap and notion of discrimination due to their disabilities and marginal condition, beside the problem of gender discrimination. Violence against women with disabilities can range from neglect to physical abuse to denying them even traditional roles of marriages and childbearing.

**In this research we will focus on given below points:**

- Problem of sexual assault of women with disabilities and Behavior of family and society towards disabled women.
- Assessment of disabled women's desire for sex and marriage.
- Awareness of disabled people towards their legal rights.

## **Women with Disabilities**

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Women have always been engulfed by demands of bodily perfection, physical appearance and beauty. A woman is required to constantly move towards attaining the perfect bodily appearance in accordance with the ideal body type of the particular cultural and social space she belongs to. The ideal body type is always based on an able-bodied woman. This constant comparison of women's bodies with the ideal able-bodied woman leaves women with disability in uncertainties about their own bodies and creates pressure on them to appear 'normal'. The notions of beauty, perfect body et cetera create a whole new definition of

femininity and compel women to resort to add-ons/ enhancers present in the market. Just like able bodies women, women with disability struggle to come to terms with their own bodies while exploring their femininity. Sometimes there is undue pressure on women with disability to adhere to these norms forcing them to feel dejected by their own bodies. While one needs to acknowledge the desires of young women with disability to express their femininity just like able bodied women, it is also essential to understand the effect of the social and culturally constructed standards of beauty and perfection on women with disability who are already struggling to accept their bodies as being (in)complete.

This paper explores the effect of social and cultural constructions of body image on the lives of women with visual disability specifically. This paper emerges out of my research among young women with visual disability who are pursuing higher education in Delhi. The research and this paper follow an intersectional feminist perspective borrowing from feminist disability theory.

## **Inclusive Education for Children with Disability: Mending Links from Family to Society for Girls With Disability**

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Across the world, the amount of marginalization faced by people with disability is tremendous. Among them women and children are further discriminated by two points, one being their disability status and the other being their social status. In a third world developing country like India, those with disability experience another point of misery, which is poverty. According to reports about 2 percent of the Indian population is disabled from which almost a negligible figure enter the realm of education after overcoming their physical, social, economical and cultural barriers. Out of 2.9 million children with disabilities, 990,000 children aged 6 to 14 years (34 percent) are out of school. Females with disability are not considered an educational investment by Indian families because they marry into a husband's family, whereas boys stay with and provide for their extended families all their lives. Hence girls with disabilities have a lower enrolment rate in school than boys with disabilities. As a result 68% of girls with disability are not in school. Most families have the mindset that girls with disabilities are vulnerable in the society and if they don't go to school the family will be able to supervise them closely. Although these gender trends are also true for girls without disabilities, social, cultural, political and economic factors have led to women and girls with

disabilities to become one of the most marginalized groups in society. The plight of women and girls with disability is worse than men with disability and women without disability. Apart from being considered as a financial burden and social liability they are subjected to violence, abuse, exploitation, forced sterilization, extreme poverty and also denied the right to family and reproductive and health services.

To address the issues of people with disability at grassroots level, one major step taken by the government of India was introducing schemes for inclusive education at primary and secondary school levels like IEDC (Integrated Education for Disabled Children) and IEDSS (Inclusive Education for the disabled at Secondary Stage). The main objective of this paper is to understand the functions and entitlements of these schemes, their viability, implementation and delivery to the targeted. The paper would explore the challenges faced by girls with disabilities in and after reaching schools and to point out the discrepancies and hurdles within the system that hinders their active involvement in education. Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) will be used as a benchmark for analysis and presenting gaps. It is not in the scope of this paper to retrieve data from schools across the country, and hence most of the data are collected from Kerala and Tamil Nadu as the former bears the title for highest literacy and the later is a state with higher number of females with disability in India. Further, it will attempt to address the gravity of the issues and try to provide possible resolutions.

## **Disability and Higher Education: Barriers to Access for Women with Disabilities**

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Access to education is an important factor that determines educational attainment. In the era of liberalization and privatization, higher education has emerged as a private good which emphasizes on the underlying principle of 'one who benefits, pays', raises serious concerns in terms of ensuring equity in access. In the realm of social research, disparities in educational attainment, both in school and higher education, along the axes of caste, class, region, religion, language and gender and its intersectionalities has been widely discussed. However, there are very few studies that have examined the exclusion, barriers and challenges confronted by persons with disabilities (PWDs) in accessing higher education. This paper presents the findings of a survey of barriers and quality



of access to higher education to PWDs with special reference to women (239) in select central and state universities in the country. The survey, administered online as well as through field investigators, covered responses from faculty, non-teaching staff and students to various levels of barriers – attitudinal, physical and infrastructural – in an attempt to arrive at a nuanced understanding of the problems faced by PWDs in higher education in India in general and women with disabilities in particular.

## **From institutions to living in the community: services, entitlements and delivery**

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The tenants of equality and dignity often do not permeate into the institution of the patriarchal family. Members in a traditional family are insulated from being held to the high ideals of equality for all members. Denial of equality to women within their families may even take the form of grotesque violence towards women which is often condoned by keeping the family away from heavy handed regulation and tucked safely into the private sphere.

Outside the institution of the family the law is complicit in allowing private entities to abandon obligations and accountability towards persons with disabilities. Instead the State is endowed with full-fledged power and responsibilities for providing services to persons with disabilities, thereby resurrecting a public-private binary.

This paper will explore how the two binaries operate together: one binary between the domestic and public sphere; the other between the provision of services to persons with disabilities is a matter of state welfare and not a right. The method adopted is of close reading of legal instruments and case law. The linkages of paternalism, stereotyping and discrimination mark the nexus between the two binaries. Finally the paper will move on to explore efforts in breaking both binaries; of the family and the public sphere, as well as that of the private sector and public sector.

# Rights of Psycho- Socially Disabled Women in State Custody

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Outside the public gaze; discrimination, violence and denial of rights are routine occurrences for psycho-socially disabled women (PSDWs) in state custody, irrespective of location be it shelters, hospitals, detention centres or prisons. In particular, PSDs arising out of deep rooted armed or social conflicts in Kashmir and Bihar, disproportionately affecting the women, have hitherto received inadequate state attention. This ongoing violence also has a two way connection with issues of governance and underdevelopment, and similar conditions prevails inside the state institutions.

Through field interviews at the Beur Central Jail, Patna and Srinagar Central Jail the author first seeks to establish that the coercive prison laws and prevalent practices systematically deny access to health to PSDs through — a) no early screening and intervention; b) denial of access and communication; c) creation of attitudinal and environmental barriers; and d) incapacitation and disqualification. It is also yet to be acknowledged that prisons as traditionally designed confinement spaces for men are neither gender sensitive or appropriate for accompanying children; and therefore state should provide suitable alternatives. In the present environment women prisoners suffer from greater disabilities and have higher suicide rates. This invariably results in poor and prolonged trials for the PSDs who are more likely to languish in jail than be rehabilitated.

Through field work at state shelter homes and psychiatric hospitals established for 'protection' of PSDW, situation of the vulnerable viz. the destitute, dislocated, indigenous, sexually trafficked, migrant, victim of armed conflict etc. from extremely turbulent background is captured. Instances of vulnerability of PSDW in 'bride trafficking', hitherto unhighlighted in research and law, are pointed out. The state follows centralised model of mental health care with low penetration beyond, and it is at this juncture I have attempted to capture relation between the state and PSDW. It is urged that state institutions, particularly lock-ups and prisons, cannot be accepted as mental health care facilities and practice of 'picking up' PSDW by police under Mental Health Act, 1987 can be abusive for these women. Yet, despite these continued practice the author shows how the authorities undermine presence of PSDWs, which is against the requirement

for collecting 'standardised and internationally comparable' data by the World Health Organisation.

In view of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Mental Health Bill, 2013 particularly vulnerabilities of PSDW in state institutions are discussed including discrimination and unequal access in employment and educational activities. Most importantly, it is witnessed that due to lack of recognition of legal capacity the state merely transfers guardianship to the next kin, in denial of personhood of PSDW and therefore legal capacity needs to be strengthened under the Bill. The need for paradigm shift from colonial methods and institutionalisation to possible community based rehabilitation programmes is required. Ultimately, however to address the culture of violence in these two states the larger questions on eroded substantive democracy and breach of constitutional boundaries with abuse of human rights and lack of state accountability will need to be addressed.

## **Inclusion of Acid Attack Survivors in Disability List: The Need Of The Hour**

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Acid attack is a standout amongst the most appalling crimes against women. It just dispenses physical wounds as well as pulverizes the victim's whole life, leaving the scars of the horrifying crime on the body and psyche of the victim. Expanding number of acid attacks throughout the years has created a disturbing circumstance which needs to be redressed. Dismissal of love or marriage proposals, refusal to pay dowry, dismissal of sexual advances are some of the reasons behind the commission of such deplorable offence. This perspective could be said to be founded on a patriarchal arrangement of society which is the absolute entirety of the Indian culture where the man takes all the decisions. At the point when a woman rejects a man, it is seen as hampering his reputation and he tries to re establish it by means of acid attacks. Acid attack victims in India will soon be included in the disability list and granted disability benefits incorporating reservation in government jobs and education institutions. The 'Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities' has recommended the inclusion of acid attack victims in the list of differently-abled under the draft 'Right of Persons with Disabilities' Bill. The inclusion of acid attack victims in the disability list is advocated in light of the fact that these casualties face social disgrace which

blocks them from effective participation in our democratic society. This paper discusses about the individual cases of acid attack victims who suffer from various mental, physical, and socio-economic consequences and make them impair. Moreover, the paper depicts the various lawful arrangements to battle the threat of acid attack and how the recent amendments have changed the Indian legal system concerning it. The inadequacy in the role played by the police, judiciary and hospitals while managing acid attacks is also highlighted through individual cases of the victims. Acid Attacks has turned into a typical type of offence in today's time, and it is the need of the hour to spread alertness and prepare society to counteract such attacks in future. Additionally, the society should permit such casualties the chance to win their own particular employments, as well as to discover and grasp their own particular feeling of respect and self-esteem.

## **Justice, Gender and the Indian State: Examining the Mental Health Policy of India**

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Justice has been a concept of central importance in a democratic state like India where the Preamble to the Constitution gives special emphasis to the idea of justice. This idea of justice becomes effective only when special focus is given to the special needs of specific category of persons. Gender justice is ensured only when special need of specific category of women are duly addressed. When we view justice from the perspective of law, we are concerned with legal justice and two forms of justice underlie any legal process-procedural justice and substantive justice. The present paper intends to examine the Mental Health Policy of the Indian state from the perspective of substantive justice by focusing on how far this policy addresses the special need of women suffering from mental disability. The World Health Organization has predicted that about twenty percent of India's population would suffer from some form of mental illness by 2020 and the percentage of female population would be higher than the male. The World Disability Report 2011, the first global report on disability, has mentioned that the person with mental disabilities stand at the bottom of the pyramid. The situation is worse for women patients who stand at the bottom of the bottom. India has some archaic laws governing the mentally ill like the Indian Lunatic Act, 1858 and the Indian Lunacy Act, 1912. The first legislation of post-independent Indian state was the Mental Health Act, 1987, which failed to come in force into most of

the states and union territories. Finally India introduced its first national mental health policy in 2014. In this context the present paper would like to explore how the need of women with mental disabilities has been addressed by the Indian state and how far they are from being ensured substantive justice.

## SUB - THEME 9

### SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND SEXUALISATION OF VIOLENCE

**Coordinators: Aasha Ramesh (Gender Consultant, Bengaluru) and Celine Suguna (Vimochana, Bengaluru)**

#### ABSTRACTS

**Atrocities against Dalit Women in Indian Society: A continue process in changing world**

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Violence has many forms physical, verbal, mental etc. Gender violation has been used to confine women's freedom under male supremacy in the world. But Violence against Dalit women in Indian society is very unique and strategically formulated. The forms of caste violations are very much in previous shapes. There are legal laws but no employ of it because caste has been used as a tool to dominate lower caste to maintain hierarchy and structure of inequalities alive.

Dalit women have been subjected to pre-design belligerence, which is exceptional for them in Indian society. The caste class and gender scenario triple down their human identity. They have to bear lot of aggression and cruelty through other upper caste people. Since origin Indian villages have been witnesses for this structure. And still there is no concern has been paid towards the reporting of rape cases from different state. Like other example Dalit house burning is sole issue in Indian states.

In recent years the Dalit women have been show interest in education but still very few of them have an access on mobility. They have been restricted by the family, society due to fear of being harassed, raped etc. The issues of gender and caste identity are much more challenging for these women. They have been dominated on several points as women, being as women from untouchable caste, poor women. Rege noticed that triple exclusion in terms of caste, class and gender of Dalit women is unique for lower caste women. Due to their caste identity they are easy target for sexual brutality. States like Haryana and Rajasthan reported continuously countless numbers of rapes and molestation cases against these women. Recently cases have been reported in which women from these lower caste were getting empower themselves through higher

education. The social denial for empowerment still exists and is restricted by the caste. The caste atrocities restricted them in to limited periphery of society. Dalit women have been subjected to sexual violence. Their sexuality is used as a tool to organize and maintain the domination of caste active in changing world. Gender is problematic category even within the same community. Women from these groups are most vulnerable and deprived from their human rights. These lower caste women are lowest sub category of lower castes in India and brutally victim of caste untouchability. This restriction has located them in vicious cycle of socio- economic poverty, socio-economic vulnerability and socio-economic isolation. Being as women form lower caste these vulnerabilities becomes much more challenging and concrete to break down for them. The question several time popup in minds that what caste do with gender? The answer is given by both the word itself. The role of caste and gender is well defined in pervious researches. Like caste, that oppresses the socio-economic mobility of certain groups and gender, which dominates the women in society.

## **Debates around Kopardi in Relation to Sairat: Caste Identity and Gender Politics**

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According to National Crime Records Bureau in India, massive increase in the number of violence on women cases registered in the country. In incidence of violence, if we put caste and gender centrally we can understand the complexities. Through this, new reality can be come in front. Also Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar stated that women are the gateways of castes. Leela Dube underlines in her article (gender and Caste) that, “the principles of caste inform the specific nature of sexual asymmetry in Hindu Society making it inevitable that the boundaries and hierarchies of caste are articulated by gender”.

In recent 10-15 years in Maharashtra, Brahmins and along with Marathas, various small – large caste communities, tried to build aggressive politics through their caste identity. Politics of caste identities happened in various levels and all were and are in symbolic forms.

This paper reflects the complexities between caste and gender. To understand the complexities I will review the debates around Kopardi (the brutal gang-rape and murder of a 15-year old girl at the village in Ahmadnagar, Maharashtra) in relation to Sairat (A commercial blockbuster Marathi film, directed by Nagraj

Manjule). Through this debate we can understand how caste identity asserts through gender. Through this paper I want to investigate, is there any reason or background of Sairat for mobilizing Morcha of Maratha Community on the bases of Kopardi gang rape and murder. Also want to know opinion of youths about Sairat and Kopardi.

The reason behind to choose this particular subject is, in the state legislative assembly various MLAs shared their opinion and showed their angers in different ways. It has been discussed that the number of rape cases have been increased because of Sairat. BJP MLA from Dahisar, Manisha Choudhari demanded that Sairat should be banned because it provokes teenagers for pre-marital relations. The NCP's Bhaskar Jadhav said that the theme of the cinema - love between a Dalit boy and a girl belonging to the dominant, upper caste Maratha community, was creating fissures between various sections in the society. The gap in the society is increasing because of the false representation of local politician as an oppressor.

Why Sairat should be the questioned or responsible for the increasing numbers of rape cases on women? Before releasing Sairat there were various regional Marathi films which talks about teenagers' love stories. Through these kinds of movies does not spread any message regarding teenagers' pre-marital relations? Does youth thinks that, Sairat is responsible for increasing rape cases? How they look towards Sairat and Kopardi rape case? What is the role of gender in asserting communities' identity need to be understood? Gender relations are inflected by the multiple and overlapping patriarchies of caste communities that produce forms of vulnerability that need to be analyze.

I am going to use qualitative methodology. I will collect the data through FGDs, content analysis of whatsApp group of 'Maratha Kranti (Muk) Morcha to understand above mentioned questions.

## **Dalit Women Rape Survivors in Haryana**

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This paper is on Dalit women rape survivors in Haryana, a paper will examine various aspects of Dalit woman rape survivors in an attempt to develop a frame of looking at them beyond the identity of a rape victim. In the Indian society, rapes are committed against women every 15-20 minutes. This fact points towards rape not being an unusual occurrence, but one which is normative and validated by



the everyday patriarchy. However, rape is reified as a rare instance of the bestiality of a man, of an act committed by a morally reprehensible individual, conveniently ignoring how this is in fact facilitated by the structures of patriarchy, feudalism, capitalism, and casteism- all of which we have daily participation in. Further, the culture of victim-blaming encourages such crimes to go unnoticed and turns them into an exceptional instance for which the woman is responsible. The usual rhetoric revolves around what kind of clothes was the victim wearing, why she was out late in the night, how she was walking etc. Women have issued a manual of do's and don't's which highlights that the society continues to associate rape with morality, instead of recognizing it as reprehensible kind of sexual violence. Because violence is always interlinked with power, rape, too, is associated with domination and power. It is with this understanding that I wish to proceed in this paper where the Dalit women rape survivors will be understood as not only victims of sexual violence, but also as the ones who are marginalized along the casteist power nexus.

States like Haryana and Rajasthan reported continuously countless numbers of rapes and molestation cases against these women. Recently cases have been reported in which women from these lower caste were getting empower themselves through higher education. The social denial for empowerment is still exist and restricted by the caste. The caste atrocities restricted them in to limited periphery of society. Dalit women have been subjected to sexual violence. Their sexuality is used as a tool to organize and maintain the domination of caste active in changing world. Gender is problematic category even within the same community. Women from these groups are most vulnerable and deprived from their human rights. These lower caste women are lowest sub category of lower castes in India and brutally victim of caste untouchability. This restriction has located them in vicious cycle of socio- economic poverty, socio-economic vulnerability and socio-economic isolation. Being as women form lower caste these vulnerabilities becomes much more challenging and concrete to break down for them. The question several time pop up in minds that what caste do with gender? The answer is given by

Post-16 December there has been a growing understanding among the urban middle classes and the youth to come forward for justice for the rape survivors, but the fault lines in this social phenomenon will be exposed through this paper by laying bare the ugly power network of caste, class, and patriarchy. Social action is not linear or homogenous and thus, even within the wider public demand for justice, Dalit women remain invisible and silenced. By focusing on Dalit women

and further, on Dalit women against whom rape has been committed, the paper will contribute to an expanded understanding of Brahmanical patriarchy. both the word itself. The role of caste and gender is well defined in pervious researches. Like caste, that oppresses the socio-economic mobility of certain groups and gender, which dominates the women in society.

## **Sexualization of Violence against Women in Entertainment Media**

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Media has always proved to be a double edged sword when it comes to promoting gender equality and ending all forms of gender-based violence. On one hand media has advocated the need for perfect equality between both the sexes, on the other hand many outlets of media in general and entertainment media in particular have portrayed women in a very inferior, condescending and regressive manner. Entertainment media, often, has been held responsible for glamorizing and glorifying violence against women. The movies of 70's and 80's of Bollywood movies are the most common examples as extended scenes of eve-teasing, rape, physical torture, sexual abuse of women characters were the staple of most of these movies. The women characters of such movies were shown as submissive victims. These reprehensible acts against women were immediately followed by scenes where the women were shown as hapless victims crying and wailing at their misfortune and desperately waiting for their 'knight in shining armor' (hero) to save them while the villain smiled with a sadistic grin. The camera concentrated more on the expression of the villain in order to vividly showcase the look of satisfaction and superiority on his face. As the decades progressed by, such scenes became fewer and fewer but the glorification of violence against women in entertainment media has achieved dangerously humongous proportions. Movies like 'Fifty Shades of Grey' and the global success enjoyed by such movies have put the entire concept of gender equality on shaky ground. Like movies, the world of advertisement and fashion has also gone too far in depicting women as objects of control by men, whose only purpose is to dance to the whims and fancies of men. Recent ads by giant fashion labels like 'Calvin Klein' and 'Dolce Gabbana', where young women in skimpy clothing are brutally assaulted by well-oiled male models have appeared to be very derogatory towards women. Such portrayal of

women are direct manifestation of a society controlled by men where the self-serving male ego has to be satisfied even at the cost of propagating and propounding multiple forms of violence against women, like, physical torture, sexual and psychological abuse. The very idea of gender equality becomes a farce and gender bias where the man is the controlling authority while the woman is his will full slave becomes rampant. This might also serve as the guiding principle for the impressionable minds of the youth who are yet to understand the many layers of gender dynamics and why gender equality is mandatory for all round development of both the sexes. In fact this blatant sexualisation of violence against women in entertainment media would prove destructive to the society in general and women in particular. This research paper delves deep into the multiple aspects of entertainment media responsible for sexualizing violence against women and the impact it has on younger generation.

## **Exploring Violence against Women with Mental Disabilities in Indian Cinema**

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The representation and treatment of disability in Indian cinema, influenced by society's perception of disability, has for long been stereotypical, with disabled characters, particularly women, occupying a peripheral and most marginalized place in the overall scheme of things, invoking pity, shame, dependency, guilt complex, and often vulnerable to various kinds of violence and sexual exploitation, both for their 'lure' as a woman and 'helplessness' for being disabled. However, the increasing focus on the status and issues of women in general has led to a visible change in the portrayal of women with disability in films too, beginning from Gulzar's *Koshish* in early 1970's to recent contemporary cinema, not to ignore the parallel stream of New Wave cinema. The present paper attempts to analyze representation of violence against women suffering from mental disability and the new insights provided therein into the hitherto unexplored areas of the disabled women's psyche. The analysis includes two films- *Sadma* (1983), and *15 Park Avenue* (2005)- which have in their lead roles amnesia related mentally regressive and schizophrenic woman characters.

In a society based on various hierarchies of caste, class and gender, where women in general are marginalized, women with mental disabilities have to face

the most inhuman kind of social exclusion due to deprivation at multiple levels being a woman, a person with disability and being mentally disabled. Mentally challenged women, within society and even within their own community, are far more discriminated, neglected and harassed due to the widespread myth of placing all mentally challenged women in the category of insanity and madness and being rejected as absolutely 'useless'. Such societal and attitudinal barriers increase the vulnerability of mentally disabled women to various kinds of violation of their dignity and sexual exploitation at their residences as well as in shelter homes. Further, these disabled women, particularly mentally challenged women, not being a priority group in various kinds of research, State and Government policies and rehabilitation programmes, violence against women with disabilities, continues to remain to a large extent, an invisible problem in research, in social services and in the political agenda. This paper, by focusing upon the nature of sexual exploitation of mentally challenged women and its horrible impacts, tries to highlight upon the urgent need to address and integrate the 'silent' sufferings and needs of disabled and mentally disabled women into the mainstream agenda of development.

## **Mediatized Rape and the Rise of Preventive State: Discursive Constructs of Rape in Print Media of West Bengal**

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The paper aims to explore the nature of imagination of rape etched out by print media in West Bengal and how the preventive State derives from the media's narratives, by looking into the newspaper reporting of incidents of sexual violence in two regional newspapers from the year 2010 to 2014. The primary method that this paper employs is critical discourse analysis while engaging with two regional newspapers Anandabazaar Patrika and Ganashakti, treating them as 'sites' or 'sexual economies' where rape discourses seems to be generated as objective truth. The proposed paper will unfold in four sections. The first section will argue that the 'rape script' emerging from the print media is one of the many narratives emerging from the incidents of rape which tries to claim authenticity and has the tremendous potency to shape the imagination of its readers about a rape script, - who can be raped, where rape happens, who rapes and also what is the act of the rape. Post Delhi rape case of 2012, there has been a considerable

amount of media attention which focused on reporting of incidents of sexual violence in public places and media in West Bengal appears to subscribe to this pattern. The second section of the paper will also argue that the surfacing of the sexuality discourse in West Bengal cannot be ascribed to Delhi rape case alone but has other stakeholders. The section will critique the understanding of West Bengal as a 'safe state' and how Kolkata is often pitied as a 'safe city' space when it comes to women questions; and will also argue that there is a proliferation of masculinity discourse in the imagination of cityscapes. The third section of the paper will argue the heightened media reporting around certain 'high profile' cases and the opinion building it does as a corollary to its functioning, comes in conflict with the rights of the accused as well as quenches the possibility of 'fair trial' for the 'victim'. This section will also argue how the newspaper reporting of incidents of sexual violence mars the nuances and complexities of rape debates that women's movement has been engaging with: the complexity of 'retrospective consent', the difficulties of courtroom trials, the over emphasis on retributive notions of justice as the only form of conflict resolution, the interplays of caste-class-religion on trial procedures. The final section will argue how the preventive State slowly gains ideological strength from the discursive constructs of the potential 'criminal' in the mediatized narratives of rape, violence that women face as well as from political commitment of feminists and in turn annexes citizenship rights in the name of security and justice. The paper shall explore some of these crucial questions in a way to reorient our existing scholarship and praxis.

## **Geography of Fear: Interfacing Sexual Violence, Gender Justice and Politics of Spatial Exclusions of Women in Contemporary India**

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In Indian cities women do not restrict their lives within the private sphere to the same extent as they have been claimed to do so in the public space. Such a restriction with respect to their mobility in public spaces arises because of a gendered spatiality which sanctions domination of men in the public space and controls the spatial behavior of women. However, this gendered spatiality is reinforced through a fear psychosis perpetrated by men onto the minds of women so as to push them away towards the periphery i.e private sphere. This leads to spatial exclusion for women in the public space and further leads to consequent inequality in society. However, legal institutional mechanisms have not sufficiently reduced this crisis of fear psychosis.

The reason behind this being all such mechanisms having a narrow value laden gaze in which narratives of protectionism is mostly valued over freedom for women's mobility and inclusion. This intensifies the problem of gender inequality and gender violence in society.

The paper reveals this geography of fear through a series of sexual violence and harassment women experienced in recent times in various cities in India which in a way restricted their mobility and freedom of choices with respect of using the public spaces. To this end, the paper conceptualizes the geography of fear and gendered exclusion in public spaces by analyzing existing theoretical literature fear; sexual violence, politics of gendered space etc. Also while locating this problem of fear psychosis in the Indian context; the paper uses series of factual details in order to unveil the situation which arrests such incidents in a regular interval.

Therefore, this paper seeks to study how women's fear of violence is realized as spatial exclusions and also argues that this spatial exclusions in women's lives are a reflection of gendered power relations which is reproduced in everyday practices; reinforced and simultaneously contributing to a perpetuating gendered inequality. It also analyses how the institutional mechanisms have been influenced by an existing patriarchal gender discourse which increases the chances of vulnerability and violence for women in society.

## **Claiming Safe Space in a Global Village: Activism against Sexual Violence in Online Media**

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Sexism and prejudices have long been embedded in the social fabric in India where violence against women is often suppressed due to societal pressure. Women are often compelled to be confined in the private domain and their presence and activities in the public domain have been restricted to a certain limit. Due to the impact of globalization and widespread use of science and technology a virtual world has been created by connecting the world through internet. The presence of this virtual world has changed the idea of the public and the private domain in the society and broke open the door to a wider audience. Men and

women are using this space to share their ideas and opinions about different topics. They are also championing the cause of gender equality and forming solidarity to fight against misogynistic ideologies. This space is providing them a platform, and creating a chorus of women's voices even without showing their real name, face, or identity. Thus, in the twenty first century, sexual violence in various forms is catching public attention through social media and not met with silence but protests from urban educated Indians. Online media is increasingly being used for garnering support against sexual violence with the aim of raising gender consciousness in the society and launching gender sensitive activities and programmes. In a fight against rampant sexual harassment experienced by women in public spaces, Twitter and Facebook users are taking to the micro-blogging site by posting real life accounts of crimes and even organizing “slut-walks” and marches, mainly in metro cities, to emphasize on the zero tolerance against violence. On the other hand, women are often being victims of online bullying and, as a way out, resorting to social media to register their protests with the screenshots of the conversation. Thus, women and men are forming networks and calling for action and exchanging ideas on how to quell sexual harassment by turning “hash- tag” protests into movements, showing how sexual assault has become a widespread problem that has long gone unnoticed. Survivors of sexual violence are also anonymously opting to use this space to post the stories of harassment. Some women independently, are launching their own social awareness campaigns about incidents of harassment in the hopes of inspiring others to come forward. These campaigns often cross the boundaries of the nation and assume a transnational character. Thus the dissolution of borders in the virtual space spurs the emergence of global communities to address the specific issues and concerns.

Against this background, in this paper we aim to analyze how online media has become a platform to share women's stories for voicing the agony and silences and denouncing the perpetrators in the world and specifically in India. We would also examine how far the global action campaigns against violence are building networks irrespective of time and place and whether the reverberations in the virtual space are having an impact on the society.

## **Sexualisation of Violence: its Different Forms etc.**

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The cases of sexual violence are increasing day by day . The reason may be the pleasure seeking principle or keeping women under subjugation. The cases of sexual violence are not only seen against women or children but now the sexualisation of violence is also used against adivasis , dalits and the alleged naxals or maoist .

If you see the data of NCRB, the rate of sexual violence is increasing at a very high pace . It should also be noted that the most cases go unregistered due to the social stigma. So in that way the data is inappropriate.

Rape has become the part of everyday news. It is so common that people have begun to accept it as the part of everyday life. No matter what the justice verma committee recommends or what the laws says the incidents like bulandshahar gang rape or nirbhaya gang rape are still prevalent. Rape is a medium to terrorize the venerable and the marginalized. Whether it were the communal rape in muzzafarnagar riots or custodial assault of soni sori or the manorama gang rape by army personnels. The rapes by army in Kashmir and in north eastern states are also happening because AFSPA has given rights to enter anyone's home to which the Indian government is quite. The marital rape also could not be ignored as havellock ellins says, "there are certainly more rapes committed in marriage than outside".

Sexual violence does not only mean rape it also includes staring harassing and even staring. The laws are very stringent in order to prevent girls from sexual harassment in workplace the vishakha guidelines is there and inside universities justice verma committee lays down the establishment of gender sensitization committee against sexual harassment (GSCASH) .

Women are being commodified and the sexual stereotype is devaluating her. The taboo related to women's virginity is still seen everywhere. Moral policing is done. Women's are told what to wear, what to eat and where to go. Trivialization of sexual crimes is done by the politicians and it could be seen in there statements like, "ladko se galti ho jaati hai "or "muslim aurto ka kabron se nikalkar rape karna chahye" or "hindu rashtra ke nirmaan ke liye aurton ko 10 10 bachche paida karne chahye". Instead of chanting the Bharat mata ki Jay people in real should learn to respect the women's dignity . These fake sloganeering would not empower woman, something substantial needs to be done.

In order to stop these it is very important that men and women are taught about the rights of women. The stringents laws are of no importance unless



socio –political steps are not taken. Women study should become the important subject from the school level itself. Co-education should be promoted.

## **Commercial Sex Workers: Facing the Brunt of Sexual Violence in Indian Society**

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Commercial sex workers have existed in Indian society since its inception. This group of marginalized and socially excluded women have always faced the brunt of sexual violence in Indian society. Furthermore, by the nature of their profession, the sexual violence which is meted out to them passes unnoticed in Indian society. This paper aims to address the problem of social exclusion of commercial sex workers, establish the realities of the sexual violence which is faced by these women and discuss the inadequacy of Indian laws in protecting the rights of this marginalized group.

## **Reasons, Impacts and Social Taboos Associated With Women Trafficking In India**

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Trafficking has been considered as one of the serious concern nowadays. Every country has been impacted by the human trafficking throughout the World in spite of Socio-economic status, history or political setup. Human trafficking is the third largest organized crime after drugs and the arms trade across the globe. About 80% of the human trafficking across the world is done for sexual exploitation and the rest is for bonded labour. In Asia, India is considered as the focal point of this crime. International market has been created by traffickers for the trade in human beings based on high profits and demand for commercial sex as well as cheap labour. It is slavery because traffickers use violence, threats, and other forms of coercion to force their victims to work against their will. This includes controlling their freedom of movement, where and when they will work and what pay, if any, they will receive. The physical and mental health consequences of human trafficking are physical symptoms including: headaches, fatigue, dizzy spells, (back pain, memory difficulty pelvic pain, and gynaecological infections. Anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Human Trafficking is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon and requires

multidisciplinary approach. Any analysis of the root causes of human trafficking must take into account, human trafficking is a violation of human rights and any strategy to eliminate trafficking should be framed within a human-rights perspective by placing the victim at the centre. Victims of trafficking are used for commercial purposes; they are used like products and then thrown away. Gender discrimination further aggravates human trafficking. The objectives of this paper are to understand the impacts, reasons and Preventive Measures of human trafficking and also deal with the social taboos associated with human trafficking.

## **Increasing menace of Cross-Border Child Trafficking: the unheard stories from Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD) of Assam**

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Human trafficking is the third largest criminal industry with huge turnovers, where buying and selling of women and children take place through unscrupulous means. The UN convention to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Person, especially Women and Children, 2000, had defined trafficking in terms of recruitment, transportation or harboring and receipt of person through force, coercion, deception, abduction or threat as trafficking; where trafficking involves exploitation of a person for sexual servitude, prostitution, bonded labour etc.

According to official records of National Crime Bureau, Assam records the highest number (1,494) of human trafficking cases in India as on 2015. Taking cognizance of reports published in regional and national newspapers, reports from local NGOs and CID's anti-trafficking units and primary data collected from field (Bodoland Territorial Council, BTAD districts) the menace of missing children cases and problem of child trafficking in the region seems alarming. The cases of missing girl child below the age of 18 years are more than boy child in the same age group. Factors such as poverty, ethnic conflict, internal displacement, unemployment, gender inequality, lower status of girl child in the society, patriarchy etc have enabled trafficking of girl child below the age group of 18 years to thrive. Assam because of its geographical location, open border system with neighboring South Asian countries such as Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal through North-Bengal (Siliguri, New Jaipauri) border makes it

an origin, transit and at times destination point for traffickers. The girls once trafficked from the state are taken to different metropolis in India and to gulf countries for domestic labour and prostitution; kept in most vulnerable and exploitative conditions. They face sexual and physical abuse and are often under- paid for their work. Political instability and underdevelopment of BTAD further accelerate the problem of trafficking in the region. Citing from incidences as observed in the field, it has become a common practice among the families which had been affected with conflict in past and lives near the border to send their children to work in metropolis; dreaming of better future. The conflict situation in the region, helplessness of parents and desperation of affected families for brighter future has helped the traffickers in recent times to lure young girls for domestic labour and prostitution. In this context, the present study has been undertaken to analyze the increasing problem of child trafficking in BTAD areas in Assam within the framework of regional particularities, and studying the problem of child trafficking through human security perspective.

The study is based on ethnographic methods, where the researcher have carried out intensive field work through semi-structured, unstructured interviews, participant observation, and informal discussion through purposive sampling methods with the child survivor of trafficking in the region to record the lived experiences in the form of their own narratives. Structured interview of people working in Non-Governmental Organizations, working on the issue of human trafficking has also been conducted.

## **Sexual Violence and the Role of State – A Study of Women Police Stations in West Bengal**

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Women in third world countries such as India, in divergent cultural context are victims of sexual violence such as rape, molestation, eve-teasing and cultural crimes in form of dowry-related domestic violence and death. The issues of such violence against women have been recognized as a basic human rights issue and the elimination of gender based violence is central to equality, development and peace. Violence against women has roots in the male-dominated socio-economic, legal and political order. At a theoretical level, male patriarchy is cited as a cause for the prevalence of violence against women. Violence against women stems from a deeply unequal relationship between the two sexes in private and public

life. Along with this, assaults on women are often visibly associated with their social status, their communal, ethnic and caste-identities. Implicit in all this is the treatment of women as private property, to be protected by men of particular family, social, communal and caste groups. In fact, violence is an extension of a continuum of beliefs that grant men the right to control and regulate women's code of conduct.

It is the responsibilities of the state to strengthen service provision, provide legal and social justice to women and girls currently being victimized, while at the same time investing in holistic prevention strategies. In order to address violence against women and ensure justice is meted out to women irrespective of caste, creed, religion, Women Police Stations (henceforth WPS) have been formed in different parts of India. Women Police Stations are operated by women police personnel to address crime committed against women ranging from sexual assault and harassment to domestic violence and dowry death. These specialized units are to provide multi-disciplinary services in the form of legal, medical, psychological counseling to women victims of violence. The United Nations Declaration on Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power, 1985, clearly stipulate the need for special services for women victims merely because they deserve a safe space to redress their grievances in their path to recovery, reparation and help them getting justice for being wronged. The very idea of formation of Women Police Station is based on the assumption that women police officers will create a friendly environment conducive for the female victims of violence to express their grievances. Women police officers will be gentler towards women than men and women victims will feel more comfortable talking to a woman officer. Women who feel intimidated in a regular police station can freely discuss their personal problems with women police personnel. Women Police Stations are to offer a more humane and compassionate service than provided in the general police station.

The paper based on primary data will discuss the role and effectiveness of Women Police Stations in the context of West Bengal. The paper will try to comprehend lived experiences of women who as victims of sexual violence have approached Women Police Stations in West Bengal. An effort is being made to explore whether Women Police Stations are extension of patriarchal control in the society. The paper will try to delve into alternative plans and methods state can employ to prevent sexual violence.

# Vulnerability Setting of Crime against Women in Delhi

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There seems a culture of silence in the society about sexual crimes. The true picture rarely comes out. Very high underreporting causes difficulty to draw any certain conclusion about the causes behind it. Uneven spatial distribution is another area of difficulty to explore it. Hence only an iota of such crimes comes out in the form of reporting. But nonetheless, this research is an attempt to explore some of the aspects of crimes against women in Delhi. Three sources of crime data- NCRB (data published by government), The Times of India (for a content analysis 2011-2013) and a Perception Survey of crime against women in Delhi have been taken for the study. Four crimes namely rape, molestation, sexual harassment and cruelty at home are chosen for the study. The period for this study is year 2003 to 2012.

For the broader picture, NCRB data is analyzed first and it is found that at all India level, both Total IPC crimes as well as crime against women (CAW) have shown increasing trends over the study period (2003-2012), but the growth in CAW is much higher. The share of CAW to Total IPC crime has consistently gone up during this period. Delhi has become the most crime prone metro city among all 53 metros (at top in 2014). Police station-wise distribution of CAW shows concentrated hotspots confirming the intra district variation of crime distribution.

A content analysis is done to understand the vulnerability setting in Delhi. A comparison is also done between content analysis and NCRB in order to check out the consistency of data reporting/underreporting. It was found that 18-20 years age group of women is most vulnerable for rape. Most of the victim are found unmarried. 74 percent offenders are found known to the victim. 60 percent rape victims are found below 18 years of age. Most of the sexual crimes are committed in broad day light. A substantial number of rapes are committed either in the house premise or adjacent neighbourhood. As many as 16 percent rapists were found from the adjacent neighbours and friends constituted 9 percent of total number of rapists. 14 cases were published in which the rapists were none other than victim's own fathers/step fathers.

South and West Delhi were found the most vulnerable districts for women whereas according to NCRB, South West Delhi and New Delhi are most vulnerable one. But still there is some similarity between the NCRB and content

analysis e.g. East, South, South West and West Delhi are one of the most crime prone districts in Delhi according to both sources. Content analysis supported many crime theories such as family disorganization theory, opportunity theory, routine activity approach and rational choice perspective while explaining the findings.

Public perception and suggestion about crime against women that how the perception differs according to the age, sex, marital status, social category, economic status, educational status of the respondents and what cause and solution they see behind sexual crimes against women. This survey based on a questionnaire of 50 questions also tries to make out the mental map of fear in Delhi i.e. most dangerous places for women in Delhi. Perception might be the true reflection of offenders as well as victims' state of mind. A mental map of most dangerous locations says that North-East Delhi was said the most dangerous district for women followed by South, East and South West Delhi.

Major findings of the perception survey are: Late night is said to be most dangerous time for women, 72 percent responses think that offender is known to the victim. Public conveyance or private transport is said to be most dangerous places for women, most vulnerable age group for sexual crime is 11 to 25 years. More than 80 percent people IN Delhi think that forced sex by husband should be called a marital rape. More than half (56.4%) of the responders believe that dress of women provoke offenders for rape or molestation.

69 % People think that our traditional and patriarchal structure of the society is also responsible for sexual crimes at least to some extent. More than half of the respondents said that most of the offenders of sexual crimes belong to lower class. Most people (43%) are of opinion that social stigma attached with such sexual crimes is the single most prominent reason for this huge underreporting. On misuse of laws by women against men, more than half of the respondents think that women misuse laws to some extent. 84.5 percent responders said that police itself can molest women even it finds a woman in a dark lonely area. Gender sensitization is said t be the best measure to prevent sexual crimes followed by stricter laws and fast trail courts.

55% people think that SC/ST women are comparatively more vulnerable to sexual crimes. Three forth of all the responders were of opinion that physical or mental disability makes women more prone to sexual abuse.

# **Homicides of Women in Public Spaces of Tamil Nadu: Is threat to Women's Freedom?**

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In patriarchal Indian society women and girls are facing different forms of oppressions and violence both in public and private spheres irrespective of their caste, class, gender, religion, region and creed. This has been in increasing trend and evidentially reported by various print and electronic media. The patriarchal social-cultural factors that predominantly playing the role to make the women and girls feels insecure. Cutting across caste, class, region and religion, women are facing continuous and different forms of violence in public spaces, including public transport, railway station, bus stand, markets, roads, parks, educational institutions, and worshipping places etc., unlike men, women experience the public spaces differently. Although a city belongs to those men and women who live there, women's access is limited due to the unsuitability of public places. This means most women restrict their movements or activities because they feel unsafe. This feeling acts as a way of socially controlling women's freedom of choice. Recently occurred homicides in Chennai, Thoothukudi, Karur, Coimbatore of Tamil Nadu state has created fear of psychosis among women and parents about public safety of women and girls. Also these incidences reflect the society's misogyny and double standardness in women's empowerment in one hand; the other hand questioning/controlling the women's rights and freedom of choice, expressions, mobility, decision making and autonomy which are crucial for gender equality. With this background this paper explores the causes and consequences of violence against women in public place, role state and its public safety policies particularly four major homicides by using content analysis of popular mainstream dailies published in Tamil Nadu.

## **Empowerment without Sexual Autonomy: Study of Women in Karnataka**

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Women, whether married or not are more vulnerable to unequal power relations. Women are not recognized as fully independent human beings when their sexual autonomy is not recognized. Most of the times many women are

coerced into having unwanted relationships and unwanted sex with men by religious, cultural, and economic pressures, and by means of violence. Their sexual subordination to men makes them vulnerable to adverse health consequences like unwanted pregnancy, venereal infection, etc. Despite considerable development in healthcare, women face more health risks than men as their experiences are different due to limited control over their sexual and reproductive lives, lack of decision-making power and poor access to nutrition and healthcare services.

With this background, this article attempts to understand the implications of sexual autonomy on the reproductive lives of women through primary data collected from the two districts in Karnataka. Generally women empowerment is measured through various variables like decision making in the household, freedom of movement, awareness against domestic violence, financial freedom and sexual autonomy, which mainly help them to take control of their life and improve their status. This study shows that women have considerable autonomy in all the above mentioned variables within the household barring the last variable namely the sexual autonomy. The article explores the reasons for this phenomenon and tries to analyse its repercussion on the lives of women through case studies and primary data. It shows how women are still intrigued by societal norms, insecurity, son preference and ignorance and other patriarchal pressures. All these make women to silently consent to atrocities on her body and self-dignity within the legally accepted framework of marriage. Hence the study advocates strengthening the family planning programme to make people aware of women's sexual autonomy in order to avoid their vulnerabilities to sexually transmitted diseases and other problems. The study also advocates the necessity to make women themselves aware of their sexual rights so as to improve their health and status in family and society.

## **Widowhood, Remarriage and Political Economy of Violence: A Case of Rabha Women in Assam**

**Sikha Das**

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The paper is an attempt to understand the connect between “widow remarriage” and “witch hunting” among Rabha community of Assam. Victims of witch hunting are mostly single women and widows. Witch hunting are executed to annex the land of widows either by her own kin or other community men. Sometimes widows are also approached for sexual favour under the pretext of marriage by some community men and in case they (the widows) refuse they



are easily accused as witches. The local powerful men and witch doctors connive with the violator adding to the agony of these young widows.

Widows have inheritance right among the Rabhas. Kin and family discourage widows to remarry. If a widow initiates to take her independent decision to remarry she is accused as witch in most of the cases. There are other instances where her refusal of remarriage and decision to remain independent is construed by as 'dangerous'. On account of her assertion to live on her own terms she is morally suspected and attempts are made to vilify her and accuse her as witch by those whose demands she turns down. Based on ethnographic studies of witch accusation in a village in Golpara district in Assam the paper focuses upon the political economy of witch hunting and how the local power sustains this violence. It will also try to understand the dilemma and "traumatic experiences" of the victims and how these women survive as widows, as witches and as morally suspect in a poverty stricken context in Assam. Though there is both a right to property and right to remarriage but the institution of witch-hunt in the village make many women disable to exercise these rights.

## **Casteism and Sexual Violence against Women: A Primary Study of Bijnor District of Uttar Pradesh**

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A time of 21st century is considered as the time of liberal democracy, where the rules are made for equal opportunities and stresses are given on the equal participation of all in the overall socio-economic and political activities. The Indian constitution in this regard is very much clear by providing some fundamental rights without any claim and discrimination based on their race, religion, caste, region and gender. In spite of these, what we see is the continuity of inequalities, discrimination, exploitation and oppression. Any kind of study either Tribal, Dalits or women is important, as the society is formed on the hierarchical system of bottom-top, oppressed-oppressor and stronger-weaker. When it comes to the question of gender in Indian society, the situation is very much bad as the women were the one who faces much exploitations, discrimination and right violations in the form of physical and sexual violence and other. In other words, they are denied their basic rights viz; social, economic and political.

Hence, it is essential for the researchers to engage in interrogating into the issues such as the violation of human rights, particularly women's rights. Therefore, this study intends to examine the violence on women. As the woman

always remained the soft target of any violence and becomes the first victim of sexual harassment, rape and murder. These all activities are used as an instrument to control, subjugate and terrorise. Because women is always used as a symbol of honour for caste, class, religion, region and culture. For these reason the women are targeting to increase hegemony and domination in society.

Violence is a very heinous act against any individual in any form and manifestation. Violence is condemnable per se. Justification for violence cannot hold well in any civil society, let alone the justification for violence employed against women in different guises. Sexual violence is an activity that shows any sexual forces or manipulates someone else into unwanted sexual activities (stalking, unwanted sexual contact or touching, rape or commit to rape, and sexual exploitation or assault and masturbating in public) without their consent.

The study will focus on Sexual Violence against Women and Casteism in Bijnor district. How the caste increase a heinous crime (sexual violence) against women and the why are the women double victims of sexual violence? Bijnor district is situated in the western region of Uttar Pradesh. It is known for high crime rate, particularly crime against women. The district was separated from Moradabad district in year 1997. So, the study will focus on one decade of Sexual Violence against women.

## **Alcoholism and Domestic Violence against Women in Meghalaya**

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Meghalaya, located in the north-eastern region of India, is comprised of the three tribes: Khasis, Jaintias and Garos. The three indigenous groups being matrilineal, and is often said to be unique. The women in these societies are given special status, in terms of their mobility, access to resources etc. Despite such a scenario domestic violence is seen in the state in a serious manner. Amongst many factors, one such is the issue of alcoholism, where men play the role of perpetrator. This paper will attempt to understand the relation of alcoholism, its nature of violence carried out and the general nature of violence of lives of women in the domestic sphere. The violence outlined here, encompasses within it physical, emotional and psychological elements, in particular status of women as wives, mothers and daughters. The violence may be severe or mild, and as

such it may or may not be registered under any official record, criminal, medical or otherwise. The role of organisations operating in the state is studied. To understand the role played in the context of Governing bodies such as the village durbar, the police and courts and other non-governmental bodies such as KRIPA FOUNDATION, NEW HOPE CENTRE, etc., do contribute from their records to the documenting of such cases, which the paper will sufficiently highlight. The paper will also focus on writings and contributions of professionals, as well as opinions and articles in newspapers and magazines, which deals with this subject. While the paper is not exhaustive in dealing with the subject, it is precise in its initiative to open the subject for further discussion. The aim is to bring about a wider discussion on the topic, to help bring about change in the society maligned by the problem of alcoholism which many times lead to physical, emotional and psychological violence directly or indirectly against women.

## **Young Girls at The Intersections Of Increased Mobility, Customary Laws And Laws That Criminalize Sexuality: Evidence From Tribal Areas Of Gujarat**

**Jahnvi Andharia, Jeevika Shiv and Seema Shah**

### **ANANDI Gujarat**

Child marriage is still widespread in India, which is home to a third of the world's child brides. About half of Indian women were married before they turned 18. It also affects society as a whole since child marriage reinforces a cycle of poverty and perpetuates gender discrimination, illiteracy and malnutrition as well as high infant and maternal mortality rates.

Child marriage impacts on almost all facets of reaching the Millennium Development Goals.

Both girls and boys are affected by child marriage, but girls are affected in much larger numbers and with greater intensity. Child marriage can be seen across the country but it is far higher in rural than in urban areas. Girls from poorer families, scheduled castes and tribes, and with lower education levels are more likely to marry at a younger age.

### **Usually the causes of early child marriage are linked to**

- Limited education opportunities, poor quality of education, inadequate infrastructure, and therefore concerns about girls' safety while travelling to school significantly contribute to keeping girls out of school and therefore tend to favour child marriage.

- People feel that the traditions and norms are stronger than the law and the institutions and rarely report cases.

- Girls are often seen as a liability with limited economic role. Women's work is confined to the household and is not valued. In addition, there is the problem of dowry. The dowry amount increases with the age and the education level of the girl. Hence, the "incentive" of the system of dowry perpetuates child marriage.

- Law enforcement to prohibit child marriage is relatively weak. The impacts of early marriage are also well documented

- Pregnancy is consistently among the leading causes of death for girls ages 15 to 19 worldwide.

- Child brides often face a higher risk of contracting HIV because they often marry an older man with more sexual experience. Girls ages 15 – 19 are 2 to 6 times more likely to contract HIV than boys of the same age in sub-Saharan Africa.

- Girls who marry before 18 are more likely to experience domestic violence than their peers who marry later. A study conducted by ICRW in two states in India found that girls who were married before 18 were twice as likely to report being beaten, slapped or threatened by their husbands than girls who married later.

- Child brides often show signs symptomatic of sexual abuse and post-traumatic stress such as feelings of hopelessness, helplessness and severe depression.

However evidence from two districts on Panchmahaals and Dahod Points out that early marriage also results from young 'minor' girls "choosing" their male partners who also may or may not be minor. Such cases are on the rise and given the different age limits that define child marriage and how rape is defined for young girls under 18, a complex situation arises.

This paper explores how customary laws and the formal laws intersect and the impact it has on young girls. Data from police records of such cases are examined to understand how the formal law records such incidents, who are the complainants and interviews with the women and their families provide insights into the challenges that young girls face and patriarchy operates. Case studies are presented where the local women's federation in partnership with a feminist organisation ANANDI have sensitively dealt with such cases and the

challenges that they face in arriving at solutions that do not undermine young girl's aspirations and agency as well as protects them from being exploited.

## **Spatio-Temporal Pattern of Types of Crime against Women: A Case Study of Haryana**

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Violence against women is a worldwide phenomenon and exists in all societies. Women are victims of violence at all stages of life during their life cycle. They may be victim of any of the general crime such as robbery, murder, cheating etc. but there are some which are directed specifically against them. Some of these are less violent such as stalking, ogling, wolf whistling, making loud remarks, chain snatching, etc. The other more violent ones are molestation, sexual assault or rape, kidnapping and abduction, immoral trafficking, dowry harassment and deaths, domestic violence, torture by husband, acid throwing etc. Studies have revealed that the act of violence against women cause more deaths and disabilities than deaths from cancer, malaria, traffic accidents and war combined. Their nature however varies with time and space.

In this context, the present paper studies the pattern of crime against women in terms of its spatial and temporal dimensions in the state of Haryana. The state of Haryana is chosen due to the fact that generally, it is assumed that economic prosperity and growth leads to social development as well. The state of Haryana however, does not reveal much on this account. Hence, given its economic development, the present paper attempts to present crime against women, its trend and changing nature in different districts of the state. The paper is largely based on secondary sources of data obtained from NCRB. While acknowledging the nuances of such data, the researchers also attempt to correlate the type of crimes with the experience gathered during primary survey of few villages in Haryana.

The study reveals that the incidence and rate of crime, (computed as per lakh women population) has an increasing trend irrespective of space in the study area. The composition of crime suggests that domestic violence particularly cruelty by husband is the most dominant crime. Molestation and rape together constitute another 30 per cent of reported crime against women. There are other distressing spatial patterns which have been mapped and discussed in spat.

# **Symptomology of Phallic Offense against Communities: Rape as an Instrument of Patrarchial Hegemonic Triumph**

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Incessant rapes are part of Indian society and culture. Our society is matrixed around multiverse of hierarchical and patriarchal power relations which makes the status of women of different classes, castes and communities complex and extremely vulnerable to sexual offence and violence. The body of women in politically implicated conditions becomes subject of violent and sexual assaults. The methodological usage of rapes in domains of riots, massist communal and caste violence, ethnic strife and massacres in Indian society are symptomatic of clandestine persistence of pathological psyche and politico-psychological overt bestiality and exercise of phallic weapon as a definitive and unfailing weapon of punishment, terror, subjugation and endurance of order by the caste and communal hegemony in events of assertions and resistances. It has been opined that politically induced assaultive rape is not a matter of sexuality, but rather an expression of control and conquest, enveloped in mechanics of inculcating the feeling of powerlessness and downed status of imagined opponents and their women.

If one goes by the latest statistics of National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), every day 93 women are being raped in the country. According to NCRB data, there is a gradual increase in the number of rapes reported in India from 24,923 in 2012 to 33,707 in 2013. Dalit, tribal and marginal women experience endemic discrimination and violence as the outcome of severely imbalanced social, economic and political power equations and are subjected to 'punitive' rape. Their socio-economic vulnerability and lack of political voice, when combined with the risk factors of being marginalized and female, increase their exposure to potentially violent situations while simultaneously reducing their ability to escape. The UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women has noted that Dalit women "face targeted violence, even rape and death from state actors and powerful members of dominant castes, used to inflict political lessons and crush dissent within the community..." Similarly, there is a steep rise in increase in number of acts of sexual violence against Dalit women primarily by dominant

caste men. Likewise, women in conflict areas, such as in Jammu and Kashmir, the North-East, Maoism affected states like Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh are often victims of 'dominance and resistance- deterrence rape' or threats of rape. National crime statistics indicated that, compared with other caste affiliations, rape was most often perpetrated against Dalit women. It is used by 'patriarchal caste terrorists' to maintain social hierarchy and status-quoism whereas by statist police and security forces in Kashmir, Nagaland, Manipur, Assam, and parts of Tripura to 'maintain law and order'. This reprisal violence though has now reached record numbers with a recent study by the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights reporting that over 67% of Dalit women have faced some form of sexual violence.

Body of a Woman is reduced to a site of communal and ethnic political conquests and settlement of patriarchal clashes. Rape against women in India is normally trivialized and female body is seen as battle field or arena to settle scores of frenzy fanaticism and revenge in any event of communal or caste riots. During the 1947 Partition of India 100,000 women were abducted and raped by belligerent Hindu, Sikh and Muslim patriarchal terrorist and predators who used their phallic aggression as symbol of conquest of 'inimical sexual territory' - most treasured and honoured by their opponents. During Gujarat riots most of the Muslim women were raped in public, and the victims were then killed and their bodies burnt. The rape survivors face emotional torment, psychological injury, physical wrongs, disease, social ostracism and many other consequences that can devastate their lives. This paper hypothesises that rape is utilised by hegemonic patriarchal social forces as an instrument of retain hegemony and patriarchal triumph.

## **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace**

**Ms. P. Sunitha and Prof. D. Usharani**

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Preamble an Act to provide protection against sexual harassment of women at workplace and for the prevention and redressal of complaints of sexual harassment and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. Whereas, sexual harassment results in violation of the fundamental rights of a woman to equality under Articles 14 and 15 of the Constitution of India and her right to life and to live with dignity under Article 21 of the Constitution and right to practice any profession or to carry on any occupation, trade or business which includes a right

to a safe environment free from sexual harassment; And whereas, the protection against sexual harassment and the right to work with dignity are universally recognized human rights by international conventions and instruments such as Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of discrimination against Women, which has been ratified on the 25th June, 1993 by the Government of India; and whereas. It is expedient to make provisions for giving effect to the said Convention for protection of women against sexual harassment at workplace. Be it enacted by Parliament in the Sixty-fourth Year of the Republic of India, as follows. Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint.

## **“If You Had A Sister”: A Glimpse Into The Issue Of “Comfort Women” And “Jihadi Brides”**

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Trying to do a comparative study about women's movement in East Asia and Middle East drew my attention to the issue of “Comfort Women”. Engaging with the testimonies, life stories and documentaries about women who are known as “Comfort Women” (some of them who are already in their late 60s and 70s) was appealing, profoundly painful and raised several questions. It was easy to make a link between “Comfort Women” and “Jihadi Bride” when I located myself as a researcher from Middle East. This essay is an attempt to understand what are the similarities and differences between “Jihadi Brides” and “Comfort Women” through their life experiences, testimonies, interviews and documentaries which were available to me. The subject is significant because both group of women, who are from different cultures and chronological periods , have been subjected to sexual slavery to “comfort soldiers” at the time of war. This paper provides the definition and back ground of these two historical and legitimized experiences of “Sex slavery” and tries to compare these two issues through two approaches: understanding the male domination that subject women for the male interests in war and identifying the situation of women and girls who were subjected to sexual slavery in war condition. My hope in this paper is to attract the attention of women to their important role as mother, wife, daughter and sister in contributing to stop civil conflict and war.



# **Public Place Harassment and Its Impact on Women's Movements: a Study with Special Reference to Adolescent School Going Girls**

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The safety and security of women and girls is a serious concern anywhere in the world. Women merely because they are women, are subjected to harassment in public spaces. As a result, women are controlled from doing their duties or recreation in most public spaces. This become as an issue relating to the human rights of women. Violence against school going girls is a global phenomenon, taking different forms and with different levels of prevalence in different places. The causes are deep rooted in male-dominated patriarchal cultures that overlook gender-based violence and treat women and girls as unequal and less worthy of education and human rights. Public place harassment is harassment intended for by men towards women and girls. Adolescent girls are universally recognized as the most important asset of any nation. Violence against women takes any forms-physical, sexual, psychological and economical. The experience of public place harassment undermines women's security and well being along with freedom of choice, action and participation in public life that are core to the basic civil and political rights of every human being. Women's safety in street is not only about violence in domestic situation, it is also about being able to go to school or college, and to enjoy the city without fear and insecurity, both in the day and at night. This study investigates the safety and security of adolescent girls in public places. The aim of the study is to find out the level of sexual harassment experienced by adolescent school going girls in public places and to find out the consequences or impact of public place harassment of adolescent girls. The study conducted in Malappuram District, Kerala. Primary data collection was based on the interview schedule and case study method. A total of 100 adolescent girls (age group between 13-16) students were interview with the help of unstructured interview schedule. This article reports on a small exploratory study of adolescent girls' experiences of sexual harassment and abuse while travelling to school or outside the home environment in Malappuram district, Kerala. Data from open ended interviews with school girls revealed that girls were vulnerable to sexual harassment on the school surroundings (mostly by male pupils) and while travelling to and from school (by older boys and adult men), especially on public transport. In this study shows that public place harassment, is a sign of an unjust society which is

unsafe for women and girls. Whenever the girls came they discuss about sexual abuse or harassment of girls as a major problem and sought to overcome it, both socially and individually. In this research paper, the research methodology used is as per feminist research and women-centric. Issues like patriarchy, gender discrimination, gender based violence, male gaze; marginalization, silencing, and devaluation are analyzed from a feminist perspective. Girls who experience violence suffer a range of health problems (Mental or physical) and their ability to participate in public and private life is diminished.

**KEYWORDS: Adolescent girls, public place, abuse, harassment, violence against women, sexual harassment, patriarchy.**

**Are public spaces safe in India- The discourse of violence and mobility?**

**Sancheeta Ghosh, Leena Sushant, Sonali Khan**

Nearly 2 years after the horrific Delhi gang rape, the 2012 incident has only managed become a symbol for the need for change but not a propagator for effective and immediate change. Even though it did prompt the parliament to pass stricter laws on sexual violence and increase the sentence for the convicted; redefined sexual violence to include penetration by objects or any body parts; and establish fast track courts to speed up trials in sexual assault cases, a lot still needs to be done to make women feel safer in India.

According to National Crimes Record Bureau, since the 2012 gang rape, there has been a rise in sexual harassment cases in the country. Despite this increase, convictions have dropped by a third, which only suggests failure of the authorities to conduct proper and thorough investigations and prosecutions. Moreover, according to a study conducted by the International Center for Research on Women in 2012, about 90 percent women and girls feels unsafe in public spaces and in 2013, another research based in Delhi showed nearly 75 percent of women and girls had faced sexual violence in their own neighbourhoods.

The reality of sexual violence and its threat in public spaces reduces women's and girls' freedom of movement. It reduces their ability to participate in school, work and in public life. It limits their access to essential services, and enjoyment of cultural and recreational opportunities. It also negatively impacts their health and well-being (UN Women 2011). Although violence in the private domain is now widely recognized as a human rights violation, violence against women and girls, especially sexual harassment in public spaces, remains a largely neglected issue, with few laws or policies in place to prevent and address it.

Breakthrough's current intervention design to address violence against

women imply on the idea of PVCSN (Preventing Violence-Change Starts Now) applied the proven Breakthrough approach of arts-infused multi-media assets, colourful community-based education, and multiple partnerships. With this background, Breakthrough conducted baseline survey in six cities of India, Delhi, Lucknow, Bangalore, Panipat, Ranchi and Gaya on perception of safety and issue of sexual harassment in public spaces. The findings include both men and women's perception of safety which is presented below.

Findings show that most women and girls consider public spaces are unsafe. Among the public places, bus stops (83.5%), railway stations (82.2%), open toilets (88.7%), public toilets (69.1%), markets (51%) and streets (61.1%) were considered unsafe. Women felt they can't travel in market/recreation places more often and felt particularly unsafe to work in evening shifts or late hours.

More than 90% of women and girls have experienced sexual harassment in their lifetime in public spaces and 63.4% of them have experienced in last one year. Most common forms of harassments were verbal (53%) and visual (51%). Few of them also experienced stalking by men and boys in public spaces and most of them could not take any action.

Only 38% of men and boys on the other hand felt that public spaces are very unsafe for women and girls. Unsafe public spaces according to them are different - streets (51%), park (50.4%) followed by places surrounding alcohol shops (44.3%), and interestingly inside schools and colleges (44.2%).

One of the most known causes for violence is just being a woman. Half of the men and boys think that women and girls are being harassed in public spaces because of their gender (52.1%). The way women and girls are dressed is the most important cause of their experience of harassment (73.4 %) followed by being alone in public spaces (more than 60%). Half of them think that women should avoid taking up jobs that require travel at night. 56% think that there is no particular time for women to be safe with all times unsafe.

The paper discusses different aspects of harassment and violence against women and girls in public spaces based on both quantitative and qualitative data. It also argues on the fact that how norm change affects the society in terms of changing attitude towards violence against women and girls in Indian society.

# Reading Minakshi Sen's "Jailer Bhetor Jail" as a Cultural Artefact of Dissent against Heterotopias of Social and Clinical 'Wellness'

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This paper will explore Minakshi Sen's book *Jailer Bhetor Jail* in terms of how women prisoners are first clinically selected as mad and then 'civilized'/ 'normalized' in an asylum (a heterotopic space) to cleanse public and private social spaces. The residents of 'Pagol bari' or the Mental Ward inside the jail are very often confined without having any history of mental illness, thereby rendering problematic the condition of the Mental Ward itself as depicted in the book.

Sen herself is a surviving political prisoner who had been incarcerated for over six years in different jails of West Bengal. Her book is a vivid memoir of these years as it speaks for her co-partners in jail through fictional reconstructions and re-imaginings. It portrays that most of the inmates were kept in the mental asylum/jail for two reasons; one was to maintain peace for the society (social cleansing involving a heterotopia of deviation), and second was to 'cure' them through right procedure (clinical processing). While social cleansing involved their isolation and disconnect from other spaces surrounding them, medicalizing them involved clinical procedures used for 'curing' them. Both happen under the vigil of the state which seems to preoccupy itself with the welfare of its citizens. Yet, Sen's narrative argues and shows how such state induced heterotopic and clinical 'welfare' work by actually keeping them nearly hungry and fully naked! Their hunger and their nakedness would ensure their vulnerability to control of their bodies and minds to submission and passivity out of fear and real or potential torture. The asylum and the jail lose their borders as bodies and subjects fall under the predatory gaze of the state representatives.

However, struggles against unjust incarcerations of political activists continue from the outside by challenging the walls of heterotopias. Such efforts often manage to fight out cases through courts or through building on public awareness and consensus. This paper will look at how writing becomes a tool for resistance which contests state coercive and clinical apparatuses by exposing the nefarious acts of violence inside the jail/asylum. Sen's narrative thus challenges the dehumanized state actions to argue how such 'surgical' procedures of public and private cleansing through incarceration, rape and murders cannot contain peoples' struggles for survival and human dignity.

# **Sexual Harassment at Workplace: Everyday Experiences of Women Managers in India**

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Mackinnon defines sexual harassment as “the unwanted imposition of sexual requirements in the context of a relationship of unequal power” (Mackinnon 1979: 01) In India, Vishakha Guidelines were introduced in 1997; however the law to prevent sexual harassment at workplace came in 2013. Though various studies and newspaper reports reveal the staggering number of sexual harassment cases in India, little is known about the experience that women go through when their personal space and dignity is violated.

This research paper is a testimony that sexual harassment at workplace poses a serious challenge for assimilating women in organisations. Ironically, many women tend to remain silent when they face abject experiences at the workplace. Is it because of their ignorance, or a lack of understanding, or is it fear that drives those subjected to sexual harassment, to accept the treatment meted out to them? Do those who are expected to protect the rights of their employees take cognizance of such cases or do they tend to hush up matters, with the hope that they would “somehow” get sorted out on their own? Objective of this research was to examine the nature and extent of sexual harassment of women at managerial levels in corporate India. It aimed to gain understanding of how women managers handle sexual harassment. The purpose was to learn from experience, and suggest measures for strengthening organisational processes to foster a secure workplace for women.

The research uses a blend of qualitative and quantitative methods for this study. To reach out to a larger data base of women, a brief questionnaire was prepared which included questions on: type of organisation, its policies related to sexual harassment, experiences etc. Based on this exercise, respondents were contacted and interviewed. It was a challenging task to contact women who had been sexually harassed and get them to share their experiences with the researchers.

The research uses case studies where respondents candidly reveal their experience, negotiation, internal dilemmas which they have undergone and also support provided to them by their peers, organization and family. Most of these women were working in Multinational Companies which supposedly had Internal Complaints Committees as mandated by the law.

However, in several cases the respondent was unaware of its presence and/or procedures. Also, the proceedings, as carried out by these committees, diluted the investigation process. These findings highlight the disjuncture as it exists, between an everyday form of harassment, and role of such committees, which are based on evidence (Sen 2010). The research will discuss all these aspects in the course of presentation.

## **Preliminary Investigations into the Changing Perceptions Towards Patterns Of Violence Against Women In The Last Two Decades**

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The Indian society is characterized and governed by a patriarchal structure and the oppression faced by women is complex and multifaceted. Accepting the oppression as an integral and essential part of their lives woman often rationalize the violence played against under the guise of preserving family peace and honour.

Contextualizing the term ‘violence’ as a theoretical and a methodical category has been a source of dispute in the historical, literary and circles of academia. “Violence’ per se is a multifaceted and multi-layered phenomenon that does not cease to limit itself only to its legal connotations but it also encapsulates acts of ‘hostility’-- verbal, non-verbal and physical-- in social spaces and one of the key areas which recently has garnered a lot of attention revolves around the gender-related violence. In simple terms, gender based violence refers to any of aggression or any form of violence that is intended towards individual or communities on the basis of their gender.

Violence whether in the form of domestic violence, rape, gang-rape, communal violence, honour killings are gendered violence that is overt and is generally comes into public light. However, the covert gendered violence in the social spaces stemming from the manifestation of a fear that is borne within the four walls of the house is usually never acknowledged.

The household is a social space a site a repository of traditions wherein social hierarchies are maintained and social roles are constantly negotiated, and among these bargaining ritual,

Women are the ones who are at the receiving end. The cultural niche carved

out for women by the society not only conditions' them to accept a subordinate position in the societal hierarchy but also makes them accept to lead their lives playing various roles in the circumscribed social spaces doled out for them.

Through this paper, I intend to investigate the cases of domestic violence registered, recorded and collated with All India Democratic Women's Association Delhi, (AIDWA) across three decades by focusing on the years 1986 to 1996 to 2006.

The paper would work on an on an analytical and a comparative model wherein the diverse cultures across the region of Delhi intersects on the question of gendered violence and as to how cultural affinities correspondence produce recurrent and structured patterns of gendered violence.

While the paper will discuss the cases against the backdrop of domestic violence at the macro theoretical level, my main question is to trace the predominant patterns of violence and locate them in the contemporary context.

It will also locate the shifts in the operations of the organization as to how they tackle each case, and how each case is reported and the new patterns of violence that have emerged in the last three decades primarily due to the fact that these subtle and covert acts were never considered as acts of violence. Women were conditioned and used to take-it-for-granted and endure it in their lives.

While it is true that a woman's image and position changes in her life cycle, it is also true that a single, widow and elderly women undergo face all forms of violence in both private and public spaces. The paper while dealing extensively at the macro level of domestic violence in the form of gendered violence will also look at the individual experiences wherein alternate discourses can emerge so that the truth and validity of existing so-called legitimate norms, mores and roles can be questioned.

## **The Spectacle of Intimate Violence: 'Everyday' as a Site**

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The event of the Partition of 1947 saw unabated violence against women. Women's bodies were seen as territories to be claimed on which the markers of violence became the cartographic exercises on part of the perpetrators. While

the statist narratives reduced the cases of such cataclysmic violence to mere statistical details, feminist researchers tried to dig out many unheard and buried narratives of the experiences of women. In such research women became the central figures of investigation and their stories of selfhood and struggle become the canvas of such history. While there are numerous such narratives about the violence from the opposing communities, what seems to be lacking is the stories from the closed confines of one's home where the violence from outside had travelled rhythmically to be part of the everyday. While traditional methods of recovering such narratives have meagerly been able to address how the spectacle of extraordinary violence folded in to the ordinary, literature around Partition has been able to give representation to such concerns. This paper aims to attempt to understand how such 'everyday', 'ordinary' and 'non spectacular' violence was represented in literature written by Muslim women about the domestic confines of a Muslim home. It aims to address the gaps in historiography through the figure of afterlife of the 'abducted migrant woman'. It explicates how the violence from outside folded into the ordinary, and how during Partition it wasn't just the outside, the 'other' that was the source of violence but the members of the family who inflicted the violence on women within the so called safe confines of their home. Through the study of novels it theorizes that violence against women was not just a 'moment of insanity' that came upon men in such extraordinary circumstances but that the transaction of violence against women is embedded in everyday social relationships.

## **Consent in Relations**

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Despite the enormous struggles and efforts of the women's movement over decades, the culture and incidence of Gender based Violence persists. One of the key reasons for this is the continuation of challenges related to consent. In this paper, the Kinky Collective will seek to identify some of these challenges and to offer reflections from a Bondage Domination SadoMasochism (BDSM) perspective. As a group whose focus is BDSM, we believe that BDSM offers rich insights as well as practices that can contribute significantly to existing feminist understandings of consent.

The objective of this paper is not just to counter the myth that BDSM is violent, but to further the discourse of consent. This may seem ironic to those who presume BDSM to be violent. In fact, BDSM is able to demonstrate clearly



what absence of violence looks like, because consent is at the heart of BDSM and is considered sacrosanct.

The constructs/assumptions related to consent that are currently hampering struggles against sexual violence which will be addressed in the paper will include the following.

-When a woman says no she actually means yes. (Underlying fear on the part of the woman of being considered a slut if she clearly says yes.)

-Consent is presumed, not explicitly taken or given.

-Absence of a culture of talking about and negotiating consent. (Unstated assumption that talking about consent is unsexy and that will kill passion. Related assumption of sex being spontaneous in essence).

-Assumption that consent is static and that consent given to a person/for certain acts will continue to hold over time.

-Goal of consent assumed to be protection of danger.

-Framework of consent limited to a 'yes'/'no' binary.

The paper will proceed to challenge each of these constructs/assumptions with learnings and practices from the BDSM community. The framework will be one of praxis since the way in which consent is understood goes hand in hand with the practices that enable its actualization. Alternative constructs and approaches need to be and will be illustrated with a focus on 'how' and the mechanisms of consent. Some of these alternative ways of approaching and practicing consent include

- Consent as necessarily proactive, enthusiastic and explicitly given/taken.

- The culture in the BDSM community of talking about/negotiating consent.

- Factors enabling an absence of confusion between 'yes' and 'no'.

Including affirmative space for saying yes and unconditional respect for 'no'.

- Recognition of the dynamic nature of consent.

- The goal of consent as pursuit of pleasure, not only protection from harm. (Denial of pursuit of pleasure as a form of violence.)
- Recognition of consent as a spectrum including yes, no and maybe, with space for exploration of desires.

## **Marital Rape Tamil Nadu in India - A Case Study**

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Marital rape violates the right of dignity of a married woman. It breaches the trust of wife. Even then, it is not criminalized as rape in India. It raises a question, is a married woman being considered an object or the property of the husband. It also raises the question, as to does a married woman has right to save her body from the lust of her husband. No doubt the purpose of the marriage is to provide right to have sex with wife. Marital rape refers to unwanted intercourse by a man with his wife obtained by force, threat of force, or physical violence or when she unable to give consent. Marital rape could be use of force only; it is a non consensual act of violent prevention by a husband against the wife where she is physical and sexually abused. Sexual violence, including rape, falls within the larger ambit of domestic violence, but rape by husbands within marriages is a shadowy subject in India. According to NCRB, 98% of all rapes involve perpetrators familiar to survivors. These presumably include friends, acquaintances, colleagues and relatives. But husbands?

According to National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) police data also reveal that 2069 cases of rape were registered in 2014 as compared to 1571 in 2013. There were 1,282 cases of harassment in 2014 against 879 the year before and dowry death cases touched 147 in 2014 as compared to 137 in 2013. According to national family health survey report even married women who have ever experienced spousal violence 37.2% -44.2% in 2015-2016 and ever married women who have experienced violence during any pregnancy 5%-7.5% in 2015-2016. Delhi police has registered 7,124 FIRs of rape in the first eight month of 2015 of which only one cases has been solved. In 2014, 11, 2009 such FIRs were lodged but only nine accused were convicted.

This paper points out whether this right can be coupled with force or right to have sex is only coupled with will or consent of wife. The purpose of the marriage

in point of view of right to have sex should only be providing satisfaction of biological need without any check or burden of society and law. India has been a male dominated society and it is also a fact that Indian culture gives special status to the women. Today, we talk about women empowerment. Many rights have been provided to the women in India. But in a male dominated society, would women be empowered in real sense without criminalizing marital rape. The main purpose of this paper is to find out as to whether sex without the consent of wife should be considered as rape. In this study conducted by affected married women at selected taluk of Tamil Nadu India. The case study method used for this study.

Key words: Marital Rape, Sexual violence, Rape.

## **Sexual Violence and Sexualisation of Women**

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Sexual violence is defined by WHO as “any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim ,in any setting ,including but not limited to home and work”

Forms and contexts of sexual violence

A wide range of sexually violent acts can take place in different circumstance and settings. These include, for example-

- Rape within marriage or dating relationships.
- Rape by strangers.
- Systematic relationships during armed conflict.
- Unwanted sexual advances or sexual harassment, including demanding sex in return for favours.
- Sexual abuse of physically or mentally disabled people.
- Forced marriage or cohabitation, including the marriage of children.
- Denial of the right to use contraception or to adopt other measures to protect against sexually transmitted diseases.
- Forced abortion.
- Violent acts against sexual integrity of women, including female genital

mutilation and obligatory inspections for virginity.

- Forced prostitution and trafficking of people for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

Sexual violence takes place to anyone at anytime irrespective of the perpetrator's relationship to the victim. Sexual violence takes place in following ways-

- Compelling someone to have sex.
- Forcing someone into prostitution.
- Forcing people to have sexual relationships with others.
- Forcing people to participate in sexual activities in which they aren't comfortable.
- Forcing people to act or pose for pornography.
- Obscene gestures.
- Pressure for dating and other sexual favors.
- Insults based on gender.
- Sexually explicit phone calls and emails.
- Unfriendly remarks.

Remedial measures

- Change in perception and attitude of society.
- Creating awareness among women.
- Educating women and men
- Motivating women from poor and economically backward families.
- Organizing programs.
- Family counseling centres has to be set up.
- Strict laws have to be implemented.
- Family planning has to be promoted.
- Good cooperation between NGOs and Police.
- Role of media.

Sexualisation of women means a process by which turning a women into toy or sexual objects. Sexualisation of women takes place in various ways such as advertising, film, Music videos, Modeling, Pornography, Television and Video Games. The media uses women as a sex objects to sell their products which is been done in order to earn profit. We can stop sexualisation of women by using following ways-

- Try to bring awareness of sexualisation of women and girls through social media.
- Watch and support documentaries that object sexualisation of women

and girls and find solutions to it.

- School education to focus on sexual equality.
- File petition or report media if hyper sexualisation of women and girls takes place.

## **Sexual violence and State responses: A Case Study of the Delhi Gang Rape Case of December 2012, Lessons for the post-colonial context.**

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Sara Mills suggests that post-colonial feminists though are not a unified group; they have reacted against lack of address of issues pertaining to gender in the work of post-colonial theorists, whilst at the same time they have criticized universalizing tendencies prevalent in the work of western feminists . V. S. Peterson has argued that the State not only exercises its power to provide and define security/insecurity through its claim of legitimate use of coercion; but also through routine activities of State, that regulate the norms of acceptability/legitimacy/illegitimacy in social activities and in construction of individual and collective identities . Further, the State also acts as the bearer of gender in terms of the fact that there exists male domination and a cult of masculinity at the level of top positions of power in the State itself.

In the India context, laws and policies to check sexual violence exist but sexual violence still seems to be growing. In terms of state practices, it is worth pondering over the question- what is amiss? The aim is to probe the democratic commitment of the state and the efficacy of state practices in curbing sexual violence through the medium of laws and policies. In order to do this, it is important to map out state practices conceptually and empirically.

A case study of Delhi gang rape case of 2012 would be attempted. This would include the examination of the linkages between brief social movement which emerged to protest against sexual violence and the State responses to the demands of the social movement. The State responses will be examined by analyzing the parliamentary debates which ensued at this time, action taken by the parliament in terms of the constitution of State Commissions and Committees (such as the Justice Verma Committee, Usha Mehra Committee), the implementation of the Criminal Law Amendment Act 2013 and the Judgements passed on the gang

rape. In addition to secondary sources, the other sources examined would include newspaper reports, parliamentary debates, Justice Verma Committee report, Usha Mehra Committee and judgements. The attempt would be to engage with the language in which the State understands and responds to sexual violence.

Taking on from Foucault's conceptualization of governmentality, the nuances and discontinuities of State practices in responding to crisis in the population will be attempted. This would be a multidisciplinary study drawing from political science, gender studies, legal research following textual interpretative analysis. Further an attempt would be made to draw out conclusions from this case study for the post colonial context.

**Title:**

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The paper deals with the prevalence of sexual violence in India, its effect on gender sensitization and the laws regarding sexual violence, both males and females. The paper, under the three research points, will deal with the trends observed in sexual violence against both men and women, by recording and presenting data on the increase in crime rate and the association of other crimes with sexual violence. It will also present data with respect to the effect on gender sensitization. The stigmas associated with the victims of sexual violence, the recourse and the compensation offered to the victims as well as victimology, i.e., the study of victim rights will be presented. With respect to the research topic, laws regarding sexual violence, victims as well as perpetrators will be researched upon. A study will be made on the current laws and amendment and their effectiveness. The state of the laws, whether they are actually effective or merely there for show will be shown in the paper. The involvement of the state and the society in upholding the laws, the deterrent effect the laws have on the society will be recorded and presented

## **Health System's Role towards Survivors of Gender Based Violence: A critical analysis**

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Legal and policy mandates for health system provisioning of care for sexual and other forms of gender violence globally as well as nationally – in India,

have emerged as important milestones over the recent years. The Criminal Law Amendments (CLA), the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare Guidelines and Protocols for healthcare providers on medico-legal care and treatment of survivors of sexual violence have all taken an enhanced cognizance of gendered violence and have called upon healthcare systems to address and respond to violence. These crucial changes though undoubtedly need to be celebrated; it simultaneously calls for the women's movement to unsimplify these changes and delve into the analysis of 'changing' or 'unchanging' response of health system towards GBV in its manifested and underlying aspects.

While the laws, guidelines and protocols foster systems of accountability and strengthened response by the health system, the latter is often sustained around "legal compliance" and remains weak in its overall orientation on gendered violence. Does the legal "essential" thus supersede "comprehensive" care? While the health care system gradually initiates implementation of response to survivors of GBV, how does it perceive those who are abused or excluded by the same system?

Given the perspective of the health system and its biases, it overwhelmingly attempts at "establishing falsity" or assumes that women's narratives are largely untrue. Much of its role is been medico-legal centric and constantly reflects its structural underpinnings of gender biasness.

This paper shall draw on Sama's work to critically discuss the contemporary changes in the health system's role, analysing the nature of change and flagging persisting challenges. Reinforcement of the hetero-patriarchal norms, biases and stereotypes are to be found in the health system; which often leads to creation of barriers for survivors in accessing the health system, and marginalises their health needs and concerns. This jeopardises survivors' right to health, care, treatment, safety, and the due conducive environment to overcome impacts of violence. The almost negligible existence of psycho-social care, problematic perspective within the medico-legal documentation, and sheer lack of sensitivity on the issues of gender and its intersectionalities with caste, class, religion, disability etc; portrays a discriminatory and contravening picture of the health system vis-à-vis the roles expected from it. Overall, the medicalisation of the response remains a biggest challenge in ever developing a personalized and humane response towards GBV survivors. Analysing the multi aspects involved in the role of the health system would help in facilitating perspectives on ways to engage with it towards recognising the rights of the survivors.

# The Dilemma of Masculinity and Violence: Changing the Male 'Mindset'

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Year after year, the graph of sexual violence in India keeps rising with no signs of any dips or relief. There have been several Nirbhayas from 1012 to the present and the count seems to keep going up. The discourse around sexual violence in the media and conversations in society has taken quite a different turn. No longer are the old arguments of alcoholism, aberration, rarity of incidents, provocation by dress or something else, etc. used or discussed. The more recent ones take for granted that women have a right to be in public spaces, to work, to study and have aspirations. And that men who rape, beat or stalk do not do so because of alcohol or dark alleys. We got a glimpse of recent societal reactions to sexual violence in the demands raised during the Nirbhaya protests. The demands made by the protestors, interviewed by the press and those carrying placards, highlighted three major areas of concern- to use stricter laws especially the death penalty; security measures like CCTV or police patrolling and changing the 'mindset' of men.

In this paper, we would like to explore the term 'mindset of men' and understand how its transformation will impact or bring about a change in the violence men perpetuate on women. What do people generally mean by 'mindset'? Is it a set of beliefs and values rather than a psychological state? Are there different 'mindsets' according to genders, class, caste and other identities? How does the present context of unemployment, feeling of displacement, the gap between aspirations and reality impact one's 'mindset'? What is this deep anger that men feel that can lead to such brutality? How different are the 'mindsets of men and women? How does the traditional and the modern influence it?

People's views and perspectives emerge from or have roots in their social rearing, educational systems and the nature of patriarchal society. Perhaps this spate of sexual violence on women, and that too of the most brutal kind, is our wake up call to start taking responsibility as a society. How is society, the state and civil society organisations responding to it? We do see various kinds of efforts to inculcate the sense of gender equality on part of society and the state. What are these efforts and where do they fall short? Can they be taken up at a mass scale to impact a whole generation of young people?

CSOs have taken up this issue, especially the women's groups with young men and women. Recently a spate of men's groups working with men – older



and younger men have raised it in the context of male privileges and prevention of violence. What are the advantages and limitations of such programs? Akshara has experimented with some key triggers which might influence young people's gender perceptions. Can we evaluate the efforts to say that there is substantial change in the 'mindset' of women and men?

## **Class Societies and Rape: Understanding Vulnerability, Culpability And Complicity In Contemporary Times**

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The paper I propose to read delves on issues which came to the forefront in the debate that ensued within activist circles post the 'Nirbhaya' gang-rape case. Given the present realities of growing sexual violence on women and children, feminist explanations of rape have demanded closer scrutiny, particularly in the context of urban rapes involving large numbers of victims and perpetrators from the economically and socially vulnerable sections of our society. In my paper, I seek to survey well-known feminist explanations of rape and misogynist culture, as well as existing feminist action programs and campaigns on such issues. My survey will position feminist readings of rape culture, patriarchy, 'male gaze', etc. against the background of important records, patterns and statistics on sexual assaults in India. In this way, the paper will proceed to discuss the inadequacy of (mainstream) feminist discourse and politics by questioning the tendency for such discourse and politics to explain all rapes and sexual assaults through a class-sanitized, gender-only prism, or uncritically through the patriarchal backlash theory.

My questioning is based on the fact that sexual violence on women is never just about asserting male authority over the female body, especially if we consider the growing prevalence of child rapes, rapes perpetrated during communal riots, gang-rapes of dalit or adivasi women by men of dominant social groups, etc. In fact, the paper shall argue that abstract male power or an omnipresent patriarchal desire to 'put women in their place' is an a historical, far from a sufficient explanation even in the case of rapes involving sexual partners such as husbands-wives/boyfriend-girlfriend, and for that matter stranger rapes of the 'Nirbhaya'-kind.

Sexual violence on women and children can be understood holistically and

fought effectively against if the entrenched inequalities stemming from class, caste, etc. are used to explain vulnerability as well as culpability. For instance, by bringing to the forefront the issue of widespread repercussions of class divisions in our society, we can begin to explain the growing sexual crimes in working-class neighbourhoods, in isolated public places, etc. where working-class women and children are daily made victims. Similarly, through the prism of the alienating effects of class exploitation we are in a better position to explain the enmasse creation of perpetrators within the most economically disempowered men in our cities; namely, male workers, impoverished juveniles, etc. As will be argued, even the absent cause, i.e. the vulnerable position of working-class women, is essential to highlight since the image of such widespread vulnerability imposes itself on the very being of otherwise independent, vocal middle-class women who can, at certain conjunctures, be made the next victim of sexual crimes. Moreover, sexual exploitation of middle-class women in their relationships with men of their own class is closely linked to class-informed sexual codes, sexual compromises that accompany the practice of hypergamy and the unprecedented commodification of women's sexuality in contemporary times. In this regard, my paper shall seek to address the degree of complicity that middle-class women exercise in contributing towards a misogynist culture in certain ways.

The paper shall conclude by critically assessing some feminist assessments of gender inequality which claim to be not so oblivious to class. Here I shall revisit the concept of intersectionality, especially its use within feminist discourse and politics.

## SUB - THEME 10

### CLIMATE CHANGE

**Coordinators: Amrita Patel (Sanristi, Bhubaneswar) and Nitya Rao (University of East Anglia, UK)**

#### ABSTRACTS

##### **Vulnerability of Climate Change: Women as Saviours**

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From times immemorial, Women and Nature are interlinked in Indian custom and traditions. Women referred as nature and nature being referred to women. But both 'Women' and 'Nature' are targets of men dominated society. The ever growing global economy has resulted in loss of biodiversity and unstoppable climate change which are the greatest ecological challenges of our time.

21st century has witnessed irrevocable changes in climate making 'Right to a healthy environment a Myth'. Indeed leading to a blurred future. Imagine a world in which environmental and climate change threatens people's health, physical security and never witnessed increased rate of species extinction. The state of global economy is affluent providing all amenities but it cannot buy nature. The paradox and crisis of development has resulted in rapid ecological degradation and climate change. After the Chernobyl catastrophe in 1986, Russian woman stated, 'Men never think of life. They only want to conquer nature and enemy'. Every country aims at being a 'developed nation' but is that really our aim. At what cost we are developing our nations. Development at a rapid rate have led to massive climate change leading to increased temperature, rising sea levels, floods, droughts, earthquakes, species extinction. It is all because of greed's of man which have made his living difficult. It is time to end the warfare against nature. Women have a close relationship with communities and environment has made us indeed critical in responding to the global climate crisis. There is a need for climate justice and gender justice. Climate change has dire consequences mainly on women and children. The RIO+20 was critically concluded by women's group stating that governments had a historic chance to take bold steps to end poverty and environmental destruction, to protect the rights of the most vulnerable members of our societies, to take concrete measures to fully implement women's rights and women's leadership. We now risk increased poverty, inequities and irreversible

environmental damage. This is not the future we want, nor the future we need. Global environment, climate change and sustainable development negotiations are far behind the targets resulting in climate injustice. In this situation this paper tries to attempt the emancipation of environment by women, their efforts in saving the world from destruction.

**In this light our paper would like to throw lights on:**

1. Use of Historical-Feminist research methodology
2. To study climate change and its impact on women.
3. To analyse the role of women as saviours of environment.

Using triangulation; (mixing of both qualitative and quantitative methods) quantitative secondary data will be used from various national and international reports. Primary data will be collected from ethnographic studies.

Keywords: Climate Change, Women, Development, Nature imbalance

## **Climate Change Effects on Women: A Case Study of Odisha**

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Climate change is one of the most important global challenges of our time. The nature and extent of climate change is a major threat to the most vulnerable people with the least capacity to adapt. Global climate change not only broadly affects the scientific, economic and political factors of a region, but also has significant societal consequences; mainly from a gender perspective.

This paper seeks to review women's higher vulnerability to the effects of climatic change in Odisha, a coastal state of India which has been a victim to natural calamities like Cyclone and Droughts. Majority of the population of rural Odisha depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. Today Odisha's agricultural lands are affected with water logging, encroachment of saline water on agri-rich soil and the lack of regular rainfall.

Women are hit the hardest due to the climatic changes because of the lack of access to information and education, income, and dependency on natural resources for their day to day living.

Keywords: climate change, women, livelihood

# **The Language of Madness and Ecology: A Reading of the Yellow Wall-Paper of Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Surfacing of Margaret Atwood**

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Since prehistoric time, women have had an inalienable, close relationship with her natural surroundings in their history. Woman's response to her surroundings differs from that of man who, to use the words of a feminist environmentalist, Annette Kolodny, fantasized nature for "privatized erotic mastery". Oriental mythology often tells us about the role of a woman who always restores the disorder or devastation brought by a monstrous man. Woman's fantasy about her surroundings is for a "garden implied home and community".

Historically, metaphysics on women, however, has distorted this image of the conservator of nature and her perspective for ages. Eco-feminists have revisited this arena of institutionalized ideas in order to explore women's own perspective towards life and nature and about their relationship with it. Psychoanalyst feminist like Juliet Mitchell has theorized the idea of the phallogocentric language which women writers are compelled to use it. This patriarchal institutionalized enterprise has driven women into madness in their search for a language of their own which is in harmony with nature and for their own identity.

The silencing surge of phallogocentric language meets a resistance in the language of two women writers – Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860—1935) of the U.S. and Margaret Atwood (1939) of Canada. They belong to different centuries.

For the present study, *The Yellow Wall-Paper* (a short story first published in 1892) of Charlotte Perkins Gilman and *Surfacing* (a novel first published in 1972) of Margaret Atwood have been taken up.

The central women characters in both the texts have similar struggle with variations in some areas with Margaret Atwood's imagination making a flight to deep ecology in her revisit of the past. Both their struggle is hard driven into madness and even beyond that in their attempt to find out their true self and to be free from the colonization of patriarchal control and grip. Both have suffered from patriarchal protectionism. The paper is a textual analysis which will reflect

on the linguistic nuances and their imagery. The earlier text is a depiction of the nineteenth century domestication of women like cattle as a therapy for mental depression. Charlotte's work revolutionized the whole concept of psychotherapy of women patients after the publication of her short story. Women's world has been fixed in domestic chores and has been denied of the vast external surrounding. Both the texts are a critique of suffocating, meaningless existence of woman in the city life and are an expression of her quest for freedom to live in harmony with her natural surroundings. The hatred for the yellow wallpaper is symbolic representation in the first fiction. And the unnamed woman's longing to stay back in the island in the second fictional narrative is woman's longing for a life in deep ecology indicating human exploitation pioneered by men.

Key words: [Madness, ecology, eco-feminist, phallogentric, patriarchal, psychotherapy, protectionism]

## **Linking Women Empowerment and Resilience in the context of Climate change: A Case Study of Bhusandapur Village in Shore of Chilika Lake of Odisha**

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Women Empowerment often is viewed as a multi-dimensional process on which women themselves have differing perspectives. Thus it is important to understand the subjectivities, actors and the factors influencing the changing contexts. The paper seeks to explore how women's empowerment interacts with resilience in the context of climate change. It provides insights from studies on how to conceptualize links of women's empowerment and resilience to climate change risks. The capacities in the context of social resilience; such as coping, adaptive and transformative capacities are studied and presented in a case study form. The socio-ecological systems, levels and interactions of household, community, institutions and policy level are incorporated into the resilience perspective. The study area is Bhusandapur village of Tangi block in Khordha district which situated at 19°55'51.764" N latitude and 85°30'29.21" E longitude. The linkage to resilience in the context of study area focuses on how interventions can target particular dimensions of empowerment to foster coping, adaptive and transformative capacities to effectively participate in decision-making processes which translate into resilience.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Resilience, Climate Change, Coping, Adaptive, Transformative, Capacities

## **Bengal Delta Submersion – Tiger Attacks and “Bidhoba Pally”**

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The prevalent commanding model of capitalism is one of the main catalysts of the climate change. Dipesh Chakrabarty in *The Climate of History* observes, ‘humans have become geological agents, changing the most basic physical process of the earth’. In this paper I want to locate the analysis of the social, cultural stigma faced by women in the Sunderban region, owing to the loss of their male –family members to tiger attacks. As a result of the Human –Wildlife Conflict emerging from the submersion of this Bengal Delta region. The potential and violence of climate change is best illustrated in this area, with the accelerated loss of land to the rising water levels and frequent cyclones, the humans and wildlife (tigers, crocodiles, and snakes) are brought into close proximity. The human and wildlife habitat overlap here, the male breadwinner has to raid the forest in search of food, meat, honey, wood (business). When the total land area decreases, naturally the terrestrial animals seek refuge in the same area of land as the humans and come into close proximity.

Amitava Ghosh in *The Great Derangement- Climate Change and the Unthinkable* writes : ‘I do believe it to be true that the land here is demonstrably alive ,that it does not exist solely , or even incidentally as a stage for the enactment for human history ;that it is( itself) a protagonist. ‘Dispersed through the forest are red rags , marking the sites where people have been killed by tigers .Most striking is the creation of the ‘bidhoba pally’ ( widow’s village ) due to the social castration of the widows. It is to evaluate how the ‘uncanny’ (Freud) is being perceived by the women in this situation .How this ‘wicked problem’ of the climate change has defeated the philosopher’s of freedom to help escape humans from oppression , injustice and inequality. It is to assess how women are compelled to accept cultural injustice through the propagation of Sundarban’s Folk epic Bon BibirJohuranama( The Miracles of BonBibi) where the goddess is thought to come for Dukhey’s ( symbol of perennial ‘angst’) rescue when he is faced by the tiger ( ‘that tiger is the demon and I am to be his feast’), it is a common belief that the goddess punishes those who are evil by never coming to their rescue . This presents a bigger question: is equality and justice devoid of

the shackles of environment? Where religion forms an integral component of our daily lives and the same strings of religion are enshrined as symbols in the nature ( Bon Bibi reveals herself through the workings of and within Sunderbans) can we deny the influence of nature and its change in a woman's fight for equality and acceptance in the society ?

## **Climate Change and Adaptation: Adaptation Strategy and Coping Mechanism- Role of Women Self Help Group in Indian Bengal Delta**

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In India, the concept of Self Help Group (SHGs) can be traced back to the Gandhian Gram Swaraj Movement. In West Bengal it started during the early 1990's. Women deprived of education especially in the lower income group or even in the middle class society in India; traditionally remain economically dependent on the earning male members. The scheme of micro financing through SHGs has transferred the real economic power in the hands of women. Today SHGs are accepted as agent by social changes, development and empowerment among the women. It was first started by women. With support of banking institutions to access credit facilities, the poorer section of rural women found new hope through the SHGs, which is now turned into real social movement. Maximum members of the SHGs are women who have developed their self-confidence and initiated a process of earning through innovative enterprises; this in turn made them confident and assertive in decision making in the family matters. This has led boost to the process of women's empowerment of the fundamental Right to work (Article 41) ensured under the Indian constitution. Life in the riverine islands of Indian Bengal Delta is difficult because of lack of almost all basic facilities in many of the areas; electricity has not reached in many islands, access to safe drinking water is still to be achieved in others, the primary health care centre is catering to the needs of the island people remains abysmally under staffed and there is no scope for vocational education or training. With all this limitations, island people who have been able to get higher education choose to migrate to the mainland area especially in and around capital city of Kolkata. However, since the delta is becoming increasing vulnerable with Climate Change, migration from the human population from the IBD is clearly indicating the upward trend since mid 1980's. Adaptation is a key component of the process but the scope for demand based skill development for the emigrants to the sending areas is totally lacking.



As such they end up working as unskilled labour. The majority of SHGs in IBD were initially promoted by NGO'S who work within the community and are Community Based Organisations (CBOs), though Government agencies, now appear to be playing a predominant role in increasing the number (Samling and Ghosh, 2013).

In West Bengal, a Department of SHGs and Self Employment was created in 2006 with the objectives of policy formulation and coordination of activities relating to SHGs and Self Employment programmes, operated by different Departments of the Government. According to official statistics, more than 3 million rural families have been organised under Self Help Group from April 1, 1999 to March 2012. Now there is more than 1, 00,000 Self Help Groups (SHG's) operating in the State formed by different organizations (both Government and Non-Government). Under the programme of Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana (SGSY) based programme, implemented by Rural Development Department about 55700 SHGs (Department of Panchayats and Rural Development, GoWB). In India, the total number of Self Help Groups (SHGs) promoted under National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) stood at 18, 64,742 in 2014 which increased to 23,05,513 in 2015, recording a growth of 23.64% in one financial year but it will be critical to examine the functioning of the groups especially focusing on Women empowerment.

The paper will highlight how the participation of women in SHGs made a significant impact on their empowerment both in social and economic aspects. West Bengal especially Indian Bengal Delta is considered as one of the most critically vulnerable areas in the era of Climate Change. However, published paper on the functioning of SHG's in south 24 Parganas district of IBD ( Samling and Ghosh, 2013) and unpublished report from selected block of IBD in north 24 Parganas (Sandeshkhali block II, Chakraborty and Ghosh, 2015) provided convincing evidence on the increasingly significant role that the women self help group can play, towards a process of adaptation with better coping mechanism with the climate change in the future time.

## **Gendered Vulnerabilities In Diyaras: Struggle With Flood And Drought In Gandaki Plains Of Bihar**

**Pranita B. Udas, Anjal Prakash, Chanda G. Goodrich**

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Diyaras, the land where Diya, a lamp never lights- is the name given to villages located in flood plains of Gandakiriver mostly inside embankment in Bihar. In the changing climate context, troubled with either too much or too little water, understanding vulnerabilities of people living in the Diyaras is crucial. Millions of people live in the vulnerable areas, not because of their choice. Many of the villages considered as safe one time have been gradually turning into Diyaraswith the effect of dancing river every year that may have triggered by intense rainfall in changing climate context.

This paper analyses gendered vulnerabilities in four villages representing different contexts in West Champaran district of Bihar. The field inquiry is inspired by anthropological research methods and makes use of participatory assessment tools to understand socioeconomic drivers and conditions leading to vulnerability of the people residing in the area. The two major climatic parameters that have affected the livelihood of people living in Diyarasare flood in the rainy season and drought in the summer An analysis of annual livelihood strategies of the community members in response to climate change indicates male members in all the households adopt mobile lifestyle to earn for families, whereas women and children remain throughout the year in flood plains. In recent past even young girls have started to join the men to go outside the village to earn, however neither of the households shared it as a happy strategy. Women who had left behind reported that the families are forced to go outside for work for survival. However there is always a worry that absentee family member may disappear forever, reporting some incidences of death.

The analysis concludes that anthropogenic activities such as infrastructure development either as roads or embankments have protected some villages against others, making other villages more vulnerable. Infrastructure development requires proper resettlement practices. Within this, the sociocultural differences women face specific to practice of dowry in Bihar has made women more vulnerable to men. This is validated by people's perception on 'who is vulnerable'. People's perceptions highlights that households with more daughters are perceived more vulnerable than others, addressing the fact that gender differences in society has causal relation with vulnerability.

# **Water Crisis and Its Impact on Women's Development: A Study of Kashmir Valley**

**Syed Suhail Yaqoob and Azra Musavi**

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Environmental change has become a global concern and consequently, the international community is worried about its effects on the world's economy and development. It has affected food prices, health and has caused flooding in various countries. There have, however, been many failed attempts at international level to contain its effects. Since world's development is skewed in nature, environmental change is going to affect under-developed and developing countries more, as compared to developed countries. Women form a greater chunk of population in both under-developed and developing countries. Due to the existing patriarchal setup in these countries, the effects of environmental change will be felt more by women as compared to men. Women lack control over economic, social and political resources in these countries. Environmental effects are not considered to be gender neutral. It is feared to affect more women as compared to men due to men having control over almost all resources. Women in patriarchal society, which still exists in these countries, are expected to manage home affairs. Management of water for drinking and other purposes forms the essential part of home management. Due to environmental change women's access to water will be greatly reduced. The unavailability of water supply in local canals, taps and dwindling groundwater will force them to devote extra time for water management. Kashmir valley has consistently witnessed erratic weather patterns due to environmental degradation. Due to change in the weather patterns there has occurred an acute shortage of fresh water. Women are forced to cover large distances to fetch fresh water for their households; this has affected their education and health. The present paper will analyse the effects of water crisis on the development of women through reallocation of time from education to water management in the valley. It will also concentrate on the health problems faced by women due to transportation of water from far-flung areas in the Kashmir valley.

# The Gendered Dimensions of Groundwater Usage in India and Its Implications for Climate Change Adaptation

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Over the last two decades, groundwater has played a vital role in the rapid growth of irrigated agriculture in India. This accelerated growth has been largely assisted by supportive government policy and a conspicuous lack of irrigation regulation. This is particularly relevant in the case of ground water where ownership is atomized and extraction unregulated. Unchecked usage has led to severe groundwater depletion in many parts of India with the worst affected being arid and semi arid regions.

In India's rural landscape, water usage for livelihoods and domestic purposes are strongly gendered. However, most literature on water from a gender perspective tends to focus on water in the context of structured schemes and water projects. This emphasis effectively excludes the experiences of the vast majority of people, both men and women, who live outside the domain of these projects. Furthermore, the binary gendered separation of water usage, into the domestic and livelihood domain fails to address the significant role women play in irrigation practices.

In this panel, we propose to examine groundwater-gender relationships and the gendered usage of groundwater both in the domestic and irrigated spheres. The panel will discuss findings from three research sites: semi-arid regions in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Maharashtra. Using in-depth interviews, surveys, and focus group discussions, the three presentations will interrogate the everyday experiences of users, as men and women, to understand how the growing prevalence and importance of groundwater in farming activities has impacted women's agency and shaped gender roles within the household and community. Taking into consideration the critical level of groundwater resources due to over extraction the papers will also probe (1) how the gendered impacts of current and future water scarcity will be exacerbated by the impacts of climate change, and (2) conversely, how changing access to groundwater mediates adaptation responses.

# Gender Difference in Climate Change Vulnerabilities and Adaptive Capacities

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Climate change is a lasting variation in the global climate in response to natural and/or human factors. Climatic changes affect weather patterns, increasing the frequency and intensity of floods, droughts, and extreme weather events. These types of conditions also result in natural disasters. Gender is the collective social differences between males and females, as determined by culture. Gender is one of many components of vulnerability to climatic change. Changes in the climate affect genders differently, magnifying existing gender inequality. Both women and men are affected by and vulnerable to climate change and global warming, but women often bear more of the burden. This higher vulnerability is mostly not due to biological or physical differences, but is formed by the social, institutional and legal context. Subsequently, Vulnerability is less an intrinsic feature of women and girls but rather a product of their marginalization.

## Objectives

- To analyze the socio economic status of the respondents
- To find out the vulnerabilities of men and women to climate change
- To study about the gender difference in vulnerabilities due to climate change
- To identify the adaptive capacities of men and women and provide valuable suggestions to response climate change

Addressing the social and gender dimensions of climate change poses many challenges that are not insurmountable. It requires gender mainstreaming in climate change response activities, sustainable and equitable development, a clear focus on adaptation and mitigation, a strong commitment of resources, and empowerment of individuals to build their own resilience. Equity and social justice cannot be achieved without recognizing the differences in vulnerability and strengths of women and men, and the various factors that contribute to vulnerability. Recognizing these differences is a necessary and important component of any prospective attempts to address the gendered health

consequences of climate change. The article makes an effort to identify the gender difference in climate change vulnerabilities and adaptive capacities.

## **Climate Change and Male Migration: Role of Women in the Changed Environ**

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The Indian Bengal Delta (IBD), popularly known as The Indian Sundarbans Delta (ISD), is the largest delta in the world. The delta, shared with Bangladesh, has been identified as one of the most vulnerable areas in the global level due to its low elevation. The IBD comprises a total of 104 islands out of which 54 are inhabited by human beings. Out of those 54 habitable islands, one island, Lohachura, has been completely submerged and another island, Ghoramara, is on the brink of submergence because of sea level rise, tectonic plates' movement and soil erosion. Available data indicate that in the past 30 years about more than 30,000 people have been displaced from their original homes in the IBD as a direct result of Climate Change induced sea level rise, coastal erosion, cyclone incidences and coastal flooding. An attempt was made by the state government to rehabilitate the migrants from Lohachura and Ghoramara Islands to the Sagar Island between 1982 and 2005; the later migrants did not find much support from the government. Cyclone Aila wreaked havoc in the IBD on May 25th, 2009, causing loss of human lives, livestock, and obliteration of livelihood and property. In the post Aila situation, due to economic crisis, 50% of the able bodied males from the most affected blocks of N and S 24 Parganas migrated out of the region to as many as 10 other states besides West Bengal. The women of IBD were suddenly burdened with an added sense of responsibility with their newly established position as household heads. Overnight, they had to turn into decision makers and also become the household administrator in all aspects encompassing family health, children's education, etc. The sudden onslaught of nature had profound impact on the social construct. The Delta Vision document 2011 of WWF-I further predicted that 1.4 million people have to migrate out of IBD due to sea-level rise. As adaptive strategy, there is an urgent need for skill development for the men folk of IBD who are primarily fishermen and farmers, in other trades such as masonry, painting, electrical work, carpentry, plumbing, crane operation, etc. which are in great demand in the real estate sector, all over India; for the women, training in cutting and stitching of garments can be

considered besides other trades for gainful employment. It is also necessary to empower women through Self-Help Groups, which are already a great success in IBD, as adaptive measures to look after their family in the absence of male members. The need for Adaptation Finance has become most critical at this point of time.

## **Women, Energy and Empowerment**

**Moderator: Govind Kelkar**

*Panellists: Rengalakshmi R.; Manjula M; and Dev Nathan*

Access and use of clean energy is closely linked to the problem of climate change. The focus of the panel is on the ways in which women's use of modern energy (broadly electricity, LPG and diesel) is related to their empowerment. There can two ways in which energy and empowerment of women relate to each other. Use of energy may lead to empowerment, or empowerment of women may lead to a change in the use of energy, e.g. shifting from household polluting solid biomass to non-household polluting LPG.

Panellists will look at both of the above relations between use of energy and the empowerment of women. The empowerment of women can be seen as occurring when there is a change in gender relations in the household and wider society from that which existed earlier. A minimal definition of empowerment, using Amartya Sen's cooperative conflict model of household bargaining, is when women are able to change the distribution of resources or consumption within the household in their favour.

Women's use of energy can be looked at in three domains – household consumption, the consumptive use of energy: the productive or income-earning use of energy such as agriculture and agri based enterprises; and community or public use of energy. As always in such categorization there are cross-category connections. For instance, electricity for charging a mobile phone may have both consumptive (social networking) and productive (checking on market prices) uses as well as changes in gendered social norms.

Panellists will each deal with one of the above domains, consumption, production and community use. They are encouraged to look at not only the initial or first-order relations (e.g. women's empowerment leading to their shift from wood to LPG for cooking) but also the subsequent, reflexive or second-order relations – that the switch in cooking fuel may, in turn, lead to subsequent empowerment.

# Migration, Climate Change and India's Neighborhood: Causes and Conflict

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Migration is a fact of human history. Through millennia, people have been migrating for reasons that have been neither obvious nor straightforward. In the contemporary times, migration has again come to vanguard due to several factors such as the global economic recession, increased identity-based violence and as well as the increased frequency of extreme disaster due to climate change and the nexus of environment, climate change and migration is surfaced as an area of research and concern. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the number of persons forced to migrate due to climate change and environmental degradation by 2050 has been forecast to vary by a factor of 40 (between 25 million and 1 billion) and it largely depends on which climate scenario unfolds. While the context of India's borders neighborhood especially, Bangladesh, the flow of migration has far been a multi-casual phenomenon and historical linkages.

Keeping in mind the historical and civilization ties of India and Bangladesh and their geographic proximity, this paper offers a systematic review of the various reasons for climate change induced migration from Bangladesh into India and in addition focusing on socio-economic challenges into the destination country. It would try also offers few case studies as the increasing impacts of climate change in Bangladesh people cross the border to the Indian Sunderbans Region (ISR), West Bengal where loss of lands and habitats are the two major issues due to sea level rise in recent years in search of food and shelter. There is a steady influx of Bangladeshi migrants into this region who could be termed 'crisis migrants, entering into ISR illegally in anticipation of threats in their own country and eventually becoming trapped by humanitarian crisis. The most pressing concerns related to the influx of migration are highlighted by international approaches to protected climate refugees, security implications, on one hand, and policy perspectives, on the other.

Keywords: Migration, Climate Change, India and Bangladesh.



# Household Drought Coping & Women in Odisha: Impact and Issues

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## **Extended Abstract:**

Off late climatic changes followed by recurrence of drought in many parts of India adversely affected the rural poor, farming households, women and others. While rural labour migration has been a routine household drought coping strategy, progressive increase in participation of rural women in farming and other land based activities was reported in semi-arid and backward areas. Drought induced migration and shortfalls in rural income, employment and expenditure however, not found gender neutral (Sahu, 2014). Under this situation many rural women are left to manage farming and other household activities with low or no access and control over resources such as land, water, credit and other resources which could affect them adversely. Occurrence of drought augment socio-economic costs in terms of loss of crop output and income, unemployment, food and water scarcity, high work burden, borrowings etc. but they are not necessarily gender neutral.

The objective of the paper is to analyze major impact and issues of household drought coping and adaptation strategies with focus on women and different dimensions of gender inequity in different drought affected areas. We have tried to analyze the nature and pattern of household labour allocation and other resource uses. Effort has been made to highlight intra-household drought coping and its impact on women at regional and group level. Our analysis shows rural household labour use has constrained by drought, inadequate local employment and rural credit that further affect household risk coping and gender relations.

The study is based on primary household data collected through field surveys in two different districts in Odisha to highlight impact and major issues relating to women, especially in labour diversification, farming, food management and consumption. Stratified sampling was used to determine the sample households from each study villages. The analytical framework also covers local drought adaptation and practices and help to discuss multiple impacts of drought on women both in tribal and non-tribal areas and in irrigated and dry areas just

to highlight complexity of inter-regional and inter-group diversities. Intra-household analysis of rate and intensity of work participation, food insecurity and drought coping is also attempted.

Household employment and food consumption shortfalls has direct fallout of drought induced crop failure, loss of farm income and rising food prices and women members were used for 'labour smoothing' and 'consumption smoothing' to cope with such scarcity. Increase in numbers of works and working hours, reduction in both quantity and frequency of food intake found common among women in the study areas with evidence of sharp fall in quality of food, imbalance in diet, drop in consumption of vital items like milk, vegetables which has adverse implication women and children. While employment adjustment reported in terms of undertaking multiple low productive non-farm activities by women, diverse food consumption adjustment also found rampant in both tribal and non-tribal areas indicating visible regional diversities. Consuming seeds, substitution of staple food, shifting to low value food, liquidation of assets, dependence on declining common property resources etc. show a sizeable tress of food insecurity, particularly on the poor and women.

More than two third of women reported increase in work burden during drought by half to double of the normal period. About one third of women in tribal areas reported migrated out during last drought season. Similarly, 71% of women in tribal area and 59 % of non-tribal area reported reduced their food intake during drought showing the extent of gender inequality in food consumption. Intra-household labour use and food consumption inequality found predominant in the study areas but varies across social groups. Factors like local agriculture, access to natural resources like forest, rivers and others, non-farm activities, public programs like PDS, MGNREGA etc. found play crucial role in household drought. Increase in number of works and working hours, unequal access to resource, inadequate drought relief and other public measures, under representation in decision making, poor human development push women into more distress widen gender inequality. With frequent drought and rising uncertain farm production conditions, high participation of women in land based activities appear more distress condition and it poses threat to food security and gender equity.

Therefore, regional specific and women centric development plans including long term drought proofing and agriculture development, expanding access to and use of water, land, credit and other resources, particularly to the women is suggested to reduce adverse impact of climatic change like recurrence of drought.

Long term drought measures, assured public employment and food provisioning, conservation and management of resources with women participation and decision making are reemphasized for improving gender equality and drought coping.

Key Words: Drought, Household Coping, Women, Odisha, India

## SUB - THEME 11

### GENDER, RELIGION AND DEMOCRACY

**Coordinators: Sabiha Hussain (Jamia Milia Islamia University, New Delhi) and A. Suneetha (Anveshi, Hyderabad)**

#### ABSTRACTS

##### **Between Sexual Self and Religious Self: Queer Subjects in Contemporary India**

**Dr. Pushpesh Kumar**

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The paper delineates negotiations of erotic desire and religious identity by those who follow Islam and engage with alternative erotic sensibilities. The queer Muslim subjects whose narratives constitute the core of this paper belong to different metropolitan cities in India where they inhabit a hybrid existence: In everyday life, they are not only located in their family and community contexts where homonegativity suffocate them but they associate themselves with civil society groups working on sexual rights, participate in internet spaces where queer subjects chat and interact, and invariably seek membership in what Leela Gandhi calls 'affective community' constituted, in this context, by erotically excluded groups. This enables them to undermine homonegativity through compartmentalization of their lives: the anonymity of city enables them to escape family and community gaze while the internet and affective community allow them to address their erotic needs. Like queer Muslims in diasporic contexts, the participants in the present study engage in with interpretative understanding of their religious text and cling more to spiritual than jurisprudential Islam. They wish to sustain their erotic desire while refusing to give up their religious affiliation and feel no less Islamic than other members of the religious community.

##### **Neo-Buddhist Women and Buddhist Identity formation**

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Dr. B.R. Ambedkar embraced Buddhism in the year 1956 to usher in a collective transformation in the lives of India's so called 'untouchables'. Ambedkar's 'Engaged- Buddhism', known as Navayana, was a result of a critical

reworking of traditional Buddhism in India. Navayana contextualized Buddha's teachings in accordance with modern values and socio-political life. In Navayana, every follower has the right to administer or receive 'Deeksha'.

This has dismantled the institution of priesthood and religious dogma. Furthermore, Navayana has rejected the significance of rituals by embracing the principle of 'Atta Deva Bhava' – which ascertains that every 'individual' is the 'creator' of her/his own life. Thus, the idea and institution of the 'Savior' who would elevate us from our drudgery has been questioned and abandoned. The theology of Navayana is based on Ambedkar's book 'Buddha and his Dhamma'. Evangelization based on Navayana principles of equality, liberty and fraternity is an undeterred, on-going process in India.

Navayana women have played and continue to play a critical role in the construction of a new Buddhist society in Maharashtra. One needs to systematically enquire into the ways in which they embraced the teachings of Navayana. Such an enquiry needs to be contextualized in the total rejection of traditional Hindu value systems. Life after conversion, in the past sixty years has been a new cultural journey for Navayana women. This journey was shaped (and continues to be shaped) by the social, economic, political complexities of everyday life. My research is an effort to capture this journey in all its complexities. As a part of my endeavor, I have been a regular participant observer of Navayana Buddhist women's everyday lives in Bopodi, Pune (Maharashtra) for the past eleven months.

This essay would be based on my field-notes collected during these visits. Through my interactions with Buddhist women, I have tried to find answers to the following questions - How do they built their Buddhist identity in everyday material lives? What, according to them, is a Buddhist way of life? How do they 'actualize' such a life? Are they fully dependent on men and their decisions to shape their Buddhist practice in public and private lives? How does patriarchy within the community shape and control their everyday lives? In this essay, I would try to a gendered analysis of the answers (or further questions) which were documented in the context of the above mentioned questions.

## **Women in Ritual Space: Negotiating Gender Roles**

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Feminism has been wary of religion, especially given that most of the religions are in fact male dominated and hence propagate ideas that are conflicting with women's freedom and equality. However, religion as an ideology and religion as practiced through rituals can be very different. There are two probable approaches to studying rituals- one of which is to focus on what ritual stands for and the other looks at how people practice rituals. In this paper I look at ritual as being performative and by extension, its participants as actors of it. The latter approach emphasizes the ways in which people interpret ritual forms to pursue their own individual as well as collective interests, often appropriating and modifying rituals when convenient.

In the context of Hindu ritual practices, ritual skills are very often equated to that of domestic skills as a lot of these practices mirror everyday domestic activities like cooking, feeding, bathing, etc. And therefore, primacy of women in ritual practices and religion is often explained by their skills in the domestic sphere. Also, given that women are often taught to stifle their individual drives and needs, ritual spaces sometimes become one of the few available avenues to express themselves. What can't find expression elsewhere finds expression in ritual spaces.

This paper is a study of changing patterns of women's participation in Durga Puja in order to analyze how women negotiate and transform such ritual spaces that largely function within the hegemonic structures. The choice to study participation of women in Durga Puja is largely based on the fact that women were relegated to the task of participating in the ritual practices based on the understanding that they are more adept in performing domestic chores. Durga transformed from being a private worship to a public festival. Earlier, women used to perform the chores within the household and continued the same when it became a community celebration. Initially, women were only responsible for preparing the ritual offerings. However, over the years, the involvement of women has also spilled onto the organizing, planning, and logistics of this public ritual performance. This gave women a great deal of public visibility and offered them a space for community building.

This study is based on informal interviews conducted with women who identify themselves as active participants in organizing community Durga Puja in their neighbourhoods. In keeping with feminist qualitative methodology, I wish to foreground their experiences and rationality (religious or otherwise) behind their participation in Durga Puja as expressed by them. Through these narratives I have tried to analyze how the ritual actors, the women who participate

in the Community Durga Puja, negotiate and tackle the dominant patriarchal hegemony inherent to these spaces.

## **Sahadharmini and More: Expectations of Women in the Rashtra Sevika Samiti's Discourse**

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Rashtra Sevika Samiti has been studied as a part of the larger Hindu right-wing movement in India. Scholars have tried to show the points of convergence and divergence of Samiti's ideology with that of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, the largest representative of the Hindu right in India. Samiti Prakashan, the publication unit of the Samiti, was a very carefully constructed mechanism to further Samiti ideology. Considering the Samiti's Sevikas hardly ever come into the limelight (unlike the RSS), these texts become important as the one-stop materials for a cohesive description of the thought of the women of the Hindu right-wing. For the purpose of this thesis, the overwhelming influence of the RSS on the members of the Sangh Parivar (of which Samiti is a part) will be acknowledged but more importantly, Samiti Prakashan's text's will be treated as the vehicles of Samiti's own Hindutva. Here, I would like to propose that while the Sangh has conceptualised ideal womanhood as a Sahadharmini, a concept borrowed from the colonial era, the Samiti has not only appropriated the religious realm that it was relegated to but is also using that to envision its own brand of Hindutva. Secondly, inspired by the work done by Saba Mahmood on the Piety Movement of Egypt and Atreyee Sen on the Shiv Sena women, there will be an attempt to understand the complexity of the concept of 'agency' in the women's participation in the right-wing movement.

## **Nation and Uniform Civil Code: Locating Women of Northeast India**

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The debates around UCC have once again come to the forefront, something which has been intriguing the Indian women's movement for a long time now. While debating its implications for the rest of India, we often forget to mention the case and peculiarity with which it is entangled when we talk of India's Northeast. For Northeast, with its troubled political legacy, the UCC debate can turn

particularly problematic for two reasons, firstly, the tussle between institutions of modern nation state and existence of constitutionally recognized customary laws, already functioning community/ clan based institutions like the village councils etc. Secondly, multiplicity of religious practices amongst various tribal groups, those which are beyond the ambit of the established or predominant religious practices. Will a UCC be able to address such heterogeneity, is a question worth pondering upon. Speaking of rights of women in context of the region is already a difficult terrain and UCC will aggravate the tensions further, reasons which this paper would attempt to map out. For Northeast India, a UCC cannot be a gender just formulation unless the conflict between community, customary laws and anxieties about institutions of modern state are solved first. Based on empirical insights from various parts of Northeast India, this paper will critique the homogenizing tendency of a UCC, and also attempt to sketch its implications and challenges to gender justice in the region.

## **The Urgent Need for Queer and Feminist Hindu Theology**

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Most religions have for their ideal equality of humankind. For example, Christianity preaches that God created man in his own image. Although we have a problematic narrative of Eve being created from the rib of Adam, another reading of the Genesis says men and woman were all created equally by God. In essence Islam also teaches us that all are equal in the eyes of Allah. Buddhism does not talk about God but certainly talks about equality for all human beings. This is not to say that in practice, the followers of these religions have ensured equality for all. The reality is far from that. Christianity was used to justify slavery and deny women their fundamental rights. In countries like the United States the major objections to basic LGBT rights like marriage equality and access to restrooms for trans\*persons all come from orthodox Christian ideology. However, in its most basic and essential form, the theology of most religions is based on the premise of equality of all.

In its dominant discourse, Hinduism seems to be an exception to this trend. While there is no one single scripture or authority for Hinduism, the most popular account of creation talks about Brahmins being created from the head of God and the Sudras from the feet of the God. While it can be argued that both the head and the feet are equally important for a human being to function, it is also true that the feet can never aspire to become the head. The fallacy of equality



in such a setup is similar to that in the “separate but equal” doctrine which was used to justify apartheid.

While there are both masculine and feminine divine entities, the feminine ones are always subsumed into the masculine and not the other way round. For example, Shiva is called popularly “Ardhanarishvara”, which literally means half-woman. However, there is no such popular term to talk about Parvathi as a half-man God. There are examples of fierce and powerful feminine gods like Mariamman but they do not enjoy the same prestige and status like the gods of the dominant castes. Even today, religious institutions like Sankara Madam continue to practice blatant discrimination based on caste and gender but get away with it by disguising such evil practices as noble religious traditions. For example, a woman or a person from the oppressed castes does not have equal opportunity to study the Vedas in these institutions.

While we have made tremendous progress in taking issues like discrimination against women in access to Temples to the highest courts, there is also an urgent need for engagement with religious establishments on the basis of feminist and queer theology. Otherwise, extremist forces will continue to use this disconnect to their advantage as was evident in women coming up with “Ready to Wait” campaign in response to the the court granting women the right to enter sacred shrines like Sabarimala.

## **Matriliney and Islam: An Ethnographic Study of the Minangkabau of West Sumatra**

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The co-existence of religious and customary practices continues to be an important aspect of the social organization among the Minangkabau, a Muslim majority group in the West Sumatra province of Indonesia, in contemporary times. Matrilineal practices constitute an integral part of the everyday life of the Minangkabau Muslims irrespective of the challenges posed by a multitude of factors at various moments in the history of West Sumatra. The Dutch colonial rule since the seventeenth century and the emergence of Islamic reformist trends in the early nineteenth and twentieth century posed challenges to the matrilineal social organization, through the codification of customary laws, introduction of money economy and calling into question the inheritance in the female line. One also cannot discount the contestations raised by nationalist leaders to the matrilineal practices. They perceived the existence of multiple customary practices as hindrance to the creation of a uniform nationhood. In the recent past, the validity of matrilineal inheritance and coparcenary property rights

have come to be questioned under the patrilineal Javanese led central ministry. The legal system of the central government entails within it, the legal vestige of a colonial past and a shift towards the creation of a uniform, patrilineal law in Indonesia. However, matrilineal practices continue to sustain in the everyday social organization of the Minangkabau, through processes of accommodation, negotiation and contestation. The paper explores these elements of change and continuity in the matrilineal practices of Minangkabau Muslims through an ethnographic study in the villages of Solok, Pariaman and the coastal town of Padang in West Sumatra, Indonesia.

## **Exploring Religious Discrimination in Health Facilities in Mumbai**

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The rise in communally driven identity politics in India during the past two decades has led to an increasing number of communal flare-ups in the country, State institutions have been found to be complicit in many cases, raising questions on the secular nature of the state. In the two major instances of communal violence in the past two decades - the 1992-1993 Mumbai riots following the Babri Masjid demolition and the 2002 post-Godhra riots in Gujarat - the involvement of the police force has been explicitly noted by Judicial Enquiry Commissions as well as fact-finding reports. As with the police system, the health system too has displayed biases towards minority communities during communal riots. This departure from a neutral role in times of communal riots points to the extent to which communal elements have seeped into even the health machinery.

In addition to this active bias and discrimination perpetrated during communal riots, we at CEHAT hypothesize that discriminatory treatment by health facilities operates in times of peace as well, and women belonging to the minority community face such discrimination on a regular basis. CEHAT's own work with health care providers in the MCGM has shown that the health care providers do harbour communal biases and stereotypes related to the Muslim community. The Sachar Committee report, based on discussions with representatives from the Muslim community, has reported that Muslim women prefer not to access health facilities due to the 'unacceptable behaviour' that they encounter. (Rajinder Sachar Committee, 2005)

The link between discrimination and health is a close yet complex one. The studies in the West show that the experience of discrimination has an impact on people's health and sense of well-being. Discrimination by health care providers at health facilities results not only in poor health outcomes for vulnerable groups

but also reduces compliance with treatment and serves as a barrier to accessing medical care.

India is signatory to several human rights treaties that explicitly forbid prejudice and bias in the provision of services. By virtue of being a signatory to these human rights treaties, the Indian State is committed to provide health services and end all forms of discrimination in the health facilities. It therefore becomes important to understand the overt and covert functioning of religious based discrimination in the area of health. It is a serious health and human rights issue that warrants exploration so that interventions can be put in place to address it.

This paper is an attempt to explore religion based discrimination in health facilities based on perceptions of women from different communities. My study, “Exploring Religious Discrimination in Health Facilities in Mumbai” on which the paper is based reports that women accessing public health facilities in Mumbai are discriminated on the basis of class, caste, language, region and religion. Health professionals and health systems need to recognize that women face multiple forms of discrimination based on caste, class and community and therefore take additional steps to ensure unbiased delivery of services.

I am working on issues of Women and Violence specialising in Armed Conflict areas of India.

## **Jab Who Met? Indian Cinema, Religion and the Construction of Gendered Difference**

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How does a nation move past the eruption of mass violence within its ranks? This paper examines popular Indian cinema’s treatment of violence, religious difference and gendered relations, with a focus on Sikhs and Muslims. Approaching mainstream Indian cinema as a particularly productive site for tracking the cultural imaginary that is constitutive of, and constituted by, nation formation and its attendant homogenizing of identity, I study two blockbuster films that reveal glimpses into the socio-cultural practices at work that seek to move communities beyond histories of violence. In my reading of two film texts, I make the case that they recast the minority subject as the welcoming recipient of the love and neo-liberal values on offer by the nation-state. The rewriting of

these relations of affiliation, however, are predicated on the construction of other minorities, such as the Muslim, as a source of shared threat to national well-being.

## **Issues and Challenges before Muslim women Professionals: A Feminist Analysis based on Bangalore,**

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These days in general Islam seems to be associated with several fears, ideas and stereotypes in the eyes of common people. The prevalence of such mental constructs is also demonstrated by media. Popular notions are often far from reality. True Islam liberated women from a society that extensively restricted their rights. With the advent of Islam, women were given rights of inheritance, property ownership, divorce and even education.

Like all other traditional women in the society, Muslim women also undergoing transformation. There has been a changing trend towards traditional status of the Muslim women throughout the globe owing to spread of education, demand from the economy and to some extent slackening of patriarchal rigidity, dynamic political system and growth of women's movements. Change in the position of Muslim women and the Muslim family is becoming more of a reality every day. More and more Muslim women are entering in the labor force. This has several consequences for the family. The traditional picture of Muslim women is very different than what it is today. Earlier they were restricted only to do house work and generally it was the Muslim men who earn for the family. But Now there are Muslim women who control and own giant financial interests. Often women response to positive change is much quick and faster than the men. Many Muslim women have become earners in the present age, some of them who possess high academic qualifications earn even higher salaries than their husbands. They now work in schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, administrative offices, political establishments etc.

In this regards the present paper based on qualitative feminist research methodology (case studies) will try to see the issues and challenges faced by Muslim women professionals. It also would throw light on how being Muslim women and by wearing burkha or hijab they face/overcome any kind of discriminations or insecurity at their respective work places.

# **Interrogating Hijab: Divergent Dimensions of wearing it – A Case Study of Delhi City**

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‘Hijab’ remains one of the most controversial and most debatable issue all over the world. Scholars have been pondering and challenging the oppressing feature of hijab in the society since long. According to feminist scholarship, the general stereotype associated with hijab is seclusion of Muslim women and restricting them from leading an independent lives. But what this scholarship fails to notice is that in most parts of the world, hijab has multiple interpretations. The word hijab refers to both the head-covering customarily worn by some Muslim women and an overall modest Islamic styles of dressing. The garment has unlike legitimacy and cultural statuses in various countries. Hijab in these cases has become a sign of political Islam or is often perceived as fundamentalism against secular government. Islamic dress, notably the variety of headdresses worn by Muslim women, has become a prominent symbol of the presence of Islam in Western Europe. The issue has different names in different countries, and “the veil” or “hijab” may be used as general terms for the debate, representing more than just the veil itself, or the concept of modesty embodied in hijab.

Many studies in the west have been carried out bringing out the dynamics of wearing a hijab, politics of wearing a hijab, formation of identities through hijab, etc. However, no such study has been taken up in the Indian context, thus, this study is an extension of contemporary researches being carried out in the West. It tries to explore and pose several questions regarding the observance of ‘hijab’. It tries to explore whether the ‘religious’ identity alone determines the personality of ‘hijab’ observers or does cultural practices, traditions and customs has an influence over it in the Indian context? How do these women perceive ‘hijab’? Do they face any challenge in observing it? Do they practice it on their own or on account of societal pressures?

This paper is a part of an independent ongoing research work based on the field survey of 100 educated Muslim women either college/university going students or working women from various fields residing in Delhi. The interview schedule comprised of closed and open ended questions. Simple random sampling has been used. Due to time constraint the final findings could not be presented in this paper. However, theoretical concepts of ‘hijab’ along with

the preliminary findings of the survey based on the seven interviews with the college/university going students and working women in the city of Delhi forms the basis of this paper. The study has a mixed method approach which is based on both, theoretical concepts of hijab along with the empirical evidences from the capital city of India.

## **Legislative Debates on Marriage Laws**

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The continued existence of religious personal laws in India is a product of both British colonial rule and subsequent post-colonial nation formation. These post-colonial nationalist forces resulted in a retention of personal law as an accommodative strategy, a recognition of difference on the lines of religion and thus as an expression of state 'secularism'.

This particular accommodative strategy is of great significance to the lives of women, as personal law governs and regulates family life in gender unequal ways, varying on the basis of religion. Each personal law retains gender unequal provisions based on the religiously differentiated normative constructions of family life current at the time these laws were framed. Often the form of these laws reflect these constructions of family life, despite several amendments and some judicial precedent using creative interpretation to push for more gender-equal laws and their implementation.

The legislative debates are a record of public reasoning and democratic deliberative processes which lead to the drafting and retention of personal laws and their shaping into the form in which they now exist. As legislative debates are immediately implicated in the framing of laws, they more strongly influence the form of these laws than other public debates on the subject. In some instances several conflicting constructions are at play in the drafting of the laws, based on the conflicting normative views held by legislators involved in the process, which result in the legislation retaining these tensions.

This paper explores legislative debates around the enactment of and changes to certain provisions within divorce legislation across personal laws. In particular it seeks to examine the debates surrounding the enactment of The Muslim Dissolution of Marriage Act (1939); The Hindu Marriage Act (1955) and the Marriage Laws Amendment Bill (2001). Specifically it focuses on debates surrounding the existence and availability of divorce; the effect of conversion or apostasy on the persistence of a marriage and the demand for members of a religious community to be the only ones to interpret their own personal law.

Though these debates pertain to particular changes in different personal laws separated by decades, each debate implicates normative constructions of family life of other religions as well as the one(s) under discussion, as they are invoked in comparison by legislators. This enables the paper to work across communities.

This paper attempts to map the arguments that structure these debates. Through this, it seeks to understand the underlying normative constructions of family life (religiously differentiated as well as those common across religions), which both influence and are deployed by legislators. Specifically, it attempts to understand how gender is implicated in these constructions and in the evolving relationship between the state, religion and religiously-defined 'community'.

## **Mapping the Scholarship on New Religious Movements: Gender/Caste Perspective**

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Enormous growth and continuously rising popularity of New Religious Movements (henceforth NRMs) is notable development in contemporary India. NRMs are revisionist, internationalist (Gerald,1995), transnational in nature and attract huge followings from urban educated middle-class background. They have widespread reach in public through various means of communication. Many of them have state support, open admiration from prominent political leaders, corporate sector etc. These modern cults are not only limited to spirituality but have influence on other aspects of contemporary living including what to eat, what products to use, what television channels to view and so on (Upadhyay and Robinson 2012). Considering this vast influence of gurus on contemporary Indian society, it is important to study them in relation to the contemporary social changes in India. The major shifts in the socio-cultural environment in India include the rising Hindu nationalism, the growing gap between the castes, the increasing caste uprising, and the resultant construction of gender to suit the needs of society etc. The paper will try to explore the linkages between gender/caste system and NRMs by mapping the scholarships from gender caste perspective.

The rapidly growing influence of NRMs on contemporary Indian Society, have attracted the attention of different scholars. A broad review of the scholarship suggests that studies are being done either academically elaborating the phenomena, different types of NRMs, the reasons behind there proliferation,

historical growth of the phenomena in India etc. or specific cults, gurus etc. are studied from the theoretical frameworks of gurus, new religious movements, seva, neo-liberal reforms, secularization, women's right to renunciation, modernity etc. To get a greater and clearer understanding of NRMs and its influence on gender/caste system in India, the paper would attempt to categorize the theoretical frameworks used in the study of NRMs by various scholars focusing on the scholarships on New Hindu Religious Movements considering Hindu as the majority religion having tremendous influence on Indian society. The paper would make an effort to map the scholarship done on NRMs through various scholars from gender/caste perspective exploring the different ways caste is seen by them. It would attempt to analyze whether the scholarship attempts to study caste needs and the resultant gender needs and whether these needs inform the following of these cults? Whether there are studies showing how these NRMs envision caste or gender roles in society? Similarly whether the studies done, look through the caste of gurus and followers and if so, in which way? By keeping these questions at the centre of this paper, it would analyze the scholarship from a gender/caste perspective.

## **Several Scripts, Several Scribes: The (Un)Making of Taslima Nasreen**

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How to read the inclusion of Taslima Nasreen in the Western society and in India? The saviors have given her shelter but how shall we read this shelter? Here, inclusion becomes another form of exclusion. The writer is appropriated, her works are appropriated and perhaps, her 'inclusion' is also appropriated.

I began with the question "Who is Taslima Nasreen?" and tried to answer it by analysing her case through the categories of nationalism, citizenship, gender and violence. This question led me to another question "What is Taslima Nasreen and how to read her narrativization?"

From the biographical sketches, I shifted to the narrative sketches. There are numerous narratives generated around Taslima Nasreen by the Western Media and Human Rights Organisations and the Hindu Right in India.

The controversy around Taslima begins with the publication of Lajja and also her appropriation. Western Media and Human Rights Organisations, Hindu Right in India and the fundamentalist Islamic groups in Bangladesh constitute the set of three seemingly different prisms which form the figure of Nasreen. For



the Islamic political parties and groups, Nasreen was a symbol of blasphemy and disgrace to their faith and women. For, the BJP and other Hindu right parties and groups, she was a spokesperson, bringing forward the atrocities against Hindus and revealing the 'true' nature of Islam. For the Western media, she was the champion of free speech and critique. Her case was soon connected with the fatwa against Salman Rushdie for his book *Satanic Verses*. In the western world, the discourse around Muslim identity and its relation to fundamentalism and barbarity was nurtured around the protests and fatwas against Taslima Nasreen by the Islamic groups in Bangladesh. This understanding strengthens with her banishment from Bangladesh by the state.

In my research paper, I discuss the narrativization of Taslima Nasreen by the Hindu Right in India and by her portrayal in western media and academia. I begin with discussing her case through the trajectories of nation, citizenship, religion and agency. Further, I discuss the construction of the Muslim Other in India by the Hindu fundamentalist groups. This kind of othering sees the inception of two categories, the "good" and the "bad" Muslim. For the Hindu right, Nasreen falls in the previous category. In this section, I unpack the discourse formed around the Muslim body.

One cannot discuss Nasreen without discussing the category of free speech. In the latter half of the paper, I unpack the categories of free speech, tolerance and multiculturalism. Is Nasreen's speech free or is free speech free? Another crucial emphasis is on the formation of the Third World subject by western feminists.

One question which had continuously remained in my mind during the research is whether the problematisation of the one-dimensional identity given to Islam by the West and the Hindu Right undermines the question of Taslima Nasreen's oppression by her religion and how shall we read this oppression. Do I negate her agency to speak against the patriarchal nature of religion when I discuss her appropriation by the Hindu Right in India? I conclude by conversing with this dilemma through a discussion on multiculturalism and feminism.

## **Salvation through Starvation: Everydayness of Violence on Adolescent Girls through Jain Religious Rituals**

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A 13 year old Jain girl Aaradhana Samdariya died a few days ago in Hyderabad. She died during the Jain festival season, having starved herself for 68 days. For

those 68 days of her fast, she was a spectacle. Community members came to see her and took selfies with her. There was a ritual festivity in the air.

The incident which was seen as an accident or an exception and it was argued that she herself given a consent for this upvas(starvation). But these kinds of practices are very common in Jain religion. In chaturmas (4 holy months) people often do these kinds of upvas. In paryushan parv( 10 days Jain festival in august/september), most of the Jain people do these upvas , especially women and adolescent girls. There are different types of upvas nirjal(without drinking water), ekasan(only lunch), eating only fruits etc.

Adolescent girls take part in such upvas practices in large numbers. However this doesn't happen in isolation. There is a series of practices, which motivate these girls to adopt such practices of starvation. Religion becomes a site to construct the self of adolescent Jain girls especially through temple rituals. Cultural activities in Jain festivals like Paryushan Parv, Panch Kalyanak Pratishtha Mahotsav (a traditional Jain ceremony that consecrates one or more Jain Tirthankara icons with celebration of Panch Kalyanaka (five auspicious events). The ceremony is generally held when new Jain temple is erected or new idols are installed in temples.) In these events, adolescent girls are appointed as 'sacred volunteers' for various rituals, they are called Asht Kumarikas(8 virgin girls) or Chhappan Kumarikas (56 virgin girls). They get dressed in functional attires, perform dance on religious songs, do pujas, perform aartis, offer arghya (Offering to the lord) to maharaj (Jain gurus and munis). Also these Jain munis give pravachan especially for adolescent boys and girls in the evening, to teach them how to take ahead Jain religion through youth. They also tell girls to keep fast for the welfare of their family, religion and themselves.

I, myself, growing as a Jain girl have undergone through these practices. I was part of these celebrations and fasting.

I am going to analyze how these rituals and meanings associated to participation in these rituals construct the self of Jain Adolescent girls and also construct the 'consent' of Jain girls to undergo starvation. Therefore I do not see Religious murder of Aradhana as an accident but how everydayness of violence on Jain adolescent girls leads to the epitome like the incidence happened in Hyderabad. Gender roles are assigned for adolescent girls like to bring water for puja on their head in a kalash. Also they are encouraged to give Aahar (to serve 'auspicious' food in 'pure attire' (Sovale) ) to Jain gurus or munis) and while giving this Aahar, Jain munis give some kind of Niyam (a temporary or

permanent rule) to give up something like giving up eating rice for few days or months. Many times these Niyams includes fasting. In this paper I am focusing on Digambar Jain religious practices in Maharashtra. It will be an ethnographic study of adolescent Digambar Jain girls and construction of their 'self' through the religious practices mentioned above.

## **Inverted Argument, Subversive Opinion: Zeenath Sajida Writes to Muslim Patriarchy**

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In the 1950s, Hyderabad writer Zeenath Sajida wrote an essay in Urdu titled "Agar Allah Miyan Aurat Hotey" ("If Allah Miyan Were a Woman"), in which she systematically refutes patriarchal arguments about women's ostensibly inherent inferiority and fiercely argues against prevailing social norms of polygamy, hijab/purdah, the idea that children mark a continuation of the paternal line, and the denial of maintenance to children born of tawa'ifs. What is remarkable about Sajida's essay is that all her arguments are rooted through a deep understanding and dynamic feminist interpretation of the foundational texts of Islam, i.e. the Qur'an and the Sunna ("tradition," otherwise known as Hadith). In doing so, Sajida also cleverly displaces the assumed masculine gender of Allah, positing that Allah can only be a woman and, actually, might even be genderless. Such an essay is surely a vital text that must be read, revisited, and made visible in light of Muslim women's increasingly vocal engagements with religion and religious patriarchy in the largest "democracy" in the world. Located in the context of contemporary debates about a uniform civil code versus retaining a (reformed) Muslim Personal Law and drawing from the Islamic feminist scholarship of Amina Wadud and Fatima Mernissi, this paper seeks to examine Sajida's essay in order to study how Muslim women have used Islam as the platform from which to articulate their problems and claim their rights.

"Islamic feminism" is a term that has only recently been applied to some Muslim women's activities in the context of community-based (non-elite) interventions, which are understood to have begun in urban areas in India in the 1980s. However, research on the Islamic feminist aspects of many of these interventions in the Indian context remains scant, even though Muslim women's political organizing and influence has only increased over the past three decades, most notably in the form of the Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan, Bebaak Collective, and the Muslim Women's Rights Network. Another important

organizational development occurred in 2006, when the All-India Muslim Women's Personal Law Board (AIMWPLB) was formed to stand as a counterpoint to the blatantly misogynistic All-India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB). The Islamic feminist standpoint of the AIMWPLB is revealed in its Chairperson's recent words that "Muslim women will walk with the Qur'an in one hand and the Constitution in another" (21:35-21:50). Shaista Amber's tactful yet feasible solution to the problem of Personal Law implies that Muslim women will and should access all legal provisions, religious and secular, that are available to them in their quest for rights, but that they must first and foremost be returned their legitimate rights within Islam.

Much research still needs to be done in order to understand these collective and individual instances of Muslim women's activisms in India, especially those in which Muslim women insist on Islam as the framework through which to fight for their rights. And although the historiography about Muslim women's activisms from the early and mid-twentieth century is quite robust, more work needs to be conducted on texts such as Sajida's essay in order to understand and theorize the trajectory and shifts in Muslim women's activisms across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Many questions need answering: When did Muslim women start fighting for their rights using Islam as pedestal and pivot? How have the issues over which they organized and mobilized their personal, political, and community-based resources evolved and changed based on practical considerations and urgencies? What media have Muslim women used to register their protest against what they see as an un-Islamic patriarchy being practiced by Muslim men and Muslim institutions? Does Geraldine Forbes' understanding of "social feminism" (239) apply to Islamic feminism in the context of Muslim women's interventions in India today? This paper will address these questions through an examination of Sajida's hitherto forgotten essay.

## **Hindu Women 'Organise': The Politics and Programme of the All India Hindu Mahasabha**

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There is a growing body of academic literature that demonstrates women's involvement in various religio-political groups and movements. In this paper, I focus on the history of the women's wing of the All India Hindu Mahasabha (AIHM), the first Hindu right wing political party in India, called as the All India

Hindu Mahila Mahasabha. This organization is under-reported both in academic works on the AIHM as well as organizational literature produced by the AIHM. The story of this little-known women's organization, then is illuminative of the general conditions of women's mobilization for shoring up varied political agendas.

The Hindu Mahila Mahasabha was formally inaugurated in 1942 though there were a series of 'Hindu' women's conferences since 1935. Importantly women from western India were in the forefront of this organization, quite like their older and still surviving counterpart, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's women's affiliate, the Rashtra Sevika Samiti (1933). Indeed Padma Anagol (2013) has demonstrated right-wing polemic amongst women in the region by studying the writings of Laxmibai Dravid, a Pune-based brahman woman of the late nineteenth century. It is well known that western India was also the site of some of the earliest of feminist mobilisations. Here, I analyse the discourse as well as programmes of the short-lived All India Hindu Mahila Mahasabha so as to complicate feminist understanding of 'agency' in addition to adding historical depth to the existing literature on women and the Hindu right.

Key words: gender, religion, democracy, discourse, marginality, community, region, nation, modern,

## **Invoking the Goddess: Local Deities and Female Devotees**

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Feminism, in the Indian context, takes a slightly deviant approach compared to Western feministic devices by relating woman to the powerful and nurturing divine form of a Hindu goddess. The concept of 'Shakti' is thereby accommodated in the Patriarchal structure through sanction of religion. However, it is also in these religious/cultural spaces that women are sometimes confined to or restricted from admission and participation in rites, citing age old traditions and norms. The recent interventions such as the Temple Entry movements at Sabarimala, Shani Shignapur or at Haji Ali mosque by Feminist activists have raised debates on violation of constitutional rights of a citizen to access spiritual and religious spaces.

While this is the case with sacred spaces regulated by dominant castes,

religions and gender hierarchies, coming to a different kind of oppressive and exclusionary politics, I shall now bring to notice cases of local deities in Hyderabad which were primarily worshipped by women in mostly domestic spaces such as their own houses or in neighborhoods since almost their migration and settlement in the city a few decades back. According to preliminary fieldwork conducted while studying and documenting the visual culture through the images of the local deities for my thesis, titled, “ Making of the deity: mapping the visual culture of local deities in Telangana”, on the shrines dedicated to them, I came across the deities to be an integral part of the daily lives of specific communities who worship them. Such shrines start off with the dedication to the ‘Inti devata’ (family/caste goddess) generally consecrated inside the compound walls of the house. Historically, these have evolved from gramadevatas who are closely associated with different communities divided according to their traditional family professions/castes or each goddess is worshiped for a specific purpose. These small sacred spaces or shrines dedicated to local deities like Pochamma, Yellamma etc are usually found around the dwellings and neighbourhoods of communities worshipping them. Significant feature here is that these deities were mainly worshipped by the women of the house hold, typically the mother or the wife and later the duties of conducting the rituals are passed over to the daughter or the son. Evidently, woman played a major role right from consecration of the deity to the establishment of the shrine and daily performance of pooja, rituals and cleansing. In recent decades, these shrines seem to be Hinduvised as they expand into larger temple structures with organized temple committees and upper caste male priests taking over the duties of worship. As the local culture and festivities like Bonalu and Bathukamma, both celebrating the local goddesses, gain popularity and have played a major role in the formation of a common cultural identity during the Telangana movement, it may also be observed that the women who performed as priestess in their earlier domestic settings seem to lose their affinity with the rights and rituals of worshipping the deity. Instead they appear to become mere spectators or participants in the festivities. The shifting paradigms of worship and power/gender relations in society due to increasing political support and commercial viability of the temple committees seems to be affecting the role of priestesses and female devotees in measured and silent processes.

The present paper shall attempt to examine the discriminatory practices carried on the basis of marginalities of gender, caste and class and their contemporary Feminist repercussions.

## **Imagining rights of Muslim women beyond religion, feasibility or impossibility?**

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The debates around rights of Muslim women have always been tied down by conversations around Muslim Personal Law; where marriage, divorce and matrimonial rights seem to be the larger framework for the rights of Muslim women. In recent time, there has been a resurfacing of the debate of Muslim Personal Law in the country on the pretext of Shyara Bano's petition filed in the apex court of India challenging the constitutionality of the practice of one sided 'triple talaq', halala and polygamy. While multiple positions have emerged within the women's groups working on rights of Muslim women, there has been a propensity to contextualize Muslim women as a monolithic identity. The proposed paper aims to locate itself in these ongoing debates of triple talaq and how marriage is seen as an inevitable reality for women, where multiple realities of quotidian living of Muslim women remain unacknowledged. The primary aim of this paper is to break the silence on the multiple identities of Muslim women as well as envisaging a gender justice where religion is not the liminal space of this imagination. The paper will unfold in three sections: the first section will map the extant debates around rights of Muslim women in context of Muslim Personal Laws and also its exclusions; it will also complicate the ideas of 'community' and multiple voices in a community and how each of these sections claim authenticity to represent based on numerical strength. The second section aims to map the contradictions and feasibility of Muslim Personal Law in relation to Uniform Civil Code as well as codification of Personal Laws, keeping in mind the contentious relationship of a socially marginalized community with a right wing government. The third section will conceptualise 'social insecurity' and its implications for a marginalized community in the larger discourse of global Islamophobia. This section will map the events which have led to the simmering growth of identity politics and how a homogenous minority identity is emerging to safeguard the rights of the already vulnerables.

### **Islamic Feminism and Legal Reforms in India**

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This paper first discusses feminism and Islamic feminism through a rather brief and unavoidably selective overview of “Islamic feminism”. Above this is a matter of theoretically Islamic feminism. This includes the importance of Islamic feminism and its history to have a discussion about it. Firstly what is the Islamic feminism? And Islamic feminism differs from other religion why? What the impact of feminism happened in India Muslim feminism and what to have political, legal, economic and social rights changes at Muslim women life or Feminism was already in Muslim personal law? After the Islamic feminism in India what changes and reforms in Muslim Personal law? I communicate in this paper a nascent ‘Islamic feminist’ movement in India, dedicated to the goal of achieving gender equity under Muslim Personal Law. I will argue in this paper that a clear distinction should rather be made between Islamic feminism as a discursive movement, and the distinct local, national or transnational social and political movements that are all increasingly referring to this discourse.

In India, these movements in many cases precede the emergence of Islamic feminism in the 1990s. There is significant struggle against accepting them as partners in the debate and struggles to determine women’s rights and their future. The intellectual strand of Islamic feminism, specifically are justification of Islamic law and theology respectively. This paper has an overview with this question what impact at Muslim Personal law and Muslim women rights in India after Islamic feminism? Feminism gives a new point-of-view on society, when eliminating old theory about why things are the way they are, and looking at it from the perspective that women are not inferior and men are not the mean. Feminism is a collection of movements and ideologies that share a common stated aim: to define, establish, and defend equal political, economic, cultural, and social rights for women. In this paper includes looking for to establish equal rights for women in society and religion.

## **‘Love Jihad’– Experiences of Intervention in Karnataka**

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In-spite of the Constitution of India granting equal rights to all its citizens irrespective of their gender, caste, religion, these rights have remained a distant dream for the women of the country, thanks to fundamentalist forces that have forced the women to remain as a subsidiary class. This paper aims at throwing light on how even in a democratic set up these forces snub women’s rights making use of religious dictums.



These fundamental forces which originate in the political strategy of 'divide and rule' of British imperialism have constantly been imposing certain rules and laws on women, which succeed in clipping their freedom of choice.

Recently we have seen the phrases like "Love Jihad" being coined in the name of protecting religious culture. Such practices or phrases do not find existence anywhere in the religious scriptures. By damnation of inter religious and inter caste marriage, society is further strengthening the prevalent caste culture. This is definitely a daunting development in terms of a healthy secular society as well as the women's rights. Such developments not just only circumscribe women within prevalent social laws, but also limit their fundamental right to freedom.

The construct of "Love Jihad" exert a constant pressure on the minority community in India, which result in a situation of unrest. Needless to say, women are the most affected in such socio political unrest, where patriarchy makes it a question of pride to demean and abuse the women as a mode of insult to the other community.

This paper looks at how a mass organisation of women such as AIDWA has intervened on behalf of women and the affected persons in events of so called incidents of "Love Jihad" in the state of Karnataka. It reflects upon the manner in which institutions of governance fail to address the issues of women's rights and empowerment.

## **Civil Social Life-The Rationale for a Gender just Civil Code**

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Clamour for justice is part of social systemic life especially where human beings are 'destined' to act and interact in highly differentiated social positioning of very distinctive subjectivities—by being gendered, religion-/caste-linked etc. Gender Justice, which is possible to conceive and achieve only in the democracy, has become a watch word among the academics and activists. It is in this context of "Unity in Diversity" that the citizens are to reflect consequently on the conceptualizing aspects of Civil Code, before and beyond the religious affiliations of the subjectivities, whether it is uniform or common is another question to be addressed to altogether.

Hence it has become the immediate necessity to reflect on the conceptual

frame that had already produced and reproduced the whole legal system that is knitted socially by the mentality (social structural property) of androcentricity maintaining the social legitimization of differences by and through the beings almost unquestionably. It is all the more significant for it is by and through the same system/constitution that the interacting beings decide whether to perpetuate such or to amend or alter the provisions incorporating novel and justiciable concepts so as to re-invent the social, suspending the social hierarchies and differentiations.

It is very momentous to note that though the trials of understanding the plight of human beings, primarily gendered, so to say, go on and on, it is not just the subjectivity positioning, structure and structuration that make understanding the social/life possible but it needs reflect on the committal of the very same beings-having the property of self-reflexivity- and their sense of being, becoming and belonging to diverse life situations. Towards conceptualising 'the social', based on this presupposition, one has to suspend from big-structure of projected subjectivity-woman or man-these bearings one has is attentively attained by oneself as well as by similar selves. Subjectivity itself is not simply projections but principally open-ended-subjections directed towards it.

It is the human beings as interacting agents who produce, reproduce and maintain the legitimizing social structuration leading to the law-making, and executing the social systemic life. Hence, it needs problematising the conceptual preliminaries of the social life patterns mended through the differentiations of religion, caste, gender etc. to move towards a gender just civil social life. Such a conceptualisation of civil social life is the immediate necessity so as to reduce the sufferings of disadvantaged/deprived beings. It will lead to orienting life patterns/forms in a civil mode. Civil social life-forms are hence to become part of everyday life, law-making leading to its social legitimation.

Attempt of this paper is to reflect on conceptualisation of 'the social' in the making of "Civil Code" based on civil life orientation and secular life forms (secularism being the binding source of democracy.) It presupposes the civil social life, gender justice towards the rationale of the Gender just Civil Code. The paper proposes to discuss in detail the cycle of civil social life, gender, gender justice, secular life forms, and the need for the mentality shift from androcentricity.

## **Schools as a site of Religious Intervention in the Reinforcement of Gender**

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Religion and gender are important factors which influence educational system and it impacts on educational outcomes as well as men and women roles in the society. Gender equality in education system is not only the equal access to education but also the process of equal opportunities and experiences for boys and girls. Because of the religious interventions in schooling, especially in the classroom practices lead to religious interventions in the reinforcement of gendering in attitudes, beliefs, practices, roles and responsibilities among girls and boys. A study was conducted to analyse the religious interventions in the reinforcement of gender in schools in secondary level classrooms by using observation. For this 12 secondary classrooms belonging to Muslim, Christian, Hindu and Government schools at Malappuram and Thrissur districts of Kerala were selected as sample. The observation revealed that religion plays a major role in strengthening gendered behaviours in schools especially in classroom practices. The results also show that the type and management of schools were developing religious and gendered notions among children at secondary level with regard to the seating arrangement, disciplinary practices, interactions between students, dress code, play provisions, assignment of roles and responsibilities, teaching learning practices and classroom instructions.

## SUB - THEME 12

### MARGINALITIES AND CITIZENSHIP

**Coordinators: Meena Radhakrishna (Delhi ) and Dyuti (NCDHR)**

#### ABSTRACTS

##### **Interface Between The State And Marginalized Communities: A Critical Survey On Police Behaviour Towards De-Notified And Nomadic Tribes' Women In Maharashtra**

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The de-notified and nomadic tribes are the integral part of our Indian society. In our country, there are 198 de-notified tribes and 313 nomadic tribes. Society generally recognizes those communities as 'criminal tribes'. Those tribes were notified as criminal since colonial India in 1871 under the Criminal Tribal Act. Even after India's independence, the act was carry on and those tribe came to be called as 'de-notified tribes', but society still remain stigmatized them as criminals. They all suffered injustices from both government and society. These allcontemporary oppressed situation get worst for them and push this community to marginalize. Their increasing marginality simply compounds the already existing prejudices against them so they are seen to be perennially disloyal. Women are also the worst sufferer of this community. Verbal abuse, physical and sexual harassment are very commonly practice against those de-notified and nomadic tribes women. There several types of tyranny face by de-notified and nomadic tribes women. Due to these circumstances the people of this community should be denied from the social justice. There are several evidences, which indicate that state and especially police department are prejudice about the de-notified and nomadic tribes. This paper tries to shows the concept of welfare state and the behavior of police administration towards women of these communities. It also focuses on the behavior of other marginalized communities with de-notified and nomadic tribes.

##### **Challenges facing the Denotified Tribes in Contemporary India**

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It is not unknown that during colonial rule, a large number of nomadic tribes were labelled as criminals in India under the Criminal Tribes Act, 1871. Colonial administrators branded them as born criminals, thereby, attaching criminality to hereditary and forming the lines of discrimination and injustice against an entire community. While post-independent India has denotified these marginal communities by repealing the CTA in 1952, the constant tension between the State's interests and the needs of the tribal communities persists.

One of the many challenges facing them is the absence of established citizenship and voting rights; they also do not have land rights or house titles which forces them to live in the peripheries. The welfare policies adopted by the government have been half-hearted in implementation as the promises of rehabilitation and removal of stigma and discriminatory practices against the DNTs are yet to be fulfilled. Further, the Census enumerations of the DNTs have been confusing; while many have been listed as Scheduled Tribes other have been categorized as Scheduled Castes. The persisting social stigma against the ex-criminal tribes has posed difficulties in getting education and employment outside of their traditional livelihood structures. Numerous instances of mob lynching, arbitrary police arrests, sexual harassments show how prejudiced the attitude of mainstream society is towards them.

This paper aims at studying the contemporary challenges facing the DNTs in India today by first locating the historical roots of the criminalization of certain tribes by colonial administrators through a brief discussion of the colonial Census, CTA and the Habitual Offenders' Act and then, focusing on the various social and political challenges facing these communities after they have received the de-notified status in post-Independent India by studying the government's policy implementations from time to time to rehabilitate these communities and in providing them constitutional rights. I want to specifically highlight the social implications of the stigma of criminality on the DNTs by mentioning the numerous cases of mob lynching, police detention, sexual harassment directed against them, in order to show how removal of legal stigma does not implicitly remove social stigma and prejudice that plagues the community in their everyday lives. In doing so I want to address the women's question in relation to the daily experiences of discrimination as they are the worst victims of this oppression; a discussion on how the brand of criminality and new processes of development have affected their status, livelihood, education is important to shed light on how far women have been able to emancipate themselves from the tag of criminality and oppression within their own communities.

## **The Widow's Home**

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The paper tries to show the situation of Chara tribal community through stories of its women. Chara Tribe was notified under the Criminal Tribal Act, 1871 as “born criminals”. In 1952, the tribe was denotified, but they still carry the stigma of criminality. Chara tribes are also known as Kanjarbhat (Maharashtra) and Kanjar (Rajasthan). In Gujarat, the tribe resides in Charanagar, Ahmadabad.

Charanagar is one of the most infamous places in Ahmedabad known for thieves and brewers of illicit alcohol. However, similar to other parts of Ahmedabad, the literacy level in Charanagar is considerably high. But due to historical stigma of criminality, the charas face discrimination in acquiring white collared jobs. Additionally, Charanagar is also significantly characterized with high number of single women. A single woman heads every tenth family in Charanagar. This paper involves an in-depth case study of one family of Charanagar. This family constitutes of two members – a mother and her daughter (both widows). Through this case study, this paper explores the situation of single women within the tribe involved in illicit brewing of alcohol. It attempts to examine the following aspects: How the community responds to lives of single women and the internal support provided to them; how are these women able to negotiate with the state, particularly police in a state where liquor is ban; and the nature of atrocities faced by these women vis-à-vis the state and the community. Additionally, the paper also explores in depth the historical analysis of their journey from dignified folk artists to being stigmatized as criminals; and how the state is responding to these communities for their empowerment and upliftment.

The Widow's Home, thus, is an endeavour to look critically at a denotified tribe from the perspective of the tribe's women and the challenges they face to survive within the unjust social structure and the state.

### **Asserting Citizenship through a Women's Collective: A Case Study of VAJRA Mahila Sangathan**

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There is scarce literature about the situation of women among nomadic and de-notified tribes in India. The situation of these women is marked by very low educational status, child marriages, teenage pregnancies, poor access to health facilities leading to maternal mortality, domestic violence, victimisation by patriarchal *jat* panchayats, and violence by the state and civil society on account of their continued criminalisation. This paper looks at the struggles, strategies and attempts at asserting the rights of NT-DNT women by a women's collective, VAJRA Mahila Sangathan, which was initiated in 2012 by TANDA (Towards Advocacy, Networking and Developmental Action), a field action project of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences. The collective was formed to address the injustices faced by NT-DNT women including lack of access to food security and public goods, domestic violence, and exploitation at worksites, through a process of community mobilisation and formation of SHGs. VAJRA Mahila Sangathan has mobilised more than 400 women from mostly the Wadar, Banjara, Masanjogi, Pardhi, and Dhangar communities but has also included Muslim and Dalit women living across various locations in Mumbai and Navi-Mumbai areas. This mobilisation process has led to significant conscientisation and assertion in claiming their position as citizens through accessing and engaging with public institutions including the police, the school, and the municipal corporation. It has led to reduced borrowing from money lenders in times of crisis, increased retention in schools of their children (especially girl children), recognition of domestic violence as a crime needing intervention, and most importantly, has provided a space for NT-DNT women to discuss their problems, and take collective action. The paper will trace the journey of VAJRA Mahila Sangathan, and the shifts it has brought in the lives of these women towards their empowerment and assertion of their agency.

## **Examining the Existing Justice Systems for Pardhi Women**

**Pallav Thadgar, Shivani Taneja, Savita Sohlt, Sujata Gothoskar**

*Muskaan*

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Any justice system exists for ensuring adherence to the accepted law of the population group it works upon, and largely operates and plays out the biases of that society and the forces in power. The present paper profiles the responsiveness of the dual justice systems, i.e. the community panchayat and the state's legal systems, operating upon a woman of a denotified tribal community.

Based on an analysis of matters dealt with by the panchayat within a defined period; we look into the issues reaching the panchayat, decisions taken, costs involved, from a feminist perspective. We also document the nature of dictats, decisions and evolving new norms of the community in the present context of their realities.

Separately, the interaction with the law custodians and the judiciary are explored from a Pardhi woman's perspective. At times, this is in the form of being perceived as a criminal herself and at times as a victim seeking justice. The study examines how the legal system (police and courts) respond to Pardhi women.

Drawing from key informant interviews, group discussions and case studies, the paper aims at building a nuanced discussion on weighing an indigenous internal system, transparently regressive yet accessible and familiar for them, versus a modern system meant to uphold progressive values and women's rights yet carrying a double bias against them as a member of a specific community and as women.

## **Marginalization of women and women's labour in a DNT community – the Pardhis**

**Sujata Gothoskar Pallav Thadgar, Shivani Taneja, Savita Sohit**

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Marginalization has several aspects and layers – historical, economic, social, political and cultural, marginalization vis-à-vis citizenship, complete lack of representation, negation of identity and so on. Several of these aspects and layers feed into each other, strengthening marginalization and weakening communities and individuals within those communities.

The so-called De-notified Tribes or De-notified communities are sections of people who stand at one pole of marginalization in most of the above mentioned aspects. This has historical roots in colonial policy and was backed by legislative controls over these communities. The legacy of repression and marginalization continued in the post-colonial period and has intensified in certain aspects in the last decades.

The women and girls of these communities experience an even greater marginalization. Due to the repression, suppression and contempt that the community as a whole is forced to experience, the internal mechanisms of the community, the Jaat Panchayat has a greater hold over the people as a whole. This has an even greater impact on the labour, mobility, sexuality and self-perception



of girls and women.

A cursory glance indicates that while almost 100% of the women are engaged in labour and in tending for the household, the men are not engaged in systematic labour. This is almost true of domestic labour in the household as well. For example, in one basti, out of 60 households, the men of 2 households have their own small shops, where the women in the households also work; 3 men work as drivers. None of the other men do work of any kind on a regular basis. However, all the women work, mostly waste picking in the recycling industry.

Our paper will explore the aspect of labour and mobility and the resultant self-perception of the women in this community in greater detail in the context of 4 bastis of the Pardhi community in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh.

## **Conditions of Women**

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Women all over the world are victims of discrimination, their condition is immeasurably bad and pitiable in Denotified and Nomadic tribes. Women of NT-DNT are socio-economic, educational, cultural and political deprived in Indian society. NT-DNT women faced the triple discrimination on the basis of Caste, class and gender. Living utterly undignified lives in destitute conditions, they are subject to maltreatment and abuse by the family, the community and the society at large. Having no shelter or support, they fall victim to every kind of social harassment and torture.

In a nutshell, Denotified and Nomadic Tribes women are subject to exploitation, suppression, and oppression. This paper will try to highlight vulnerable situation of the NT-DNT women by analyzing cases of violence committed against them by individual, state and community. Cases of child marriage, rape, custodial violence and arbitrary detention, mob lynching, burning of houses of NT-DNTs occur frequently but there is a sense of ignorance shown by our mainstream society that has never looked at the rampant violence against women from NT-DNTs as an issue that they should consider even worth discussing.

This paper will try to study the pattern of violence incurred on NT-DNT women. This will be done through analyzing various institutions that women interact with on day-to-day basis like how state machinery that is police who are

very often seen to be the perpetrators of violence and atrocities against NT-DNT women and studding how judicial system functions when it comes to delivery of justice NT-DNT women although it has to be noted that very less cases actually get registered, as it is widely believed that NT-DNT's are the communities which commit crime. This paper will also highlight the failure of society in addressing the violence against NT-DNTs women due to their patriarchal and colonial mindset. Through this I will also look into how the women from these communities shoulder the double burden of working at home and earning wages to sustain their families, in search of water, sanitation and livelihood forces NT-DNT women to travel long distances and these places often become sites for sexual violence by the higher caste communities in the villages on the NT-DNTs women. Having no shelter or support, they fall victim to every kind of social harassment and torture. The vast majority of these instances of women rights infringement do not discover an explanation or redressal at the national level.

## **Inter-generational Prostitution in DNT communities**

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Nomadic and De-notified Tribes (DNTs), also known as Vimukta Jati, are the tribes that were originally listed under the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871, as "Criminal Tribes" and "addicted to the systematic commission of non-bailable offences." Once a tribe became notified as criminal, all its members were required to register with the local magistrate, failing which they would be charged with a crime under the Indian Penal Code. The Criminal Tribes Act of 1952 repealed the notification, i.e. 'de-notified' the tribal communities. This act, however, was replaced by a series of Habitual Offenders Acts, that asked police to investigate a "suspect's" "criminal tendencies" and whether their occupation is "conducive to settled way of life." The de-notified tribes were reclassified as "habitual offenders" in 1959.

Perna community is one of the de-notified tribes, infamous for practicing intergenerational prostitution. This practice is found in other DNT communities as well such as Nat and Bedia present in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. The proclivity of the community towards prostitution is explained by the familial aspect where the men of the families support and encourage this practice by acting as pimps for the women. This also maintains the economic power in the hands of the men, thus involving exploitation of the women who have no agency over their body.

The paper will discuss the illegal practice of prostitution that has been going on for years in India and the exploitation of women and minor girls. The lack of education and employment in these communities reflects the callous attitude of the government that hasn't taken any viable steps towards eradicating such practices even after the establishment of a National Commission for De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes. The paper will look into the present day situation of the women involved in prostitution and the exploitation faced by them.

The research will be done by carrying out in depth interviews with members of the community residing in Nazafgarh are in Delhi. Since the study involves a deep understanding of the community, their history and struggles, qualitative research methodology will be employed in order to do justice to the participants by retaining emotions and essence of the experiences.

## **Illusory Marriage and Marginalisation Of Women: A Study Of The Kolhatis In Kolhapur City (Maharashtra)**

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The present paper is on the marginalisation of women in Dombari community. Dombari is subdivision of Kolhati community. Kolhati is one of the peripatetic communities in Maharashtra. The traditional occupation of the Dombari community is the making combs from the horns of cows and buffaloes. The study is conducted at Kolhapur city of Maharashtra. Kolhapur district has a historical background of being a welfare state of Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaja (1874-1922). He had taken special efforts for the settlement and upliftment of the nomadic communities. The present settlement of Dombari community was established by Shahu Maharaj.

From the study it was found that in spite of the historical background of welfare state and post-independent development of the city, the Dombaris are experiencing lower level of social mobility. Industrialisation and urbanisation has changed their livelihood pattern. Majority of them engaged in occupation of petty business and wage earning. Some of them are inclined towards Tamasha, a traditional folk art. Involvement of women in Tamasha resulted into marginalisation of women in the community. These women become serve as main earners of the family and lose marital status and domestic life. In majority of cases these women maintain extra-marital relation with person belong to

caste community and try to achieve caste status. However, they couldn't achieve legitimate marital status and it becomes illusion for them. It created hierarchy among women within community and marginalisation of community in mainstream society.

## **The Devipujak Women of Gujarat**

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In the context of local governance in Kerala, the study is an attempt to explore the experiences of dalit Elected Women Representatives (EWRs), their perspectives on power relations in politics and governance. The study also analyses how the gender socialisation as women and other aspects of their identity influence the perspectives of EWRs on power relations in family and local governance and mould their understanding of gender interest and influence their ability to intervene in local governance. The perspectives are elicited through the detail interviews of dalit EWRs from two panchayats each from two districts. When Dalit and Adivasi EWRs are considered, they are comparatively younger than other EWRs. The factors such as membership in affiliated organisations of political parties, civil society organisations and political family background paved the way for their entry into local governance. Their perspective on power relations in local governance reveals the barriers, their interest and aspirations in local governance and politics. They also perceived that their ability to coordinate gramasabha had increased their acceptance in the political parties. Also, dalit and adivasi EWRs faced caste discrimination from the upper class people of their gramasabha and they were resorted to allegations in the name of favouritism.

## **Branded as a Prostitute Village**

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According to my ancestor's oral history, Survivor interviews, study on cast and prostitution. I would like to share some situation of DNTs.

The population of DNTs (IGP) communities who actually forced for intergeneration prostitution is hidden.

Very few people who belong to this community speaking about their exploitation because of people think this is job of this community. So, it's normal.

Most of DNTs communities have still stigma of thieves, untouchability but approx 12 to 15 communities have stigma as sex service provider across India where most of the women and girls are exploited by so-called civilized communities.

Most of the girls forced into prostitution at age of 10 to 14 where they lost their Right to Education.

Some of the organization who believes that prostitution is a work. Actually, they do not work in village or such community they work at metro and with brothel madams who well spoken about legalize prostitution.

The girls from such community lived in villages that are the source area. Who surveillance that girls will trafficked at home and who will care that the girls will recruit by Dubai or Mumbai bar agency.

The big populations of such community are trafficked for prostitution in India.

## **Business as Usual' After Dawn in a 'Lover's Town': The Perna Community of Najafgarh**

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The British in India enacted the Criminal Tribes Act (CTA) XXVII in 1871. Consequently some two hundred itinerant and peripatetic communities were declared as criminal, with the notion that 'anonymous' people or 'customary strangers' with unsettled and ambulatory lifestyle were prone to committing crime. Influenced by a string of anti-gypsy laws against 'traveling people' in Europe, along with the popularity of 'Eugenics,' and Social Darwinism, crime and genetics were entwined and established as a 'social fact'. According to this belief, crime like the caste system was hereditary and carried a genetic 'baton' that was relayed from one generation to the other. Moreover, mobility was declared as a criminal act.

The members of CTA included forest communities, tribal groups, peddling communities, mendicants, beggars, prostitutes, eunuchs, nomads and vagabonds including others like drifters, strollers, castaways, gypsies, wanderlusts and vagrants. The notion of criminality was premised on the fact that a constant 'movement' and 'non-sedentary' lifestyle of people was a threat to the law and

order and stability of the 'new imperium' especially after the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. However, in reality there were far more deep seated political and administrative concerns responsible for the 'criminalizing' of communities. This 'labeling' of criminality was a trope to impose 'governmentality' and produce 'docile bodies' so that 'biopower,' and 'surveillance' over the natives could be enacted. The final act of surveillance was achieved through the state itself acting as the 'panopticon' which was aided by colonial disciplines like anthropology, ethnology and anthropometry.

The CTA was amended several times and was finally replaced by Habitual Offenders Act (HOA) in 1952. According to the HOA, the erstwhile 'criminal tribes' were now designated as Denotified Nomadic Tribes (DNTs) or Vimukti Jatis one of which is the Perna community located at Najafgarh on the outskirts of Delhi and is the focus of my paper.

My paper engages with the Perna community which resides in a 'lal dora' in south-west Delhi in Najafgarh and make their living by sex work which is inter-generational in nature. Among the Pernas, while the women folk are sex workers, the male members including children and youngsters are pimps. My ethnographic research deals with the topography of the three settlements namely Prem Nagar, Dharampura and Uttam Nagar that houses roughly around 2000 women which is where the Perna community resides. The paper deals with the social structure of the Perna community besides the actors, political economy, structural violence and the modus operandi of the sex trade. Drawing on my doctoral ethnography, the paper also attempts at making a cross-comparative study of the everyday life, agency, aspirations and demands in the Prem Nagar Bastis of the Pernas in Najafgarh and the Nat community in Forbesganj, Bihar.

## **De-Skilling of the Skilled Women: The case of denotified communities in Punjab**

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The role of women is universally burdened with not only running the household chores but also sharing with men (as husbands) their share of the productive process necessary for livelihood. This means that all women were doubly skilled in living out not only their lives but others too in the family until the emergence of industrial society. The separation of home from the work place

and specialised knowledge in the guise of science and technology has rendered majority women confined to home.

The plight of poor women of artisan castes and especially those belonging to the denotified communities has worsened manifold due to the road-rolling of their traditional occupations following the modern industrial system with enhanced production and quality finesse of its products. The irrelevance of their traditional skills is compounded further when these women are left out from the possibility of learning the new/modern/technical skills based on specialised education and training that is available neither easily nor cheaply. The majority nomadic communities historically living at the periphery of the mainstream society were already marginalised, and now these have been left out altogether when they are unable to provide their children modern technical education for multiple reasons beyond their control. Making matters worse, the Punjab government does not recognise their existence even in the state, and people at large are carrying all sorts of prejudices and stereotypes against them. The present paper deals with such issues in the context of patterns of changing occupations over three generations of women in the denotified communities of Punjab.

## **Role of Women among Nomadic and Denotified Tribes: Issues and Challenges**

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Environmental orientation and adaptive strategies of indigenous societies and people in India reflect harmony with their ecological bonds. Some primitive societies to mention are the wandering, nomadic and semi-nomadic groups (NT/DNTs) such as Boya, Relli, Paidi, Pirikimuggala, Yatha, Golla, Chenchu, Yerukula, Budabukkala, Yanadi, Sugali, Dommara, Nakkala, Shikari, Woddera, Poosala, Mala, Madiga, Reddika, Uppara, Kepmari, Koracha, Kondadora, Jogula, Mandula, Mutharacha, Dabbala, Mondivagula, Nirshikari, Kanjarbhat etc. Some of them are living as hunter-gatherers and inhabited the uplands and lowlands. Some of them are reverine fishing communities. Some of them are following traditional, subsistent occupations, both big and small. Some of them are living by following cattle breeding, dealing in all kinds of forest, agricultural produce and casual work. In addition they make baskets, mats, ropes, brooms and brushes. Most of them are acrobats, following different types of occupations

such as monkey trapping, bird snaring, singing, snake charming, fortune telling, exploitation of forest plants, foods, nuts, seeds, berries, leaf and roots, vegetables, yams, mushrooms etc. Culture of these societies is institutional and knowledgeable, a way of information processing and a mechanism in situating different social groups within the changing social environment. In these societies role played by women is very significant. The aims and objectives of the present paper is to analyze and understand the traditional roles and responsibilities of women among the NT/DNT women, their roles and responsibilities in socio-cultural practices, exploitation and ruination of lives of NT/DNT women, administrative policies for the development of NT/DNT women, their changed roles and responsibilities in the present day society, patterns of earning livelihood, problems and challenges faced by NT/DNT women, approached for the development and conclusions and recommendations.

## **From Marginalization to Marginalization: Road to Education for Phase-Pardhi Girls of Chandrapur and Nagpur District'**

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Phase-Pardhi is the Denotified Tribe which now includes in the category of VJ/NT in Maharashtra, resides in outskirts of villages in Chandrapur and Nagpur Districts. These are basically "hunters" and selling of small birds is their main means of livelihood. Nowadays they are engaged in the illegal business of liquor production and sell. So, they are harassed by police for various crimes and father (or/and mother) always found in police custody. In such state, the girls of this community are started their schooling after motivated by Dalit Movement. This paper explores the experiences of these girls which not only analyse their humiliation but also show the pathway from marginalization to marginalization for them.

This research is based on qualitative research methods with population study where 37 Phase-Pardhi girls from 3rd standard to 8th standard are interviewed from the Chak (Chindhi) and Champa villages of Chandrapur and Nagpur District respectively, by applying snow-ball sampling. Now-a-days, Parthia population is engaged in unlawful liquor production and selling activities as the means of livelihood after enforcement of forest laws. They are incapacitated to



get various educational facilities due to non-issuance of their caste certificates, thus they are demotivated for further education. Their poverty dehumanizing to them and classmates are denied cooperation on the issues of study by denying access to books, copies, and entry into their homes. The girls are victimised not only by police but also by their fellow-students and teachers too and they are humiliated by stigmatizing them as a thief. Their dialect (which is different than learning language), anti-education socio-cultural environment, health issues and struggle for livelihood (after the police custody to father and mother) are creating learning inability, absenteeism, incompetency, and un-competitiveness. Begging at school-mates' home is adversely affect their assimilation with their school-mates and they are victimised by molestation in the school campus. Ultimately, their education is not pushing them toward development, but it is the way of one marginalization to another marginalisation.

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Number of girls on the streets always seem to be low compared to boys. Reasons for girls being on the streets are many - runaway from home, eloped with a lover, migration to cities in search of jobs, rag picking, the entire family is homeless and staying closer to a place that helps in survival, etc. Many girls might end up being trafficked on the way to cities, yet quite a few live in the homeless dense areas. This paper will talk about the everyday life of few such girls (who are part of my study on growing up on the streets) on how relationships are formed for everyday negotiations that often end up as a brutal scar on one's face, life which is aided by drugs, mobility, friendships and charity by a few. It will further explore if community affiliations make any difference in this setting.

## **Unpaid Work in North East India: Some Reflections on Household Work and Domestic Duties**

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The declining female labour force participation and gender differentials in employment has been a matter of serious concern for policy makers in India. Though, the Beijing Platform for Action 1995 reaffirmed the commitment to promote women's economic independence for women yet, there are widening

gaps that need to be covered for achieving Sustainable Development Goals 2015. Economic growth and prosperity has led India to rank as the fourth largest economy of the world but, a large section of population has remained excluded and marginalized from such growth process, the North eastern region (NER) being one of them. Though the region has displayed tremendous diversity in terms of caste, religion and ethnicity, yet women of the region have been the victims of poverty, unemployment, inequality, despite their significant contribution to the economy. Women perform a large number of economic activities in this predominantly hilly and mountainous region yet, their economic contributions are underestimated and there is underreporting of women's work. Further, the non-market economic activities performed within households are usually not recorded and the contribution of women within the household is undercounted in National Accounting Statistics. Lack of recognition of women's work in statistical sources, additional burdens of women's unpaid responsibilities and social and cultural practices constraints them from accessing social protection and social security provisions available in the country. However, the NER has not received much attention from scholars on issues related to understanding women's agency in the North East, particularly in terms of access to employment and choice of employment, intra-household gender relations specifically participation in household and other non-market activities that deprives them of adequate social security provisions.

In this context, the present paper tries to analyze the gendered dimensions of employment in North East India and tries to provide a critical understanding about the reasons for gender differentials in the working lives of men and women. The paper is contextualized within the feminist understanding of unpaid work and relies on wide ranging feminist discourses on recognition of women's unpaid work and time use patterns. There is also an attempt to analyze women's unpaid work with specific emphasis on their participation in household and related activities (domestic duties) thereby exploring intra-household dynamics and role of socio and cultural norms and regional disparities for interpreting gender relations in the household. The paper also provides for policy recommendations in improving women's work and economic participation in the NER.

The paper is based on secondary data from several governmental sources including the Census, National Sample Survey (NSS), Time Use Survey 1998-99 and published government reports from different Ministries. It largely draws from the NSS Report on Participation of Women in Specified Activities along with Domestic Duties 2014 and NSS data for employment estimates of the 15-59 age- group is taken for all kinds of analysis from various NSS years.

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The Bodo Movement with its principal demand for Bodoland now has passed many ages. It has its genesis in pre-independent India of 1930's and still struggling to identify their demand as the status of the democratic value of equal and inclusive citizenship. The political mobilization of Bodo womenfolk demanding for separate statehood plays a significant role in the movements which are renegotiating citizenship. The establishment of the All Bodo Women's Welfare Federation (ABWWF) symbolises and highlights women's participants in equal manner. Women in movement often have to negotiate with the perception that they are a helper body, and challenged to be a decision making body. Women's role in any such movement are cornered to gendered division of volunteering to look at the everyday life of caring families, in nursing the wounded armed volunteers when the male-participants grasp to hold in the leadership position of state formation. It is thus need to revisit the involvement of activist and civil society, mainly women's organization to transgress the gendered division of citizenship enquiring marginality issue of neglecting such actors of the movement.

## **Khasi Women of Meghalaya: Unseen Marginalisation**

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India is a paradox in itself. There is so much disparity in the country that a woman from the northern region, say, a Punjabi woman can not relate to a Malayali woman from Kerela, or to a Mizo woman from Mizoram.

The Khasi tribe, who account for around 1 million in the eastern part of the north-eastern state of Meghalaya follow the matrilineal system of descent and inheritance.. The youngest daughter or the "Ka Khadduh" inherits the ancestral property, the children take their mother's surnames and once married, men relocate to their mother-in-law's house. Here the property passes from mother to daughter but still authority remains in the hands of the men.

But the point that I want to make can be seen through "Ka Shad Suk Mynsiem", the annual spring festival, held during the harvest month of April. This dance is also known as the "Nongkrem Dance" performed in the harvest month of November. The women stand in the middle of the group and have to

be pure unmarried virgins, while the men do not have any such restrictions. The women are docile, timid, eyes downcast, dance in a restricted space and have their heads bowed down to the earth. They have a white handkerchief in their hands to represent their virginity. The men dance around them in an energetic fashion by holding a ceremonial sword “Ka Waitlam” and a whisk made out of yak hair “U Symphiah”. The sword is used to symbolise the “protective” nature of the men towards the women in his family, and the fertility cult which represents women as the bearer of seeds and the men as the cultivators, who nourishes and protects the land. It is also a testimony to the fact that even patriarchy has roots in matrilineal society.

It is often misinterpreted that the Khasi matrilineal society is matriarchal in nature too. The Khasi tribe is not matriarchal in nature. In the family, the maternal uncle is the head of the family; he looks after his niece who would eventually inherit his ancestral property. The father spends more time in his sister’s household looking after his sister’s daughter. This has led to a sense of loss of identity among the Khasi men. The women are not even included in the “durbar” related to governance. Although the woman enjoys a high status, she has no power or position in society.

In the rest of the world, the patrilineal ideology has led to the authentication of the patriarchal structure. So why has the opposite not happened in the Khasi society? Why has the matrilineal society not been able to convert itself to a matriarchal society, such that the rights of a woman move beyond property rights and move towards authority in the family? Why is the whole patriarchal mentality of women being the “weaker sex” still prevalent in the Khasi tribe where the youngest and the most looked-after daughter inherits the ancestral property and eventually looks after her aging parents?

## **Gender and Marginality; Narratives of women migrants’ lives in the slums of M-East Ward of Mumbai**

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In 2011, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai celebrated its 75th Anniversary by initiating Transforming M (East) Ward Project in 256 slums of M-East Ward with the objective of improving human development indices through participatory people centric development approach. This paper is based

on my empirical engagement as Programme Officer with this project for two years and as a residence of this ward for sixteen years (1999-2016).

M-East ward is a microcosm of the Mumbai city with seventy five percent populations living in slum. Within the 24 administrative areas of Mumbai, M-East ward has the lowest Human Development Index of 0.05. This ward is host to oil refineries, chemical fertiliser industries, nuclear power plant and research centre, Asia's largest dumping ground, renowned social science institutes, recently exposed to mega urban development projects and resettlement area for "Project Affected People" across the city. Slums of this ward are heterogeneous in nature and entitlements of the slum dwellers vary as per the tenement status such as recognized, unrecognized, and planned settlement and resettlement area. A large percentage of this slum population is from Maharashtra. Through informal sector they contribute in economics of the city. Due to uncertain livelihood opportunities and lack of affordable housing facilities the residents are forced to settle in recognized and unrecognized slums with inhuman condition. Often, the State responds with demolition drives, violating the residents' human rights and dignity.

This paper aims to document and analyze the lived experiences of migrant women living in the slums of M- East Ward of Mumbai through case studies. The study focuses on their relationship as a marginal community vis-a-vis the State. The case studies attempts to understand the context of their migration, challenges of uncertain dwelling and livelihood opportunity, their gendered existence and negotiation within that space, and its impact on their health and development. The narratives will reflect critically on their rights and entitlements as citizen, their informal work participation in the development of the city, the role of the State in terms of gender equity and social justice.

## **An Overview on Migration of Tribal Women in India**

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The tribal population of the country, as per the 2011 census, is 104.3 million constituting 8.6% of the total population. There are over 705 Scheduled Tribes notified under Article 342 of the Constitution of India, spread over different States and Union Territories of the country. Many tribes are present in more than one state. These Scheduled Tribes (STs) are indigenous, have their own distinctive

culture, geographically isolated and are low in socio-economic conditions. Due to the backwardness and low socio-economic development among STs, Government has made affirmative policies, Programmes and enacted laws. There are many Constitutional safeguards for the welfare, development and protection of STs in the country. In spite of the many affirmative actions, tribals in India face insurmountable problems due to their low socio-economic conditions, poverty, unemployment, displacement, indebtedness, lack of opportunities, accessibility and awareness of the government programmes. Coupled to this, the government and private industrial establishments have initiated mega projects of mining, hydro-electric, industry, business, roads and transport which is leading to the loss of traditional land ownership and livelihood opportunities. This is resulting in large-scale migration of rural tribal to urban areas in search of livelihoods. Along with men, tribal women and girls also migrate to urban towns and cities in different situations. For them the society and cultural system in the cities is totally new and different and adjustment is difficult in the initial stage. These tribal women and girls are facing a number of problems in the big cities in India where they have taken shelter. Their housing conditions are miserable, economically they are still poor, only few of them are in regular employment and they are financially and sexually exploited in these big cities. Human Migration and in particular tribal migration with its implications is becoming an important socio-economic problem for the policy makers and government to undertake welfare and development activities. It is, therefore, the present paper is to be focused on discussing the socio- economic causes for migration to urban areas among tribal women and girls in India and also to examine the social intervention on the part of Government agencies and the voluntary organizations to help them in improving their socio-economic status.

## **Marginalization of IDPs: The Case of Assam**

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This paper refers to the situation of internally displaced women who have been survivors of ethnic violence that occurred in the Bodo Territorial Autonomous District, (BTAD), a Sixth Schedule area, since the past decade. Such ethnic violence witnessed incessant killings, loss of social security and safety. Analysis is to be made on the State's response to the victims of violence, the handling of rehabilitation and reintegration issues, and whether the basic needs such as sanitation, housing, livelihood, and education to the children of

displaced persons, were met. This has direct connection to the State's obligations in eliminating all kinds of discrimination against women, (CEDAW).

The paper also looks into the status of the marginalised women as we need to understand that women's lives in a relief camps or without one, are wrought with fear, extreme mental trauma and a constant state of suspicion as a result of which their vulnerabilities come in several forms. On one hand they are confronted by restricted social mobility and on the other by the dangers of unwelcome intrusion and trafficking. We need to look at the behavioural attitudes of the bureaucracy over the marginalized, in general and the displaced women in particular.

The issue of sustaining the displaced in situations of conflict is a vexed one, particularly when strategies of the state to meet the felt needs of internally displaced persons, are not well designed nor have long term solutions. It is in this context that the contents of the Assam Relief Manual, dealing with compensation, and the functioning of peace committees or village protection committees have to be studied to examine whether the package of relief is inclusive of gender considerations. The relationship between the state and Autonomous District Councils, which come under the Sixth Schedule, must be analysed to see the degree of attention that is given in terms of governance and resource allocations.

## **Nested marginalities: Women in healing in South India**

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Based on a two year long ethnographic work on traditional healing in three southern states of India (Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu) in 2014-2016, this paper discusses how the role of women in healing is laden in layered marginalities. For many, healing is embedded in kinship roles of family practice, and yet not always associated with the title of healer for the women involved. This is despite the fact that many male healers we spoke to have inherited their knowledge on healing from their mothers or grandmothers. Women healers' public presentations in collective forums (Sangams, Healers' Association Meetings) are extremely limited. Women healers were conspicuous by their absence during a dialogue on revitalization of local health traditions organized by us. Despite our repeated efforts to reach out to several of them only one female healer, who by virtue of accompanying her reputed father-healer, participated in this dialogue. The sacred circumscriptions of traditional healing establish a hierarchy of healing tasks, wherein women are involved in supportive activities (like preparation

of medicines) while the front-stage consultations are done by men (in family practice). A more extreme example is the relegation of dais to a specific category of healers involved in healing in polluted spaces (i.e. associated with blood as in pregnancy and delivery rites). Gendered roles are reinforced through outlining the spaces of healing with women healers treating only 'women' patients (specifically where healing involves 'touch') or not entering the forest to collect herbs during menstruation. Drawing on this data, this paper argues that women in healing operate in layered marginalities in a larger patriarchal framework of the households and community, which are further invisibilized in the typical struggles around the state's lack of legal recognition of traditional medicine and healing.

## **The Practice of Early Marriage among Santhal Tribe of Bolpur, West Bengal**

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Marriage before the age of 18 years is considered as child marriage. The practice of early marriage is still prevalent in African and Asian countries. Among Asian countries Bangladesh and India hold the highest percentage of child marriage. A recent United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) report said 720 million women around the world, alive today, were married before 18 years compared to 156 million men. One-third of these are in India – about 240 million. According to another report of UNICEF, 47% women aged 20 to 24 years were married before the legal age of 18 years in India in 200.

Although the global trend of child marriage is declining day by day, it is a matter of concern as the practice is treated as a habituated one among some communities. The study conducted on the Santhal tribe of three villages (Sarkardanga, Ballavpur and Golamighat) of Birbhum district in West Bengal shows us that the practice is very much prevalent among this tribal community.

### **Objectives:**

- To find out the causes of early marriage among the Santhal tribe people.
- To find out the relationship between low income level and the probability of early marriage
- To find out the relationship between low level of education and the probability of getting married at an early age



## **Findings:**

- It is found that the practice of child marriage is very much prevalent in their society.
- Poor economic condition is another feature. Maximum of the population of that group works as agricultural labourers (both men and women); the proportion of women who work is 86.67% out of which 76% work as agricultural labourers, 12% as brick field labourers and the remaining 12% work in other fields. So, maximum of the population belong to labour community.
- Illiteracy rate is high among them. About 72% female respondents were illiterate. Even their husbands were not highly educated. The illiteracy rate among them was 59.62%. The percentage of people passing the secondary level is very poor.
- The health condition is poor among the women of the tribe. It has been found that 58.33% of the women are underweight. They lack proper nutrition. Another linking problem with child marriage is early motherhood. 64% of the married women had their first child between the age group of 15 to 19 years.
- Quite surprisingly, dowry is not a conventional practice among people of Santhal Tribe.
- The major cause of child marriage among Santhals is tradition. In most of the cases family arranges marriage for their children at an early age. The girl child is accepted in large percentage, as they also contribute to the household economy.

## **Conclusion:**

Even after six decades of independence child marriage continues to thrive in rural India. The country needs a radical reform to eradicate it. It is not just a constitutional amendment or a law which is an imperative rather than a strong implementation of the law and change in perception of rural India which can only be brought about by education, can be an endeavour in improving the social status of women.

# **Living With an Absentee Husband: Marginalities and Empowerment among Women from Adivasi, Migrant Communities of Southern Rajasthan**

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Southern Rajasthan is a region that has been experiencing near complete destruction of traditional livelihoods and immense water scarcity. Pushed out by economic distress, about 57% of the rural households in the region send at least one male member to labour markets, typically in Gujarat and Maharashtra, to work as seasonal, labour migrants. 61% of the households in this region are adivasi, and it has the lowest HDI score of 0.50 in the state. The 'adivasi' and 'labour migrant' compound represents a community that has been pushed to the margins by the triple phenomenon of agrarian distress, unprotected and invisible movements and exploitative labour markets. The phenomenon of seasonal labour migration, where men spend 6-11 months in cities, earning meagre incomes that can ensure not more than basic sustenance of families, is poorly understood. However, the experiences of women who stay behind in villages, whose lives become structured by their absentee husbands, is even more under-studied. This paper weaves together data and narratives collected over the years by Aajeevika Bureau, a community based organization that has been working in the region for over a decade. The evidence characterizes the deep and multi-dimensional marginalities experienced by such women. Among its other initiatives, the organization has been working to organize the women in this community into village level, women's solidarity groups or Ujala Samoohs. Drawing from the experiences of its 10,000 members, the paper goes on to throw some light on the process of empowerment experienced by them, particularly through the platform of these groups.

Visibly, prolonged or frequent male absence makes women the de-facto heads of household. However, evidence suggests that their absence often fails to have an empowering effect on their lives. On the contrary, it results in a significant increase in labour burden, without a shift in power relations in their favour. The paper discusses two key implications of male absence from the point of view of such women – doubled labour burden and reduced autonomy. It argues that male absence chokes the daily routine of a woman, with all responsibilities of cooking, cleaning, caring for children and the elderly, managing the land and animals,

performing social responsibilities and navigating the public domain squarely falling on them. Their daily labour, stretching for almost 20 hours a day takes a severe toll on their malnourished bodies, while their work remains invisible and unpaid. Often, this pressurizes young and adolescent girls out of school to provide care for their younger siblings. Male migration in these parts starts young around the age of 14-16. By 35-40, men stop their migration cycles and return home permanently. Often this is precipitated by work place injuries, occupational diseases or plain exhaustion from severe physical toil. The returnee husband is usually unable to perform laborious tasks, is easily tired, which further increases the care duties of women. Furthermore, in the absence of their husbands, women find themselves subject to the supervision and surveillance of their parent-in-laws and the larger community. Women share narratives of harassment or inability to communicate with in-laws, even in cases of severe health problems experienced by them or their children. One of the most glaring consequences of this is adverse health seeking behaviour and outcomes. The paper also discusses the conditions of abuse, surveillance and narratives of being perceived as a 'disloyal woman', that function to inhibit the mobility of women and exacerbate their sense of isolation.

These marginalities are worsened by other environmental factors. In the absence of young, able-bodied men, the villages become home to the 'powerless' – the old, very young, infirmed and women. Public service providers feel little compulsion to provide critical welfare services, which could have eased the burden on these women and families to some extent. Moreover, domestic violence and abuse is commonplace and legitimized through allegations on women about engaging in extra-marital affairs. In this context, Ujala Samoohs have emerged as peer support groups and a vehicle for powerful collective action. The paper uses the resources, agency and achievements framework widely accepted in women's empowerment literature, to put into perspective the gains that have been made by the Ujala Samooh members. These gains have been both in the public domain - claiming their citizenship rights against the state, participating meaningfully in what were considered as 'men's spaces' in the villages, as well as in the private domain - challenging patriarchal structures that function to inhibit their mobility as well as control their bodies and minds. The paper uses case studies and in-depth interviews with some members to develop an imagination of women's empowerment in the context of adivasi, migrant communities of southern Rajasthan.

# At The Threshold of Life and Death: A Photo Narrative on Maternal Health in India

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While maternal health is a visible priority for the Indian state reflected in its commitment to achieve the millennium development goals and recently sustainable development goals, stories of several women living at the margins of caste, class and gender get silenced. Through the methodology of a photo narrative, we make a modest effort to render their stories audible and visible. This photo essay (a collection of 25 photographs) narrates the life stories of women from different parts of Easton and Central India. The stories travel from the Garos in Assam, Sahariyas in Madhya Pradesh, Kandhas in Odisha, Bengali Muslims in West Bengal, Oraons in Chhattisgarh and the slum dwellers in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. These real life stories witness a range of events that move from the mundane to the extraordinary (the birth or death of a child/mother) as well as varied experiences including accessing formal and informal spaces of care (state provisioning through ante-natal care, institutional delivery, healing hands of a dai, help from the family) or even ruptures in such care (severe anemia, near miss or maternal death). These stories are co-written by those who the women encounter in this journey of motherhood that is, the ASHAs, Sahiyas, Ojhas, Dais, family members, multi-purpose Village Health Workers, Auxiliary Nurse Midwives and doctors. These stories unfold through four themes, including a) universe of care b) everyday lives of women c) ruptures in care and d) stories of hope offering a space for both substantive and methodological discussion on maternal health. This photo essay draws on field work (November 2015-February 2016) conducted by a group of masters' students in Development in Azim Premji University, Bangalore led by the first author and supervised by the second and third authors.

**Title:**

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The ageing population, people above the age of 60 years, is constantly increasing and it expected to grow even larger in the coming decades. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India in its report illustrated that this generation of people has increased from 19.8 million (1951)

to 103.8 million (2011) and is expected to reach 143.20 million in 2021. In the global context, according to UN report, World Population Aging, 2105 it is estimated that by the year 2030, older persons are projected to account for one in six people globally. India, as well as the other countries, is likely to face serious consequences in the coming years due to growing aging population.

Research studies have revealed that women live longer than men. Thereby, they experience ageing for longer duration. Again, the gender inequality that women face in her entire life course accumulates in her old age (United Nation Economic Commission for Europe, 2009). The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007 attends to the need of the senior citizens as a whole but fails to highlight the requirements of the elderly female who have different sets of issues and problems. Many nations have tried to address these problems by creating age friendly environment through policies and programs whereas; India is yet to address ageing from gender dimensions. Thereby an attempt is being made to study ageing from gender dimension and emphasis the need to mainstream gender in the policies and program. The primary question that will revolve the entire study is how government policies and program addresses the gender dimensions of ageing?

The study will be based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data will be collected through structured questionnaires, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Feminist methodology will be applied to study the position of elderly women and their situations will be critically analysed from varied dimensions. Constrains, predicaments and issues revolving around ageing women will be highlighted from feminist standpoint theory.

The study intends to bridge the existing gender gaps in the policies and programs introduced and implemented from time to time by Government of India for the welfare of elderly women.

## **Shifting Narratives on Marginality: Experiences of Women Workers from Northeast India in Delhi's Retail Spaces**

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In this paper I explore the presence and participation of a large number of women from 'Northeast' India working in retail and mall spaces in Delhi against

a larger discourse of social marginality that they are often embedded in. I argue that while women from the Northeast comprise a section of the population that are subject to frequent racial and sexualised discrimination and violence in the city, they experience their identity and positionality differently when it comes to finding jobs and working in malls and retail stores. In this landscape (the service industry) being 'Northeastern' carries with it the connotation of preferred labour and the same women's bodies and identities now become 'valued' and 'sought after'.

This paper therefore attempts to examine the ways in which women workers from the Northeast move between shifting landscapes of power and marginality and renegotiate their Northeastern identity and its commodification across different terrains in the city.

This paper emerges from my recently concluded year-long fieldwork for my doctoral thesis - an in-depth ethnographic inquiry into the daily lives of shop floor staff in the malls of Delhi and Gurgaon and the subsequent self-fashioning and subjectification that they engage and deal with. The methods adopted for my fieldwork include two-three months of participant observation in each store which involved working full-time alongside the other staff, and performing the roles and responsibilities expected of them, as well as in-depth interviews with the staff in those stores and other stores in the mall.

## **The Politics of Double Descent**

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Dimasas are an ethnic group residing in the North-Eastern part of the Indian subcontinent. This indigenous group has the system of double descent which places them apart from other ethnic groups of this part of the country. In double descent lineages are drawn from both paternal and maternal side of the family. The previous studies on double descent have mostly focused on the ethnic groups of Africa and not much research has been done on this ethnic group. So the present paper would try to look into two different aspect of cultural identity that is shaped through the presence of double descent. Firstly it will look into the cultural identity of the community that demarcates it from the other neighboring communities. While in the later section it will look into politics of identity where the equal positioned men and women identities are misinterpreted and the identities of women-folk get subsumed within the patriarchal setup.

# **Drug Abuse and the Construction of Self Examining Daily Struggles and Gender Roles in Manipur**

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Manipur, with now more than 35 insurgent groups, is considered as one of the most conflict prone states in the country. Drug trafficking has become an important way to generate resources for some of these groups. The easy availability of drugs has led to a situation where drug abuse is rampant, and in many cases leading to HIV infections among the youths of the state. Insurgency and counter-insurgency activities have led to a very gendered experience of violence. This paper will analyse the conflict situation in the state since post 1990's, by placing drug addicts at the centre of analysis to articulate a narration of the conflict through their lives. I choose this specific period is because of two reasons: 1) Post 1990's saw the epidemic of HIV/ AIDS, rise globally. Post 2000 saw a huge rise in the consumption of drugs, other than opium, like synthetic drugs, pain killer capsules etc in the state; and, 2) this period saw the dramatic decline of people's support of the 'Liberation War' raged by the insurgent groups.

Many have cited 'poverty, underdevelopment and lack of economic opportunities' as the causes of armed civil conflicts. The situation needs to be investigated further as the data and information is not sufficiently analysed and contribute to further misinformation, mismanagement and alienation. A common assumption among the public is that 'mental stress and strain, growing unemployment and frustrations and instability in society has led the youth to consume narcotics'. My paper seeks to complicate this simplistic understanding. Some questions which it needs to be studied are: 1) How women drug addicts break and humiliate families and communities; How do women drug addicts respond? 2) Does the society responds differently this scenario, based on gender: 3) Does the situation systematically neglected, if the addict is male? 4) Is there any gender difference, in the experiences and emotions carried after finished the course in the rehabilitation centre?

My paper will help in understanding the different roles played by women in a conflict zone- like Manipur: as a victim/ survivors / peace agent or perpetrators; how the men and women drug addicts intersect with the societal norms and the ongoing conflict? How they negotiate within the household and how is it different from men drug addicts?

My paper is also an attempt to know the impact of violence on the gendered body by emphasizing the question of drug addiction. So far there hasn't been

enough attention of this aspect in Manipur. The studies that exist are written by defence analysts working within the security framework or within the framework of rehabilitation. Both these perspective are limited to understand the conflict scenario in the region. This paper also seeks to explicate the importance of daily practice that the men and women perform in the family; how do the drug addicts bargain their status/ views within the family and society.

## **Maternal Health and Healthcare amongst Garo Community, Assam**

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The paper explores and reflects upon the maternal health and healthcare amongst Garo community in Kamrup district, Assam. It echoes upon co-existence and manifestation of various complex factors like gender-class-ethnicity-language and other socio-cultural along with other economic-political and geographical factors that deepen the marginalities faced by women, especially during pregnancy. The factors like lack of access to public health institutions, gendered roles and responsibilities and secondary status to women's health are often clubbed with above factors which tend to put women at risk of going through severe complications during pregnancy and post-delivery, in extreme cases even death during the period of pregnancy, at the time of delivery or post-delivery. It distances pregnant women from right to safe deliveries and denies adequate healthcare.

In Garo, one of the best-known matrilineal groups in India, visible evidence is that after marriage, a male move to the residence of his wife and the lineage of the property is through the daughter in the family. Even then there are factors that contribute to poor maternal healthcare.

Even in public health, women's health is narrowed down only to maternal health and generally in cases of complications during pregnancy or death caused due to pregnancy, only biological-medical reasons are explored and medical reasons arising from the recent past add a line to the investigation. It is integral to explore and realize the multiple aspects that marginalize maternal health.

Can institutional delivery be single solution to address maternal health, structural violence and for marginalities faced by women? Or do we also need to re-look at existing systems of maternal health at local level, effective use of



decentralized knowledge present in the community, address the causes of structural violence and marginalities which often prevent pregnant women from accessing formal health systems, policies, schemes and facilities?

It is not to say that institutional deliveries are beneficial or not but one-point approach fails to take into consideration a range of factors that affect maternal health, prevent and limit access to existing public health institutions, does not provide space to critically explore functioning of health institutions, policies and schemes and adequately doesn't consider the possibility of having 'safe home-delivery' with immediate complication redressal mechanism as part of the public health system.

With long years of focus and investment on maternal health, infrastructure and supplement medicines why is it that the country failed to achieve the Millennium Development Goal on MMR and why is it that states such as Assam have persistent higher MMR? This is often attributed to lacking institutional systems and accessibility to primary healthcare services. However, in the Indian context the complicated realities multiply vulnerabilities of pregnant women due to discrimination towards women under a patriarchal society.

Especially in remote and interior areas where public health schemes are services do not reach, where it is difficult to access existing public health services due to emergencies around odd-timing and lack of roads and transport to institutions and where geographical factors limit access, contact and affordability to reach Sub-centres and PHC's in absence of 108 Ambulance.

Even with the changing attitude of State towards health and healthcare of women what are the persistent reasons that contribute to poor maternal health and high number of maternal deaths. How can existing systems of decentralized knowledge be put to effective use and the unique ways of providing health and healthcare to pregnant women be put to specific context?

## **Understanding Reproductive Health of the Women Pavement Dwellers in Pune City**

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Background: pavement dwelling has its own existence right from the birth of city itself which is very common in metropolis. People living of pavement are recognized as marginalized and poorest of the poor, who are well acquainted

about their vulnerability. It is also well documented that the poor people who are migrating to cities most of the times are getting place on pavement to live. Even women are not the exception to this. This specific section of the population is with Lack of social identity and no elementary markers of citizenship, obviously resource less and root less along with undefined health status. Even if being visible in every big city, they are totally invisible or neglected by any programme or policy. Main plank of this articles is to illuminate on the indicators of reproductive health of the women since it is different from each other that being men, living on pavement and being women, living on pavement so this Article has taken following objectives into the consideration.

- To determine the prevalence of institutional delivery for the women living on pavement in Pune city.
- To determine the ANC coverage of the women living on the pavement in Pune city.
- To understand the reproductive health problems and health care seeking behavior of women pavement dwellers of Pune city.

Method: a cross sectional study was conducted in Pune municipal corporation area. Structured questionnaire was used to collect the data from the women of reproductive age group 14-49. To determine the sample size there was no updated information about the population so before data collection census was conducted and based on that decided to do universal sampling. Informed consent was taken from the entire respondent to avoid ethical problems.

Results and interpretations: Study sample comprised of 258 women from reproductive age group. The major study findings are the percentage of institutional deliveries which was found to be 45.3%. Among the lactating (75) women 56 % were registered and received TT injections and their complete ANC coverage was very less that is 34.7%. Furthermore from the considerable percentage of women complained about having problems related to the reproductive tract and unable to access the health care services due to certain circumstances. Furthermore As per information collected on their occupational conditions that are not good enough to secure their healthy life, when we look through the public health perspectives. And due to their unstable, invisible citizenship status they have to face many obstacles, for instance evictions by authority, in accessing services Additionally present study pin points their deprivation from basic needs such as housing, sanitation, personal hygiene and food and the barriers to access the

ANC services found to be lack of knowledge, cultural practices, and resistance to change etc.

Conclusion: pavement dwellers are the marginalized population and highly deprived of all basic needs including health services. Another side of coin is even if services are available they are out of their reach. And there are socio cultural, system's barriers too which are preventing access of health services. Negligence towards such kinds of pockets of population could be the obstacle in the journey of making healthy nation.

## **Intergenerational Solidarity and Family Structure Among Aged Tribal women of Odisha**

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Intergenerational solidarity at the family level is strongly associated with and influenced by their socio-economic status. It evolves as family generations observe each others' practices and adjust their expectations accordingly. The intergenerational solidarity within families takes shape by the public policies, which generates different kinds of expectations and aspirations. In India the social dependency as conceived by Blanker is a common feature but middle class aged are more independent than the lower class people. The support to the parents and grandparents by the grand children determines a considerable extent by the prevailing cultural values. In Indian family, the parent-child relationship is generally characterized by mutual respect. In the study area such type of case studies are collected from the tribal women. The nature and structure of the family vary from society to society.

According to Birren (1988) aging refers to an orderly or regular transformation in the time of representative organisms living under representative environments. A definition of aging from the social sciences considers the individual's position with regard to a social time table consisting of age norms about which there is broad consensual agreement in society (Hagestad and Neugarten, 1985).

The present study deals with the family structure and intergenerational relationship patterns of aged women of the tribal societies. The reason for focusing it on aged women is that they are the inseparable part of our social system. The study has been undertaken among the aged women population of two different

tribal communities i.e. Kondh of Kandhamal and the Juang of Keonjhar districts of Odisha. This is purely an ethnographic study based on empirical data collected from the aged women through fieldwork.

It has been observed that the minor land holding and migration by the youth to the urban areas make the lives of the aged women more lonely and difficult. Due to inadequate medical facility and lack of health and diet awareness they face different diseases and disorders. The hard labour that the females put in throughout their lives without going through a proper dietary habit and health care system causes premature ageing problems.

## **Feminisation of Local Governance in Kerala: Perspectives of Dalit Women Representatives on Politics and Governance**

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In the context of local governance in Kerala, the study is an attempt to explore the experiences of dalit Elected Women Representatives (EWRs), their perspectives on power relations in politics and governance. The study also analyses how the gender socialisation as women and other aspects of their identity influence the perspectives of EWRs on power relations in family and local governance and mould their understanding of gender interest and influence their ability to intervene in local governance. The perspectives are elicited through the detail interviews of dalit EWRs from two panchayats each from two districts. When Dalit and Adivasi EWRs are considered, they are comparatively younger than other EWRs. The factors such as membership in affiliated organisations of political parties, civil society organisations and political family background paved the way for their entry into local governance. Their perspectives on power relations in local governance reveal the barriers, their interest and aspirations in local governance and politics. They also perceived that their ability to coordinate gramasabha had increased their acceptance in the political parties Also, dalit and adivasi EWRs faced caste discrimination from the upper class people of their gramasabha and they were resorted to allegations in the name of favouritism.

## SUB - THEME 13

### TEACHING WOMEN'S STUDIES

**Coordinators: Shadab Bano (Centre of Advanced Study in History, Aligarh Muslim University) and Panchali Ray (School of Women's Studies, Jadavpur University)**

#### ABSTRACTS

##### Mapping Changes with Women Studies Initiatives

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It is now more than three decades that women studies made inroads into curricula and syllabi of many disciplines making changes in the content of curriculums so as to incorporate in them women's issues from feminist perspectives. As a strategy the idea was to push their boundaries and reach out to students to enable them look at their lived realities from different standpoints. With this in view new perspectives and information on gender relations were incorporated into existing syllabi while at the same time new women studies courses were also created both at under graduate and post graduate levels.

Classroom was viewed as a space for questioning power relationships as also understanding the intersections of caste, class and gender as a result of new knowledge created by women studies. This was and continues to be exciting. The last three decades witnessed the proliferation of new research on women issues, inclusion of women issues in mainstream disciplines as well as establishment of UGC supported and/or semi autonomous women studies centres with a view to promote research and teaching on women issues. These developments, state's approach to these centres and the functioning of these centres have continued to attract critical appraisal from within the feminist academia. How much has changed at various levels since the introduction of such courses in terms of students' teachers' and establishment's response to these courses and centres? What kind of changes are these? What kind of space these courses have been able to make in the academic institutions? In the present day corporatized world how do students view these courses? There are serious issues of linking research, teaching and action and need for a review of available women studies programmes and courses by way of understanding their influence on mainstream disciplines or are these courses lying still in the margins of academy.

The changes spearheaded by economic liberalisation and globalisation in higher education need to be taken note of. The trend towards privatisation of higher education points to a conflict between the traditional image of a University as a place for 'disinterested' scholarship and the new image of corporate university. The latter is posing a threat to universities as spaces to reflect on broader social issues and concerns. Reduction in government funding, pressure on universities to raise funds from the industry, the market and individual student, the language of efficiency and accountability associated with corporate management to run and evaluate universities, dominance of commerce and technology related courses in higher education as providing for better paid jobs in market, change in the notion of knowledge and work, are all making it difficult to pursue equity goals in higher education. Women (and men) academics, who have been involved in women studies, are generally located in humanities and social science. How are they getting affected by such changes? Is it making it more difficult for them to use the university space for debating issues of equity and social change and social mobility especially in the context of right wing consolidation on campuses?

My paper intends to address these issues in the context of functioning of four major women studies centre working in the capital city of Delhi, namely, Centre for Women's Development Studies, Women Studies Development Centre (University of Delhi), Women Studies Centre (Jawaharlal Nehru University), Sarojini Naidu Centre for Women Studies (Jamia Milia Islamia. While CWDS is a semi-autonomous and primarily a research centre not affiliated to any state funded University, the other three centres are part of three major central Universities and are engaged with teaching of women studies courses at different levels. The locations of these centres, the socio-economic backgrounds of students studying in these different institutions, the structure of these institutions make it important to understand the issues that women studies courses are fraught with.

## **Making the Personal Political- Consensus and Contestation in a Course Exploring Gender Justice for M.A. students**

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The goal of this essay is to reflect on the pedagogical learnings, areas of contestation and consensus, and development of students' own understandings of gender equity during a semester long M.A. course on Gender and Development at Azim Premji University, Bangalore. Employing an explicitly feminist approach

and assessment strategies including curating visual essays, asking students to develop interventions using techniques drawn from the performing arts to situate intersectionality, this course attempts to scaffold and nourish lived experiences using innovative teaching methodologies.

**Methods:** In its first iteration, the instructor and a post-graduate student took notes on classroom interactions and reflected on the learnings from each week, identifying areas for improvement and assessing the success of new strategies. We collected informal oral feedback periodically, changing processes and pedagogical strategies, in response to this. At the end of the course formal written feedback was collected where students were asked to reflect on their attitudes towards gender justice, and make note of any changes as a result of their participation in the course. We followed a similar process in the second and the third run, with more oral inputs from students and more sharing and reflections in class as well as personally with the instructor, but with less structure as compared to the first semester it ran.

**Preliminary Findings:** During its first run, the course did not self-consciously deploy feminist pedagogical epistemologies (Kenway and Modra 1992; Shrewsbury 1993; Luke 1996), but we did so during the second and the third runs with students actively using their personal experiences as learning materials and transformation of perspectives through a process of discussion and reflection. Students drew from their experiences to comment on gendered violence, unequal treatment of sons and daughters, safety in public spaces, experiences of class and caste inequalities, marginal sexualities (including three students, one every year who “outed” themselves to the instructor in private conversations) and hegemonic masculinity. Given the topics under discussion, it is not entirely surprising that students shared extremely personal and sensitive information including instances of abortions, childhood abuse, problems with potential marriage alliances, conflicts with parents, drug use to cope with serious personal problems including problems with mental health.

Students often initiated their own learning by sharing videos, blogs and news articles with the class and then presented their own reflections, making broader connections to the themes under discussion. For example a student presented her own discomfort with the “in your face strategies” of “Pads Against Sexism” campaign in several Universities across the country, and its lack of resonance for reproductive rights for rural women; another presented on the Muslim divorce law because of her own interest in Islamic Feminism. Another group focussed on the issue of disabilities and gender, a topic that was not part of the syllabus, but nevertheless an important issue.

Despite the substantial presence of men in the classroom, discussions for the most part did not become polarized with two notable exceptions: the law on and police treatment of domestic violence offenders (Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code) and honour killings. Here, with the exception of one male student, others including some female students adopted a fairly regressive position believing that the law should be repealed based on anecdotal evidence, newspaper articles and anti-498A videos that had been circulated by male students earlier in the class. Despite exposure to empirical studies debunking the myth of the abuse of this law and a presentation by a first-year student on her work in police stations in Bangalore, there was little transformation in their beliefs. The second exception was with regard to honour killings – a male student felt that “as outsiders, we could not understand why honour killings take place” and demanded more “information” before he could form an opinion on it. The classroom thus refracted the same cosmologies as the larger society with concerns neatly split into the dichotomy of modern urban women and rural men from the hinterlands. While all students agreed that non-sexualized violence against women (such as female infanticide or feticide) could not be justified, there was contestation over the appropriateness of the deployment of violence in governing sexuality.

From our experiences a few insights have emerged (1) The process of instilling gender-equitable perspectives requires multiple exposures through additional courses since understandings of feminist praxis is extremely nascent; for students set on careers as development practitioners, this is absolutely critical. However gender is neither embedded nor mainstreamed into other courses in the M.A. program, necessitating separate, substantive and deep engagement with gender issues (2) Students defined gender equity initially (though this changed for a small number towards the end of the course) as equality of opportunities not outcomes; for instance women-specific interventions were thought to be exclusionary of men, despite the fact that the needs and starting points were very different. (3) An unintended and perhaps positive spill-over was that some students particularly women, and also some men, felt sufficiently comfortable to share their personal challenges in living with a feminist ideology with the instructor particularly in areas of love, relationships, sexuality, career and mental health.

## **Challenges Faced and Strategies Evolved in the Implementation of Gender Sensitivity as a Compulsory Value addition Course to Under Graduate Students**



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## **Dr. Sangeetha Motkar**

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In the light of the compulsory gender education course introduced by the Telangana government, the teachers of the undergraduate courses -mostly English lecturers- who lack the specialised knowledge of the discipline are up against the challenges of

A) Equipping themselves with the knowledge required to teach the new course

B) outlining a relevant curriculum that is need-based in its approach to meet the objective of Gender Sensitisation as a non-core, Ability Enhance Compulsory course (AECC) within the stipulated time of 30 hrs and Two credits set for Value addition courses under Choice Based Credit System.

C) To design a teaching module to accommodate the bilingual textbook, "Towards a world of Equals", as a prescribed reference text.

D) To evolve suitable pedagogical tools, viz. identifying questionnaires, activities, films, Ads, YouTube videos, etc; including appropriate evaluation strategies/modes such as group discussions, personal narratives, situational questions, projects, etc.

This paper highlights the dynamics of Curriculum designing and Curriculum transaction of Gender Studies in the new context of teaching it as a non core course by teachers without the experience or expertise of teaching such a course. The study uses the case study of the authors' teaching experiences of handling the course as a pilot project at St. Joseph's Degree and PG College, Hyderabad. Gender sensitivity at St. Joseph's has been introduced in the academic year 2016-17, as a part of Choice Based Credit System.

A value added course would imply teaching gender as a life skill, rather than as a traditional academic discipline. Hence, curriculum building for a unique course requirement such as this would require orchestrating the available resources to be level-appropriate while critically rethinking the traditional modes of teaching gender studies as a specialised post graduate course .So that it is customised and made relevant to meet the objective of a value addition course.

The course currently emphasizes on a functional approach rather than a pedantic mode of learning. Retaining the jargon-free, narrative framework of the textbook, the course relies heavily on examples from popular culture. Through this course we have observed the probability of innovative pedagogical methods that explore pluralisms and intersectional standpoints; and encourage multilingual and multidisciplinary approach. The aim here is not to teach gender as an analytical category or as a discipline, but reiterate the unmistakable presence of gender in their own campus spaces/ other public spaces; or in their domestic life/ other private spaces.

Within its limited scope the paper will attempt to uncover the limitations in institutionalising gender sensitivity in a few colleges across Hyderabad. Besides the simple structure and forthright language of the textbook, the harsh reality is that most faculty members are neither trained nor oriented to deal with the material provided. A pilot study has brought to light that teachers of the English department in most engineering and non-engineering colleges have been entrusted with teaching this course. Through a more elaborate survey, we want to probe into some of the difficult questions in this scenario; are these faculties equipped to generate gender discussions within a classroom situation? Has the government conducted training programmes reached these institutions? If not, do they have an external resource person? How do they approach the material?

The challenges are not limited to teachers alone; the students' feedback to gender sensitivity is sometimes misguided by the compulsion of marks and attendance requirements. The teaching community needs to further analyse if critical learning/thinking is conducive in such an environment. As a teacher of gender sensitivity, one needs to revamp all the arrows in the quiver and constantly reinvent new idioms of teaching such a controversial topic to a target group with varied biases and prejudices.

## **Women's/Gender Studies: missing link to restructure social institutions**

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Women's studies as a discipline, has helped in producing knowledge from the perspective of women. The worldview developed by women has gained much interest in India today. This is due to the continuous efforts of women

producing knowledge in every field be it arts, science or technology. But the visibility of women and women's studies is still a pertinent question asked in the universities teaching women's/ gender studies. Feminists have made several attempts to challenge the patriarchal institutions. Both scholars and activists have tried to break this chain of hierarchical structure. Feminist epistemologies and methodology have also been limited to scholars in women's studies. As pointed out by many research scholars, the NGOisation of the discipline has contributed to this limitation. This marginality in university settings has restricted women's studies from becoming the tool it had initially intended to be. The teachings and understandings have also evolved from personal to political and now to individual level. Therefore, as a student of gender studies, one is informed of both the women's movements and women's studies. But the experience also tells that the larger part of the society is unaware of these struggles. Also, very essential is to note that one was not aware of both movement and discipline before beginning as a learner of this discipline.

This paper is an attempt to underline the marginal preference shown towards women's studies by other institutions like universities which have led to limited reach of women's studies to NGOs and few other institutions. Policy making and implementation bodies have long been gender insensitive. Educational institutions also need gender sensitive individuals for analyzing and structuring course materials that are apt for a gender aware new generation. Such institutions can potentially answer the question of employability and training of women's studies practitioners.

## **Teachings of Women's Studies and Local Movements: A study of Anti-arrack Movement in India**

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Women have been in the forefront in the movements against liquor related social evils in India. It has been more intensive in the countryside. They have challenged the abuse and domination of male within the households on one hand, and on the other, compelled the administration to close down liquor shops in the locality. The objective of my study is to argue that narrations of such movements are essential inputs for teaching Women's Studies.

Teachings on Women's Studies across the world and especially in India have developed in two ways. Different disciplines in Social Science have focused

on women's issues related to their field considering women as an important social component of a state. This has helped them in gendering their respective disciplines. On the other, in many Universities with the help of Universities Grants Commission, Women's Study Centres have been established to pursue research and advocacy on issues relating to women. In some of the Universities, Masters Programme is operational.

Presently, teaching Women's Studies is confronted with the binary criticality vs. employability. In the process, due to limited scope for placements we have failed to create interest in the youth for women's studies. We have also failed in the last three decades to socialize our youth in a gender sensitive way through our teachings. It is pertinent to mention here that, the curriculum has mainly focused on theoretical perspectives, cultural construction of gender and public policies relating to women. What is lacking in this is practical teaching of women's agency in creating regional history.

The linkages between experiences and theories in deliberations made by the instructor make a Women Studies class room unique. Women's studies is more a Science than Arts. Therefore, teaching Women's Studies is expected to play a far more meaningful role in developing such linkages and need to connect the class room with movements.

**In this paper, I have addressed the following questions:**

1. What elements in women's socialization have contributed to women's emergence as leaders in local movements?
2. How women's 'gender roles' are reshaped by these movements.
3. What motivated women to challenge domestic abuse and domination in public.

These questions will be answered by analysing anti-arrack movement in India as a case study. I prefer the word 'arrack' to 'liquor' as arrack is locally produced alcohol profusely used by men in the villages.

My humble submission is that research on such acts of social citizenship by women will enrich the content and teaching of women's studies. This paper is divided into four sections. In the first part, I have analysed the contemporary features of teaching Women's Studies in class rooms. The second part deals with the essential features of regional history which enriches Women's Studies by focusing on Women's agency. The third part analyses anti-arrack movement in rural India as a case study to link experience with theory. The fourth part concludes my paper.

# Can Intersectionality Be a Universal Framework for Women's Studies in India?

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Intersectional approaches were being derived from feminist scholarship, which recognized that 'women' itself is not a homogeneous category and there were significant differences among women themselves. 'Intersectionality' is a term that was coined by American professor Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. The concept was very much there but she gave a name to it.

"... women experience oppression in varying configurations and in varying degrees of intensity. Cultural patterns of oppression are not only interrelated, but are bound together and influenced by the intersectional systems of society. Examples of this include race, gender, class, ability, and ethnicity." (Crenshaw, 1989)

But does intersectionality as a universal framework help us to capture this complexity in a developing country like India? In "Is Feminism about 'Women'? A Critical View on Intersectionality from India" (EPW, 25 April 2015), Nivedita Menon, the pioneering Indian feminist argues that that it actually does not help to capture this complexity. In response to Menon's perception, the leading Indian feminist scholar, Mary E John suggests that "instead of dismissing intersectionality, we might be better off engaging with it." (EPW, 15 August 2015) She argues that feminists should critically examine whether the concept offers any insights into women's' dilemmas and challenges.

My objective is to examine the relevance of the concept of 'intersectionality' with reference to Women's Studies in Indian context and also to locate the problems associated with the concept itself.

## The Critical Nuances and the Future Course of Action in Women's Studies

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In India, Women's Studies as an academic discipline traces its roots to the formation of Research Centre for Women's Studies (RCWS) at the SNDT Women's University, Mumbai, and in the recommendations made by the 'Towards

Equality Report' by the Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI) and the later developments associated with it. After four decades of its establishment, it needs a serious rethinking and introspection about the current underpinnings and the future course of its growth. Emerged with the objective to question and remove the silencing of women's voices within the academic discourse, the discipline at present is confronting with some complex issues. Women's Studies as a discipline poses new questions and attempts to search for the answers, and also emphasizes on sharing of experiences and develops critical consciousness. The discipline provides a pedestal where ideas evolve and metamorphose into self reflective, conscious and purposeful lives. Despite its strengths, the need of the hour is to rejuvenate its soul and chisel the critical edge as well as to tackle the challenges posed by the contemporary global world. The paper aims to analyze the challenges confronted by the discipline of women's studies in today's neo-liberal world, where interest of market prevails over the interest of the people.

Teaching women's studies at different geographical locations has its own contextualization and local specifications. The paper aims to raise some of these questions contextualized in the local geographical boundaries of Aligarh but also having a bearing of the global neo-capitalist regime. Here, an attempt is made to suggest a few alternatives for the sustenance and prospective development of the discipline.

The paper also locates itself into three different dimensions: how the process of teaching is creating an imprint on the discipline of Women's Studies and vice versa? How the academic responsibilities associated with the teaching constricts the space for extension activities for spreading awareness about gender issues? How the career prospects of Women's Studies could be enlarged to garner the attention and good number of students? These concerns reflect the existential realities of practicing Women's Studies- an unconventional and still evolving field of knowledge that questions androcentricism prevalent within the mainstream academia.

## **Gender and the Everyday**

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Everyday is so close to us that it often goes unnoticed, unable to appreciate the significance of the quotidian and the ways in which gender is learned, performed and practiced in everyday life. The repetitive and routinely performed activities

largely stay unexamined and remain absent in the dominant gendered discourses. Further, the everyday is central for an understanding of the process of social construction and the role played by women which is perceived as ‘natural’ and recognized for its taken for granted nature. It is precisely for this reason, that it is important to bring into light the sites of most obvious and mundane activities to understand and challenge the spaces that make women invisible. I draw attention towards the quotidian as a site to comprehend multiplicity of lived realities as both constructed and lived.

The present paper draws on the works of four feminist scholars: Gillian Rose, Dorothy E. Smith, Agnes Heller and Mary Holmes, whose research spans over diverse sociopolitical contexts and is centered around the concept of the everyday. I illustrate through the works of these feminist scholars that an analysis of mundane significantly reveals the embeddedness of gender into the everyday spaces based on repetition, rhythm and cyclic nature of life. Based on the selective readings, this paper argues for a more focused approach based on the everyday, as a line of inquiry in the women’s studies course. Such an approach highlights the centrality of the quotidian to understand the interface between gender, subject and the routine at different scales from the body to the global. This paper posits a demand for a microscopic and grounded approach to examine the gendered embodiment of the female subject in everyday life.

## **Status of Women’s Studies Centres in Vidarbha (Maharashtra): “UGC is not allowing to Beg and Universities are not allowing to Live”**

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Anti-establishment women’s movement was started after 1970s in India. Because of the UNs efforts and emancipatory movements in India, historically discriminated communities came into the center of policies framed by state and research in the higher education. Women’s studies as an interdisciplinary subject has been started in higher education only because of UNs initiatives. The women’s studies are making critical emancipatory discourse in the field of higher education. Gender centric power relation put in to the forefront of knowledge making process.

First women studies Centre was established in SNTD University in India in the year 1981. In 1986 the higher education policy was declared in India.

According to 1986s national policy on education –“education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women... ..This will be an act of faith and social engineering. Women’s studies will be promoted as a part of various courses and educational institutions encouraged taking active programs to further women’s development.” (National Policy on Education 1986, GoI, 1986, p 80) Because this national policy, during 1986 to 1989 the Women Studies Centre’s were established in major universities. During the year 2005 to 2009 almost all universities in Maharashtra had established the WSCs except few newly established universities like Solapur and Gondwana.

But according to UN’s and govt. of India’s goal of gender equality, are the women’s studies Centre’s truly working . Are the universities providing healthy and supportive culture . Is the administration of universities gender sensitive. Is the adequate teaching faculty appointed in the women’s studies centers.

**This paper is going to discuss the following points –**

UN goals for the integrated development and egalitarian society

Emerging Women’s studies a knowledge making politics & strategies for gender equality

Higher education policy and status of women’s studies in India

Financial, Administrative issues in university grant commission & at the university level

## **Teaching women studies: some critical questions**

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In the last decade or so, I have shared my unhappiness with attempts that position disability as the sole pre-occupation of those who are given that label. Though now there is a sea change in the understanding of disability. IAWS has been active in underscoring the issues of disability. However the reality as it stands today is that very few Women Studies courses teach disability in the present paper, I would like to share my concern with the women studies program. IAWS presented a detailed program on gender and disability in UGC as well IAWS newsletter. My concern is that such exclusions will not allow non-disabled and disabled women to understand disability. I do not believe that a non-disabled woman cannot traverse the same road that a disabled can. In my



own understanding, disabled women too like the non-disabled women, can occupy multiple positions that are taken as responses to the kind of domination that is experienced most critically. My endeavor therefore in the present paper is to share my agony about the absence of the disability issues in the teaching programs. Mostly constructions of disability assume that the disabled person is more damaged while those who construct this disabled identity are undamaged. The implicit assumption of course is that society is normal, intact, and capable of setting norms. However, no one questions the authenticity of this rather utopian expectation of a perfect/undamaged society. The work of reconstructing the women studies programs must focus on the sociocultural and political issues of disability. The fact that disabled women embodies a complex of interlocking situations. We need to understand that “Gender reaches into disability; disability wraps around class; class strains against abuse; abuse snarls into sexuality; sexuality folds on top of race.... Everything finally piling into a single human body” (Clare, 1999, p. 123). We cannot ignore the reality if a disabled body. My plea is that teaching of women studies must be inclusive of disabled body

## **Shaping a Feminist Identity with the Foundation Course on Women Studies**

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The Center for Women Studies, Lady Doak College for Women, was founded in the year 1989, to augment Women Studies in the different disciplines in the college and fit it into an institutional frame. It became a UGC supported Center from the year 2005. Among others it offers a Foundation Course on Women Studies for all students both at the under graduate and post graduate levels of every discipline in the college. The course is mandatory for each student of the college irrespective of the discipline to which she belongs. A total of Twenty three faculty members representing different disciplines of the college are periodically trained to teach the course.

Situating itself within an interdisciplinary framework, this Foundation Course on Women Studies has engaged Teachers and learners to critically study the reality of women's oppression. It has allowed students to recognize the hierarchies present in families and examine their own unequal positions in these hierarchies. It is a critical instrument to understand their own conflicts and

apprehensions on gender and seek the autonomy to be in full control of them to have and make the right choices. This is evident in the way students have involved themselves in raising gender consciousness and develop a feminist identity. This Paper attempts to explain how both Teachers and learners from different disciplines of Sciences and Humanities are able to connect theory and practice with Women Studies. The following objectives emerge:

1. Explore the pedagogies in which the information and analysis of women's oppression in WS classrooms has resolved the many conflicts/apprehensions in the minds of learners and made them proactive.
2. Demonstrate how Women studies determine the relationship between knowledge and action.
3. Study how it improves the self-image of learners of Women studies and the extent to which they are able to incorporate women's experiences and understandings in their own disciplines.

Methodology: To assess attitudinal changes and map new perceptions separate questionnaires for Sciences and Humanities Disciplines will be used among Teachers and students of Women Studies. Discussions with students and faculty will substantiate the new ideas and perceptions gained. A study of the research work of students of 2015-16 academic session of each discipline will assess how much women's lives, their perspectives, viewpoints, are incorporated. A case study of the Center for Women Studies as a Center for knowledge and human resources will outline its best practices and challenges faced in gendering the disciplines.

## **Debating Women's Question in College Class Rooms: Local Specificities**

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As a sociology teacher I would like to present myself as a case study in debating women's question in class rooms. Being a woman faculty in a boy's college itself is an interesting challenge. But in the centre of learning, it's very tough to train them to unlearn some socialized notions especially about women. I am a teacher from the city of Madurai which is famous as temple city and as a tourist attraction in Tamil Nadu. Ours is a century old arts and science college with strength of 6500 students.

We have included in our curriculum a varied range of topics like gender discrimination met out by Indian women, the strong hold of patriarchy, women in family, women at work, gender equality, portrayal of women in media, crime against women etc. We have students from a wide range of socio - economic backgrounds from all disciplines.

It is always very difficult to debate women's question in college class rooms. As a researcher, I would like to attribute this difficulty to social institutions like family, religion, education and politics. All institutions contribute to the strengthening of patriarchy and this is supplemented by media. I would like to present a paper on the challenges and problems in debating women's question in class rooms with special reference to higher education in small towns and cities.

## **Teaching from Wistfulness: Balancing the Space for Gender in Uneasy Times**

**Sarvar Sherry Chand and Catrinel Dunca**

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We do not teach "women's studies" where we come from. We sneak texts into syllabi which might allow us to have conversations. When the board of studies meets, we go in looking sheepish and shivery kneed knowing that if the members have read those texts, they're likely to say they're 'too much for our kind of students.' Think the too-muchness of Jeanette Winterson, if you will, or of Alice Walker. Institutional policies regarding preference being given to students from marginalized communities makes an easy tool to curb the 'arcane' conversations around gender.

We write from bitterness but we also write from a space that has grown over time, which has had to find nooks and crannies and figure out strategies. What the paper proposes is a dialogue from the two often overlapping, sometimes diverging positions that we hold: of one who was part of the beginning of 'Women's writing' in St. Xavier's College, Ahmedabad more than 20 years ago; and of another who claims those classes as fundamental to the making of her queer self and who is left now holding the baby that's grown too loud, seemingly, to be swept under the carpet any more. That is not what we do with babies, you say?

What our dialogue looks at is based on the experience of teaching Women's Writing and Gender and Literature, under various names, at the undergrad level;

and teaching similar papers for the Master's degree. It looks at the way in which issues of gender and class, race, ethnicity, caste, but also genre sneak into other papers one teaches as well; how learning happens in spaces formal and informal, in relationships that continue off campus; through research shared and through involvement in and commitment to other issues and movements; in classrooms where Gujarati literature is taught and feminism turns into 'narivadi' with all the challenges that brings.

We want to raise questions which we (the paper writers and the students we interact with) experience at the moment with a sense of urgency: what do we (not) see of the feminist, queer and other movements in India, as academics located in a Jesuit institution in Ahmedabad? How do the pedagogies we continuously adopt because we are in these classes, as feminists and as lesbian women, function within the rigours of the institution? What do these things we learn mean when it comes to engaging with the social reality around—and while we're at it, why is that engagement so minimal?

## **Academia without Walls: Creating a New External Reality**

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The teaching of Women's Studies is assailed with difficulties as much as rewards. It is suggested that teaching Women's studies often differs from teaching of conventional disciplines but this offers a chance for academic innovation. As a female teacher teaching literary feminist theories in under graduate classes, I have encountered a manifestation of a diverse reaction from the students who are a composite of mixed genders. This reaction from the students is very different from the kind that is experienced during my teaching of gender neutral literary narratives.

In the grand and meta narratives, the writers are mostly males who disseminate the portrayal of female images & their sexualities with the pseudo concerned authority to minimize or to beget complete negation in the writings throughout history. The images of female characters are portrayed with the issues of confining & concealing their desires & urges with the epithet of phallogocentric meaning of a virtuous woman. This is a tool exercised by the patriarchal mindset in order to enhance their personal politics which is regressive in nature. This concept is pseudo in nature because men have been sketching women images of what they want them to be and not what they are in actuality. So in order to orientate the mind of the students by breaking the wall and to disseminate to the classroom

the new external reality of what womanhood is - is not an easy task. As a teacher and also as a female teacher, the ultimate presentation is to provide the unbiased attitude to all gender groups.

With this line of thought, my paper will be concentrated on some feminist writers like Helen Cixous, Elaine Showalter, Githa Hariharan and Margaret Atwood. The thesis will be centred around my experiences and impressions while teaching these ground breaking writers to the students of mixed genders at the undergraduate level.

## **Decentring the Discipline: Women's Studies as a Politics and a Discipline in Tamil Nadu, India**

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The object of this paper is to inquire into the practices and possibilities of women's studies (WS) courses in non-metropolitan locations in India facilitating a decentring of the discipline. I engage with the ways in which postgraduate and doctoral women's studies (gender studies) unfold in two UGC-funded Women's Studies Centres in universities in Tamil Nadu – Bharathidasan University (BDU) in Tiruchirapalli district and the Bharathiar University (BU) in Coimbatore district. While there is a significant amount of literature that traces the institutionalisation of WS, there is a relative absence of critique of the institutionalised discipline in the Indian context. Experiential modes, even if employed, are restricted to discourse about the discipline from the point of view of the pedagogue. The changing demography of students of Women's Studies, their self-perceptions and their locations in the circuits of feminist epistemology do not find space for articulation.

This research is premised on the idea that the experiences and situated knowledge of those engaged in women's studies in these locations are apposite starting points for a critical reflection on not just the functioning of women's studies as both politics and discipline within this particular context, but also stand to offer a lens for a critical appraisal of the institutionalised discipline at large. Engaging with the prevalent discourse of depoliticisation, NGOisation and professionalisation of Women's Studies, I propose the need to dialogue with the everyday experiences and perspectival knowledge of the students and scholars from these locations, to say how these micro-negotiations need to be attended to along with the attention to structural inequalities, in order to find a way forward.

This paper posits that by highlighting the exclusions in the curricular engagement and citational practices of institutionalised women's studies, by questioning the binaries of academic and non-academic work and thereby deconstructing the hierarchies foundational in the construction of such binaries, WS students in these locations enable the possibility of decentring WS knowledge. In creating a new language of women's studies, one that speaks to their location and against hegemonic knowledge flows, I argue that my research participants have constructed theoretical work as political practice. Drawing from these, I then argue for their positioning as organic intellectuals, as feminist scholars who are 'situated' and who, by their engagements, struggle both within and against the institutions of power.

Starting from the lived experiences of WS scholars in these locations is not just a resisting of or a rupture of the dominant narrative of women's studies produced in metropolitan circuits, but a production of a different, partial narrative that then can sit equally at the table to negotiate with the dominant, and minimise its violence.

## **Feminism and Politics in South Asia: Teaching 'Region' in Women's Studies**

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Critical approaches to new region studies have emphasised that regions are neither 'out there' to be discovered nor passive entities created by adding some border-sharing nation-states; but rather are spaces constructed through several administrative, social, cultural and economic practices. Naming of concrete and symbolic landscapes through memory and heritage mark the process of institutionalising a uniform regional (which can also be national in certain cases) past. Ruptures in such social spatialisations are significant for tracing the territorial boundaries and borderlands. Various points of interface between feminism and politics in South Asia reflect on the ways in which the question of gender is central to the imagination of modern South Asia as a region. Considering feminist politics as action and engagement – as a complex, messy but always necessary process of subversion on the one hand, and building coalitions on the other – this paper takes a closer look at the deeply intertwined connections among feminist politics, regional feminism(s) and modes of teaching region in Women's Studies.

Erasure of internal inconsistencies within national contexts and cross-border overlap of memories, populations and social practices indicate limits of the usual understanding of South Asian region as an assemblage of several different nation-states. Territorial boundaries and their porosity are key elements of rethinking regional history and how it shapes governance, economy and culture. In other words, a comparative understanding dependent on finding similarities and differences between national contexts is not enough to identify the converging issues at stake for regional feminist politics. It is equally important to see how regions are constituted within the wider discourses of feminist politics beyond/internal to national borders. Instead of creating a neat comparative model based on different nation states that constitute South Asia as a region, this paper intends to unpack how re-thinking region in the context of feminist politics can become an useful category of analysis in Women's Studies.

## **Sharing the Experience on “Teaching Women’s Studies” as Interdisciplinary Challenges and Opportunities**

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The Centre for Women's Studies was started in the year 2004 with the financial support of the University Grants Commission in X plan period. It was upgraded into full fledged Department of Women's Studies in the year 2008 in XI plan period. During the XII plan period the Department of Women's Studies has been upgraded to Phase III with enhanced financial assistance.

The Department offers MA, M.Phil and PhD in Women's Studies. In addition the department also offers BA and MA in distance education. The interdisciplinary nature of Women's Studies is capable of cultivating a critical attitude towards disciplinary constraints, which allows research to move beyond discipline boundaries. It also serves to build a bridge between arts, sciences and technology, between skill-building and general education and between individual capacity enhancement and social awareness.

The department plays a significant role in teaching, training, research, extension, field action, documentation, publication and advocacy. The department offers two credit supportive papers under CBCS system to other department students. It also undertakes the following activities.

1. Teaching
2. Research
3. Training
4. Extension Activities / Field Action Projects

The Department of Women's Studies offers M.A Women's Studies (Regular Course) since 2009. I am teaching M.A Women's Studies Course since 2009. The present paper aims to share the experience of teaching Women's Studies as Interdisciplinary at PG level.

## **Teaching Genders, Mainstreaming Gender Issues: Introduction, Progress and Feedback of Gender Sensitization Course at JNTUH Hyderabad**

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This paper is based on my experiences and observations as a teacher and mentor for the newly introduced course on Gender Sensitization at Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University Hyderabad with effect from the academic year 2015-2016. This initiative is based on the directions of UGC Saksham Report and Government of Telangana. This course is an attempt to sensitize students of engineering and technology towards contemporary issues in family and society and help them develop an understanding and a critical perspective towards gendering of social roles, relationships and rights, and review perceptions of their own selves in the socio-economic and cultural milieu. This course is also an attempt to help both students and the teachers to reflect upon their own unique position in terms of gender roles, equality and justice, share their experiences and raise their concerns, voices and even protests as the case may be. In the given context, this paper discusses the need and importance of doing a course on Gender Sensitization in the elusive domains of science, engineering and technology - which largely, and perhaps knowingly, remain intact from the attempts and significant impacts of doing gender studies in the humanities and cultural domains till date. This course provides a foundation for bridging the existing gaps between technical education and social sense and life skills appropriating a gender just



environment. This paper gives an overview of the elaborated ground work and brain storming for preparation and introduction of this course, the relevance of developing a bilingual text-book (in English and Telugu) and alternative teaching methods, and orientation for both the students and the teachers. This paper also sums up the progress of the course and gives an account of the individual, societal and institutional barriers faced during conducting this course. The discussions on gendered socialisation, stereotyping, division of labour and discrimination provided much needed insights for developing necessary gender-just personal, professional and social skills. The personal and socio-cultural inhibitions of both the students and teachers in learning certain taboo topics like domestic violence and sexual harassment, the issues of various gender identities such as LGBT and sexual orientations were noted and their journey to gradually overcome their own inhibitions and stereotypes marks the progress and success of this course. As a continuum of the life-long learning purpose of this course, this paper lists some reflections, experiences and feedback of students and teachers. To sum up, this course encouraged discussions on gender issues within and beyond classrooms, outreaching to the open areas like the campus corridors, hostels and canteens, and even into the households, leading to discussions on gender issues in the living spaces and the dining tables. As a live course, they discussed poetry and literary works, films, posters and everyday dialogues to understand on-going gender issues. Along with discussions, the students and the teachers also reported to reflect upon their existing gendered roles and images and attempted to bring little yet significant changes towards a gender-just environment.

## **The Advocacy Role of IAWS in Introducing Gender / Women's Studies Components at all Levels of Education System**

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Gender equality has been a key objective of educational policy of India for over three decades. The NPE 1986 has envisaged education as an agent of basic change in the status of women and that the national educational system will play a positive interventionist role in the empowerment of women. It stressed the need for developing new values through redesigned curricula, textbooks, training and orientation of teachers, decision makers and administrators. Even after 30 years this vision of the NPE document still seems a distant dream.

Unfortunately, our education system is entrenched with gender bias at all

levels of formal education. With regard to the objectives of higher education, enrolment in professional courses, retention of students in the degree/PG programmes, gender division of roles etc, gender bias is prevalent in the higher education system. Researches showing significant difference in the gender role perception between boys and girls in higher education with girls having highly progressive and boys having traditional views are quoted by the author.

Even though education has the potential to bring about readiness for change in the mindsets of people, the present education system offers little on Gender/ Women's Studies components. Now that gender equality and gender justice have been realized as essential requisites for peaceful living and sustainable development, the education system has to respond positively by including Gender/ Women's Studies components as a compulsory curricular component at all levels of education. Respect for the opposite sex is not something that can be developed all of a sudden at the UG/PG level. Curricular components appropriate to each level need to be included from the primary classes onwards. Though the NCERT has responded positively, examples of stiff resistance from the academic circles in the introduction of Gender Studies in higher education are quoted in the paper. The author stresses the need for advocacy of IAWS with the Ministry of Women and Child Development for evolving policies for introducing Gender Studies components at all levels of education system. It must be made mandatory at the UG/ PG levels. Otherwise having Gender Studies as an optional paper could do nothing in promoting the gender sensitivity of the youngsters. The author also seeks the support of the Ministry in reserving posts like gender consultants, school counselors and protection officers for people who have studied a paper on gender studies at their UG or PG levels. The various issues confronting the teaching of Women's Studies are also dealt in the paper.

## **Between the National and the Post National: Teaching Women's and Gender Studies in the Postcolonial University**

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This paper examines the frames within which women's and gender studies are conceived in the university curriculum in the postcolonial Indian university. In particular, it interrogates the roles played by the nation, region

and the transnational in developing women's and gender studies curriculum and pedagogy. It examines what it would mean to decolonize women's studies and gender studies pedagogies in the global south. Would this mean engaging with just the legacies of colonialism and eurocentrism, or also a critical engagement with the question of differences of caste, race, religion, ethnicity, state violence and so forth? This is foregrounded through a discussion of what would it mean to teach women's studies in India's Northeast, an engagement which critically evaluates the emergence and intersection of the two fields of study in the Indian university Women's and gender Studies and Northeast India Studies.

## **Women's Studies, Feminisms and Knowledge Production: Some Thoughts**

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This paper reflects on the relations of 'feminism' to the possibilities of knowledge production in the interdisciplinary space of 'Women's Studies'. It also tries to (re)think the specificity of feminist intervention in Women's Studies. Every disciplinary paradigm focuses on specific areas of investigation. Although discipline may certainly change over time and new areas of interest emerge, nonetheless each discipline is thought to retain characteristics that separate it from all other discipline. The important issues raised by feminisms in this interdisciplinary space call for foundational changes in knowledge production. These changes are not exhausted by overt attempts to bring in studies of the condition of women in society. Studies that take seriously the challenges of feminism should also look at the changes in approaches and methodologies thus required. The increasing importance of feminist theory and issues of gender in the field of academic spaces demands sustained scholarly attention and deliberations. An inquiry into the current state of the epistemological fields needs to address presuppositions on which much of these orthodox disciplinary structures are founded. One can well argue, perhaps somewhat rightfully, that the foundational presuppositions of disciplinary knowledges could be attended in terms of multiple theoretical nuances including sociology of knowledge, history of disciplines or history of philosophy. What then is the significance of feminist perspective? How to think of feminisms criticality? What are the boundaries that define and differentiate Women's Studies at the same time? How feminist knowledge productions are also marked by various elements of

intersectionalities like class, caste, sexuality, religion etc.? My aim is to critique the dominant patriarchal notion of 'neutral' and 'universal knowledge claim of the orthodox disciplinary paradigm. Is it primarily the fact that the epistemological assumptions are gendered or is it simply an effort to question the underpinnings of male-stream discourses? In my paper I will address the question of power and its relation to knowledge production. I will argue that feminist research is a transformative process which will democratize social, political and ideological processes and compels one to be aware of the multiplicity of axes that marks the interdisciplinary academic space called women's studies. It is established that women are not a monolithic category and differences has to be acknowledged. Feminism advances knowledge, leads to new potentialities for self definition and cautious us against a liberal, humanist politics of complicity, where women can only mimic men. In this paper, I will critique the established norms of hegemonic knowledge production and circulation.

## **Teaching Caste and Gender in Law Schools**

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Caste and gender are arguably the two most vital axes of oppression and deprivation in India. While this premise should make the affected individuals and groups the most worthy targets of legal protection in a democratic set up, the structural biases in the legal system ensure little access to justice to those lower in the caste and gender hierarchy. When faced by discrimination and violence the recourse to legal mechanisms and legal representation is further away from the disadvantaged groups. While many possible solutions can be proffered to respond to this situation, this article argues for making caste and gender integral to teaching of law. It takes the approach that the systemic biases can be confronted more effectively with the practical understanding of the daily realities as well a theoretical and historical grounding and may assist the practitioners of law such as lawyers, judges and law makers in ways. As the law school influences the legal profession in most profound ways- from legal content to normativity- it is paramount that lawyers are introduced to sociological understanding of caste and gender at the inception of their journey as legal professionals.

The article begins by asking why a serious consideration to caste and gender is vital for justice in India and dwells into statistics as well as an anthology of recent caste crimes and how law has dealt with them. It considers the manner in which caste is visible and invisible within the legal discourse and practice in

India. I take an overview of Indian legal education including innovations and pedagogies established by the new brand of law schools and show that caste and gender remain outside of the mainstream legal education. I draw from the lessons that Critical Race Theory, Feminist Legal Theory and Critical Race theory have brought to legal education in the Western world and show how they can be applied to teaching caste and gender in Indian law schools. The article then moves to the methodological and pedagogical question; what should be the content and pedagogy of teaching caste and gender in law schools? For this I offer suggestions from my own experience of teaching this subject in a premier law university in India.

## **My Tryst with Teaching Women's Studies in the Bangalore University**

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To fill the intellectual void created in the academia in the absence of perspective on Gender and to challenge the sexist, patriarchal and phallogocentric construction of Knowledge, Women's Studies first appeared in the United States in the second half of 1960's and subsequently popularized in West during 70's. Women's Movement in and outside India and United Nation's initiatives towards mitigating gender inequality during 70's created perfect set up for introduction of women's Studies in India. Disturbing findings of "Towards Equality" Report provided the much needed push for fundamental shift, what Mary John described, 'women as subject to be educated to women as new subject of investigation and study'.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has promoted, strengthened and given direction to the Women's Studies programme in the country since the VII Plan period. Women's Studies Centre's, established in the university system and colleges, have contributed significantly to the expansion of Women's Studies curricula, research and innovative pedagogy in classrooms and in field action projects. Mary Maynard in her famous article "Women's Studies" has identified three phases in the growth of the discipline. In Recuperative Phase the discipline aimed to challenge the silencing, stereotyping, marginalization and misrepresentation of women in other disciplines and adding women to the existing body of knowledge. In Reconstitutive Phase, practices of existing disciplines have been reevaluated and redesigned to focus on new areas of concern and the generation of new concepts and theories. Reflexive Phase on the other hand

endorses self-criticism and self-awareness and this paper is an initiative towards this end. My tryst with teaching Women's studies in the Bangalore University began on the year 2007 and the present paper is introspection and reflection on my journey. The paper will reflect on:

- Genesis and growth of the Centre in the Bangalore University
- From curiosity to the emergence of gender as an important analytical variable
- Increasingly male dominated class room and possible shift towards more inclusive term Gender studies
- Increasingly marginalized classroom and need for Intersectionality
- From Western feminism to more inclusive Indian Feminism
- Employability and debate on Discipline, interdiscipline and trans discipline
- Plight of a pro-active movement born discipline within University system
- Possibilities and Prospects

## **Connection, Contestation and Conflict: Teaching and Learning Women's and Gender Studies**

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In the five decades of its existence as an interdisciplinary field of study in the university, Women's and Gender Studies has had a profound impact across the Social Sciences and Humanities. Women's Studies was first conceived of as a distinct field of learning, teaching and research within the activism of the women's movement in the 1960s and 1970s. In the Canadian context, this activism came out of what is known as second wave feminism and has since expanded into a full blown independent field of academic study. Yet the field itself continues to be internally contested, challenged by questions of inclusion and exclusion, and of the viability of its political projects. Although Women's Studies makes the claim of speaking to, for, and from, the concerns of 'women', the experiences and perspectives of marginalized women's communities have yet to find space in this

field. This paper analyzes some of the major developments and present state of Women's and Gender Studies in Canada, it also presents a critical reflection on emerging trends that are likely to shape the future of this field in the university.

## **Teaching Resistance and Critique: Some Reflections on Women's Studies in the Academy**

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While inaugurating the first conference of the Indian Association of Women's Studies in 1981 Madhuri Shah, the then Chairperson of the University Grants Commission had remarked that introduction of separate Women's Studies programmes was "a temptation" presumably not to be succumbed to. Be that as it may, there was a proliferation of master's and doctoral programmes in Women's Studies since then, reflecting the need for "new knowledge about women" (John, 2008). While its institutional presence in higher education by now is apparent, if often limited, its function as an expected catalyst for social change through its academic programmes is still open for critical scrutiny. The original context of the emergence of Women's Studies rooted in the demonstration and documentation of multiple inequalities between (mostly) men and women and the critique of dominant disciplinary approaches to knowledge production appears to be now history, and seems to have given way in the present times to new perceptions of gender. In the present times, these new messages that convey possibilities of freedom of choice and autonomy, and personal identity seem to captivate privileged students in particular seeking admission to this course of study. Or else, it is the 'do-good impulse' to change the lives of 'long-suffering women in the villages'. Further, we are living in times when funding issues determine the sustainability of academic programmes, when the 'processing' of graduate students for employability vis-à-vis the discussion and production of ideas, which was the original link between the women's movement and higher education institutions seems to be of paramount importance, and when the increased tolerance to Women's Studies seems to stem more from its potential to churn out 'young professionals' who can oversee and execute state programmes related to women's empowerment. Concern over what is being taught in the name of Women's Studies, what is being conveyed to our students, whether we are being able to play an interventionary/transformatory role in higher education in accordance with the original mandate is the prime motivator for this reflection paper. Contextualizing this concern within a premier social sciences university

which actively encourages inter-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary programmes rather than conventional courses, the paper draws on our experience of teaching Women's Studies since the past two years, sharing our misgivings and apprehensions, as well as our small triumphs and pleasures.

The paper focuses on two key arguments: a) the implications of the location of a trans-disciplinary subject such as Women's Studies in an inter-disciplinary educational institution and b) the practice of feminist pedagogy and reflections on power relations in the classroom.

## **A Mind of One's Own: My Journey in doing a 'Feminist Research'**

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The paper is a reflexive account in the form of a confessional tale about the researcher's journey in pursuing her doctoral research in the interdisciplinary arena of 'Women's Studies'. The essay is divided in three sections and begins with the dilemmas experienced when designing an empirical study on 'Indian women', where categories 'Indian' and 'women' cannot be used without detailing their genealogy and exploring them as constructs. The second section discusses the potential pitfalls in the dominant discourses on feminism and the inevitable paradox of doing research in the absence of 'language of the feminine'. This includes an acute description of the state of ambiguity and meaninglessness experienced when working as a 'feminist researcher' and journals her anxieties and frustrations as a researcher and woman embedded in the very structures that she wishes to question. The last and final section, talks about her coming together both personally and professionally as she weaves her questions together and realizes the importance of maintaining a fluid stand when talking about 'women'. Thus she no longer seeks to concretize her 'data' but analyze it to raise critical arguments when trying to categorize women's experiences with mental health and illness. Thus, her "fear and bitterness", being the foreground of any observation of oppression, was replaced by a non-aggressive posture where she starts reflecting on her position and the intricate web of social relations in which she and the phenomena are intertwined. Thus, in this paradigm one is no longer situated as a victim of 'patriarchy' but the individual is seen both as a victim and perpetrator directing an understanding of how, why and where one changes one's position. This questions the seemingly paradoxical position of researches done on women, which is aimed to be 'for' women, but the positions of "on" and



“for” are male-driven. Thus, any ‘feminist’ research cannot be done by a mind working in binaries, but by a mind that is acutely aware of the many positions one takes and identifying the patriarch within rather than in the ‘phenomena.’ The paper concludes with highlighting the importance of ‘positionality’ as a research tool and mode of analysis where the researcher’s location and posture within the various aspects of research need to be elucidated, facilitating analysis at three levels: intra-psychic, inter-personal and social. It is this interdisciplinary approach that perhaps makes Women Studies a more holistic endeavor for young scholars.

## **Testimony of a Women’s Studies Teacher**

### **S. Suba**

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As a person I have bonded with the discipline “Women’s Studies” more than twenty five years in two ways one as student and other as teacher. These two different engagements in learning and teaching Women’s Studies in institutional setting have given multiple experiences. Though, the discipline Women’s Studies making the invisible to visible and voicing for voiceless the existence of discipline within the University campuses is facing struggles and challenges both administratively and academically. Since my student hood of Women’s Studies the challenges like recognizing women’s studies on par with other disciplines, building institutional perspective, funding, space, recruiting qualified teachers, understanding the inter disciplinary nature of pedagogy, Linking academics with movement, enrollment, employability are continuing in different faces in different situations. In Tamil Nadu state the very objective and relevance of Women’s Studies and its nexus with movements are diluted as well as elusive currently ever before though the numbers Women’s Studies centres and departments are increased. Diluted understanding of Women’s Studies is misrepresented the feminist questions and gender politics at various levels of its core activities particularly teaching, research and extension process which is disconnected the academics from activism. This disconnectivity has made the classrooms as space to simply teaching Women’s Studies only for employability not for practicing politically. This kind of functioning trend of the Women’s Studies centres and departments in institutional setting make the environment as apolitical and shrinking the space for feminist discourse. With this background this paper explores the challenges, issues and concerns in teaching Women’s Studies in state universities in Tamil Nadu.

## **Scope of Women's Studies: Should it confine to Employability and Marketability**

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Women's Studies, an interdisciplinary academic programme being offered from Post Graduation to PhD in various academic institutions. Women's Studies/Gender Studies as an academic discipline is yet to gain through, though there are 172 Women's Studies Centres in India supported by UGC as per 12th five year plan. The Advanced Centres in Women's Studies are being functioning since 1989. Women's Studies is not just a course, but it is an evaluation of life, experiences of each woman, which get theorized to contribute to literature. The Women's Questions which were neglected as issues in the policy context due to lack of sensitivity could be addressed by the women's movements. Thanks to Women's movements for bringing the women's questions as integral part of the policy highlighting the crucial issues such as female infanticide, feticide, dowry, widow harassment, system of Sati, child labour, female drop out, lack of participation of women in paid work or non-recognition of the unpaid work etc. It is from Women's movements, the Women's Studies had emerged primarily with the objective to transfer the knowledge generated through the huge literature on women's movements, women's issues, women's experiences, women's subordination in the patriarchal and capitalist/feudalistic context to class rooms where Women's Studies qualifies to gain an academic disciplinary status. With such a focus the Women's studies got institutionalized. Such institutionalization has gradually failed to recognise the historical context of emergence of Women's Studies from Women's movement on the one hand and fail to wed a link with movements on the other. There has been a complete dichotomy between activism and academic which needs to be addressed as Women's Studies per se as an Academic discipline cannot stand in isolation with activism.

This paper tries to discuss and examine, What really prevents Women's Studies to be really recognised as Academic Discipline, what is actually being taught and what is to be taught in Women's Studies, how does Women's Studies differ from other discipline in just not focusing on employment and career, how does teaching of Women's Studies make every individual to be self questioning, self analysing and self evaluating their own lives, the influence of social cultural practices in women's lives etc There is a need to analyse the existing socially constructed practices which subordinate the women and keep patriarchy to

sustain, the intersectionality of Gender with Class, caste, religion etc to with rationality and scientific temper with the Women's Studies Perspective in Women's Studies, which one cannot always expect the course to be marketed. However, any student who wishes to do a course necessarily looks for career opportunities for the course. Hence in addition to the above research questions to be analysed, the paper will also focus on the nature of employment for Women's Studies and Gender Studies Graduates at International, National and regional levels, etc. the issues and challenges of promoting Women's Studies as an academic discipline equivalent to other social sciences, to strategies to present to the State to recognise the course to Public Service Commissions, recruitment, etc the issues in making the subject matter and content of the discipline visible, the hardness in accepting the same by the students, parents, employers and other stakeholders etc

## **On the Place of Psychology in Women's Studies**

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The paper will address the absence of Psychology from the usual imagination of an interdisciplinary program of Women's Studies in India. The limitations of Psychology in contributing to the field have been repeatedly enumerated. With a positivist bent on one hand and a focus on the individual on the other, Psychology has been seen to be deeply problematic for Women's Studies particularly in the Indian context. There have been few psychologists who identify with Women's Studies and those who do have generally been critical of their own discipline. The argument in this paper will be that a time may have come to rethink this relationship. This is in part due to the changes within the discipline of Psychology that has now become increasingly permeable to other disciplines and has taken the turn towards qualitative methodology. Such a psychology has greater utility as part of the tool kit of Women's Studies. More importantly however the absence of Psychology has also inadvertently resulted in relative silence within Women's Studies on questions such as those of mental illness. My argument in this paper will be that the exclusion of the psychological from teaching and research in Women's Studies has also lead to the invisibilization of women with mental illness despite a long history of engagement within feminist thought of the question of Women's madness. The paper is a plea for the expansion of interdisciplinarity within Women's Studies to include Psychology and interrelated disciplines.

# Theorizing Women's Studies in the Academia

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In this presentation I shall attempt to map the trajectory of Women's Studies from being a perspective or a way of seeing to its eventual incorporation into the academic world as a discipline, and the consequent shifts in the direction from both within the Women's Movement (activist stance) as well as from without (the academic). This paper will draw liberally from my rich experience in the academic world as a teacher in the discipline—and drawing comparisons from my work in Women's Studies as a researcher before I became a teacher of Women's Studies.

In the course of this analytical presentation, I shall attempt to look at Women's Studies as a discipline in the University context, looking at the various difficulties posed—in terms of even framing a working syllabus, finding the right teaching sources, organizing the curricula etc.

The difficulties of incorporating Women's Studies papers into mainstream courses within the academia as well as reaching out to the students will be discussed. The distance from the ideal situation wherein the courses should be mainstreamed, to the current scenario where a certain amount of ghettoism is taking place, seems to be widening.

In all the paper hopes to problematise the various directions taken by Women's Studies courses today. I shall attempt to theorise on the specific issues that we had to encounter. It would look closely at the primary objective of feminist approaches and the diluting of these directions in the actual implementation of course work. The paper will also look into the problematic of Women's Studies as a discipline as opposed to Women's Studies from independent research positions.

## Women's Studies and Multi Disciplinarity

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Women's Studies has become part and parcel of the Higher Education scenario of the University of Calicut, which being one of the biggest Universities having 469 affiliated colleges for its credit. How much and how far the Department

had been causal to the enhancement of the gender sensitivity among the students and in the teacher-student relationship is an area yet to be researched. But in such an environment having a Department in the main campus and the University being sensitized towards incorporating gender-orientations in its curriculum, syllabus and pedagogy all the other areas of learning including that of Language and Literature especially Malayalam and English Disciplines. While reflecting on the attempts for transformations and reformations in curriculum, syllabus and pedagogy in its micro-political level of understanding one cannot evade thinking about the rationale of resistance from “this side” to the global-neo-liberal-socio-cultural invading tendencies, affecting the levels of thoughts and actions of the agents of the fields of Higher Education. In Kerala while the Public Education system was revamped with an intention of incorporating critical pedagogy, in Nineties, gender-question had been specifically included in curriculum, syllabus and pedagogy. Activity-oriented Learning process became part of the student-centered-class room experiences. Gender relation became visible all sorts of interactions, say between girl student and boy student and among student-teacher, parent-teacher, and parent-teacher-student.

Such an intervention led to the revamping the scenario of Higher Education consequently resulting in Choice based Credit Semester System, critical pedagogy being part of its conceptualisation. As and when critical pedagogy became focus to the conceptualisation Gender, ecology, black-aesthetics etc became part of curriculum, syllabus and pedagogy. The academic seminars, refresher courses, orientation programmes on the issues of gender conducted by the departments of the main campus and affiliated colleges are also fruits of the introduction of Women’s Studies in the concerned areas of study. Added attention is being given to the framing of the common courses and core courses offered. Electives and open courses introducing feminist thoughts and perspectives are also part of contemporary curriculum, syllabus and pedagogy of Higher Education. Topics of Dissertations of the UG and PG levels have been increasingly directed towards the gender based enquiries. This later has helped to open up researching the realms of literature, by and about women, exposing the lives, works and life history of women as writers, characters and living beings. Women’s Studies, hence has become a significant area for research activities.

This paper attempts to enquire how much and how far gender as a category has been part of conceptualization of the curriculum, syllabus and pedagogy of UG PG and research levels esp. that of Malayalam Language and Literature.

# Rethinking Women Studies in India

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Women Studies which has the issues of social justice and practical dimensions of societal knowledge associated with it was allegedly an academic discipline with a specific focus to examine the society through the lens, which perceived gender as a socio cultural construct and analyse the association and structuring of the power dynamics emerged out of such construction has been an important area of study. Since its inception, women studies have been successful in achieving a level of sophistication and autonomy as a separate branch of study. As a specific branch of archaic, whose major focus was on gender and its related issues and which comes with a plea to play an instrumental role in re-establishing equality of gender in society, therefore has been able to make its presence felt strongly in the academic sphere of the societies across the world. In India, the journey of women studies as an academic discipline however has been comparatively new. Though it has been evolved only recently, from the very onset of its emergence and with a kind of constant activism by its preachers, the discipline grew and has become successfully in making its mark in the academic field by significantly disseminating gender knowledge in Indian society. Almost every leading universities of India now teaches women studies with prominent academicians, scholars and young researchers from different branches of studies widely recognizes the need and necessity of women studies for promoting a holistic development of the Indian society. But despite the growing influence of women studies within academic field and remarkable contributions of path breaking feminist research across the different disciplines and also despite its honest effort of making society and its being aware about the deplorable conditions of women's in society and sensitizing the need for re-stabilising women's equality in the society, women studies in India still lags behind to achieve its remarkable status. Ironically alleged nature of reluctance can still be observed in widely acclaiming the importance of this discipline in society. Moreover the regressive structural forces and dominant patriarchal structure of Indian society often stands in the path of vibrant growth and vitality of this discipline. This paper thus comes with a purpose will to delve into various empirically pertinent questions related to the growth of the discipline. The paper will also make an attempt to draw a conclusion on how to enlarge the scope and lead to the wider dissemination of women studies in India. The paper will also try to find answers on how to make the women studies more

people centric and inclusive and also try to find answers on how the dichotomy between classroom and outside environment can be eradicated. Methodologically the paper will rely on secondary sources and the basis of the paper will remain theoretical.





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## SUB - THEME 1

### WOMEN'S WORK AND EMPLOYMENT

#### ABSTRACTS

स्त्रियों को व्यवसाय उपलब्ध कराता बीड़ी निर्माण उद्योग : बिहार के जमुई जिले का एक अध्ययन

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17वीं शताब्दी में अस्तित्व में आई तंबाकू की खेती से भारतीय कुटीर उद्योग में एक क्रांति आई, जब तंबाकू के बचे अवशेषों को लंबे चौड़े व गोलक चनार के पत्तों में भरकर बीड़ी बनाने की तकनीक विकसित हुई। कालांतर में कचनार के पत्तों का स्थान तेंदू के पत्तियों ने ले लिया। 1930 के दशक में महात्मा गांधी द्वारा भारतीय घरेलू उद्योगों एवं स्वदेशी उत्पाद को अपनाने व संरक्षण देने की बात के पश्चात इस उद्योग का पर्याप्त विकास हुआ एवं शीघ्र ही इसने एक प्रमुख घरेलू व्यवसाय या कुटीर उद्योग का रूप ले लिया। घरेलू व्यवसाय होने के कारण स्त्रियों की सक्रिय सहभागिता बीड़ी निर्माण कार्य में बढ़ने लगी। आज भी तेंदू पत्तियों की व्यवस्था करने, उनमें तंबाकू भरकर बीड़ी बनाने से लेकर उनके पैकिंग तक के कार्यों में स्त्रियों की सक्रिय संलग्नता को देखा जा सकता है। स्वतन्त्रता प्राप्ति के पश्चात से ही भारत के सर्वाधिक आर्थिक रूपसे पिछड़े जिले में गिने जानेवाले बिहार राज्य के जमुई जिले में बीड़ी निर्माण उद्योग का इतनी तेजीसे विकास हुआ कि उद्योग विहीन होने के बावजूद इस जिले के झाड़ा, गिद्धौर वचकाई क्षेत्र को राज्य के सर्वाधिक बीड़ी उत्पादक क्षेत्रों में गिना जाता है। इस जिले की 60 प्रतिशत भूमि (उत्तरीभाग) कृषि योग्य है जबकि 40 प्रतिशत भूमि (दक्षिणीभाग) पथरीली एवं वनाच्छादित है जिस पर कृषि कार्य नहीं किया जा सकता। इस कारण इस वनाच्छादित क्षेत्र के अधिकांशतः पुरुष राष्ट्रीय राजधानी सहित भारत के अन्य भागों के औद्योगिक शहरों में आजीविका प्राप्ति हेतु चले जाते हैं। ऐसी स्थिति में उनके घरों की स्त्रियाँ अपने बच्चों सहित समस्त परिवार के भरण पोषण हेतु बीड़ी निर्माण उद्योग में संलग्न होकर अपनी आजीविका चला रही हैं। वर्तमान में जमुई जिले की 21% भूमि वनाच्छादित है जिस में तेंदुके पौधों की भी बहुलता है। हालांकि तंबाकू का उन्हें आयात करना पड़ता है। कच्चे माल की उपलब्धता, कम शारीरिक श्रम, घरपर ही रहकर काम करना आदि अनेक सुविधाओं के फलस्वरूप बीड़ी निर्माण उद्योग कुटीर उद्योग का रूप ले चुका है। यह उद्योग लाखों की संख्या में स्त्रियों को रोजगार प्रदान कर उन्हें आर्थिक रूप से सशक्त कर रहा है। शोधार्थी के संज्ञान में इस क्षेत्र की महिला बीड़ी मजदूरों की स्थिति, उनकी समस्याओं पर कोई कार्य नहीं हुआ है। अतः उनकी सामाजिक-आर्थिक स्थिति को समझने की दृष्टि से यह कार्य महत्त्वपूर्ण होगा।

इस शोधपत्र में निम्न बिंदुओं पर विचार किया जाएगा -

- बीड़ी निर्माण उद्योग किस प्रकार उनकी आर्थिक आवश्यकताओं की पूर्ति में मदद कर रहा है?
- असंगठित महिला कामगार के रूप में उन्हें किन-किन समस्याओं व चुनौतियों का सामना करना पड़ता है?
- केंद्र/राज्य सरकार द्वारा इनके हितों के लिए कौन-कौन से योजनाएँ चलाई जा रही हैं? और इन योजनाओं के क्रियान्वयन की स्थिति क्या है?

## SUB - THEME 2

# INEVITABILITY OF LAW AND THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF LAW: RESISTANCE AND RECOGNITION

## ABSTRACTS

### Live-in Relationship: कानून और राज्य - आलोचनात्मक

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राज्य का उद्देश्य अपने नागरिकों की सुरक्षा व मूल भूत आवश्यकताओं की पूर्ति करना होता है, इसी उद्देश्य को ध्यान में रखते हुये वह अपने नागरिकों के लिए अनेक कायदे कानून बनाता व उनका पालन-

कानून के दायरे में नागरिकों का निजी जीवन भी शामिल है- करवाता है। इन कायदे, जिसमें आवश्यकतानुसार राज्य हस्तक्षेप करता है , परन्तु यह ध्यान देना आवश्यक है की , कानून की आवश्यकता का निर्धारण राज्य करता है। न्यायालय द्वारा लिव इन रिलेशन की मान्यता व लिव इन रिलेशनशिप में रहने वाली महिला व पैदा हुये बच्चे की सुरक्षा के लिए बना कानून एक क्रान्तिकारी कदम कहा जा सकता है। लिव इन रिलेशनशिप की कानूनी मान्यता पितृसत्तात्मक ढांचे में परिवर्तन के लिए सकारात्मक पहलू है , परन्तु यह प्रश्न उठना स्वाभाविक हो जाता है कि , क्या पारिवारिक व वैवाहिक संस्थाओं में बदलाव के साथ स्त्री पुरुष की भूमिकाओं, स्थितियों, समाज व राज्य के नजरिए में भी परिवर्तन हुआ है ? जिस भारतीय समाज में परिवार , विवाह, धर्म, जाति, आदि समाज के मुख्य आधार है, जहाँ विवाह पूर्व संबंध अवैध अनैतिक माने जाते हैं, वहाँ कानून ऐसे संबंधों को किस नजरिये से देखती है? उसके लिए क्या प्रणाली तय करती है ? इस पर विचार करना महत्वपूर्ण हो जाता है। लिव इन रिलेशनशिप कानून का उद्देश्य संबंध विच्छेद के बाद महिला के भरण पोषण पर ध्यान देना है।

परन्तु कानून के अनुसार यदि महिला स्वयं संबंध विच्छेद करती है तो उसे गुजारा भत्ता प्राप्त करने का अधिकार नहीं है, जबकि लंबे समय तक सहजीवन में साथ रहने के बाद भी महिला द्वारा संबंध विच्छेद का कारण पुरुष साथी द्वारा किया गया हिंसा व शोषण हो सकता है , ऐसे में सामान्य कानून के विपरीत इस कानून में महिला की स्थिति की परिभाषा राज्य के दोहरे चरित्र को प्रकट करती है।

इसके साथ ही कानून महिला द्वारा संबंध विच्छेद के कारणों पर प्रकाश नहीं डालता। न्यायालय ने लिव इन के लिए कुछ शर्तें निर्धारित किए हैं जैसे स्त्री पुरुष विवाह की सारी शर्तों को पूरी करते हों , इसमें उम्र व उनका अविवाहित होना भी शामिल है, युगल को समाज के सामने पति पत्नी के रूप में प्रस्तुत- करना होगा। लिव इन में बच्चे को सिर्फ पिता की संपत्ति में ही अधिकार प्रदान किया गया है, पैतृक संपत्ति में नहीं। कानून किसी स्थान पर सकारात्मक प्रतीत होता है तो वहीं पितृसत्तात्मक सामाजिक मानकों व पारंपरिक हितों की पूर्ति करते हुये ही नजर आता है। कानून की दृष्टि में लिव इन में लंबे समय तक साथ रहने वाले युगल पति पत्नी के खांचे में ही फिट बैठते हैं , इसका कारण लिव इन को परिभाषित करने में पति पत्नी के अतिरिक्त किसी अन्य शब्द का अभाव भी हो सकता है। हेट्रोसेक्सुयल-

मोनोगेमी पर आधारित सहजीवन संबंधों को कानूनी मान्यता प्रदान करना, वहीं होमोसेक्सुयल रिलेशन को अपराध की श्रेणी में रखना, राज्य के दोहरे चरित्र को स्पष्ट करते हैं, जो अपने नागरिकों को संकीर्ण

सामाजिक, पारंपरिक नियमों के अनुसार चलाने के लिए कायदे कानून बनाता है। सहजीवन को लेकर- कानूनी उलझन अब भी बनी हुई है, सहजीवन में स्त्रीपुरुष व बच्चों के अधिकारों की कानूनी व्याख्या व प्राप्ति कम अधिकार समाज में उनकी हैसियत और राज्य के दोहरे चरित्र को स्पष्ट करते हैं।

## प्रवासी इतिहास में अदृश्य महिलाएँ और समाज सुधार आंदोलन से गायब ये सवाल

*Invisible women's of migrants history and social reform movement in India*

भारत में ब्रिटिश राज की स्थापना के बाद अंग्रेजों, फ्रांसीसियों और पुर्तगालियों ने अमेरिका और दक्षिण अमेरिका साथ ही दक्षिण पूर्वी एशिया के औपनिवेशिक राज्यों में अपने औद्योगिक विस्तार के लिए भारत से गरीब मजदूरों को (अनुबंधित मजदूर) के रूप में निर्यात किया। अनुबंध का मतलब शर्तों से था। यह निर्यात भारत से भारी संख्या में मजदूरों को भेजने का काम डच, पुर्तगाली, फ्रांसीसी, और अंग्रेज कंपनियों कर रही थी। भारतीय व्यवसायी भी इसमें शामिल थे, इन दोनों के बीच सौदा होता था और वे मजदूरों को जानवर की तरह बेचते थे, बेखबर मजदूरों को सात समंदर पार भेज दिया जाता था। जो मजदूर वहाँ जाकर गिरमिटिया, कलकतिया, कुली, जहाजी आदि नामों से जाने गए<sup>[1]</sup>।

इस दौरान जो प्रवासन हुए हैं उनमें बड़ी संख्या में महिलाएँ भी थीं, “हर प्रवासी जहाज में निश्चित प्रतिशत महिलाओं का होना जरूरी था। ब्रिटिश अप्रवासन में न्यूनतम 25 प्रतिशतस्त्रियोंका होना निश्चित कर दिया था। सन 1958 में इसे बढ़ाकर 40 प्रतिशत कर दिया गया, लेकिन इन लक्ष्यों को पूरा करना अत्यंत कठिन कार्य था। अतएव कानूनी आवश्यकता को पूरा करने के लिए कृतियों के प्रत्येक झुंड में कुछ महिलाओं को वस्तुतः भगाकर सम्मिलित कर दिया जाता था। भारतीयों की जनसंख्या में महिलाओं का अनुपात बढ़ने लगा जो मॉरीशस में सन 1901 में 80.7 प्रतिशत हो गया था”<sup>[2]</sup>। इस बात की स्पष्टता के साथ ही इनकार भी नहीं किया जा सकता कि यह पूरा प्रवासन बगैर शोषण के हुआ होगा। यह वही औपनिवेशिक सरकार कर रही है जोकि यह कहती है कि “भारत की जनता या लोग इतने असभ्य हैं कि वे अपनी महिलाओं के साथ इतना अत्याचार करते हैं”<sup>[3]</sup>। जब यह बात भारतीय जनता के लीडर के रूप में उन समाज सुधारकों से सरकार के साथ होती है इन सब से यह स्पष्टता नहीं दिखती की समाज सुधार आंदोलन उपनिवेश के खिलाफ है या उसके दबाव में क्योंकि यदि इन आन्दोलनों कि पृष्ठभूमि को देखे तो पता चलता है कि इन समाज सुधारक आन्दोलनों में उपनिवेशवाद का विरोध तथा सहमति दोनों ही दृष्टिगत होती है। इस दौर के इतिहास के जरिए जबकि देश में कई तरह की घटनाएँ चल रही थीं और विभिन्न मुद्दों को लेकर नेतृत्व भी उभर कर सामने आ रहे थे। संप्रदाय अधिकार, अभिव्यक्ति की स्वतंत्रता, दलित तथा महिला मुक्ति के प्रश्न और धार्मिकसुधार आंदोलन आदि। जिनकी तथ्य और अभिव्यक्तियाँ इतिहास व अन्य दस्तावेजों में दर्ज किए गए। इसी काल में भारतीय मजदूरों के प्रवासन भी शुरू हुए और एक बड़े पैमाने पर मजदूरों के विस्थापन भिन्न-भिन्न रूपों में हुए। मजदूर निश्चित तौर पर एक खास (निम्न) जाति और वर्ग के रहे होंगे। ऐसे में उनके प्रवासन को लेकर इतिहास में बहुत ही कम दस्तावेज देखने को मिलते हैं जो यह इंगित करें कि वे कौन थे और उनके जाने की मूल वजहें क्या थीं। जबकि प्रवासी भारतीयों पर जो दस्तावेजीकरण किया गया उसमें एक संभावी आधार उनके मजदूर होने के कारण प्रवासन को निहित कर दिया गया।

जब समाज सुधार आंदोलन ने महिलाओं के ऊपर हो रहे जुल्म को आधार बनाकर इतने बड़े आंदोलन की शुरुआत की तो ठीक इसी समय महिलाओं के ऊपर औपनिवेशिक शासकों द्वारा हो रहे जुल्म और प्रवासन पर उनकी चुप्पी दिखती है। ऐसे में इन चुप्पियों के कारणों की तलाश अध्ययन का विषय है। अंग्रेजी शासन काल को लेकर सबसे ज्यादा दस्तावेजीकरण हुआ है ऐसे में वर्षों तक चले इस प्रवासन के दस्तावेज और उन पर इतिहास की नजर क्यों नहीं गयी? समाज सुधार आंदोलन महिलाओं की स्थितियों में सुधार की बात करता है। जबकि यह एक गैर मुल्क के द्वारा महिलाओं की प्रताड़ना की शुरुआत थी तो इस स्थिति पर कोई नेतृत्व क्यों? उभर कर नहीं आया। जहाँ एक तरफ समाज सुधार आंदोलन चल रहा है और दूसरी तरफ प्रवासन और जबकि समाज सुधारवादी और औपनिवेशिक सरकार दोनों भारत में चल रहे महिला अत्याचारों के खिलाफ नीतियाँ बनाते और सुधारक के रूप में जाने जाते हैं, ऐसे में प्रवासन पर विमर्श में शून्यता की स्थिति दिखती है। यह भारत का कोई प्रत्यक्ष बंटवारा नहीं था परंतु मिनो भारत की निर्मित संभव हुई और यह प्रवासन से ही बना, लेकिन इतिहास के पन्नों पर इसको दर्ज न किया जाना अध्ययन का विषय बनता है। जबकि यह इस प्रचलन के भी खिलाफ है जिसमें कागजों पर चीजें दर्ज हुईं और वे जमीन पर लागू नहीं हुईं। प्रवासन इससे ठीक उलट तस्वीर प्रस्तुत करता है कि जमीन पर घटनाएँ घटी पर इनका दस्तावेजीकरण नहीं हुआ।

महत्वपूर्ण शब्द- समाज सुधार आंदोलन, महिलाओं के औपनिवेशिक सरकार,

*(Invisible woman*

*of migrants)*

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[1] किशोर गिरिराज, पहला गिरमिटिया उपन्यास

[2] प्रशाद डॉ. धर्मेन्द्र, हिन्दी महासागर का मोती मारीशस,

[3] चक्रवर्ती उमा, "री काष्टिंग वूमेन" सं. कुमकुम संघारी, दिल्ली काली फॉर वूमेन

## SUB - THEME 3

### WOMEN, PEACE AND THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

#### ABSTRACTS

महिलाओं, शांति और महिलओं के आंदोलन

दुर्गा मसराम

एम.फिल, स्त्री अध्ययन विभाग, महात्मा गाँधी अंतरराष्ट्रीय हिंदी विश्वविद्यालय, वर्धा

वैदयानिक अनुसंधान के माध्यम से यह तथ्य सामने आया है | कि पुरुषों के अपेक्षा महिलाएं अधिक सवेदशील और भावुक होती हैं | महिलाओं को हमेशा से शांत और गंभीर ही अधिकतर देखा जाता है | और केवल वह शारीरिक रूप से नहीं मानसिक, व्यवहारिक आदि रूपों में वह शांत होती हैं उनके व्यवहार हाव-भाव प्रकृति ही शांति होते हैं | साथ में सवेदशील भी महिलाएं हर विषय पर बड़े गंभीर और तर्क पूर्ण से सोचती हैं | यहकारण है कि वह और उनके द्वारा कार्य सदैवसार्थक और उचित परिणाम देने वाले होते हैं | किसी भी तथ्य पर वह बड़े गंभीर तर्क और गंभीर परिणाम से सबकुछ सोचते हैं और निर्णय लेती हैं | दृढ़ता कि प्रवृत्ति भी इसी का परिणाम है | कूल आकड़े भी यही बताते हैं जितने शांत तरीके से वह सकारात्मक पक्षों को उजागर करती हैं उतनी ही शांत तरीके से आन्दोलन भी करती हैं और अपने तरीके से अपना बचाव के लिए तत्पर होती हैं | देशकी आजादी की लड़ाई रही हो या पुरुषों के साथ बराबरी का मामला महिलाओं ने बढ़चढ़कर हिस्सा लिया है | इसके बावजूद राजनीतिक हो या समाज या दूसरा कोई क्षेत्र महिलाओं का उनका वाजिब हक्क नहीं मिल पाया है हर आंदोलनों में महिलाएं बढ़ चढ़कर आगे हैं | चाहे वह स्वतंत्र का आंदोलन हो सत्याग्रह हो अनेक जगह उनकी सहभागिता है | आजादी के इतिहास पर अनेक ग्रंथ हैं पर स्त्रियों कि सामान्य भागीदारी पर अलग से खोज करने निकले तो कही कुछ नहीं मिलता | स्त्री कि पूरी परम्परा उसका इतिहास संघर्ष दफन कर दिया गया है | इतिहास में औरतों कि भूमिका हमेशा अदृश्य रही है | उन्नीसवीं सदी के अंत और बीसवीं सदी कीसुरुवात में आंदोलन हुए हैं पर उन आंदोलन का कोई इतिहास नहीं मिलता | १८५७ से लेकर १९४२ तक आजादी आंदोलन में महिलाओं कीसंघर्ष में ऐसी हजारों गाथा हैं जिसे समटने में कितने वर्ष लगेंगे | जैसा कि रानी लक्ष्मी बाई, झांसी की , महारानी दुर्गावती, सावित्रीबाई फुल, सरोजनी नायडू , एनी बेसेंट , कमला देवी , अमृता कौर लेडी फिरोजशाहा मेहता, इत्यादि उनकी राजनितिक भागीदारी कुछ इस प्रकार है | ५ जून १८५७ को खुले आम क्रांति का एलान हुआ २० मार्च को रानी लक्ष्मी बाई ने किले के चारों ओर अपने आदमी किले मराममत के लिए तैनात किये गोद लिए पुत्र दामोदर को पिट पर ले जाती थी | हजारों महिलओं कि सहादत के सरकारी दस्तावेजों में रिकॉर्ड मिलते हैं | जिन्हो ने १८५७ कि जन क्रांति में सहादत दी इसी प्रकार से बेगम हजरत महल वाजिद अलीशाहा कि पत्नी भारत कि आजादी कि लड़ाई में महिलओं ने पुरुषोंके कंधे से कंधा मिलाकर संघर्ष में हिस्सा लिया था | हाथी पर सवार होकर जब बेगम ने लखनऊ रेगिडेंसी पर आक्रमण किया तो

अंग्रेज सेनापति कि सिटी -पीटी गुम हो गयी | या तककि कम उम्र में भी महिलाओं ने आंदोलन किये है | हमारे सामने एक बड़ा उदहारण है | रानीगुडी यालू आदिवासी लड़की नागालैंड कि उत्तरी कछार पहाडियों में रहने वाली रानी गिडालू - लोग प्यार से रानी बोलते थे रानी गिडालू मात्र तेरह वर्ष कि आयु में ही स्वाधीनता संग्राम में कूद पड़ी गिडालू का अक्सर जिक्र किया परंतु राष्ट्रवादियो ने या गाँधी वादियो ने उसकी चर्चा नहीं कि।

### **The Rights of Adivasi Women**

**Kanhaiya Tripathi**

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#### **सारांश**

आदिवासी समाज का सौन्दर्यबोध ही उनकी अपनी अस्मिता है। भारत में अब भी आदिवासी समाज, लोगों के बीच मुख्यधारा का सम्मान पाने से वंचित है। एक तरफ दुनिया की सरकारें आदिवासियों को विभिन्न योजनाओं से संपृक्त करने की कोशिश में संलग्न हैं तो दूसरी ओर स्व-घोषित सम्य समाज द्वारा उन्हें सम्य बनाने की मुहिम जारी है। ऐसे में, उन्हें अपनी सतत साम्यतिक अस्मिता से दूर करके क्या मुख्यधारा का समाज उन्हें सम्य बना सकता है? क्या उनका अपना जन-जीवन, उनका प्रकृति के साथ सान्निध्य एवं संसर्ग उनकी विशिष्टता के लिए अच्छा नहीं है? यदि है, तो यह कोशिश आखिर क्यों की जा रही है? इससे उनके प्राकृतिक रूप से जो मानवाधिकार हैं, उनका भी अतिक्रमण हो रहा है। इससे यह स्पष्ट होता है कि मुख्यधारा का सम्य समाज जानबूझकर उनके साथ खेल रहा है। ऐसे में, आदिवासी संस्कृति में रह रही स्त्री समाज को क्या खतरे हैं, इसे उपरोक्त प्रपत्र में जानने-समझने का प्रयास किया गया है। आदिवासी स्त्रियों का मानवाधिकार आज सबसे बड़े प्रश्न के रूप में दस्तक दे रहा है। खासकर, आजादी के बाद उनके सम्पूर्ण गरिमा, स्वतंत्रता सुरक्षा और स्वास्थ्य के खतरे को किस प्रकार राज्य प्रदान करने में विफल हुआ है और उनके बीच से उठी नक्सल जैसी समस्या, विस्थापन से जूझती स्त्री आबादी की वास्तविक छवि या स्थिति क्या है, इसको अपने प्रपत्र में देखने की कोशिश की गयी है। निःसंदेह उत्तर औपनिवेशिकता के युग में आदिवासी समाज की स्त्री की स्थिति नव विमर्श का आमंत्रण है।



**SUB - THEME 4**  
**CULTURES OF RESISTANCE**  
**ABSTRACTS**

**कथक में स्त्री की आवाज और प्रतिरोधी स्वर**

अर्वतिका शुक्ला

स्त्री अध्ययन विभाग

म.गां.अं.हिं.वि.वर्धा

आजादी के बाद से ही शास्त्रीय नृत्य भारतीय संस्कृति की बड़ी पहचान के रूप में उभरे हैं। भारत की प्राचीन व गौरवशाली परम्परा के प्रतीक के रूप में शास्त्रीय नृत्य और शास्त्रीय नृत्यों की नृत्यांगनाओं को देश विदेश में सदैव बहुत सम्मान के देखा जाता रहा है। देश विदेश में आयोजित शास्त्रीय नृत्य की प्रस्तुतियों में बड़ी संख्या में महिलाओं की भागीदारी होती है पर नृत्य की बेहतर से बेहतर प्रस्तुति के बाद भी उस कला पर नियंत्रण उनके गुरुओं का ही होता है जो कि अधिकांशतः पुरुष ही होते हैं। नृत्य के क्षेत्र में बड़ी भागीदारी के बाद भी बहुत ही कम महिलायें हैं, जिन्हें हाल फिलहाल गुरु के रूप में स्वीकारा जाने लगा है। वरना उनकी प्रस्तुतियों को तो सराहा जाता था, पर उन्हें एक नर्तकी का ही सम्मान मिलता था, गुरु का नहीं। गुरु और शिष्य के पारम्परिक भाव में एक बहुत बड़ा सत्ता सम्बंध हमेशा से व्याप्त रहा है। भारतीय संस्कृति में गुरु को भगवान से भी ऊपर का दर्जा दिया है और भगवान एक ऐसी शख्सियत रहे हैं, जिन्हें कोई चुनौती नहीं दे सकता। कोई उनसे आगे नहीं हो सकता। गुरु के साथ शिष्य का भी यही सम्बंध रहा है। शास्त्रीय नृत्यांगनाओं ने इसी परम्परा में नृत्य की शिक्षा ली और अपने गुरु और खुद के बीच हमेशा एक वर्चस्वशाली पित्रसत्तात्मक सम्बंध को जिया, जिसमें परम्परा और संस्कृति के नाम पर उनकी स्थिति को दायम दर्जे का रखा गया। लेकिन नृत्यांगनायें जब स्वयं गुरु की भूमिका में आयीं तो उन्होंने इस सत्ता संबंध को उल्टा दिया और संस्कृति के एक ऐसे रूप को सामने रखने की कोशिश की जो कि ज्यादा लोकतांत्रिक और जीवंत है। इसे हम संस्कृति के भीतर महिलाओं की प्रतिरोधी चेतना का बड़ा उदाहरण मान सकते हैं।

इस आलेख में शास्त्रीय नृत्य कथक की नृत्यांगनाओं के अपने जीवन के अनुभवों के आधार पर उनकी दायम दर्जे की स्थिति और उससे नृत्यांगनाओं के निकल कर खुद को नयी व्यवस्था और नये मूल्यों के साथ स्थापित करने के संघर्ष को दर्ज किया गया है। कथक की दुनिया में महिलाओं के प्रति फैले भेदभाव को भी चुनौती दी है। कथक के क्षेत्र में नृत्यांगनाओं की एजेंसी, उनकी आवाज़ और प्रतिरोधी स्वर को सामने लाने का प्रयास किया गया है। नृत्यांगनाओं की ओर से ही आए बदलावों ने इस पूरी कला के क्षेत्र की सत्ता को चुनौती देने का काम किया है। इन नृत्यांगनाओं ने अपनी शिक्षा का उपयोग कथक को नये अर्थ देने वाली कला के रूप में विकसित करने में किया है, जो कि कहीं न कहीं उनकी बढी राजनैतिक चेतना मजबूत व्यक्तित्व की पुष्टि करता है। कथक जिसे सिर्फ राधा-कृष्ण के नृत्य के तौर पर ही देखा जाता रहा है, उसमें सामाजिक और राजनैतिक मुद्दों को शामिल कर कला के एक नये दौर की शुरुआत इन नृत्यांगनाओं ने की है। इस आलेख में उन तमाम प्रस्तुतियों की जानकारी भी दी गयी है, जो कि कथक में आयी परिपक्व सामाजिक, राजनैतिक सोच का परिचायक है। नृत्यांगनाओं के इस स्वरूप को हम उनकी प्रतिरोधी चेतना के रूप में देख सकते हैं। यह आलेख कथक की प्रमुख नृत्यांगनाओं के गहरे साक्षात्कार के आधार पर तैयार किया गया है।

## SUB - THEME 5

# WOMEN FARMERS: LABOUR, LIVELIHOODS AND RESOURCE RIGHTS

## ABSTRACTS

एकल महिला किसान और सामाजिक पूंजी के बीच अंतर्विरोध

रवीन्द्र कुमार

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भारत सहित पूरे देश में कृषि संकट की परिस्थितियां अलग अलग रूपों में देखी जा सकती हैं। के दशक में देखा जा स 90 स्थितियों को भारतीय संदर्भ में कृषि संकट की उत्पन्न है, जब पहली बार ग्रामीण मामलों के संवाददाता पी साईनाथ किसान आत्महत्या की खबरों की रिपोर्टिंग करना शुरू करते हैं। सबका ध्यान किसान आत्महत्या पर केन्द्रित होने लगता है बावजूद इसके किसान आत्महत्या के बाद की परिस्थितियों पर बहुत कम ध्यान केन्द्रित हुआ है। चाहे राष्ट्रीय आर्थिक नीति हो या समाज कल्याण प्रशासन की कल्याणकारिता हो। जब एक किसान आत्महत्या करता है तो उसके बाद किसानों और परिवार की जिम्मेदारियाँ किसान की विधवा पर आ जाती हैं इस तरह यहाँ से शुरू होता है एकल महिला किसान का जीवन अथवा संघर्ष। इस अध्ययन में एकल महिला किसान का तात्पर्य आत्महत्या किए हुए किसान की विधवा से हैं। प्रस्तुत अध्ययन में देखा गया है कि क्या एकल महिला किसान के प्रति भी सामाजिक सरोकार अथवा सामाजिक व्यवहार वैसा ही है जो एक पुरुष किसान के साथ होता है ? सामाजिक पूंजी की अवधारणा का सर्वप्रथम प्रयोग जेम्स कोलमैन ने व्यक्ति और परिवार एवं व्यक्ति और समुदाय के बीच के संबंधों के स्वरूप एवं प्रकार को स्पष्ट करने के लिए किया था। यहाँ हम कोलमैन के प्रयोग को अगर एकल महिला किसान के संदर्भ में देखे तो , हमारा पुरुषवादी नजरियाँ एक महिला को व्यक्ति और परिवार एवं व्यक्ति और समुदाय में कहीं स्थान देगा ? सामाजिक पूंजी अपनी सांस्कृतिक अवस्था में इतनी कमजोर हो गई है कि एक व्यक्ति को आत्महत्या करने से रोकने में विफल है। हमारा समाज पुरुष प्रधान समाज है अतः सामाजिक ताने बाने पुरुषों के हित में ही दिखाई देते हैं इसमें कोई संदेह नहीं है कि सामाजिक पूंजी का स्वरूप भी पुरुषवादी है। ऐसी परिस्थितियों में हमें समझने की जरूरत है कि एकल महिला किसान के जीवन में सामाजिक पूंजी के बीच किस तरह के अंतर्विरोध हैं ? प्रस्तुत अध्ययन के उद्देश्य पूर्ति हेतु वर्धा जिला, महाराष्ट्र की पाँच एकल महिला किसान का केस स्टडी (casestudy) किया गया है। (तथ्यों के आधार पर हम कह सकते हैं कि एकल महिला किसान के जीवन में एक तो एकल महिला होने का बोझ है साथ ही सामाजिक परिवेश में खुद को जिम्मेदारियों के योग्य साबित करने का दूसरा बोझ है। इस अध्ययन में यह भी पाया गया कि किसानों के लिए उपयुक्त साधनों और संसाधनों के लिए एकल महिला को हमेशा आसपास के लोगों पर निर्भर रहना पड़ता है साथ ही रिश्तेदारों पर ज्यादा निर्भरता है जिस कारण समय से कोई भी काम नहीं हो पाता। दैनिक जीवन के लिए

रोज मजदूरी करनी पड़ती है चूंकि ज्यादातर एकल महिला खेतों में ही मजदूरी करती है जिस कारण उन्हें रोज काम भी नहीं मिल पाता है और मजदूरी भी ज्यादा नहीं मिलती। आकस्मिक कार्यों के लिए गाँव में कर्ज नहीं मिल पाता है जिसकी वजह से दिक्कत होती है। कई तरह के धार्मिक आयोजनों में इन्हें शामिल नहीं किया जाता है , क्योंकि विधवा होना अशुभ माना जाता है। गाँव में जब भी धार्मिक आयोजन होता है तब इन महिलाओं को खुद के एकल होने का एहसास होने लगता है जिसका असर इनके मानसिक स्वास्थ्य पर पड़ता है। एकल महिला किसान के साथ जिस तरह की परिस्थितियाँ हैं वह एकल पुरुष किसान के साथ देखने को नहीं मिलती। इससे यह स्पष्ट होता है कि भारतीय समाज में विधवा होना धार्मिक अभिशाप तो है ही साथ में अगर कोई एकल महिला किसान हो तो मुश्किलें और बढ़ जाती हैं, संघर्ष और बढ़ जाता है।

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### **“कृषी क्षेत्र में आदिवासी महिलाओं की भूमिका और उनके अधिकार”**

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कृषी यह आदिवासी जीवन का मूल आधार है। कृषी व कृषी आधारित उद्योगों पर ही उनकी जीविका का चलती है। अबूझमाड़ यह छत्तीसगढ़ का दक्षिणी भाग है। जहाँ सबसे अधिक आदिवासी समाज निवास करते हैं अबूझमाड़ीयों का मुख्य व्यवसाय खेती है। शिकार करना और वन उपज यह भी उनके व्यवसाय में आते हैं परन्तु सबसे अधिक वो खेती करते हैं। अबूझमाड़ में स्थलांतरित खेती कि जाती है। जिसमें सबसे अधिक योगदान महिलाओं का होता है। यहाँ पर महिलाएँ खेतों में बुआई के पहले से काम पर लग जाती है। और कटाई के बाद भी काम करती है पुरुषों का काम सिर्फ बीज डालना होता है इसके पीछे यह मान्यता है। की पुरुष यह समाज का पुनरुत्पादन करता है उसके पास बीज होता है जो नये समाज का निर्माण कर सकता है। और स्त्री की तुलना जमीन से की गई है स्त्री में बीज का पालन पोषण की शक्ति होती है और नये समाज का निर्माण करने में उसका भी आधा योगदान होता है। उसी तरह अगर बुआई का काम अगर पुरुष करेगे तो फसल अच्छी होगी इसी मान्यता के आधार पर पुरुष सिर्फ बुआई का ही काम करते हैं बाकि सारे काम महिलाओं के द्वारा किये जाते हैं इस मान्यता पर पुरुषो का भी पूर्ण विश्वास है। इसी वजह से

अबूझमाइ के आदिवासी समाज में महिलाओं को एक विशेष स्थान है वो पुरुष के बराबर नहीं है। परन्तु एक विशेष स्थान रखती है जिसे सभी आदर के साथ देखते हैं।

आदिवासी समाज में महिलाओं के अधिकार को समझने के उन्हें दो भागों में बाटना होगा उसमें एक पितृवंशीय परिवार पद्धति और दूसरी मातृवंशीय परिवार पद्धति होती है। दक्षिण भारत और असम की पहाड़ियों में रहने वाली जनजातियाँ में मातृवंशीय परिवार पद्धति का पालन होता है जिसमें विवाह के बाद लडकी अपने पिता के घर ही रहती लडका अपना घर छोड़कर लडकी के घर घरजावई बन कर रहता है। जिससे घर की सम्पत्ति पर लडकी का अधिकार होता है दूसरा पितृवंशीय परिवार यह अधिकतर मध्य भारत में पाई जाने वाली जनजातियाँ है। जिसमें स्त्री और पुरुषों को समान अधिकार तो नहीं है परन्तु स्त्रियों एक विशेष स्थान है जिसमें वह घर व् बाहर, सभी जगह स्त्री पुरुष कंधे से कंधा मिलाकर काम करते दिखाई देते हैं। मुरिया गाँवों में स्त्रियों को पति चुनने या तलाक देने का अधिकार होता है विवाहपूर्व यौन संबंध स्थापन करने कि छुट होती है इसके समाज में घोटुल नामक युवागृह संस्था में युवक युवतियों को जीवन साथी चुनने का अधिकार होता है। अबूझमाइ में रहने वाले मुरिया समाज में स्त्री को संपत्ति में अधिकार होता है विवाह के बाद यह पति के घर में निवास करती है इस वजह से पिता की सम्पत्ति में अधिकार नहीं होता परन्तु विवाह के दौरान जो कन्या मूल दिया जाता है। उस पर कन्या का अधिकार होता है परन्तु जब से वन अधिकार कायदा आया है। उस के अनुसार घर का जो मुखिया होता है उसे सम्पत्ति पर अधिकार दिया जाएगा ऐसे में महिलाओं के अधिकार पर कोई बात ही नहीं होती इस सभी प्रश्नों के साथ इस पेपर को लिखने की कोशिश करूगी।

## SUB - THEME 6

### WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

#### ABSTRACTS

##### **बुनियादी ढांचा, पूर्वाग्रह और विकलांग महिलाएं**

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हमारा संविधान सक्षमता और अक्षमता के आधार पर कोई भेदभाव नहीं करता है, जबकि सामाजिक संरचना इसके विपरीत है। समाज के नजरिये एवं भेदभावपूर्ण व्यवहार के कारण विकलांग व्यक्ति सबसे अधिक अधिकारविहीन व्यक्तियों की श्रेणी में आते हैं। इनके प्रति समाज हमेशा से उपेक्षा, दया, अलगाव, अभाव, कल्याण व सहानुभूति का नजरिया रखता आया है। इनके उपेक्षा का एक लंबा इतिहास है। इनकी इसी उपेक्षा की वजह से इन्हें मौलिक, नागरिक, राजनीतिक, सामाजिक, आर्थिक और सांस्कृतिक अधिकारों से भी वंचित रखा गया है या रखने का प्रयास किया जाता रहा है। अगर हम विकलांग महिलाओं की बात करें तो जहां उन्हें एकतरफ लैंगिक पूर्वाग्रह के कारण और दूसरी तरफ विकलांगता के कारण सामाजिक भूमिकाओं से भी वंचित रखा जाता है। महिलाओं के प्रति यह भेदभाव सामाजिक, राजनीतिक व शैक्षिक संस्थाओं में भी देखने को मिलता है। शैक्षिक संस्थाएं जो स्वयं मानसिक विकास और जागरूकता प्रसार के केंद्र मानी जाती हैं वहाँ पर भी शारीरिक रूप से अक्षम महिलाओं के साथ असंवेदनशीलता दिखाई जाती है। उच्च शिक्षा के कार्यक्रम और नीतियों में भी विकलांग महिलाओं की तरफ ध्यान नहीं दिया गया है। उच्च शिक्षा पर अखिल भारतीय सर्वेक्षण (All India Survey On higher Education 2014-2015) के अनुसार भारतीय विश्वविद्यालयों में 78,449 छात्र पंजीकृत हैं जोकि विकलांगजन अधिनियम 1995 (PWDA Act 1995) के मानक से भी कम है। शैक्षिक संस्थाओं में विकलांग छात्रों की कमी उनमें भी छात्राओं की कमी का प्रमुख कारण सुलभ बुनियादी ढांचे का एक गंभीर अभाव, पठन सामग्री की अनुपलब्धता, प्रशासनिक उदासीनता और सामाजिक उपेक्षा है।

इस प्रपत्र के माध्यम से अकादमिक जगत में विकलांग महिलाओं को किन-किन समस्याओं से जूझना पड़ता है व वे इन चुनौतियों का सामना किस तरह से करती हैं का अध्ययन किया जाएगा। इस प्रपत्र में महात्मा गांधी अंतरराष्ट्रीय हिंदी विश्वविद्यालय, वर्धा में शारीरिक रूप से अक्षम महिलाओं विशेषतः छात्राओं को किन-किन चुनौतियों का सामना करना पड़ता है, वे इन चुनौतियों का वह किस तरह से सामना करती हैं इसका अध्ययन किया जाएगा। इसमें बुनियादी ढांचागत समस्याएं व अकादमिक समस्याओं के साथ उनके प्रति लोगों का व्यवहार पर भी फोकस किया जाएगा। विकलांग महिलाएं स्वयं इन समस्याओं के बारे में क्या महसूस करती हैं, और उनकी आकांक्षाएं क्या हैं, यह जानने के लिए साक्षात्कार विधि का प्रयोग किया जाएगा। साक्षात्कार के साथ अवलोकन विधि भी उनकी समस्याओं को ट्रेस करने में सहायक होगी।

## आभाव और संवेदनहीनता की शिकार दलित डिसेबल महिलाएं

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महिलाओं की स्थिति भारतीय समाज में वैसे ही दोगुम दर्जे की आंकी जाती है और ऐसेमें यदि कोई महिला विकलांग और दलित समुदाय से है तो ऐसी महिलाओं को समाज में तीन गुना ज्यादा भेदभाव का शिकार होना पड़ता है। उन्हें घर परिवार से लेकर समाज में उनके लिए कोई स्थान नहीं होता। दलित परिवार की आर्थिक और सामाजिक स्थिति ज्यादातर लचरही होती है। इन परिवारों के सभी लोग किसी ना किसी रोजगार के काम से जुड़े होते हैं, यानि श्रमजीविता ही इनके रोजगार का साधन है। ऐसी स्थिति में यदि कोई डिसेबल है तो उसके देख-भाल की जिम्मेदारी के लिए एक व्यक्ति को रोजगार से विमुक्त होना पड़ता है। यदि घरमें कोई डिसेबल महिला है तो परिवार के सदस्यों को एक अतिरिक्त जिम्मेदारी उठानी पड़ती है। लेकिन अमूमन ऐसा नहीं हो पता। उनकी देख-भाल के लिए कोई अहम जिम्मेदारी नहीं निभाना चाहता। बीमार पड़ जाने कि स्थिति में उसके स्वास्थ्य पर ध्यान नहीं दिया जाता है। स्वास्थ्य एवं असंवेदनशीलता की वजह से इनकी स्थिति खराब हो जाती है और इन्हें अपनी अक्षमता पर खीझ एवं गुस्सा आता है।

सामाजिक जीवन में इन महिलाओं को हर कदम पर आर्थिक, शैक्षिक, आर्किटेक्चर, लीगल और स्वास्थ्य सम्बन्धी समस्याओं का सामना करना होता है, जो इनके मनोबल को झकझोर कर रख देता है। सबसे दुखद पहलू ये है कि इन महिलाओं को महज एक रोबट और मजाक का पात्र माना जाता है, जैसे कि इनके भीतर कोई संवेदना ही ना हो। इन महिलाओं की इक्षाओं को लेकर किसी को कोई सरोकार नहीं होता। ऐसी महिलाएं ज्यादातर अविवाहित ही रह जाती हैं, और इनके जीवन यापन के लिए भी कोई पहल नहीं किया जाता है। ऐसे में विकलांग सदस्य के लिए कुछ नियोजित किये जाने का सवाल ही नहीं उठता। इन तमाम कठिनाइयों के साथ-साथ इन महिलाओं को तमाम तरह के सेक्सुअल उत्पीड़न का सामना भी करना पड़ता है, पर इन पर हुए उत्पीड़न से समाज और सरकार को कोई सरोकार नहीं होता। ये महिलाएं दया और घृणा का पात्र बन कर रह जाती हैं। इस शोध पत्र में निम्नलिखित बिन्दुओं पर चर्चा की जायेगी

- दलित विकलांग महिलाओं के प्रति उनके परिवार और समाज के लोगों का रवैया
- दलित विकलांग महिलाओं की स्थिति और उनकी जीवन से अपेक्षाएं
- दलित विकलांग महिलाएं: जाति द्वेष और सामाजिक संरचना की जटिलताएँ

## SUB - THEME 7

### SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND SEXUALISATION OF VIOLENCE

#### ABSTRACTS

##### Female sex workers and sexual violence interrelationship

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सेक्स वर्क एक ऐसा व्यवसाय है जिसमें देह आमदनी का एक स्रोत होता है। सेक्स वर्क शब्द को सबसे पहले 1978 में Carol Leigh ने इस्तेमाल किया। इस शब्द को प्रसिद्धि 80 के दशक में Frederique dela Coste और Priscilla Alexander द्वारा संपादित पुस्तक Sex Work: Writings by Women in the Sex Industry से मिली थी। सेक्स वर्क कोई नयी बात नहीं है यह यौन शोषण का एक हिस्सा है खासकर महिलाओं तथा बच्चों का शोषण जो इतिहास से चला आ रहा है। अभी यह देह व्यापार बड़े स्तर के एक व्यापार के रूप में बदल गया है। जैसे सभी कुछ औद्योगिकृत हो चुका है वैसे ही देह व्यापार भी एक उद्योग बन गया है। इस व्यापार का दुनिया भर में अरबों डॉलर का उद्योग है इस व्यापार में सड़क वेश्यावृत्ति, वेश्यालय, मसाज पार्लर स्ट्रिप क्लब, यौन उद्देश्यों के लिए मानव तस्करी, फोन सेक्स, अश्लील साहित्य, सेक्स पर्यटन आदि शामिल हैं। जब हम यौन हिंसा की बात हम करते हैं तो मुख्य धारा तक के समाज में हम सिमट कर रह जाते हैं। जबकि मुख्य धारा के समाज के हिंसात्मक दंश को बड़े पैमाने पर एक महिला सेक्स वर्कर को झेलना पड़ता है। सेक्स वर्क उत्पीड़न का बहुत बड़ा एक हिस्सा है। वास्तव में देखा जाए तो सेक्स वर्क एक महिला के खिलाफ हिंसा का एक कामुक तरीका है। सेक्स वर्क में महिलाएं सिर्फ यौन हिंसा का ही शिकार नहीं होती हैं बल्कि वह जैविकीय हिंसा का भी शिकार होती हैं। एक तरफ महिला सेक्स वर्कर समाज के हिंसक पुरुषों से लगातार प्रताड़ित होती है कभी प्रत्यक्ष रूप में तो कभी संरचित रूप में बावजूद इसके वह यौन संक्रमणित रोगों का भी शिकार होती है। यह रोग भी एक तरह से हिंसा का ही साधन होते हैं क्योंकि एक महिला सेक्स वर्कर जिन संचारित व गैर-संचारित रोगों का सामना करती है उन रोगों का सामना सामान्य महिलाएं नहीं करती हैं। हमें सोचने की जरूरत है, आखिर ऐसा क्यों होता है कि आज भी हमारे समाज में यौन उत्पीड़न के मामले सिर्फ मुख्य धारा के महिलाओं के संदर्भ तक ही सिमटकर रह जाते हैं? आखिर क्यों एक महिला सेक्स वर्कर के बलात्कार या यौन उत्पीड़न को हम मानने से इंकार कर देते हैं? वर्तमान में सेक्स वर्क इतना जोखिम भरा व्यवसाय हो गया है जिसमें हिंसा के नए-नए तरीके अपनाए जाने लगे हैं। तथाकथित हमारे मुख्य धारा के पुरुष जो अपनी यौनिक हिंसा की प्रवृत्ति को अपनी पत्नी के साथ पूरी नहीं कर पाते वे एक महिला सेक्स वर्कर के साथ पूरी करते हैं। इस तरह हम समझ सकते हैं कि एक महिला सेक्स वर्कर का यौन हिंसा से अंतर्संबंध कैसे है?

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महिला तस्करी की बढ़ती घटनाएं सामाजिक-आर्थिक विकास, क्षेत्रीय एवं अंतर्राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा व्यवस्था के साथ-साथ मानवाधिकार की रक्षा तथा स्वतंत्रता के समक्ष एक कठिन चुनौती हैं। ऐसी संगठित अपराधिक गतिविधियों की सक्रियता आंतरिक एवं वाह्य सुरक्षा तंत्र को खोखला बना रही हैं। किसी भी राष्ट्र की मानव पूंजी का अवैध व्यापार वहां की सामाजिक-आर्थिक संरचना को दुर्बल बनाती है। जिसका प्रभाव राष्ट्र और उसके नागरिकों दोनों पर पड़ता है। दुनिया भर में 80 प्रतिशत से अधिक मानव तस्करी देह व्यापार अथवा यौन शोषण के लिए की जाती है। भारत को दक्षिण एशिया में मानव तस्करी का केंद्र माना जाता है। राष्ट्रीय अपराध रिकार्ड ब्यूरो द्वारा जारी हालिया आंकड़ों के मुताबिक पिछले एक दशक में लड़कियों की तस्करी के मामले में 14 गुना की वृद्धि हुई है। ऐसे आंकड़े निकट भविष्य के लिए अच्छे संकेत नहीं हैं।

वर्ष 2000 में संयुक्त राष्ट्र द्वारा अंतर्राष्ट्रीय संगठित अपराध के विरुद्ध आयोजित सम्मेलन में *पालेर्मो प्रोटोकाल* के रूप में एक दस्तावेज तैयार किया गया जो, खासतौर से महिलाओं और लड़कियों की तस्करी में संलिप्त लोगों को दंड देने और इस संगठित तंत्र को समाप्त करने से संबंधित है। अंतर्राष्ट्रीय श्रम संगठन भी मानव श्रम एवं अनैतिक देहिक शोषण के इस उपक्रम को आधुनिक गुलामी अथवा दासता के नए रूप में देख रहा है, जो महिलाओं के खिलाफ सबसे हिंसक कृत्यों की श्रेणी में आता है। देश भर में फैले तस्करों की पहचान करना और इससे महिलाओं और बच्चों को मुक्ति दिला पाना इसलिए और भी कठिन हो जाता है क्योंकि ये अक्सर पीड़ित के रिश्तेदार, दोस्त, सगे संबंधी और कई बार पुरुष मित्र भी होते हैं जो नौकरी, विवाह, विदेश भ्रमण आदि का झांसा देकर इस नर्क में धकेल देते हैं। हालांकि पीड़ितों के पुनर्वास और उनके अधिकारों की सुरक्षा हेतु काम करने वाली सरकारी गैरसरकारी संस्थाएं लगातार सक्रिय हैं। परंतु इसकी व्यापक व्यूह रचना को तोड़ पाना आज बहुत बड़ी चुनौती है। यह सफेद पोश अपराधी हमारे इर्द-गिर्द रहते हुए भी अपनी गतिविधियों को सक्रिय रखते हैं। राष्ट्रीय और अंतर्राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर चल रहे तमाम प्रयासों के बावजूद यह अपराध बढ़ता ही जा रहा है। आखिर क्यों हम इसे रोक पाने में अक्षम दिखाई पड़ते हैं? क्या इनके खिलाफ बने नियम और कानूनों की पहुंच जमीनी स्तर तक नहीं है? 21वीं सदी में मानव व्यापार की कल्पना ही डरावनी लगती है। क्या सभ्य समाज यही है? भारत में तस्करी के इस संगठित और बर्बर अपराध को व्यापक रूप से समझने और इसकी जटिलताओं की तह तक जाकर इसके कारणों को जानने के लिए विस्तृत अध्ययन की जरूरत है।



## वैवाहिक संबंधों में यौन हिंसा : एक मनो-सामाजिक विमर्श

भारतीय समाज में विवाह को एक पवित्र धार्मिक संस्कार के रूप में देखा जाता है। विवाह के आदर्शों और लक्ष्यों पर कोई भी सवाल अनैतिक एवं गलत माना जाता है। विवाह के बाद पत्नी के शरीर पर पति का अधिकार माना जाता है। परिवार की देखभाल, वैध संतानों की उत्पत्ति और पति की यौन इच्छाओं की पूर्ति करना पत्नी का धर्म व विवाह का उद्देश्य माना जाता है फिर चाहे पत्नी की इच्छा हो या ना हो।

वर्तमान समय में देश में बढ़ती बलात्कार और यौन हिंसा महत्वपूर्ण समस्या है लेकिन यदि वैवाहिक संबंधों में यौन हिंसा की बात करें तो देश में ज्यादातर महिलाएं अपनी जिंदगी में कभी-ना-कभी इस हिंसा का शिकार जरूर होती हैं, फिर चाहे वो घरेलु महिलाएं हों या कामकाजी वर्ग की। जैसे तो बलात्कार को समाज में एक जघन्य अपराध माना जाता है, किन्तु पत्नी का उसके पति द्वारा भी बलात्कार हो सकता है, वे यौन हिंसा की शिकार हो सकती है, ये लोगों को आसानी से स्वीकार्य नहीं होता है। क्योंकि पत्नी के शरीर पर पति का हक माना जाता है। भारतीय दण्डविधान में ये प्रावधान है कि, पति के सहमती से उसकी पत्नी के साथ कोई भी अन्य व्यक्ति यौन संबंध बना सकता है। यहां पर भी पत्नी की सहमती और असहमती का कोई महत्व नहीं है। इससे ही कानून के पितृसत्तात्मक सोच का पता चलता है।

सन् 1860 में भारतीय दण्ड संहिता में पहली बार वैवाहिक बलात्कार की परिभाषा – ‘एक पति द्वारा 10 साल से कम उम्र की पत्नी के साथ बनाए गये शारीरिक संबंध’ को बलात्कार माना गया और विवाह के उम्र को बढ़ाने की बात की गई। 1891 में तत्कालीन ब्रिटिश सरकार ने यह व्यवस्था लागू की कि ‘12 वर्ष से कम उम्र की पत्नी के साथ सम्भोग दण्डनीय अपराध होगा’ क्योंकि इस समय विशेषकर बंगाल में कई दुखद हादसे सामने आए। बंगाल का ही एक केस 10 वर्षीय फुलमणि का है जिसमें उसके 35 वर्षीय पति हरिमोहन मैत्री के साथ संभोग के दौरान मृत्यु हो गई।

इस प्रकार इन सभी समस्याओं को ध्यान में रखते हुए विवाह की उम्र को बढ़ाए जाने की बात की गई। उपरोक्त बातों पर यदि गौर किया जाय तो एक निश्चित उम्र से कम उम्र की पत्नी के साथ बनाए गये यौन संबंधों को ही वैवाहिक बलात्कार माना गया है लेकिन यदि वो निश्चित उम्र पूरी कर ली गई हो तो उसके बाद जबरन बनाए गये यौन संबंधों को यौन हिंसा या बलात्कार नहीं माना जाता है, भारतीय न्याय व्यवस्था इस संबंध में बहुत ही लचर व्यवस्था है। वैवाहिक बलात्कार के ज्यादातर केस में न्यायालय पति द्वारा उसकी पत्नी के साथ जबरन बनाए गये यौन संबंध को बलात्कार नहीं मानती है।

इस प्रकार वैवाहिक संबंधों में भी यौन हिंसा या वैवाहिक बलात्कार संबंधी समस्या भी एक गम्भीर समस्या है जिससे महिलाएं पीड़ित होती हैं। ये बात न तो समाज व्यवस्था मानने को तैयार है और न ही हमारी न्याय-व्यवस्था। अतः इस महत्वपूर्ण समस्या की तरफ सरकार सहित समाज के लोगों का ध्यान आकर्षित करने व समस्या की जड़ तक जाकर इसके मनो-सामाजिक कारणों को जानने की दृष्टि से यह एक महत्वपूर्ण शोध कार्य होगा।

# SUB - THEME 8

## CLIMATE CHANGE

### ABSTRACTS

#### जलवायु परिवर्तन का जेंडर पक्ष और ग्रामीण महिलाएं

(Rural women and the gender aspect of climate change)

● मनोज कुमार गुप्ता

शोधार्थी पीएच. डी. (स्त्री अध्ययन)

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जलवायु परिवर्तन हमारे दौर की सबसे बड़ी पारिस्थितिकीय एवं पर्यावरणीय चुनौती है। बाढ़, सूखा, असमय बरसात एवं घटते जल स्तर जैसी तेजी से बढ़ती पर्यावरणीय असंतुलन की परिस्थितियां आगामी खतरे का संकेत हैं। दुनिया भर के तमाम विकसित और विकासशील देश एवं कल्याणकारी संस्थाएं इस समस्या से चिंतित होने के साथ-साथ बढ़ती पारिस्थितिकीय असंतुलन को सुधारने की दिशा में भी अग्रसर हैं। सीमा रहित और बहुआयामी तरीके से पूरी दुनिया को प्रभावित करने वाले इस संकट को ध्यान में रखते हुए संयुक्त राष्ट्र महासचिव बान की-मून ने वर्ष 2015 को जलवायु परिवर्तन पर वैश्विक कार्यवाही वर्ष के रूप में भी घोषित किया। इससे पहले रियो इंटरनेशनल अर्थ समिति, 1992; न्योटो प्रोटोकाल जैसे प्रयास इस दिशा में प्रयास किए गए हैं। विकास की आपाधापी के क्रम में असंतुलित निर्वाणकरण, भू-जल दोहन आदि के परिणामस्वरूप ग्लोबल वार्मिंग, मौसम चक्र के असंतुलन जैसी व्यापक समस्याएं बढ़ती जा रही हैं। जो सार्वभौमिक मानवाधिकार से जुड़ा मसला भी है।

वैसे तो इसका भार पूरी मानवता पर है, पर बराबर मात्रा में नहीं। जलवायु परिवर्तन का प्रभाव भिन्न-भिन्न क्षेत्रों, भिन्न आर्थिक समूहों, रोजगार और यहां तक महिलाओं और पुरुषों पर भिन्न-भिन्न तरीके से पड़ता है। जिसे रोजगार, आवास, अथवा जीविका के अन्य संसाधनों की उपलब्धता के संदर्भ में देखा जा सकता है। दुनिया की लगभग 1.3 मिलियन गरीब आबादी में महिलाओं की संख्यात्मक भागीदारी सबसे अधिक है। विशेषज्ञों का मानना है कि जलवायु परिवर्तन का प्रभाव आर्थिक संकट से जुड़ रहे लोगों पर अधिक पड़ता है। अविकसित देशों की ग्रामीण महिलाओं के जीवनयापन की सबसे अधिक निर्भरता स्थानीय प्राकृतिक संसाधनों पर ही होती है। बतौर ऐतिहासिक एवं पारंपरिक तथाकथित नैतिकताओं के कारण गरीब परिवारों में लकड़ी, पानी, आदि दैनिक जरूरतों को जुटाने का काम महिलाओं का ही होता है। इस प्रकार पर्यावरणीय असंतुलन की स्थिति में महिलाएं संकटों का सामना करने के लिए बाध्य होती हैं। बावजूद इसके महिलाओं को बहुत ही व्यवस्थित तरीके से निर्णय लेने की प्रक्रिया से बाहर रखना और निर्णयकारी संस्थाओं द्वारा उनकी समस्याओं एवं मुद्दों को गौण कर दिया जाना कहीं न कहीं पितृसत्तात्मक मानसिकता को दर्शाता है। ऐसी परिस्थिति में यह जरूरी हो जाता है कि जलवायु परिवर्तन पर बात करते समय अथवा योजनाओं को बनाने के क्रम में इसके जेंडर पक्ष पर समुचित ध्यान दिया जाय। भारत के जलवायु संबंधी दस्तावेज नेशनल एक्शन प्लान ऑन क्लाइमेट चेंज (NAPCC) को भी जेंडर परिप्रेक्ष्य में देखने पर कुछ खास बातें सामने नहीं आतीं। जबकि जलवायु परिवर्तन संबंधी अहम फैसलों में महिलाओं की प्रमुख भागीदारी होनी चाहिए। इस शोध पत्र में जलवायु परिवर्तन की बढ़ती समस्याओं एवं राष्ट्रीय-अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर किए जा रहे प्रयासों को उत्तर भारत की ग्रामीण महिलाओं के संदर्भ में, जिनमें से बहुतायत कृषि संबंधित कार्यों से जुड़ी हैं, की नारीवादी दृष्टिकोण से व्यापक पड़ताल की जानी है।

## SUB - THEME 9

### GENDER, RELIGION AND DEMOCRACY

#### ABSTRACTS

##### Islamic Revivalism and Gender Justice in India

##### (भारत में इस्लामिक पुनरुत्थान और लैंगिक न्याय)

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वर्तमान समय के भारत में मुस्लिम स्त्रियों की जो स्थिति है उसके पीछे कहीं न कहीं औपनिवेशिक भारत के इस्लामिक पुनरुत्थान आंदोलन को जिम्मेदार माना जा सकता है। क्योंकि उन्नीसवीं सदी में जब मुस्लिम समाज सुधार आंदोलन की शुरुआत हुई तो महिलाओं से संबंधित मुद्दों को बखूबी उठाया गया। यह ऐसा दौर था की जब ब्रिटिश सरकार की नई शिक्षा प्रणाली लागू हुई, जो जाति वर्ग और जेंडर जैसे विभेदों से परे था। ऐसे में इन्हीं पुनरुत्थानवादियों ने ब्रिटिश सरकार के आधुनिक शिक्षा विशेष कर स्त्रियों के शिक्षा की खुल कर मुखालफत किया। आज मुस्लिम समुदाय विशेष कर मुस्लिम औरतों की शैक्षिक और सामाजिक रूप से पिछड़े होने की वजह यही पुनरुत्थान आंदोलन है। क्योंकि उसी समय भारत में इज्जतेहाद (Re-Application of Sariya) को भी लागू किया गया। बहुत सारे मुस्लिम धर्म गुरु कुरान और हदीस की अलग-अलग व्याख्यायें करने लगे थे। औपनिवेशिककालीन भारत में Islamic Jurisprudence में जो Re-Interpretation हुआ उसमें मुस्लिम ख्वातीनों के हुकूक को ताक पर रख कर किया गया। उन्नीसवीं सदी में जब इस आंदोलन की शुरुआत में भारतीय मुस्लिमों के इस्लामिकरण के साथ-साथ अरबीकरण का भी विशेष महत्व रहा। भारत में इस्लाम से जुड़े सुधार और बदलाव के सवाल दो हिस्सों में बटे हुए थे। एक पुनरुत्थानवादियों का वर्ग था जो इस्लामिक कानून और शरीयतमें किसी तरह के परिवर्तन और सुधार को स्वीकार नहीं करता था। मूलतत्त्ववादी विचारक 'बिदात-ए-शियाह' (ऐसा रिवाज जिसका जिक्र कुरान और हदीस में नहीं है) से बचने के लिए तथा मुस्लिमों को उन्हीं रीति-रिवाज को मानने की इजाजत देते थे, जिसका उल्लेख कुरान और हदीस में है। दूसरा मुस्लिम वर्ग संशोधनवाद (Reformism) का समर्थक था। क्योंकि आधुनिक शिक्षा प्राप्त कुछ मुस्लिम सुधारक थे, जिनको यह लगता था कि मुस्लिम समाज को रूढ़िवादिता से बाहर निकाला जाए। संशोधनवादी मुस्लिम विचारक विददत-ए-हसना को महत्व देते थे विददत-ए-हसना का मतलब होता है, ऐसे रिवाज और परंपरायें जो इस्लामिक तो नहीं पर इस्लाम के विरुद्ध भी नहीं हैं और आज के समाज के लिए अनुकूल हैं। अतः अवाग की खुशहाली के लिए इसमें सुधार किया जाना चाहिए।

पुनरुत्थान के उद्देश से उन्नीसवीं सदी में कई ऐसे पुनरुत्थानवादी संगठनों की स्थापना हुई। जैसे सैयद अहमद बरेलवी ने सन 1830 में भारत में वहाबी आंदोलन का नेतृत्व किया जो की पूर्णतया कट्टर और मूलतत्त्ववादी आंदोलन था। वहाबी आंदोलन के जरिये अरब की तरह भारत में भी इस्लामिक पुनरुत्थान का प्रयास किया गया। भारत में दूसरा महत्वपूर्ण आंदोलन देवबंद था जिसे मुहम्मद कालिम नौतवी और रशीद अहमद गंगोही ने सन 1832 में देवबन्द प्रारंभ किया। आगे चल कर इस आंदोलन का नेतृत्व मौलाना अशरफ अली थानवी ने किया। उन्नीसवीं सदी का दौर ऐसा था कि भारत में नारीवादी मुद्दों पर विमर्श काफी तीव्र हो चुका था। यह काल नवीन व पुरातन मूल्यों के बीच बढ़ती टकराहटों का था। ऐसे में थानवी ने इस्लाम की बिल्कुल अलग व्याख्या किया जोकि पूर्णतया स्त्रियों के विरुद्ध था। मौलाना ने भारत में उच्च और मध्य वर्ग के मुसलमानों में पाश्चात्य प्रभाव को समाप्त करके इस्लाम की नई ऊर्जा का संचार करना चाहा। परंतु मौलाना थानवी का यह प्रयास भद्र वर्ग के मुस्लिम परिवारों विशेष कर महिलाओं पर अधिक रहा। मौलाना ने दस भागों में 'बहिश्ती जेवर' पुस्तक लिख कर मुस्लिम समाज और शरीयत को पितृसत्तात्मक बनाने का पूरा प्रयास किया जबकि इस्लाम की मूल प्रकृति ऐसी नहीं थी।

## नारीवादी दृष्टिकोण से आतंकवाद

गुंजन सिंह

पीएचडी मानवविज्ञान, महात्मा गाँधी अंतर्राष्ट्रीय हिंदी विश्वविद्यालय

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वर्तमान परिदृश में आतंकवाद विश्व के लिए एक बड़ी चुनौती और समस्या के रूप में खड़ा है। ऐतिहासिक परिप्रेक्ष्य में आतंकवाद की यात्रा बहुत लम्बी है जिसमें जेंडर की अहम् भूमिका रही है। परन्तु आतंकवाद और जेंडर के आपसी सम्बन्ध को हमेशा नजरंदाज किया गया है। मानवविज्ञान में ऐतिहासिक दृष्टिकोण से शोध करने वाले विद्वान आतंकवाद शब्द का इस्तेमाल फ्रांस और रूस की क्रांति से करते हैं। जिसमें वो स्पष्ट करते हैं कि अपने अधिकारों और शोषण के विरुद्ध लड़ाई को राज्य और पूंजीवादी आतंकवादी कहते थे। महिलाओं के लिए इस दुनिया में एक खास तरह की दरजाबंदी होती है जिसके अनुरूप महिलाओं को अपने जीवन में आचरण करना होता है। उसी तरह पुरुषों के लिए भी दर्जाबंदी होती है जिसको मानने के लिए उन्हें बाध्य होना पड़ता है। इसी दर्जाबंदी के कारण महिलाये प्रेम, शांति, निष्क्रियता आदि की छवि से इतनी ओतप्रोत होती हैं कि किसी भी तरह की हिंसा में उनकी भागीदारी है इसे सहजता से नहीं स्वीकार किया जाता है। दुनिया भर में आतंकवादी गतिविधियों में महिलाओं की सक्रियता को लेकर कई तरह के शोध सामने आ रहे हैं। इन शोधों में उनके साथ अन्याय, उनकी परिस्थितियों, तथा उनके मानवाधिकार के हनन से लेकर उनकी बीमार मानसिकता जिसके कारण वो हिंसक वारदातों में शामिल होती हैं, आदि के बारे में विश्लेषणात्मक नजरिया सामने आता है। इस तरह की महिलाओं के स्त्रीत्व में पुरुषत्व के अतिक्रमण के रूप में देखा जाता है। भारत में आतंकवाद का जेंडर पहलू लगभग अछुता रह गया है। दक्षिण भारत में आतंकवादी गतिविधियों में The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam नामक संगठन जो श्री लंका में था, महिलाओं की सक्रिय भूमिका रही है। यहाँ तक कि महिलाओं द्वारा खुद को बम से उड़ा देने की घटना पहली घटना मानी जाती है। नक्सलवाद में भी महिलाओं की सक्रिय भूमिका नजर आती है। परन्तु भारत में तथाकथित इस्लामिक आतंकवाद में महिलाओं की सक्रियता की पुष्टी की खबर बहुत कम अथवा ना के बराबर है। इशरतजहाँ नामक लड़की का संबंध आतंकवादी संगठन से जोड़े गए थे उसका एनकाउंटर किया गया जिसमें उसे गुजरात के मुख्यमंत्री को मारने का षड्यंत्र के आरोप लगाये गए। परन्तु यह पूरी घटना पर सवालिया निशान तब लगा जब इशरतजहाँ की माँ ने अदालत में केस दाखिल किया और कई उच्च अधिकारी जेल गए। इसी तरह से आतंकवाद के नाम पर तमाम मुस्लिम युवको को गिरफ्तार किया गया जो

बाद में बाईज्जत बरी हुए, कई युवक जेलों में हैं जिनके निर्दोष होने के साक्ष्य हैं पर उनका ट्रायल नहीं हो रहा है। मनीषा सेट्टी ने अपनी पुस्तक 'काफ़कालेंड' में कुछ युवकों के जीवन तथा कानून और पुलिस के रवौये पर विस्तृत चर्चा की है। परन्तु जब एक परिवार पर आतंकवादी होने का ठप्पा लगता है तो उन परिवारों की महिलाओं की आवागमन, उनकी शिक्षा आदि जबरदस्त प्रभावित होती हैं। वो महिलाये जिनके पिता, भाई, पति या बेटा आतंकवाद के केस में जेलों में हैं या निर्दोष साबित हो चुके हैं उनकी लड़ाई अपने जीवन के हर पहलू से होती है। समाज, राज्य तथा न्याय के उनके मायने अपने होते हैं। इन महिलाओं का यह नजरिया, उनके अनुभव, तथा उनके साथ सामाजिक व्यवहार समाज के सामने लेन की सख्त जरूरत महसूस होती है। यह शोध मुख्यतः उन परिवार की महिलाओं पर है जिनके घर के पुरुष आतंकवाद के नाम पर या तो जेलों में हैं या निर्दोष साबित हो चुके हैं।

## SUB - THEME 10

### MARGINALITIES AND CITIZENSHIP

#### ABSTRACTS

##### Literature and Adivasi women

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##### समकालीन हिंदी उपन्यास और आदिवासी स्त्री (आलेख सार)

साहित्य समय और समाज के साथ चलते हुए बेहतर भविष्य की सर्जना का दूसरा नाम है. कहा जा सकता है कि जीवन और जगत की सारी समस्याएं साहित्य के अंदर समाहित हो जाती हैं. साहित्य की विभिन्न विधाओं में उपन्यास विधा को समग्र जीवन का प्रतिबिंब माना जाता है. उपन्यास का फलक विस्तृत होता है, मानव जीवन की जटिलताओं की अभिव्यक्ति की दृष्टि से यह विधा महत्वपूर्ण है.

भारतीय समाज की संरचना अत्यंत जटिल है. यहाँ वर्ग के अतिरिक्त जाति की संकल्पना के कारण सामाजिक संरचना में कुछ लोग केंद्र पर काबिज हैं तो कुछ लोग हाशिए पर अभिशप्त जीवन जीने को विवश हैं. हाशिए पर रह रहे लोगों में स्त्री, दलित एवं आदिवासी आते हैं. आदिवासी भारत के लगभग सभी राज्यों में पाए जाते हैं. इनकी समस्या दलित और स्त्रियों की अपेक्षा अधिक जटिल है. यह समुदाय अभी भी सर्वाधिक पिछड़ा एवं मुख्यधारा से कटा हुआ है. अधिकतर आदिवासी एक तो दुर्गम क्षेत्रों में निवास करते हैं दूसरा इन्हीं क्षेत्रों में खनिज सम्पदा होने के कारण इन्हें विस्थापन का दंश भी झेलना पड़ रहा है. इन आदिवासियों में अशिक्षा, बेरोजगारी एवं स्वास्थ्य जैसी अन्य अनेक समस्याएँ भी हैं. इन समस्याओं का कारण पूंजीवादी अर्थतंत्र के साथ कुछ हद तक सरकार की भ्रष्ट एवं शोषणकारी नीतियाँ रही हैं. यह समुदाय वर्तमान में अस्तित्व एवं अस्मिता के संकट से जूझ रहा है. यद्यपि साहित्य में हमेशा अपने समय की महत्वपूर्ण घटनाएँ और अनुगूँजे विभिन्न विधाओं में यथार्थ और काल्पनिक रूप में दर्ज होती रहती हैं, तथापि लंबे समय तक हिंदी उपन्यासों में आदिवासी जनजीवन और उनकी समस्याओं की कोई आहट नहीं मिलती.

हिंदी साहित्य में अस्सी के बाद कई विमर्श चर्चा में आए और इन आधुनिक विमर्शों के कारण हाशिए के लोग भी साहित्यिक विधाओं के केंद्र में आए और आ रहे हैं, इनमें स्त्री एवं

दलित के साथ आदिवासी महत्वपूर्ण हैं। ब्रिटिश शासन काल में पहली बार प्रत्यक्ष रूप से आदिवासियों के जीवन में हस्तक्षेप किया गया और आदिवासियों ने अपने अस्तित्व और अस्मिता के लिए विरोधी पक्ष से जमकर लोहा लिया। आज़ाद भारत में भी आदिवासियों के जीवन में प्रत्यक्ष- अप्रत्यक्ष दखल दिया जाता रहा। आज आदिवासी समुदाय अपने अस्तित्व, अस्मिता और संस्कृति के लिए संघर्षरत है। आदिवासियों की यह चेतना साहित्य में भी दिखाई दे रही है। समकालीन हिंदी उपन्यासों में आदिवासी स्त्री अस्मिता और संघर्ष को स्वर दिया गया है।

आदिवासी समाज की अस्मिता, समस्याओं और चिंतन को केंद्र में रखकर अनेक उपन्यास लिखे गए जिनमें हबीब कैफी का 'गमना' (1999), पीटर पॉल एक्का का 'जंगल के गीत' (1999), संजीव का 'जंगल जहाँ से शुरू होता है' (2002), तेजिंदर का 'काला पादरी' (2002), राकेश कुमार सिंह का 'पठार पर कोहरा' (2003), मंगल सिंह मुण्डा का 'छैला सन्दु' (2004), वाल्टर भेंगरा तरुण का 'लौटते हुए' (2005), राकेश कुमार सिंह का 'जो इतिहास में नहीं है' (2005), हरिराम मीणा का 'धूणी तपे तीर' (2008), भगवानदास मोरवाल का 'रेत' (2008), रणेंद्र का 'ग्लोबल गाँव का देवता' (2009) आदि प्रमुख हैं।

प्रस्तुत प्रपत्र में समकालीन हिंदी उपन्यासों में आदिवासी स्त्रियों के संघर्ष की पड़ताल की गई है।



## SUB - THEME 11

### TEACHING WOMEN'S STUDIES

#### ABSTRACTS

हिंदी में स्त्री-अध्ययन: सांस्कृतिक संदर्भ की विशिष्टता और विषयानुशासन की चुनौतियाँ

(Women's Studies in Hindi: Challenges about Disciplining Gender in a Particular Cultural Context)

अतुल कुमार मिश्र

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भाषा सिर्फ अभिव्यक्ति का माध्यम नहीं है, बल्कि यह किसी समाज-संस्कृति की अपनी विशिष्ट निर्मिति भी है। यही कारण है कि अपनी भाषाई चेतना के अंतर्गत दुनिया की प्रत्येक भाषा, अपने चिंतन और अपने व्यवहारों में सांस्कृतिक संदर्भों की विभिन्न विशिष्टताओं को भी अभिव्यक्त कर रही होती है। एक भाषा के बतौर हिंदी भी इस बात का कोई अपवाद नहीं है। हिंदी की अपनी एक खास सांस्कृतिक चेतना है, जो उसकी सामाजिक-स्कृतिक विशिष्टता के दायरे में निर्मित होती है। दूसरी तरफ एक अकादमिक अनुशासन के बतौर स्त्री-अध्ययन; स्त्री- आंदोलन की उस लंबी परंपरा से उपजता है, जो 'समता, स्वतंत्रता और न्याय' के आधुनिक मूल्य बोधों से संचालित हुई और जिसका केंद्र बिंदु यूरोप था। ऐसे में जब हम एक सवाल के रूप में 'हिंदी में स्त्री-अध्ययन' के मामले पर विचार करते हैं तो इस सवाल में अंतर्निहित तीन बिंदु महत्वपूर्ण रूप से हमारे सामने आते हैं। पहला; एक भाषा और भाषायी माध्यम के बतौर हिंदी, दूसरा; एक विशिष्ट सांस्कृतिक चेतना के बतौर हिंदी और तीसरा; एक अकादमिक अनुशासन के बतौर स्त्री-अध्ययन की विशिष्टता। 'हिंदी में स्त्री-अध्ययन' का सवाल इन तीन बिंदुओं के परिप्रेक्ष्य में ही समझा जा सकता है और इसे समझना इसलिए जरूरी है क्योंकि इन तीनों बिंदुओं की अपनी-अपनी विशिष्टता एवं परिप्रेक्ष्य एक-दूसरे के बरक्स कुछ व्यापक अंतर्विरोधों को जन्म देते हैं और इन अंतर्विरोधों से आगे बढ़कर ही हिंदी में स्त्री-अध्ययन' का विचार अपनी मूल चेतना के साथ फलीभूत हो सकता है।

चूँकि एक अकादमिक अनुशासन के बतौर स्त्री-अध्ययन इस मायने में खास है कि यह बदलाव की उस 'शैक्षणिक रणनीति' का हिस्सा है जो ज्ञान को जीवन से अलग नहीं करती, बल्कि इसे व्यक्तिगत व सामाजिक रूपान्तरण का जरिया मानती है। ऐसी स्थिति में भाषा का सवाल सिर्फ ज्ञान के माध्यम का सवाल नहीं रह जाता जैसा कि अन्य पारंपरिक ज्ञाननुशासनों के मामलों में होता है। यहाँ भाषा ज्ञान के संवाद का जरिया होने के साथ ही रूपान्तरण की वाहक भी है और यह रूपान्तरण उस भाषा-भाषी व्यक्ति/समाज के साथ-साथ भाषा की अपनी संरचना में भी घटित होता है। लेकिन एक ऐसी भाषा जो अपनी सांस्कृतिक चेतना और संरचना में गैर-आधुनिक एवं सामंती मूल्यों की पोषक हो, वहाँ एक अकादमिक अनुशासन के बतौर स्त्री-अध्ययन की परिवर्तनकारी भूमिका के पारंपरिक अनुशासनों के खांचे में ढल जाने का खतरा बढ़ जाता है। यह खतरा तब और बढ़ जाता है जब हम देखते हैं कि स्त्री-आंदोलन की वह सुदीर्घ परंपरा, जिसने एक ज्ञाननुशासन के बतौर स्त्री-अध्ययन को आकार दिया, हिंदी के भाषा यी समाज में लगभग नदारद है। ऐसी स्थिति में स्त्री-अध्ययन और स्त्री-आंदोलन के द्वन्द्ववात्मक संबंधों को हिंदी के सांस्कृतिक संदर्भों में समझना महत्वपूर्ण है, ताकि 'हिंदी में स्त्री-अध्ययन' से संबंधित प्रमुख चुनौतियों को समझा जा सके। प्रस्तुत शोध-प्रपत्र दरअसल इसी दिशा में एक कोशिश है।

**Indian Association for Women's Studies (IAWS)  
XV National Conference on Women's Studies**

**Women in a Changing World:  
Restructured Inequalities, Countercurrents, and Sites of Resistance**

**Concept Note**

From the first Women's Studies Conference in 1981, where it was decided to form the Association, IAWS Conferences have been landmarks in a united drive by scholars, students, activists, and allies of the women's movement in India to advance the agenda of gender equality. These Conferences have provided an important platform for studies, debates, and clarification of perspectives on a wide range of issues and questions that impact the lives of women.

The XV National Conference in Chennai, January 2017, constitutes one more step in this journey of ideas. Its central theme reflects the current context of a rapidly changing economy and society that is simultaneously and increasingly mired in a lived experience of uncertainty, volatility, insecurity, and conflict. There is accumulating evidence that far from being an equalizing or liberating force, the nature of contemporary change and continued restructuring of the State and the economy by neo-liberalism and globalization has expanded the range of inequalities, modes of discrimination, and forms of violence against women. In the midst of a significantly more complicated terrain of inequality, assertions and resistance by women across several new sites of public action have also come to the fore, even as some others may have become less visible. The intricately intertwined multiplicity of issues, questions, and debates that confronts any student of women's studies today, can indeed appear like an eternally confusing medley of contingent circumstances. It has foregrounded the need to search through the mounting complexities of day-to-day experiences, issues, and incidents for the structural underpinnings of contemporary inequalities and the violence it generates. Troubled and troubling times call for renewed efforts to engage with both accumulated experience and new thinking around the key elements of the contemporary condition, if we are to effectively challenge the structures that breed and feed on inequalities of gender, caste, class and community.

### ***Changing Political Economy of Education***

A popular recognition of and widespread hunger for education as the way forward, has indeed led to significant increases in enrolment ratios among girls, including in higher education. This surge in women's involvement with education as students and teachers has also been reflected in a heightened presence of girl students and women teachers in debates and movements in colleges and universities across India. Gender issues, feminist perspectives, and resistance against inequality and discrimination have emerged as important components of campus discourse. Even as ascendant privatization is transforming and restructuring the political economy and role of education in India, it appears that public institutions have become important sites of renewed questioning by an increasingly diversified community of students and teachers. At the same time, the academic institutional space seems more fraught, restricted, and subject to new uncertainties at various levels. Nowhere is this uncertainty more directly apparent than in the case of the more than 150 Women's Studies Centres that have been established by the UGC, whose continued existence is still not assured. Debates around quality, interdisciplinarity, employability, accountability in education, thus necessarily intermingle with concerns regarding increasing contractualisation, adhocism, and discontinuities experienced by students, teachers, and practitioners of women's studies, as well as other new and old disciplines. The XV National Conference of the IAWS will provide a platform to discuss, document, debate, and develop collective thinking and strategizing on all these issues to face the challenges ahead.

### ***Crisis in Women's Employment***

For quite some time, the hyper-visibility of some new forms of employment for women, particularly in urban services, had masked the crisis in women's employment. After a quarter century of entrenchment of the neo-liberal policy framework, we now know that it has resulted in female employment rates having actually dropped to the lowest levels in the history of independent India. Paradoxically, the sharpest fall in women's employment took place during the period that saw the highest rates of economic growth. 21<sup>st</sup> century rural India has also witnessed widespread agrarian crisis marked by increasing non-viability of agricultural livelihoods. Its consequence has been a dramatic reduction in self-cultivation, with a greater fall in the number of women cultivators. The number of agricultural labourers, on the other hand, continued to increase to record levels. Declining workdays for agriculture suggests that significant proportions of even those counted as employed in agriculture have little work. Interconnected to these

processes are the issues of sustainability, environmental degradation, reduction of rights over Common Property Resources, and the impact of climate change.

At an overall level, it has become clear that the narrow range of occupations in industry and services, in which many women had indeed found employment, was unable to compensate for the continuous and increasingly sanctioned process of eviction of millions of women from jobs not only in agriculture, but also in industry and services. There is mounting evidence that the losses in employment and related incomes encompasses even informal work that for long had appeared as forms of labour where particularly poor women seeking employment had been able to find some work, albeit in extremely harsh and exploitative conditions. At the same time, recent years have seen both spontaneous and organized protests by cadres and contingents of workers that are either all women or female dominated, suggesting a new dynamic of resistance that women's studies needs to engage with. The enduring question of unpaid work by women and its contribution to economy and society is also evoking renewed interest with the increased pressure on women's unpaid labour in a context of retreating public services, reduced public provisioning, and the consistent decline in public investment, even as paid care work is also on the rise. In this XV IAWS Conference, our focus is therefore on the structural conditions and nature of change in paid and unpaid work by women across regions and sectors in India and also the experience of other south Asian countries.

### ***Restructured Inequalities and Contemporary Sites of Social Ferment***

Once criticized for ignoring the divergent experiences and articulations of women of socially oppressed and Dalit castes/communities, women's studies and the women's movement in India have become significant contributors to contemporary Dalit assertion against caste based discrimination, stigma, inequality, and for affirmative action. Varied positions and arguments have emerged from within women's studies on Dalit women's unique experience and issues including one argument, advocating for feminists who may not be dalits to reinvent themselves as 'Dalit feminists' to enable a more 'emancipatory standpoint'. At the same time, diverse forms of Dalit women's organizations are also increasingly allying their anti-caste/anti-patriarchy assertions with the women's movement. Social perceptions of women's 'honour' being linked to caste identity and endogamy have of course long been accepted as oppressive for women, and the women's movement has indeed stood steadfast beside young couples who cross such

boundaries. Yet, in such cases, vulnerability to assaults, degrading forms of public humiliation, and even killings, remain a continuing reality, particularly when a Dalit is involved. We are fortunate that this IAWS Conference is being held in Tamil Nadu, a state which has a rich and long history of anti-caste social movements and ideas that have been ideologically linked with an agenda for women's emancipation. It provides us with a special opportunity for collective learning about this heritage, and also for debating its place and relevance for women located within the restructured correlations of caste domination and countercurrents of resistance that define the contemporary Indian context.

New issues have also emerged from the recent experience of organized attempts to brutally suppress Dalit ferment intersecting with organized attempts at communal polarization and promotion of communal hatred. Recurrent practices of 'dishonouring' women in the name of community honour, and the virulent attacks on inter-faith marriages, do indeed appear to share features in common with violence against inter-caste marriages, albeit on a stridently political and communal register. Women's studies has from its inception, been committed to peace and communal amity as a basic condition for progression towards equality and emancipation. The adverse effects of politicization of religion on the advance of equality for women, the dangers of majoritarianism, as well as contemporary articulations of women's rights from within minority communities, are all important issues before this IAWS Conference.

There are other minorities whose movements for democratic rights and equality have come to the fore in recent years. The disability rights movement has expanded in scope and scale in recent years, and this conference will make space for integrating their location within the broader themes of the conference, while also providing a platform for articulation of their special issues. The Conference will also include voices of sexual minorities, and discuss their key concerns, including but not restricted to discrimination, prejudice, stigma, violence, as well the articulation and assertion of their right to dignity and equality.

Of special significance is the upsurge of different forms of militarization, and the immediate impact on women's rights, external as well as internal to their existence and location in the societal structures and regions. Issues of conflict and peace thus form an essential component of

the Conference, in order not only to debate and discuss, but also to develop theoretical research in tandem with women's strategies and movements for peace and security.

### ***Multidisciplinary Solidarity for Women's Studies***

IAWS conferences have always been characterized by a lively cultural component and wider solidarities. Agendas and issues are not only debated in seminar formats or panel discussions, but also through films, plays, music and dance. As we prepare for the conference, it is only fitting to reiterate that women's studies is by nature inter-disciplinary, just as IAWS is innately collaborative in its activities. We draw strength from the support of scholars, students, and teachers from a range of disciplines and departments. So also, we have been privileged to receive the support of several departments in the University of Madras, in collaboration with whom the XV IAWS Conference is being organized. The University of Madras has opened its doors to the women's studies community and given us a historic venue for the conference for which we are truly grateful. This will be the first IAWS National Conference in Tamil Nadu, and we can all look forward to a particularly special conference.

### ***35 Years of IAWS***

Finally, 2017 marks the 35<sup>th</sup> year of the IAWS. It provides a special opportunity to take stock of how far we have travelled, to look back and replenish our spirit to face the challenges ahead. A time perhaps to remember a little of what our founders felt and thought about the role of the IAWS, so vividly expressed in verse written on the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of IAWS as

### ***Greetings for the Twenty Year Old: From One of the Midwives***

*Vina Mazumdar (in 2002)*

*You are twenty, going on twenty one, soon you will think you are old,*

*All who surround you, steer and guide you, some not so young, nor bold.*

*You are a rover, without any cover, not even a permanent home.*

*Many who love you, want to settle you, within the walls of a room-*

*Because they believe in - order and ruling*

*Filing and accounting order.*

*Records are needed, as and when heeded*

*To avoid in the future - disorder.*

*But you, my darling, were born without a farthing —  
To challenge a powerful system,  
The symbol of a hope, for many who were broke  
But believed they could transform the system  
Not through destruction, but persuasion,  
Carrying the torch for knowledge -  
Through research and teaching, action, debating —  
Enriching young minds with courage.*

*Structures these days, age faster than earlier,  
And become homes without people,  
With declining rationale, sponsors and personnel  
The life-force moves away — as natural.  
Life is dynamic, Knowledge not static.*

*'Tis a mistake to tie them down.  
Challenge especially, needs strategically  
New thrusts, ways and not frown  
On changing methodology, for order and maintenance  
Of records, history and the spirit -  
Of moving on gracefully, welcome affectionately  
New people ready to (wo)man it. Retain your youth, and remain a rover  
Keep on challenging the system!  
Systems — though obdurate, hesitant and cussed —  
Know they must bend to the wind.  
Fanning that wind is your raison d'etre —  
Think up new ways to do it better.  
Monolithic models hid most of our reality,  
Bharat darshan opens doors to diversity*



**INDIAN ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES**

**GENERAL BODY MEETING**

**President's Remarks**  
**General Secretary's Report**  
**Treasurer's Report**  
**Financial Report**  
**2013-14 to 2015-16**

**24<sup>th</sup> January 2017**

**University Of Madras, Chennai**

**XV NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON WOMEN'S STUDIES**  
**University of Madras, Chennai**

**PRESIDENT'S REMARKS**

**Ritu Dewan, President, IAWS**

Chennai, 24th February, 2017

The current EC began its term in the phase of huge challenges. Amongst the most prominent ones were the dramatic change that took place in the political and social scenario leading to increased restrictions on women's freedoms and rights; the rising attacks on civil society, organizations as well as activists; the attempts to dilute women studies as a serious discipline; the uncertainty over the very continuation of Women Study Centres.

In spite of these constraints, the present EC can claim several achievements. The IAWS has been extended and strengthened via the holding of highly successful regional workshops. Another highlight is the consistent participation and inclusion of youth, both girls and boys. An extremely significant achievement is the placing of the association on a sounder financial footing, thus giving the scope for further extension of activities. This EC has forged new alliances via formal institution of joint panels with two of the most renowned professional bodies in India - The Indian Society of Labour Economics and The Indian Society of Agricultural Economics.

However, it is our endeavour to address various issues including improvement in the quality of research, upgradation and sharpening of the curriculum, the tighter integration of research to women's issues, increasing relevance to the central concerns of women in India, the extension of alliances with other professional bodies from other social sciences, as well as with other academic fields like physical sciences and medicines, etc.

## **GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT**

**Indrani Mazumdar, General Secretary**  
Chennai, 24th February, 2017

Dear Members,

On behalf of the IAWS Executive Committee (EC), a warm welcome to members present here in this General Body Meeting (GBM) at the XV National Conference of IAWS in Chennai.

This is the first time we are holding our GBM in Tamil Nadu, although our Association has longstanding and deep roots in the state. The present EC is indeed fortunate that we have two of our elected members from this state, which has facilitated the organization of the XV National Conference of IAWS in Chennai, and brought us together here in this General Body Meeting.

### **The context since the Guwahati Conference: Continuities and Changes**

The period since our last general body meeting in Guwahati have seen several continuities as well as significant changes in the educational, political, and social context in which we are situated. These have affected the women's studies community at different levels.

There have been continuities in the broad policy framework since 1991 vis-à-vis education and the economy that have become further entrenched in the period since our last conference. Continuities remain in the thrust towards both privatization of education as well as increasing concentration of administrative power over the academic processes and democratic forms of community life in public and private institutions. On the economic front, continuing 'reforms' directed at facilitating and promoting private (Indian and foreign) as opposed to public investment as the prime instrument for promotion of growth remains a core article of policy, despite the massive governmental intervention we have seen in demonetisation. On the social policy front, the increasing use of schemes of uncertain duration rather than making structures and institutions more attuned to and more sensitive to mass needs has sustained. And yet significant changes have also been taking place on the same fronts, whose features and consequences are still unfolding.

Important elements flowing from policy and political processes that have direct bearing on women's studies, and particularly its structures of institutionalization, are: a) the abolition of the Planning Commission and 5 year plans under which most of the Women's Studies Centres received financial support; b) a reconstitution of the Standing Committee on Women's Studies,

whose ideas and perspective towards women's studies remains to be clarified; c) a greater tendency to administrative command overriding the institutional structures of academic autonomy in educational institutions in general; d) normalizing of retrogressive ideologies outside and within academic institutions. An atmosphere of uncertainty regarding the continuation of UGC support (on which most WSCs are dependent) lies ahead, even as the reconstituted Standing Committee has sanctioned the establishment of several new centres in this period.

In general, many of the public institutions of higher education have become a locus for a variety of forms of activism by not only students, but also teachers. A noticeable phenomenon has been the presence of an articulate leadership by women/girls on women's issues as well as mixed gender questions affecting students, teachers, and the increasing presence of diverse and hitherto excluded social groups in higher education, who no longer sit quietly on the margins, but are far more assertive than ever before. In the case of women, this reflects at one level, the critical mass of women among students and teachers. At another, it perhaps also reflects a new social credibility to women's leadership in movements (despite continued resistance to 33% reservation in parliament) and the accumulated impact of the work and pressure of many who have been associated with women's movements and women's studies.

In this period, recognition of the differentiated experiences of women based on their caste and community locations has acquired further momentum in feminist discourses.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, differentiated concerns and frames of thought between women of younger and older age groups have perhaps not been discussed so much. A question that we might consider is whether a generation gap is emerging in our own field, and if so, what is its nature and whether it needs to be examined or ignored. A new sense of agency in young middle class women is of course visible, among whom independent self-organizing groups have emerged, whose agendas, support bases, and social trajectories are still in the making.

Outside the field of education, all-female or predominantly female workforces in services such as anganwadi workers or domestic workers have carved out distinctive leadership spaces for themselves in mixed gender unions/organisations and their demands have reached tripartite bodies for labour such as the Indian Labour Conference. In rural areas, widespread agrarian distress and volatile conditions of work and livelihood continues to dog the lives of rural women, but the increasingly divergent graph between male and female employment in agriculture as well as other sectors yet remains to receive adequate attention and analysis. At the same time, the issue of unpaid labour of women in rural and urban areas and its links with paid work has also come into renewed focus. Refined study and analysis of these and other trends and experiences has also been in the making in this period.

Greater public articulation by Muslim women organizing and intensively arguing for their rights and for greater equality within their community have emerged as another distinctive

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<sup>1</sup> It seems to me that class analysis, on the other hand, is perhaps acknowledged more in passing rhetoric on inequality rather than emerging in more rigorous social analysis attuned to gender in changing class correlations.

phenomenon. On the other hand, the earlier interest and articulations regarding dalit feminism have perhaps not gained much further momentum, as the attacks on minorities and Dalits in general have acquired more sinister tones. The inclusive nature of the women's movement and its alliances has to my mind grown amidst a variety of different opinions, perspectives, and forms of organization. Such an inclusive unity is indeed one of the defining characteristics of the women's studies movement of which IAWS has remained the most representative body. So, as we look ahead, we can once again say that our period has thrown up both challenges and possibilities.

## **REPORT ON ACTIVITIES AND ORGANISATION**

### **The IAWS Executive Committee (2014-17)**

Let me begin by laying out the process through which our present EC was elected and took office after the last GBM at Guwahati. The previous EC had appointed Sadhna Arya from Delhi University as the Returning Officer for conducting the elections. The Returning Officer and her team declared the results of the election on 30<sup>th</sup> October. 8 EC members were declared elected from the life member category. They were Ritu Dewan, Indrani Mazumdar, Kiran Moghe, Anagha Tambe, Sakira Sahin, N. Manimekalai, Mini Sukumar, Kalpana Karunakaran. No nomination from the Institutional member category or from the student member category had been received. From December 2014 to September, 2015, the EC functioned with 10 members, i.e., the 8 elected from the life members' category and the President and General Secretary of the previous EC, Iilina Sen and Indu Agnihotri as ex-officio members. The handing over of charge by the previous EC to the newly elected EC took place on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2014 with the two posts from the institutional category and the student category remaining vacant. In its first meeting on the same day, the newly elected EC members unanimously elected the following office bearers and distributed responsibilities as under:

### **OFFICE BEARERS**

President: Ritu Dewan

Vice President : Kiran Moghe

General Secretary : Indrani Mazumdar

Joint Secretary : Sakira Sahin

Treasurer : N. Manimekalai

### **DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES**

Anagha Tambe : Editor of the Newsletter

Kalpana Karunakaran : IAWS website

Indu Agnihotri : Coordination, Northern Region

Sakira Sahin : Coordination, East and North East

Iliina Sen/Anagha Tambe : Coordination, Western Region

Mini Sukumar : Southern Region

In September 2015, Aishika Chakravarty from the School of Women's Studies, Jadavpur University was coopted as an institutional member representative. Of the present 11 member EC, three are from the southern region, four from the western, two from the east and northeast, and two from the north (Delhi). Strikingly, more than half (six) of the EC members are teachers in Women's Studies Centres/Departments in universities. Of the eight elected members of the EC, seven were first timers.

Over a period of 24 months, 7 meetings of the EC were held, four in Delhi, one in Pune, one in Ranchi, and the last one in Chennai.

## EC MEETINGS

In the meeting when charge was handed over by the outgoing EC, we were apprised of the organizational and financial situation in the Association. Some of the longstanding issues with reference to maintenance of records of the Association were discussed, including of membership and the need for digitisation of files and records of the Association. In relation to the functioning of the financial office, it was reported that regular maintenance of accounting, taxation and audit procedures as well as adaptation to changing rules and regulations had been made possible by the location of the financial office had CWDS on a permanent basis. Careful husbanding of resources by previous ECs had ensured the establishment of a corpus, whose interest was used to support the functioning of the secretariat and the financial office. Yet such interest was still insufficient to meet all expenses.

In its first meeting (4<sup>th</sup> Dec. 2014, Delhi) after the handing over of charge, the new EC set itself a task of **expansion and focus on regional levels**. Two regional workshops in Pune (western region) and Guwahati (northeast) were accordingly planned to be organized over the next three months.

The second EC (20<sup>th</sup> Feb. 2015, Pune) meeting which was held alongside the western regional workshop decided that IAWS needs to play a more representational role with regard to **the issues and problems that Women's Studies Centres** were facing. It also emphasized the need for **linking IAWS to other associations** following which possibilities of such association were explored with the Indian Society of Labour Economics (ISLE) and the Indian Society of Agricultural Economics (ISAE). On both these counts progress was made over the following months.

A decision to set up an all India **Working Group on Women's Work and Employment** involving scholars, women's organisations and trade unions, and for which a concept note had been prepared and placed before the EC, could not however move forward because of lack of funds.

The EC also decided to put in a **proposal for an endowment grant from Ford**, for which a proposal was submitted in May later that year, but could not advance further because of restrictions placed on the Ford Foundation in India. It was also decided to **explore possibilities of raising funds for IAWS activities from OAK Foundation**.

The issue of **representing the concerns of Women's Studies Centres** was further taken up in the third meeting of the EC (18-19<sup>th</sup> Sep 2015, Delhi) where it was decided to invite members of the newly constituted UGC Standing Committee on Women's Studies to an interaction with IAWS EC members. Details of IAWS' collaboration with ISLE and ISAE were also discussed. The need to expand membership as well as streamline/update membership records was emphasized for which a draft brochure was presented. It was decided that EC members would examine the membership and contact details of members from their region and collect more recent addresses and email id from members they interacted with for updating contact details of IAWS members. Suggestions to change the look of the website were discussed and it was decided to upload more material on the website. The audited accounts for 2014-15 were approved.

The fourth EC meeting (14-15<sup>th</sup> March, 2016, Delhi) drew up a **preliminary outline for the XV National Conference of IAWS**. Various suggestions were made for the theme of the conference and it was decided that Anna University, Chennai would be the venue since the Registrar of the University had assured us of support. A preliminary discussion took place on the theme and sub-themes of the conference, and it was decided to have one **pre-conference on Education** and the movements that had been erupting across various university campuses. The 5<sup>th</sup> EC meeting (29-30<sup>th</sup> July, 2016, Delhi) **finalized the venue of Madras University** following receipt of a letter from the VC of Anna University expressing inability to host the IAWS National Conference. The concept note, sub-themes, and outline programme for the Conference were also finalized. It was decided to constitute a Reception Committee with Prof. Swaminathan as chair, and Profs. M. Srinivasan and Dr. Bharathi Harishankar of Madras University as the convenors of the local organizing committee. The **13 sub-themes and their coordinators** were also finalized. The EC approved the plans of the **Development of Women's Studies in Jharkhand project** for which OAK Foundation had sanctioned a substantial grant. A proposal for organizing a **northern regional workshop on documenting women's movements** in Ranchi was accepted and it was decided to hold the next EC meeting at Ranchi. A proposal from the Vina Mazumdar Memorial Fund (VMMF) to institute an annual **VMMF-IAWS annual award for young scholars** in women's studies, with selection of awardee to be on the basis of published papers during 1<sup>st</sup> July 2015 to 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2016.

The 6<sup>th</sup> EC meeting (30<sup>th</sup> Sep-1<sup>st</sup> Nov, 2016, Ranchi) reviewed progress made on the Jharkhand project and preparations for the XV National Conference, and pre-conference events, and finalized the date for the GBM. It was decided to bring out a **special issue of the Newsletter** at the time of the Conference. It was also decided to institute an **IAWS President's Award** in IAWS National Conferences for the best paper from a fund of Rs 5 lakhs that was being donated by President Ritu Dewan for the same. The audited accounts for 2015-16 were approved.

The 7<sup>th</sup> EC meeting (30<sup>th</sup> Dec, 2016) reviewed the preparations for the conference.

## ACTIVITIES

### *Regional Workshops*

IAWS along with Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule Women's Studies Centre, Pune University organized a two- day seminar on '**Different Worlds of Women's Studies in India: Focus on Western and Southern Regions**' on 20th and 21st February 2015. Focusing on the present critical juncture of both disquiet and hope - when Women's Studies is being institutionalized, while the category of gender is being contested, it highlighted some contradictions. – engendering disciplines v/s disciplining gender, theory v/s politics, profession v/s passion, institutionalization v/s ghettoisation that have informed the field of women's studies. It brought out the shifting frames of thinking about women were outlined and associated with this moment of institutionalization of Women's Studies.

The seminar was spread over seven sessions: History of Women's Studies in the Region, Debating Women's Question in the Region, Doing Women's Studies in the Regional Language, Different Voices in Feminist Politics, Travel of Women's Studies Knowledge between Academia and Activism, Teaching Gender on Multiple Sites, Challenges of Institutionalization of Women's Studies.

Recognizing the increasing social diversity/democratization of higher educational institutions where Women's Studies is housed, it underlined the importance of bilingualism in women's studies as well as of women's studies knowledges produced between academia and activism, and the need for greater ideological debate to clarify perspectives.

A two- day regional seminar on '**Gender and Displacement in the Northeast**' was organized on 17 and 18 March, 2015 by Department of Women's Studies, Gauhati University in collaboration with IAWS commemorating 25 years of Women's Studies Research Centre (WSRC), Gauhati University.

It focused on the historically diverse contexts of displacement in northeast. displacement with rising ethnic and religious violence in the region, dislocation and trafficking of women and the gendered dimensions of disaster situations; vulnerabilities of internally displaced people face and the need for rehabilitation, specifically of women survivors, the need to de-glorify media representation of violence. Displacement associated with the hegemonic concept of development under globalization was interrogated. Five sessions brought out the diverse contexts of displacement in northeast: Displacement and Gender: Theoretical Exploration, Conflict and Displacement, Tribal Displacement and Gender, Development Induced Displacement Environment and Displacement. Theoretical Exploration, Conflict and Displacement, Tribal Displacement and Gender, Development Induced Displacement Environment and Displacement.



A two day Southern Regional Workshop on 18-19 February was organized on '**Documenting Contributions of Women's Movements, Women's Organizations and Women**' at University of Madras in association with the departments/centre of Women's Studies of University of Madras, Ethiraj College, Stella Maris College, Bharathidasan University and RAWS (Regional Association of Women's Studies). In its opening session, marginalization and exclusion of women's studies departments within universities was also fore-grounded and a demand raised for a national policy on women's studies.

The contribution of the southern region in terms of extending activism into academics was acknowledged. The need to capture local voices from various regions was reiterated to revitalise the Women's movement and ensure its vibrancy.

Well known activists from a range of organisations, primarily from Kerala and Tamil Nadu spoke about their struggles and experiences on a range of issues – from women's participation and organization in class based movements to portrayal of women in the media, disability, women's health, portrayal in media, disability rights, etc. Sexual and gender minorities were also focused on. The setting up of an all women jamaat in Tamil Nadu was discussed. The shrinking space for women's movements was pointed out as a reason for concern.

It was stressed that Women's Studies need to be perceived as an instrument for bridging the gap between institutes of higher education and the community so that there is awareness on the inter-linkages of the various strands of society. It was felt that the women's movements can and should hold space for multiple strands of thinking, multiple forms of practices and resistances. She concluded by It was emphasized that in order to create a critical perspective, attempts should be made to draw conceptual frameworks that take cognizance of such intermeshing.

A two day Northern Regional Workshop on **Documenting Women's Experiences in the Movement: Issues, Experiences and Struggles** was held in Ranchi on the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2016.

The non-homogenous nature of the women's movement was emphasised during the sessions. It was stressed that research should strengthen the women's movements and that there was a need to broaden the parameters of women's studies and to continue building alliances with the most marginalised sections. It was pointed out that the Dalit women's movement believe sex work was a tool for exploitation while other groups might argue that it was a form of labour. Muslim women's rights and the resolution of gender issues within Islam through shariat adalat was brought up by organisations like BMMA.

A special session on Jharkhand highlighted the emergence of a gun culture and capitalist exploitation especially with the mining industry gaining ground in the state post 2000. Issues of women construction workers and women migrant workers were brought to the fore and the need for the state to step in was stressed. Issues of Domestic Violence and the changing nature of such violence was discussed in the context of experiences of UP and Delhi based groups.

It was pointed out that Violence against Women and the Right to Information were the two movements which were running parallel to and feeding into each other in Rajasthan.

The changing nature and role of the state vis a vis the movement was discussed, and an increasing lack of effect of mass mobilisations and demonstrations on the state came up in the context of Bihar. The possibility of collaboration with the state on various issues that were discussed was questioned as women were being turned from a development constituency to a corporate friendly one. As in the southern regional workshop, the need for the women's studies to work more in tandem with the women's movement was pointed out at the same time as the need to address the stresses and strains within the women's movement itself.

### ***Collaboration with other associations***

Collaboration with other associations/professional bodies of scholars has been furthered through the institution of a **joint IAWS/ISLE panel** discussion on *organizing women workers* at the annual labour economics conference of ISLE, first in 2015 and again on *domestic workers* in 2016. A similar joint panel on *Social Security and Informalisation of Labour* has been organized in the IAWS conference in Chennai. Such collaborations are important for reinforcing the inter-disciplinary nature of women's studies, for bringing gender issues into the frame of other disciplines and fields in social sciences, and for giving IAWS greater visibility.

### ***Development of Women's Studies in Jharkhand Project***

The Jharkhand Project is a new initiative by IAWS that has been made possible by funding from OAK Foundation. The first phase of the project began in July, 2016 for a period of 15 months. The IAWS Jharkhand Project has the following key objectives:

- To generate interest in women's studies among teachers, researchers, students and social activists in Jharkhand and its sub-regions;
- to facilitate interaction between scholars, activists, NGOs and policy makers in Jharkhand with individuals, institutions and organisations engaged in teaching, research or action for women's rights in other parts of India ;
- document experiences of movements around women's issues in the region and generate new and relevant reading and study materials for the development of women's studies in Jharkhand
- bring a focus on women and gender inequalities into ongoing discussions and debates on longstanding and influential socio-economic movements in Jharkhand including in tribal movements and identities
- facilitate the creation of a women's studies network in the state that can inform, enable, and sustain a community committed to and capable of anchoring women's studies at the state level.
- To collate resources and materials on issues that have emerged in the field of women's studies and make them accessible to scholars, students and activists in the state.
- An initial set of dialogues - between the IAWS Executive Committee members and teachers and students of various social science departments in universities and colleges

across Jharkhand has been initiated, and the Ranchi northern regional workshop initiated the process of giving visibility to IAWS in the region.

An MOU has been signed with the Department of Economics at Ranchi University in September, 2016 and received sanction from the University authorities thereafter. Under the MOU, a Project Committee comprising of three members from the Deptt. of Economics and three from IAWS has been constituted to promote the activities of the project, which comprises of a special fellowship for a student of Ranchi University. A room has been provided by the Department for housing the project and a Women's Studies Resource Centre. Due to delays in obtaining official sanction from the university authorities, it could not be formally inaugurated at the time of the Ranchi EC meeting as planned, but in practical terms, it started operating since then. A coordinator for the project has been hired, who functions under the supervision of the Project Committee.

PhDs on and around issues of gender and women at Ranchi University are being listed and a digest is to be prepared as part of an initial review process. An orientation course in women's studies is planned for the first quarter of 2017. Terms and procedures for award of an IAWS PhD fellowship for one research student from any of the social science departments at Ranchi University and in the case of research grants for 5-6 applicants from across Jharkhand for work on and in the state are being worked out. Under the project, two orientation courses in women's studies, a seminar/conference on the Tribal Question and Women, and a workshop on women's work and employment in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are all planned for 2017. A compendium of papers/documents on the women's movement is also to be prepared for publication under this project.

### ***The IAWS Archives***

Housed in the RCWS at SNDT University, Mumbai, the IAWS Archive contains documentation regarding IAWS sponsored activities and events as well as some documentation on organizational aspects, including records of EC meetings, GBMs, National Conferences. The Archives is monitored by an Archives Committee. Three meetings with available members of the Archives Committee were held between February 2014-2016. Uma Chakravarti, Sumi Krishna and Kamala Ganesh who continued on the archive committee as life members, stepped down in a staggered manner over 2014-16. The committee constituted earlier continued till Jan 2016. Kumkum Roy was invited to be a new member. The new members as decided by the EC in 2016 are Samita Sen and Meera Velayudhan. The EC requested Indu Agnihotri to convene meetings.

RCWS has seen several changes and Veena Poonacha, former IAWS General secretary as well as other older staff have retired. As a result, the link between IAWS EC and the Archives has to be reestablished and Ilina Sen and Ritu Dewan in Mumbai are to explore the renewal of contact with the Ava Bai Wadia Archives in RCWS, SNDT, which hosts the IAWS archives. The EC has observed that maintenance of the Archives needed to be continuously monitored. The MoU signed with SNDT for establishing and maintaining the IAWS Archive did not have

a timeline but the committee which was set up to look into the workings of the Archives (Management Committee) and review the MoU had a term for five years which was now over. There is a proposal before the EC that we should try to develop the Archives with a password protected website, and also perhaps, explore collecting a charge for usage; ways of no cost acquisition be explored; there is also a need to take steps for guidelines with regard to acknowledgement; ethical norms for users as is the policy, and undertaking that the material will not be used with commercial intent. The Archives committee has seen a turn -over of members and this may be the case in the future as well. The EC has proposed that copies be made of records are digitized and maintained in the CWDS library as back up.

### ***Publications***

IAWS conferences and workshops have been bringing together a whole range of research papers and discussions, and yet these are not reflected in IAWS publications. Sumi Krishna has recently published a book based on IAWS papers, and the present EC is of the view that more such publications should be promoted. In preparing for the XV National Conference, the EC has suggested that the various sub-theme coordinators think about publishing select papers as books. Indu Agnihotri has been requested by the EC to prepare an edited compendium of papers of women's movements, drawn from the southern and northern regional workshops on documenting women's movements. The articles collected for observing 35 years of IAWS have also been published for the conference.

The Newsletter has remained the principal publication of IAWS. Three Newsletters have been published during the tenure of the present EC. The first had been prepared by the Editor of the previous EC, but was printed and circulated under the present EC. Two other Newsletters have been since published, one edited by Anagha Tambe, and the special edition for the National Conference was put together by Anagha and some other members of the EC.

### ***Website***

The website is increasingly becoming the principal source of news on IAWS. It has been managed and is updated by Sundaresh, at CWDS, which has also housed the Secretariat since Periodic discussions in the EC on revamping the website have remained incomplete. An attack of malicious code in one of the web pages may have caused problems during the conference. It has been dealt with and the cause of the attack removed and may still take some time to be reflected in web. The Google and yahoo search engines are also blocked the web site and Sundaresh was able to get the problem corrected after installation of site guard on the web server following discussion with the domain hosting agency godaddy.com.

### ***The Secretariat and Financial Office***

The secretariat continued to be located in CWDS, and work on updation of contact addresses and membership lists that began during the las EC has been continued by Nandan, whose longstanding association with IAWS has been of service to the running of the office of the

secretariat. The Financial Office being also located in CWDS has functioned in coordination with treasurer of the Association despite the long distance that separates the two. Lalitha, has been a meticulous keeper of accounts and financial records, and with the advice of senior accounts officer at CWDS, the financial office has helped in formulating the several budgets for the several proposals for funding that have been submitted to various agencies by the secretariat in the past two years.

Some continuing issues remain in communication between the secretariat and the members of IAWS, but efforts have been made to streamline and ensure a flow of information.

### ***Financial Situation***

Our EC has made special efforts throughout its term to raise funds for the regular functioning of IAWS, apart from the special efforts that are made for the National Conference. We are happy to announce that a letter for endowment grant of 550,000 dollars from Ford Foundation has been received in January 2017. This grant was made possible at the initiative of Vanita Mukherjee at Ford Foundation, Delhi office, who as a longstanding member and supporter of IAWS, made special efforts to not only forward the proposal, but also advised and helped us go through all the procedures. IAWS is immensely grateful for her support and counsel.

The Ford Endowment Fund has to be carefully invested, and procedures put in place so that successive ECs will ensure that the grant contract conditions continue to be met and FCRA regulations are followed meticulously. The nature of the grant and its purpose of providing financial stability for the day to day functioning of the Association is such that for the next five years at least, 70 per cent of the interest on the fund of 500,000 dollars is to be ploughed back into maintaining the real value of the fund, with 30 per cent of the interest available for our functioning. The EC may be authorized by the General Body for devising the procedures for the management of the Ford endowment Fund, which would have to be followed by successive ECs in the coming years.

Programme funding of around 86 lakhs from OAK Foundation for the Jharkhand project has provided IAWS with the opportunity to actually support one PhD scholar and support other research projects, which is new for IAWS. This grant was facilitated by Paromita Chowdhury at OAK Foundation who had approached us for a partnership for activities in Jharkhand, her concern being that understanding of gender issues were not so developed in the state.

While obtaining these two grants have been important task fulfilled by the secretariat and the financial office of IAWS, it must be also borne in mind that the funding environment for a professional body like IAWS is not very conducive. The fund position of many of our longstanding supporters in UN agencies has been weakened and locked into pre-determined programmes allowing for little flexibility.

The raising of funds for the National Conference, whose expenses are increasing alongside increased expectations of our members with respect to facilities, has been quite difficult,

despite our having raised the registration fees. We are still subsidizing accommodation and other facilities at the cost of severe strain on our limited funds, having to draw on funds that have been husbanded by earlier ECs and sustained by continued careful management by the present EC. CSR funding is not easily forthcoming and whatever we have received in the way of corporate funding for our conference has been through the agency of Prof. M.S. Swaminathan.

As has become a tradition, EC members have contributed through personal donations, and we appeal to other members to also donate, as a few have already done. As a voluntary body, we are in the last analysis dependent on our members for sustaining the functioning of the Association, including in the financial sphere.

### *XV National Conference*

In preparing for the conference, 13 pairs of **sub-theme coordinators** shouldered a major task of organizing the sub-themes which are along with the plenary sessions, the cornerstone of any IAWS conference. It is through the concept notes and call for papers in sub-themes that hundreds of particularly young students are drawn to IAWS conferences. Several scores of paper abstracts have been sifted and evaluated by our sub-theme coordinators, N. Neetha & Praveena Kodoth for sub-theme 1, Rukmini Sen & Saptarshi Mandal for sub-theme 2, Asha Hans & Swarna Rajagopalan for sub-theme 3, S. Suba & Christy Subathra for sub-theme 4, A. Mangai & Swati Dyahadroy for sub-theme 5, Sejal Dand and Usha Seethalakshmi for sub-theme 6, Meena Gopal & Asha Achyuthan for sub-theme 7, Poonam Natrajana & Meenakshi Balasubramaniam for sub-theme 8, Aasha Ramesh & Celine Suguna for sub-theme 9, Amrita Patel & Nitya Rao for sub-theme 10, Sabiha Hussain & A. Suneetha for sub-theme 11, Meena Radhakrishna and Dyuti, A. for sub-theme 12, and Shadab Bano & Panchali Ray for sub-theme 13.

The papers presented at this conference in the 13 sub-theme sessions of the conference have been finalized by these coordinators for which they have worked over several months. From formulation of their concept notes to reading through abstracts, asking for revisions in some, receiving and answering queries for those who had sent their abstracts, to planning their sessions and organizing curated panels, these 26 sub-theme coordinators worked across long distances and across states collaboration to finalise and inform the writers of papers regarding selection of their papers for presentation at the conference. It is this spirit of voluntarism and commitment to IAWS that is the bedrock on which the Association and its XV conference stands.

IAWS has been fortunate in its collaboration with and support received from teachers, students and indeed the administration and Registrar of the University of Madras. It is only such support that has ensured that our conference, which is being held for the first time in Tamil Nadu, has a truly historic venue in the Chepauk campus of their 160 year old University. Dominated by the graceful Senate House, that has stood there for close to 140 years, and the grand Centenary

Auditorium that has been Chennai's City's largest Hall for some five decades, the campus venue of the conference is flanked on one side by Chennai's famous Marina Beach.

Some 200 volunteers have been mobilized by the **Organizing Committee of the Conference**. Prof. M. Srinivasan of the Criminology Department and Bharathi Harishankar, of the Department of Women's Studies in the University of Madras as the Committee's Convenors have sought and received cooperative involvement in the Committee by Faculty and Students of several other University Departments including History, Anthropology, Economics, and Christian Studies. Student volunteers have been mobilized by the Women's Studies Centres of Ethiraj College, Stella Maris College, Madras Christian College, Chennai, the School of Gender Studies at Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD) in Sriperumbudur, and the Department of Women's Studies at Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirapalli and Bharathiar University, Coimbatore.

Prof. M.S. Swaminathan as the Chair of the **Reception Committee** has been an invaluable ally for IAWS, helped raise resources for the funding of Conference expenditures, and offered the facilities of MSSRF for anchoring the Reception Committee comprising of both academics and a wide range of activists from various contingents of the Women's Movement in the state of Tamil Nadu. Dr. Yasodha Shanmugasundaram, as Vice-chair of the Reception Committee and an early supporter of Women's Studies in Tamil Nadu has also extended all the resources at her command for the conference. Dr. Kadambari, Faculty Gender Studies Unit, RGNIYD, facilitated a partnership with RGNIYD for the South Asia panel in the conference, with the support of Director Latha Pillai who had earlier even offered to host the conference in Sriperumbudur.

Mr. Thomas Franco of the State Bank of India Officers Association (SBIOA), Secretary & Correspondent of SBIOA Educational Trust was one of the first supporters of the Conference from beyond the usual boundaries of University Academia and Women's Movements that have traditionally been associated with IAWS conferences. SBIOA Trust, is hosting the pre-conference colloquium at the SBOA School and Junior college.

Apart from the material and human resources provided by the University of Madras, and the other institutions and individuals mentioned above, several individuals, institutions, agencies and business houses have also come forward to help fund the expenditures that a conference of this scale inevitably entails. Agencies, institutions and companies that have already given/committed direct and indirect **funding support** for the IAWS conference include Ford Foundation, SBIOA Educational Trust, ILO, TVS Motor Company, Sundaram Finance Limited, UN Women, ICSSR, RGNIYD, The Raza Foundation, Action aid, CBGA, University Women's Association, Chennai, and Dr. Anita Ratnam, Chennai.

The organization of the Conference in Chennai is still an ongoing learning experience for all involved, within IAWS and its partners and collaborators. An inclusive collaborative instinct has been foundational to IAWS, and every conference leads to new partnerships with a range of individuals, institutions, disciplines, and sections of the citizenry. So has been the experience

of organization of the XV Conference, and for that we are indeed grateful for the way our Chennai partners and supporters have taken on the challenge of hosting a conference of more than 1000 participants of which close to 700 are from outside Chennai.

The IAWS **secretariat and financial office team** worked overtime with registration papers, mails, preparing publication materials, updating the website, allotment of accommodation appropriate to needs, certificates, budgets and accounting procedures for the running of the conference.

In sum, it is this multi-layered and broad based collective and voluntarist effort and support and the response from the hundreds who have registered for the conference that has made it possible for an eleven member Executive Committee thinly spread across the length and breadth of the country to attempt to fulfil its responsibilities towards the XV National Conference on Women's Studies, and it is this that makes the experience of organising a national conference truly memorable.

### ***IAWS Membership:***

The last two years have seen an additional enrolment of 268 members of IAWS, of which 234 are life members, and 34 are student members. This has brought our total number of members of IAWS to 2,178 as per the records at the current secretariat office. An enormous effort has been made by Nandan to compile the list from old and scattered records of the shifting secretariat and drawing on his personal knowledge of earlier members, and put it on the website. Members are all advised to check the lists and if any discrepancies in details remain, to please inform the secretariat office.

A trend that we are noting is for students to also become life members, rather than take three year membership in the category of student members. This implies that some of our life members are also students. Registration for the Conference at the secretariat office had reached 900 before spot registration, and a quick analysis of such registered participants showed that more than half were below 35, and also that around half were non-members. It will be a task for the future that such non-members are encouraged to become members of IAWS.

While we are unable to give an age profile for all members of the Association, there indeed appears to be a surge of interest among the young in participating in IAWS programmes, and there is a need to integrate them as members and in the leadership of IAWS.

### ***The Way Forward:***

Many of the tasks, responsibilities and the problems that need to be overcome in the coming period are self-evident from the various sections and issues already described in this report, and I will not repeat them here, so may I end this report with the hope that the two way communication between IAWS' EC and other members of the Association gets strengthened between conferences.



There is a need to improve co-ordination between the Archives Committee and the EC.

<b>Category of IAWS Member</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Enrolled between Dec 2014-Jan 2017</b>	<b>Enrolled between Dec 2014-Jan 2017</b>
<b><i>LIFE MEMBERS BY STATE</i></b>	<b>All Members as on 14.1.17</b>	<b>Life members</b>	<b>Students</b>
Andhra Pradesh	152	5	0
Arunachal Pradesh	3	0	0
Assam	90	13	20
Bihar	24	4	0
Chandigarh	28	0	0
Chhattisgarh	8	0	0
Delhi	259	36	0
Goa	11	1	0
Gujarat	80	3	0
Haryana	28	3	0
Himachal Pradesh	14	1	0
Jammu & Kashmir	25	7	2
Jharkhand	25	6	0
Karnataka	134	10	0
Kerala	79	17	2
Madhya Pradesh	22	2	0
Maharashtra	396	22	4
Manipur	15	0	0
Meghalaya	9	1	1
Odisha	80	6	0
Pondicherry	9	2	0
Punjab	15	3	0
Rajasthan	67	3	0
Tamil Nadu	149	38	2
Tripura	3	2	0
Uttarakhand	6	0	0
Uttar Pradesh	112	15	0
West Bengal	138	15	3
Nagaland	5	1	0
Mizoram	1	0	0
Telangana	16	16	0
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>232</i>	<i>34</i>
<b><i>INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERS</i></b>	<b>45</b>		
<b><i>STUDENT MEMBERS</i></b>	<b>125</b>		
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>2178</b>		

## **TREASURER'S REPORT**

**N. Manimekalai, Treasurer, IAWS**  
Chennai, 24th February, 2017

### **Report of the IAWS Treasurer December 2014-16**

It is my pleasure to welcome and greet all the members of the General Body of the Indian Association for Women's Studies. I am all the more delighted that the XV National Conference of IAWS is being held for the first time in Tamil Nadu.

On such a cheerful note, I am really privileged and glad to place the Treasurer's Report on the finances and accounts of the IAWS for the period December 2014-16.

In the first meeting of the present EC held on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> December 2014, I took over as Treasurer from Dr. Nandini Manjrekar, the outgoing Treasurer on 4<sup>th</sup> Dec 2014'

### **General Information**

The funds of the IAWS are operated jointly by the General Secretary, the President and the Treasurer in a transparent manner as prescribed by the EC. The central financial office of the IAWS for banking, accounting and tax purposes has been established at the Centre for Women's Development Studies (CWDS), New Delhi since 2005 through a resolution of the General Body. Such continuity in the location of the financial office has ensured that all operations related to taxation, accounts, audit, and general funding, remain streamlined and properly maintained. It further ensures stability of financial accounting procedures and records of the Association and maintaining regularity with regard to submission of the requisite papers in compliance with reporting and submission of financial records as per the FCRA and Income Tax regulations.

In recent years, there have been continuous alterations in the format of reporting and submission of financial records as per the FCRA and Income Tax regulations that have introduced new pressures in management of funds and accounts. The IAWS Secretariat has been able to continuously adapt to the new demands and has maintained regularity with regard to submission of the requisite papers. I am happy to inform that IAWS applied for FCRA Renewal in 2014 and got it renewed during 2015.

## **Management of Grant:**

It is true that IAWS has been facing financial challenges and the funds carefully husbanded through successive ECs was still not able to yield sufficient 'interest' to fully cover the day to day running of the Secretariat and Financial Office. The spread of EC members in different corners of the country has also raised the cost of holding EC meetings. This was particularly true for present EC where members come from locations distant from each other.

The present EC made particular emphasis on raising resources and grants for programme activities in such a manner that the EC meetings could be held along with programmes. It has continued to work on building the Corpus fund.

The detailed audited statement for the years 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16 (balance sheet and income/expenditure statements) are appended. All the expenditures were undertaken with the approval of the Executive Committee of the Association'.

During the tenure of the present EC, a proposal to develop Women's Studies in Jharkhand was submitted to Oak Foundation. A total grant of Rs. 87,87,230 was approved by Oak for a 15 month duration project covering July 2016 to September 2017. The Association received the first installment of Rs. 75 lakhs in July 2016. This grant provides for one PhD scholarship and for funding research in Jharkhand. I acknowledge with gratitude the funding support extended by Oak foundation for this programme. The grant is being utilized partly for establishing the Women's Studies Centre in the Department of Economics, University of Ranchi, Jharkhand and for ensuring participation of students and scholars in the XV National Conference in Chennai.

Ford Foundation has supported IAWS with core maintenance grants in the past. In January 2017 Ford has sanctioned an endowment grant of US\$ 550,000 of which US\$ 50,000 was earmarked for the XV National Conference. It was sanctioned with the stipulation and specificities that a 30 percent of the interest accrued from the Ford Grant must be ploughed back in order to maintain financial stability and sustainability. We are deeply grateful to Ford Foundation for such support which would enable the IAWS Secretariat to carry out its future activities and provide a stable financial base for the Association.

IAWS has been maintaining a separate account for IAWS membership subscriptions. The New Membership as of mid January 2017 has touched 257 and the Association has received Rs. 3,76,800/-.

It is indeed my duty to place on record the generous personal contribution of Rs. 5 lakhs by our President Dr. Ritu Dewan towards the IAWS Conference Award. Given the need to strengthen the financial positions and promote need based research to be undertaken by IAWS and appreciate the WS Scholars with Awards, it is necessary that funds are being generated for the same. I appeal and welcome all the Members and well wishers to make similar contributions.

EC has attempted to mobilize funds seeking individual donations. I am grateful to the EC members and other members made individual donations ranging from Rs. 5000 to Rs. 10,000. The Corpus as on 31.12.16 has been 6,76,120 Four Regional Workshops were organized during 2014-16 on the significant theme of documenting women's movements, in different regions with the funding and logistic support of institutions from the respective regions. I thank all the institution for supporting the regional workshops, say Assam Univerity, Pune University, SBOA, Action Aid, Madras University, Ethiraj and Stella Maris Colleges, Bharathidasan University, Ranchi University, etc. IAWS had spent Rs. 5,61,300 on Regional Workshops and Seminars

For the XV National Conference 2017, the Association approached several organizations and donors. Thanks to all the supporters and well wishers for their generosity. It is my duty to gratefully acknowledge for the monetary contributions from Ford Foundation, SBOA, Sundaram Finance, TVS Groups, Mahindra and Mahindra, OAK Foundation, Raza Foundation, ILO, CBGA, ICSSR, UN Women, Rajiv Gandhi National Institute for Youth Development, Action Aid, Dr. Anita Ratnam, etc which came to the total of Rs. 88,00,000, On behalf of IAWS, I am grateful to all of them and earnestly acknowledge all their support.

IAWS Newsletter and a special issue for the National Conference were published during this period, edited by Dr. Anagha Tambe, EC Member, with the budget commitment of Rs. 87,442 towards Newsletter printing and postage. A new IAWS brochure was also published

There was a need to revive the IAWS website with additional information. The Website and archive revision incurred an expenditure of Rs. 32000.

Before closing, I wish to place on record, my sincere appreciation and gratitude to all my colleagues in the Executive Committee, especially the President and the General Secretary, the IAWS Secretariat for the constant and continuous efforts to strengthen and improve the financial position of IAWS . With the sense of duty, I thank Ms Lalitha Manohar, for her proficient and dexterous capabilities in handling and maintaining the accounts as per the audit rules, preparing the audit statements, balance sheet etc. I express my sincere thanks to the auditor of IAWS, Shri Suri Malhotra and his Associates for their professional support, guidance and advice to keep the accounts professionally as per the audit rules.

I once again thank the excellent and proactive EC for approval of the expenditure, and support and co-operation throughout. The efforts of the President and General Secretary for considerable efforts to strengthe the financial position of IAWS cannot be exaggerated. I join with GB to sincerely thank them for their commitment and dedication.



**IAWS**

Indian Association for Women's Studies

**XV National  
Conference on Women's Studies**

**"Women in a Changing World:  
Restructured Inequalities, Countercurrents and Sites of Resistance"**

**22 to 25 January 2017  
University of Madras, Chennai**

**35  
Years 2017**

XV NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON WOMEN'S STUDIES

**WOMEN IN A CHANGING WORLD:  
RESTRUCTURED INEQUALITIES, COUNTERCURRENTS,  
AND SITES OF RESISTANCE**

22-25 JANUARY, 2017  
UNIVERSITY OF MADRAS  
CHENNAI



Celebrating 35 years of  
**THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION FOR  
WOMEN'S STUDIES**

2017

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## INTRODUCTION

While initiating preparations for the XV National Conference of the IAWS in Chennai, January 2017, the Executive Committee of the IAWS noted that the Association would complete 35 years in 2017. These years have marked a long journey involving both the envisioning and creation of a platform where scholars, students, activists, policy makers and experts drawn from diverse streams, meet to discuss perspectives and strategies with regard to taking forward discussion on women's status and issues. The mid 1970s and the crisis that India was moving towards, the varied movements – food movement, anti-price rise movement, the struggles for land reforms, the campaigns against violence on women in different regions of India - formed the background to this process. The government appointed Committee on the Status of women in India (CSWI, 1974) and its report Towards Equality (1975) - was somewhat lost owing to the political Emergency that was imposed. The CSWI's startling findings indicating a decline in women's situation post-independence, provided the much needed critique and data base, the growing mobilization and organization of women, not just in the metropolitan areas, but in almost all regions of India, led to the beginning of a unique journey-of women's studies and the women's movements shaping each other. Also, the UN Conferences on Women since Mexico (1975) and upto the mid 1980s, the Non- Aligned movement and its conferences, informed the debates, with a focus on national policies and mechanisms that were needed to transform the status of women, in post-colonial countries in particular.



To map the trajectories of this process, it was decided that a special effort be made to recall memories and contributions from previous office –bearers. This was also in continuation of similar efforts made by previous ECs in the past, which had offered interesting glimpses of what entailed charting out new paths in the building of Women's Studies in India.

This was also in recognition of the fact that in recent years it has been noticed that a sizeable section of the participants are drawn from a younger age group. The setting up of more than 150 Women's Studies Centres in India over these past three decades - as well as the teaching undertaken at the Masters and research level - have fed into this steady stream of young participants, who bring fresh perspectives and a new energy at the level of both the movement and the scholarship. Many of them are unfamiliar with the history of the IAWS. There is a curiosity about debates in the past as well as the issues that preoccupied an earlier generation.

There is also an urgent need to convey to the new members the process by which this path of Women's Studies has been carved out with the active involvement of the IAWS in the effort to open up new areas for enquiry at the level of Higher Education. The IAWS journey marks one of the most positive stories of introducing new perspectives in the formal education curricula and streams, drawing upon the rich experience and energy of the women's movement in India. It needs to be recognized that it also reflects the deep commitment of Indian intellectuals and scholars to critical social enquiry and using their academic training to address the challenges facing the forces which sought to bring about democratic changes in the social, political and cultural fabric of India. These were some of the finest women and men, drawn from the foremost educational institutions as well as those who had honed their skills in social movements, ranging from the Gandhian to the left-socialist.



IAWS acknowledges its debt to these pioneers who dared to think differently in order to bridge the gap between educational institutions and society at large; who recognized that social interactions were undertaken in the complex and complicated terrain of existing and prevailing inequalities which included deep divides based on gender, caste, class, region, ethnicity, language and diverse cultural histories in a pluralist society such as ours. They challenged notions of objectivity which ignored entrenched hierarchies to paper over differences which were staring us in the face and posed a challenge to attempts made at social transformation.

We, who were assigned this responsibility had ourselves traversed much of this journey together with the IAWS. However, the varied trajectories, the diverse personal histories that wove into a dynamic movement of women studies, on the one hand, and on the other, more sustained and collective long term planning and resources by IAWS, need to be documented. The reflections as well as thematic contributions carried in this volume offer an insight into this complex but historical journey.

We would like to acknowledge the support received from all those who responded, as well as those whose contributions which could not reach us due to various compulsions. We pay our tribute to the pioneers who set us going on this track. Many of them are no longer with us, even as we have fond memories of the times spent together. We also take this occasion to thank our sisters across South Asia, some of whom have walked this journey with us, across borders, even as the political climate often turned hostile. We are sorry that many more who were approached could not send us their contributions in time. We hope there will be other occasions and better times to share our experiences from this region.





We are grateful to the EC for entrusting this responsibility to us and offering support at different levels. We would like to acknowledge the support provided by Sonali Sharma, Sundaresh, Neeru Mehta, Bhaswati, the CWDS library staff and the inimitable Nandan who also forms part of the story!

***Indu Agnihotri***  
***Meera Velayudhan***

January 2017





**1981 MUMBAI:  
FIRST NATIONAL CONFERENCE**



## **From Women's education to Women's Studies The long struggle for Legitimacy**

*Neera Desai, Vina Mazumdar and Kamalini Bhansali*

The passage from acceptance of the legitimacy of education for women to the recognition of women's education as a critical instrument in the educational process, has been long and protracted. The process has been marked by recurring challenges and struggles and reluctant concession of legitimacy, immediately followed by resistance or apathy. Obstacles in this context are raised by the following dominant ideologies:

1. Social construction/perception of gender roles in civil society;
2. Educational system that create structural rigidities/resistance;
3. Politics and economics of educational policy; and
4. Determination by market forces in all activities, whether pertaining to mind or body.

### **The Emergence of Women's Studies**

The urgency for improvement of women's status in developing countries emanated from the process of development, but it took considerable time to realize that the process of development itself had an adverse effect on women's lives and roles in society. The world Plan of Action for the Decade gave a high to research activities, analysis and data collection regarding all aspects of the situation of women, since adequate data and information are essential for formulating policies and evaluating progress about attitudinal as well as basic socio economic change. It was found to be necessary to get systematic information on the existing conditions, and also to look into the causes of discriminatory practices, attitudes and beliefs which impede women's contribution to development policies. Simultaneously, the GOI had also drawn up a Draft National Plan of

Action for Women, Where emphasis was given to research, which could identify problems and help in bridging the information gap. ICSSR and particularly the late J.P. Naik, had personally facilitated the functioning of the CSWI in a number of ways. However a more conscious, deliberate and committed action came up when ICSSR constituted an Advisory Committee ON Women's Studies (specifically using the term women's studies instead of research on the status of women). As mentioned in the booklet, 'the main objective of the programme of women's studies is the generation and analysis of data with a view of uncovering significant trends in patterns of social and economic organization which affect women's position in the long run. Probably for the first time, it was categorically started that 'all over the world the social sciences studies on women had been focusing on the middle class; the new stance emphasized the study of women belonging to the poorer or the 'less visible' sections of society. It also stressed that the purpose of the studies was to renew the debate on the woman's question. SNDT Women's University probably pioneered the use of the term 'women's studies' for academic and action-oriented activities connected to women's issue. Looking back, it seems that this could only happen in a women's university searching for an identity for itself. The university had its roots in social reform, and specialized in organizing educational programmes to suit the diverse needs of women. It was also a place where innovations and experiments were encouraged.

*Extract from Women's Education to Women's Studies - The long struggle for Legitimacy from the book 'Narratives from the Women's Studies Family: Recreating Knowledge, edited by Devaki Jain and Pam Rajput, Sage publication , New Delhi, 2003, p. 46, pp. 53-55.*



# PERSONAL REFLECTIONS





## IAWS – THE EARLY YEARS

*S. Anandalakshmy\**

In the early seventies, I was working at Lady Irwin College, teaching Child Development in a new Master's course I had helped establish. I also took up a part time assignment assessing the applications for grants in Psychology at the Indian Council for Social Science Research (ICSSR). It was a period in which Sri J. P. Naik was the Member Secretary of the ICSSR. He was wise and large-hearted and under his leadership, the ICSSR became a nucleus for planned gatherings of many kinds, as well as for serendipitous meetings.





Vina Mazumdar had been assigned a room next door, where she was putting together the reams of data from several studies and writing up the draft after the completion of the nation-wide landmark study on the status of women in India. The document that emerged was titled "Towards Equality", now recognized as a milestone publication in social history.

We would meet casually for tea breaks and in the corridors, exchanging thoughts and ideas. That was the beginning of our long association and friendship.

---

\*General Secretary, IAWS, 1991-93



Vina-di felt the need for consolidating the relationships among scholars and practitioners which had developed in the course of the research and the writing up of it. J.P. Naik was a builder of institutions. He always seemed to know the right moment to start something. He advised and supported Vina Mazumdar to register an association and the Indian Association for Women's Studies was born.

Vina Mazumdar had written up the objectives and found almost all the signatories for its registration. The last and seventh one was me. Vina-di summoned me in her characteristic voice of authority, and a lovely smile, and asked me if I wished to sign. Thus, fortuitously, I became one of the founding members of the IAWS, by simply being available at the right time! Some years later for a 2-year period, I was General Secretary of the IAWS, when Devaki Jain was the President, and we organised the Conference in Mysore. Again, my being there was one of those 'accidental' factors. That year, Maithreyi Krishnaraj had been made President, but she got an appointment at the Institute of Social Studies at The Hague and she temporarily opted out of her lead responsibility in the IAWS. Devaki Jain took on the role of President and I was roped in as General Secretary.

I felt privileged to be part of the early years of the Association. We interacted closely with Phulrenu Guha, Lotika Sarkar and other stalwarts. My acquaintance with women activists widened as Conferences and seminars were held across the country. If I named them here, it would be a Who's Who of the women's movement in the 80's and 90's. Aruna Asaf Ali, Kamladevi Chattopadhyay, Hansa Mehta, Madhuri Shah, Ela Bhatt, Neera Desai, Vasantha Kannabiran and so many more from different parts of the country. It was a veritable festival of outstanding women. I feel truly blessed to have known them and interacted with them.

Now IAWS is celebrating 35 years of effective scholarship in the cause of gender equality! All power to it! May it grow in strength and outreach.

\* \* \*

# FEMINIST ENGAGEMENTS WITH DISABILITY IN INDIAN ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN STUDIES

*Anita Ghai\**



## A Personal Journey

A feminist engagement with disability has been a major preoccupation of the last three decades of my life. I must admit neither my personal predicament, nor my self-proclaimed standing as a feminist gave me the courage to carry the basic assertion of the “personal is political”, of my disabled existence. The disabled woman was in the unconscious, not daring to debate with the societal formulations about my inner world of disability that experienced oppression and anxieties of disability. Owning disability took almost two decades. A deep yearning was to ‘pass’ as a ‘normal’ person. Before I underscore the potential of Indian Association for Women’s Studies (IAWS), let me foreground some of the challenges that I believe have led to an evolution of understanding disability. As a disabled woman, my own location in the field is complicated because it raises perturbing yet important questions: What is my stance as an activist? With what



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
\* President, IAWS, 2008-2011



authority can I speak about disability and Women's Studies? And why? Am I speaking with disabled people or about them? What language do I use to describe disability? Who has the power to name and label? How does understanding of disability exclude others from speaking out? Similarly, how will I negotiate with issues of diagnosis and certification? In doing so, I hope to share some ideas that make disability more as an epistemology rather than only a concessional category within both academia and activism.

My own understanding is that disability is not really a fixed category most clearly signified by the white cane user or a crutch user. Disability, like most dimensions of experience is polysemic — that is ambiguous and unstable in meaning — as well as a mixture of truth and fiction that depends on who says what, to whom, when and where' (Corker, 1999, p. 3) (emphasis mine). Many categories such as muscular dystrophy and myalgia encephalomyelitis are not as fixed as perhaps the polio is. Even polio changes its character as is evident from the development of post-polio syndrome in young polio survivors as they become older. Thus, a collective of disabled people have coagulated to fight the hegemony of the normality. The understanding is that the battle can be won only if the disabled act as unified subjects in their own right.

Therefore, the need is to bring the disabled together, appealing to a common language, common consciousness and common experience that each disabled can identify with. It is imperative that the understanding is in terms of identity: the political subject being one who remains identical to it-self in all circumstances. To be a political subject, then is to have a politically recognised identity, an identifiable self, and a consciousness to claim as one's own. Taking over from disability studies, this approach requires that not only would each disabled individual be a subject, but also all disabled people would partake in a common political identity called disabled. Thus, the politics





that proceeds from this emphasis on disabled as subjects, united in a common struggle, usually going by the name identity politics thus becomes a viable methodology to gain a voice which was hitherto silenced. Both my experiential reality and academic understanding is tied with IAWS. I must acknowledge that my testimony (if I can call it) begins from the year 2000.<sup>1</sup> I grew up in the vibrant IP College, in which there were many feminist scholars, who made the students connect with critical questions that were/are raised about patriarchy, Sati, eve teasing, rape and violence.

### **Disability as an Epistemic Location**

Although Women's Studies within the academy has opened up new understandings of gender, sexuality and their interactions with various systems of oppression, it has, like its activist counterpart, been critiqued—and rightly so—for leaving certain people out. My intimate connection with IAWS can be understood as a reflection of my life situation as a disabled woman, who sees IAWS as a transitional space in Winnicott's terminology. Winnicott first used the term 'holding environment' (1953, 1971) to describe the optimal environment for 'good enough' parenting. IAWS gave me a holding environment, as my personal predicament was adapted slowly but surely. IAWS clarified my stance not only on disability, but made me engage with questions of race, gender, caste and class, labor, state. Infact, the state has been one of the most provocative topics among women scholars who have an interest in marginality.

### **Am I not a Woman? <sup>2</sup>**



My association with IAWS goes back to the late 1980's. My first interaction with IAWS was in Hyderabad. The theme of the conference was on public policy. Despite attempts by activists to include the issue of disabled women in the agenda of the national conference on public policy in Hyderabad in January 2000, the organisers expressed their



inability on the pretext that there were more pressing concerns to discussed. Couched in politically correct language, the message of course was clear that the disabled women do not count as significant. While there was/is a strong emphasis on mainstreaming women's concerns for self-development in the national policy documents on empowerment of women, the paradox of a hierarchy within a hierarchy is evident because discussions about certain groups of women considered lower class and caste, tribal, and minority, and disability continue to be couched in 'welfare' terms. This reflects the skewed attitude of mainstream feminists, who while sensitively exploring distress as a major component of a woman's life experience, conveniently leave disabled women out of their focus. There have been changes in the last decade as issues of disabled women have been included in the Women's movements. There have been some gains in participation as well as inclusion in the decision making of some organizations. To survive as a disabled woman in such a scenario meant coming to terms with unequal power relationships. This was reflected clearly by an absence and invisibility in the most forward-looking social movements and dialogues in India including the women's movement. The dejection in a way made me struggle further to include the issues of disability in creating a dialogue with academic scholars and activists who were prominent in the women's movement. A couple of books were important contributions in 2003 and the Goa conference historically became the most significant from the perspective of disability.

### **Symposium on Disability in Goa Conference**

Prof. Asha Hans was the coordinator for organizing the symposium on disability in 2005 in the Goa conference. The Goa conference included disabled women, but created a symposium in which disabled women were speaking mainly to the converted, but being in a conference did provide the opportunity to listen to other disabled





women talk about their lives and to understand that there are feminists with disabilities who were ready to work together to bring about change in the lives of their fraternity. Though, IAWS took a step further for recognizing disability issues, it was/ is still not yet fully cognizant of the lived realities of the disabled women. The idea that the sharing of issues could be collectively understood so that “nondisabled” women could understand disabled women as well as let the unconscious connect with the hidden disabling parts. It was almost like a roller coaster and what Arthur Frank (1995) would call a ‘quest narrative’ in which the introduction of disability can be accepted and used to derive personal meaning. As Frank explains, ‘the genesis of the quest is that some occasion requiring the person to be more than she has been, and the purpose is becoming one who has risen to the occasion’ (1995: 128).

In the recommendation, many of us articulated the distress that we experienced in 2005, and suggested that lived reality of disability could be shared in a bigger platform of IAWS. In retrospective I understood that women’s movement would always retain fluidity as some agendas would seem to hit deadlocks and yet on account of collectivity will always hold its basic character. IAWS therefore never ceased to create academic spaces for understanding and theorizing the lived realities of marginalized sections.

### **Lucknow: a Milestone**

An invite to share my thoughts on disability by IAWS through (Prof. Nivedita Menon) would always remain a memorable moment. To be in the plenary created immense responsibility, anxiety and excitement, as it would have repercussions on what I will share with almost 500 women in the audience. In my humility and pride, the applause meant as if I have connected the existential realities of my fellow disabled in a meaningful way. I could not but note that there were only two fellow





disabled in the audience so the political work to connect with disabled women was a task that was imperative. I was nominated and was selected as the President of IAWS (2008-2011). Had I been chosen as a token, rather than as real, contributing, valued member was to be comprehended.

*This was where my internal struggle began. I also realized that this - I couldn't leave this connection - as the ally would be women's movement. So the IAWS platform would always remain the place in which an engagement with the disability issues is possible. As an executive member of the IAWS, there were many lessons that I learnt not only about disability but also about politics and the relationship with women studies. However, my identity as the President was contingent on the category of 'woman' as it was evident that both the women's movement as well as women studies had been about women largely. And yet, speaking for disabled women in this present scenario epitomizes an entirely new challenge for many of us in India. My affiliation with women sometimes puts me in a self-conscious state as my tokenization as a disabled person becomes evident. What is stressful in the part, which feels that can I provide voice to people who are also at margins? Can I claim their issues? I cannot help being conscious that I am not them.*

The deliberations for the 2011 conference changed its pattern. We moved away from the politics of identity and attempted to underscore resurgent efforts to resist and challenge hegemonies in the spheres of the state, natural resources, labor, body, markets, culture and ideology, conflict, language, sites of law, boundaries of relationships and the interfaces of these arenas. While numerous struggles envision a polity and society with a meaningful citizenship. This formulation afresh in a way looks at experiences from the field, rethinking several of the old questions and seeking new alliances in the face of emerging challenges.







As I became a part of IAWS, a certain objectivity entered my worldview and I was connected to many other intersecting identities. In a lighter vein, there were some lessons worth learning for all of us. CWDS could not have discussion in the basement, and a decent ramp was in place. For the first time, the mainstream Indian Journal of Gender Studies brought out a special issue on Disability, Gender and Society (May/ August 2008, Volume 15, No 2, published by Sage). Though a lot more work needs to be done, this is a welcome starting point. While there are sensitive women who have heard the voices of their disabled relatives, colleagues and friends, within the broader feminist discourse and practice, a certain tokenism prevails. For instance, to go to the toilet in the University of Lucknow was a humiliating experience and yet that made me understand that to certainly hear disabled women's voices, the women's movement had to acknowledge the social, economic, communication as well as architectural barriers that prevented disabled women from sharing their stories and engaging in a public discourse. It's time that the women's movement interrogated able-ism.

### **Wardha: an Uncharted Journey**

Wardha for me became a trajectory in which I understood the hegemony of the state when it chooses to go against "marked" people. While I engaged with disability, I also registered a deep understanding of the state's propensity of giving up on democratic norms. The rally in Wardha appeared as a political move and the state did not take much time to create chaos. An open letter was written to the then Hon'ble Home Minister, Govt. of India, Mr. P. Chidambaram. We expressed our dismay and shock in the face of experiences of intimidation and harassment at the hands of the Anti Terrorism Squad during the XIII National Conference of the IAWS in Wardha at the Mahatma Gandhi Antarrashtriya Hindi Vishwavidyalaya (MGAHV), from January 20-24th 2011. While I coped with disability, I was not attuned





to understanding hegemony and the ways in which the state can powerfully marginalise ordinary citizens. Yet the enriching part was that we did resist and managed to respond to the political domination exercised by the ATS. For me, I understood that despite the intersecting systems of oppression, my colleagues in the women's movement collaborated and resolved the crisis. In this negotiation, I understood new conversations and perilous political configurations.

### **Gauwahati: So Far and Yet So Close**

Women's Studies is a field that hasn't fully answered all the questions, and it's often in a mode of self-analysis and capability for change. Disability is a feminist issue and the silencing of disabled voices and experiences does not further the feminist cause. This makes us think about making the study of disability a part of the women studies programs in different universities. The IAWS sought to focus on some of these issues by hosting a pre-conference event along with its XIV National Conference. The effort was to bring into the discussion the issue of recurrent violence, which has been common to all women, and among Northeast Indian disabled women, where this fear is heightened by the situation in which they live. It stems not merely from the horror of physical assault and vulnerabilities, especially those unleashed by state forces that are permitted to do so without impunity, but also from the subsequent traumas, social stigmatization and many other inexpressible feelings.



This preconference therefore, sought to address the concerns of women with disabilities especially in the additional context of conflict-induced trauma. The objective was to highlight the issues of women with disabilities as well as to initiate a dialogue within and between young women within members of IAWS. The goal was to identify the gaps in both, acquiring knowledge and information regarding statutory provisions of the State and the existing scenario such as issues of



support services, resources and advocacy that are critical. However, the issue was whether access again would become a “converted” dialogue. Though IAWS executive members were sensitive and did attend the preconference for some time, the interaction, which was visualized in our plans, did not happen. The disabled person’s functioning in society has been tied to the extent their impairments can be normalized. What is critical is that the built environments have no understanding of bodily multiplicity, thereby producing ‘standard-fit’ designs. For the IAWS that everyday reality of the disabled women — of physical and attitudinal barriers, which thwart their effortlessness of mobility and access — is not comprehensible. Thus, the imagination of the collective remains elusive. As part of the executive, I lived alone in the university and had no way to stay with the other members. Notwithstanding the sensitivity of my colleagues, I did not play a role in the participation of the decision-making through out the conference.

I wonder whether my loneliness was perceptible to my colleagues. The isolation and pain of being included and yet excluded remains a serious consideration for a full feminist engagement with disability. Maybe this ablest gaze determines not only the architecture, but the internal psyche too. IAWS is still the only organization, which is ensuring representation of the disabled women. Despite the sincerity of all these collective efforts, what is important is that appealing to exclusionary identity categories should become more meaningful.

Feminist engagement with disability can offer new possibilities for an understanding of women’s studies as a whole, but powerfully illuminate issues that have traditionally been important to feminist theory in new and exciting ways, including abortion and prenatal testing, assisted suicide and the right to die (or live), pace-of-life issues, media representations that carry cultural messages about the body, the experience of chronic illness and pain, the social construction of



“normative” versus non-normative bodies, the medical establishment, labor, and sexuality.

### **Archival Work: a Learning Lesson**

My association with the archival work made me create a project on the interface between the women’s movement and the disabled women’s struggle through interviews with representatives of both. What I understood was that the body per se is always part and parcel of feminism, but somehow the abject body remained alive in the psyche of the different scholars and activists, but did not go beyond the intricacies of disability. All narratives<sup>3</sup> indicate fascinating stories of women who spoke about body, difference, vulnerability, interdependency, sexuality, reproductive health and political participation, issues of selection and abortion. The project made a significant contribution to the study of disability framework within a context of inclusion and accommodation.



While disability might not have been formulated from the vantage point of women activists, feminists who interrogated patriarchy did not muster enough energy to question normative hegemony. The transcriptions are significant though fraught with a range of different kinds of politics in which a dialectic of absence/ presence, inclusion/ exclusion medical/social are clearly evident. This interconnection remains for me a memorable grasp of the struggle in engaging with the normal versus disabled narrative. The narratives gave me immense joy, sadness, regret, questions, but what is fascinating is that hope remained a certainty, that the women’s movement would campaign for the lived realities of women with disabilities. As archival research, this work can serve as a benchmark in an honest, thoughtful and considerate understanding of disability.



### **Interconnection between Women's Studies and The Study of Disability**

It could be argued that I am creating a fantasy in which there would be a "real" dialogue between the women's studies groups and disabled women. It isn't that I am ignoring the possibilities of resistance, which in the face of no recognition can only be attributed to a sheer will to survive. Taking this into consideration, I could argue that women with disabilities have formed support groups and are in the process of challenging dominant constructions of disabilities. Also IAWS created funds, which helped in creating a module on gender and disability. It also went to the University Grants Commission and in a way the module was accepted. However, women's studies departments will take a long time to address disability. A feature of some of the archival research carried out by me has been poignant and was the recurrent use of disability as an analogue for other kinds of limitations. For example, one respondent stressed that "Being a woman is the biggest form of disability". Another observation was that: "Disability is like belonging to the lowest caste possible". There are several ways of understanding these analogies. One option is to look at the socio-cultural meanings ascribed to female bodies and those assigned to disabled bodies. Both the female and the disabled body are excluded from full participation in public and economic spheres; both are conceived in opposition to a norm that is assumed to possess natural superiority. Such comparisons can be both emancipatory and oppressive. If the objective of invoking such comparisons is to understand different people's lived experience and grasp their authenticity, the potential is immense. However, if the underlying realities of the categories serve only at a metaphorical level, it can lead to a total erasure of the category, which is being invoked. It is true that analogy is a theoretical device that is meant to enable the move from more familiar to relatively unknown terrain in order to understand how a set of relations evident in one sphere might illuminate the other.







However, if a comparison or the parallel pits one set of relations against the other, as is the case of women against disability, the strategic advantage of the analogy gets lost.

Without devaluing such metaphorical moves, I wish to focus on what gets 'valorised' and 'suppressed' in the process of understanding women's studies. My submission is that such analogising results in a suppression of the exacting reality of disabled women's lives, which are limited by conditions that are much more difficult than ordinary to transcend. A shift from the theoretical/metaphorical to the material is essential to render visible the 'culture constructions' that have supported the currently flawed understanding of disability as an epistemology. In fact a careful analysis of such metaphors is required to unearth their meanings and functions, so that their power can be subverted. Till the popular refrain that women's studies is going to understand disability as a marginalized category and not as a way of enhancing knowledge production, the road to emancipation/ empowerment is going to be a difficult one.



Also, owing to the absence of discussion among disabled women themselves, no group exists to collectively pursue the concerns of disabled women, and thus to influence both the disability movement and the women's movement. Right now the voices of disabled women are restricted to academic settings, where double oppression hypothesis is expounded. This hypothesis takes the standpoint that disabled women experience a double disadvantage, as they fare worse than either disabled men or nondisabled women socio economically, psychologically and politically. Disability compounds their already marginal status as women.

The absence of disability from the mainstream women's studies academia creates and maintains a status quo where the 'disabled woman' is incorporated within the existing social patterns as a



“problem”. Disability thus remains as an out-and-out state, both politically and academically — it is the source of its own oppression. Such an understanding suggests that more is at stake than a problematizing discourse of specific categories. By not exploring this relationship, women’s studies programs at large have delimited inquiry and pursuit of knowledge of disability. Possibly the reason is that schools, colleges, Universities (over all community), remain sites where not only knowledge but also a middle- class orientation with its patriarchal, neo-liberal and normative values are produced and reproduced. A feminist understanding of disability as a social, cultural, and political phenomenon, is central to counter the notion of disability as an inherent, unchallengeable trait located in an individual. Such an approach rejects the view that disability is solely a medical problem or a personal tragedy. Women’s Studies curriculum has to create possibilities, where conversations with the disabled women are prioritised. When I say “conversations” I mean that disabled women can have conversations about nuanced, complicated issues that matter to all women. It is only when we have the potential space and the support to reflect critically on disability issues, that we will enable women’s studies to challenge stereotypes and disability concerns become palpable in a way in which the “able-bodied” women can understand the vulnerabilities experienced by disabled women. Women’s Studies will then place the responsibility for re-examining and repositioning the place of disability within society not on the individual, but on women’s studies as well as society itself. A study of Disability may be many things to many people, but if it’s full potential is to be realized, then it must avoid being seen as simply a new bottle for old wine.

The purpose of making the study of Disability an academic discipline is to create a body of knowledge, which can provide challenges towards rethinking and reflecting upon aspects of our comprehension of disability and social marginalization. Disability exists at the uneven



boundaries of the social, concurrently rebellious and celebratory in its insistence that disability is neither tragedy nor inspiration but a satisfying and enjoyable way of “being in the world” ...if only the (ablest) world would not get in the way! Just like the unforeseen possibilities of a new day, reflecting on the field of disability is also loaded with an unknown. For instance, knowledge of disability has to be engaged in ‘the unlearning of traditional thinking’s privilege. So that, not only is one marginalized constituency in a position to listen to another, but

rewrite the relationship between the margin and the center.

There are no easy answers to these never-ending questions of identity and inter-connections. There is no easy way of drawing boundaries between who should be in and who should be out; no easy inventory of heterogeneity of innumerable disability communities. Both as an academician and an advocate, I believe that an impassioned study of disability makes these questions relevant to everyone, whether they identify as disabled or not at any given time. Lack of comprehensive data on women with disabilities both adds to their ‘invisibility’ and marginalisation and keeps them out of the ambit of engagement and interaction with women’s groups and movements. Within the women’s movement, women with disabilities have not been included systematically in women’s movement to their homes and are thus less likely to access the state’s mainstream programs or services. Many factors compound their situation, such as terrain, weather, lack of mobility aids; being single and female in a traditional setting; and, fearfulness, prompted by experiences of stigma or harassment.

Notwithstanding the current inclusion of disabled women within the Indian women’s movement, I would argue that simply deciding to include them is insufficient. The problem cannot be resolved so easily by merely adding on disabled women as another category to the list of matters or kinds of issues requiring attention. Offering a feminist





account of disabled girls is problematic because it requires including them in the discourse. However, writing a subject (for example, disabled women) into the on-going discourse necessitates a certain exercise of power to construct that subject in some form, to give her shape, and to breathe life into her. This cannot be accomplished without knowing how she might construct herself. This process thus requires certain reflexivity.

It seems to me that the identity of disability is not an idle insertion into feminist discourse; rather it has critical implications for how the understanding of disability can expand and thrive within academic and activist women's studies as well as movement. As an insider I find that the ideas are wide-ranging with the most radical re-imagining of possibilities. They produce few answers but rather embrace the practice of constantly troubling the questions. They make even the radical seem quite conservative. For instance take any theory—humanism, psychology Marxism, critical race theory, feminist theory, LGBT/queer theory, etc. You bring the study of disability in its midst and pose questions such as- what are the conceptions of the normal? What is autonomy? When exactly is life not worth living? Why does rationality have to be the sole determinant of our humanity? How do we define limit? Issues such as euthanasia, institutionalization, trans-humanism, cochlear implants, special schools/sheltered workshops are critical in women studies discourse. To explore the possibilities authentically and adequately requires that the process has to have a dialogical character. It is vital that both feminist discourse and practice engage in a concerted dialogue with the disabled women and the disability movement, so that a more inclusive theory as well as practice can emerge.

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## WHY I LIKE IAWS?

*Chhaya Datar*\*



Reflecting on my days as the General Secretary of the IAWS during 1996 to 1999 is an exercise which involves not only recollection of fond nostalgic memories of colleagues and friends working together to organize two national conferences and four regional conferences but also scrutinizing what we could contribute to the efforts of production of feminist knowledge by using the IAWS platform.



You will be surprised to know that during this period we could organise two conferences instead of one which was the general practice for IAWS. But it was a true phenomenon. Since 1997 happened to be the 50<sup>th</sup> year of celebrating India's independence achieved in 1947, our Executive Committee shouldered the responsibility to organize a special seminar on the topic, "The Early Years of Indian Independence" at the University of Baroda. The second conference, which was the regular biennial conference was organized in S.N.D.T. Campus, Pune.

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\* General Secretary, IAWS, 1996-98.



The first conference had a special fascinating feature for which we could invite six veteran activists from the era of Freedom Struggle and could film their testimonies. We did not have money to edit the film and make it into a documentary. But later their transcripts were made available which could be printed together with the summary of seminar papers in the form of a booklet. It was distributed at the time of the National Conference in Pune in June 1998. It was an emotional experience for all who were present in that small hall to listen to these veterans. Though old and fragile, they were quite spirited when they narrated their experiences of participation in the freedom struggle.

The Pune conference had another exciting feature. Just one day before the conference was to start, the second nuclear bomb test was held by Vajpayee government at Pokhran in Rajasthan and it threw our plan of hosting Pakistani feminists off-gear. The Pakistan government prevented them from traveling to India. They had been invited for the special session of South Asian feminists, which had become a special feature for IAWS conferences. We took this opportunity and with the local activist groups, men and women, organized a Peace March, protesting against the nuclear test and the competitive war - mongering going on with Pakistan. India had never signed the non-proliferation treaty. The women's movement worldwide has always resisted nuclear armaments. All the 500 participants joined in the march. It helped to get publicity for IAWS in the local papers. Kamla Bhasin took the initiative in this and spoke in the public meeting on our behalf. The feminist walk was an innovative feature introduced at that time. Our local collaboration was with Maharashtra Stree Abhyas Vyaspeeth and they came forward to organize this walk.



Early morning of the second day of the conference a two kilometer walk through the city took us to the Phulewada where Savitribai ran the school. Savitribai Phule, the first lady teacher in Maharashtra, who along with her husband Jyotiba Phule ran a school around 1857 where



dalit and Muslim female students were invited to attend. Along with very inspiring plenary speeches, we had a good response for two extracurricular events. One was the exhibition and sale of women's crafts including textiles and the other one was the screening of movies made mainly by women as well as those made on women's issues, which were going on in the campus, parallel to the subtheme sessions. The Exhibition of books also got a tremendous response. Some women had brought their newly published books for release on this occasion. I would like to say proudly that my book called, "Nurturing Nature" too was released by Prof. Vina Mazumdar, Founder member of IAWS. A good number of participants presented papers in the subtheme sessions and they were found to be quite substantive.



When I got elected in 1996, I was a little nervous because I did not know how to raise funds for the activities of the IAWS, including funds for administrative expenses. But Kamla Bhasin who was the General Secretary in the earlier term assured me of help. She had already lined up a Ford Foundation grant for administrative expenses for the next five years and hence we could start our Executive Committee meetings and planning for future activities immediately. However, we realized that because of the practice of a roaming office as per the new Secretary's location every time shifting bank accounts and looking for a new chartered accountant every time was creating problems for account keeping and required clarifications from the previous Secretary and the Treasurer. Also, every time all the old files containing accounts, correspondence and the membership forms and list etc. had to be packed and sent to the location of the next secretary at, where again there were issues of space to store those big boxes. Fortunately in my case I had a garage and I could store those fifteen boxes at one place.

I was teaching at TISS but could not get much space for this purpose except to keep day-to-day files in my cupboard. TISS allowed the office assistant to occupy one table and computer in a pool of assistants



for many departments. I realized that it was important to have some institutional back-up for these extra activities which are voluntary. Also those were not the days of smart mobile phones, internet and WiFi which creates ease of communications. I remembered using my own landline at home to call Nirmala Banerjee, our President, early morning before she left for work. TISS was generous enough to allow me to spare my time for the activities of the IAWS. However, I must say that my presence at TISS as the General Secretary of IAWS was not very useful to convert many of my colleagues from social work, health and media backgrounds to become IAWS members. My own departmental colleagues, such as Lakshmi Lingam and Nishi Mitra were already members of IAWS and I encouraged Lakshmi to stand for elections during the next term. Somehow many women academics feel that Women's Studies is a specialized academic field and IAWS is a professional body, where they have no space. Our interdisciplinary approach, as well as zealotness of feminist activism could not convince them that they could attain gender sensitivity in their work by attending the biennial conferences of IAWS where academics from different disciplines and activists working on different issues related to women gathered and shared experiences formally through papers and also through informal conversations. The conference does provide the ethos of the feminist movement which is still alive and kicking.

I thought by being a part of the Executive Committee of the IAWS during that period I could focus on environmental issues, which was my dream. Going through earlier conferences I realized that thus far very little space was provided for the issues related to environment and women. Kamla Bhasin had made efforts to invite Vandana Shiva who came with some members of the Chipko Movement and asked them to narrate their stories of struggle. Many felt that this was not the appropriate forum to call them and show off their bravery, amidst a large academic crowd, where they could get embarrassed. Medha Patkar was invited to talk about displacement of adivasis due to big





dams like Sardar Sarovar, the prominent symbol of development at that time. But somehow there was no scope for discussion around the development versus environment debate.

Looking at our themes for plenaries I feel that we could fulfill my dream of getting some of the environmental issues on board. The main theme was 'Survival and Sovereignty: Challenges to Women's Studies'. I think in 1991 the Government of India had adopted the policy of globalization, liberalization and privatization, which had threatened the local production processes, making survival of the working people difficult. Many activists felt that liberalization and globalization would bring the sovereignty over natural resources into question, which the traditional tribal communities survive. Feminisation of poverty was being discussed as a new phenomenon. There was a sense of entering into a new era in history. Under this broad theme the following four plenaries were planned:

- I Stable Livelihoods versus Pursuit of Profit: Micro and Macro Issues Related to Globalisation and Food Security.
- II Ecology and Economy
- III Our Households, Ourselves: Bodies, Subsistence, and Resources
- IV Culture and Resistance

We invited speakers of eminence who were also a part of the struggles. All the four South Asian speakers were given space each in one of the plenaries, which was appreciated since they could relate their struggles in contexts, similar to the Indian experience. I think it was a little unusual to have so many men among the speakers.

Another dream could, however, not be fulfilled because of many reasons. I wanted to bring about a strong linkage between Women's movement and women's studies and I thought that one way to achieve this was that IAWS should encourage and help women in the movement, i.e. activists and NGOs to organise their conference



immediately after or with some overlap with the IAWS conference. It should be planned in the same city, so that many academics would be able to attend some of the sessions in the movement conference. The activists would also benefit if some of them could attend the Women's Studies conference. This was one way to reduce the expenses for the movement conference. Also much more substantive give and take would become possible if the two forums physically interacted with each other more often. My own colleagues were suspicious of this suggestion as well as there was no warm response for the coming from the women activists. I suspect that women academics were considered elite and not having a sufficiently feminist perspective which could emerge from the grassroots level organizing work.

I must say that three years of administrative experience was so overwhelming that once it was over I felt empty. I was living, breathing, dreaming, and hoping that there would be no gaps in the management so that the conference experience would be memorable despite its timing in the summer. I have always felt satisfied with the way IAWS conferences are conceptualized and implemented so that the feeling of sisterhood gets strengthened at all levels. We had some glitches, such as that the Research Centre for Women's Studies (RCWS) although a part of S.N.D.T. Women's University, due to its location in Mumbai could not participate actively in organizing. The Women's Studies Centre in Pune University was also absent due to some personal reasons. But Maharashtra Stree Abhyas Vyaspeeth women came to our help providing local volunteers. The whole IAWS team of elected members were very cooperative and offered to work also backstage. We had a very few violent differences. I must give extra credit to the Executive Committee members, President Nirmala Banerjee - a stalwart in her own right - who was always available for consultation, Vice President Sunita Pathania from Kurukshetra, Rohini Gawankar Treasurer, who had prior experience of being Treasurer, Kalpana Kannabiran with young blood as a Joint Secretary and Kavita Panjabi as an editor of the



Newsletter. My gratitude will not be complete till I mention Gabriele Dietrich who also had a passion for environmental issues and would support me to bring those on board.

I wish that IAWS should survive and encourage young scholars and activists to explore the subordinate status of women from diverse angles and increase critical thinking among young women from diverse disciplinary backgrounds. In the present situation women are finding that space for freedom of expression is shrinking, democracy withering and thus the challenge to assert their voices may get tougher. I am sure IAWS will continue to provide a platform to diverse voices which unite to give expression to critical thinking in the present situation.

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## MY LIFE WITH THE IAWS

*Ilina Sen* \*

In many ways, the journey of the IAWS for me mirrors my own, and as I sit down to write today I find it difficult to separate the narratives in my own head. I am sorry if this sounds presumptuous, it is not that I was central to the history of the IAWS. My own life and work began to take shape around the time I left University in 1981 and ventured to the wilds of central India. 1981 was also the year IAWS began its journey; it formed a central plank of my confused and mixed up trajectory that is only now beginning to acquire shape.





The birth of Women's Studies in India preceded that of the IAWS by a small margin. The indomitable group of women- Vina di, Neera ben, Lotika di, Ela ben, and many others- who gathered together around the 'Towards Equality' report were the life forces behind both. I got to know and interact with them during my student years, when exciting things were happening in Delhi around women's issues. As I began to work on my doctoral research on the Indian sex ratio Vina di became one of my mentors. It must have been her doing that I became the first recipient of the ICSSR doctoral fellowship for Women's Studies.

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\* President, IAWS, 2011-2014.





Talk of organizing the first national conference on Women's Studies was already afoot when I left Delhi for data collection in Madhya Pradesh, and I actually turned up for the conference at Mumbai from Hoshangabad. The spirit and atmosphere at that first conference was electric; I have later met many first timers at IAWS conferences who have commented on the spirit and ambience of our gatherings. I like to believe that this is an intangible heritage that we have carried through the times. The association was conceived at the first conference and took formal shape shortly after.

IAWS was held together and nurtured from the beginning until now by an extremely dedicated support group. A snowballing group of women's movement activists, academics who anchored their research on a gender axis, journalists, cultural activists and others came together to steer the organization through the earlier (and somewhat chaotic) years of moving secretariats and disappearing documents to relative stability. There have been a host of challenges and strong camaraderie on the way. The older members of this group have slowly begun to leave us; those who were young in 1981 are now arthritic and full of groans and moans. There is an acute need for young blood to join the gang of retiring oldies to guide us forward through the challenges that are yet to come. Fortunately, every conference and every new location has aroused great enthusiasm and brought forth new talent into the EC.

We are currently getting ready for our 15<sup>th</sup> National Conference. I have attended most of the earlier conferences, having missed for personal reasons only the ones at Chandigarh, Mysore, and Hyderabad. The thematic contents have always opened new windows to ongoing work by colleagues, but IAWS conferences have always been more than just academic gatherings. At each conference I have looked forward to meeting old friends and reopening unfinished discussions. This has inevitably happened, as friendships have deepened and each





conference has led to new friendships and some insights. Personally for me the conferences also played an important role in keeping me connected to academic discourses before the time I came back into full time academic engagement. Most of us old timers feel very emotional as we recall our solidarity of the years. Recalling this long journey today, there are some memories I would like to share, and some issues to flag.

In the early years, there appeared to be some issues of trust and compatibility between the activists and the academics/policy makers who made up the constituency of the conferences. While the close connect between the women's movement and the field of women's studies was acknowledged by all, in practice, a certain element of tension could be seen at many levels. Whether this was the issue of conference registration fees or of the coordination of thematic sessions- the differences in understanding would sometimes spill into the open, and were debated in several early conferences.



At the Trivandrum conference one unstated issue that many participants had in mind was the relationship that this series of conferences did or did not have with the series of so called 'movement ' conferences that had begun around the same time as the series of IAWS conferences. In 1981, the city of Bombay that had hosted the first national conference for Women's Studies had also hosted a 'Feminist conference', and some of the participation had been common, rather in the nature of intersecting sets. In 1984, the year of the Trivandrum conference, a second 'Feminist conference' was held at Bombay. While both sets of networks, the women's studies one and the feminist had been bringing together women grappling with issues of their subordination, marginalization and struggle, there were important differences in the politics of their organization as well as participation.





The general perception of some 'feminist' activists was that the IAWS network was modeled on the traditions of academic conferences and welcomed academics as well as activists to present analytical papers. Women from divergent political affiliations including the official left parliamentary parties participated in them. The other set of conferences, while also having theme based discussion sessions, were not structured necessarily around paper presentations. The second network was also more open to the active engagement of women with diverse views ranging from the unadulterated feminist to representatives from the far left. The third conference in this series, the one at Patna in early 1988, made a conscious effort to connect with women in the many mass struggles working in tandem with these forces. Women's organizations with affiliations to the parliamentary left groups generally stayed away from this series out of a sense of distrust for anarchist tendencies of avowed 'feminists'. The tension actually peaked after the Trivandrum conference. However, even in Trivandrum some of this unstated tension spilled over as a somewhat acrimonious discussion about the relative spaces of academics and activists in the IAWS.



For many of us, these undercurrents were difficult to understand and to negotiate. Having grown up in Kolkata in the time of splits and more splits in the left movement, and having witnessed the sectarian violence that brought life in the city to a halt in the early seventies, I always found it very hard to take categorical positions, and over the years kept up my relationship with the autonomous series of conferences up to the last one in Kolkata in 2004. In the process, one saw the efforts by one or other political tendency to dominate the proceedings, and witnessed the increasing penetration of NGO funds into this network. The IAWS remained a relatively stable platform through all of this, and to the credit of all, over time the fissures and differences among groups diminished perceptibly, and there was much



more openness to working together while recognizing differences. It was in this spirit that we were able to learn from an impassioned intervention about majoritarian cultural domination in our functioning at the Jadavpur conference. The one time when there was throwback to the past was during the Lucknow conference of 2008, when a late night discussion on the choice of development paradigms, state policy, and definitions of 'public' interest saw participants take highly polarized positions.

I have been on four different IAWS ECs over the years. The first time was in the EC that organized the Jadavpur (Kolkata) conference, in 1991, which is now fifteen years into the past. The last three terms have been consecutive, including the present one, in which I am not an elected, but an ex officio member. From my experience, I feel that each executive committee has had its own particular chemistry and a special bond which has begun to gel after the first few months of working together. Each bond has been unique and special, the subject of memories which I will carry with me for a long time. During the Wardha conference EC, apart from the challenge of dealing with a host University vice chancellor (he was also my boss since I was teaching there at the time) who had distinguished himself by patriarchal comments regarding women writers, we also came up against the state in a big way, which had perhaps never happened before in the history of IAWS conferences. In retrospect, the experience was both scary and funny.

For our South Asia panel in this conference, we had invited the noted Pakistani feminist writer Zahida Hina, who had been given a visa that exempted her from police reporting, which is generally mandatory for both Indian and Pakistani citizens when visiting each others' countries. We had also carefully done all the required paperwork and obtained all necessary government permissions from different ministries. Our other cardinal sin was the rally spontaneously taken out on the campus



by the conference delegates protesting the conviction of Dr Binayak Sen for sedition, who also happened to be my significant other. I myself was signing conference participation certificates in my room while the *joshila* rally was traversing the campus trail, and Zahida had actually left Wardha, but these facts were of no consequence. These two events were enough to alert the Nagpur office of the Anti Terror squad (ATS), who swooped down on the conference on it last night, raided the residences of conference delegates, arrested hoteliers who were hosting foreign delegates, and filed an FIR against me under the Foreigners' Act. The conference itself ended under somewhat chaotic conditions. Many delegates had actually left Wardha by this time, and only learnt of the events on their way home. There was much indignation, and IAWS comrades in Delhi and Bombay immediately got into action to speak to the higher ups in the state and central home departments. In this situation Samita, our then General Secretary, extended her stay to as it were 'woman the barricades' and deal with police, media, and *tamashbeen janta* on a war footing. Her spirited e mails proclaiming the musketeer slogan 'One for All and All for One', were a great source of comfort in those bleak times. Eventually, the state backed out under pressure from the IAWS troops, which was one more victory for our solidarity.

The last conference, the XIVth, was in Guwahati and was organized by the the EC in which I was President. Having spent my adolescence years in Shillong, and having many friends and more memories in the north east, this conference was particularly close to my heart. Unfortunately, I was seriously ill at the time of the conference, and in the run up to the event an unfair load had to be carried by our General Secretary Indu and the secretariat. They were extremely generous about this, and I am glad that today, IAWS as an organization, has a significant presence in the area, as a result of the mobilization for the conference. Many young organizing committee members from Gauhati



University gained confidence in their own organizational talents as a result of the way they held the conference together. One person who kept us all rooted and going during the tenure of this EC was Kumkum with her poetry and gentle wit.

An IAWS conference is never all about logistics, organization, political debates, or even academic papers. While these have been important, conferences have always been spaces for fun, laughter, music, and friendship. For me there have always been friends from afar, whom one has met at every successive conference, and with whom the friendship has slowly deepened over the years. Krishna Soman was one such person, always quiet, but always there at an IAWS conference. In the Bhubaneshwar conference, we actually ended up staying together, going on long morning walks up the nearby desolate hillside near our place of stay. Many ideas were shared and many plans made during that last time we really met and talked. Sadly, Krishna succumbed to cancer sometime ago. I still miss her at every conference, just as I will continue to miss Jashodhara di, Vina di, Neera ben and many others who were part of my journey. Today many new friends have come into IAWS whose ideas and perspectives are perhaps different from that of ours, but equally rich and meaningful. I am sure their collective solidarity will keep our organization strong and vibrant in the years to come. For IAWS I want to quote Browning as I end:

*“Grow old along with me! The best is yet to be, the last of life, for which the first was made.”*

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## LOOKING BEYOND FEMINISM: REFLECTIONS ON MY JOURNEY WITH THE IAWS

*Indu Agnihotri* \*

Looking back on my association with the IAWS what stands out for me is a long engagement with issues and debates.





This started with the first National Conference on Women's Studies at the SNDT, way back in 1981, in what was still Bombay. I was young then and attended the conference as Convenor of the Women's Committee, JNU. We were a fairly large group of students from the university. Since then, I have traversed this journey in different capacities: as paper presenter, discussant, a panelist in plenary/special sessions, sub theme organizer, EC member and then again as General Secretary, coming down to the present conference in 2017, as an ex officio member of the EC. However, the more formal presence and presentations represented only a fraction of what I gathered, learnt and absorbed in all this. I would not be wrong that— as also happens in our formal educational process— one learnt more from interaction with such a diverse group comprising some of the best minds in Indian academia

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\* General Secretary, IAWS, 2011-2014.







and those drawn from the women's movement in the immediate post Emergency years.

While my association with women's issues preceded and went beyond the platform of the IAWS, it is this association with the IAWS which introduced me to the significance, as well as the potential, of incorporating Women's Studies perspectives in the academic domain. It also ensured that classroom interactions with my students, through these decades, were enriched due to the introduction of a women's perspective. This started prior to the revision of the formal syllabus in the history curriculum at Delhi University and enabled me to bridge the gap between the formal structures and the social milieu within the space that the educational institutions including women's colleges offered. The relevance for such an initiative was visible in the college where I was teaching and the students in the early years were, mostly, undergraduate students who were first generation learners. The fact that the College was selected for the setting up of a Women's Development Centre in the very first round in 1984, only proved to me that interventions planned from the IAWS platform could be used to reach out to sections where these mattered most.

Drawn inadvertently into this process, I have seen Women's Studies evolve in India for over three decades now. In engaging with the debates stemming from the IAWS platform, I learnt many things, due also to my long- term involvement with women's issues in the movement. Above all, I learnt that the state and governments were not always inured to innovative ideas coming from below. Also, the need to dialogue with the institutions and agencies of the state and to explore possibilities of effective interventions. Coming from a background of a mass-based militant movement, this did not always go down well with me to start with. However, I came to realise that with persistence and planning there was scope to develop a Women's Studies' perspective and find a space for this within existing educational



curricula and to persuade as well as convince fellow teachers that our social sciences needed to both reflect and address social concerns. Those who were part of these processes in the 1980s would recall how much energy went into sensitizing our own colleagues, students and those who could make a difference at the level of decision - making. Throughout the 1980s there was an identifiable set of names and people who were constantly on the move, visiting virtually every other college and university in India generating public awareness and creating space for discussion on women's issues within the educational spaces, while also specifically reaching out to the youth. In the 1990s CWDS initiated a move to bring the research on Women's Studies into the teaching curricula by proposing to UGC, then headed by Armaity Desai, that a Refresher Course in Women's Studies be developed as part of the faculty improvement programmes. I was personally involved with planning and design of the Refresher Course during 1995-96 and drew immense satisfaction from the fact that the format developed by us provided the core syllabi for many Refresher Courses in Women's Studies held across India. This in fact initiated the process of teaching by women's studies centres, since the late 1990s. This struggle went alongside engaging with the University establishment and the UGC for democratization of the institutional spaces in Higher Education. While we often acknowledge the role of individuals located in the education establishment, there is hardly any recognition of the significant role played by the teachers' movement in raising issues and advancing struggles. These movements provided the context for our efforts to attain a degree of success. All this of course was still located in the context of the 1980s.

The IAWS discussions also made me understand how concerns emanating from experiences in the movement could be taken forward, to develop perspectives on issues to go beyond our individual 'experiential' modes. Education/ curricula, women's work/economy, violence, political and legal rights remained perennial concerns. State





and state policy, particularly in the context of development, as well as their role in providing pathways to equality and equal opportunity or vice versa, were aspects which both complicated as well as informed our discussions.



Equally significantly, it remained a platform where I often disagreed with the framework within which issues, or the strategies for solutions to these were being discussed. Interestingly, this situation hardly ever arose from personal differences or criticisms. Rather, it was an indication of the times we lived in as also of the diverse locations from which many in my generation addressed the challenges we faced. Often I did not know the persons with whom I was entangled in heated arguments in these sessions. Over several conferences, they became familiar names, sometimes friends and even colleagues or comrades in common struggles.

I have never been particularly enamoured by the slogan 'the personal is political,' in terms of the analytical framework that it offers or advances. Ironically, however, the imbrication of the circumstances or my manner of living out my daily life by virtue of a deep involvement in women's struggles, it is perhaps best encapsulated by tweaking the slogan to its reverse: the political was most certainly also personal. For, even as I disagreed with the formulation, the very choices I made in my personal life, charting out largely unknown paths for middle class women of my background, I was drawn into events unfolding in the backdrop of a larger political canvas, which shaped both my consciousness as well as responses. My training in history and my exposure to student politics from diverse ideological perspectives, in the precincts of the Jawaharlal Nehru University, ensured that I would never accept the narrow confines of a feminist frame as the answer to the problems that had loomed large in my mind from the early years of my childhood.





What drew me to all this? Was it the fact of my being born in a family which represented a heady mix of the vestiges/ remnants of feudal authority and power, in small town UP and a very ordinary, urban, middle class existence in the capital city, with its upper caste baggage? This came with a peculiar ethos of what I later came to understand as the spirit of the Protestant Ethic thrown in. Or, perhaps, the fact that I was singularly blessed with a storehouse of memories based on an extended family network where the personal and the social merged on an everyday basis. What exactly it was, I do not know? But by the time I entered my teens I had become acutely aware of dowry, dowry related suicides, child marriage, domestic violence, denial of choice in marriage and, a familiarity with stories of crime involving the everyday negotiation of the various axis of power in rural India as well as the ravages and stress of urban poverty. I knew of women from very wealthy families suffering indignity, discrimination and violence on a regular basis. I witnessed a situation of a near 'honour crime' being committed in the wake of an impending inter-caste marriage, long before we came up with that vocabulary. Arguments with my immediate as well as my extended family over some of these issues were everyday fare. I remember reading in the papers about the Prime Minister of an East Asian country, who was reported to be indulging in wife- beating, which resulted in an argument with my father, which I ended with a statement that a man who beats his wife should never be the Prime Minister of any country! He balked at my views, even as he shuddered, thinking about his daughter's future in an India where women experienced this every day! My mother, who straddled both these worlds in a very personal way, would never fail to speak up for what may be described as urban modernity as against the declining fortunes of feudal families in her natal home. Modern India, she firmly believed, opened up a vast new world for girls and opportunities to change their lives by asking questions which most in her generation could never have dared to. When I entered the hotbed of Marxist debates in JNU,





I had my own opinion on many issues, except that these were never publicly articulated since I shuddered at the thought of taking the mike. To say that this was Stage fright would be a gross understatement.

But what was already clear and was reinforced by my lessons in history as well as the political debates that I was exposed to was the fact that the material basis of social relations was critical to both, present circumstances and the imaginings of alternate futures. The road to revolution was a path I was still very hesitantly beginning to tread.

The IAWS provided a mid- way path to discussing issues which bogged my mind. It also often pitted me against the large community of my feminist friends.



Looking back, these discussions spread across several conferences, meetings and late night debates with others, as well as amongst ourselves— since I often went with a group comprising old student friends who also worked together in the Janwadi Mahila Samiti, the Delhi unit of the AIDWA. What stands out is a long engagement with issues and debates drawing upon different ideological traditions. Also, not surprisingly, these often stemmed from different positions being taken along the axis of Marxism and Feminism and perspectives arising from these ideological divides on the issues being discussed.

This started with the very first conference in SNTD, Bombay in 1981. While there were discussions all through the conference, including in what was the concluding session which was conducted more like a general body even prior to the setting up of the formal Association, the most vigorous and heated debate was sparked off by Gail Omvedt's presentation in a special session which focused on Marxism and Feminism.





Starting from this time for me one aspect of the engagement with the IAWS focused around what I think represented one of the most creative tensions running through the spectrum of political engagements of the 1980s and early 1990s. This was the difference of perspectives emerging from the left –socialist stream in India’s political history spanning both the pre and post-independence years on the one hand and, the emerging voices from what came to be abelled as the autonomous feminist movement.

In a different way, this featured in sub theme discussions in Trivandrum, in 1984, especially where K. Lalitha, Rama Melkhote and Suzie Tharu presented their first thoughts on women in the Telangana armed struggle. If I remember correctly, the title of the working paper they presented was ‘we were just individuals..... But these women were making history, I observed as one of the discussants in that session. There were other issues: of how the mass peasant uprisings of the 1970s mobilized women, opening up new vistas for activism, how far ahead they were of the other movements of the time, and what were the constraints? Also, one asked, how does memory get recorded, especially in a movement which at that time was seen as having failed, leading to massive repression driving thousands underground or behind bars for years, while driving some back into their families in the absence of other possibilities. Oral history, as I have always maintained, requires caution in terms of the questions we ask, the answers we get, as well as who asks, what and when? For women who walked out of their prescribed roles to pick up arms in the 1940s, how do you record memory, when you approach them in their twilight years? Especially when the movement they were a part of suffered major setbacks –if not failures? These questions persist, even as new and interesting work on women’s involvements in social movements comes out. Sessions on oral history have now become a regular feature of IAWS conferences/activities and are part of sustained efforts to build



documentation around women's history and narratives. One such effort that I initiated from CWDS and was happy to be part of organizing was the session on oral history, held in Baroda, in 1997, when the IAWS organized a National Symposium to mark Fifty Years of Indian Independence. Nevertheless, the question today is, how do students read history and historical movements in Women's Studies? Do we read them only through the prism of the feminist lens focused on an exclusive oral history methodology? If students in Women's Studies do not feel and internalize a revulsion for feudal exploitation as also the brutality perpetrated by the State against mass movements, and instead mark out only the patriarchal mindset of left parties based on a feminist reading of the history of the Telangana movement, should we not ask ourselves whether we have done justice to our work, as teachers, leave alone as feminists?



Trivandrum was also about fireworks around the question of funding and the agendas of foreign donors. Even as I have myself subsequently steered institutional processes involving core funding based on foreign grants, many of us have drawn a distinction between research and movements and been wary of foreign grants, especially when these are used to influence and shape political agendas. But the context of these debates has vastly changed from the 1980s when we were still prone to taking positions within the post-independent anti colonial model, which foregrounded the role of the state and public sector funding, including especially in Higher Education. Dependence on the Bretton Woods institutions and their prescribed model has changed the ground beneath us. As Vina Mazumdar famously quipped to my voicing concerns on this count in the 1990s....*arre baba, who do you think funds the Bharat Sarkar and the UGC, from where you draw your salary?* Admittedly, today the issue is both more complex and complicated, but the questions have not died down.



The Waltair Conference, in 1988, was different in other ways. I recall a panel on state policies in which C. P. Sujaya and Ilina Sen spoke, and perhaps, Yugandhar himself, if my memory is correct. Even as there was some prevarication on issues such as the nature of the state by some of the speakers, the panelists did not fail to take note of the State, which seemed to be moving one step forward and one or maybe several steps back even on its proclaimed 'welfarist' goals.



Again, there was a heated exchange in the plenary coordinated by Bina Agarwal on Feminism and Being a Feminist in India, where Madhu Kishwar, Govind Kelkar and I spoke, even as Ela Bhatt was unable to make it. This was when Madhu proclaimed 'Why I am not a feminist.' I had my own different take on how mass organisations approach the women's issue differently, drawing on my association with the AIDWA, a left-oriented mass organization from its founding years in Delhi. While disagreeing with Madhu on her take on not believing in any of the 'isms...' I argued that the women's movement in India needed to look beyond a narrow feminist perspective based on the experience of the 'autonomous' groups, to understand how the state, policy and social formation converged and coalesced to curtail democratic rights and deny equal citizenship. In this, patriarchy was one of the tools used to perpetuate inequalities and, reinforce caste and class hierarchies, especially with regard to the experience of women from the working class. The interrogation of patriarchy in urban working class families follows a different trajectory from what we tend to identify from our normative middle class locations. I drew upon incidents from the lives of working class women in what was still an industrial working class, where AIDWA had made a conscious effort to build its units and organizational strength amongst families of textile mill workers to build a more democratic social base for the emerging women's movement in Delhi. The primary activists and leadership of AIDWA's Delhi unit from its early years emerged and were drawn from these







backgrounds, which also ensured a more diverse caste and class background than represented in some of the other women's groups formed in Delhi in the same years. It also gave a distinct edge to the forms of protest, mobilization and the search for alternate perspectives on issues. These included violence and discrimination, including the campaign against dowry, the issue of maintenance as raised in the Shah Bano case, or sati, in the aftermath of the Deorala incident. I mention these three because the years between 1982-1987 had seen extensive mass campaigns on these issues in the years preceding the Waltair Conference.

Another debate, which has resonated in the IAWS, certainly since Trivandrum, (1984) if I recall correctly, is with regard to women's legal rights and, more specifically the issue of customary rights and personal laws. This came up in different ways and different viewpoints were expressed on the issue throughout. While Lotika Sarkar and Vina Mazumdar themselves carried forward the issues that Towards Equality focused on in the 1970s, both women's studies and the women's movement had to continuously negotiate their positions during these years. There was a huge polarization prompted by the unlocking of the gates in Ayodhya in the same month that the new Bill on Protection of the Rights on Divorce (Muslim women), in 1986. This was a subject on which no unified position was taken by women's organisations during 1985-86. In fact Woman's Role in a planned economy—the pre independence committee of the NPC – had also seen differences on this issue, as was also visible from the fate of the proceedings of the B.N Rau Committee. All these went into the debates on women's rights, the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) and the issue of Personal Laws in the Constituent Assembly. While in 1985 the AIDWA took a single point position for retention of Section 125 of the Cr. PC, challenging the Bill on account of it being discriminatory towards women from the Muslim minority community and diluting a secular provision which formed part





of the criminal law, there were others who wished to adhere to the demand for a UCC. The effort made towards mobilization of Muslim women for retention of the criminal provision was phenomenal for those times, and new platforms sprang up to provide space for articulation of these positions. I recall that in April 1986 AIDWA and others handed over a petition for retention of Section 125 Cr. PC signed by more than 10,000 Muslim women to the Speaker of the Lok Sabha. Many drew in public opinion from amongst the Muslim community to both articulate the need for reform as well as counter the propaganda that the women's movement did not reflect the voice of Muslim women. However, the Act was passed, compelling re-visiting of the debate in subsequent years, even as the political climate in the country changed in the early 1990s. So did the discourse on women's rights in the context of personal laws. These were still early years of contending with anti-reform as well as fundamentalist opinions in the contemporary phase of the movement. The 1990s prompted continuous re-thinking on these issues. The alternative slogan, raised by the AIDWA in the early 1990s was, 'Equal Rights, Equal Laws.' This sought to negotiate women's rights from a commitment to equality as per the constitution, including perspectives of reform within the framework of personal laws of communities, even as it countered the efforts by the majority community to push for changes in personal laws of the minority community from a plank of uniformity. The autonomous women's groups also continued with similar debates and some of these discussions were reflected in the Jaipur IAWS conference, where a special session was held focusing on this issue.

This issue is once again being debated and, much more widely so today in the context of the politics of the current regime. The most heartening development in this period is the galvanization of an informed opinion from amongst Muslim women, as is visible in the media debates, and as also articulated in the recent regional workshop





held by the IAWS, in Ranchi. I am sure that this will feature as a major issue in the Chennai conference and in the coming months. Here again, as we know, there has been no one feminist response on the issue. This requires constant re-negotiation in the face of the larger political context, wherein fundamentalist politics has consistently tried to set the terms of the discourse on women's rights in the name of unity, uniformity and a singularly defined Nationhood while oppositional voices from the Muslim community claim that they represent *the* standpoint of the Muslim community. However, the difference today is that the debates feature articulate Muslim women who effectively and forcefully counter the patriarchal interpretations as the only authentic different approaches arising from their community. However, this remains an issue on which wider alliances need to be built, if the possibilities for democratic politics and secular issues are to be explored.

Interestingly, the 1990s re-defined the context of our debates both in the IAWS and in the wider on –going movement. This is been most visible in terms of the political context in which we function and, at several levels. The policies of liberalization, privatization and globalization have resulted in a vastly changed world and the frames within which women are both perceived, as well as trying to negotiate their rights. This is seen in the economic sphere with the Congress itself abandoning the Nehruvian model —of state developed capitalism. It has not only resulted in an adverse impact on women's status and livelihood as documented by successive documents from the movement, but has also negatively affected both the opportunities for finding work for women as also the terms of negotiation of wages and work conditions for all workers. While work participation rates are indicative, more alarming is the story of the sectors in which women are concentrated, non –recognition of their status as workers, denial of rights by the state and endorsement of this non –worker status by the judiciary. The volatility and vulnerability in the lives of workers,



especially women have increased manifold, even as the power of capital has grown enormously.

Interestingly, while we in Women's Studies are visibly engrossed with some of these debates, there are serious gaps. Hardly any attention has been paid to the nature of changes, shifts in capitalism, industry or the impact of the global financial crisis/ meltdown and how the structure of both, industry and capital, are changing, to adjust to a situation of continued crisis. A critical focus area that has emerged is unpaid work. There is considerable discussion on aspects of social reproduction. However, can we adequately analyse these aspects without building on our analysis of macro policies and the structures? Would we be doing justice to women if we were to adopt a laissez faire towards the state and its policies and approach the emerging areas of work, including surrogacy and sex work by giving the go-bye to the macro structures that have spawned and shaped their emergence? These remain concerns for some of us. Also, rural India and agriculture seem to be given the back seat in the teaching and research on-going in Women's Studies Centres, despite the continued agrarian crisis and farmers suicides. Can we envisage a serious improvement in women's status if these phenomena continue? Land rights for women have emerged as a key concern, but these often remain embedded in NGO- led agendas and are not related to macro-processes. In our teaching of Women's studies, aspects of political economy are insufficiently foregrounded, nor are the historical and development concerns. Sometimes we pay more attention to alternate readings without allowing students to become familiar with the fundamental concepts that they wish to critique, both for lack of time and perspective. Further, the necessary links between features of political economy and the persistence of discrimination - rooted in class divisions and social hierarchies- are often glossed over. This remains, despite an increased focus on caste in some of the major teaching programs in Women's Studies.





It is not possible to capture all the debates that have informed and enriched my mind through all these years from interaction in the IAWS platform with an ever-growing community of scholars, researchers and activists. Even as we have disagreed, I have learnt from these debates and the articulation of diverse voices.

However, there is a specific concern to which I wish to draw attention. As Women's Studies becomes more and more identified with feminist approaches and an assumed feminist research methodology –singularly constructed and defined—I worry for the voices that are being silenced, marginalized and I daresay, consciously or unconsciously erased, in the process.

Women's Studies and the women's movement in India emerged from the inherited legacy of the social sciences in India. This included a rich and vibrant debate among social scientists drawing upon a range of philosophical and intellectual traditions. The most visible impact in the discipline that I was trained in was that of Marxist methods, the focus on scientific enquiry and developing evidence based research tools and methodologies. As the years progressed, particularly in the 1990s we saw the emergence of other perspectives, which often brought new insights, particularly to the study of cultures, identities, representation and mentalities and consciousness. Interestingly, today the emphasis on interpretation is often not backed by sufficient attention to field or document/ evidence based research and ends up becoming a re-interpretation of earlier interpretations. This seriously impairs historical analysis.

Further, the conflation of women's studies, perspectives with feminism is troublesome, to say the least. Presently, to be a woman or to talk about one's rights as a woman is assumed to be in itself an assertion of feminism - and to be located in Women's Studies is assumed to be doubly so. The assumption that everyone who enters the precincts of



Women's Studies Centres is sensitized to even basic gender concerns rests on shaky ground. Even if we were to ignore some of the rumblings within the Women's Studies Centres expressing concerns about democratic functioning, it may be said that such assumptions would not hold. The institutionalization of Women's Studies, the world over, points to the need for both caution and greater self- reflection in these matters.

Lastly, for someone who came into Women's Studies from a women's movement background, the erasure of the multiple voices in the study, teaching and envisioning of Women's Studies, is most disconcerting. We cannot forget that the neo-liberal world of the 1990s has been built on the defeat of other imaginations of the world, including also suppression of the history of socialist projects aimed at revolution and transformation of society. In the absence of even egalitarian –leave alone socialist –concerns, and the erasure of left –socialist interventions on women's rights, we may actually end up handing the platform of feminism to the neo liberalism dominated world....where no other thought prevails...nor does it have the right to be! The push towards a singularly constructed feminist envisioning of the women's movement would be unacceptable in a movement which celebrates diversity in other spheres. This coalescence of a non – ideologized debate on women's rights with the context of post- cold war era has forebodings of pushing feminism into the neo liberal discourse, driven by the needs of a crisis-ridden capitalism. That would surely mark the failure of all that the women's movement in India has stood for and the institutional processes it has sought to initiate and build, including the IAWS. There is a need to be wary of a project that consciously seeks to align feminism with the search for an apparently liberal political formation within the framework of a non-left/ socialist alternative. Does the vast, amorphous middle class formation on which this project rests its hopes, with inclusion of sections of the new social media, allow for such optimism to be sustained?



As someone who has grown up with these debates in the IAWS, I would express apprehensions about and against an attempt to present such a unified voice in the name of feminism. This is particularly so given the context of a neo-liberal world order and rising fundamentalisms in a uni-polar world, where the powers that be constantly seek to marginalize and erase other, different voices. The IAWS has developed by providing an inclusive platform for critical social enquiry. This has allowed it to attract younger scholars whose participation has increased substantially over the last few conferences. As someone who now forms part of India's story of an evolving reverse pyramid with regard to sex ratios, I find the spirited defense of women's rights from a much younger set of activists exhilarating. As the struggle goes on, I draw energy from the questions they ask and the answers they seek, in their own unique and different ways.

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## SOME RECOLLECTIONS OF MY INVOLVEMENT IN IAWS

*Kalpana Kannabiran* \*

### Entering the Executive Committee of IAWS

When I entered feminist activism in 1980 as part of one of the first feminist groups in the country, Stree Shakti Sanghatana, I did not imagine that I would someday be responsible for organising an IAWS conference. In 1984, at Trivandrum, the beginning of my active association with the IAWS, I was star-gazing. In 1996, I was Joint Secretary and sub-theme coordinator for the Pune conference in 1998, and General Secretary in 1998 and the organising secretary of the 2000 conference in Hyderabad that marked the beginning of the new millennium. When I look back, I realise that my term as General Secretary was challenging to put it mildly — work, organising and thinking through collective conversations like never before; pregnancy and the birth of my second child (6 months before the conference), and a new full-time teaching position in a new university. As if this was not enough, I was, at 37 years, perhaps the youngest general secretary in the history of the IAWS, and therefore straddled a generational shift in leadership – the age line, even in



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\* General Secretary, IAWS, 1998-2000.



feminist spaces, was kept firmly in place for ever so long. My biggest supports in IAWS at that time were Neera Desai, Divya Pandey, Rohini Gawankar and Pushpa Bhawe. I stayed on course because of their warmth, affection and understanding. On hindsight, I realise I have been the proverbial 'bull in the China shop.' But we know that family courts, revolutionary spaces, activist addas and academia are only rendered more robust and inclusive through disruptions, big and small.

In this short account, I look back at my term in the Executive Committee, especially my tenure as General Secretary, and (a) reflect on our conversations around issues of women's studies in the IAWS; (b) our public engagements on specific debates at the national level (I focus on sexual harassment in university campuses); and (c) recall unforgettable moments in the 2000 Hyderabad conference.<sup>1</sup>

### **(a) Conversations in the Executive Committee, 1998-2000**

Being part of the Executive Committee, especially as General Secretary, opened out opportunities for me to participate in intense discussions on the state of women's studies and reflect on possible future directions of research and writing. Vina Mazumdar's observations at the end of her term as President are pertinent:

*'any struggle or movement has to respond to major changes in the broader environment if it wants to survive. It calls for vigilance, broad-based participation and organisational strength. Above all it needs allies in all groups who stand to lose their dreams for a future in a*

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<sup>1</sup> Acknowledgements: My thanks to Indu Agnihotri and Meera Velayudhan for the invitation to write this piece. I am especially grateful to Indu for her patience and gentle persuasion and persistence – she coaxed me to a point where it was impossible for me to decline despite several other overrun deadlines. I hope this is something along the lines of what she expected from me. This account draws on reports written by me as part of my work as General Secretary, all of which are available on the IAWS website.

*world and a nation threatened by too many destructive forces and sharpening inequalities.*<sup>2</sup>

The challenge – even in 1998-2000 — was to build and *sustain* a women's studies movement – politically and organizationally.



On the subject of research our discussions centred on honing women's studies *within* disciplines as well as strengthening the legacy of interdisciplinary research that was so unique to women's studies since its inception in India.<sup>3</sup> One of the ways we believed the IAWS could do this would be to build closer ties with academic staff colleges in universities and intervene more effectively with the UGC.

A brief detour into the history of the IAWS, would demonstrate the inseparability between the IAWS, the UGC and the growth of Women's Studies in India in the early 1980s. At a time in the late 1990s when the UGC had announced the withdrawal of support to university based women's studies centres across the country, Madhuri Shah's role in institutionalizing women's studies in India, and the manner in which she deployed the machinery of the University Grants Commission to provide the momentum, was remarkable. The recommendations that came out of the First National Conference on Women's Studies in 1981 were picked up by the UGC [as Madhuri Shah reported in her Conference Address in Trivandrum in 1984]. The UGC addressed a letter to universities in 1983, suggesting that universities incorporate women's issues and concerns within different disciplines through restructuring

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2 Vina Mazumdar, Presidential Address, IX General Body Meeting, Hyderabad, 10 January 2000. <http://iaws.org/wp-content/themes/pdf/national%20conference/NCF09.3-Office%20Bearer's%20Reports%20to%20GB,%202000.pdf>. Accessed on 25 December 2016.

3 Based on the Report of the General Secretary, IX General Body Meeting, Hyderabad, 10 January 2000. <http://iaws.org/wp-content/themes/pdf/national%20conference/NCF09.3-Office%20Bearer's%20Reports%20to%20GB,%202000.pdf>. Accessed on 25 December 2016.



of courses, curriculum development, research activities and extension work. The UGC was able to actively push the agenda of women's studies forward, backed by the IAWS, in those early years. That was also the critical period when the legitimacy of women's studies as an independent discipline had to be established.

Vina Mazumdar was the architect of many innovative strategies to accomplish this at multiple levels. I knew of this of course from women's studies folklore – but her presidency of the IAWS in 1998-2000 offered a rare proximity to these accounts and to her. Over two years I was able to hear praxiological accounts of the growth of women's studies in India in her voice, and witnessed her frequent and animated ploughing into her memory archives to provide precious anecdotes with much humour of those collective endeavours at gate-crashing, subversions, disruptions and creative engagements by the founders. What she tried to emphasize through her 'old' stories was that

*'in the eyes of the political establishment at least, women's studies came to acquire a political identity as well as an ideology which challenged the status quo and vested interests, in academia and society at large - at the theoretical/philosophical - or the purpose, value or content, as well as at the operational, organisational or structural levels.'*<sup>4</sup>

The founders of the association repeatedly stressed the vital role of statutory bodies like the UGC, ICSSR, ICHR, ICMR, DST etc. in the active promotion of women's studies. Further, the founding members of the IAWS had a keen understanding of the critical intellectual, political and activist role that Women's Studies should play. To quote Madhuri Shah from her Trivandrum address,

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4 Vina Mazumdar, Presidential Address, IX General Body Meeting, Hyderabad, 10 January 2000.



*'Women's Studies has emerged as a powerful challenge (a) to the existing marginal position of women in society and (b) to the intellectual perceptions of the most dominant section of our people, which includes both men and women, that contribute to perpetuate the marginal role of women.'*<sup>5</sup>

The women on the Executive Committee in the 1998-2000 term were pioneers in the field – Vina Mazumdar, Nirmala Banerjee, Maithreyi Krishnaraj, Rama Melkote, among others. Most members had been experimenting for long years with new and innovative ways of teaching Women's Studies, not always as part of university based women's studies departments. There were several in the EC, like myself who were part of NGOs engaged in research and writing in Women's Studies – and part of the setting up of centres of women's studies in universities as students and research scholars. Clustering such centres and organisations with university based centres, developing curricula, designing foundation courses and producing multi-lingual materials in women's studies were seen as urgent needs.

In terms of research priorities, regional histories, health, and the history of the IAWS emerged as specific points of emphasis in our deliberations. The regional histories workshops – in Guwahati, Kolkata, Mumbai and Hyderabad – were memorable, to say the least, and drew in scholars of literature, history, economics and performance to reflect on the significance, textures and specificities of regional histories in India – exploring the intricate interconnections between histories, women's movements and women's studies, searching for our pasts in a manner of speaking. On the history of IAWS, the 1998-2000 EC saw the end of one millennium, the beginning of the next – and IAWS was about to complete 20 years. The concern, therefore, was to preserve and document institutional memories and record oral histories of people

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<sup>5</sup> Cited in Report of the General Secretary, IX General Body Meeting, Hyderabad, 10 January 2000.





who had been active in the association at various points in its history, for we could scarcely forget that this would in fact be a history of the women's studies movement in India – what were the different voices? What was the texture of the debates between activists and academics?

### **(b) Hostile Environments in Higher Education**

Being a membership based body, the IAWS has always stood at the intersection of the work of academic scholars and scholar-activists, underscoring the indispensability of an activist orientation to scholarship – and the centrality of feminist politics to the practice of women's studies. The rise in sexual harassment and violence against women on university campuses and in institutions of higher learning in the mid and late 1990s was increasingly becoming a matter of concern that preoccupied the members of the EC. Incidents in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chennai and Hyderabad, ranged from causing injury and rape to death of women on campuses. Apart from these incidents, there were the everyday encounters that women students, faculty, and non-teaching employees reported in private conversations – encounters with fellow students, colleagues and teachers. While it was been possible to raise these issues in public and campaigns against them outside, most campuses were cloistered communities – 'private spaces'— that actively resisted 'outside' intervention even in the gravest instances. Redressal was seen as a matter of discretion, not mandatory. The worst hit were women students – especially research scholars. With the Vishakha judgement, the time was right to open out a public debate in university campuses. This national consultation was held in January 1999, in collaboration with the Human Rights Programme, University of Hyderabad.<sup>6</sup> Looking back at the discussions, what is striking is the similarity with situations in the present.



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<sup>6</sup> National Consultation on Sexual Harrassment in University Campuses: A Report, University of Hyderabad & IAWS, 23-24 January 1999. <http://iaws.org/wp-content/themes/pdf/other-conference/DOC008-National%20Consultation%20on%20Sexual%20Harassment,%201999.pdf>. Accessed on 25 December 2016.



What were the conversations like in this consultation? Several students felt that the issue of caste figures centrally in several issues of sexual harassment on campuses, with several cases of dalit-non dalit sexual harassment cases (involving men and women on both ends). Yet, there was undoubtedly a polarisation of interests, which could scarcely be ignored. From the accounts at the consultation, differences in caste-class location and participation in student politics complicated negotiations around cases on a day-to-day basis. The drafting of policy, students and faculty felt, the constitution of committees, and more importantly the devising of strategies to get students unions to formulate policies and codes of conduct, must be based on dialogue and debate around complex concerns of location, politics and interpersonal conduct. For instance, when there was an incident of rape on a campus a few years prior to the consultation, some dalit students suggested monetary compensation as a remedy. The (non-dalit) women students reacted very sharply against this suggestion, to which dalit students responded by marking monetary compensation as common remedy against caste atrocity. The question of representation was articulated in complex ways – caste in some instances, region, and religion in other instances.

While there seemed to be agreement that no committee can be totally representative, procedures for induction to and removal from committees were not firmly in place, making most committees open to the charge of arbitrariness and unfair procedure. The dilemma arose it was felt, because even elected members and representatives from elected unions veered towards right wing politics, undermining the work of the committees in far reaching ways. In thinking through possible resolutions, a suggestion was made that there could be special cells for women on similar lines as the special cells in universities in Maharashtra for addressing issues of discrimination against dalit students. Alternately, it was suggested that the jurisdiction of the special cells could be extended to both constituencies, necessitating a



consciousness of and commitment to both issues on the part of those who assume responsibility in these cells, which would exist alongside mandatory committees and not substitute them.

In looking at the detailed report of these deliberations, what is striking is how cyclical our actions on this issue have been. The further we move ahead, the more we need to constantly retrace our steps. We are at a point where hostile environments have proliferated in higher education far beyond sexual harassment – markedly in the times of right wing Hindutva governments and their allies. The movements in University of Hyderabad, especially after Rohith Vemula, and the movements in JNU and beyond have forced us to reckon with discrimination based on caste, community, political belief, place of birth, sexual orientation and disability on campuses across the country. But even if we return to a restricted understanding as originally set out in *Vishakha*, have we moved closer to fixing the problem of hostile environments and sexual harassment in universities 20 years after the 1997 Vishakha judgement?

**(c) The IX National Conference on Women's Studies,  
Hyderabad, 2000**

The conference focussing on *Women's Perspectives on Public Policy* in January 2000 ushered in the new millennium. This was an opportunity for us to put together a conference with a difference. Organising this conference and planning every detail was a thrilling experience – exhausting too, but very rewarding for all of us in Asmita.

This conference was special for a number of reasons. The most important reason was that it was being held in Hyderabad, in the heart of Telangana. Vasanth Kannabiran welcomed delegates,

*'to the historic city of Hyderabad, the capital of Andhra Pradesh, to Andhra where ...the IAWS [has] been before and to Telangana where*

[it has] not. And each of these places, each a part and yet not a part of the other, the ease and dis-ease with which these identities divide, connect and oppress us mirror our fragmented realities and selves in India today<sup>7</sup>

– words that were prophetic when recalled in our present times of state reorganisation and after.

Every conference has an opening session and a cultural programme – being a collective focussed on creative writing, these spaces offered us a wonderful possibility to open conversations in the conference in new ways and to explore new areas of writing, performance and creative expression. Given our own past involvement in the women's history project, and the location of the conference in Telangana, we decided in Asmita to open with bilingual readings from *We were making history: Women in the Telangana armed struggle* by Mangai and Volga. This immediately provided a perspective without parallel – feminist historiography; women's voices; the politics of organising; women's resistance; the significance of the region from a feminist standpoint; and feminist performance, all came together beautifully. Now the conference would roll on without a problem. Even while the preparations for the conference were underway, we wondered if we could present a cultural programme with a difference. We began an exploration with Kuchipudi drawing on mythology, partition narratives (Menon & Bhasin and Butalia) and feminist accounts of war as our point of departure. This was our first attempt to meld feminist historiography and feminist poetry with Kuchipudi. *War and Peace* was produced and performed for the IX National Conference on

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7 Vasanth Kannabiran, Welcome Address, IX National Conference on Women's Studies, Hyderabad, 8 January 2000. <http://iaws.org/wp-content/themes/pdf/national%20conference/NCF09.2%20Welcome%20Speech,%202000.pdf>. Accessed on 25 December 2016.





Women's Studies and subsequently travelled to every district in the state.

My most enduring and cherished memory of the Hyderabad conference was the Madhuri Shah Memorial Lecture by my dear friend Sunila Abeyasekera. I end this journey down memory lane with lines from Sunila's speech:

*'We know that it is women in the conflict ridden parts of our sub continent who have come forward to challenge patriarchal norms of war and conflict and to replace it with a humane norm of dialogue, consensus and negotiation... [W]omen belonging to different communities that are in conflict with one another have been the pioneers of community based peace building efforts, balancing their individual concerns as members of a particular community or group with their collective interests as women.'*<sup>8</sup>

Yet again we have returned to the criticality of feminist organising in times of conflict that she speaks to so eloquently.

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<sup>8</sup> *IAWS Newsletter*, November 2000, p. 11. <http://iaws.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/NLBO28-2000.pdf>. Accessed on 25 December 2016.



**WOMEN'S STUDIES:  
WALKING ON TWO LEGS OF THEORY AND ACTION AND  
GOING BEYOND NATIONAL BOUNDARIES**

*Kamla Bhasin* \*



The first sentence under 'Women's studies' on Wikipedia is, "*Women's studies* is an interdisciplinary field of *academic study* that examines gender as a *social and cultural construct*, the social status and contributions of women, and the relationships between power and gender."



If women's studies is a field of academic study, then I am afraid that I am an outsider to women's studies. However, I have been part of the Indian Association of Women's Studies (IAWS) since 1984, when I attended the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Conference of Women's Studies in Trivandrum, Kerala. Since then, I have attended several IAWS National Conferences and in 1993 *decided to devote two years of my life to IAWS* by accepting my election to the position of *General Secretary of the Association*. The post of General Secretary of the Association is a full time job, if one wants to do it well. I did this work in addition to my full time work with the Food and Agriculture Association of the United Nations (FAO/

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\* General Secretary, IAWS, 1993-95.





UN), where I was running a capacity building and networking program for development activists across South Asia.

When looking at the list of IAWS office bearers, I realize that *I am perhaps the only non-academic member to have become an office bearer, that too in the post of General Secretary*. In December 1995, other office bearers and I organized the 7<sup>th</sup> National Women's Studies Conference in Jaipur.

I have a Master's degree in Economics from Rajasthan University and studied Sociology of Development for two years in Muenster University, Germany without a degree. Upon completing the program in Germany, I realized that I did not have an interest in (or perhaps the brain for) academia. Thus, I decided to go into development work and joined *Seva Mandir, a non-governmental organization based in Udaipur, Rajasthan*. Seva Mandir was working in a comprehensive way with marginalized people in largely rural, but also urban, areas.

After four years of working at a grassroots level and writing popular articles on development issues, in 1975 I was invited by the FAO/UN to run a training program for development activists in Asia and later in South Asia. I have been doing this work in South Asia for the last 41 years. Although I have no connections to "academic study", I do have connections to trying to understand women, men, gender, patriarchy, human rights, caste, and class and seek to discuss these issues with others as well as write about them.



I neither knew much nor thought much of theory/academic work at the start of my development work. This was perhaps either because of my ignorance of the importance of theory or because of my activist snootiness. Also, I found I could not understand most theoretical writings. I felt academics wrote for each other rather than for the general public. I feel the same about most academic writings even



today, although *I now realize that theory and action must go together to have any meaning or relevance.*

In 1975, I began organizing workshops/trainings for development workers from Asian countries, as part of my FAO work. It was then that I came to feel that a good conceptual understanding of all issues was necessary. In 1984, I organized the first all-women's course for 25 development activists from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The objective of the course was to establish people-to-people contact and sharing across our national borders and create South-South cooperation. This course was seven weeks long and we travelled from Bangladesh to Nepal to India to visit participants' innovative projects. The last ten days were spent in Madras, India, where we learned poster making, body work and street theater. Our gurus here were the iconic dancer, choreographer, feminist, and activist *Chandralekha*, journalist and art critic *Sadanand Menon*, and theater activist *Tripurari Sharma*.

It was at this course that I first organized a three day interaction between development practitioners and activist academics. *Kumari Jayawardena* and *Bina Agarwal* served as the resource persons for this interaction. Initially, I was unsure how the activists and course participants would respond to sessions on concepts and social theory. I was delighted when almost all of the participants were fascinated with and appreciated these discussions. One of them wrote in her evaluation, "a thirst for theory was created in us but there was not enough time to quench that thirst." This response convinced me further of the need for activists *to walk on two legs of action and theory*. Since then I have been organizing four week long feminist capacity building courses for women's rights activists in South Asia. These courses have been like women and gender studies for us, where we create an *interface* between feminist activists and activist scholars like *Kumari Jayawardena*, *Amrita Chhachhi*, *Nighat Saeed Khan*, *Rubina Saigol*, and *Charlotte Bunch*.





In 2016, I organized the 21<sup>st</sup> of such feminist courses. The first seven were organized while I was with FAO, and the last 14 have been *organized through Sangat – A Feminist Network*. Although these courses are primarily for women activists from the eight countries of South Asia, we have had participants from Myanmar, Iran, Turkey, Sudan, Australia and Ghana as well. These courses are held in different countries of South Asia, and normally in NGO training centers. In addition to lectures and discussions, we do yoga, learn feminist songs and slogans, watch many films related to the issues discussed and share our personal and work related stories. We laugh and cry, sing and dance. Our day starts at 6:30 am with yoga, and never finishes before 10 pm at night. *These courses are consciousness raising sessions.*

Because these month long courses are in English, activists who do not know English started complaining and *demanding courses in Asian languages*. For the last ten years, we have been organizing annual two week long courses in *Hindi/Urdu* for women participants from India and Nepal, in *Tamil* for women from Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka, and in *Bangla* for women from Bangladesh and West Bengal. In the last two years, *men* working on gender and human rights issues have been admitted to the Hindi/Urdu and Bangla courses.

### **Entry into the World of Feminist Books, Posters, Songs, Banners and Feminist Publishing**

My capacity building work with activists and my involvement with the women's movement in South Asia has made me a song writer and a singer of sorts, a street theater artist, a slogan writer and slogan chanter, a poster maker and even a writer of feminist books. I felt we needed simply written books on concepts and actions on feminism, patriarchy, gender, and others. I had to educate myself in order to teach these courses. The participants would ask many questions which



needed to be answered. This is how my first booklet on Feminism (titled *Feminism and its Relevance in South Asia, and published by Kali for Women in 1986* and now in its 13<sup>th</sup> edition by *Women Unlimited*) was born. I wrote this booklet with my friend *Nighat Saeed Khan* from Pakistan. Since then, my friend *Ritu Menon* has published several books/pamphlets written by me through *Kali for Women* and subsequently *Women Unlimited*. All of these books are in question-answer format and have been translated into over 20 languages by women's groups in Asia. I was delighted when *Indira Gandhi National Open University* published four of my books for their courses. These books are used in many women and gender studies courses in India, South Asia and other countries. I suppose that now I **am** a part of women and gender studies. I think my work as a facilitator of capacity building courses turned me into a *bridge between feminist activism and women's studies*.

*I am Learning How to Read so that I can Read the World*

I believe that the aim of education is to liberate us from all hierarchies, inequalities and injustices. I believe women's studies is born of the women's movement and the only purpose of women's studies is to challenge patriarchy and bring about gender equality. Expressing these sentiments, I penned the following lines which were turned in to post cards by the *International Women's Tribune Centre, New York* and into posters by *Jagori, Delhi*.

*I am learning how to read so that I can read the world*  
*I am learning how to write so that I can write my own destiny*  
*I am learning how to count so that I can take account of my rights also.*

I wrote a poem in Hindi on why a girl should study, which also defines what I believe to be the purpose of women's studies. Here is the English translation of that poem:

**Because I am a girl, I must study**

A father asks his daughter: Study? Why should you study?  
I have sons aplenty who can study  
Girl, why should you study?

The daughter tells her father: Since you ask, here's why I  
must study  
Because I am a girl, I must study  
Long denied this right, I must study  
for my dreams to take flight, I must study  
Knowledge brings new light, I must study  
Because I am a girl, I must study

To avoid destitution, I must study  
To win independence, I must study  
To fight frustration, I must study  
To find inspiration, I must study  
Because I am a girl, I must study

To fight men's violence, I must study  
To end my silence, I must study  
To challenge patriarchy I must study  
To demolish all hierarchy, I must study  
Because I am a girl, I must study

To mould a faith I can trust, I must study  
To make laws that are just, I must study  
To sweep centuries of dust, I must study'



To challenge what I must, I must study  
Because I am a girl, I must study

To know right from wrong, I must study  
To find a voice that is strong, I must study  
To write feminist songs I must study  
To make a world where girls belong, I must study  
Because I am a girl, I must study

### **My Participation in IAWS Conferences**

I have attended five IAWS national conferences; at Trivandrum in 1984, Chandigarh in 1986, Jaipur in 1995, Pune in 1998, and Bhuwaneshwar in 2002. My organization Sangat was at the Goa conference in 2005, but I was not able to go because of an illness in the family. I found all of the conferences to be vibrant and most useful for meeting friends, interacting with them, learning and sharing. *Some of us took it upon ourselves to create a joyous and celebratory atmosphere and bring passion and bonhomie by singing in all of the breaks, lunches and dinners.* For the Chandigarh conference, I actually prepared a small song book with Hindi and Roman scripts to involve everyone in the singing and merry making. Since we were in Punjab, I wrote and sang a song based on Punjabi tappas, a tongue in cheek song, about academic research and the tensions between activists and academics. People loved the song and *Vina di* (Vina Mazumdar, one of the founders and pillars of women's studies in India) made me sing it every time she and I met in feminist gatherings. After Vina di passed away, her colleagues, especially *Indu Agnihotri*, asked me to sing it at the memorial meeting organized for her. As I was not in Delhi at the time, they asked me to send a video of my message. Because of my love and admiration for Vina di, I did precisely that and the video was played at this event.







## **The Seventh Conference in Jaipur: A Sangam (Confluence) of Academics and Activists, Discourses, Music, Poetry and Art**

Many activists have been a part of IAWS from the beginning, but we, the organizers of the Jaipur Conference, made a concerted effort to make it a true confluence of academia and activism, art, culture, music and poetry. The Jaipur Conference was the first to be organized outside a university structure, mainly by women's and human rights organizations. The theme of the conference was *"Looking Forward, Looking Back: In Search of Feminist Visions, Alternative Paradigms and Practices"* In keeping with the theme, we sought to make the conference participatory, and an example of pluralism and collective leadership and decision making. More than 35 organizations were part of the Conference Organizing Committee. In addition to the over 700 participants of the conference, there were about 75 crafts women and men and 40 women folk artists who attended and made this gathering truly special.

Here is what Kavita Shrivastava, one of the main local organizers of the conference, wrote in the conference report when reflecting on organizing the conference: "From the beginning, it was clear that the objective of organizing the conference was not merely to provide the space and facilities for a national group to come together and interact. The conference was also meant to be an opportunity to spread the women's studies movement in the city of Jaipur and in Rajasthan. With the help of pamphlets, booklets, seminars, discussions and film shows, we interacted with students and teachers of many colleges. A pamphlet in Hindi, introducing women's studies and the theme of the Jaipur Conference, and a booklet, "Mahila Adhyayan Kya hai?" (What are Women's Studies?), were prepared by the Publications Committee for the contact program. Creative activities were also planned. Students were invited to send their entries for a poster and/or a poem on the theme of the "New Woman". This did evoke enthusiasm among students



and it resulted in bringing out an IAWS publication of poems by women poets, entitled “Karuna aaye magar is tarah naheen”. On the suggestion of the media committee, an all women Kavi Sammelan was also organized by the Jaipur Door Darshan for their viewers.”

I got a special and very colorful poster designed for this conference, a copy of which was given as a souvenir to every participant. The Other India Bookstore organized an information mela at the conference. During the conference itself, an exhibition was held of paintings, sculpture and graphics by Indian women artists in collaboration with Jawahar Kala Kendra, a prestigious art and culture center in Jaipur. Some volunteers organized a craft mela of products by over 50 artisan, women’s groups and NGOS from Rajasthan, Gujarat, Haryana, Manipur and Delhi.

The West Zone Cultural Centre, Udaipur responded to our call and facilitated the participation of seven groups of folk artists for the evening performances.

In true compassionate feminist fashion, the local organizing committee provided support to mothers with young children by running a **crèche**. Twenty-seven children registered for this facility.

This is what Kavita Shrivastava wrote about the atmosphere at the venue, (which was a boy’s school): “Saint Xavier’s School looked festive and cheerful, with colorful banners and flags with messages of welcome and about the conference and the IAWS. They were hanging from every tree, bush and pillar on the pathway. The conference poster was pasted on the walls of all the buildings. Rekha and her team of College of Art students and Kamla Bhasin worked round the clock to give this festive look and feeling.

For us organizing this conference was a celebration of resilience, mutual cooperation, feminist principles and solidarity.”



### **South Asian Presence at the National Conferences**

IAWS is committed to the creation of a peaceful South Asia and has always sought to promote cooperation and solidarity among women's groups, feminist scholars, people's organizations and NGOs working in different countries of South Asia. From its initiation, there were always some South Asian scholars at the IAWS conferences. For example, my friends from Sri Lanka, Kumari Jayawardena and Chitra Maunaguru, attended the conference in Trivandrum. As I was working at the South Asian level, had many contacts, and was keen to promote cross border cooperation, we organized the first South Asian panel at the conference in Jaipur in 1995 and made special efforts to bring participants from the neighboring countries. The response was very positive and there were 33 participants from the neighboring countries, 16 women from Nepal (who were setting-up the first women's studies course in Kathmandu), one woman from Bhutan, six women and one man from Pakistan, four women from Sri Lanka and five women from Bangladesh. The South Asians actively participated in different sub theme workshops and in all the other events.

I coordinated the special South Asian plenary on the theme "Women's Visions and Strategies for a Peaceful and Democratic South Asia". This panel brought together four women and one man from different South Asian countries to share stories of resistance and struggle against various kinds of violence and their visions of just, democratic, peaceful and sustainable communities, countries and region. Meena Acharya (Nepal), Khushi Kabir (Bangladesh), Karamat Ali (Pakistan), Sunila Abeyasekera (Sri Lanka and Veena Das (India) were panelists, and they made it abundantly clear that women in the region have not remained silent in the face of violence, oppression and exploitation. They have resisted and challenged family violence, violence unleashed by the religious extremists, violence in and by the media, and state





violence. Women have also tentatively expressed their dreams and visions of a peaceful and democratic South Asia.

*South Asian feminists have always stated, in different fora, that because of geographical, historical and cultural interconnections, the future of South Asian countries is a common one. Therefore, hostility and tensions between South Asian countries must end if the region is to move forward.*

With the friendships and networking created in this conference, I was able to facilitate ongoing cooperation between Padma Kanya Campus, Kathmandu in Nepal and feminist scholars from India, such as Dr. Maithreyi Krishnaraj who helped them in formulating the women's studies curricula and training of teachers.

It is very heartening to see that the cross border relationships and networks that we built slowly and steadily have flourished. There is a great deal of coming and going and sharing of ideas and experiences across borders by feminist academics, activists, writers, artists and others.

It is also wonderful to see how women's studies has expanded in India and in the neighboring countries. The beginnings made in India by feminist stalwarts like Madhuri Shah, Neera Desai, Vina Mazumdar, Maithreyi Krishnaraj, Gita Sen, Sardamoni, Leela Gulati, and many others have come a long way.

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**IAWS:  
TO PROVIDE DYNAMIC AND RESPONSIVE LEADERSHIP IN  
CURRENT TIMES**

*Lakshmi Lingam\**

**Introduction**



While I was recovering from a long bout of administrative overrun of working non-stop for five years to set up Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Hyderabad (now with multiple academic programs, a fairly large student, Faculty and administrative communities), I had received an email from the organizers of



IAWS. The email said that they are inviting past Presidents and General Secretaries to write a thematic piece in the field of Women's Studies and wanted me to write on the trajectory of public policies *vis a vis* women in India. I spent the next two weeks mulling over the idea with an apprehension whether I can put together a paper between my existing travels, project commitments and top it all a writer's block that I seem to be nurturing.

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\* General Secretary, IAWS, 2000-2002.





For the past five years, much of my time went in writing funding proposals for seeking grants to construct the campus, preparing power point presentations, filling UGC formats for getting an off-campus recognition, working with teams of Faculty preparing new course outlines for Academic Council approvals, working on brand building, website content development, boot camps for new Faculty recruits to align the young faculty personal career plans with the growth plans of the new Institute, coordinating and spearheading admission procedures, speaking to parents of students, dealing with complaining neighborhood societies about students and their expression of freedoms, visiting police stations to lodge complaints along with students on street harassment and reworking hardwired institutional bureaucracies and so on (the list is endless). I have not been trained to do most of these either as a PhD student or as a Faculty member at TISS. However, I felt like fish in water and had the guiding values of Feminism, of being an empirical researcher, my life experience of being part of women's movements and the amazing experience as a General Secretary from 2000-2002. I am keen on writing about charting new ground as a feminist administrator sometime soon!

This is a free wheeling note covering almost three decades of my association with the Indian Association for Women's Studies (IAWS) at various stages of my academic engagements. I have attempted to study the trajectory of IAWS in terms of the various conference themes to provide us insights to a powerful movement that is dynamic and responsive. This is a work in progress which will be developed further.

### **My journey: In a Nutshell**

I wish to share my personal journey in women's studies. I had registered and attended the Second IAWS conference that took place in Trivandrum in 1984. I was a young research scholar pursuing my Ph.D. with the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay. My research was on





traversing the twin fields of Rural Sociology and the upcoming field of Women's Studies. I tried to present a paper but was too nervous to meet the Sub theme Coordinator for a time slot. I looked up in awe at all the senior feminists. Attending each IAWS conference, was a dream come true, where you could meet your favourite authors, chat with them while standing in a queue for lunch, receive feedback on your presentation, dance with them in the evening informal gatherings.

I presented my first paper at the IAWS Conference held at Visakhapatnam in 1988 on Family Survival Strategies based on my study on women migrants. I was then a young Lecturer with Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. Twelve years down the lane, I was nominated and then elected as the General Secretary of IAWS from 2000-2002. I worked closely with Zarina Bhatti (President), Rameswari Varma (Treasurer), Pushpa Bhave, the Late Jasodhara Bagchi, Seema Sakhare, Vidyut Bhagwat, Gabriel Dietrich and Asha Hans. At the organization level, during my term, the IAWS website (an earlier version) was developed, the logo had been designed, the entire membership had been streamlined and amendments to the Constitution had been carried out, apart from all other Association activities. I have not been regular at the Conferences after 2002 but have been in touch with the ongoing discourses. This piece is a homecoming for me.

### **Introduction**

Women's Studies as a 'discipline' is at the intersections of academic and activist discourse, engaging with undoing hierarchies in knowledge production and dissemination as well as critically engaging with power, hierarchies, gender based discrimination in various institutions in society. Apart from working towards strengthening the field of women's studies' perspectives, theoretical moorings, research methodologies and knowledge production, the IAWS attempts to nurture the political





edge that women's studies brings to bear within Universities. The IAWS is expected to interface with Women's Studies Centres in Universities and Colleges, Government departments, national and international NGOs and autonomous women's movements to straddle the twin horses of knowledge production on the one hand and play an advocacy role on women's issues on the other.

The IAWS conferences provide a democratic platform for women's studies researchers and activists, young and old to participate, dialogue, debate, share, nurture and grow across generations. I personally feel that IAWS regional workshops, meetings and conferences chart a different set of objectives compared to other professional associations. Most professional academic associations and their meetings/conferences are often subscribed from the point of view of individual careers and networking opportunities. In the case of IAWS, subscription to the Association and attending the bi-annual conferences qualifies as *rites de passage* for several young entrants and a platform to articulate collective concerns and positions in the case of senior researchers and activists. The IAWS platform therefore is a space that is actively claimed and nurtured.

The genesis of the IAWS comes from the coming together of women from the autonomous women's movements and women academicians who have observed the limitations and inadequacies in the body of knowledge across most social sciences and humanities disciplines that had virtual absence of women's voices and perspectives. The autonomous women's movements that emerged in late 1970s from the critique of the traditional left and its shortcomings in dealing with the women's question in contemporary society, economy and polity had centre-staged the significance of a mode of knowledge production that brings in the perspective of the women, vulnerable and marginalized groups. This consciousness imbued the pursuit of women's studies as a critique of main-stream disciplines and their







limited conceptualization of Indian realities and that of women. This awareness and consciousness had steadily lead to breaking the conceptual and political binaries of subjective-objective; public-private; inside-outside; production-reproduction and later male-female in research enquiry, tools of research and the outcome of research.

The past three decades had witnessed an explosion of publications on the one hand and a wide range of spin offs in the realm of art, theatre, cinema and literature. Researching, writing and publishing have broken fresh ground with works emerging from the vantage point of multiple subject positions that women occupy. Knowledge production is not limited to Universities and research institutions. There is a vibrant culture of writing and publishing across the country.

The steady growth of Women's Studies centres across the country with funding from University Grants Commission has provided an opportunity to reach larger number of students through academic programs and on-campus engagement on issues of gender. Women's Studies during the past decade as a discipline with Masters, MPhil and PhD degree programs being offered from several Universities has created a new pool of Faculty with careers in Women's Studies and young students attempting to sharpen their analytical skills and their political vocabulary. These developments provide new opportunities for the IAWS and also fresh challenges that ensue with institutionalization of Women's Studies raising concerns of de-politicization of the agenda of reworking disciplinary boundaries, democratizing research, building stronger linkages with the movements, struggles to influence society, institutions and the state.

### **Women's Studies and Women's Movements**

It is often said that Women's Studies is an intellectual arm of the Women's movement. In India, several feminists owe their allegiance



to both. However, in various IAWS conferences there have been discussions on the mutuality of women's studies and movements; the tension between the academic and the activist, the threat of appropriation of the knowledge from the field by the academic through the activist. This schism has persisted over the decades and is seemingly getting diluted in recent times. A close examination of this will be undertaken towards the end of this paper.

The autonomous women's movements identify themselves as that stream of the women's movements prominently focusing on women's issues from non-governmental, non-political party-based, secular platforms, struggling against patriarchy and for justice and equality. The women's movements do not have an association but operate through a National Coordination Committee formed through a network of organisations and struggle groups across the country. Seven conferences have been held to date between (1980 to 2014). The history of these conferences begins with the first conference and second conferences held at Bombay in 1980 and 1985; the third at Patna in 1987-88 followed by Calicut in 1990 and the fourth in Tirupati in 1994. The sixth conference was held at Ranchi in 1998 and the seventh at Kolkata in 2014. The women's movements' conferences see the participation of activists as well as struggle groups and individuals inhabiting particular subject positions – women with disabilities, transgender, sex workers and so on, thus affirming diversity, voice and inclusion<sup>1</sup>. This is uniquely a distinctive feature of the women's movements' conferences.

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1 Meena Gopal (2006): "Affirming Diversities, Resisting Divisiveness." Report of the Seventh National Conference on Women's Movements in India. Downloaded on 1 Jan 2017. [www.esocialsciences.org/Download/repecDownload.aspx?fname...doc](http://www.esocialsciences.org/Download/repecDownload.aspx?fname...doc).



## **Conferences as a Reflection of Changing Times**

From its inception in 1981, the IAWS has worked towards a formal Constitution, membership, elections, region workshops culminating into a national conference. It is pertinent to note that each thematic of the IAWS was a reflection of the growing concerns of women's studies scholars and activists over the years.

### **First decade: Visibilizing the Invisible Women**

The first decade, had a focus on gaps in knowledge, deficiencies in conceptualization and its impact on women in various facets of their life. The close association and umbilical connection with women's struggles and movements is also evident in this decade.

#### **Conference Titles**

- 1981: Mumbai: First National Conference
- 1984: Thiruvananthapuram: Gender Justice
- 1986: Chandigarh: Women's Struggles and Movements
- 1988: Visakhapatnam: Rural Women: Poverty, Survival, Struggle and Change

One could call this a decade of de-mystification and visibilizing the invisible and placing a finger on issues of violence and systematic marginalization. This was also a period when changes to legislations in area of dowry and rape took place. The controversial Shah Bano case and the enactment of the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986 and the Sati of Roop Kanwar (1987) in Rajasthan brought to the fore the issue of women's rights embedded in cultures and communities and the role of State. A Committee headed by Ela Bhatt had submitted a pathbreaking report titled – *Shram Shakti* - with a focus on women in the unorganized and self-employed sector.





## **Second decade: Markets, Mandal and Masjid**

The conferences in the second decade (1991–98) – reflected the changing Indian economy with structural adjustment and globalization, the Mandal and Masjid politics and politicization.


1991 Kolkata: Religion, Culture and Politics

1993 Mysore: The New Economic Policy and Women

1995 Jaipur: Looking Forward, Looking Back: In Search of Feminist Visions, Alternatives, Paradigms and Practices

1998 Pune: Survival and Sovereignty: Challenges to Women's Studies

The deep-seated divisions among women and the cultural plurality closely entwined with caste, ethnicity and religion had begun to surface in feminist discourses. Hegemonic, universal envisioning of social transformation from women's perspective had come under severe challenge. The singular reference to women's movement has been replaced with the term women's movements recognizing the multiple subject positions and experience of hegemony, violence, exploitation and subjugation as spaces for reflection, theorizing, mobilization and articulation. The conference themes and sub-themes began to focus on economic, political questions of development/globalization and simultaneously also on the issue of religion, culture, identity and marginalization. This is the decade that had also witnessed the steady move of autonomous women's movement groups towards setting up NGOs. Apart from the need to build a strong alternative feminist space, resource centres, advocacy centres, development work and service delivery the other major factor that contributed to the establishment of NGOs was the participation in UN Conferences. The participation in the NGO Forum at the UN Conferences is linked to accreditation as NGOs. Several NGOs sought accreditation and also special status in the UN Commissions as NGO representatives.



Several UN Conferences<sup>10</sup> took place in the last decade of the previous millennium, where women from India (referred to as part of Global South) had participated and significantly impacted the discourses hitherto dominated by the Global North. Extensive mobilization on the key thematic of the UN Conferences took place within the country at the national and regional levels.

### **Third Decade: Globalization, Sovereignty and Citizenship**

The intensification of globalization particularly with reference to overall reduction in employment in the organized sector, a series of changes in legislations dispossessing communities from access to natural resources and growing state repression in various parts of the country marked the engagement of the IAWS in this decade.

#### **Conference Titles:**

2000 Hyderabad:	Women's Perspectives on Public Policy
2002 Bhubaneswar:	Sustaining Democracy: Challenges in the New Millennium
2005 Goa:	Sovereignty, Citizenship and Gender
2008 Lucknow:	Feminism, Education and the Transformation of Knowledges

Along with a close focus on new policies that were announced during this decade – National Population Policy 2000 and National Policy for the Empowerment of Women 2001, the conferences had focused extensively on reiterating democracy, democratic institutions at the



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<sup>2</sup>1992: United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)

1993: World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, Austria)

1994: International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, Egypt)

1995: Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, China); World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, Denmark)



national level while attempting to unpack markets and global financial architecture that dictate State policies.

#### **Fourth Decade: Redistribution to Recognition**

There has been a palpable emergence of critical voices pointing to 'diversity', 'difference', 'voice', 'participation', 'identity' and the like, in the country. These have also resonated in the conferences of the IAWS that had brought to the fore the "politics of recognition" in tandem with the "politics of redistribution" to use Nancy Fraser's<sup>11</sup> analysis, along the lines of caste, ethnicity and sexual orientation. Discussion on issues of economic inequalities and addressing the same are now laced with discussions on the cultural identities and intersectionalities. In other words "what constituted the category of woman?" Are the terms "women's studies" and "women" expansive or limited terms?



#### **Conference Titles**

- 2011 Wardha: Resisting Marginalizations, Challenging Hegemonies:  
Re-visioning Gender Politics
- 2014 Guwahati: Equality, Pluralism and the State: Perspectives from  
the Women's Movement

As a reflection of changing times and the complexity in feminist theorizing and mobilization, it is important to note that there has been a reaching out by IAWS to include the questions of diversity and difference along with the questions of inequalities. The decoupling that occurs with addressing issues of distribution independent of social and cultural identities, is attended to, when they are taken together.

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<sup>3</sup> Nancy Fraser (2000): Rethinking Recognition. *New Left Review* 3, May- June.



To illustrate through a reading of the concept notes and brochures of the IAWS conferences:

The concept note of the 2011 IAWS Conference in Wardha elaborates - "In the domain of culture and ideology, hegemonic nationalism prevails even as its newer versions are nurtured through the media and other cultural modes. ...The misrepresentation and marginalization of women and their interests coincides with this hegemonic representation of 'Indian culture'...The diverse voices emerging from the margins those of the queer, sign-language enabled, dalit, adivasi, muslim, are unable to enter into conversation with the mainstream or with each other due to the absence of translation.....What kind of politics of gender is appropriate for this moment? This conference hopes to survey the existing field, capturing the resistances and challenges coming from the margins as well as prospecting for the future of our movements".

The 2014 IAWS Conference focussed on the Theme of "Equality, Pluralism and the State: Perspectives from the Women's Movement" and its brochure mentions: "The women's movement has engaged in debates on these issues from its myriad locations..... the movement has actively worked to preserve the pluralist culture and historical legacies of our people against fundamentalist assertions of women's rights and womanhood per se. Commitment to equality and pluralism is both an underlying principle as well as a necessary condition for women's democratic advance in Indian society today".

During this decade, Women's Studies has globally started discussing "intersectionality". Wherein, an attempt is made to bring in the multi-cultural, multi-layered and yet specific ways in which women's lives and realities are shaped within the environment of global and local political climate.

More sharply, the theme of the XV IAWS conference, "Women in a Changing World: Restructured Inequalities, Countercurrents and Sites



of Resistance". This is taking place at a critical juncture of our times experiencing national and global political changes. Growing fundamentalism, the triumph of economic liberalism coupled with rising conservatism and global exclusions are the descriptors of our times. Gendered poverty and gender-based violence compound the effects all these have on women, girls, children and marginal groups. IAWS and feminists have a special responsibility to strengthen Women's Studies which is a political tool and an instrument of change.

### **Specific Suggestions for the Future**

- Build strong collaborations with women's movement groups engaged in sectoral development work, carrying out advocacy work and working with communities. There is much to learn and undo the fragmentation.
- Build a strong digital presence given the enormous content that IAWS has.
- Reimagine the relationship with Women's Studies centres in Universities and colleges to strengthen research methodologies and teaching pedagogies.
- Provide leadership to the Global South through an international conference to be held each decade.

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## MY WOMEN'S STUDIES JOURNEY



*Maithreyi Krishnaraj\**

My entry into Women's Studies (WS) was in a way fortuitous but the result actually of an unseen hand propelling me towards it. This unseen hand was my self-reflective observation of women's lives within my family and the way it fostered a latent feminism within me. It is the combination of personal experience and study of feminist literature much later and reading about the history of our fore mothers like the women of the nineteenth century struggle for liberation, that pushed me formally into women's studies. However there were precedents which prepared the ground for this. I had occasion to live with my mother's family off and on. In those days children were often left with relatives if parents were away. My mother had a difficult time in her in-law's house. As a child I shuttled between my maternal grand- parents and my paternal grand- parents. I witnessed my mother's suffering. At my maternal grand- mother's house, there were stories of child widows, visible signs of strict enforcement of Brahmin customs in the way my grandaunts lived, and the austerities that



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\* EC Member, IAWS, 1991-93 and 1998-2000.





widows had to bear. My great grand- mother was always in white and had her head tonsured, ate frugally and could not participate in any ceremonies. My grandmother's young sister was a virgin widow. My maternal grandmother had ten children. So also my paternal grand - mother who had ten children. In those days, family planning was not known. What impresses me was that all the women in my family had a great yearning for education. They could not attend school beyond a few classes but were literate and continued to read books in their spare time. I was given one mantra. "Educate yourself and don't rush into marriage. Pick up a vocation where you can be useful to other women."



Somewhere these seeds that lay within me, at the opportune time given the sun and water of reading, connections to women's movements, sprang into a sapling and later blossomed into a tree, whose branches kept widening as new experience fed into the original seed.

My father was a great scholar well versed in several disciplines- Mathematics, Science, Sanskrit, Tamil, and English Literature. He became a civil servant. My father's father was a teacher of English literature and knew a lot of Shakespeare. My mother's father was a Tamil scholar, though he went into Police service. I am harping on this point because I imbibed this culture of learning. My own name, chosen by my father, was that of a renowned woman philosopher of ancient India. It made me feel very special.

Moving out of this preface, I will quickly run through my formal educational history. I moved from place to place and my schooling was in different places depending on where my father was. Starting school in Chennai, whenever my mother went to her parents place in Coimbatore I went to school there. Later, I went to school in Nagpur, Delhi and Shimla. This exposure to different places and different





people, had an impact on me in so far as I learnt about the diversity of India and I escaped any taint of parochialism. My bachelor's was in Pune, where I picked up Marathi and lived in the hostel as my father was away. I saw nine yard saree wearing Marathi ladies riding bicycles, or swimming and their freedom to do what they wanted to do was astonishing. My first day in the economics class was an unexpected jolt. The male teacher asked the five girls who were in the class what girls were doing in economics –'it is too tough a subject for ladies and they should do home science'. I was horrified. This was my first brush with male bias. As the girls did well in the examinations (I got a merit scholarship) he mellowed and appreciating an essay I wrote he became very friendly. Years after when I went to see him in Pune, he welcomed me warmly and declared that he has named his daughter after me. What an honour! The professors were friendly, we were often invited to their homes where we had coffee and discussions. It was a glorious period of intellectual stimulation for me. This background helped me to develop a critical attitude to what I read. Moving to Delhi to do my MA in economics, we had very distinguished teachers and that was the period when India launched planning. I have felt strongly that women's studies students should have a strong background in social sciences because we must understand the social structures and social ideologies to make sense of women's position in society. Some centres offer BA in WS to students who have no such training and I think it is a bad idea. A systematic study helps one to acquire the wherewithal for academics. One cannot critique Marx or other liberal economists without being familiar with what they said. In the absence of such training, one is likely to jump to conclusions and one's arguments are not based on sound premises but only on received wisdom. It was this conviction that made me write, years later, 'Gender in Economic Theory and Philosophy' (Krishnaraj 2001) in the Economic and Political Weekly. I switched to Education as I found Economics the way it was as taught, too dry. My performance at B.Ed. won for me a





Government sponsorship and a US government scholarship to do Masters in the USA. The purpose of drawing in these details is to underscore the varied exposures I had, which came in handy to do interdisciplinary work. Though I did not do any course in philosophy my personal interest led me to read on my own some books on Philosophy, both Indian and general.

The stint at the State University of New York College at New Paltz and later at Syracuse was where my systematic reading of feminist literature began and I became familiar with important feminist writers. I do not want to give the whole bibliography here to tire the readers. I also attended many conferences of women. This was the thick of the second wave women's movement in the USA. While much of it appealed to me, somehow I could sense India was different culturally because in our case, the family, caste and kin were major forces. The notion of 'autonomy' and breaking away from men which western feminist advocated, seemed a negative approach. Even within the USA, there were many who spoke about women's association as important to give them space. In India where we have a highly sex segregated society, where women always had a separate space to sit in any public functions, women's groups used to have lives of their own in special rituals, in mutual exchange and activities. Affiliation with others is equally important and this is the difference between Indian women's movement and western movement. Thus from the beginning I had this feeling that our feminism had to be different. Solidarity with other women was essential but a society ridden with class and caste differences - as in India - meant that there were dimensions which the western middle class women ignored. An example was how Black women raised questions of colour and race in the USA.

To cut a long story short: after returning from the US and after teaching here and there, when Dr. Neera Desai opened a small Research Unit on Women's Studies in the Women's University in Bombay, I joined as a research assistant.





With my joining the women's university, I imbibed the ethos of the university. My own development as a WS scholar is thus intimately linked to the history of my host institution. I could not have done as much as I did in WS but for the pioneering and promotional spirit of the important figures in that institution, not through any outside influence or lobbying. What was unique about the founding of WS in the university was that it was the first initiative in the country and long before the UGC stepped in to support WS in higher education. Even that happened because the Vice Chancellor of the women's university, Dr. Madhuri Shah became the Chairperson of the UGC. The UGC gives Grants and also gives accreditation to universities in India on the basis of a set of criteria. The university had the right 'horoscope' of favourable factors for the growth of WS. Earlier national leaders who promoted women's education had a perspective which was both class biased, ambiguous and conservative. They saw women's role as primarily family bound and because women as mothers were entrusted the care of children, they needed education in health, hygiene, child development and so on. This view was what impelled Dr. D.K. Karve, the founder of the university. Today, despite dissenting voices that advocate self-development as a necessary goal of education the approach of a woman's essential role as that of her family-role was to die hard. Later, Sir Vithaldas Thakersey in 1916, gave a handsome donation which enabled the institution to become a full-fledged institution. In the early nineteen thirties the university shifted to Bombay offering courses in nursing, home science, arts, and humanities and after 1952 became a part of the Maharashtra State university system and expanded to cover all faculties. It henceforward became known as Srimathi Nathibai Damodar Thakersey University after the donor's mother's name (S.N.D.T. for short) Between 1916 and 1951 the university was basically interested in a liberal education for women and played the role of social reform by bringing women out of their orthodox homes. The perceived role of education for women had no doubt widened but without challenging the idea that this was the only role a woman



should play. In the deliberations the university held on its golden jubilee, a momentous decision was made. Apart from teaching subjects taught in any normal Women's University, it was decided that a woman's university must also investigate issues concerning women.



To wind up this history, after the report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI) which revealed the dismal state of women's condition in India, Dr.Vina Mazumdar, the then, member secretary of the Committee, with ICSSR help launched a programme of Women's Studies in India. This official sanction further gave legitimacy to Women's Studies. Thus was born Women's Studies in India. It came into academics, not as a God given gift or a happenstance but as a result of hard work, ingenuity, imagination and dedication of many actors. The small unit became the Research Centre for Women's Studies (RCWS).

Given my varied exposure, my own understanding of feminism deepened. One can define feminism in its historical context as a discourse that evolved overtime, which at some points joined up with as social movements, or some action joined to theory. 'Feminism' meant to me, a set of ideas and beliefs that were situated in a particular social context, as a reaction to a particular set of circumstances, in a particular world or particular part of the world. What is common to feminism is its woman centredness and valuation of women. Different tendencies developed- socialist, radical, Marxist and liberal. The discourse way of looking at it enables us to think about how different tendencies interrelated and how they changed in historical periods. Actually the distinction between viewing it as a discourse and as a social movement is superficial as it differentiates the intellectual component from people who are doing the action. Theory is a reflection of practical struggles. Today we seem to have issue based feminism whereas earlier we had a 'sisterhood' approach which made us strong, cohesive and identified.



Questions of methodology, perspective and frameworks were to come in course of time as WS developed. To this, I was happy to have been a contributor. Some of the issues I tried to explore were: feminism, methodology and theorisation in Women's Studies. In 1986, Alice Thorner and I approached the editor of Economic and Political Weekly to begin a Review of Women's Studies supplement in the journal. From then on, twice a year the Review of Women's Studies in the Weekly began to appear. I owe this support to Krishnaraj who was then the editor and to Padma Prakash who was part of the Weekly. While earlier I wrote unsigned articles, it was much later that my name began to appear in the Weekly.



There were many field projects with grants from different agencies. I undertook a study of cane bamboo workers in the Konkan (a region which lies in the Western Coastal area of the State) along with my colleague Dr. Divya Pande. We complemented each other in several ways and our relationship was congenial. In fact there was an absence of competitiveness in those days in our colleagues in RCWS as well as other WS centres. We were not seeking academic accolades, but exploring women's issues in order to understand them better and to mount proper action. We learnt a lot about caste based occupations and about sexual division of labour and how patriarchy worked even among the poor in our field projects. The women did intricate labour of weaving objects necessary for agricultural processes like winnowing baskets and drying mats for rice and so on used in local agriculture while the men specialised in making baskets for mangoes of commercial value and also undertook all marketing. Thus cash was in the hands of men. This story was repeated when I was part of a sericulture study. Women reeled cocoons at home dipping their hands in very hot water but they were sold by men in auctions. We persuaded the Silk Board to provide space for women in the auction centre. When we did a collaborative project on Women's Work and Family Strategies with many other centres, it was once again obvious how opportunities for



economic improvement were always seized by the men who migrated while women continued to hold the family's subsistence farming or did traditional crafts with old technology.



My work on Women in Agriculture, co-authored with Amita Shah, was upgraded with more data and co-authored with Aruna Kanchi and was brought out by National Book Trust in 2008. Even today, women are the mainstay of family farms. In another study on the impact of male migration on reclaimed land in Maharashtra, once again the lesson was driven home to us that women bore a heavy burden without any support in the form of improved technology, markets and inputs. In many houses I saw women carrying even the plough on their shoulders for lack of help in hiring bullocks in the absence of male members. My deep concern with Agriculture in India, on which I wrote some articles to emphasize the criticality of agriculture to India's development earned me the sobriquet of 'Agricultural Fundamentalist' by the Delhi policy makers. When the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation asked me to edit some papers, I added some new ones on 'Gender and Food Security'. It was published by Stree, Kolkata. My own intuitive feeling buttressed by reading convinced me of the need to revive this sector with State support for improving soil, water, technology and markets. Bina Agarwal had in her award winning book (1994) "A Field of Her Own" stressed land rights for women. Her insight that land rights to women were critical to empower women was reinforced in my mind decades later when I edited for U.N. Women a set of conference papers on "Gender and Productive Resources'- a multi country study. When policy makers talk of economic empowerment of women they think only in terms of income generating projects. This volume emphasized how important holding assets were for women. Income is not predictable; assets give a measure of social security. Indian agriculture is cultivated by small and marginal land holders who form the majority. Even though many find agriculture unviable for lack of support and take up non- farm employment to get wages, land is held as security, just as gold ornaments serve as security for women in India.





Motherhood is so venerated in India that I wanted to explore this area. When I worked on The International Labour (ILO) and Government of India Ministry of Labour sponsored study of Maternity Benefit Schemes in India. I realised how few receive the statutory benefits. The majority of births still take place in rural areas at home with the midwife( 'dai").Some attempts to upgrade the skills of dais have been undertaken but we have a long way to go as maternal deaths continue to be high. Part of the problem is lack of medical outfits in rural areas close enough for access for the people and lack adequate staff, who would be present at the primary centres. India is one country that spends little on health, as compared to even Bangladesh or Sri Lanka. One of the things that has helped me is my regular reading of political economy both in the daily newspapers and in journals.



Our Research Study on Women Scientists demonstrated that even among the middle class, highly educated women, rising to top positions was difficult. This outcome was blamed on women having to manage two roles- professional and family/childcare. Our study showed that the reasons for women's career stagnation had much to do with institutional blockages such as men cornering opportunities through old boys' networks. Seminar notices or important conferences would not be passed on to women. Often women were given less work that was innovative or challenging tasks. I kept asking why is it that the work place is designed only for - called 'male bread winner' when women were equal partners in the economy. Why is a woman's reproductive role treated as a private task when it is very much a social task. She produces the future worker; she nurtures the future worker. Without this base how would the economy function? From these questions a new interest began in examining unpaid work of women and undercounting of women's work. Working with UN organisations and our own Department of Women and Child we examined through a workshop, our census, our national sample survey



(NSS), our national industrial classification to show the omissions of women's participation in the economy. From these exercises, as well as my direct participation in the 1991 census we were able to highlight the need for improvement on data on women. These efforts have borne fruit in our data system especially in National Sample Survey (NSS). These attempts were also helped by UN. Organisations like the ILO and UN System of National Accounts in rectifying our data system. We now have figures of hours of work in market work and non-market work of men and women. However much needs to be done still.



My own progress in theorising came with all these experiences. Is Women's Studies a new paradigm or just a new perspective? Originally I began with the notion it was a perspective. (Krishnaraj 1986). Later I began to see it as a new paradigm (Krishnaraj, 1988). I defined paradigm as follows: "A paradigm is a fundamental image of the subject matter. It serves to define what should be studied, what questions should be asked, how they should be asked and what rules are to be followed in interpreting the answers. It subsumes, defines, inter-relates the problem situations and rules evolved which are used as models for solving other puzzle situations".

Somewhere along the line, international influences introduced the term 'gender' to stand for women. Gender as a concept was a great innovation in making a distinction between biological sex and social identity. Different traits were attached to each gender- man and woman. Thus what began as a descriptive term developed into an *analytical concept*. Though actually gender has more than one entity composed within it, it became the practice to say 'Gender and Development, 'Gender Budgeting' and 'Gender Studies' to imply we are talking about women. Perhaps it is because it is less threatening to men. I felt this substitution was not necessarily a great improvement unless we simultaneously talk of the other side. While a great deal has been written about femininity, not much work existed on masculinity and so





I tried to say something about masculinity. I do not wish to tire the reader by quoting myself all the time so suffice it to say that the common notion about femininity and masculinity as a biological given is untrue. Sexual identities are made up of three kinds of directional tendencies: i) sexual orientation ii) style of behaviour iii) core identity. In most of us all three point in the same direction. This core identity is located in the brain, not between the legs. Most genetic females feel female, while genetic males feel male. Given exposure to high levels of male hormones during the foetal stage makes females behave tomboyish but they feel female. The message is our core identity is resistant to biology and is open to social manipulation. Seeking answers in Biology is doomed to fail. Granted that gender identity is fixed early, we have a range of behaviour traits that vary across cultures. Masculine and feminine are variously conceived as either polar attributes ii) complementary iii) as fragmented which need fusion for a whole personality. Modern science veers towards the third view- the importance of the emotional and rational to be in balance. The notion of 'Ardha Nareeswara' a Hindu icon, takes this view. Shiva (the male principle) and Shakti (the female principle) must conjoin to create life (or universe).

The emphasis on *difference* between male and female human beings obscures a whole of range of behaviours that are common to both. They are a continuum rather than polar opposites- gentleness to aggressiveness. In every women's life, gender stereo types have a powerful influence. Manhood as dominance is one of the root causes of male violence against women. In our own tradition we have had poets, artists and saints venerated for their gentle demeanour. Modern societies with less physical work being needed and service occupations being more widespread, muscular strength as a pre requisite has given way to importance of interpersonal skills. Yet there is a revival of the 'BODY' due to media influence and the advertisement industry in this era of market economy.





Many of our studies demonstrated how ubiquitous sexual division of labour was. It is not an innocuous exercise of merely saying women do this while men do this but is loaded with a value system. Women's work is under rated in terms of skill and in terms of its value to the household and the economy. They are underpaid, in low skill occupations by and large. But the question is who defines skill? Why should transplanting be considered low skill and paid less than ploughing where the man merely drives bullocks?

I joined the Research Unit in Women's Studies (SNDT) in 1975. It was just a small unit housed in the department of sociology with Dr. Neera Desai as honorary director. With the immense support from the vice chancellors of the day- I thought of them as a benign matriarchy. We quickly expanded and moved to larger space in a new campus. The first women's conference was held here where six hundred women from various organisations- Socialist Party, Communist party of India Marxist (CPI-M), Communist Party of India (CPI), All India Women's Conference, Young Women's Christian Association, Working Women's Forum and other non party women's groups attended. Unlike the later birth of WS centres, right in the beginning we had this link with political agencies. It was at this conference that the decision to launch an Indian Association of Women's Studies was taken. My own experience was thus to understand Women's Studies as a political as well as an academic venture. The very first thing we did was to invite social science departments of all Universities to send us their under graduate syllabi and we noted the absence of women, the lack of women's dominant position in the economy , ignorance about the Sociology of women, the biases in Psychology that was following old outmoded content and methodology, the omission of women's participation in many movements in political science and history, national and regional- were an eye opener on how much work needed to be done. Thus we began Women's Studies within academia. Politically, Women's Studies was closely linked to the women's movement in many ways. The



questions that were brought up by the movement such as dowry, violence, economic condition, lower power within the household-family inspired many researches on the causes for the emergence of these maladies and fructified in legislation to protect women. That laws were not effective against social customs is another story. Many studies were undertaken to gauge the effectiveness of policy and their gender bias and women's groups offered policy prescriptions. I was part of the group to appraise the national XII Five Year plan.

My most creative period was when I organised workshops with Prof. Neera Desai's encouragement on what I called Feminist Concepts: Gender, Concept of Status, Sexual Division of labour, Production and Reproduction, Domestic labour and Patriarchy. Gail Omvedt did a piece on patriarchy, Gita Sen presented an essay on Production and Reproduction, Chhaya Datar did on Domestic labour debates, Vidyut Bhagwat wrote on Sexual Division of labour and I on the concept of Status. I edited these deliberations and these were cyclostyled (as Computers and Xeroxing were not available then) and as working papers these were widely distributed. Kamla Bhasin used them a lot in her training programmes. Women's Studies scholars use these terms without the knowledge that I was the first person who was responsible for coining them as Feminist Concepts. In those days I never worried about claiming authorship. The pursuit of WS was itself an emotional and intellectual adventure. Now I realise by not putting my stamp on my writing through a published form I lost recognition of this contribution. It was during this period that I began to learn more about the concept of 'patriarchy'. The basic components of patriarchy are: control of female sexuality, female reproductive ability and female labour. Gerda Lerner's 'Creation of Patriarchy' made me understand the historical angle. From then to realise that patriarchy is not uniform and exhibits different characteristics in different cultural contexts. So, Indian feminists talked of 'patriarchies' in the plural. I saw patriarchy not as an uncontested structure but contested often and as permeable.



Age and being the head of a household gives a woman some degree of power. It is not an undiluted male dominance. However what is important to accept is that unless women are also in the public domain, they cannot have any say about their own welfare as well as that of society. Collective struggles are the means to assert their rights. Participation in decision making bodies and elective organs are avenues of such opportunity.

There are departments today organising Feminist Methodology courses. There is a popular confusion between method and methodology. Methods relate to techniques of data collection while methodology relates to the framework used. Somehow many WS scholars seem to think that what matters is employing known techniques. The more critical issue is how do we frame the problem? What is our analytical mode? Earlier there were sharp distinctions between liberal feminism and Marxist/socialist feminism. In my visiting scholar stint at Syracuse University where I was teaching Women and Development, I got the opportunity to read more about socialism and capitalism and books on anthropology. Many books I found stimulating became part of my personal library but at all times I was aware of the difference in our case of the influence of caste, class, kinship and family organisation (Palriwala and Risseeuw, 1996).

It was my interest in Socialism that spurred me on to read through these texts What I was aware of was: that India was not a complete capitalist country and there were large remnants of pre-capitalist styles of production with subsistence agriculture, household production of crafts and capitalist organisations out-sourcing production to so called 'informal sector'. The public sector was also more prominent. Hence many of the analyses were not relevant to India but it is when we read contrasting stories that we understand our own culture by noticing where the differences lay. The feminist socialist argument that in the relations of reproduction, not so much in production that patriarchal



power is more evident was very helpful to link these theories to our own condition. Our family planning programmes - targeting women to control population growth - illustrated these truths tellingly. Secondly caste and class were big determinants. Patriarchy and masculinity are closely associated.

Today there are many Women's Studies Centres and not all of even quality. The link with the women's movement has also become more tenuous. Women's Studies as another intellectual enterprise prized for its intellectuality rather than its significance for women's liberation is counter-productive. Unless the link with the movement is nourished, we are no different than others in the academia.

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ARCHIVING THE IAWS JOURNEY:  
FROM SIX STEEL CUPBOARDS TO ORAL NARRATIVES –  
ORGANISING, DIGITISING, DOCUMENTING

*Sumi Krishna* \*

*'The IAWS Archives will preserve, conserve and make accessible records of its own past history including probing into absences and silences and retrieving lost, scattered and dispersed material; further, it will put in place methods and processes to document and subsequently archive its ongoing activities and developments. Finally, it will also create and archive new material on themes at the interface of the history of the women's studies movement and the women's movement in India.'*



– Objectives of the IAWS Archives



### **A Personal Prelude**

In 1999, just back from a visit to north eastern India, I dropped in at the Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi. Like most women's organisations, CWDS was an open house frequented for its

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\* President, IAWS, 2005-08.







well-stocked library, stimulating conversations and refreshing lemon tea! Over a shared lunch, the talk turned to the next conference of the Indian Association for Women's Studies in Hyderabad in January 2000. My work as an independent action-researcher in the area of gender, science and natural resource-based livelihoods seemed somewhat tangential to the prevailing women's studies agenda. Nevertheless, Narayan Banerjee (who looked after CWDS' field project in Bankura, Bengal) and I decided to jointly coordinate a sub theme on gender and community forest rights, inviting both academic papers and activist presentations. That drew tremendous response and after that I became increasingly more involved with IAWS. In October 2005, as a member of the recently elected Executive Committee (EC), I was persuaded to accept the responsibility of President, with the support of many senior members in the team and Mary John as General Secretary. Neither Mary nor I had served on the EC before and we did not know what we were in for. That very evening I found out!

After the formal handing over in Delhi, out-going General Secretary Veena Poonacha asked me casually, 'So where should I send the six steel cupboards and other stuff?' It was astounding to learn that the material history of IAWS (books, papers, vouchers etc.) were stored in these cupboards, a large yellow bag and sundry cardboard boxes, which were meticulously moved at considerable expense by train or truck, in recent years from Hyderabad to Deonar, Mumbai, and then across the city to Juhu, Mumbai! This did not seem feasible anymore. Where could we accommodate all this stuff, how expensive would it be to move? After a sleepless night, the next morning I requested Vina, then Director of the Research Centre for Women's Studies (RCWS, SNDT Mumbai), to hold everything till we figured out what to do.

Back in Bengaluru, just as I entered our front door and put my suitcase down, I realised that my husband was unwell; this was a shock because he had been in good health after major heart surgery a decade ago.



We rushed to the hospital where he was admitted to the cardiac emergency. As I sat outside the CCU, Vina's question kept popping up in my mind and it was in that unlikely setting that the plan for the IAWS Archives began to take shape.

### **The First Phase**

An institutional archives is a collective reference, providing continuity with the past and reflecting the complex ways in which an organisation is shaped over the years. Amazingly, despite the problems of a roving secretariat, year-after-year successive ECs had maintained and passed on files and other materials. The need for an IAWS archives had been talked about earlier. In 2002, Vidyut Bhagwat and Sharmila Rege had edited the collection, *Twenty years of the IAWS*, which included Kalpana Kannabiran's collation of the presidents' addresses to nine conferences from 1981 (Madhuri Shah) to 2000 (Vina Mazumdar). With the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary coming up, it seemed to me that this was the ideal moment to systematically start archiving the IAWS journey. Clearly, the very first task was to sort through and make an inventory of the material in the steel cupboards, keeping what was of archival interest and distributing or discarding the rest. The archives would have to be physically located in a women's organisation or an academic institution where it would be safe and accessible. I was personally excited about this and thought it would be a wonderful project for our members in the run-up to the Silver Jubilee Conference.

Under the terms of our major grant, the previous EC had agreed to have some permanent presence in Delhi. This was mainly for practical and financial reasons – the bank accounts, the auditor and so on were located in the national capital. But at the last General Body meeting in Goa in 2005, many IAWS members (including myself) had argued that the diverse and plural national character of IAWS would change with a permanent secretariat; the apprehension was that Delhi-based

members tend to take control of everything (*'Dilliwale sab kabza kar lete hain'*).

Our plan, therefore, was for the *roving secretariat* to continue, moving with each new secretary and for a *financial secretariat* to be located in Delhi. This would be in keeping both with the concerns of the general body and the terms of the grant. The financial secretariat could hold the financial documents (required to be preserved by law) that were scattered at various locations including the back of Chhaya Datar's garage in Mumbai! The IAWS archives could then be located in the western region, where IAWS has a substantial membership. Through the years, CWDS had often provided an umbrella to IAWS and readily agreed to house the financial secretariat; Director Narayan Banerjee carved out a tiny space for us in their already cramped offices. The next step was to decide on a location for the IAWS archives in the western region.

In 2006, I called a consultative meeting at Aalochana, Pune, attended by invited IAWS life and institutional members from the universities of Amravati, Aurangabad, Mumbai, Pune and SNDT, women's groups such as the Maharashtra Stree Abhiyas Vyaspeeth, besides EC members. The consensus was that the most feasible location would be at RCWS in SNDT University for Women, Mumbai. SNDT was the first university in the country to start a women's studies centre. It was also where IAWS had been launched a quarter century earlier. (And, of course, those six cumbersome steel cupboards were currently housed there!) The university gave its consent and space within RCWS was demarcated. So, on March 14, 2007, the IAWS Archives at RCWS, SNDT Mumbai, was inaugurated by Vina Mazumdar in the presence of Neera Desai, Maithreyi Krishnaraj and other doyens of the women's studies movement.





### **Archiving women's lives**

The story of the IAWS Archives is a part of a larger vision of retrieving, documenting and archiving women's lives. Realizing that feminist perspectives have transformed the conventional understanding of archives, even as documentation technologies have undergone fundamental changes, one of our early tasks was to bring scholars, practitioners and technical experts together to discuss this. In January 2007, an IAWS Western Regional Workshop, 'Archiving Women's Lives: Perspectives and Techniques', was organized in collaboration with the Department of Sociology, University of Mumbai. Academics from different disciplines joined artists, film makers, and professionals with expertise in archiving, documentation, digital and film technology. The workshop focused on how to address the gender biases in historical accounts, recover and privilege alternative sources, and make use of the new technologies. An important part of the workshop was the CWDS visual documentary exhibition, 'Re-presenting Indian Women 1875-1947' (curated by Malavika Karlekar with Leela Kasturi and Indrani Majumdar) which was brought from Delhi to Mumbai. The archival photographs of women – in the family, women learning, at work and in the freedom struggle – drew the attention of many young students. For us, these formal and informal interactions underlined the importance of using varied means of documentation to recover different stories, of networking and reaching out to different groups.

Kamala Ganesh, our Joint Secretary, who had coordinated the archiving workshop in Mumbai, volunteered (despite having recently recovered from cancer treatment) to oversee the arduous process of sorting through the stuff in the steel cupboards, the large yellow bag and cardboard boxes. I undertook the responsibility of collecting the published materials, books, speeches, newsletters etc. and having these digitised. As both of us discovered, the experience was fascinating but much more difficult and time consuming than we had imagined. CWDS







too was taken aback to find how much space the financial documents required – the cardboard boxes that arrived from Mumbai were all over their lobby for a while till room could be found in the basement.

### **The physical archives**

In the first phase before the Silver Jubilee conference, Kamala assisted by Unnati Tripathi sorted through the materials to prepare a detailed inventory. The aim was to reduce the sheer volume by identifying what needed to be kept and what could be discarded. The EC decided to hold not more than five copies of each published document and distribute the rest to women's studies centres. The unpublished 'grey literature' comprised mainly of routine correspondence, abstracts of conference papers, rejected paper proposals, drafts of publications and so on; much of this was discarded. A selection of letters was retained because of their interesting content or to provide an insight into the changing times – from handwritten postcards to typed notes, from cyclostyled sheets to computer printouts. Kamala prepared a detailed inventory of the documents that were retained or discarded. The voluminous material was successfully reduced to two steel cupboards!

Writing about this exercise for the Silver Jubilee publication *Anchoring Women's Studies*, Kamala Ganesh (2008) noted certain key features: The material reflected the organisation's feminist principles, its 'austere purpose with a human touch', and a concern for accountability. As the membership had changed and grown in 25 years (from 271 at Trivandrum in 1984 to over 1500), the logistics of organising a conference had become overwhelming and made up the bulk of the grey literature. She writes:





'The rich material provides glimpses of the organisational, personal and interpersonal dimensions of the IAWS that played a role in the way the academic agenda and activities developed. To some extent, one can track the course of the women's studies movement in India in its formative phase, since many members were also leading figures in the field. Popular themes and approaches for research, the quality of papers, and the nature of participation in the conferences over the years can be analysed, as also the issues taken up for resolutions and advocacy, and the internal debates that went into them. ... Furthermore. In contrast to the individual member, who reacts to the organisation through her personal experience of it, the cumulative picture that comes through is one of office bearers taking considerable pains to run the organisation as well as to lead it.' (pp. 29-30).

She also draws attention to 'an easy and unselfconscious transition between personal and professional matters and issues'. For instance, 'The EC correspondence is scattered with references to shifting house, children's and other family illnesses, and conjunctivitis and laryngitis of EC members! Past President Nirmala Banerjee's letter to a pregnant General Secretary Kalpana Kannabiran on the eve of the Hyderabad conference asking her to take care and mentioning her own impending cataract operation highlights not only the generational sweep in the composition of the office bearers but also the very pressing personal happenings in the midst of serious conferencing, the impossibility for women of having a neat separation and perhaps even its undesirability.' (p.32)

### **The digital archives**



In 2007, I was a nearly 60-year-old digital novice; my digital experience till then was confined to e-mails, and setting up and moderating e-groups, including one for members of the IAWS Executive Committee. My first digital project was creating a CD of the IAWS Southern Regional



Workshop (Feb.2007), 'The Struggle to Transform Disciplines'. The CD put together with the technical help of the Centre for Education and Documentation (CED), Bengaluru, included presented papers, PPTs, photographs, a photo-montage and video clip, reports from other regional workshops and information on IAWS. This was later distributed to all the participants.

This exercise provided the confidence to go ahead with digitizing all the IAWS publications, again with technical support from CED, Bengaluru. The process of identification, collection, collation and digitizing took many months. In the early years before commercial publishers discovered gender/ women's studies, the Association itself had published significant works, most of which were only available as single copies; there were a quarter century of newsletters, besides office bearer's reports to the previous eleven national conferences, the IAWS constitution, and selected photographs. These materials were scattered across the country with individual members and former office bearers, or in libraries. Kalpana Kannabiran (Hyderabad), Chhaya Datar and Veena Poonacha (Mumbai) shared materials generously; others hesitated to send precious original documents to Bengaluru but sent photocopies instead. My obsession with getting the full set of newsletters led to some teasing from my colleagues, because no meeting began without my mentioning IAWS Newsletter No. 6 presumed to have been issued from Baroda – it continues to remain elusive!

Because of cost, time and other constraints we decided not to digitize membership lists (privacy concerns), conference abstracts (too many) and conference papers (incomplete sets). Initially, the grey literature (correspondence, balance sheets) was not digitized but after 2010 some part of this was done at RCWS. In all we scanned about 110 documents, including 20 publications and over 40 newsletters, covering the period from 1983 to 2007. I had to learn all about the various file



and image formats before choosing the image pdf format, which maintains the characteristics of the original document. The IAWS Silver Jubilee Archives CD was released at the XIIth National Conference, Lucknow, on Feb 7, 2008. Designed as a self-sustaining venture, it was priced at Rs100 and we soon ran out of copies. Of course, if we were to undertake this project today we would opt for pen drives instead of CDs.

The intention was to eventually have the digital material available on the IAWS website. So the CD too had a web format with hyperlinks that connect different files. A small start was also made to set up an open access IAWS Web Archives drawing upon the material published in the Archives CD. Enhancing and supplementing this is a continuing task that requires archival and design expertise and funding.



The IAWS Archives project was among the key factors that helped us negotiate a five-year grant from the Ford Foundation in 2008 to cover IAWS activities including the on-going work on the archives. The Archives has been visited by scholars and students researching the growth of women's studies in India.

### **The Second Phase**

It took a couple of years before the working arrangement between IAWS and RCWS, SNDT University could be legally formalised. In December 2010, a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) was signed between IAWS and RCWS, SNDT University. In the meanwhile, RCWS had received a substantial donation under the late Avabai Wadia's will to set up the Avabai Wadia Archives (AWA) to document the lives of women. The Memorandum signed by the then IAWS General Secretary Samita Sen and Veena Poonacha, who then headed RCWS, states:

'The IAWS Archives is being established under this agreement between the two collaborating institutions, IAWS and RCWS. Under the terms







of the agreement the RCWS will provide and maintain the space, and minimum maintenance of the collection. It will also provide expertise in archiving through the RCWS Archives (AWA) and Documentation Centre. The IAWS Archives and the AWA archives will have distinct identities and will make no financial commitment to each other. The IAWS collection cannot be merged with the RCWS archives and documentation collection or with the University Library or with any other body of the University without the permission of the IAWS Executive Committee. The RCWS holds the IAWS Archives Collection in trust and will ensure routine maintenance. RCWS will also facilitate the development of the archives without any financial commitment. The IAWS will be responsible for transferring material, including correspondence, materials, and conference related papers to the RCWS on a regular basis. It will also be responsible for the overall functioning of the IAWS Archives and will bear the financial costs of its activities.'

An IAWS Archives Committee set up by the EC had been functioning since 2006. Under the terms of the MoA, this was reconstituted in 2010 as a Core Management Committee (CMC). It included four IAWS life members; two representatives of the EC, one of whom would serve as the convenor of the committee; and the Director of RCWS as an ex-officio member. The CMC had a term of five years (unlike the three year term of the IAWS EC).

In collaboration with AWA two workshops were held at RCWS, in 2011 and 2013, on the challenges of feminist archiving. Archiving work in Mumbai progressed, as Unnati Tripathi and RCWS (guided by Kamala and Veena) undertook the classification, cataloguing and digitising of some of the grey literature, such as minutes of meetings, conference proceedings, and other materials that had been acquired. With the guidance of Indu Agnihotri, CWDS also digitized the fragile documents from the Indian women's movement stored in its own office files and library collection. The effort here was to digitize documents emanating



from the joint women's organisations during the 1980s and 1990s. These focus on violence, women's economic rights and role vis-à-vis development policies and planning as well as interventions aimed at engaging in institutional processes and critique of policy framework.



### **Video documentation**

With the strong base established in the first phase of archiving, IAWS ventured into video documentation of workshops and conferences, under the leadership of Uma Chakravarty who headed the CMC. A regional workshop on 'Cultural Production of the Women's Movement in India' was held in collaboration with Indraprastha College for Women, Delhi, which itself had many years earlier established its own archives on higher education for women. A selection of audio-visual recordings from the workshop covers 30 years of cultural production relating to the women's movement.

Subsequently, the proceedings of the IAWS National Conferences at Wardha (2011), and Guwahati (2014) were videographed (by Pranhita Sen and Puloma Pal, respectively). These form a unique record of alternative forms of recording women's lives. The Wardha conference, for instance, included sessions such as the Chhatisgarh Tribal Artists' Workshop on Gond painting, a mono-act on the struggle of Irom Sharmila in Manipur, and a pre-conference workshop that captured the voices of university students from across India on women's studies scholarship and activism.

### **Oral narratives**

Feminist critiques had long emphasized the need to go beyond conventional archival sources to recover the voices of the marginalised, through retrieving informal documents like posters and pamphlets and by recording women's oral narratives and stories of resistance to





patriarchy. Feminist publishing and audio-visual documentation in India had drawn attention to the range of 'sources' that needed to be explored. In keeping with the three-fold objectives of the IAWS Archives (epigraph above), during 2011-12 the CMC initiated projects to 'create and archive new material on themes at the interface of the history of women's studies and the women's movement in India'.

The first of these projects was to interview women activists of the 1970s and early 1980s, a time when many 'new social movements' had emerged and questions about the direction of the nation-state had been raised. Ponni Arasu (guided by Uma and Mary) recorded interviews with pioneering women and collected historic photographs, pamphlets and other documents from them. Among those interviewed were the following: Southern region - Geetha Ramakrishnan, Vasanth Kannabiran, Mythili Sivaraman, Nalini Nayak, Fatima Burnad, Saraswathi Rajendran; Northern region - Manimala, Nandita Haksar, Shah Jehan Apa, Vina Mazumdar, Nandana Reddy, Vasanthi Raman. Western Region - Urmila Pawar, Shiraz Bulsara, Sujata Gothoskar, Kumud Pawde, and Gail Omvedt (who also donated 400 photographs of three decades of her work in Maharashtra).

A project envisaged by J Devika as 'a snowballing preliminary archives' was on 'Feminism before and after the Fourth National Conference of the Indian Women's Movements'. The conference, held at Kozhikode (Calicut) in December 1990 was critical in understanding the history and perceptions of feminism in Kerala at that time. Recorded interviews and discussions with key organisers and participants (such as K. Ajitha, Sara Joseph and others) were complimented by collecting relevant materials in Malayalam and English – conference reports, newspaper and journal articles and so on.

In 2014, despite a difficult funding situation, we went ahead with two significant oral narrative projects. One of these is Ilina Sen's project to





interview key participants of the Nari Mukti Sangharsh Sammelan, held in Patna in 1988. The Patna Conference had brought to the fore the voices of women in people's struggles and mass organizations in a hitherto unprecedented manner. Indeed, this inspiring example preceded the Calicut conference and other conferences organized by the autonomous women's movement. It is also unique because later conferences have not had this kind of representation.

The other is Anita Ghai's project on the interface (or lack thereof) between the women's movement and the disabled women's struggle through interviews with representatives of both. Although 'women's bodies' are intrinsic to feminist perspectives, women with disability have been excluded from both the women's movement and women's studies. Anita suggests that beyond acknowledging exclusion, there is need to articulate and understand the perceptions of feminist activists that led to this. Are there any common threads in the narratives of women who interrogated patriarchy but did not 'see' disabled women? Could the articulation and analysis of these narratives lead to a surer path towards a socially just women's movement?

### **Moving Forward**

We may no longer be carting steel cupboards, bags and boxes across the country but the digital era makes archiving both easier and more difficult. Immediately after our EC took over in 2005 we had set up an e-group to communicate among EC members. This has continued to serve the invaluable purpose of linking EC members in far flung cities and is a digital record of internal correspondence and discussion (including, no doubt, some angry exchanges!). This vast amount of 'grey literature' already in the digital space needs to be organised and perhaps selectively made accessible to future researchers. This has not happened partly because of lack of funding and partly because



the nitty-gritty of archiving is laborious, backroom work, requiring considerable patience and persistence to yield small nuggets.

Using newer documentary technologies and recovering oral histories is invigorating but this too requires focus and organisation. The priorities for future oral narrative projects of the IAWS Archives, as outlined in September 2014, are: a) History of the women's movement; b) Role of women in struggles and other movements/ Women's linkages with other movements and struggles; c) Women's struggles with larger movements; d) Women's involvement with the health movement; and e) Women's Studies.

The process of archiving the IAWS journey has involved retrieving that which has been scattered or lost and 'probing into absences and silences', devising methods to document and subsequently archive women's changing lives, and creating new materials at the juncture of women's studies and the women's movement. It has meant selecting and sifting through all kinds of oral and written records that are often interwoven in complex ways. Personal and collective narratives are open to varied interpretations, reflecting the politics of the past and the present. The Archives show that as a professional association, IAWS has consistently striven to institutionalise the critical concerns of the women's movement, straddling the space between women's democratic resistance and academic structures. This endeavour is fraught with obstacles and challenges. Archiving the IAWS journey serves as a touchstone and a guide to the ways in which two generations of women have faced and overcome these challenges.

**Note:**

IAWS Archives Committee 2006: Sumi Krishna (chair), Kamala Ganesh, Veena Poonacha, S. Anandhi, Meena Gopal. Core Management Committee of the IAWS Archives 2010: Life members - Uma Chakravarty

(chair), Sumi Krishna, Kamala Ganesh, J Devika (to 2014)/ Kumkum Roy (from 2014);

IAWS EC representatives – Ilina Sen, Meena Gopal (convenor)/Shaila Desouza (convenor); Veena Poonacha (RCWS Director, ex-officio).

**Sources:**

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PIONEERING WOMEN'S STUDIES INTO  
UNIVERSITIES:  
THE ROLE OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN'S  
STUDIES

*Veena Poonacha\**



**Introduction**

I write this essay as someone who has had a ringside view of the growth and development of Indian Association of Women's Studies (IAWS) for over three decades. I write with the hope that those who have only recently ventured into the grand adventure of women's studies scholarship may become aware of the history of IAWS and its contribution to the growth of women's studies in the country. This knowledge is important, so that we do not forget its founding vision, or overlook the collective struggle that created a space within institutions of higher education for women's studies scholarship and led to the establishment of women's studies centres.



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\* General Secretary, IAWS, 2003-05.



Currently there are approximately 200 women's studies centres/cells in the country, under the grant-in-aid programme of the University Grants Commission (UGC), New Delhi. Many of these centres fight a lonely battle for survival within institutional structures that do not appreciate the radical import of the discipline and its potential to overturn accepted tomes of knowledge. Apart from the administrative and financial problems that they face, their work is made difficult by rigid university structures. Consequently, these centres find it difficult to fulfil UGC's mandate of initiating teaching, research and extension activities, under the terms of its grant-in-aid support.



The framework given to these centres/cells is different from that of other university departments. They are expected to work as agents of social change through research, teaching and community outreach programmes. This vision of higher education institutions grows out of an understanding that the three-fold activities of research, teaching-learning programmes and community outreach activities, are not mutually exclusive. They are intricately interwoven to enrich each other, generate experiential knowledge, democratize knowledge systems and promote women's struggles for equality.

To appreciate this model of higher education, there is a need to look into how and why women's studies entered the university system. It is a story that is inextricably linked to the pioneering work of the IAWS. The IAWS lobbied to shape education policies and programmes, played an important role in ensuring UGC grant-in-aid support to women's studies centres.

### **The Growth of Women's Studies**

I begin by describing some of the factors that led to the growth of women's studies in India. Women's studies has its origins within the feminist politics of the early 1970s. The theoretical challenges that it represents to mainstream disciplines, can be traced to the various





consciousness-raising sessions organized within autonomous women's groups as well as to the questions raised women academics within universities. Women scholars and activists recognized the negative impact of the prevailing development policies on women's lives. The Government of India therefore set up the Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI) to look into the socio-economic and political processes that were negatively impacting on women. Drawing upon the Census, the NSS data, interviews with more than 10,000 women, the Committee painted in its report, entitled the *Towards Equality Report* (1975), a dismal picture of women's lives. The report, presented at the first international U.N. Conference on women in Mexico (1975) provided a suitable environment for the emergence of autonomous women's groups seeking to promote gender politics.

Based on the recommendations of the Committee, the Government of India drew up a *Plan of Action* to stem the deteriorating status of women. The plan emphasized the need for research and documentation to uncover the social structures/processes that hampered gender justice in the country. The Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) pioneered women's studies research to bridge the existing knowledge gaps on women's lives and to develop intervention strategies. The research findings generated through the ICSSR programme substantiated many of the conclusions drawn by the CSWI. The CSWI had specifically called for 'greater involvement of educational institution in removing the invisibility of the real life experiences of the majority of India's women within the curriculum, teaching and research activities of educational institutions.'<sup>1</sup> The report stated:

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the early experiments that grew out of these recommendations included: 1) the Research Unit for Women's Studies subsequently named Research Centre for Women's Studies by Neera Desai in SNDT Women's University, Mumbai; 2) the Centre for Women's Development Studies, by Vina Mazumdar; and 3) the Indian Institute for Social Science Trust (ISST), New Delhi by Devaki Jain.

‘The deep foundations of the inequality of the sexes are built in the minds of men and women through a socialization process which continues to be extremely powerful. If education is to promote equality for women, it must make deliberate planned and sustained effort, so that the new values of equality can replace traditional value system.’<sup>2</sup>

### **Birth of the Association**

The First National Conference, organized at SNDT Women’s University from April 20-24, 1981, was to follow up on the recommendations made in the *Towards Equality Report*.<sup>3</sup> As Madhuri Shah one of the main convenors of the conference stated in her inaugural address:

‘When we initiated the move for this Conference, five months ago, we thought we were about to begin a long struggle to persuade the educational system to take a new look at women’s situation and its role in bringing about healthy and positive changes in society, so that women do not continue to suffer from injustice, discrimination and indignity. We were prepared for indifference, reluctance and resistance to the idea of developing Women’s Studies as a new and unfamiliar venture within the educational process. The response however was beyond expectations.’<sup>4</sup>

It was at this historic conference, that the participants first mooted the idea for an organization that would sustain and lend voice to the

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2 Cited in Dr. Madhuri Shah’s inaugural address at the First National Conference in 1981 at SNDT Women’s Studies. (RCWS Newsletter 2014, Vol. 35, No.1).

3 The conference was convened under the leadership of Dr. Madhuri Shah, (the first woman Chairperson of the UGC) and Prof. J. P. Naik (former Member Secretary of the ICSSR and of the India Education Commission).

4 Madhuri Shah’s inaugural address at the First National Conference held in SNDT Women’s University, 1981 (cited in RCWS Newsletter 2014, vol. 35, No.1).



concerns of activists and scholars. The participants included a large number of teachers, students, vice chancellors of different universities as well as well as activists and political leaders. Describing the heady excitement of the conference, Indu Agnihotri, recalls participation of stalwarts like Pulrenu Guha, Ahalya Rangnekar, Vimala Randive, Pramila Dandavate and Gail Omvedt.<sup>5</sup>

### **Formation of IAWS**



Since its formal inauguration in 1982, the IAWS has been the space for academics, policy-makers and activists to meet, share, analyze perspectives, present inter-linkages, and initiate action as academics and activists. The IAWS has the distinction of being the only professional association in the country that draws its members from such diverse fields and provides a forum to the grassroots activists as well as internationally recognized scholars to come together in the same platform.

Over the years, the IAWS has retained its national character and has developed an effective system of networking with institutions and regional women's studies associations in different parts of the country. This representative character of the IAWS is maintained by ensuring that the EC members are from different parts of the country. These members take special pains to reach out to grassroots women's organizations and women's studies centers in their respective regions. The IAWS also brings out a newsletter to facilitate effective communication with its members.

Providing impetus to political activism as well as critical theoretical enquiry, the IAWS organizes national conferences in collaboration

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<sup>5</sup> Agnihotri, Indu. 'How I landed up at the first NCWS in Bombay in 1981' In *Anchoring Women's Studies in India: Twenty Five Years of the Indian Association of Women's Studies*. 2008 Pp. 19-27.





universities in different parts of the country. In the interim period between two national conferences, the IAWS organizes a series of seminars and regional workshops with different institutions. A review of the conference themes indicates that the focus has been on a range of socio-economic and political concerns that undermine women's citizenship rights/entitlements. The conferences, in effect, provide the space to discuss ongoing trends that displace people, deny them livelihood and erode their entitlements to natural resources. It has been a space to question regressive ideologies that seek to exclude communities/people on the basis of their religion, ethnicity and sexual orientation; and a space to discuss epistemological and pedagogic concerns in women's studies. The synergy created through the organization of bi-annual/triannual national conferences as well as the various regional seminars and workshops has contributed significantly to the growth of women's studies teaching and research and pedagogy in the country.

### **Women's Studies Enters Universities**

Perhaps a lesser known contribution of the IAWS to the growth of women's studies is its efforts to ensure the establishment of women's studies centres within universities. The IAWS was the forum through which women lobbied for the inclusion of the gender component in education policies. This demand was made at a collaborative workshop on the proposed education policy organized by IAWS, UGC and University of Delhi in April 1985. The recommendations made at the workshop for women's studies research, teaching and extension programmes within universities was subsequently incorporated into the National Policy on Education by the Parliament in May 1986.



The policy provided a clear mandate to the national education system to 'play a positivist interventionist role in the empowerment of women through research, curriculum development and direct involvement in



women's development activities.' It also stated that women's studies would be promoted within existing institutions and disciplines. The subsequent modifications of the educational policy in 1992 passed by Parliament further elaborated on the role of women's studies programmes as agents of social change within institutions of higher education. Following which, the UGC, since the Seventh Plan, provided grant-in-aid to a few universities for the establishment of women's studies centres. Pioneering institutions like CWDS, New Delhi, and Research Centre for Women's Studies, SNDT Women's University, Mumbai, undertook teacher training programmes and curriculum development activities to facilitate the introduction of women's studies.

It was expected that women's studies centres within higher education institutions would strengthen women's movements and struggles by building a data-base on women's lived situation through documentation research and publications. The centres were also expected to conduct teaching-learning and community outreach programmes to create awareness and sensitivity to gender concerns. Envisaged as the academic arm of women's movements and struggles, the centres were expected to provide women space to conceptualize, document and preserve their knowledge for posterity. It was, in short, an attempt to infiltrate feminist ideas into the university system.

The importance of this process was that it aimed at creating a back-up for women's political assertion. Women had learnt bitter lessons about the politics of knowledge generation: their knowledge and the history of their resistance to patriarchy tended to be trivialized by men, unless they made a conscious effort to preserve it. Without knowing their history, future generations of women would have to start from scratch to seek out their liberation. These centres were not envisioned as a pure research institution. It was expected to go beyond theoretical discourses to reach out to the community and become an agent of social change. This was a revolutionary measure: for it meant breaking



the academic isolation of the university system and making it sensitive to the needs of the community.



Women's studies centres have been established through UGC grants since 1985.<sup>6</sup> Through the three decade history of women's studies within universities, the IAWS has cooperated with the UGC to shape women's studies. It was a relationship that can be traced to the time when Dr. Madhuri Shah, who was the President of IAWS, was inducted as the ex-officio member of the UGC standing committee on women's studies. Subsequently, the UGC followed the precedent of inducting her successors as ex officio members of the standing committee. The rapid expansion of women's studies programmes occurred under Dr. Armaity Desai's initiative when she was the UGC Chairperson. During this period, the IAWS was part of the UGC consultations to frame the guidelines for women's studies programmes.<sup>7</sup> The IAWS also cooperated with various centres in conducting organizing seminars as well as the refresher and orientations courses in women's studies that the UGC had initiated under its Ninth Plan programme.<sup>8</sup> The IAWS lobbied for the inclusion of women's studies as an area in which candidates could appear for the NET examination. Further it suggested that the qualifying

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6 The Research Centre for Women's Studies, SNDT Women's University is an exception here, since it was established in 1974, a year before the International Year of Women. The mandate given to the centre since its inception was broad-based. It included research, teaching, training publication, documentation, extension and networking with other academic institutions as well as women's groups. It was the model for the development of women's studies centres in the country.

7 Under the Ninth Plan Guidelines, the centres were classified under three phases and given grants according to the phase they were in. The centres classified as phase III were expected to provide support to other centres within each region. It was an attempt to create network among women's studies centres and across universities.

8 The UGC guidelines expected the faculty development programmes in women's studies would be organized by III UGC centres and well-established women's studies centres outside the university system.





candidates should be recruited not just in women's studies teaching programmes, but also in any social science departments in which the candidate had a post graduate degree. The IAWS has also been the forum in which the various women's studies centres lobbied for redressal of their grievances about their service conditions by the UGC.

The UGC framework for action provided by the UGC guidelines since the Ninth Plan required the centres undertake: 1) research (both theoretical and action oriented); 2) teaching (curriculum design, post-graduate programmes and short-term courses); 3) training and gender sensitization (within the university as well as the larger community); 4) publication (of teaching-learning material, training modules and research reports,); 5) documentation (creating a data-base on women); and 6) extension/ community-action research. The last was the most difficult activity for most women's studies centres to implement. The faculty members were generally comfortable with teaching and research, but were not aware of how to engage in extension/community outreach activities. The importance of extension and community outreach programmes, however, cannot be underestimated. It is the means by which the academic hierarchies between universities and grass-roots communities can be bridged, leading to the democratization of university knowledge systems and enrichment of learning experiences for university students.

### **Confrontation with UGC**

Sadly this close cooperation between the IAWS and the UGC received a setback during the tenure of Dr. Hari Gautam as UGC chairperson and subsequently under Dr. Arun Nigwaker. The commission refused to recognize the IAWS Presidents as ex-officio members of the UGC standing committee on women's studies. The IAWS protested against such arbitrary action to undermine the long-standing precedents established to promote women's studies. The rise of right wing



ideologies in the UGC, during the period, saw insidious attempts to undermine the radical potential of women's studies programmes. Under the Tenth Plan programme attempt was made to restrict the scope of women's studies centres by renaming them as 'Women and Family Studies Centres.' Dissenting members of the women's studies standing committee (who were also IAWS members) present at the meeting appraised the IAWS EC of these developments. The IAWS immediately initiated a widely discussion on this issue. Supported by national and international scholars, IAWS successfully forced the UGC to withdraw such a move.

Further lobbying by founding members of IAWS forced the government to reconstitute the women's studies standing committee under Dr. Vina Mazumdar's leadership. This committee comprising women's studies scholars (also members of the IAWS) framed the policy guidelines for the UGC Eleventh Plan programme after regional consultations in different parts of the country. The revision of guidelines was necessitated because of the ways by which the Tenth Plan guidelines had tampered with the founding vision of the women's studies programmes within universities.<sup>9</sup>



### **Changing Directions for Women's Studies**

The Eleventh Plan period sought to expand and consolidate women's studies programmes within universities: for it sought to establish women's studies centres in each university of the country. One of the pitfalls of introducing women's studies through official decrees was that many centres were opened in areas that did not have a history of women's movement, transformatory vision and politics. This meant

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<sup>9</sup> For instance, the Tenth Plan Guidelines expected women's studies centres to monitor the functioning of NGOs in their regions. This surveillance role that women's studies centres were expected to play could not under any circumstance be accepted.







that very often the faculty appointed in the centres had no idea about women's studies. The only criteria for the appointment of faculty members in women's studies centres was that they were women willing to shoulder additional responsibilities. Indubitably, these women accept the additional charge out of a commitment for women, but they are often unable to appreciate the political content of the discipline; or even if they did, they were not able to draw upon the rich experience of feminist activism to gain insights and creatively enrich their teaching/research programmes. Women's studies research and teaching programmes increasingly became a study of women without reflecting the feminist underpinnings of the discipline. This is not to imply that all the existing women's studies centres similarly failed but rather to suggest that without a suitable knowledge and appreciation of the history of struggles, the newly initiated centres/cells fail to transmit feminist ideas to the new generations of women.

The Eleventh Plan document had laid considerable stress on teaching-learning programmes to be conducted through these centres. This is not to suggest that women's studies teaching-learning programmes began only during the Eleventh Plan. Many universities had initiated such courses earlier.<sup>10</sup> The earliest attempt to initiate women's studies teaching was made at the SNDT Women's University in 1991 with the introduction of a compulsory foundation course in women's studies for its undergraduate students. The RCWs also introduced a post-graduate diploma programme in 1997. At around the same time, Pune University as well as southern universities like Mother Theresa

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<sup>10</sup> The earliest attempt to initiate women's studies teaching was made at the SNDT Women's University in 1991 with the introduction of a compulsory foundation course in women's studies for its undergraduate students. The RCWs also introduced a post-graduate diploma programme in 1997. At around the same time, Pune University as well as southern universities like Mother Theresa University, Avinashlingam University and Padmavathi University had begun their post graduate and doctoral programmes in women's studies.



University, Avinashlingam University and Padmavathi University had begun their post graduate and doctoral programmes in women's studies. The twofold reasons for the growth of women's studies teaching programmes were: 1) the growing demand from the student community for such courses; and 2) the need to gain concurrence for women's studies faculty positions from state governments. Such a concurrence for the faculty positions by state governments requires that faculty appointments comply with the requisite teaching workload.<sup>11</sup>



While many universities have offered exciting new courses on women's studies, drawing upon the current advances in women's studies theorizing. It cannot be denied that the teaching-learning programmes offered in some of the universities are dismal. Without adequate guidelines or availability of course materials these courses did not fulfil the objectives of introducing women's studies in universities. To overcome these constraints, the UGC during the Twelfth Plan period set up a Curriculum Development Committee to design model post graduate and undergraduate curriculum in women's studies. Many members of the Curriculum Development Committee were members of the IAWS and also its EC members. These members sought to ensure that the theoretical advances made within women's studies scholarship was reflected in the curriculum.

### **Need for Intervention**

The initiative to form a model curriculum addresses only one aspect of teaching-learning programmes. Women's studies scholarship has grown exponentially. The theoretical advances made by scholars across disciplinary boundaries and by activist-scholars are not easily available to students from far-flung parts of the country. There is a need to

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<sup>11</sup> Faculty workload is often measured in terms of teaching hours. The faculty member's contribution to research and extension are not taken into account





develop suitable teaching-learning materials in different languages to meet this demand. A point of concern is the rigid structures imposed on women's studies teaching programmes within universities.

In many universities, there is not much scope for interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary areas of study. Women's studies is seen as a discipline under the faculty of social science. This restricts the admission of students from other disciplines and courses. For instance, students with post-graduate qualification from disciplines outside the faculty of social sciences may not be allowed to enroll in a Ph.D programme in women's studies. No doubt, the introduction of choice-based credit system under the semester system is an attempt to allow students to take elective courses across departments and faculties. Yet the question that bothers me is, to what extent can a modular teaching-learning programme, inculcate the critical consciousness required to do women's studies? Does the programme, in effect, undermine the radical potential of women's studies?

This point becomes clearer when examining the evaluation pattern adopted under this model of education. The emphasis is on standardization and objective evaluation in ways that would eliminate teacher bias. This sounds good in principle. But the question is, how does one go beyond standardized testing, to see the extent to which students can engage critically with theories? This concern becomes clearer when examining the model question paper designed for NET examination. The model prescribed seems to test the information level of the student rather than her ability to critically sustain a theoretical position.

### **Pitfalls of Institutionalization**

The institutionalization of women's studies has created its own compulsions of meeting certain standards set by universities, of API scores. In trying to meet these standards, the large political aims of



women's studies scholarship may well be forgotten. This has led to the neglect of extension activities by women's studies centres. In the process, women's studies becomes another discipline – a venue for career growth, rather than a potentially politically charged area. Women's studies centres are also uncertain about their existence beyond the Twelfth Plan period which concludes in March 2017 and this uncertainty has affected their functioning. These centres need support from the IAWS to ensure the continuity of UGC grant-in-aid through the next plan period.

### **Challenges Ahead**

Alongside these concerns, a point that needs to be addressed by the IAWS is the pernicious ways by which retrogressive, right-winged ideologies have entered university systems. These ideologies seek to intimidate, silence and infiltrate women's studies centers. The question is how do we resist and challenge these ideologies that are based on non-secular values and understandings about gender concerns? The resolution of this question is not as easy as it appears, neither strategically nor theoretically. The strategic difficulty of spearheading a homogenous feminist position is because acceptance of difference is fundamental to the discipline. Theoretically, feminist commitment to a secular and progressive ideology aimed at establishing women's equality is weakened by its recognition of a relativist position of truth. If no truth is non-negotiable, how can we claim the falsity of non-secular ideologies? How do we confront the interpolation of identity politics within universities? How do we accommodate diversity of ideas without compromising on core values that marked the foundations of women's studies?

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# THEMES



## GROUNDING RESEARCH: NEGOTIATING CHANGE

*Devaki Jain* \*



The 1950's and 1960's were heady times, especially for the former colonies. There were struggles for freedom in the countries of the global South for affirmation of political rights. ***Emancipation and liberation*** were the words of the moment. Many of the women who emerged from their freedom movements became prominent leaders of social and economic struggles and also established national women's organisations<sup>1</sup>. This phenomenon - women's emergence as leaders - as part of the outcome of the freedom struggles, was a characteristic of many nations in the South continents in the post-colonial era.



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\* President, IAWS, 1991-93.

<sup>1</sup> Like the National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW) founded by Aruna Asaf Ali, All India Women's Conference (AIWC) founded by Kamladevi Chattopadhyay, Anasuya Sarabhai founded the Textile Labour Association, India's oldest and largest union of textile workers in 1920. Durgabai Deshmukh established the Central Social Welfare Board in 1953. Sarojini Naidu went on to preside over the Asian Relations Conference in March 1947. Kamladevi Chattopadhyay struggled for the township of Faridabad in the outskirts of Delhi. Sucheta Kripalani became the first woman to be elected as the Chief Minister of a state (Uttar Pradesh) in 1963.



In India the decades -1950's and 60's were also years of great turbulence, both positive and negative. Post-independence, the sense of renewal, "*freedom to be*" was a strong current. Reformist and revolutionary ideological breezes blew across the country, and within identities. For example Marxism and socialism were strong currents. Simultaneously there was the presence of the ideas and institutions that came from the Gandhian fold — an open space. The turmoil, pain of partition and refugees were tangible, reconstruction was the idiom of the times. Women leaders and all India women's formations, coming from varied political roots were a major presence in the field.

While the announcement by the UN , of a world conference to be held in Mexico in 1975 June, in many ways transformed the space of thought and activism related to women and their aspirations, for most of those from the global South, UN conferences formed a very small part of their work and participation in the larger spaces. In fact, while it gave us, in India, a base and the space to make ourselves transnational, it was fed and sustained by national and sub-national issues. Thus, when the first UN conference on women to be held in Mexico was announced in 1974, many of the women in the former colonies were already engaged in one or other movement for liberation. (See *Devaki Jain, Women development and the UN Indiana University Press, 2005*).

It was this call of reporting on Status that led to the setting up of the famous Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI). Towards Equality<sup>2</sup>: the Report of the CSWI set the bench mark for investigation into the condition of women in India, as well as a stimulus to government to examine and take forward the proposals emerging from

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2 Towards Equality - <http://feministlawarchives.pldindia.org/wp-content/uploads/towards-equality-1974-part-1.pdf>? <http://feministlawarchives.pldindia.org/wp-content/uploads/towards-equality-1974-part-2.pdf>?

the findings. While many of the findings and recommendations of the report were contested from the point of view of varied political ideologies, it was still a most progressive and fact driven analysis and was acclaimed the world over for its dimensions.<sup>3</sup>

What however is interesting to note, as an Indian achievement and the progressiveness of the “old” are the recommendations of a committee that was set up by the Congress Party in 1938! Its proposals/ recommendations are almost as “radical” as the ones made by the CSWI report !!

In 1938, a National Planning Committee (NPC) was set up to chart the course of future planning in India, a Sub-Committee on Women (SCW) called Women's Role in Planned Economy (WRPE), was established in 1939 to examine and make recommendations on women's role in the planned economy.<sup>4</sup>

The SCW insisted that the traditional vision of the man in front carving out new paths, and the woman trailing behind with the child in her arms,

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3 Many a time it was not the institution but the players who made the difference. Mr.JP Naik as Chairman of Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), led the stream that enabled research, later the setting up of a committee in the ICSSR on women studies. The encouragement by the ICSSR, of research related to women brought many of us into the field of women studies. Dr. Madhuri Shah, as Chair of University Grants Commission (UGC)<sup>2</sup> ensured that women studies became a part of the University curriculum. A path breaking move leading to the current streams not only of research and report but scholars and students.

4 The Sub-Committee to discuss Women's Role in a Planned Economy was formed on 16th June 1939 to “deal with the place of woman in the planned economy..” ranging from family life, employment, education and social customs that prevent women's participation in the economy. Ref. to K.T. Shah's Introduction, (pg. 27) of “Woman's Role in Planned Economy”. Report of the Sub-Committee, National Planning Committee series. Bombay: Vora & Co. Publishers, 1947. The chairperson of the Committee was Rani Lakshmibai Rajwade, and the committee included prominent women of that time: Sarla Devi, Vijaylakshmi Pandit, Begum Zarina Currimbhoy, Sarojini Naidu, Durgabai Joshi and Dr (Smt) Muthulakshmi Reddy.



must be changed to “man and woman, comrades of the road, going forward **together**, the child joyously shared by both.”<sup>5</sup>

In each section, there were many recommendations; some of the key ones are in notes at the end of this paper. The most striking recommendation is the need to recognise women’s labour, both on the land and in the home. Other major suggestion indicates the role of the state in: provision of equal opportunities, ensuring equal wage for equal work, and protection from dangers in employment (for instance, the threat of violence).

The WRPE was obviously against the tradition of making the family a unit of economic activities because it recognised that this made women the subsidiary or secondary earners. They felt that it also acted as a justification for the relatively lower earnings of women.

Perhaps the most radical and innovative recommendation of the WRPE [resonating the current campaign for/wages for unpaid work] concerned women’s unpaid labour both in the family’s economic activities and in the household. The WRPE recommended that the economic value of the work must be recognised and, in lieu of payment, “she should have the right to claim all facilities given by the state to other workers” (e.g. medical help, crèches, training etc.). As compensation for work at home- mainly housework- the women should get absolute control over a part of the family income, and also an inalienable right to a share in the husband’s property. And the husband should pay on her behalf, the contribution necessary for a social insurance scheme for workers that the state may introduce. There was also a mention that men should learn and practice household skills.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid. Introduction, p.33., emphasis added.

Unfortunately, most of these issues and recommendations by the Committee were not incorporated into the first plan, and the women's role was considered only as a 'social' and 'welfare' issue. Nor was this oversight corrected in the later plans.



*While retrospectively on our histories, it seems important not to lose sight of the many other champions, agencies, spaces where, what can be called the women's question was being discussed as well as negotiated. Women MPs like Renu Chakravarty of the CPI, Lakshmi Menon of the Congress, often came together to negotiate space. Earlier stalwarts such as Aruna Asaf Ali, Ava Bai Wadia, Kamala Devi Chattopadhyay, Durgabai Deshmukh were all not only at "work" but had their own "clubs" - networks and activities - which were enabling women, negotiating with governments, as well as offering platforms for researchers and the women's movement.*

It is easy to negate the value of earlier generations as conservative compared to the present, but as we go deeper into political history, we recognize the valour of the "old" and the battles they fought.

### **My entry into this domain**

In the 1960's, I was a lecturer in Economics at Miranda House. But marriage and children forced me to give up the job. But I continued to dabble in writing and was persuaded to write an essay on women in an issue of the SEMINAR being brought out by Romesh and Raj Thapar in 1974. This prompted an editor in the Publications Division of Government of India to invite me to prepare a book, basically on the status of women in India also for the World Conference of Women 1975 in Mexico.

As the Governments were required to present a report on the status of women in their countries - India took two initiatives - one, setting up of the Committee on the Status of Women which was to do a well-





researched Report on the Status of Women in India. The other was an initiative by the Publications Division of the Government of India who invited me to write a book on the status of women in India, also to be released in 1975 and taken to Mexico. My edited volume was a volume of essays by academics, who had some expertise on themes related to the status of women but not experts on women or gender<sup>6</sup>. Thus, as a person who had been at the university, I recruited friends from the various departments of the University, such as: Ashish Bose from the Institute of Economic Growth, Andre Beteille from the Sociology Department, Romila Thapar from the History Department etc. to write essays. I also invited some political women, as well as stalwarts of that era. For example, Ester Boserup for employment and the writer Qurratalain Hyder for a consideration of Muslim women.

It would not be surprising to any of us now to hear that none of these scholars/ persons had really thought about women as a focus. It was a learning experience for them as it was for me. Any way doing that book or pulling it together, reading the essays and trying to write an Introduction plunged me into what can be called gendered inequality, injustice, the extraordinary neglect of women. Apart from the issues that came up from Ashish Bose's essay in the book on starting a demographic profile became a high profile topic, and which haunted as well as influenced research and policy for several decades and continues to do so, - the other glaring fact was the number given for would be called women's work participation drawn from the Census 1971 as 11.8% for women and 52.5 for men. This drove me to a desire to do a study which would look at women's roles in the economy in greater detail.

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<sup>6</sup> Jain, D. (1975), *Indian Women*, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India.



My interest in uncovering the truth about women's economic roles emerged out of both the visual and the academic. Visual in the sense that one could not miss the picture - either as one drove across India whether by bus or by car across different geographical areas, or on our city roads - of women, backs bent, working.

Women were in the fields back bending,- for picking tea leaves or back bending for sowing or digging or pulling out weeds or picking out berries gathered on the floor of the forest. They were there in what was obviously work that was adding to the economic product. But when we looked at the national statistics on women's participation it was is abysmal as compared to men's participation- it was 52.5 percent of Males as opposed to only 11.8 percent of females<sup>7</sup> in 1971.

I decided to do a field study to see if we could correct this grave error.

Post-1975 a whole new era of engagement with the women's question emerged from within government and outside; stimulated not only by the knowledge that these documents provided but also the follow up that was designated by the First UN World Conference on Women held in Mexico from June 19 to July 2<sup>nd</sup> in 1975. Governments were mandated to have bureaus to provide support to women studies and were commissioned to understand better the position and the neglect of women in different domains. The Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) which had housed the office of the CSWI, became a hub with Vina as Director, Programme of Women's Studies (from 1975-80) energizing research pertaining to women

I designed a proposal which was to observe and record women's activities and then group them together according to whether they were "productive" or "household". This study was funded by ICSSR

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid. Pg 169

which led to the founding/the birth of the ISST -whose first office was a bedroom in our home in Jor Bagh. I was able to recruit support staff.

ISST then undertook this study of rural households in 1976. In designing the study, the ISST had the privilege of advice from several scholars, notably late Professor Ashok Rudra (who initiated and supervised a first module in a village Muluk in 1977); as well as the late Professor V.M. Dandekar, who was at that time the chairperson of NSSO, and several others.

The hypothesis on the basis of which this study was undertaken was that female work participation in India was under-enumerated because of the nature of female work and wage (i) the primary objective of the study was to test this hypothesis (ii) a second objective was to try to identify the various determinants of female labour supply (iii) a third was to re-group productive and non-productive activities and define gainful activity on the basis of the evidence. However as the study went along many additional issues as well as information was thrown up which both widened and reduced the scope of the investigation.

The mode of investigation was observation and not recall. We employed the usual methodology of taking two types of areas – one which is wet land cultivation and the other one which is dry land. I chose West Bengal and Rajasthan.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> In West Bengal, I chose an area near Shantiniketan and in Rajasthan near Bharatpur. NSSO advised us to choose three villages as a 15 % sample of a taluka. The NSSO field officers helped us then to make the selection of households, which we did according to land classes as the proxy for economic class. Having done that, over one year, my colleagues lived in these villages, two in a cluster of three and did what we call recording of time use with the observation method. They would visit households on rotation basis. (Jain, D. (2007) 'Integrating Unpaid Work in Macro economics: Some Indian Experiences', International Seminar on Mainstreaming Time Use Survey in the National Statistical System in India, Goa).

The study underlined that the characteristics of the female labour force were markedly different from those of male labour force, requiring far greater investigation and documentation and requiring a far most sensitive response by the system. For example female labour was concentrated in certain occupations which were by and large, the least skilled, worst paid, most time consuming ones. It further revealed that within certain processes of production there was segmentation of tasks between men and women, and often the tasks performed by women were not identified. In other words, the base line invisibility made the displacement from employment an invisible unquantified loss to women.<sup>9</sup>

By this time i.e. 1979 / 85 women studies centers had also increased their pace and generated many reports and studies. The idea of a conference on women studies emerged and the First<sup>10</sup>. National Conference on Women's Studies<sup>11</sup> held in India, in 1981 defined women's studies as a critical perspective and recommended the integration of the 'woman's question' in all disciplines<sup>12</sup>.

Energy, passion, knowledge-sharing, networking all took place in that one space and the fall out for many of us, who were economists was setting up our own sub network of women economists within the larger association. Similar bonding took place in other themes too, such that the arena was enriched with collective knowledge and advocacy.



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9 Jain,D. (1996) 'Valuing Work : Time As Measure', Economic and Political Weekly.

10 Krishnaraj, M. (2002) 'Looking Back' in Bhagwat, V. and Rege, S. (Eds.) *Our Story: Twenty ears of the IAWS*, Pune, Indian Association of Women's Studies, pp.14- 15.

11 Pande, R. Women Studies: An Institutional Experience, *Women Link*, 19(2) Also see- <http://www.isidelhi.org.in/wl/article/2013-02.pdf>

12 IAWS- <http://www.iaws.org>



For example at this conference many of us had an opportunity to meet others from our own disciplines, and I was able to initiate a network, drawing in the economists who came to the conference, called it EIWIG (Economists Interested in Women's Issues Group) as - in those days the term feminist was not yet in use, and secondly it was my intent that many of the economists, if not all the economists, need to look at gender.



This group was encouraged by the Ministry of Labour as well as other ministries and held four conferences at which the focal points were special issues such as industry, agriculture, poverty and invisibility in statistics. These conferences took note of data on women's particular locations and issues arising from them and also challenged the statistical system and the way that data was collected. It was the first round in gendering economics. ISST brought out a volume out of these conferences called *Tyranny of the household*<sup>13</sup>, and the now famous professor Amartya Sen was part of the first meeting of EIWIG, which was focused on poverty and women, and contributed an essay 'Malnutrition of Rural Children and the Sex Bias'<sup>14</sup> to this volume that emerged out of these meetings.

This differentiating between men and women, amongst the poor, now known as gender differentiation, became the strum of all the research, and advocacy of ISST. This uncovering of women within the poverty sets as a "class" by themselves was of crucial importance to the journey, as it challenged political ideology apart from economic programmes.

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13 Jain, D. and Banerjee, N. (Eds.) (1985) *Tyranny of Household: Investigative Essays on Women's Work*, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi

14 Sen, A. And Sengupta, S. (1985) Malnutrition of Rural Children and the Sex Bias in Jain, D. And Banerjee, N. (Eds.) *Tyranny of the Household: Investigative Essays on Women's Work*, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, pp. 3- 24





Government in India had massive anti-poverty programs. We decided to find out how women were doing in these programs. This was a continuum to our finding that within the household there was such cruel inequality based on gender. Since the targeted poverty eradication programmes in India considered the household as the last unit of the boundary for giving relief, we wanted to break through those household walls and see what was happening inside. The findings were chastening. The woman in the household was perceived as not having any economic activity; neither poor women nor poor men were receiving the benefits. The delivery mechanisms were remote and inappropriate, and women were not recognized as economic agents. Often in poor households, while men may be wage labours, the woman could be providing an income through selling cow dung cakes, rolling bidis etc or some home based productions. However, she was not addressed at all in the outreach of credit support.

This finding led us to propose breaking open the household, to look into the various inequalities it contained. Research was coming up from other places, on sequential feeding, how in a household men and male children were fed first, so women and girls often were deprived, if the household was a poverty household. It was a hunt and we were constantly invited to investigate injustices in the domain of women's work both by the government as well as self driven.

When one of the girls who had been brought in a gang from Kerala to the beaches of Gujarat to peel the prawns that had to be harvested and readied for the market died in the "camps", the Ministry of Labor invited us to investigate this death to see what it was all about? The girls were usually housed in small dingy rooms in Veraval on the coast of Gujarat, often separated from the Contractors living space only by a cloth curtain.







This led us to look at the whole business of bringing women labour as gangs by contractors and the supply seemed to be coming from one set of villages in Kerala. The study called 'prawn peelers of Kerala' showed the vulnerability of the girls, the misconduct of the contractors as well as the low wages paid to these women. As a result, both the state governments took interest. We arranged for a conference in Kerala which included the fishery department and the women's department to see why it was that these girls could be so easily mobilized and taken all the way and no wage fixation or protection or accommodation had been arranged on the beaches. This led to a similar echo conference in Ahmedabad. A policy was framed where hostels would be built on that coast where the women who were brought, could be housed and other legislation, including income earning opportunities were put in place in Kerala to protect the women.

Similarly, ISST undertook a study of sericulture in Karnataka where the World Bank argued that women had no role to play in this industry. They were funding an upgradation of the silk cocoons. We did a field study and found that in fact cocoon rearing inside the small shacks was all done by women. They harvested the mulberry leaves and often had to feed the cocoons every three hours all night. Once we pointed out that this was unpaid family work, and affecting women's health- issues which got no recognition at all, the state government began to look into the matter of health and better facilities for cocoon rearing.



This uncovering of women's contribution to "the final product", but neither recognized nor rewarded became another important objective of the ISST. We studied production processes, such as weaving of carpets in Jammu and Kashmir, preparing of silver filigree products in Orissa, and so on. In each case the recognition was not only for the sake of recognition but also to enable the understanding of "displacement", the silent removal of wage earning spaces.



Our time use study had revealed that the majority of women in rural Rajasthan earned their income, in cash or kind through weeding the fields. There was a strong move to introduce harvesters to improve productivity in farming. Our findings and voice , i.e. shouting with the data, among other information , -induced a member of the Planning commission at that time, Professor Sukhumoy Chakravarty to also support the banning of harvesters in agriculture in these regions.

Chasing women's spaces in the work field became a passionate journey. In the Jama Masjid area we found women were working on zari embroidered into various decorative items. Just a little behind the shops and theatres of Asaf Ali Road in the gullies women in hovels were preparing lifafas i.e. small paper bags made out of old newspaper. They would buy old newspapers and in their homes with some homemade gum they would make these bags in assorted sizes – some 6x4, some 10x6. These in turn were sold to the street vendors for putting their small or big amounts of whatever they were selling – especially foodstuffs or rather dried items. It was a circular economy. We found that whether it was the zardozi workers or the lifafa makers, despite spending hours in their homes working with their hands while also doing the cooking and child care, their earnings were abysmal. They were obviously being exploited by the brokers who commissioned them and then took their goods to be sold to the shops. Our effort then was to bring them into some form of unions – to identify their problems and to address them.

In the tea plantations in the hilly regions of Karnataka women workers in the tea plantation who were basically picking leaves carefully and putting them in their bags on the shoulders lamented as follows: Men would like to use us. They invite us to sleep with them. Those who agree they weigh their bags correctly. Those who don't, they deliberately weigh their bags to show less than what there is. Payment is usually made on the weight of the leaves that they collect in a bag.



We heard a similar story when we went to organize the women who were working in bidi rolling. A local shopkeeper holds a stock of tobacco. Local women from poor households come to them and he gives them raw material free. Payment is made when they bring bundles of thousand rolled bidis. Once again the shopkeeper propositions them asking them to give him sexual favours. Those who do not agree, he counts in such a way that he rejects falsely 200% just to weigh less. This form of sexual exploitation of workers in these industries drove us further and further into not only studying by visits, women workers, but also to enable voice, organise and intervene



Along this road we also found that women workers had combined into associations, into cooperative societies as well as street struggles, to fight for their rights as well as enhance their earning power. We undertook case studies of such endeavours, and published a book of some of them.<sup>15</sup>

Looking for catchments where women were present in large numbers led us to do the first study of women on the sites of the Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Scheme, or MEGS as it was called. The MEGS is the mother of NREGA. The ILO funded it as part of their emergency schemes studies. We published a report in 2 volumes<sup>16</sup>. We found many holes in the scheme. Firstly women participated in large numbers giving a lie to the notion that women do not come out for wage work. There were many built in inequalities in wage giving as well as share of work. We then actively pursued UNICEF to provide crèche and food

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15 Jain, D. (1980), *Women's Quest for Power: Five Indian Case Studies*, Vikas Publication Housing Pvt. Ltd.

16 *The Impact of Women Workers: Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Scheme: A Study (Vol. 1 and 2) (1979)*, Sponsored by Employment and Development Department, International Labour Organization, Geneva. Prepared by Institute of Social Studies, New Delhi.





facilities for women in the sites. Chayya Datar was the lead field investigator and later published a book on this endeavour

Learning from the field through data collection surveys and through discussions with local groups, and then doing advocacy for course correction in policy program as well as ground level organizing, became the methodology of ISST. There was no scholarly research, reference to books. It was field and then carrying the field 'upwards' to public fora and simultaneously taking steps to bring redressal to groups and people we met. In the first phase research whether it was through data collection or through listening to voice was made into reports, books, memoranda and taken to policy fora whether in Government or UN.

Going to the ground, to look at the women who are engaging in activities but without remuneration became the thrust of our work – ground and then survey, write, prepare reports, carry it to Government departments, state authorities, UN institutions and argue for better understanding of programmes. In those years, say 69-70 or 75-95 in ISST perhaps we never read theoretical work of books on these issues. Our entire work was visiting the fields, doing some short and dirty surveys, picking up the analyses and carrying it to places where it can make a difference to the people that we studied or surveyed. I do not remember reading a single book on gender studies. Each uncovering pointed to not only the flaws in measurement, data gathering but also to the flaws in programme design due to the invisibilization of women.

There were many - not conflicts but differences - amongst all of us in the movement. The study of women or the understanding of women and its articulation was not limited only to institutes of research like CWDS or ISST. It went beyond to the numerous, in fact innumerable women centers activist voices that were spread across India. There was also the radical edge of the women studies and women centers



who perceived and called those centers like ISST and even CWDS who were engaging with transforming Government programmes and policies as being **reformist**, and the autonomous women's groups called **revolutionary** . In other words working with Government was seen as co-option. Further while working with the State had been a positive idea in the 50s and 60 s as post-independence spirit, by the 70s and 80s, this mood and environment had changed.

Women's Studies, Gender studies has now spread in India both through the University as well as due to the interest by funding agencies in uncovering the reality. Theoretical works, which engage with political economy as well as other domains lead the research. In this context it could be asked whether the earlier era, which was driven to uncover the reality and then argue for change, had not had greater impact than these studies and reports?

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## REVISITING STATE POLICIES ON WOMEN IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

*Kumud Sharma\**



The XV IAWS Conference opens on the theme of Inequality. There is a long history of theorization of inequalities and discursive positioning of gender, and its intersection with class, caste, ethnicity and religion. After pursuing the economic growth models for decades it was realized that problems of inequality, poverty, declining income and livelihood options for a substantial number of people cannot be addressed by growth alone.



Engaging state on policy and legislative reform was a key agenda for women. There are many challenges involved in policy advocacy on women's issues, due to existing structures and institutionalized gender inequalities. There may not always be the desired impact or outcome. Rural development programmes and policies have witnessed several changes over the years in terms of approaches, strategies and programmes. In the last four decades, a resurgent women's movement

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\* President, IAWS, 2003-05.



and its engagement with state policies and institutions, has located women's concerns within larger debates. Sustained advocacy has led to policy shifts, legislative amendments, and new institutional mechanisms. This paper addresses a few issues relating to women and rural development.

Since the 1970s, interrogating development policies have brought out long standing concerns, problematizing social and gender relations by using a gender lens to understanding of the dynamics of social and economic change. Central to this analysis was a critique of the key social institutions (family, household, community, caste, division of labour and so on) which structure women's roles and define their entitlements. Towards Equality: the Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India (GOI, 1974) concluded that 'no matter what the growth models, the development process increases differentiation by class, caste and gender'. It recommended the adoption of a 'well defined policy' for women. It was after the UN Conference in Beijing that a National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001) was adopted. Official documents, however, claim that the approaches to women's development have shifted from welfare to equity, to anti-poverty and efficiency and women's agency and finally, to women's empowerment.

Do we have a coherent policy for rural women's development, or is it mostly an academic debate? Gender issues in rural development policies are wide and complex. These are considered as instruments of development and change and a tool for redressing inequalities and gender imbalances. The Transformative potential of development policies often gets translated into a limited framework of service delivery, target group approach or cash transfers to the poor and marginalized groups.





In the 1990s, in the wake of economic liberalization, there was a renewed debate on addressing the needs of the deprived sections. Arguments for increased social sector spending were advanced to soften the impact of new economic policies, and provide social protection and safety nets to the poor.

Rural women constitute a large majority of food producers for decades agricultural policies and research had a blinkered view of women farmers. The 'women and development' debate brought to focus the economic imperative of addressing women's concern in agriculture. Empirical studies on women in peasant households have confirmed Ester Boserup's (1970) conclusions that the marginalization of women in agriculture has further reinforced the biases in policies. A large part of India's agriculture sector depends on climatic and weather conditions. The loss of biodiversity, specifically food crops affects food security and sustainability of the agricultural sector. Increasing pressure on a fragile resource base has contributed to failure in meeting subsistence needs among marginal farmers and poor rural households. Women bear an unequal burden in meeting the subsistence needs.

NSSO's estimates (68<sup>th</sup> Round 2011-12) show that 80% of women in rural areas depend on agriculture for their livelihood. They constitute about 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of cultivators and 47% of the agricultural labour force. Time use surveys reflect heterogeneity in women's contribution to agriculture. However, rural women's work burden exceeds that of men as it includes a much higher proportion of unpaid household responsibilities. They are overrepresented in unpaid, seasonal and part-time work. Recognition of the diversity of women's role in agriculture and rural livelihood is important for meaningful policy planning. Though there are no accurate estimates of women's contribution to agriculture and food production, nonetheless women are important food producers (60-80%) in developing countries and







play a crucial role in the food production cycle. It is estimated that in India about 14.9% of households are headed by females.

A National Committee appointed by the Ministry of Agriculture (1979-80) reiterated that, 'development efforts have not taken much cognizance of the roles of women and there is a need to improve her productivity and skills in farming operations and strengthen her role in local decision making bodies'. Examining the increasing undervaluation of women's role in agriculture and their 'economic invisibility' to planners, the Committee emphasized that 'the articulation of the relationship between land, labour and capital in the rural social structure and the impact of their incorporation into the larger market system is central to understanding of the various dimensions of rural women's lives.' For the first time the Report discussed at length the need for ensuring ownership of land and house sites to women when they are distributed under land reforms or as part of a public distribution programme.

Critical resources such as land are unevenly distributed by gender as women seldom enjoy ownership rights. Even when they own land in their own right, they may not actually have a voice in decision-making with regard to sale, mortgages and purchase of land. Agriculture has seen a decline in female work force across all states. The reasons cited are education and income effect and insufficient non-farm jobs.

The traditional denial of women as farmers and key producers excludes them from equality in ownership. Though women are a crucial resource they face constraints that reduce their productivity. Occupational segregation and their concentration in low skilled low tech agricultural operations, limits opportunities to generate new capabilities.

Legislative changes have been made in India to facilitate women's right to inheritance and land ownership (e.g. Amendment to the Hindu





Succession Act, 2005), but in practice little has changed. It is difficult to say as to how many women are able to exercise their legal right to a share of the undivided land of the family. How many women have exercised their right to partition? Data about women's ownership of land and various forms of tenurial rights are not adequately recorded. The interface between gender and the land issue is contextually specific and cannot be addressed by a uniform policy.

Agrarian systems in India are highly diverse. So are patterns of inheritance. These include personal and customary laws governing inheritance. Gender and property relations are rooted in patriarchal systems. Some of the key constraints to access to land and other resources for the poor and socially excluded are – land lease market, fragmentation of holdings, failure to translate women's legal entitlement into practice, encroachment of commons and transaction costs of land transfers. Real and long lasting improvements in women's social and economic well-being are directly linked to their control and access to resources. With the deceleration of female rural employment and livelihood options, intensification of unpaid and casual labour, the land question has acquired a new urgency.

Eighty six percent of arable land is privately owned. Very few women have social and economic assets to enter land markets. The agrarian transformations, that include greater commercialization and integration of agricultural products into global food chains, bring with them both challenges and opportunities with a distinct impact on gender dimension. Farmers who are producing for supermarkets and global food chains are educated and well resourced, while the small and marginal farmers get marginalized due to low capabilities and inputs and poor access to resources and markets.

There are a number of issues on which there is little agreement – universal vs. targeted approach, equity and redistributive justice, risk





and vulnerability factors which involve systemic denial of entitlements and rights to resource.

Most governments in their rural development policies have adopted poverty alleviation strategies. These policies filter through social and economic institutions like families, communities, market arrangements, health and educational systems. Rural development policies have one dominant theme of poverty alleviation. Over the years, there have been several changes in terms of approaches, strategies and programmes (Integrated Rural Development Programmes, Area Plans, tribal sub plans, wage employment programmes, food for work, employment assurance schemes like MGNREGS, social security like maternity benefits for women and land reforms). A belated recognition of women's resource right in government land distribution programmes (joint land titles) has suffered due to non-implementation. The West Bengal government issued a circular in 1992 for joint pattas, fourteen years after the land reforms programme began and could not be implemented with retrospective effect. The majority of land distributed by state governments was wasteland and ceiling surplus land. Mostly women were the main beneficiaries as they were deemed to be the heads of the households.

### **Gender Inequality, Risk and Vulnerability in the Rural Economy**

Risk and vulnerabilities affect poverty dynamics. Small and marginal farmer households are vulnerable to both economic and social shocks which include indebtedness, production losses, lack of access to inputs, information and markets. Women are held back disproportionately by disadvantages rooted in inequality. Gender specific vulnerabilities are often multiple and interlinked.

Risks and vulnerabilities are key features of rural poverty and households manage risks through diversification of both farm and non-



farm activities. A large proportion of the chronic poor, especially women are dependent on casual labour and face the risk of entitlement failure.



The Chronic Poverty Report (2008, Overview p. xii) identified 5 poverty traps including:-

- Insecurity (of environment, conflict and violence);
- Limited citizenship (lack of political voice);
- Spatial disadvantages (exclusion from markets, resources)
- Social discrimination (traps people in exploitative relationships of power and patronage).

The report argues that a sharper policy focus is needed on the inequalities that confront the marginalized sections and massive investments are needed in assets to sustain poverty escapes.

Gender specific vulnerabilities are often multiple and interlinked. Viewing women as a target group results in a narrow conceptualization of gendered vulnerabilities and promoting their participation in sectors with low growth and remuneration.

State interventions through labour, food and credit markets have proved inadequate. Most of the interventions aim to reduce the misery and deprivations and exclusionary outcomes of various macro policy initiatives. Today the universal right to food security, livelihood and education is recognized. MGNREGA (expression of right to work) guarantees rural households access to assured employment and a nominal annual income in exchange for manual work. Is it only a palliative or will it increase the effective demand for wage goods of the working poor, a substantial number of whom are women? Has it resulted in decline in distress migration? Has it given a dignified space to poor women? While the intent is good, the scheme is plagued with many irregularities and leakages.





The National Rural Livelihood Mission (2010) emphasizes that investing in self-managed institutions of the poor yields good returns in poverty reduction.

Nevertheless, with regard to the right to food, there is no agreement on the commitment to extent and coverage. Limited and uncertain entitlements negate the potential of these legally guaranteed but limited measures to address social exclusion. Is it possible to ensure food, income and livelihood and educational rights without moving away from growth philosophy?

### **Credit as a via Media for Self-Employment**

Sizeable literature today exists about the impact of micro credit on women. In rural development programmes, credit is seen as a via media for self-employment and as an alternative livelihood initiative. Self-help Groups (SHG) of women are widely acknowledged as effective anti-poverty interventions as in the absence of effective social security programme, credit and SHGs are seen as an insurance against risks for the vulnerable households. Assumptions about women's access to credit and their empowerment are not new as many grassroots organisations in India have identified credit as a major constraint for self-employed women and women in the informal sector. High repayment rates among women led to the belief that women are good creditor.

Micro credit was also seen as a key strategy for poverty reduction in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Many NGOs have demonstrated the potential for self help in promoting self-employment and entrepreneurship among women. Some argue that in many cases, income increases are small as the groups invest in existing activities which are low profit and insecure. Women's contribution to family income does not necessarily mean that it poses a challenge to gender inequalities.



Has micro-finance emerged as a cost effective mechanism for providing financial services to the poor and meeting the needs of the rural poor women? A clear strategy in micro-finance needs to look beyond improving women's access to credit and organizing self-help groups and look at promoting rural enterprises and linking them to potential markets as part of the planning process.



### **Women's Collective Voices and Interest Representation**

In the 1980s, organisations of poor and marginalized sections were strongly advocated in order to:-

- enhance their access to resources and enlarging their livelihood options;
- demand broader policy and institutional changes through collective action and emphasizing distributional concerns (Land titles, house sites, credit, common resources);
- improve capabilities and bargaining power.

Those involved with grassroots interventions realized that 'development activism' at the local level has to deal with not only basic survival issues of the poor women which often get subverted by macro policies; but also local power structures which contain women's mobilization efforts. The issue at the local level are both ideological and strategic. The liberal democratic system believes that inequalities can be dealt with by legislation or affirmative action, which in itself does not bring about redistributive justice or changes in power structures.

New democratic spaces for women's engagement in local planning were created by the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) through 72<sup>nd</sup> and 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitution Amendment Act 1992). With the introduction of political reservation for women in PRIs it was expected that this would bring about a qualitative difference in grassroots politics. The entry of



women in large number in these institutions envisaged a significant change in the process of decentralized governance and power and development planning at the local level.

The connections between women's representations, voice and agency are not simple. According to field reports, women face multiple challenges. They are looking for support networks in their struggle and encounters with complex state structures and rural power elites. They also need adequate support mechanisms and access to information, education and resources to be effective. Other institutions of governance and local planning also need to be responsive to their concerns.

Women who have been active in local organisations/movements (literacy campaigns, anti liquor campaigns, Mahila Samakhya Groups, SHGs etc.) and have been exposed to mobilization and sensitization process, have both the will and political energy to take on the challenges and withstand counter pressures.

The Draft National Policy for Women (2016), coming after 15 years of the 1<sup>st</sup> National Policy, envisages 're-scripting of women's empowerment as a socially inclusive, right based approach while reinforcing rights and entitlement provided under the Constitution of India'. Taking note of the 'feminization of agriculture', the Draft Report talks about recognizing women as farmers and providing support to them in their livelihood, visibility and identity.

The relationship between planned interventions and macro economic policies are always weak. Macro economic policies through state interventions and markets, distribute key economic resources. Gender responsive policies have to take into account distributional concerns and exclusionary outcomes and not limit these to the single dimension of poverty. There is a need to have a hard look at forces of transformation which restructure inequalities.



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## EVOLUTION OF A DEBATE ON SEX RATIOS



*Mary E John\**

I am very grateful to the IAWS for inviting me to write something on the evolution of the debate on sex ratios, in the context of the emergence in contemporary India of the women's movement and of women's studies. What is so remarkable is the symbiotic relationship between women's studies and the problem of the adverse sex ratio. It is true that the discovery of "missing" girls and their statistical significance goes back to the colonial period (practices of female infanticide in northern India and the imbalanced numbers in the first censuses from 1881). In the post-independence period, a demographer like Pravin Visaria noted the long term trend in declining sex ratios in the population from census data up till 1961. However, it was only with the publication of the *Towards Equality* Report by the Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI) that the issue of adverse sex ratios came into full focus as a major problem for thinking about gender inequality in India. It is important to emphasize this because in the eyes of the public the issue of "missing women" is frequently associated with the



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\* General Secretary, IAWS, 2005-08.





article written by Amartya Sen in the New York Review of Books in 1990, and undue credit is given to him – by no means did he discover this problem, though he had important things to say about it, in relation to overall development in countries like India and China. In the short space of this essay I will try and focus on some of the main issues, which I have dwelt on at greater length elsewhere (John 2015, see bibliography for references in this essay).

### **The Pivotal Role of Towards Equality**

Chapter Two of *Towards Equality* on demographic trends showed that all India census statistics in 1901 put the figure at 961 women for every 1000 men, which fell to 946 in 1951, 941 in 1961 and 930 in 1971. When the fledgling research field of women's studies was established within the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) in the mid 1970s, this shocking and surprising data on the declining sex ratio acted as a springboard for the new research they hoped to undertake, ranging from migration to women's labour.

Inspired in no small measure by the work of the CSWI, another demographer Asok Mitra's monograph in 1978 is particularly noteworthy for the scope of the questions he posed to the "inexplicable" data. While it was relatively easy to put down the very early Census figures to undercounting and the regions of colonial Punjab and parts of Rajputana had already been noted for their practices of female infanticide, it was the twentieth century trends that were so difficult to comprehend. Mitra called upon the social science community to probe everything, from the effects of recurrent famines and epidemics, migration patterns, food availability and consumption trends, mortality differentials across the entire life cycle, from infancy to maternal deaths and aging, disparities in medical treatment, and, finally, to the effects of labour and employment among women both rural and urban. Till the 1980s, much of the focus on disparate sex ratios, whether in the





historical, anthropological or demographic literature, looked for their explanations within kinship patterns and in rural contexts.

Therefore, while it is important to note that Asok Mitra did wish to include in his long list of research the role of urban employment such as blue and white collar jobs, the effective focus coming out of the social sciences during the 1970s and 80s was on sex ratio disparities in rural, and more specifically, agricultural households. Barbara Miller's analysis rested on finding cultural correlates within rural societies. Moreover, the kind of focus on women's work brought out contradictory assumptions. Women's work in the home, her unpaid 'productive' labour and her potential to work for wages were deeply significant yet contradictory issues.

### **The Women's Movement's Engagements with Sex Selection**

In the late 1970s and 80s, women's organizations shocked the public with evidence of violence against women among the urban middle classes, of which the most horrendous involved unmasking the 'accidental' death of young brides in the homes of their in-laws. It is in the wake of these campaigns against violence, which opened up family, household and the state to feminist scrutiny, that an outcry ensued over the first reports of amniocentesis testing for sex determination in cities like Delhi, Bombay and Amritsar, when amniocentesis testing for foetal abnormalities was 'hijacked' for purposes of sex selection.

With the first protest meeting in 1982 in Delhi, called by a coalition of national women's organizations demanding a complete ban, and the establishment of the Forum against Sex Determination and Sex Pre-selection (FASDSP) in Bombay in 1985, a new level of political intervention was necessitated, focusing on a modern technology that made sex selection before birth a possibility. The creation of the FASDSP in 1985 turned the issue into a national campaign, which used all the





skills of organizing – from street theatre and demonstrations to public interest litigation. Initially, the problem did not find the kind of public resonance that the campaigns against dowry and rape had achieved. Just as the campaign against sex selection began to gain ground, came startling reports of female infanticide in Tamil Nadu, considered to be a ‘good’ state in terms of sex ratios and women’s overall status. In specific rural districts, especially Madurai, Salem and Dharmapuri, the numbers were high enough to show up in taluk (block) level sex ratios. (George et al 1992) In an essay reflecting on female infanticide in Tamil Nadu written a decade later, Rajeswari Sunder Rajan sensitively probes the different frameworks that have been deployed for approaching this practice – as a crime, the product of a backward region, a manifestation of gender discrimination and through the lens of demographically oriented sex ratio imbalances.

Such specific cases of female infanticide apart, it was sex selection via medical technologies (namely the detection of foetal sex followed by an abortion) that came to be perceived as the main danger. As a consequence of campaign pressure, the first central legislation took the form of the Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) (PNDT) Act of 1994, subsequently revised as the PC (Pre-conception)-PNDT (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act of 2003. However, legislation by no means had the result that was anticipated – the practice continued and has been spreading even though it is a crime (carrying a punishment of imprisonment of up to three years and a fine).

### **Sex Selection and the Law**



Precisely because of the central place that the law has occupied in the opposition to sex selection, it is particularly important to emphasize that the legal focus has been on the technologies involved in sex determination testing, not on the subsequent act of having an abortion



(which in any event would not obtain in the rare cases of pre-selection). This point is often missed, given the language of the campaigns against female foeticide or sex selective abortions (SSA), including all the media focus on sensational cases involving the discovery of aborted fetuses. There was much debate on the existing abortion law (the Medical Termination of Pregnancies Act of 1971) which had been passed as part of population control and family planning, with little or no concern for women's rights, much less control over her body.

Nivedita Menon challenged the campaign against sex selection, by arguing that the very effort to obtain justice from the law is doomed to failure. It is simply philosophically incoherent to argue in favour of abortion "in terms of the right of women to control their bodies and at the same time, demanding that women be restricted by law from choosing specifically to abort female fetuses". In our context Menon asks how the law can be "selective", that is to say, distinguish between a general right to abortion, on the one hand, and the specific abrogation of that right in the case of sex selection.

Menon's critique points to a problem in the language and focus of the campaigns. To date, 'female foeticide' is a popular slogan, in spite of or perhaps because of its connotations of murder, even genocide; others prefer the more politically correct terminology of sex selective abortions, and even more recently of gender biased sex selection. However, I would like to point out that abortions and the MTP Act have not been the most significant sites where the law encountered its limitations. The problem was not of how to narrow down the meaning of abortion to sex selective abortions, but rather of getting the law to work at the prior stage of sex determination, especially when the terrain of its applicability became technologically more widespread and advanced. In their subsequent examination of the legislative history and context of the PC-PNDT Act, Indira Jaising, C. Sathyamala and





Asmita Basu begin by pointing out the first problem with the 1994 legislation – next to nothing was done in terms of its implementation.

A Public Interest Litigation led by Sabu George, CEHAT and MASUM seeking directions was therefore filed in the Supreme Court in 1998. At this point in time, technological innovations available in India included highly expensive and complex possibilities of pre-selection through certain sperm sorting techniques in combination with Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ARTs) to “choose” the sex of a child at the time of conception through in vitro fertilization. In flagrant violation of the PNDT Act even “home kits” for knowing the sex of a baby have frequently been advertised over the internet from countries like the US and Canada. But as Jaising, Sathyamala and Basu state with great emphasis, it is with the ubiquity of ultrasound (including portable versions), prescribed for all pregnancies, that the limits of the law have become most obvious. The law encountered its biggest stumbling block in the fact that what had started out as a particular medical technique to detect foetal abnormalities via specialized genetic centres was now part of the generalized “normal” practice of ante-natal medical care.

One of the biggest obstacles of the PNDT Act has been the overall immunity of the medical fraternity and sorority, which may be why it took so many years to even put monitoring bodies in place. According to Brinda Karat and Sabu George, the strong nexus connecting medical personnel, politicians and bureaucrats has made a mockery of the law. As they point out, “since 1994 when the PCPNDT law was enacted there have been only 93 convictions. Of the 1,036 ongoing cases, only a small per cent, possibly 10 per cent, relate to charges of communication of the sex of the foetus”.



Therefore, something of an impasse has been encountered in the legal campaign, which groups are trying to break. It is not enough to say,



as Karat and George among other leading activists do, that there is nothing wrong with the law (which must certainly be included in any comprehensive policy now under consideration), when its implementation has either been non-existent or so flawed. More than the incoherence of a selective approach to abortion, it is a situation of all round collusion backed by power without a complainant that robs the law of meaning. Moreover, as the disability movement has pointed out, the law has selectiveness built into it. Even though there was some initial discussion among women's organizations about the advisability of demanding an overall ban on any amniocentesis testing including for possible foetal abnormalities, the basic form taken by the law was to make a distinction between 'legitimate' grounds and their 'misuse'. In other words, while checking for certain genetic abnormalities in a foetus are medically and socially acceptable grounds for aborting such a foetus, should there be a positive diagnosis, sex determination testing is a crime. Feminists like Anita Ghai have asked why there should be such an automatic assumption against bringing a potentially disabled child into the world, and what this tells us about the absence of any effective rights for the disabled, and of society's responsibilities towards children with disabilities. Politicizing the 'social' bias against girls cannot be advanced without also politicizing the 'naturalized' bias against disability.

### **Population Policies, Government Schemes, and the Girl Child**

Apart from the law, how else has the state machinery responded to the 'missing girl child'? Schemes are the other means that have been adopted so far. However, these very schemes that have been promoted recently reveal the ongoing centrality of population control in the compulsions towards combating the adverse child sex ratio. A particularly clear example would be the conditional cash transfer schemes for the girl child being variously promoted by a number of state governments.





Behind most of these schemes is an aspect of population policy that enjoys widespread consent, namely the two-child norm. Though the National Population Policy (2000) contains no such provisions, recent Supreme Court rulings as well as population policies promulgated by several states seek to penalize and disbar those who have more than two children from accessing various government programmes. First and foremost, such a policy constitutes a violation of human rights. As Mohan Rao has argued, the “imposition of the two-child norm, and the disincentives proposed (including disbarment to stand for elections right from the level of local government), would mean that the majority of the deprived populations would bear the brunt of the state’s withdrawal of ameliorative measures, pitifully inadequate as they are.” But, what is less well recognized, in the context of the present focus on adverse CSRs, is that a “vigorous pursuit of the two-child norm is an invitation to female sex selective abortion”.

A recent desk study by T.V. Sekher provides a detailed overview of many of the current schemes being promoted in several states, which are essentially conditional cash transfer schemes over the life a girl from birth to eighteen years. But the rules and requirements laid down, the conditionalities and eligibility criteria for the various schemes on offer today, as discussed by Sekher, have now multiplied. Moreover, as many have noted, the scrambling of population control with protecting the girl child can have particularly adverse outcomes. Poverty has also been turned into an eligibility criterion. Many have critiqued such schemes for effectively providing a lump sum as dowry to a family—indeed, in north-west India, these schemes are locally called ‘dahej’ (dowry) schemes. It is to be hoped therefore that these schemes will be subjected to a much needed review.

### **Insights and Debates in Demography**

The first discovery of new and disturbing trends among child sex ratios (CSRs) was an accidental product of the state’s desire to measure







literacy rates and schooling, which led to separate Census statistics for the pre-school 0-6 age group population. Even though Census 1991 recorded an all time low sex ratio of 927 overall, its most worrying statistic turned out to be declining CSRs in several states, even below 900 in Punjab and Haryana. A decade later Census 2001 riveted the country and the world beyond with news that India's overall CSR had dropped below that of the general population: While the child sex ratio fell from 943 in 1991 to 927 in 2001, that of the overall sex ratio rose from 927 to 933 in the same period (a clear sign that life expectancy among surviving women was increasing significantly).

Satish Agnihotri sounded a note of caution in his study of differential mortality rates among children, by region and social group in India, with sex selection as yet only of marginal concern. He is responsible for coining the notion of a "prosperity effect", defined in terms of the relative effects of increases in income on the survival of boys and girls, with startling evidence that such prosperity worsened the gender gap of survival. Of particular importance is his analysis of the sharp decline in child sex ratios among the Scheduled Castes in north India, where the rate of decline even exceeds that of the general population. While the equivalent child sex ratios among Scheduled Tribes is high on average, this is often a consequence of high rates of child mortality for both sexes, with the exception of the state of Rajasthan whose tribal populations also showed excess female mortality.

Monica Das Gupta and P.N. Mari Bhat computed that between 1981 and 1991, approximately 4.2 million girls in the age group 0-4 had died, in excess of official death rates, and also arrived at an estimate of 1.2 million girls missing due to sex selective abortions, just under 1% of all female live births. Missing women - among different age groups, social locations and across time periods – turned into a major and contentious subject of analysis, with considerable dispute over trends and their causes.



A particularly noteworthy exploration was undertaken by Mari Bhat who argued against what he deemed to be excessively 'feminist' assumptions of gender bias. Revisiting the data from 1911 onwards, he highlighted problems with age reporting among children in particular (which would render CSR comparisons across time less reliable); he also pointed to ways in which relative improvements in the life expectancy of boys and adult men from very low prior levels over the course of the twentieth century could misleadingly "worsen" the sex ratio. Re-estimating Asok Mitra's 'conundrum' over India's declining sex ratio, Mari Bhat postulated that while in the first half of the twentieth century about 5 million adult women were 'missing', by 1991 the figure was 21 million (of which only 14% were below 15 years). Between 1951 and 1981 the sex ratio among children became marginally masculine and then worsened post 1981, for the first time in urban India. The latter could be put down largely to sex selection, but the former might be as much due to a rise in male births with better maternal nutrition and deliveries, as a consequence of a greater bias against girls.

The provisional results of Census 2011 have added new twists to the saga. India's overall CSR has dropped further to 918. While north-west India and the rest of the country continue to stand apart, the reasons have changed. It would appear that there has been a peaking (or plateauing) of the practice of sex selection in states like Gujarat, Haryana, Delhi and Himachal Pradesh, with actual small improvements from very low levels in Punjab and Chandigarh. Whatever the extent and nature of positive change in north-west India, CSRs are falling in large parts of western, central and eastern India – Maharashtra, Goa, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and even Andhra Pradesh has joined the ranks from among the southern states. In other words, the state wise figures demonstrate a widening of the circle, well beyond the so-called prosperity belt of north-west India, to the poorer states.





## Dowry

When it comes to providing causal explanations for the practice of sex selection today, two broad claims emerge. As we have repeatedly seen, medical technologies have been granted fullest agency in the hands of the aggressive radiologist who takes his mobile machine into the hinterland of rural India to vend his wares, unmindful of the criminality of such actions. Such unscrupulous practitioners in turn are being ably supported by multinational capital, and several activists have pointed to the role that companies like General Electric are playing in pushing the market for ultrasound machines further and further into India's rural heartland. On the demand side, what appears with equal frequency is, quite simply, 'dowry'. "Like a black shadow in the wake of dowry demands, is the spread of sex selection." Much has been written on the modern institution of dowry. It is the idea that dowry is a modern phenomenon linked with capitalist modes of development and the devaluation of women and their labour, that makes it possible to see dowry as a primary 'cause' for the practice of sex selection as well. After all, in the initial years in the 1980s, when sex determination testing was openly being advertised in several cities, doctors put out the slogan "Rs. 500 now or Rs. 50,000 later".

The role that dowry might be playing in a changed modern context has been the subject of various analyses, of which that offered by the sociologist M.N. Srinivas is the most wellknown. Nirmala Banerjee and Devaki Jain have argued for a reversal in the usual way in which a causal relationship has been posited between women's work and status: "Women are held in low regard [in regions like the Punjab] and because of this, both the survival chances of the girl child as well as the work done by women throughout their lives are considered relatively unimportant." This led them to shift the focus of analysis to questions of 'culture' and kinship, and the role of women in certain upper castes as status agents, especially via marriage practices like hypergamy.







They then posit what they call a new 'widespread and growing male resistance to marriage' due to a shrinking of traditional occupations and the rise of uncertain access to regular incomes with modern development. Women are at a severe disadvantage in terms of their own limited earning power, and hence become even more dependent on 'good marriages' achieved with correspondingly heavy dowries, which in turn make them a burden.

Dowry has thus been something of a linchpin in many arguments, offered up in numerous ways in order to find connections between women's status in Indian society and economic developments over time. The increased, indeed 'monstrous' practice of dowry, translates quite simply into growing daughter aversion and therefore to fewer girls being born. In a recent discussion, Patricia Jeffrey has warned against any 'complacency' on the part of demographers who, in the light of a changing marriage squeeze now operating against men (given fertility declines and too few girls being born) predict that dowry will now come down and daughters increase in value.

### **Debates and Disagreements**

As would be obvious by now there is no shortage of differences among both activists and scholars on the question of sex ratios, their explanation and consequences. Indeed, over the years such disagreements have, if anything, been deepening. Has there been too great or too little a focus on the PC-PNDT Act? Many advocates believe that the main effort must continue to be the criminalization of venal medical practitioners, while others warn of how the very advocacy against sex selection has often turned into an unintended but problematic campaign against abortions per se. Disputes abound when it comes to interpretation. Could there be reduced son preference even though the numbers are more skewed today than ever before in India's history? Is the problem one of "mindsets", which are out of





synch with modern values of equality, or, does modernity itself, have a lot to do with what is going on? Some read the latest figures as proof of heightened practices of “female genocide”, while others see signs of a turn-around.

### **A Question of Violence?**

In a recent essay, Kumkum Sangari has claimed that even though the heightened prevalence of sex selection cannot be understood outside of a combination of many factors, it is the special role of domestic violence that needs to be foregrounded - as a ‘continuum’ of violence undergone by the pregnant woman, the discriminated daughter and the future daughter-in-law, which forms a ‘connective tissue’ between the familial and public domains. While the issue of violence must be examined with care, I am less convinced that violence is the major causative factor for the kinds of daughter aversion that families are displaying when, aided by medical practitioners, they ‘choose’ not to bring a detected female foetus to term. Moreover, there is little correlation between reportage on domestic violence and adverse child sex ratios – the state of Kerala leads the way according to the National Crime Records Bureau but still has the best CSRs.



Where Sangari offers the specific lens of violence to describe and explain what is happening, and others, as we have seen, have given ‘dowry’ a pre-eminent place, one also encounters the opposite problem in much of the literature, where terms are used generically and loosely, with little explanatory value. Thus, “tradition”, “culture”, “mindsets”, “son preference”, and more generally “gender discrimination and bias”, continue to be the most frequently cited.

Lest I be misunderstood, the point I am making is not that there has to be an entirely new way of understanding our present and its ‘missing girls’. One factor that has frequently figured in discussions of the family today concerns changes in fertility. Interestingly, even a scholar



like Mari Bhat has changed his own position on the consequences of fertility decline. Together with Monica Dasgupta, he posited a 'parity effect' and an 'intensification effect' in analyzing the consequences of fertility decline for gender bias. In the first case, reducing the number of children also reduces gender bias given that female mortality is most pronounced lower down the birth order. In the second case, the total number of children desired falls more rapidly than the total number of sons, thus leading to heightened discrimination against girls. The essay argued that in India, especially in the north, the intensification effect outweighed parity. Revising his opinion subsequently, however, he claimed a more complex relationship between fertility decline, son preference and sex selection. In the past, families wanted large families with plenty of sons, while today's family wants one son and a daughter, or perhaps two sons and a daughter. In other words, reduced son preference could go hand in hand with skewed child ratios. And just to add further voices, Ravinder Kaur has cautioned against simple assumptions about past preferences where sons are concerned, arguing that in the case of peasant castes like the Jats, for instance, a matching of resources with family size included regulating both 'bachelor sons' and 'dispensable daughters', and it is this dynamic that is entering a new phase today. Moreover, as Kaur has been exploring in her more recent work – it is necessary to look as much at consequences as at causes in the gender imbalance.

There is no doubt that contemporary India is witnessing a highly gendered version of fertility decline – in north-west India, according to the findings of a co-authored study, this veers from one to three children. Note therefore an unprecedented shift in son preference as well – extra sons are no longer wanted either. But I do not think this can be mechanically read as reduced son preference. Rather, even the stated preference of one son and one daughter needs to be interpreted with care – in my view families are actually 'planning' to have *at least one son and at most one daughter*. It would surely be



worth exploring whether this family building strategy has now moved beyond north-west India into the swathe of the country that has seen a downward spiral over the last decade.

Notice further that child sex ratios have fallen most precipitously during a period of unprecedented economic growth. It has emanated from northern and northwestern India, regions which may be characterized as being in the wake of the Green Revolution and whose levels of prosperity therefore require more careful calibration. A huge disenchantment with agriculture has set in, supplemented by highly volatile forms of development, a parallel revolution in aspirational levels, especially among the non-poor classes, where child sex ratios are the most skewed. Families are planning to have or not have a daughter or a son who will have to be brought up into adulthood, 'settled', and whose future relationship will be shaped by the inter-generational transfer of resources under such conditions. Positive changes are also palpable – such as increases in educational attainments, often with proportionately more girls in higher education, and rises in the ages of marriage. And yet, as our study tried to show, "these unintended consequences of contemporary social processes, when combined with parental fears of the unattached sexuality of adult daughters in a context of a highly competitive and differentiated marriage market, are compounding the sense of burden represented by the birth of a daughter. She now requires many more years at home with higher investments in nutrition, health and education... Sons, on the other hand, embody a range of ritual and economic roles. If the current climate of economic volatility and masculine anomie makes them often fall short of expectations, nonetheless at least one is essential for the future of the family. It is this conjuncture that is producing the falling child sex ratio."



More than anything else it is the interlocking effects of two markets — the compulsory institution of marriage and the increasingly depressed labour market – that are critical for the present and future life chances of daughters and sons. What needs to be understood and contested are the contradictions of value and cost embodied by women – most visible in the difference (rather than the continuum) represented by daughters and prospective daughters-in-law in hypergamous marriage markets, where sons marry ‘down’ while girls marry ‘up’. Expectations that marriage in India’s contemporary globalizing economy might be loosening are not bright when the proportion of women with any kind of paid work are as low as 15% according to NSS data trends for 2009-10.

Finally, and more positively, the very processes that are making daughters appear to be an unbearable cost are also harbingers of change and resistance. It is not the ‘girl child’ that is the source of so much anxiety and rationalization among families but the adult woman, and the sooner that the ubiquitous girl child image receives a make-over, whether in the corridors of policy or the popular media, the better. Even the horrendous violence visible in recent years in states like Haryana against those who wish to marry against community and caste norms speak of reactions to new assertions for space on the part of young people, who are seeking and making changes that will ultimately be irreversible.

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## PATRIARCHY AND CAPITALISM- A FRAUGHT MARRIAGE?

*Nirmala Banerjee \**



### Introduction

In various developed and developing countries of the world, the period of late 1960s and 1970s saw the upsurge of diverse social and political movements with new actors forming unexpected alliances in support of their ideas. India was no exception; here too new actors - young students, peasants, displaced factory workers – were coming forward to protest on all fronts against corruption and repression by vested interests and political powers. In these exciting times, the beginnings of an Indian feminist movement- a movement largely staffed by women as women against their age-old repression in all spheres, perhaps did not get the public attention it deserved; but it was probably the most momentous in its far-reaching effects.



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\* President, IAWS, 1996-98.





Social movements seeking justice for women were of course not new in India; there was a history of over hundred years for reform movements in the country which had aimed at improving women's social and even economic positions. Therefore, at the time of independence Indian women and the social reformers were justified in feeling complacent that their efforts had been successful since the new constitution of independent India gave women equal rights as citizens fully at par with men; India also saw the passing of new family laws that aimed to remove much of women's disadvantages in personal lives. Women were to have free access to all education facilities in the country and were supposed to enjoy full freedom for participating in economic activities.

However, two decades after independence and passing of the Indian constitution, Indian women had realised the many gaps between their professed status and the ground realities of their lives. Family traditions still severely limited their personal choices regarding education, marriage and careers; domestic violence was a common problem facing women of all classes and social groups. In the economy, women worked under the twin constraints of family taboos and limits on their mobility on the one hand and active discrimination by employers and fellow workers on the other. And everywhere, the severe bind on their sexuality and the imperative to contain it within lawful marriage relations still continued to guide their entire life patterns. Added to all this there was the growing menace of dowry demands backed by extreme violence, even murders. All in all, at the end of the 1960s, Indian women had many grievances in their private and public lives.

### **Workers take up the challenge**



It was perhaps to be expected that the first group to come together for action as women against their gender-based disadvantages was that of poor worker women fighting for their livelihoods. In early 1970s



the organisation SEWA was formed in Ahmedabad by women working in several unorganised trades; the 'chindhi' workers, who were its initiators, were facing discrimination in many forms from the mills supplying them their inputs. But the long-established Textile Labour Association (TLA) a union of the Congress party, refused to make them members on grounds that they were self-employed and without any identifiable employer/employee relationship. The desperate workers were then inspired to form their own trade union under the leadership of Smt. Ela Bhatt. Although self-employed workers are usually in competition with each other and therefore not willing to pool their interests, SEWA members appreciated the fact that they were fighting not just for workers' rights but for the rights of women workers. As a feminist organisation, members of SEWA as well as of several similar women workers' organisations that have come up in various cities are consciously fighting on two fronts: as unskilled workers unprotected by any labour contracts and facing a hostile and competitive market on the one hand and as women out in a male-dominated economy and society. State policies to support women's economic efforts now mainly comprise forming self-help groups; they are based on the common idea that whatever their particular occupations, the main support system of women workers in the unorganised sector can only rest on links formed with other similar vulnerable groups of women workers.

### **Women's work as an academic subject**

It was also in the middle of the 1970s that the report, Towards Equality of the CSWI triggered off academic interest in its finding that, every decade since 1911 of the 20<sup>th</sup> century had seen a fall in the rates of women's workforce participation in India. In other words, women were being increasingly marginalised as productive agents in the Indian economy in the process of capitalist development. Following this discussion, during the 1970s and 1980s, feminist scholars took up



studies of women's experience of economic development in several developing countries including India. The International Labour Organisation was one of their chief sponsors.



### **Explaining women's experience of economic development**

Marxist explanation of women's marginalisation through economic development had rested mainly on Engels' theory of "the historical defeat of the female sex" that was supposed to have happened through men's control of the growing surplus generated by development. This argument assumed that:

- a) It was the generation of surplus in an economy that create the asymmetry of powers between men and women.
- b) That tasks of production and reproduction are distinct from each other.
- c) And that, all societies are built with monogamous nuclear families where control of productive resources rests with the men.

Feminists rejected all these assumptions on the basis of the large store of historical and anthropological records available with them. They made three crucial points:

- i) The sexual division of labour is not nature-given; rather, it is the reflexion of the power relations that men have been able to impose on women whereby they can make women responsible for any task they consider unpleasant and devalue it in social and economic terms. That is why the line dividing the two sets of tasks between men and women shifts widely from one economy to another, but does so always at the discretion of men.
- ii) That, far from being clearly separable, tasks of reproduction and production are usually closely intermixed. Also there is no evidence that production was at any time solely a male prerogative. In most





societies women have always played important roles in production for basic subsistence.

- iii) Most societies comprise several kinds of institutions- extended families, kinship groups, caste alignments, religious institutions- that determine their patterns of man/woman relations including that of sharing of work and control of productive resources between them in that society.

Indian feminists found it particularly hard to fit the totality of Indian women's experience into the Marxist framework. Even though data at the all-India level exhibited a negative relation between women's role in the economy and the country's economic development, there were infinite variations in the situations women in different regions, cultures and communities. What is more, field studies in various parts of India showed that, those differences were not so much in the quantum of work that women did in different regions or communities but in its contents, and more importantly, in the acknowledgement it received from their households and communities. Determinants of women's situations obviously depended as much or far more on the patriarchal norms that they were subjected to than the imperatives of economic development.

### **The globalisation debate**



The force of patriarchal controls on Indian women was demonstrated most vividly when in the 1990s, India accepted policies of economic liberalisation. Global experience of previous two decades had shown that, in many late developing economies that had accepted policies of economic liberalisation, the new globalised economic order had actually reversed the earlier pattern of a negative relation between economic development and women's employment. At that juncture of open capital movements, in several large industries serving world markets, computerised production techniques had made it possible to



disintegrate different operations in the over-all production processes and locate those operations that used large numbers of unskilled or semi-skilled workers in newly developing countries where labour was relatively cheap. The overall control and coordination of the entire production could be done by centralised computerised management. What is more, because many developing countries were inviting these multinational companies to locate their production operations on their soil using their labour, the parent companies had the power to closely monitor the working conditions that they offered to the workers including the option that their factories in one country could be shut at any time allowing the companies to move their operation to other locations where they had found still cheaper labour.

In order to find labour that would accept such high-handed working conditions, multinational companies had opted for women workers of developing countries because it was known that patriarchal traditions of those countries had converted their women into the more flexible and docile of all workers. As a result, women in those countries had soon come to form the bulk of the countries' industrial labour. A new theoretical construct, feminisation of workforce, had come to replace the earlier women and development theories; this new theory argued that in the globalising world economy, the faster the growth of women's share in a country's manufacturing employment, the faster the pace of its overall economic development. In other words, the extent of feminisation of a country's manufacturing workforce was to be considered a reliable indicator of the pace of its overall economic development.

After the Indian state adopted similar policies of open invitation to multinational capital investment in the country, it was expected that, since Indian women were known to be exceptionally docile and malleable as workers, foot-loose multinational capital in the world would begin to move its investments in such labour intensive operations to





India. This would give a boost to women's employment especially in Indian manufacturing industry and thereby reverse the established negative relation between economic development and women's employment.

Surprisingly, these trends failed to appear in India; in fact, in the two decades since India accepted liberalisation policies, women's overall employment and manufacturing employment for the country as a whole have both been stagnant or falling. To a large extent this can be viewed as a triumph of patriarchy over capitalist forces. It was the specific character of Indian women's socialisation that probably made them unsuitable for the purposes of capital that was looking especially for flexible labour. In most developing countries of South east and East Asia as well as Mexico and Latin America, women join the labour force immediately after they finish their education and before they get married, so that the female workforce of those countries comprises mostly the unmarried young females who do not bear the burden of household duties. For Indian young girls on the other hand, immediately after puberty, marriage and child-bearing is the ordained career path and families generally discourage their joining the workforce as unmarried young girls. Though this picture has been changing quite fast in India's urban areas in the last twenty-odd years, international capital, in its quest for flexible labour does not as yet have enough incentive to select India as its chosen destination. It seems that, for Indian women, patriarchy still has the powers to decide the socialisation patterns applicable to them and capital's demand for female labour has not been able to make an impact on those patterns.

### **A Theoretical Vacuum?**

Marxist analysis of the impact of economic development on women's employment does provide a logical framework for analysing the relation between those two variables, economic development and women's







employment; it does so not only in the early stages of development during the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century when capital was looking for long term engagement in production operations and preferred male labour as a steady option, but also in later stages of development in the last quarter of 20<sup>th</sup> century when globalised multinational capital demanded and got large numbers of low-skilled docile women as workers to staff their labour-intensive manufacturing operations on temporary basis.

But for feminists, the problem remains: unlike the assumptions made by neo-classical economic theory, women are not just a part, perhaps the part at the lower end, of the continuum of an economy's workforce. In fact, there has to be a distinctly separate category of 'women workers' in the labour market whose labour supply function is given a distinct shape by social constraints and values that are not applicable to male workers. Indian women's studies provide numerous examples from different parts of India at various points of time when women's labour market behaviour could only be accounted for by the extra-economic values and compulsions imposed on them by their households, communities and to some extent, by the state. A framework that does not account for these instances of extra-economic controls on women's labour market behaviour cannot be considered as anything but arbitrary and male chauvinistic.



Therefore by the 1990s decade, researchers looking for tools to analyse the role of women's work in the economy, had all but discarded the Marxist framework. This was true more or less everywhere among feminists but especially so in the Indian context. As mentioned before, towards the end of the century, the earlier thesis regarding women and development had been replaced by a new hypothesis of feminisation of the workforce of developing countries. But while experience of many late developing countries round the world had corroborated that hypothesis, India had remained a marked exception to it. The feminisation theory in any case has remained moribund in



the years since for several reasons; chiefly this is because multinational capital was by then already in the process of changing its production processes towards greater skill content and therefore had begun to follow a different kind of international distribution of their capital investment. It is not clear what share of those jobs that are now being located in developing countries is of a kind that can be described as “women’s work”. It is also worth noting that, even as liberalised economy Indian manufacturing capital is dominated by domestic investors and they have been following a distinctly different pattern of production organisations with much of the work being farmed out to smaller producers with their own workshops. As a result labour relations and production processes in India’s manufacturing industry still follow the traditions set by Indian investors and there are few indications that India’s manufacturing labour is likely to become feminised in the near future.

### **Care Work**

A relatively new term that is now frequently being used to loosely cover much of women’s work is of ‘care work’. Originating in the United States, it is broadly meant to cover tasks that are done in service of others, to help other people to meet their needs. It can be paid or unpaid and usually is meant also to cover women’s household duties. In India too, in the absence of any generally acceptable theorisation, a few feminists have been using the term to describe most jobs that have traditionally been identified as women’s work, especially the unpaid work that they do for their own households. However, others have strongly objected to this for two broad reasons: one, that care-work is a loosely descriptive term, with no given criteria for setting its boundaries. On the one hand, in developing economies, unpaid work done by women round the household often includes not just their household tasks of caring for the family but also many productive tasks such as processing grain, making clothes, growing vegetables





etc. These tasks significantly increase real incomes of the households. On the other hand, with the care work conceptualisation, women's paid work in service professions like nursing or medicine would also get categorised as care work. In that case, it no longer can refer to women's work alone. Secondly, in identifying women's work with care work there is the danger that it entirely gets identified with nurturing and women get regarded as natural nurturers. We are then in danger of being back to the age –old belief in a nature –given sexually determined division of labour that feminists have vehemently discarded. The category care work thus does not in any way help us to understand why it is women who do the bulk of care work and why that work when done by women gets devalued.

#### **Patriarchy and Capitalism- in Tandem?**

So, at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it seemed that it is patriarchy that has retained its control over Indian women's labour and capitalist plans for its use in economic development have been foiled.

However, events in the Indian economy during the last two decades have created some unprecedented challenges before the Indian patriarchy. These briefly are: i) women's traditional employment in agriculture and household industry has shrunk significantly. ii) There has been practically no incremental growth even for males in formal sector employment of the kind that provided workers with a family living. All new jobs are in the informal sector. iii) Field studies show that households without at least one formal sector worker must send out more than one worker/take up multiple occupations to ensure their sustenance. This second worker almost always has to be the woman in the family.

These gainful activities of women for the sustenance of the households have been partially counted in the slight increase in urban female employment that was noted in the 64<sup>th</sup> Employment and Unemployment





survey done by the NSSO in 2012. But most probably, bulk of it has gone unmeasured since they may be working as unpaid and unnamed help in the activities of the vast army of self-employed male workers. Or the economically productive work that women are now doing is once again being subsumed in the load of their household tasks and therefore, as in the past, it remains unacknowledged in the economy.

Many recent studies of female occupations –domestic service, beauty work, retailing or informal factory work, have brought out the desperate and determined efforts that are being made by women to find a toe-hold in the economy. There is a marked increase in even married women migrating singly for work that has become an accepted livelihood strategy for a high percentage of households in many parts of India. An additional factor that may be helping these efforts is the definite increase in years of school education for young girls that has taken in place in most parts of India in recent years. Many observers of the situation on the ground have noted that everywhere, especially in urban India, more and more young women are looking for gainful work even if it is meant for collecting a dowry for their own marriages.

At the other end of the spectrum are daughters of urban educated families who have quickly joined the band-wagon of high-salaried jobs for the well -educated young that are very much a part of to-day's market economy. Moreover there seems to be considerable social acceptance for the changed norms of marriage and sexual practices followed by these women working in the new globalised economy. All in all, patriarchal controls on women's labour seem to be getting compromised in many ways in the new economic order created by recent economic development in the Indian economy.

To make sense of these disparate trends, one perhaps needs to consider an alternative hypothesis; instead of posing capitalism and patriarchy as two warring forces bent on claiming permanent and supreme



sovereignty over women's labour for all times, one can view the situation as one of a variety of possible adjustments and compromises made between the two institutions from time to time to accommodate each other's requirements. After all, to have survived and maintained their relevance to social and economic realities over very long periods and in diverse environments, both patriarchy and capitalism must necessarily have infinite capacity for adjustments and compromises.

So we can posit a system where both capitalism and patriarchy operate making conflicting claims on women's labour but allow compromises to accommodate the other to varying extent. Capitalism has the powerful profit motive working for it that seduces even the most traditional supporters of traditional mores. On the other hand, the most powerful tool that the Indian patriarchy has always used to maintain its control over women's labour is of its control over women's sexuality; this is reflected in the strong emphasis that Indian society places on women's uncompromising chastity and the compulsion for women to strictly contain their sexuality within lawful marriage. This has always provided Indian men and patriarchal institutions with the handy tool of sexual violence for terrorising women through abuse and rape in both public and private spaces. Public or domestic approbation of their sexual behaviour or loss of chastity is the ultimate nightmare of each Indian woman whatever her age and social background. So on the one hand, women are being driven to look for some job opportunities and gainful activities both because of their families' economic necessities and also because of their growing realisation of the vast potential for economic gains that the new economic order is offering; on the other hand, faced by a growing overt threat of sexual violence and social censure in public and private spaces, they are being driven to seek the protection of family and marriage, however abusive these may prove to be. With these manipulations, household authorities are managing both to profit from



women's participation in the new economic order but also to ensure that these newly empowered women do not assert their independence and defy their traditional authority. Rather, much to the gratification of these authorities, women have continued to acknowledge the household's claim over their incomes, labour, bodies and sexuality.

### **Conclusion**

This brief note presents a tentative hypothesis suggesting that in any economy, there is a continuous potential for confrontation between market forces and patriarchal traditions for maintaining control over women's labour. Capitalism, with its powerful tool of profit motivation, can usually win any such battle in the short run; for example currently, it has acquired full control over the labour of the top layer of highly educated and trained women workers in India. But patriarchy does not meekly surrender its domain; it can, as it is doing at present in India, fight back against those transgressing women with virulent sexual violence in public spaces. After all, gender-based violence has always been its main mechanism for controlling women's labour in the private sphere.

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## Unionising Domestic Workers: Women and Working-class Politics



*Samita Sen*\*

The question of women's work was central to women's studies as it took shape in India in the 1970s and 80s. The framework, however, was 'development' and while definitions and measurement were addressed at length, questions of class, identity and politics were less in focus. There was little resonance of the debates regarding gender and class— the intersections of women's and workers' movements— that rendered the marriage between Marxism and Feminism so deeply unhappy elsewhere. The distance between these two movements may have been in part a result of the self-conscious position adopted by the women's movement as 'autonomous', defined primarily in terms of independence from political parties, while the dominant strain of 'central' trade unions developed and functioned as affiliates of the major political parties in the electoral fray. There was some attempt to bridge the gap, notably by SEWA, which worked at the interface of women's and workers' movements, but there was comparatively less attention given to the mobilization of



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\* General Secretary, IAWS, 2008-11.



*women as workers.* In the past few years, the combined onslaught of liberalization, privatization and globalization have resulted in a renewed attack on workers and the conditions and possibilities of their collective politics. In an economy dominated by informality, scholars are beginning to argue, conventional modes of unionized politics are giving way to other forms of democratic mobilization. Yet, there are contrary trends. New constituencies of women workers are in search of forms of associational politics, posing new challenges both to established women's movements as well as conventional trade-union-based workers' movements. A significant question before the women's studies movement today is to grapple with the changing dynamics of women, work and politics.

It is in the past twenty years that domestic workers have emerged as a significant category of urban workers and as subjects of both women's and workers' politics. They have posed challenging questions of class and gender (and caste), which the mainstream in both these movements have found difficult to answer. While there has been considerable associational activity in different parts of the country, there are also major impediments in the way. In some parts of the country, state governments have resisted unionization. They argue that a home cannot be designated a commercial establishment. Therefore, those who may happen to work in a home, even if they do so for wages, cannot demand the rights of workers. Domestic workers cannot form trade unions. If they wish to collectivise, they must register as societies. This is the position adopted by some state governments, such as in Delhi and West Bengal. The problem is that most of the associations of domestic workers, few and small no doubt, are demanding the status of trade unions. In some other parts of the country, the definition of 'establishment' or 'trade' has not hindered domestic workers registering their own trade unions. For domestic workers, the question combines the perceived power of trade unions







with a more fundamental one of recognition as workers. For too long, their wage relationship has been subsumed under personalized service. The way out of this deadening domesticity, they believe, must take the route of collective politics for which the trade union is the historically validated vehicle.

Yet, history speaks in many voices. The problem is not only with the government but also with the lukewarm response of trade unions. Their position is articulated at two levels. There is, first, a range of practical and logistic difficulties, including that of accessing domestic workers within middle class homes. Some of the leaders also continue to adhere to tired shibboleths, such as domestic workers not being 'productive workers', not engaged in production, and therefore not proper subjects of unionisation.

Many initiatives have been taken in the last few years. There are several unions in the country, such as the Gharelu Kamgar Union (Kanpur), Rajasthan Mahila Kamgar Union, Pune Zila Ghar Kamgar Sangathana, Karnataka Domestic Workers' Rights Union and Stree Jagruti Samiti, the Andhra Pradesh State Domestic Workers Union, from which Renuka Sayola stood for Lok Sabha elections in 2014. In Kerala, the Self-Employed Women's Association also acts as a certifying agency, and there have been unions in other states such as Jharkhand. Under the leadership of the TUCC, there is also an effort towards a National Platform, named National Progressive Domestic Workers' Federation.



The case of West Bengal is illustrative, since it has been a late starter in the field. Under the banner of AIUTUC (affiliated to the Socialist Unity Centre of India) the Sara Bangla Griha Paricharika Samity was formed about a decade ago but it was in the last three years or so that other organizations have made headway. There has been the Paschim Banga Agragami Domestic Workers' Union (TUCC), and the Sara Bangla



Sangrami Paricharika Union (AICCTU). Only one union, however, the Balurghat Agragami Paricharika Union (TUCC) was registered in 2010. The officers of the Labour Department, when questioned about this, say this was a 'mistake', which they have not repeated since. All the other unions have been refused registration. The same is the case with what one might call the 'non-political' unions, organized by NGOs rather than trade unions affiliated to political parties, such as Durbar Disha Mahila Grihasramik Samanyaya Committee and Paschim Banga Grihparicharika Samiti (Sramik Sahayata Kendra). Another organization was started by an NGO called Parichiti, but they have not yet started a union.



In the long three and a half decades of rule by the Left Front in West Bengal, there was great advancement in unionization in general. Many new categories of workers, such as agricultural workers and cooperative workers, were organised and granted registration as trade unions. In this period, the state became associated with militant unionism, which is often cited as a cause of its gradual de-industrialisation. In the whole of the country, however, from the 1990s, the shrinking of the formal sector led to a diminution of the traditional constituency of trade unions. While unions have had some success in cushioning workers in the public sector, the central trade unions have been losing ground with increasing retrenchment and mechanisation. This was clearly manifest in the late 1990s in a series of crises in the private sector. In West Bengal, these developments pitted a 'reformist' faction of the majority party in government against the CITU, affiliated to the same party (Roy 1991).

Faced with a new set of challenges, central trade unions have been forced to rethink their strategies. There has been a slow re-orientation of policies of exclusion from the late 1990s and they are addressing hitherto ignored issues, such as women workers and workers in the informal sector. The state too has responded with policy interventions,



for instance, promoting self-employment through self-help groups and micro-credit schemes, aimed primarily at women. These have reconfigured questions of informality and women's employment in complex ways. In some informal sectors, such as within the transport industry and in vending-related trades, there has been a strong push for unionization. Thus, for instance, auto-rickshaw operators in Kolkata and Mumbai, who operate within a para-legal framework, have near-complete unionization and indeed some of the strongest unions, capable of paralyzing their respective cities. Informal trades with a predominance of women workers have not seen such depth and intensity of unionization. The CITU now claims a large proportion of women members on the strength of organizing scheme workers, specifically *anganwadi* workers. Surprisingly, in West Bengal, where the CITU has had a dominating presence, no such initiative has been taken and women remain a marginal presence in unions.



In the organization of scheme workers, the lead was taken by AIDWA and later the unions moved under CITU's banner. Several domestic workers' unions were also first organized by the AIDWA and are now in the process of transferring to the CITU, such as in Pune. Clearly, central trade unions have perceived the importance of organizing domestic workers, perhaps because of the sheer numbers involved. The effort at a National Platform for Domestic Workers reflects these changes in policy. The extreme informality characterizing domestic work is reflected also in the absence of reliable data on the size of the workforce. Estimates vary considerably; though, even in the lowest estimation, they constitute a large body of workers. According to the NSSO (2009-10), there are **2.52 million** workers engaged in this occupation; the ILO provides an estimate of **4.2 million**; some NGO sources estimate **7million**. **NPDW quotes a much larger figure of 50 million. According to the NSSO data, 75 per cent domestic workers are urban.** A large majority of the workers are



women. One recent estimate suggests that 23 per cent of women workers in West Bengal are domestic workers (Chakraborty 2016).



The gender question with respect to trade unions in India remains a troubling one. These came to fore of public debate during the Munnar events in 2015. Pembila Orumai (Unity of Women) emerged as an all-women trade union of women plantation workers, which placed their demands in defiance of established trade unions—left, right, communist and congress. When state-level leaders tried to establish contact, they were asked to stay away. This is not the first such effort. Penkoottam (Crowd of Women) led by Viji is a union of unorganized sector workers established in 2009 with over 6000 workers. This too is a women's union. These women workers have openly condemned established trade unions as male preserves and as complicit with employers. Mainstream trade unions in Kerala, once so powerful and playing such a seminal role in the state's politics, do not seem to be able to devise strategies to deal with these challenges.

These are puzzling trends. The women in traditionally unionized sectors are challenging male hegemony of central trade unions, while those left out of these processes, such as women domestic workers, are reaching out to these same unions to facilitate their struggles for recognition and better working conditions. These contradictions follow from a troubled legacy of women workers' relationship with the century-long process of unionization. In India, modern factory industry, from the beginning, preferred men as workers; it began to be 'formalised' by state regulation soon after its inception; from the Factories Act of 1881, women were subjected to special restrictions. Until the 1920s, however, there were large numbers of women workers in modern manufacturing. In the textile industries, which were large employers of labour, their share varied from 15 to 25 per cent. In the mines too, they had a similar presence. In the plantations, they were nearly fifty percent and only in the tea plantations they retained this share despite



successive rounds of restructuring. In the other sectors, factories and mines, women's employment declined over time, most drastically from the 1920s and 30s, with rationalization and the beginnings of an organized working class. The process of organization, thus, went hand in hand with masculinisation, a connection not often made in the literature on the making of the working class. The factories, mills and mines, which undertook the first large-scale retrenchment of women in the 1930s, were also the nucleus of the 'organized' sector— organized not only because they were subjected to record and registration, but also because, by the 1960s, their labour grew to be almost fully unionized under federated trade union affiliated to all the major political parties with considerable bargaining strength vis-a-vis employers and the state. Even as wages and working condition improved, employers offered various arguments as to why women were to be gradually eliminated: they could not be employed on night shifts; and they had to be paid maternity benefit and provided crèche facility. Trade unions, faced with spiralling male unemployment, were more than willing to encourage these arguments. Direct retrenchment had become difficult, so early retirement and 'natural wastage' were used to replace many women by a few men (Sen 2008). Women workers found it difficult to resist the combined onslaught of the family, the unions and the employers (Sen 1999).

Thus, it was male workers who were successfully 'organised' and brought within the purview of trade unions. Indeed, (male) unions became crucial intermediaries in providing access to jobs in the organized sector. It has been argued that trade unions became appendages to political parties because their ability to control and dispense jobs came to be seen as a valuable resource in patronage politics (Ramaswamy 1988). The dynamics of this relationship required unionized men to maintain a stranglehold over prized jobs in the organised sector; and they adopted a variety of exclusionary strategies



against women first and foremost, but also based on caste, region and language. Indeed, it could be argued, women's marginalisation was imbricated in the nature and development of organised working class politics.



By the 1970s, women had been reduced to a negligible presence in large factories (De Haan 1994). The organized sector never covered more than ten per cent of the country's workers. These trends heightened from the 1990s, when casualisation made serious inroads. Women workers particularly— at present about 96 per cent of them— remain outside the ambit of the organized sector, in casualised and exploitative labouring arrangements (NCEUS 2007). The permanent workers, including some categories of more privileged casual workers, are best represented by the unions. The security and working conditions of these jobs diverge sharply from the market conditions in the unorganized (or informal) sector and are prized as assets in which trade unions help workers exercise proprietary rights. For instance, unions and management agreed that a retiring worker may 'nominate' a successor. This led to a brisk trade in factory jobs in West Bengal in the 1980s and, to control the spiraling prices, the state encouraged an agreement with unions to reserve job 'nominations' only for male heirs. Such variations of 'closed shop' specifically discriminate against women. Unions, for instance, exercise considerable control over the new forms of casualisation begun in the 1990s and women are excluded from these new employment arrangements (Sen 2008).

Working class politics led by federated unions— 'new' unions rather than the old 'craft' based collectives— have been inimical to women. Women's ability to resist employers decreased with the growth of trade unionism; their 'spontaneous' modes of protest came under attack, not only from determined employers but also from well-meaning union leaders. Unions neither espoused their special grievances nor made any effort to include women within the ambit of union activity. The



increase of women in some industries was accompanied by decline in union activity. In the knitwear industry in Tiruppur, a strong union developed in the 1950s. Led by the CITU, they organized a general strike in 1984, and negotiated better wages and employment conditions. By 2002, however, union membership dwindled to ten percent of the total workforce because women and migrant workers, who were the majority, were excluded (Neetha 2002). Similar stories are told about the bidi industry, where the unions lost the allegiance of workers with informalisation and feminization (Saravanan 2002).

Leela Fernandes has noted the consequences of trade union policies on women workers in the 1990s. The jute workers' public space, she argues, attempts to 'represent the general interests of workers but in fact produces gender hierarchies that conflate the workers' identity with a particular construction of masculinity... and exclude the participation and interests of women workers' (Fernandes 1997: 109). She shows a remarkable continuity in the moral discourse, which serves to stigmatize women's factory employment. A gendered discourse of morality, focusing on alcoholism, prostitution and crime as forms of social disease, contrasts the 'sexual promiscuity' of women workers vis-a-vis middle class norms of family and appropriate feminine roles. This discourse helps to legitimize women's systematic exclusion from the public sphere, including the formal sector of factory work. Women workers, she argues, are fully conscious of 'the gendered nexus' that deprives them of employment, security and institutional support. They are sceptical of the benefits of participating in union activities. This does not mean that women workers in India are 'apathetic' or 'indifferent' or 'passive'; even in the 1980s, there was a collective memory of female militancy; by the 1990s, they actively rejected the unions from a consciousness of their exclusionary gendered practices. Fernandes notes, however, that this ideological resistance did not any longer translate into alternative forms of collective resistance within





the factory (Fernandes 1997). In contrast to the 1950s and 60s, when women workers were involved in militant collective action (sometimes in defiance of union leadership), numerical and political marginality sapped their potential for resistance. The scope for independent collective action has been severely restricted by the combined forces of competition and dependence, by the complex web of family structure, gendered practices in employment and exclusionary practices of trade unions.

Let us take the case of cashew industry in Kerala as told by Anna Lindberg. Among the 2,00,000 registered workers, 95 per cent have been women from 1960. These workers were organized in 1939 and were quite militant up to the 1970s. Nevertheless, and despite Kerala's history of radical trade unionism, gendered practices like discriminatory wages continue. Moreover, women have no representation in the union leadership only men can be radical trade union leaders. Lindberg speaks of the obverse of the organization-masculinisation dyad, of an 'effeminisation' that defanged the radical potential of women's militancy (Lindberg 2001). The trade union movement, argues Uma Devi, has been relegated to the domain of masculinity in the state of Kerala (Uma Devi 2002).

The politics of central trade unions influence gender adjustments in the labour market. The masculinisation of the formal sector has meant the relegation of women into the informal sector. This hierarchy of employment is, moreover, an ongoing process: When employment is tighter, men tend to take over the jobs women previously undertook, pushing the latter lower down the scale to even less desirable jobs. In the plastics industry, trade unions in large and medium scale units signed an agreement with the management negotiating the fixation of tasks and designations. This ensured that women were restricted to jobs in assembling and packing. As a result, they were removed from the machines they were operating. The expansion of women's







employment in pharmaceutical companies (like Glaxo) was reversed when they decided to 'put out' some of their production to smaller scale units. These latter preferred to employ men (Shah et al 1994). These adjustments do not challenge structures of patriarchal authority but rather reinforce men's superior claims to economic resources.



The 1990s was dominated by a debate on feminization, which was linked inextricably with the undercutting of organised labour. The debate drew on developments in the 1970s and 80s, when there was noticeable increase in women's non-agricultural employment in the rural sector and in some export-oriented industries, though they were concentrated in piece-rated work in sweat-shops or in home-based work. Most scholars agree that in India economic liberalization signaled the reduction rather than increase of women workers and that the gains of the 1980s were lost in the 1990s. In India, subcontracting and home working employs largest number of women, though these figures are difficult to verify. From the nineteenth century, women have predominated in employment where contracts cannot be enforced and organization is difficult. The bulk of women workers are clustered at the lower end— homeworking (in manufacturing), street vendors (in petty trading), unpaid workers and unskilled attendants (in the care economy), domestic workers, cleaners and sex workers (in personal, hospitality and entertainment services). Thus, domestic service has registered large numbers of women workers since census was begun. In one estimate, 92 per cent domestic workers are women, girls and children. In one survey of 12 cities, 78 per cent of domestic workers were found to be women (NCEUS 2007:86). These kinds of wage work in the informal sector are characterized by high labour-intensity and low productivity.

In the new economic climate, the ideal working class family based on a sole male breadwinner and aspirations of upward mobility by housewifisation of women is likely to be less realizable. In this context,



both academic and activist attention on domestic work, a major avenue of employment for poor urban women, acquires great significance. The decline in male employment in the organized sector from the 1990s is forcing much larger numbers of women into paid work. They have had to abandon the role of the dependent housewife and seek employment in domestic service. Despite low wages and poor working conditions, its very informality determines preference of women for such employment. For those coming to the city from the countryside, the availability and easy access to domestic work employment now leads the family's migration strategies. It also attracts women (even married mothers) who may be seeking a way of escaping traditional caste and gender structures or in search of alternative opportunities of wage labour. The option of urban migration or wage employment is a lifeline for widows, deserted and/or barren wives, and offers women a way to challenge familial control over their labour and sexuality. Thus, women in waged domestic work are seeking to limit family size, undergoing sterilization which is the most easily and cheaply available in the public health sector.



In the mainstream trade union movement, political imagination remains limited. While, there have been in the last few years calls for strikes on demands for social security in the informal sector, there is no commensurate organizational effort by central trade unions. This is somewhat surprising, since there have been other kinds of associational initiatives. Women workers have sought out local organizations and associations, neighbourhood groups or community self-help groups, which address alcoholism and domestic violence, often even seeking to settle domestic disputes in favour of women. Men have responded negatively to this increasing assertiveness by their women by attempting more control with increasing violence (Gooptu 2007). While the men are suffering from a loss of status as provider and therefore diminution of control and authority, the undermining of masculine familial authority has opened new spaces for women. Despite the



highly exploitative nature of some of the work that women are forced to undertake, the access to the public sphere, the social space of the women's groups have been a positive experience for most urban women participating in such collective exercises.



Thus more of the impetus for creating collectivities among domestic workers (and other women workers in the informal sector) has come from the so-called new social movements or the women's movement. Thus, the central trade union initiative for a national platform comes later and less successfully than the National Domestic Workers' Movement started by concerned activists in 1985. Some of these social initiatives have successfully questioned the division between personal/political and home/workplace. In many developing countries, there have been new and innovative thinking about the processes of creating collectives, securing rights and empowerment. The spectacular success of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh is well known. In India, a breakaway faction of the old Ahmedabad Textile Workers Union led the phenomenal development of SEWA. There have been experiments in organizing construction workers in some parts of the country and the first attempt at unionizing domestic workers was in Pune, leading to the formation of the Pune Shahar Molkarin Sanghatana in 1980. International mobilization has led to the ILO convention on Home Work, 1996. There is an urgent need to link these developments, and the new strategies of collective mobilisation, with the larger political canvas of trade unions and the struggle for workers' rights. Ironically, even though central trade unions are facing the dilemma of shrinking constituencies, domestic workers seeking mobilization remain in search of leadership for formation of unions.

There is deep unease about organizing domestic workers in trade union circles. Some trade union leaders admit openly that their status as employers make it difficult for them to organize domestic workers. Thus, the Paschim Banga Ganatantrik Mahila Samiti ([PGMS] West



Bengal chapter of AIDWA) initiated a union of domestic workers in 2011 in three districts of the state called Paschimbanga Grihasahayika Mahila Samiti, which applied for registration in December 2012. There were major differences within the PGMS, however, since the middle class constituency exerted a powerful influence on the ideological articulation of the problem, arguing that while workers received lower wages in middle class homes, they had greater security and dignity. Also that domestic workers' right to job security should be tempered with responsibility to not exit jobs without prior notice. This is not the usual language of left trade unions. PGMS was unable to convince its middle class membership to accept the possibility of a steep rise in costs of domestic service and was striving to find a balance between employers and employees. That it is not CITU but PGMS, not the trade union but the women's organisation, which has the responsibility of collectivising domestic workers, is itself curious (Sen and Sengupta 2016). The politics of class is a complicated one in these efforts because there is a direct conflict of interest between employers and workers.

In West Bengal, with its history of militant unionism, the question of women workers generally, and women domestic workers specifically, seem to have been left out of the Left (Sen and Sengupta 2016). The chief difficulty with domestic work is that potential organizers, whether union leaders, mahila samiti leaders or NGO activists, are invariably employers. The class divergence in women's trajectory to modernity has cast a long shadow over the contours of the domestic service sector. The whole question is shot through with doubts and hesitancy. For the bulk of workers, there is very little expectation of gain from collective politics. They are apprehensive that formalization will undermine their ability to negotiate with individual employers on the basis of personalized relationships. The domestic work issue is a challenge not only for working-class politics but also for feminist activism. While women's organizations have been the most active in organizing domestic workers, they are also faced with intractable



problems. The class division between the mistress and the maid is one of the few examples of direct exploitation of women by women. Class differences are overlaid with inequalities of caste. These cannot be resolved within the framework of a common or shared exploitation within patriarchy. The issue has to be addressed in terms of the multiple axes of gender, class and caste.

There is considerable political fear of a middle-class backlash. The Labour Minister of the Government of West Bengal, when we took a petition to him, asked rhetorically, 'do you want people with flags marching into middle class homes?' There is a very recent circular from Government of India asking states to ensure that labour laws such as minimum wages are applied to domestic workers. Only nine states have so far included domestic work in minimum wage schedules, which have pegged minimum wages by and large below market rates. Many questions dog these governmental initiatives: How will poorer employers manage? How will the aged fare if they cannot afford domestic workers? In other words: What will be the political cost of alienating the middle class? On the other side of the coin are also fears of consequences of improvement of working conditions for workers themselves, such as the difficulty of enforcing laws in middle-class homes and the possibility of a shrinkage in employment. The path forward is difficult to see. Legislation for domestic workers was first mooted in India soon after independence but successive governments have not been able to mobilize political resources to take this forward. Even today 'slavery in middle-class homes' remains a sharp reminder of the links between class and domesticity; waged domestic work remains a social and political conundrum. This is a new chapter in our many battles over the domestic and is proving proverbially rocky.



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## WOMEN, ELECTORAL POLITICS AND LOCAL SELF-GOVERNANCE

*Susheela Kaushik\**



When I met Dr. Vina Mazumdar, or Vinadi as she was called by all of us affectionately and respectfully, in 1983 in her office along with a friend from Chennai, I did not realise it will lead to such a long association with women's studies, or IAWS or the theme of women in politics. When she gave me a task, more as a student and teacher of political science, to comment on the papers for the section on Women in Politics at the second National Conference at Thiruvananthapuram, which I did with great academic curiosity and excitement, I had entered a new and profound arena of practical or applied gender politics, in which Vinadi became my mentor, guide and teacher. My association with her - and through her with the IAWS - became more and more intense and ever enlarging. Out of the blue I contested the elections, became Jt. Secy. (later Gen. Secretary), of the IAWS and then moved to many other positions in the university and elsewhere. My political science waned in front of women's studies. My field of specialisation



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\* General Secretary, IAWS, 2008-11.







became gender in politics. My socio-political activities centred around women's studies and women in politics in India and elsewhere. The impact of Vinadi, basically a teacher of Political Science, her thinking and action was clearly to be seen in my academic and social career.

Under this impact I had begun to read the proceedings and debates in the Report on the Status of Women in India (CSWI, 1975) and got particularly interested in the discussions on women's participation in politics and the reservation issue. The field of Panchayats had clearly come up for discussion. Many members had conceded to reservation there, even while they had disagreed with regard to the same at the national level. There were some, of course, who were opposed to reservation as the method of increasing the participation of women in politics. The debates which had started then are still alive with us, even while the nation has gone ahead and provided for reservation for women in panchayats and municipalities, thereby enabling women to enter politics.



The process of women's entry into local politics and the developments preceding it, by way of active and hectic lobbying by the academics and the NGOs for more than a decade made many women politicians get involved in this. The rise of a strong and widespread women's movement in India, backed these efforts. The bill to amend the Constitution and provide reservation for women, was initially defeated in the Upper House by a narrow margin. This made the women's movement even more keen and determined to get the bill passed in a second attempt.

The passing of the 72<sup>nd</sup> and 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendments to the Constitution and the immediate holding of elections to Panchayats in various states of India created enormous enthusiasm among women and tremendous curiosity among outsiders. Without losing any time the NGOs, the Women's Studies Centres, the wider university community and even





the concerned departments of the central and state governments quickly prepared themselves to make this a success. Any number of publications, explaining the historical background of panchayati Raj in India, legal and political interpretations of the new Amendments etc. came up. Literature on women's constitutional, political and legal rights, their political involvement, status of women in villages, etc. appeared. Equally prompt were the efforts to disseminate the provisions of the new Acts among the village women, elders and officials by way of awareness camps, political education and training programmes. Much help by way of support and fund came from the governmental and non-governmental and international agencies. The Women's Studies scholars not merely undertook training of rural women, the NGOs and the rural development officials, but also helped to organise women to access and benefit from the changes. Many women's studies centres and women's studies groups which came up in the universities, colleges and elsewhere, focussed on this new political participation of women at the grassroots level as they believed such political empowerment will necessarily and gradually bring about a better status for women as well as the much needed social and political equality for all the weaker sections of the rural society which was struggling to come out of the patriarchal, traditional and feudal set up.

The situation was electric and exciting for many of us who found in this a gateway for achieving the aims of women's studies. Undertaking frequent visits to villages all over India, meeting with rural women of all languages, religions, and castes in various regions ; collecting first hand data about them and their outlooks, listening to their experiences and issues and lending an ear to their 'personal stories' , many of us had a new set of lessons and learnt our new social science. Taking new political information to the rural women, building on their natural or acquired political skills, and preparing them to exercise their constitutional, legal and human rights and training them to take on



their new roles, the women's studies movement got a new fillip. The rural women of India got a new ally in them, ready to hold their hand, giving newer inputs which went beyond the political into other welfare, developmental, financial policies and budgeting, social auditing and monitoring. It was truly heartening to see the fast growth in political consciousness, skills and actual participation of grassroots women at various levels and spheres in the community.



The role and participation of women in local governments in India had given birth to much curiosity among other countries, in the international women's movement and organisations. The success of this unique experiment based on reservation for women and weaker sections, in a large and largely rural country with feudal practices, strong patriarchies, linked with caste and religiosity, cultural traditions, social backwardness, in regions where female literacy and economic levels were abysmally low, was bound to be watched by one and all. Research on women in local governments was encouraged and financed by all of them. All the women's studies centres got a new agenda and mandate to work for the political empowerment of women; many undertook research, data collection, community action and training for and of women. The continuous chain of elections to local governments in the various states created much enthusiasm and activities for the centres and NGOs. The scene in late nineties and the early part of this century, was one of hectic excitement. Many seminars and publications appeared on the scene, monitoring the participation of women, quantitatively and qualitatively. Many of us were identified and invited to speak on this, wherever we participated. Indeed it was a proud moment for me as a women's studies scholar as well as an Indian citizen, to participate whole heartedly in all these activities. No wonder the theme of political participation of women, particularly in the local governments in South and South East Asia, became the central focus of the activities of Women's Studies and Development Centre of Delhi University.



It is now 25 years since the women in Panchayats and municipalities and their “empowered women chairpersons” have been in local governance processes. In many states the proportion of reservation for women has even crossed 50%. Have they overcome the resistance as women from the society or are they still facing and fighting the social and community prejudices?

It is evident that while the structure of local governments have been rectified, made inclusive and equitable, this by itself does not make it less patriarchal or fair. By and large, it has become a mere number game. The resistance to women's leadership, or their manipulation to suit the patriarchal priorities and preferences by way of policies or their implementation by the panchayats, are clear indications of a resistance to a focus on women's issues and needs. The proposal for reservation for women in the state assemblies and Lok Sabha has been long pending. The fact is that even after 25 years of women having been in governance in local governments, the percentage of women in state and central assemblies has barely crossed a double figure, either as members or as contestants in the elections. The successful and able women performers in the local governments are neither getting re nominated, nor picked up for higher levels or involved in future political roles, Their good work and experience go unrecognised, unrewarded and unutilised, leading to frustration and drop out from politics.



Not merely in the realm of politics and political power, but in all positions at the decision making level, be it in private or public sector, in the educational institutions or corporate spheres, the number of women at the management level is still very low. The ‘chilly climate’ haunts; the glass ceiling is intact; and the women struggle to prove their extra qualifications and extraordinary capacities to move up. The structural policies and practices - the socio-economic barriers and the family restriction barriers by way of expectations even from the women



politicians and managers, clearly indicate that the society is still reluctant even if the structures and policies look to change for the better.

The stale arguments and stereotypes persist, that women are not capable and cannot undertake responsible roles, that they are not winnable candidates; are mere proxies for their more powerful and influential male relatives and that they cannot sustain themselves and will be drop-outs. They are told that they cannot raise resources for their own elections as well as for their parties. While a person like Hillary Clinton, the U.S. Presidential candidate raised more resources and possibly spent more than her rival who is a business tycoon, the popular doubts on women's capabilities, continue. The very same patriarchal convictions and practices which deny the women opportunities for being economically independent and socially empowered and which keep her subordinated, are used as factors against her from occupying high positions. Hence, the efforts to make more women visible at the higher positions and levels, and the method of reservation are necessary and need to continue, in the light of the significance of the need for a 'critical mass'.



However, one cannot stop with that. The identification of the various factors that stop her from functioning effectively even after reaching those positions, need to continue. The patriarchal backlash and the resistance, the consequent increase in violence - both physical and mental - the myriad forms of sexual harassment and murders, the number of suicides and threats, should make us ponder as to whether women have really become empowered. The doubts still persist in many (even among women, political leaders, voters and corporate boards and CEOs,) as to whether the women can manage and weather a political storm or a management crisis. The rise to positions at higher levels of power and responsibilities, both in political and administrative-management spheres, however, continue to be difficult for women to achieve.



The recent developments by way of Hillary Clinton's defeat in US Presidential elections once again confirms that the Glass Ceilings are firmly in their place and despite the best efforts by one and all, the resistance to women exercising political power at the top level cannot be broken that easily. Despite the women, ethnic and religious minorities, white collared workers and liberal men joining together and forming a strong rainbow coalition, the nation stood divided on the issue of voting for a woman president. Not merely Clinton's Democratic party, but even the women, obviously, were not convinced that a woman can govern them and become the supreme leader of the world's super power. Her qualifications, experience and democratic commitments did not help to overcome the suspicions, doubts and resistance of patriarchal forces. All the technical and non-technical methods, black mailing through the e-mails etc. were resorted to and became the last and deadly stroke by a male bureaucrat.

These developments make one sit back and contemplate about women's place in Indian politics, even after the great achievement of the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendments and women emerging as members and Chairpersons of the local government bodies by their own political rights. Even here we need to remember that the Amendments could be carried out only in the second attempt and that too by being imposed from above and not by a conviction on the part of all or the changed mindset of the local men and institutions. The method of reservation to bring in the women, rather than through the normal method, once again reflected the reluctance and nature of the essentially patriarchal polity.

This makes one to ponder whether the women's movement has done enough for them. It is very evident that the women's movement is also somewhat tired and has become indifferent to the issue of women's role, contribution, participation and representation in politics. Many of the Centres and research and action groups have not sustained their



interest; do not continue to follow the political careers and role and participation in the rural areas and stopped collecting any data and information on the problems they face. The commitment of the governments, both central and states, and the importance that their rural development agencies gave to the role of women in panchayats, has waned and even the abolition of a separate ministry has gone unnoticed. The women's movement and activists have moved away and focus on other issues, like violence as if one aspect of women's empowerment can be separated from the others.

Within and outside political parties and political organisations the attention denoted to the extent and nature of women's participation at various levels has become minimal. The women's wings of political parties and the NGO networks have lost their interest, group formation, lobbying and pushing the agenda of women acquiring power and positions. More and more roles and exposure of women, without political image, power and roles is leading to more and more violence in the public and private lives of women. The stereo types about women, their sexist symbol images and limited capabilities have returned; though more women have become Ministers that too of non-sexist stereotypical portfolios, their image in politics and political influence are not improving.

Political parties and their senior leaders and members do not care anymore about issues like indecent behaviour and patriarchal statements on women. Sexual harassment by party members and even ministers, violence against women, insult to gender equality, gender justice and democratic dealings , receive little reaction, reprimand and repercussions from the party leadership. Parties do not treat them as part of the issue of party discipline.

Women's studies and election studies need to analyse the factors that haunt and handicap the women who want to move forward. They



need to identify and analyse as to why the women who enter the panchayats or municipalities do not move up or even sustain themselves in politics and why, despite 40 years of debates, discussions and struggles, the women's movement in India is not able to make women 'visible' in the electoral politics and governance. The women still remain opaque in the political parties and in their vote banks and priorities.

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# FROM SOUTH ASIA



# DRIVERS RESTRUCTURING INEQUALITIES IN SOUTH ASIA: BARRIERS TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

*Anoja Wickramasinghe* \*



## Introduction

The social, economic, cultural and ecological diversity of South Asia attribute to the structuring of inequalities and vulnerabilities to various drivers that are emerging across the countries and geographical regions. Many perspectives have been added by the researchers, development practitioners, activists, politicians and academics enriching discussions and understanding. In this respect women's studies played a prominent role in disclosing the unseen, and including the excluded or marginalised segment of the society, particularly those who are not privileged enough to raise their voice. While acknowledging the 35 years of work carried





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out by The Indian Association for Women's Studies (IAWS) it is time to revisit its past detecting the transitional effects made through networking, research, dissemination of knowledge, and creating space for women to engage in policy dialogue. However let us take this as an opportunity to see the challenges that we have to face to resolving inequalities that tend to continue affecting the sustainable development process. The researches carried out on women and by women have been peripheral to others in the academia so inclusion of women's studies into the dominant curricular has been rather slow in Asia. IAWS in this respect has moved through obstacles strengthening national and regional cooperation. Nevertheless, with the changes in the regional economies as well as in the climate and the environment more difficulties have emerged challenging women's studies to move beyond conventional domains. The author of this paper, with her experience and the collegiality established through IAWS over the years takes this opportunity to provide a brief discussion on the challenges ahead to stimulate those who are in the platform to focus on the gaps in development.

Sustainable development has been in the forefront of the global forums for over 4 decades adding new elements to deal with the emerging and unresolved areas. In 2000, eight goals have been introduced under 'Millennium Development Goals' to guide the development process while addressing the issues of poverty, hunger and the environment. In 2015, 17 goals are being introduced to guide sustainable development process. Past experiences suggest that the development pathways have structured inequalities between countries and the regions as well as within countries in the human development and also the environmental sustainability. The achievements are being reflected on various measures reflecting the position occupied by each country and region on human development enabling to capture the draw backs and the gaps to be taken into consideration in formulating development agendas. This paper - referring to the current position



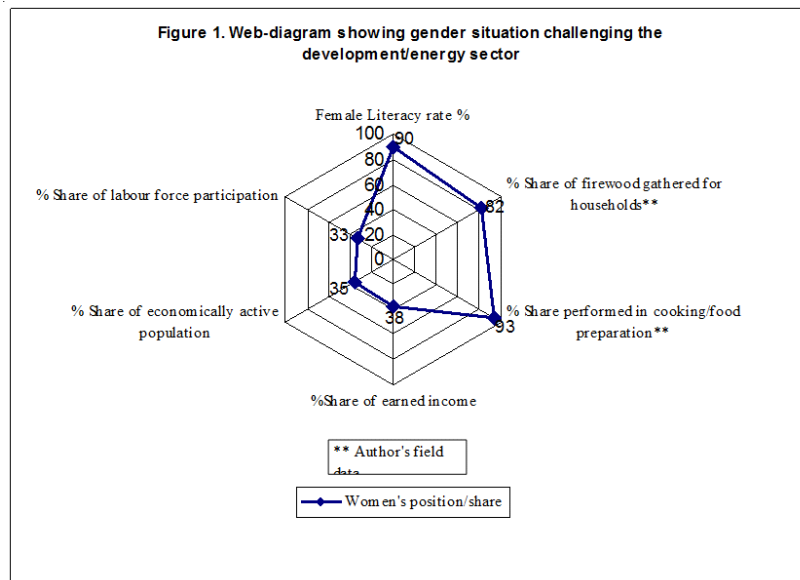
and the available data - briefly discusses how inequalities are being restructured manipulating inequalities in several dimensions. The first is the spatial differentiations that are based on inequalities in the delivery of services and opportunities instating the lagging areas, regions and the communities. The second is the gender inequalities structured through conventional ideology that has not been fully addressed through development.

The analysis presented by the author suggests that the repercussions seriously withhold the development of such lagging areas and the sectors primarily due to vulnerability to risks. Lack of resilience to deal with emerging crisis including climate change, disasters and various natural calamities, poverty and health and disease and many others stagnate the development. Conclusions derived through analysis reveal that women in South Asia have to become the catalysts and play a challenging role to dilute the inequalities preventing their rights to act as equal citizens. The catastrophic impacts of environmental degradation, deforestation and the climate change are severe on women, deteriorating their sources of livelihoods, health, food and nutrition, water, soil and the biodiversity. The majority of people live without safe water for drinking, sanitary facilities, clean energy access for cooking in particular and income are the ones who are not benefited by the development interventions.



### **Unveiling Gaps and Underserved Areas**

The issues in South Asia region are connected with the unjust in sharing the benefits of development and unequal access to services and assets. Women are subjected to and affected by the modern economic development. The resources and the custodianships to the local environments are exploited by the gender excluded protection driven interests and privatisation. The gravity of this situation is heightened for women due to their continuing engagement in managing the local

resources for the wellbeing of the respective households and the communities.





It has been noted that 'extension of the benefits of development to all people, men and women, is fundamental to the fulfilment of the social equity objectives of sustainable development. Unequal treatment of men and women, and their differentiated social and economic roles, has led to increased poverty for women in many countries (UNDP, 2001). Many countries in the region with the UN initiatives on Sustainable Energy for All, opportunities have been expanded providing electricity access to the physically, socially and economically disadvantaged sectors. The development pathways opened up through education, skill development, and health services have recognized the gender specific constrains faced by the development practitioners in rural areas in particular. However the gender based inequalities have not been resolved with a transition in the ideology of women and empowering them to exercise equal opportunities. This situation has



deepened more seriously under the administration and organisations that are defined, designed and implemented under male dominated systems, conveniently adhering women to conventional domain of reproduction.

A series of participatory analysis was carried out in Sri Lanka to define the development gaps that are to be taken into account in setting development targets in designing strategies with a focus on equality (See Fig 1). This provides an attractive base for engaging various agencies for factoring services with a focus on gender equality. Women, in spite of the long hours of work that comes to over 15 hours per day in the reproductive domain are situated low on the spikes related to labour force participation contributing to economically gainful work. Women's greater responsibility over getting solid biomass for cooking and preparing food are non-remunerative and not recognised as economically supportive.

The causes for these imbalances are not driven only by gender ideology, so the potentials for using energy for example factoring inequality mitigating measures can be rationalised. Opportunities for production and economically profitable activities rely heavily on policy commitments, resource allocation and willingness to facilitate gender equality. It is time to re-examine the situation as to what extent of the raising educational and health status and energy access has created upward occupational mobility of women. For instance from 1993 to 2009 the economic structural changes and growth have failed to change the configurations of male and female labour participation rates and the gaps between these two labour categories. During this period it has been in the range of 31 to 37 percent regarding women and 64 to 69 percent for men suggesting that male labour force participation has been consistently twice as high as female participation.



The improvements are seen in their enhanced mobility, safety, literacy, knowledge, health, and leisure with greater implications on human development. Field evidences suggest as a direct outcome of electricity access and appliances there is a willing engagement of men in the unpaid household work in ironing children's cloth, boiling water and helping out children to do additional hours of school work. Rice cookers, grinders, blenders and food processors have enabled men, with the acquisition of appliances and devices to undertake some time consuming and drudgery of work. In turn the same have enabled women to become free of such tasks, save at least two hours of time and energy daily, to lead a less stressful life, enjoy leisure, find time to listen and watch television to be equipped with information and knowledge. Energy based changes contribute to changing gender relations within households and increasing the positions held by women in community organizations are crucial. Substantial changes take place in the domain of women's and men's work with a cross boundary linkages. There is a growing tendency for increase in men undertaking household chores when they are equipped with appliances, changing the stereotyped division of work.

Findings of households surveys carried out with electrified households in Sri Lanka reported that energy based information sources enable them to build their confidence to talk with knowledge on facts. Many women enhanced knowledge on better health practices, food and nutrition, healthy cooking, child psychology, food processing, conservation farming etc. For instance effects of the off-grid micro hydro projects implemented to enhancing electricity access in the Central Province in Sri Lanka are being described by women as the initiatives made to illuminating women's lives which have been isolated in dark over generations.



## **Restructured Inequalities**

The gender based inequalities in almost all the aspects hinder the potentials available for women to reap development benefits. The analysis of secondary data points out that within economically active population women have a low share and as a result the percentage share of income earned by women is rather low. The earned income being an indication of their capacity to make decisions on financial allocation reaffirmed women's dependence on male income and obligations to engage in non-remunerative work. This situation however demands innovative approaches to service delivery for factoring economic options for women primarily through state agencies eradicating barriers to women joining the labour force. Providing livelihood options or solutions for women is a challenge for the stake holders because inputs are managed by the sectors that do not take the responsibility over gender equality. Strengthening of women's productive engagement and transferring the time spent on unpaid work for paid work with income earning options requires an integrated process with the partnership of various sectors working in compartments. These tend to locate the areas requiring capital endowments, financing and technology that are needed for reducing the time pressure arising due to exclusively heavy engagement in unpaid reproductive tasks, lack of opportunities, low mobility etc. This analysis could be furthered to deal with the broader areas like poverty reduction focusing on how economic empowerment of women and the income accrued by women goes to economic growth, human development benefiting their entire families especially children.

Women in rural areas have not equally benefited by the state - driven services that are connected with education, health, transport, water and sanitation, financing, technology, and training and vocational skill development opportunities and the markets. How to translate gaps into opportunities and to make energy as an instrument for factoring





services remain important questions. The development indicators related to gender equality illustrates that the benefits of development have been reaped disproportionately by men and women and the service extension places women on a lower tier in regard to their human capabilities, capacities and endowments. The Gender Inequality Index and the other development indicators situate women in relatively low positions in many countries, indicating the urgency for reducing the gaps (See Table 1).



In 2014 the Gender Equality Index for South Asia was 0.801 and the Gender Inequality Index was 0.536. Data by countries shows that there is a significant gap in Gender Inequality between countries in South Asia with the lowest value of 0.243 being noted in Maldives and the highest in India with 0.563.

**Table 1: Indicators of Outcome of Development/ Human Development some selected countries.**

Country	Gender inequality Index/value 2014*	Gender Dev-Index/value 2014 *	Life expectancy 2013*	Mean yrs. Schooling-Female, 2012*	Mean yrs schooling-Male-2012*	Labour force participation rate % Female 2013**	Labour force participation rate % Male 2013**
Bangladesh	0.503	0.917	70.7	4.6	5.6	57.4	84.1
India	0.563	0.795	66.4	3.2	5.6	27	79.9
Pakistan	0.536	0.726	66.6	3.3	6.1	24.6	82.9
Nepal	0.489	0.908	68.4	2.4	4.2	79.9	87.1
Sri Lanka	0.37	0.948	74.3	10.7	9.4	35.1	76.3
Bhutan	0.457	0.897	68.3	-	-	66.7	77.2
Maldives	0.243	0.937	77.9	5.4	6.2	56.2	77.5
South Asia	0.536	0.801	67.2	3.5	5.8	29.8	80.3
World	0.449	0.924	70.8	6	7.4	50.3	76.7



Source: \*UNDP 2014, Human Development Report; \*\*UN Women, 2015.

In our effort at translation of the drivers of vulnerability as taken into consideration in the Human Development Report (UNDP, 2014) we can highlight the gravity of the life cycle and structural vulnerabilities women. The productive losses of not having access to clean water, and sanitation and also cleaner cooking fuels are barriers to human



development and economic growth. The split over effects of women not having access to the supplies and the services increase the drudgery of repetitive attendance to water and sanitation. Similarly the reduced demand for child labour - particularly for fetching water and fuelwood – is reported to have positive implications on education enrolment of girls and eventually on their capacity to handle and engage in productive work.



The disproportionate division of energy related tasks particularly the cooking fuel which dominates the household energy system threatens women's health while exhausting economic opportunities. Over 80 percent of the responsibilities for over 80 percent of the energy used by the households are shouldered by women. These circumstances also suggest academics to undertaking gender research vigorously on the power sector, locating best entry points for making the energy sector responsive to economic needs of women, mobilising resources and for stimulating interest in motivating women or women's groups to use energy as a means for empowering women. Some isolated lessons illustrate that it has introduced new partnerships among private sector, financing, NGOs and civil society organisations. The experiences of working through collaborative partnerships are wide. GVEP, RERED, ITDG, ENERGIA, AIWC, Grameen Shakthi, IAWS and many others have proved the success of their interventions that were able to have effective results. Nevertheless the effects of the interventions have been rather low in making transitions. The reasons are the weaker connections between specific interventions and the gender research or researchers and the policy makers, and the researchers' lack of communication or engagement with the policy process. The willingness to consult gender research, researchers, or the civil society organisations in formulating policies is crucial. Quite strongly it has been felt that the gender disaggregated information is either limited, or available only for a few areas or communities where research has been carried out or not been available in the form needed for national or regional level policy



making. Women's specific needs and contributions to economic advancement are to be indicated in the sustainable development agendas with mechanisms encouraging women to engage themselves and share the responsibilities.

Although the causes for these imbalances cannot be justified as the limitations of the service sectors alone, the potentials for using services for factoring inequality mitigating measures can be rationalised. Women inclusive development planning is a way to close the gaps and mitigate the development draw backs that tend to continue in the foreseen future.

This analysis points out that within economically active population women have a low share and as a result the percentage share of income earned by women is also rather low. Empirical data with scientific legitimacy is needed to correlate the relationship between productive engagement and their earned income. This situation however demands innovative approaches to development factoring economic options for women. Development agendas with a check list should respond to the economic and productive needs of women. The economic incentives or remunerations for women are to be introduced using various measures and technologies primarily through state agencies eradicating barriers to women joining the labour force. Providing technology options/ solutions for women is a challenge for the development practitioners as well as for women activists. Strengthening women's productive engagement, transferring of time spent on unpaid work for paid work with income earning options requires an integrated process with the partnership of various sectors working in compartments. These require capital endowments, financing and technology that are needed for reducing the time pressure arising due to exclusively heavy engagement in unpaid reproductive tasks, lack of opportunities, low mobility etc. This analysis could be furthered to deal with the broader areas like poverty reduction focusing on how



economic empowerment of women and the income accrued by women goes to economic growth, human development benefiting their entire families especially children.

### **Barriers to Women Inclusion and Emerging Issues**



An astonishing amount of commitments have been made by and through women's studies, but the emerging situations that need attention are quite complex. The concerns over inclusion of women into the total process force us to concentrate more on the followings.

#### **1. Options in the curricular:**

Inclusion of women's studies into curriculum and the faculty based education at higher levels is essential. Often it is expected that the concerns over women and gender based dimensions are covered through women's studies or the social studies and the inclusion of social variables into science disciplines is a matter with less implications. As a result the resources allocated for women's studies have been inadequate and the dependency on external agencies to carrying out research on women and gender studies is to be reduced.

#### **2. Ideological barriers:**

In our societies the potential roles of women, their work, capabilities and contribution to the development are being placed in a rather complex domain differentiated by heightening the importance of a family and its wellbeing. The gender inequality in Asia - even in countries like Sri Lanka with relatively high human development - is deep rooted and the unequal distribution of service oriented work between men and women, and the differentiation of work for subsistence form production and income are quite significant. In most households women are expected to take the main responsibility over the household chores including water, cooking fuel, health, sanitation,



taking care of the children and elderly. The injustice is that they are equipped with less production assets, resources and skills. This situation remains unresolved due to two reasons. The first is the unaccounted nature of services and the contribution to sustaining human well being and the second is the ideology on domestic chores that are considered light and less drudgery in performing. Women's studies have highlighted the ground realities to make ideological changes, but equality has not been achieved due to the difficulty of moving through patriarchal barriers.

**3. Deepening vulnerabilities and barriers to women's personal safety:**

Two important aspects tend to affect the progress made by women. The first is the social quality deterioration which is progressing at an unprecedented scale threatening the lives of girls and women and also male dominated professionalism. The second includes vulnerabilities pertaining to geographical isolation and occupational risks, structural vulnerabilities pertaining to institutions and the discrimination in life cycle vulnerabilities.

**4. Climate change and the environmental degradation:**

Most of the countries in South Asia have experienced heightened incidents of droughts and floods and also expanded vulnerabilities to water scarcities, deforestation, and land degradation. Depletion and degradation of various resources; water, fuelwood and local food sources in particular have serious livelihood implications and if options are not available women take the drudgery of securing them by undertaking long distance walks searching for work, goods and other materials. Increasing temperature and exposure to sun seriously impact women, reducing their personal health. Climate change and land degradation severely restricts the livelihood security of women in land based economies.



## **5. Livelihood and economic opportunities:**

Domestic work, subsistence related unpaid work and family wellbeing limit the economic opportunities or the labour market of millions of women in South Asia. These have implications for the national and local economies; families and communities, as well as on women and human development. Livelihood and labour market options for women are the two crucial entry points to ensure their share of earned income. Reducing inequality and ensuring gender equality are the two key principles to achieve sustainable development goals which are to be materialised by integrating the relevant actors. It is crucial to provide options for women to enter the labour force and secure paid work enabling to maintain a satisfactory standard of living and become responsible for economic growth.



## **6. Lack of access to safe drinking water and sanitation:**

With the expanded periods of droughts the difficulties of getting access to water and sanitation are on the increase. The implications of increased use of contaminated water, distance sources, unsafe and unauthorized resources have multiple development implications for women. For instance the low consumption of water and the use of contaminated water is resulted in increasing health burdens and the costs. Contaminated water acts as a carrier of disease as well as a means exhausting the metabolic energy of women and their productive time to deal with related consequences. Unequal access is facilitated by the unequal distribution of most crucial basic needs like water and cooking fuels.

## **Conclusions**

Inequalities are in all aspects of life and get restructured through persisting inequalities and unequal opportunities. The repercussions of inequality in the labour market are barriers to human environmental





and the economic growth. A social and attitudinal change enabling men and women to act as equal citizens has to be promoted as a development goal. Women's associations seek strategic solutions, especially close coordination and cooperation to create space for women to enter the labour market; resolve the ideological unjust in defining women's needs within a broader development domain expanding opportunities that can avoid exploitation of women's labour.

Decisions on what capacities are required and policy guidelines are to be in place to facilitate and meet the principles of equality and equity. The purpose of providing services expands beyond the lives of women. There is a need to improve the systems equipped with options and opportunities rather than increasing dependency. Sustainable development justice is to be achieved by prioritising the development needs of the marginalised and underserved sectors, but not simply by looking at the numbers with service access.

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## Development of Women's Studies in Nepal: Some Memories and Reflections

*Bina Pradhan \**

### 1. Background to the development of Women's Studies in Nepal starting from late 1970s

Although the history of the women's movement in Nepal goes back to the early 1900s when Nepalese women protested and staged demonstrations against absolute autocratic rule, deprivation of rights and gender inequalities (Pradhan, 1979; Hutt, 2011), women's studies as such, in the form of conscious research or teaching, is a new development since the late 1970s. Before that there was virtually no record of serious research on women's issues in any form, or related activities in teaching/training. Gender issues were not a concern in contemporary research and development literature or in the academia, albeit found only in the literary works between 1860 -1960 where personal or societal repressions were ventilated by women in literature and poetry (Rana, 2011).



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\* Leading Gender Specialist in Nepal



This emerged in the background of the ongoing women's movement in Nepal and the struggle for equal rights, gender equality and social/gender justice. The women in development movement on a global scale (following Boserup's ground breaking work that brought to light the crucial role of women in development), and UN Declaration of International Year of Women (IYW), 1975, followed by the Women's Decade (1975-1985), was the beginning of WID movement in Nepal to place women in the forefront of development concerns and activities to improve their status and participation. There was a realization that the available data base used for planning and programming at the national and international levels, even the instruments used for data collection, were biased and seriously flawed with regard to collection of information with regard to their roles, work and contributions. Further, in 1973, the US Congress passed the Percy Amendment which required that US bilateral assistance programs enhance the integration of women into the national economies of developing countries. It was under this policy that The Status of Women in Nepal study was sponsored to address issues of gender in development and differences in income and economic power between men and women and to undertake research on differential benefits.

The Status of Women study in Nepal marked the beginning of conceptual and theoretical -enquiry into gender and development — women in development — as it was then understood. This perhaps could be seen in the context of a global movement with a few women in Nepal questioning development parameters and women's exclusion, invisibility and subordination within the academia and in the field of research.<sup>1</sup> This was outside of the active women's political/social

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<sup>1</sup> The two names that come up as researchers, at the time, were Meena Acharya and Bina Pradhan. Acharya was working in Nepal Rastra Bank, and Pradhan in Center for Economic Development and Administration (CEDA), Tribhuvan University (TU) as Research Officer.



movement, but in consonance with the concerns of gender equality/ justice and inequality.

I present a brief account of the emergence of the women's studies movement in Nepal in this short paper. This marked a quiet revolution protesting against the repressive regime and denial of the freedom of expression of thoughts/ideas, research on women and gender I draw on my own experiences, and draw connection with the regional movement through our association with pioneering feminists in India during the time. The last section outlines the formal emergence of a women's study programme in the academia under the Tribhuvan University (TU) and its proliferation followed by a focus on emerging gender issues and challenges facing women's studies in Nepal.

## **2. Status of Women Study in Nepal**

The Status of Women in Nepal study marked the beginning of serious research on gender issues documenting/accounting for women's work, roles of women in Nepalese society and economy, and their contributions. Carried out by Center for Economic Development and Administration (CEDA), Tribhuvan University (TU), it was 32 month multidisciplinary research sponsored by USAID, during the Women's Decade in 1978/79, mandated by the Percy Amendment. The overall objective of the project was "to collect and generate information on the status and roles of a range of Nepalese women in order to support planning to facilitate the increased integration of women into the national development processes". As the only women researcher in the University, I was assigned to the project as Senior Research Officer and entrusted the responsibility of forming a research team. Lynn Bennett, the Project Adviser represented USAID and Meena Acharya was seconded to the project in CEDA as Project Economist.

However, in the formulation for implementation of the project, the Research Team went beyond what was mandated and tried to theorize



and conceptualize the status of women in Nepal as a social and cultural construct and the underlying sources of women's subordination and valuation of their work, analyse status and role of women in Nepalese society from a multi- dimensional perspective, including the economic, familial, political, educational, legal, and ideological/religious. A comprehensive interdisciplinary methodology combining qualitative and quantitative techniques of data gathering was developed to critique the economic models of development in the context of the lived experiences of rural women. This connected many of us, as researchers and in the academia, to the regional and international women's studies movements during the time. The project team members shared the basic theoretical assumption that the concept of "women's status" is not a unitary construct but a complex inter-relationship between factors that influence the relative status of women and men in any given society. This study was carried out in two phases, the first devoted to the collection and analysis of the available secondary data on Nepalese women in specific areas that resulted in Volume I with five monographs. There were overtones of the suppressions and marginalization of women's movement by the system of government in particularly, the institutions concerning women (Pradhan, 1979). Phase II comprised of field work in eight communities to collect primary data. This culminated in Volume II with a series of 7 monographs. The publication of two volumes with 12 monographs was a significant contribution to the development of women's/gender studies as well as to the government policy as reflected in the 6<sup>th</sup> National Development Plan of Nepal(1980-1985). This was the first time that a separate WID section was devoted in the planned document in recognition of women's productive role and their contributions to the economy.



### **3. Founding of the First Women's Study Centre in Nepal**

The Status of Women in Nepal study and dissemination of its findings created a stir in the social sector and the political system by raising

critical issues on the women's organizations, and their marginalization within the political system. It brought to the fore the issue of exclusion of women in the development process. By this time there was a growing discontentment among different groups working on women including those in research and academia, particularly the strict controls on free thinking/ideas and speech and related activities. In the meantime researchers from the study were contacted and invited to the women's studies programmes/conferences in India and in international forums. My association with Vina Muzumdar goes back to those days when I was invited to the first women's studies conference held in SNDT, Mumbai in 1981, where I met women like Madhuri Behen, Neera Desai and other women activists and researchers from the region. Subsequently my association with Vinadi became closer and we shared and discussed issues from our respective countries and the repression that we faced. It was then that we talked about likeminded women from the region coming together in support of each other for promotion of gender issues, independent and critical thinking and women's studies. In order to concretize the idea, we came together in forming independent research centers on women and development in countries where it did not exist. Vinadi, with a group of scholars and activists, had already started CWDS in 1980 in New Delhi. Inspired by the development of women's studies in India and elsewhere, bringing together a group of likeminded Nepali professional women, I started, the Center for Women and Development (CWD) in Nepal in 1983<sup>2</sup> in the country context of: a) growing dissatisfaction of the oppressive regime of the suppression/ control of academia/media and free thinking; b) development of women's movement against gender inequality and social and economic oppression of women in Nepal; and d)

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2 About the same time CENWOR in Sri Lanka, was established in 1984 by Swarna Jayaweera. Tahrunessa Ahmed Abdullah, who was also present at the IAWS conference, was already working in Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development.



development of women's studies in the region particularly South and South East Asia. The establishment of the Centre was, in fact, a direct outcome of my participatory research experiences of my field work living in the villages that gave me an in depth understanding and an appreciation of the deprivations and discrimination facing women despite the crucial contributions they make to the household economy. At that time, there was no space for organizations to be legally recognized and registered as an independent and autonomous entity in Nepal. All organizations that were non government and non profit, required to be registered under the Social Services National Coordination Council (SSNCC) headed by the Queen. In the absence of any other independent legal provision, CWD was registered under the Company Act, where we paid taxes to be an independent forum for critical thinking and free expression of ideas. The Center started with: research studies contesting ideas and development approaches taken by the government for gender equalities and women's empowerment from a welfare perspective; women's resource unit – library – collection of literature on women and gender; and publication of CWD Networker as a tool for advocacy and connecting and networking with different individuals and organizations in the region and internationally. This brought us directly in conflict with the established Panchayat Regime<sup>3</sup>. CWD started as a research and action oriented institute on women and development, where we carried out research and evaluation of projects and programmes. All the board members of the Center professed to work as NGO for the development and sustainability of the organization. In this sense, it was the first women NGO, that is "non political," carrying out research and action



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3 On many occasions our research works and our critical thinking brought us under serious questioning from SSNCC secretariat such as the critical evaluation of the Panchayat System and the leadership that rotated among a few from the "ruling and elitist families".



on women and development to influence policies and programmes changes for gender equality and women's empowerment.

By the time that CWD was established, we were well connected with different women's studies groups and academicians in the region, particularly in India, and had developed a regional network. Vinadi and CWDS were the main link with whom we interacted and exchanged experiences and ideas in a number of regional and international seminars/workshops. It was in the workshops held in New Delhi and Penang that we discussed about our experiences of the impact (negative) of development projects on women, their work and household strategies and how development programmes were insensitive to gender issues resulting in women's marginalization. During this time the project "A comparative Study of Women's Work and Family Strategies in South and South East Asia" was conceptualized and materialized (with CWDS taking a lead) with United Nations University (UNU) funding, coordinated by Hanna Papanek, from Boston University and Vina Mazumdar from CWDS. Three Regional Workshops on the project on Women's Work and Family Strategies in South and South East Asia were held first in Delhi in December 1984; in Penang, April 1986; and the final one in Kathmandu hosted by CWD with support from ICIMOD (International Center for Integrated Mountain Development) in December 1987. The project brought together researchers and academic institutions from 8 countries of South and South East Asia that undertook over 20 field-based studies i.e. representing 20 organizations from the countries and 5 comparative reviews of research on women's work and family; education and employment, family and the kinship system; and socialization and women's labour force participation in agriculture (Mazumdar, 1989; Dube, 1997). Each of the field studies adopted methodologies appropriate to its situation around the theme of the 'women's work and family strategies'. The CWD study examined the impact of development projects on women's work and household strategies,





where we looked at the impact of Cotton Development Project of the government on women's work and household strategies using quantitative and qualitative method for data gathering. The findings were presented at the workshop held in Kathmandu. (See ICIMOD's publication: <http://lib.icimod.org/record/10819/files/5410.pdf>). CWD had a significant influence not only among those working and researching on women's issues but also on the national policies and government (HMG) plans/programmes where we worked in close relation with Women's Development Section under the Ministry of Panchayat and Local Development (MPLD) and lobbied for up scaling of women's section to Division and then to Ministry through our research and evaluation of the programmes/projects undertaken by the Ministry such as the evaluation of Production Credit for Rural Women (PCRW) project.

By this time research on women and development was gaining popularity, and the agenda for integrating women in development from empowerment approach was gathering momentum in Nepal both independently as well as with international support. Nepal was already a part of the international drive for integration of women in the mainstream development, where various individuals, institutions (national and international) and groups undertook research on women either for policies and programs changes or examining roles and issue of women in different sectors (Bhadra, 2001). This was also a time of political turmoil with undercurrents of dissatisfaction and resistance building up against the Panchayat system.<sup>4</sup> The year 1990, was a historical watershed for Nepal that restored multi-party democracy in the country that brought liberalization of economic and political controls

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<sup>4</sup> The Panchayat System introduced by Late king Mahendra in 1960 banded the political parties and the democratic government elected by the people. The leaders of the banned political parties Nepali Congress, Communist and others opposed the system from the very beginning of its application.



under Panchayat system including opening of legal provision for recognition of NGOs. It provided ample opportunities for the people, including women, to express themselves and their activism. Taking the opportunity, a host of women NGOs came into being and became active in implementing development projects, raising awareness, and advocating constitutional right for gender equity and equality – some of these organizations were in response to the external funding that was made available but few genuinely taking up the opportunity in the promotion of gender equality. Unfortunately when the opportune time came, CWD, that resisted the system and was engaged in activist research and action, contributing to the momentum, went into oblivion<sup>5</sup>. The research activism of CWD was short lived but had a marked influence on feminist research, activism in research as they relate to key socio-political issues, as well as regional research network that explored comparative perspectives on gender issues in development interventions relevant for pressing protests.



At the Governmental level, the Eight Five Year Plan (1992-97) emphasized the “mainstreaming gender” policy which resulted in the establishment of women’s units in the National Planning Commission and various ministries during the plan period. Ministry of Women and Social Welfare was instituted with the mandate of mainstreaming women in development following the Beijing Conference in 1995.

Similarly, the academic arena saw an increasing pursuance in introducing women’s studies within the university – particularly coming from women faculty members from different departments. One such

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<sup>5</sup> From 1989 to 1991 I went on the Humphry Program in Cornell University and subsequently joined Ph.D program, during which time leadership and responsibility of running CWD changed during my absence during the time. Within the period of 5 years, 1983 – 1998, since its inception, the Center was well established and known for its work nationally, regionally and internationally.





strong pursuance came from Padma Kanya (PK) Campus – the oldest and largest all women campus of Nepal under TU. As I recall, Professor Lila K.C., Chairperson, Home Science Department, with her colleagues in the Home Science Department was actively pursuing to introduce WID as a paper in the Home Science Master's Degree programme in TU. They were able to introduce WID paper in 1989 permitted by TU. Subsequently efforts were made to develop capacity of Home Science faculty in incorporating gender issues in the Home Science curricula and in the teaching. PK campus carried out different trainings on gender and development with support from USAID, FAO and other international agencies. However, despite the effort, women's studies as a full-fledged academic program could not be implemented as it is an interdisciplinary field of study in examining gender as a social and cultural construct in determining the social and gender role/relationship. Home Science Department was constrained by its own discipline biases and lacked the experience and academic credential for teaching the course. In 1993/94 I was approached by Prof. K.C to help introduce women's studies in the Home Science Department<sup>6</sup>. It was then that I took it up with the WID Officer Nirmala Sharma, in CCO for supporting a post graduate course on women and development, which was received positively. I wrote up the proposal for funding with three integrated components: first capacity development within the Home Science Department in creating a core group of faculty members with interdisciplinary background for teaching and research, second, implementation of one year post graduate (PG) diploma course on Women and Development to start with and to prepare the department and faculty towards degree

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
<sup>6</sup> This was the time when I was just back from Cornell University to do field research for my Ph. D programme and I was engaged with Canadian Cooperation Office (CCO), on a part time basis, as Gender Specialist to provide assistance in the development of gender policies and incorporation of gender in their development assistance programmes to the government of Nepal.

course, and establishment of a resource Centre. This was perhaps the beginning of institutionalized women's studies in TU academy.

#### **4. Starting of Gender/Women's Studies Under TU**

In 1996 women's studies as an interdisciplinary academic course was initiated under the Central Department of Home Science (CDHS), TU as a one year PG diploma course and can be said to be the first feminist intervention in Nepalese academis where knowledge is self-reflexively produced which distinguished Women's Studies from studies on women popularly carried out by the emerging women's NGOs or development agencies during that time. As alluded to above, Women's Studies was implemented with three components – capacity building within the Home Science Department in Padma Kanya (PK) to create a core group of women's study faculty<sup>7</sup>, implementation of the post graduate diploma, and establishment of resource centre with CCO funding.

An intensive orientation workshop on GAD was held for faculty/staff within CDHS prior to implementation of the PG course on Gender and Development as most of the teaching staff had long experience and background in Home Science but needed a thorough orientation on conceptual and theoretical grounding in gender and development to be able to teach the course of study. I coordinated and organized the workshop assuming the responsibility of preparing the groundwork, pooling together resources and materials, including resource persons for the workshop as well as to provide technical backstop for the smooth working of the workshop. I pooled together resource persons from Nepal and India from among academic circle who had background/experience in teaching/researching on women's issues and who had made contribution to the field. Once again I reached out to the network in India. I recall first contacting Maithreyi Krishnaraj from SNDT and in consultation with her we invited Uma Chakravarty and Patricia Uberoi from the University of Delhi. From Nepal I worked closely with Meena





Acharya all throughout the workshop. During that time, there were very few qualified persons in the country to teach a post graduate course in gender and development. The few names that come up are Chandra Bhadra and Sangeeta Thapa who also participated as resource persons. Resource Persons from India came for short periods in turns covering different aspect of gender and development and filled a huge gap in capacity development in Nepal.

It was a unique sharing and a learning experience for us, particularly for the participants, to have resource persons from India with long standing experiences in feminist research and teaching. Almost all faculty members who were prepared to run the classes after intensive training expressed the tremendous change they went through both at personal and professional levels as this was the first exposure to internalization of the gender issues. Six weeks of rigorous training created a group of 15 core faculty members from different disciplinary background to teach one year PG course on women and development. Subsequently a PG course was started in PK. A Resource Unit was also created to aid the faculty members as well as the students.

As I recall, starting of the Women's Studies Programme strengthened our ties with India's academic development in women's study. For instance, I and almost the whole group who were trained and involved in the women's studies, were invited to the IAWS conference that was held in Jaipur. A number of our participants had the opportunity to present papers at the conference.

Women's studies is gradually gaining a foothold in academia, gaining popularity and influential impact. At present, 18 batches of students have completed their course work. As this course is also gaining popularity among the planners, policy-makers and students, TU granted the Padma Kanya Campus approval to start a Master's Degree in Gender and Development in 2004. It is running with the 5<sup>th</sup> batch of students.





Many departments at both Tribhuvan University-the oldest and the largest university of Nepal - and Private Universities, have either incorporated or added gender component in their curricula. Central Department of Sociology and Anthropology and Geography were the first few departments that introduced gender into their courses. The new scholarship on women and gender has not only spread at Higher Education through different departments, but it has trickled down to school level as well. Recently, there is a separate Gender Studies course at Higher Secondary level. And in near future, Tribhuvan University has been introducing Gender Studies at Diploma -level. This is a huge achievement.

In relation to Women's Studies, up to 2011, more than 500 students have been enrolled. More than 80 percent have completed course work. More importantly, most students have jobs which indicate that the programme has created opportunity for entry into job market. They work at different organizations as gender experts. From government service to I/NGOs to teaching fields to community organizations, they have been working as gender experts.

## **5. Conclusions**

Reflecting on my research experiences and my association with the women's studies movement in Nepal and globally, I we have come a long way in impacting change towards gender equality, and women's empowerment and women's movement in Nepal. However, the path has not been easy – it has been challenging, confrontational and conflicting not only with the larger political and governance system, but also within one's own organization. But the feminist network support and solidarity provides tremendous strength in resisting the system and surviving the struggle within. For instance, the feminist support from the India we received and solidarity built with the group in CWDS and IAWS helped in forming alliances, providing platforms for sharing



and developing ideas and sustaining them. Personally I have benefitted tremendously from Vinadi's wisdom, compassion and her wide experiences. The experience of initiation and development of women's studies in Nepal and the support received from resources persons from India helped to fill the resource gap in Nepal. Further, the process of establishing women's studies under CDHS, PK has been an emotive experience in that there was lot of sharing and internalization of gender issues, which helped one define who they are/were and create their own identity and values within the family and society. This has already created an alternative set of normative values and practices.



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## Reflection on Teaching Women's Studies

*Mira Mishra* \*

### Introduction

This note is based primarily on my 25-year journey as a Women's Studies teacher. During my journey, I was shaped and reshaped by workshops, conferences and trainings. I shall start my note with the impact of some key transformative events, such as conferences and workshops, with which I embarked upon my journey as a Women's Studies teacher.



Then I will share my insights on the evolution of Women's Studies as an academic program in Nepal. I will link this evolution to changing socio-economic processes in Nepal in general, to transitions in women's lives in particular, touching also upon the interconnection between academia and feminism. Through all these themes, I aim to shed light on the continuous challenges that Women's Studies as an academic field has been facing, and efforts to address these challenges head on.

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### **The Jaipur conference**



I will start our conversation by reflecting on my time at the Seventh National Conference of Women's Studies in Jaipur in 1995. I still remember the EVENT, where renowned feminists and activists spoke powerfully about the intersection of feminism, gender and globalization. There was an atmosphere of celebration of womanhood and sisterhood. It was an amazing experience for me. Reflecting back on that day in 1995, I had never thought that more than twenty years later, I would share the same platform as a paper contributor. There were several reasons for my doubt. First, Women's Studies had not yet been introduced in Nepal back then. Second, in 1995 I had no regional exposure in this field. But in spite of this, I dreamed of speaking at such a plenary in front of such an impressive gathering one day. Thank you to everyone who motivated, supported and challenged me to achieve my dream.

The Jaipur conference pushed me to dream big and work hard to achieve my goals. Personally, it broadened my understanding of the power of women's potential and of women's collective strength. It also instrumentally helped me hone my critical faculties to see the interconnection between academia and activism. As I just mentioned, at the time of the conference, Women's Studies was in the process of being introduced as a full-fledged academic program at Tribhuvan University. As a potential teacher of the new discipline - I was a teacher of Home Science at the time - I was quite intrigued by the subject.

### **South Asian workshop**



Three years prior to the Jaipur conference, I had participated in one gender-related regional workshop, which is when I received my first formal introduction to the words "gender" and "feminism." Dr. Meena Acharya, a renowned Nepali feminist economist, called me one early morning and asked me to participate in the workshop. She said, "





Mira, I have proposed your name to Kamla for the South Asian residential workshop at Bhaktapur, Kathmandu. Do you know Kamla?”. I said, “No, I don’t know who that is”. She said with a surprise in her tone, “Actually I thought you might know her. She is a big name. As you are going to teach a course on “Women and Development” in Home Science, I thought you would benefit from the workshop. I have already talked with your department head”. Dr. Leela Devi KC, who was closely in touch with feminist scholars outside of academia, headed the department during the time. My call with Dr. Acharya demonstrated to me that women inside and outside of academia were collaborating to introduce Women’s Studies in Nepal. Within a week of the call, I participated in the workshop. I still recall the five days I spent with South Asian feminists including a few women from Nepal. That was my first introduction to feminism and feminists. It was a learning, frustrating and somewhat intimidating experience. Over the course of the workshop, I realized that “feminism” as a concept was something that I simultaneously wanted to adopt, but also escape from. Feminism felt more intimidating than inviting. Honestly speaking, I could not fully immerse myself in the workshop. Initially, I wanted to separate myself from women whom I thought were too “forward”: i.e. they were too informed, too active, and too vocal, *particularly given that their perception of sexuality clashed against the perceptions of the other women I knew and myself* I held myself back from several physical activities, in particular games that encouraged us to learn more about each others’ sexualities. Yet, the impact of the workshop and of those women has persisted in my life both personally and professionally. I met Kamla Bhasin for the first time at that workshop. She became my friend and a life-long inspiration.


Four years after this workshop, which was my first introduction to feminism, I joined a six-week-long content-focused training in 1996 for potential teachers of Women’s Studies. The Central Department of Home Science, which was a pioneer in its introduction of Women’s



Studies, and was being supported by the Canadian Cooperation Office in its effort to train 15 new teachers from different departments. At personal level, the training played a significant role in my life.

For the first time, since teaching the “Women and Development” class as part of Home Science in 1991, which was the first time I engaged in this field, I slowly started loving and owning Women’s Studies. I felt like I was ready to change. My engagement with Women’s Studies dates back to early nineties when the Central Department of Home Science, where I belonged as a teacher, incorporated “Women and Development” as one paper in its curricula in late eighties (1989). It was arguably the first academic Women’s Studies course in Nepal. I was among nine teachers who were supposed to teach the course collectively. With Home Science degree, and with very limited knowledge of the discipline, I became a Women’s Studies teacher in early 90’s. Honestly speaking, I did not want to teach “Women and Development” course at that time because I did not know about the subject matter.



In the six-week training, I had to reflect on my own life experiences to understand the gendered nature of family, society and the larger society. It was not easy. In fact, it was quite difficult. For — the first time in my life, I saw the practice of excluding menstruating women from public space as a symbol of women’s subordination. What was even more difficult was coming to terms with the realization I was complicit in this subordination, due to the way I was socialized. I was born into a high caste Hindu family and socialized to conform patriarchal norms and values. However, I saw that I was changing. I am grateful to Indian feminist scholars who participated in the training as resource persons. They helped broadened our vision about the social world through their remarkable journey to ensure gender equality and women’s empowerment. I owe a lot of my transformation that happened during this training to the facilitators, who were both academically



and emotionally invested in us. For example, I received calls at home from Dr. Meena Acharya and Dr. Bina Pradhan – both lead trainers - several times during the training. This was unprecedented, given that as a student of Home Science I had never received such calls; neither had I ever called to check up on any of my own students. Dr. Meena Acharya one evening called me and asked, “Mira, how are you doing? Are you learning? We suppose, most of you are changing. I can see the change reflected in how you dress. You are coming to the training in Kurta Shalwar, whereas at Padma Kanya college, I couldn’t imagine you showing up in anything but a sari. It is a great change”. Yes, she was right. We were changing. I saw myself talking confidently and fluently about gender, patriarchy and feminism not only with my colleagues and not only at trainings, but at home with my husband and my sisters. It’s funny, I would be so excited to talk about my training (and nothing else) that sometimes I would bore my husband. However, he was generally very supporting of my personal and professional development during this period. He took a lot of interest in my training, and often helped me link gender with broader socio-political issues. But I always wanted to talk about the training, nothing else. I was completely filled up with excitement. I would be surrounded by books and articles at home. That was a big change for the family as well.

### **My fear as a teacher of Women’s Studies**

In touching upon the changes I was noticing in myself, I can’t help but think of Gloria Bowley. In talking about her experience of engaging with Women’s studies as a coordinator at Berkley, she wrote “All of us who are now teaching and writing in Women’s Studies do have training in a single discipline. We know what it takes to be an ‘expert’ in one area and thus are afraid to cross this boarder into unknown territory. We might be caught saying something utterly wrong about a field nor ‘our own’ (Bowley 1983:40).”





I was fearful as well. Almost all faculty members who were prepared to run the classes had gone through similar experiences because they came from varied disciplines. Not a single teacher had a Women's Studies background. I still remember my first few classes as a teacher. The first one is memorable. I could not sleep the whole night in the fear that tomorrow I had to go to the class. Unlike in Home Science, I did not have adequate knowledge to be a so called "good teacher". However, my fear proved unwarranted after the first class ended. The pedagogy of Women's Studies allowed me to be familiar with the students at personal level. The class began with experience sharing. While sharing personal stories, some cried, some laughed and some remained critical. My experience was similar to what Sheila Ruth discusses about the nature of Women's Studies classes. Ruth notes that the feminist class consists of "an acceptance of an even emphasis on the personal-affective element in learning; and a warm, human relationship among persons in the class, students and teachers (Ruth 1990: 12-13)

### **Evolution of the program**

I wanted to share my personal journey with you to highlight the evolution I have been through, thanks to Women's Studies. Now I want to quickly share with you the complex journey Women's Studies as an academic program has taken in Nepal.

Women's Studies as an academic program is gradually gaining a foothold in Nepali academia. In 2009, Gender Studies was introduced as formal two-year Master's program for the first time in the country. Within two years, Tribhuvan University will likely start rolling Gender Studies as a major in undergrad schools across the nation. Additionally, many departments at both Tribhuvan and other universities have either incorporated or added gender components to their curricula, including Sociology, Anthropology, and Geography. Now WS has spread to other



disciplines as well, including English, Economics and History. What is inspiring is that the new scholarship on women and gender has trickled down to pre-college levels as well - Five years ago, Gender Studies was added as an optional course in the national curriculum for 12<sup>th</sup> grade. These are all huge achievements.

Publications, refresher trainings and networking have also been key structural components that have supported the evolution of WS in Nepal. A periodic publication by the title of *Hamro Sansar* ("Our world" in Nepali) is an example of a Women's Studies journal that focuses on topics such as gender mainstreaming in Nepal and violence against women. Started in 1998, this journal remains an important source of reading materials for students. Refresher trainings also play an important role in keeping teachers updated about globally, regionally and locally evolving gender issues. The fact that some of trainings are supported not just technically but also financially by feminist friends through organization such as SNV, UNFPA and FAO across South Asia shows just how much commitment there is to help this program flourish. Similarly, networking with local and regional women's organizations has provided a space to connect the program with feminists and feminist issues at local and regional level. For example, there was continuous resistance to violence against women via various INGOs and NGOs in Nepal in the 1990s. Because teachers and students of WS were able to network with members of the larger women's network in Nepal, we were able to participate in such movements. This shows that the WS program has leveraged connections between academic and activism to bring prominent gender issues to light. Women's Studies did not evolve in vacuum. It has huge impact on both students and teachers. I am going to share here the impact of the study program on me as a teacher.



### **Impact of the program**

This program has had a huge impact on me personally, and also on students and the faculties. Women's Studies has over the last 20 years raised a palpable feminist consciousness and also allowed us to develop a nuanced perspective on gender. In a way, the major objective of the program to produce graduates with perspectives on both gender and feminism – i.e., the ability to put women at the center of questions about social structures, and the ability to analyze the relationships between men and women – is en route to being achieved.

At a personal level, Women's Studies changed my life in many ways. It transformed me from a docile, non-reactive, and hesitant woman to a conscious, vocal, assertive and relatively independent individual. In addition, I have become a better partner, more a friend to my daughter(only child) than an over protecting mother and a caring daughter to my aged mother. In other words, without Women's Studies I would not have become a feminist. I developed a distinct way of looking at myself, my surroundings and the larger society I lived in. Feminism for me has since then been a way of living with dignity, respect and purpose. Illustratively, in the initial phase of running Women's studies, I was often challenged with a very patriarchal question. One senior male colleague from the university during a seminar asked me, "We have heard that you have been producing feminists at Padma Kanya campus. Is it true?" He continued, "When I first heard the news from my male colleague from your campus, I could not believe it. I was rather shocked". I immediately answered him, saying, "If we are producing feminists, so what? We are not producing criminals". The atmosphere was a bit tense for a while. When I reflect back on this conversation with the male colleague, I realized that I could only have responded to him with such confidence and clarity because of my engagement with Women's Studies. As a Home Science teacher, I was shy, non-reactive and obedient. I would



have probably not reacted to him and stayed silent. I had never ever realized I could react to him with such courage. I am glad I did so, and even in the moment I felt happy. This change did not happen in a day or a year. It is a gradual process that I am still part of.



### **Framing the context**

In acknowledging how feminist movements, academics and activists shaped Women's Studies trajectory in Nepal (and on my own agency), I now must contextualize the impact of two key larger themes that have affected Women's Studies journey so far. First, I will touch upon the post-1990 democratic set-up in Nepal that fueled significant socio-political changes including a new constitution which for the first time in the country's history, conceptualized men and women as equal citizens. Second, I will describe the interconnection between feminist movements and evolution of Women's Studies.

The Post -1990 era witnessed major socio-political changes in Nepal. The establishment of a multi-party parliamentary system after a sustained struggle against absolute monarchy, a consequent new Democratic constitution, and subsequent democratic processes provided ample opportunities for people of Nepal including women to raise voices for their rights. Women for the first time in Nepal's history were conceptualized in equal term with men constitutionally. In particular, the constitution for the first time explicitly stated that discrimination on the basis of sex was unconstitutional, marking a major victory for the women's movement.



However, I must go back in time even before 1990 to identify the roots of changes in Nepali women's lives. Three structural processes in particular - Nepal's gradual entry into a liberal capitalist economy, the 1975 global conference on women, and the state's emphasis on women's education - were instrumental in transforming the status of women. Due to the liberalization of Nepal's economy, job creation





flourished in both agriculture and non-agriculture sectors, and resultantly, women received significant opportunities to go out of home and earn. Also as a result, women's societal image and roles were re-conceptualized, in that they were no longer just housewives or mothers, but earning members of the family as well. Similarly, as a member state of the UN, Nepal participated in the first global conference on women in 1975 in Mexico City, and subsequently the state committed to ensure women's participation in development activities. For example, a micro-credit program targeted towards women, called "Production Credit for Rural Women," became one of the state's capstone programs to bring rural women into development process. Similarly, as a consequence of the state's commitment, the government set up a separate women development organization to coordinate and enhance quality of all gender-related activities organized by the non-profit sector in Nepal. It is important here to note the landmark interdisciplinary research on women, titled "Status of Women in Nepal," that was carried out in the late 70's by a group of prominent Nepali women scholars. It leveraged an unprecedented time-use survey of women across districts to quantify and interpret the contribution of women to household and thus Nepal's economy. In addition, women's increasing access to education played a key role in shaping WS's evolution. While approximately two percent of women were literate during the 1950s, the number had gone up to 57 percent by 2011 (CBS 2012). In addition, the previously large and seemingly insurmountable gender gap is shrinking in all levels of schooling. Most importantly, women have outnumbered men in higher education (Parajuli et al. 2016:50). It would have been unimaginable even in the recent past. Increasing access to education has led women to be more assertive at home and in the public sphere as teachers, students, political leaders, etc.

During the 90s, Nepal's feminist movement rose to prominence and specifically targeted education. While previously there was no urgency to transform Nepal's educational landscape, including a lack of will to



analyze the androcentric nature of the landscape itself, the feminist movement in the 90s started to question androcentric nature of the whole education system. Though women's movement in Nepal has a long history, feminists and women activists were focused more on the establishment of democracy and multiparty system, less on their own rights and even less on their individual identity as a citizen before 1990 (Acharya 2012: 8). The rise of feminist consciousness during 1990s (Acharya 2012: 8) and the introduction of Women's Studies thus concurs in Nepal. There are many governmental, non-governmental and international non-governmental agencies which have been planning, implementing and evaluating gender focused programs both in the urban and rural areas of Nepal ...therefore, study programs on women are not entirely new in Nepal. However, several features of the new post-graduate- diploma program set it apart from the rest (Mishra 1999).

Women's Studies as an academic program has evolved, and is continuing to grow, amidst many challenges. Some of the challenges are institutional, ranging from universities' unwillingness to fund the program to questioning the legitimacy of the program.

### **Challenges to introduce the program**

It was not easy to introduce a separate Women's Studies program in Tribhuvan University in 1990s. Women's Studies was a new scholarship on women. It had relatively a short history in academia globally. Most people did not know what the discipline actually means. It was, therefore, not surprising that the university authority needed more clarity about the discipline. Nonetheless, several visionary and well informed academicians in Home Science department like Dr. Leela Devi KC., Prof. Laxmi Keshari Manandhar and Dr. Chandra Bhadra played significant role in convincing the authority about the need and importance of the discipline.





### **Funding issue**

Another challenge to Women's Studies was funding. Even after university authorities agreed to formalize the program, they refused to support it financially. One of the members of Tribhuvan University administration told some teachers that in order to run the program, they would need to charge students a separate fee. He added, "University can't support the program they have never heard about. He continued, "Either you have to run the program by students' fee, or stop thinking about running the program. We have so many grounded disciplines such as Political Science, and Economics to support financially. Those disciplines have potentials to contribute to the society. We are already under financial constraint". It was an extremely trying time for the Women's Studies department, which eventually took the bold and quite unique decision in running the program by students' fee. They challenged patriarchal nature of the university system this way. After almost two decades, the bias continues. Tribhuvan University has not supported Women's Studies financially. But the program has been running successfully.

### **Issue about the program itself**

Another challenge the program had to face was criticism from within Padma Kanya campus. As I have already mentioned, the campus is the oldest and the largest women's college in Nepal. There are hundreds of teachers (both men and women) and thousands of students. Ever since gender trainings were initiated in the early 90s to prepare WS teachers, faculty and staff from various other departments would express a range of perspectives, from cautious curiosity to stark rejection, about the program. Some asked, "What is Women's Studies? We heard about women's education, is it similar to that?" A few others were more critical, stating " We have heard that Women's Studies is a sort of feminist training. Padma Kanya has a long history of producing





good women graduates, not feminists” . Some of them even went two steps forward and claimed personally harmful allegations about Women’s Studies teachers, such as: “Those teachers who are already married will get divorced, those who are single will remain singles forever”. Despite such claims, we continued with our work and training. Amidst all personal and institutional challenges, women’s studies has flourished.

### **Dress-code**

I will bring up one final example of how Women’s Studies has been challenged so far in Nepal, and this one resonates with me personally. Padma Kanya Campus has had a long history of not only producing notable women figures of Nepal, but also simultaneously perpetuating patriarchal norms and values. It has had a strong dress code for both students and teachers—a saree. In the early and mid- 90s, wearing anything but a saree to campus meant resisting patriarchy itself. When a few Women’s Studies teachers wore the more logistically-convenient ‘kurta salwar’ to class, they faced quite the furor. Initially, campus-wide authorities reminded them of the campus rule of dress code, warning the teachers that action would be taken against them if they didn’t change their outfits. Perhaps what was even more damaging was that their own colleagues looked at these teachers as “too forward.” Teachers who defied the saree were considered feminist teachers who did not care about the history of the campus. However, Women’s Studies teachers did not listen. They did not care, mostly because they were so pre-occupied with the activities of the new program. Additionally, it was convenient to wear ‘kurta salwar’, and we didn’t see any harm to students, other teachers, or even larger Nepali society in doing so. We see the dress code merely the control over women. We wanted to challenge that authority.



To conclude, Women's studies has transformed me to a feminist as it has continued to transform lives of many women around the globe. It has been playing a significant role in bringing changes in Nepali society in general and women's lives in particular. Women's Studies, which has strong feminist base, has been producing graduates with feminist perspective. Armed with such perspective, they have been able to comprehend and analyze gender issues at home and outside. Nonetheless, Women's Studies as an academic program has evolved, and is continuing to grow, amidst many challenges. It is important to acknowledging how feminist movements, academics and activists shaped Women's Studies trajectory in Nepal.

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**POEM**  
(On the outgoing EC of IAWS)



***By Kumkum Roy***

We see  
The EC  
It has been a wonderful place to be  
In and a part of our lives together  
As we figured out why, when and whether  
Things should be done or left unsaid  
Working our way towards roses and bread.

Before I begin I must apologize to Geeta who is both young and wise for  
not finding a picture of hers and not powerpointing a verse  
In her honour and praise. May the young feminists continue to thrive as towards our  
goals we strive Anita, for reminding us constantly  
Of issues we push beyond memory  
That disabilities are a part of our lives  
Energetic, strong, courageous and brave  
Ensures that we enjoy, think and we save

Chhaya is always pragmatic and wise  
Willing to pare down our dreams to right size  
Reminding us of what the IAWS can mean  
To women in villages, town, in between  
The big bad cities where most of us live.

Veena energetic, quiet and precise  
Has taught us that in documentation lies  
Perhaps the most important way  
To preserve the histories of the everyday  
Of organizations and ourselves  
So we look forward to sifting through the shelves



Of the archives that she has taught us to treasure

Shaila caught in a reflective mood  
We may not quite know what makes her brood.  
Is it the website, the accommodation?  
Is it the call of the wild or the nation?

Ritu our financier par excellence  
Is found here in a reflective stance  
Perhaps the funds haven't flowed in yet  
Or may be there are loose ends to be knotted  
And matters of importance to be sorted  
Of course we know it is Nandini's job  
Sundry creditors to charmingly fob  
But she's perhaps contemplating the subthemes  
Which range from nightmares to lovely dreams  
Ilina steering the motley team  
As well as the multitude and the stream  
Touching hearts and minds of women and men  
As she sang, and will sing again  
Of bread and roses...

Not to miss the attentive Samita Sen  
Indomitable, resourceful, I could say it again  
The big picture, the details, nothing escape her  
As she helps us realize our dreams for the future

Indu, of course, multi-tasking as usual  
I leave you to decipher what she's doing in the visual  
Is she talking, listening, catching a nap?  
May be we should ask the photographer who took the snap.

Meera reflecting and news lettering us all  
We wait for her mails, we wait for her call





She pushes us beyond the matter of fact,  
Compelling us to think, write, and act.



And then...  
Finally, ending with my favourite one  
Of battles we fought, of wars that were won  
Of the spirit that animated our team  
And which made these three years seem  
Pleasurable, even as we pushed against odds,  
Perhaps with the goddesses if not with the gods.

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If you are wondering who is this poetess, It is Kumkum, the historian, no less. She watches, quiet in the melee of ECS he rhymes, she writes minutes for us to see All done in a moment in the quite of the capital city, Overall, all in all, wonderful in simplicity!

***Samita Sen***





## Greetings for the Twenty Year Old: From One of the Midwives

*Vina Mazumdar (2002)*

You are twenty, going on twenty one, soon you will think you are old,  
All who surround you, steer and guide you, some not so young, nor bold.  
You are a rover, without any cover, not even a permanent home.  
Many who love you, want to settle you, within the walls of a room-  
Because they believe in - order and ruling  
Filing and accounting order.  
Records are needed, as and when heeded  
To avoid in the future - disorder.  
But you, my darling, were born without a farthing —  
To challenge a powerful system,  
The symbol of a hope, for many who were broke  
But believed they could transform the system  
Not through destruction, but persuasion,  
Carrying the torch for knowledge -  
Through research and teaching, action, debating —  
Enriching young minds with courage.  
Structures these days, age faster than earlier,  
And become homes without people,  
With declining rationale, sponsors and personnel  
The life-force moves away — as natural.  
Life is dynamic, Knowledge not static.  
'Tis a mistake to tie them down.  
Challenge especially, needs strategically  
New thrusts, ways and not frown  
On changing methodology, for order and maintenance  
Of records, history and the spirit -



Of moving on gracefully, welcome affectionately  
New people ready to (wo)man it. Retain your youth, and remain a rover  
Keep on challenging the system!  
Systems — though obdurate, hesitant and cussed —  
Know they must bend to the wind.  
Fanning that wind is your raison d'être —  
Think up new ways to do it better.  
Monolithic models hid most of our reality,  
Bharat darshan opens doors to diversity



## dklQd ij Vi is

yks ejhtka dks yk; s gā  
mu ij [kej i Mh cMh MKDVj vk; s gā

; s nokbz okys MKDVj ugha  
fdrkca fy [krs gā ftUga dkbz i <rk ugha

; s oclz kkw vukskh gS  
dklQd SVt vkj F; kjj; ka dh ; gka ejEer gkrh gS

dklQd ea tkuk gS  
Ldkyl Z i s j i <ā geus [kkuk vkj xkuk gS

bruk ekvk i plz gS  
I e>k dkbz ugha ij t k j ka dh ppkz gS

; s dS k esyk gS  
>yj nplkua ughā u dkbz Bsyk gS

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tk tkxū uk I e>s oks fcYclq vdsyk gS  
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□



(Hearing that several big doctors have come,  
People have brought patients to the conference.  
Oh no, these are not doctors who distribute medicines,  
These ones write books which no one reads.  
What kind of a fare is this; without any shops and swings,  
This is a fare of intellectuals and whoever does not understand jargon  
is lonely here.  
Look how thick the paper is,  
No one has understood it but the discussion is heated.  
Come to the conference academics,  
We (activists) will give you all the data and you make your theories.  
We will take data from all the activists  
Then quickly write our papers and publish them only in our names.  
We will go to the conference.  
And remove the dichotomy between theory and action.)

\* \* \*



**List of Executive Committee Members from  
1981-2014**

<b>Term</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Position Held</b>
1981-1984 Mumbai Thiruvananthapuram	Madhuri R Shah Hemalata Swarup Vina Mazumdar Neera Desai Jyoti R. Trivedi Devaki Jain	President Vice President General Secretary Joint Secretary Member Member
1985-1987 Chandigarh	Madhuri R Shah Leela Dube Lucy M. Jacob Susheela Kaushik K. Saradmoni Karuna Mary Braganza Vina Mazumdar Renu Debi Gita Sen Asok Mitra U. Kalpagam Phulrenu Guha Pam Rajput	President Vice President General Secretary Joint Secretary Treasurer Editor Ex-officio Member Member Member Member Member Member Member
1987-1989 Visakhapatnam	Ila Pathak Surinder Jetley Susheela Kaushik Prabha Mahale Vina Mazumdar Madhuri R. Shah Lucy M. Jacob	President Vice President & Editor General Secretary Joint Secretary Treasurer Ex-Officio Ex-Officio

1989-1991 Kolkata	Kamalini H. Bhansali Sharda Jain Surinder Jetley Manoshi Mitra Kumud Sharma Vina Mazumdar Rohini Gawankar Ila Pathak Susheela Kaushik S. Andalakshmy Nirmala Banerjee Zoya Hasan Neena Kaplash Ilina Sen J. Varalakshmi Jashodhara Bagchi	President Vice President General Secretary Joint Secretary Treasurer Co-opted Editor Ex-officio Ex-officio Member Member Member Member Member Member Member Member
1991-1993 Mysore	Devaki Jain Amita Verma S. Anandalakshmy C.P. Sujaya Zarina Bhatt Piyali Sengupta Kamalini Bhansali Surinder Jetley V. Bhavani Snyamnarayan Chouhary Susheela Kaushik Rameshwari Varma Radha Bhatt Armaity Desai	President Vice President General Secretary Joint Secretary Treasurer Editor Ex-officio Ex-officio Member Member Member Member Member Member Member

1993-1995 Jaipur	Neera Desai Pam Rajput Kamla Bhasin C.P Sujaya Rohini Gawankar Nandita Gandhi Devaki Jain S. Anandalakshmy Ranjana Kakkar Manjeet Bhatia Jai Chandiram Neelum Gorhe Rameshwari Varma Zarina Bhatt Kavita Srivastava Fatima Burnad	President Vice President General Secretary Joint Secretary Treasurer Editor Ex-officio Ex-officio Member Member Member Member Member Member Member Member Member
1996-1998 Pune	Nirmala Banerjee Sunita Pathania Chhaya Datar Kalpana Kannabiran Rohini Gawankar Kavita Punjabi Neera Desai Kamla Bhasin Devaki Jain Gabriele Dietrich Usha Kanhere Usha Thakkar Manu Bhaskar Bhavana Mehta Manjeet Bhatia B. Ratna Kumari	President Vice President General Secretary Joint Secretary Treasurer Editor Ex-officio Ex-officio Member Member Member Member Member Member Member Member Member



1998-2000 Hyderabad	Vina Mazumdar Rama Melkhote Kalpana Kannabiran Bina Srinivasan Divya Pandey Geetanjali Gangoli Nirmala Banerjee Chhaya Datar Kamla Bhasin Rohini Gawankar Maithreyi Krishnaraj Pam Rajput Seema Sakhare Bina Aggarwal Nandini Upreti Jayashree Vencatesan Vatika Sibal	President Vice President General Secretary Joint Secretary Treasurer Editor Ex-officio Ex-officio Member Member Member Member Member Member Member Member Member
2000-2002 Bhubaneswar	Zarina Bhatt Pushpa Bhawe Lakshmi Lingam  Jarjum Ete  Rameshwari Varma Vidyut Bhagwat Jasodhara Bagchi  Kumud Sharma  Gabriel Dietrich Vina Mazumdar Kalpana Kannabiran Seema Sakhare Surekha Dalvi Vasavi Kiro Anjali Bhagwat	President Vice- President General Secretary  Jt. Secretary, Coordinator Northeastern Region  Treasurer Editor Coordinator Eastern Region Coordinator Northern Region Coordinator Southern Region Ex-officio Ex-officio Member Member Member Member

2003-2005 Dona Paula	Kumud Sharma Rameshwari Varma Veena Poonacha Padmini Swaminathan C.S. Lakshmi Sharmila Rege Zarina Bhatt Lakshmi Lingam Asha Hans Indu Agnihotri Ritu Menon Uma Chakravarti	President Vice President General Secretary Treasurer Joint Secretary Editor Ex-officio Ex-officio Member Member Member Member
2005-2008 Lucknow	Sumi Krishna Aparna Mahanta Mary E. John Joy Deshmukh- Ranadive C P Sujaya Kavita Panjabi Zarina Bhatt Kamala Ganesh Nisha Shende Kumud Sharma Veena Poonacha	President, Coordinator Southern Region Vice President, Coordinator North eastern Region General Secretary Joint Secretary Treasurer Editor and Coordinator Eastern Region Member &Coordinator Northern Region Member &Coordinator Western Region Member &Coordinator Central Region Ex-officio Ex-officio

2008-2011 Wardha	Anita Ghai Meera Velayudhan Samita Sen Rukmini Sen M Indira Anandhi.S Sumi Krishna Mary E. John Ilina Sen Meena Gopal Uma Chakravarti Wandana Sonalkar	President Vice-President General Secretary Joint Secretary Treasurer Editor, Ex-officio Ex-officio Member, Member Member Member
2011-2014 Guwahati	Ilina Sen Ritu Dewan Indu Agnihotri Kumkum Roy Nandini Manjrekar Meera Velayudhan Shaila Desouza Chhaya Datar Veena Poonacha Anita Ghai Samita Sen	President Vice President General Secretary Joint Secretary & Coordinator Northern Region Treasurer Editor Coordinator Southern Region Coordinator Western Region Member (Institutional) Ex-officio Ex-officio & Coordinator Eastern Region Ex-officio

2014-2017 Chennai	Ritu Dewan	President
	Kiran Moghe	Vice President
	Indrani Mazumdar	General Secretary
	Syeda Sakira Sahin	Joint Secretary & Eastern Region In -Charge
	Manimekalai	Treasurer
	Anagha Tambe	Editor & Co-ordinator, Western Region
	Mini Sukumar	Co-ordinator, Southern Region
	Ilina Sen	(Ex-officio & Joint Co- ordinator, Western Region
	Indu Agnihotri	Ex-Officio & Co-ordinator, Northern Region
	Kalpana Karunakaran	Website Co-ordinator
Aishika Chakraborty	Member (Institutional)	

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**IAWS**

Indian Association for Women's Studies

**XV National  
Conference on Women's Studies**

**Women in a Changing World:**

**Restructured Inequalities, Countercurrents and Sites of Resistance**

**22 to 25 January 2017**

**University of Madras, Chennai**

***PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS***

# ***Presidential Address***

National Conference of the Indian Association for  
Women's Studies

Women in a Changing World: Restructured  
Inequalities, Countercurrents and Sites of Resistance

**Ritu Dewan**

Dr M.S Swaminathan, Hon'ble Guests on the dais, participants from abroad, friends, and colleagues. It is my honour and privilege to welcome you all on the occasion of the XV National Conference of the Indian Association for Women's Studies in the 35th year of its history.

The IAWS was founded in 1982, the origin lying in the First National Conference on Women's Studies which was organized in Mumbai in 1981 jointly by scholars and activists. The triggers were several, among them being – the publication of the Status of Women Committee Report under the auspices of the newly formed ICSSR in 1975 which led to several research studies and projects being conducted

especially focusing on the recommendations of this seminal Report; the realization of the need to relate research to action and thus the appearance of the phrase 'action oriented research'; the intrinsic interconnects between academics, action and advocacy; the resurgence of the women's movement especially in urban areas in the aftermath of the infamous judgment on Mathura; interlinkages between class, caste and community; deepened questioning of the impact of the then-prevailing development paradigm on gender issues; acknowledgement that women's exploitation and oppression cannot be isolated from people's issues.

Today in its 35th year, the IAWS has grown to become one of the largest and most renowned and respected association of academicians and activists nationally as well as internationally. Apart from the rather path-breaking research that its members have undertaken, areas of major contribution are setting up of women's studies centres in institutions, assisting universities and other academic bodies in establishing centres, integrating gender in curricula, upgrading and up-scaling syllabi continuously and consistently, engaging in pedagogy and debates, involvement in policy making at both national and regional levels.

An innovative step which has far-reaching effects taken by this Executive Committee is the building up of new alliances and partnerships especially for the institutionalization of gender mainstreaming. Two such major initiatives taken are the establishment of Joint Panels with other professional bodies namely the Indian Society of Labour Economics and the Indian Society of Agricultural Economics. Two Joint Panels have already been organized with the ISLE in its two National Conferences held in Jammu & Kashmir in 2015 and in Assam in 2016. In this conference we are initiating the First Joint Panel with the ISLE.

This XVth National Conference – ‘Women in a Changing World: Restructured Inequalities, Countercurrents and Sites of Resistance’ – is being organized during a conjuncture in which we are witnessing a massive restructuring in the systems of production and reproduction, across market and extra-market formations in both developing and developed countries. Integral to the growth paradigm is the continued intensification of myriad disparities and inequalities especially those associated



with patriarchal structures. Patriarchy plays a central role in these transformations which cannot exist without upholding and reinforcing patriarchal systems, norms and constructs.

When production mainly continues to be located in the family and within the household, the non-monetized sector still predominates, and the motive force of production is still subsistence. It is the continuum between the forms of production, reproduction, consumption and maintenance that underlies the basic survival strategies of the marginalized, and this is where we see the often willful blurring of the lines between the recognized and unrecognized contribution of women to society, between paid and unpaid 'work'. The current scenario consequently necessitates and in fact demands the reinforcement of the interlinkages between women's studies and the women's movement, each dependent upon the other, each learning from the other, each strengthening the other.

The ongoing structural transformation with its inherent and inbuilt inequalities has impacted all sectors and sub sectors of the economy, the politics, culture and social

relations in society, permeating all regions and spaces and groups that constitute our nation. What is the nature of this transformation? The purpose is not to romanticize the past or demonise the present, but to analyse this restructuring in order to understand the new conflicts, needs and aspirations and the resultant new sites of resistance and struggle, in order to forge change, in order to affect and steer societal transformation towards equality, equity, egalitarianism, justice, freedom and the fundamental issue of democratic access to resources.

The agrarian sector is characterized by further intensification of resource inequality in various forms. A development paradigm which is based on the rampant exploitation and predatory acquisition of land and natural resources is dependent upon the ousting and uprooting of people and communities who have been living on the land for generations. Displacement, denial of access to common property resources and the reduction in user-rights leaves people with hardly any alternative means of livelihood and survival. The dismantling of production systems and decline in income-earning, income-augmenting and income-substituting activities leads not only to aggravation of

labour market segmentation, but also widening of the gender-based division of labour, male-female wage differentials and lack of livelihood possibilities. The crisis of survival and livelihood is linked also to global concerns around climate change and climate justice, while the question of the sustainability of the planet has thrown up urgent concerns challenging mainstream approaches of growth based on rampant destruction of the environment and natural resources by big business. That the impacts are heavily gendered and affect women in multiple and myriad ways has been noted by numerous scholars and activists via both research and struggle.

Growth and 'development' are being associated with and measured mainly by the levels of urbanization which is equated in a totally reductionist manner to the expansion of the construction sector and large physical infrastructure needing vast investment by both private and public capital, national as well as global. The current models of urbanization and city building deny the majority of people their rights as citizens, manifested in lack of access even to shelter and basic civic services like the right to water, sanitation, energy. Public transport, health and education are not

even available in most urban centres in India, and services that were available in the public sector, limited as they might have been, are being dismantled to be replaced by corporate-driven services far beyond the capacity of most citizens to pay. Privatization of all basic services and reduced allocation for welfare are taken for granted in the policy making paradigm. Most services are either not available, or inaccessible or unaffordable for the marginalized and vulnerable sections who constitute the majority of urban residents. Space is getting increasingly privatized and access even to hitherto public spaces is becoming restricted in favour of the elite. Women's lack of secure access to public spaces and increasing violence against women in public spaces has led to some of the most remarkable mobilisations of young women, both in the capital as well as in other Indian cities and towns.

The growth of cities and towns is no longer taking place in the classical paradigm of historical development, moving away from a land-based economy to manufacturing and large scale production and creation of capital, accompanied by a breakdown of feudal relations of production. Informalisation dominates all sectors and production chains in the economy,

in urban, semi-urban and rural areas. Conditions of employment are characterized by non-payment of minimum wages, precariousness of employment, inhuman conditions of work, denial of access to even the most limited benefits available as workers, as citizens, as marginalized and as deprived.

In this context in particular there are three aspects of restructuring and inequality that currently characterize both the rural and urban sectors and that need to be emphasized.

One, the fundamental issue of the share of wages and the share of profits in production, the former losing out drastically to the latter not only in relative terms but even in absolute terms. The trend therefore centers on centralization of capital compounded by the decentralization and casualisation of the working class. Needless to say, the most profound and negative impacts are on women, who today record an unprecedented decline in access to employment; their work participation rate is today the lowest ever in Independent India, is the lowest in South Asia, and amongst the lowest in the world.

Two, the sheer hollowness of the facile commitment to 'financial inclusion'. It

needs to be recognised that the nature and strategies of financial and monetary systems and structures are closely intertwined with women's multiple and all-pervasive roles in an economy. Exclusion from the financial sphere is generally defined at involving two levels – first, keeping out the more vulnerable sections of the population from payment systems; second, exclusion from the formal credit market itself, compelling these groups to access non-institutional sources. An important feature of the rather occlusive macroeconomic policy is that large numbers of the rural population as well as the urban proletariat have been left out of the ambit of coverage. It was estimated almost a decade ago that almost three-fourths of farm households in India have no access whatsoever to formal sources of credit, with over half having access to neither formal nor informal credit. Financial exclusion has in fact been actually increasing since the advent of globalisation. Non-institutional sources of credit, especially the share of moneylenders, which had declined sharply particularly in the post-nationalisation decade with the advent of social and development banking, have now begun to rise quite steeply in the post-liberalisation period. Additionally and significantly, women in general and Dalit women in particular have

been excluded from whatever benefits have accrued. In none of the policies is economic agency ascribed to women, instead they are perceived as reproductive agents defined in the syndrome of patriarchal semantics.

Three, the spectacularly insensitive event of the recent declaration of demonitisation which has led to a massive transfer of resources from the poor and middle class to State and finance capital. The underlying philosophy is that the poor and middle class are inherently dishonest, that they are the ones who hoard wealth, that those who earn do not have a right to their own earnings, that 'cashlessness' can succeed in a country that has one of the lowest literacy levels, that digital payments can be carried out in areas such as the Northeast where two-thirds of the population have no bank accounts, that black money is not stashed abroad or converted into real estate, that 'bad' loans being written off is irrelevant to economic and equity principles. The impacts of this appropriation of people's capital are so profoundly deep and long-lasting that entire sources of livelihood and sustenance have been destroyed: agriculture where it is reported that more than 90 percent of the winter rabi crop has not been sown in many parts of the country; dairy; leather;

tannery; footwear; fishing; sweetmeats; brass work; traditional arts; forest produce; power-looms; handlooms; garment; hosiery; plantations of tea, coffee, rubber, spices; fruit and horticulture; sugarcane workers; domestic workers; construction; transport; plywood; sanitary wear; loaders; retailers; small financiers; traders; vegetable sellers; handcart pullers; casual workers; vendors; food & beverages – the list is indeed long.

Shorn of all posturing and fully demystified, two major consequences are immediately apparent – the transfer of capital from people to the authorities, and the massive decline in employment as well as wages in urban and especially rural areas. This double-edged process is compounded by a huge upsurge in financial exclusion rather than inclusion, with the poor and vulnerable being compelled to resort to moneylenders even for their minimal daily needs particularly in a context of destruction of livelihoods. Enough initial research has been conducted and several struggles have already been waged related to the catastrophic impact on the marginalized and deprived sections of people, the majority of whom constitute those termed as socially backward and minorities.

The violently exploitative nature of caste



and sub-caste systems is sanctioned through extreme force and violence exercised through caste and community hierarchies and their institutions. Related to this is an acceptance and internalisation of the logic behind group and family honour and pride based on caste hierarchy, and consequently murder of young women and men in the form of honour killing. It is indeed deplorable that instead of creating a context in which conflicts between groups can be resolved by peaceful methods through for example negotiations and talks, the State is resorting to violence against people in conflict areas in so many regions of the world. In India we see the same situation in many parts of the country – in Jammu & Kashmir, North East, Chhattisgarh, and elsewhere.

A State that overtly denies its role of providing for the welfare of its citizens goes against the basic principles of justice and also against the very *raison d'être* of its existence. Instead we are seeing its steady withdrawal from the public domain in favour of the private corporates. On the other hand, interference is oppressively present in the realm of people's personal choices relating to sexuality, religion, food, creative expression, knowledge, education etc. Outdated laws continue to be protected in the interests of an oppressive and

intrusive authoritarian machinery. An area of deep concern is State sanction of street justice through mob violence. What is heartening is that everywhere women and men are standing up against injustice: those who are members of various affected groups, sexual minorities, religious minorities, artists, writers, students, academics and ordinary women and men who are committed to the values enshrined in the Constitution of India.

The world-wide phenomenon of an upsurge of nationalism threatens the principles of peaceful coexistence which formed the foundations of foreign policies of most countries in the world. The threat of war in a nuclear world cannot be taken lightly. Nationalism as part of national culture is essentially characterized by militarism and masculinity which celebrate the identity of the warrior male, in which notions of femininity and feminism have very little space.

Women and men are struggling to defend their rights and to fight for dignity, equality, decent livelihood and a secure and peaceful life. This includes student movements for democracy; women mobilizing against violence; local population and particularly indigenous people defending common

property resources especially forest rights; struggles of disabled people to live with dignity; women plantation workers for minimum wages; informal workers for social protection and for maternity entitlements for all including home based workers; for freedom from bondage; construction workers for work site facilities; aanganwadi workers unionizing for a decent wage; fisher-people for protection of their source of livelihood; women farmers for recognition as farmers; struggles against displacement and against land acquisition especially by private business; women fighting and winning the right to enter places of worship. A large part of these struggles are either led or populated largely by women.

In the 35 years of its existence IAWS has made a remarkable contribution to the acceptance of women's studies as an academic discipline. The most visible indication is the setting up of 163 Women's Studies Centres across the country in universities, colleges and academic institutions. Combined with this is the integration of a gender perspective in major social science and humanities disciplines, and the fact that most research as well as policy cannot any more afford to ignore gender. We must ensure that these centres continue and expand. This is a central

task. It is also important to ensure that we are accountable to the women of the country, engaging with their most critical concerns and aspirations. We must also undertake to produce more ground-breaking and cutting-edge work that is inter-disciplinary, collaborative and relevant to the economic, political, social and cultural aspects of patriarchy and gender.

In this XVth National Conference of the IAWS we seek to strengthen the linkages between women's studies and the women's movement, supporting and reinforcing each other through continuous debate, discussion, discourse and collaboration. Women's studies as well as the women's movement need closer and active involvement with peoples' struggles too, since no societal change, least of all a system of inequality and privilege based on patriarchy, can ever take place without alliances and aligning with all those who seek equity, justice, equality.

This is the first National Conference of the IAWS in Tamil Nadu, a region that has a long tradition of struggles and inclusive movements and is path-breaking in many ways – the universalisation of benefits; creation and effective implementation of welfare schemes; formal recognition of the rights of several

categories of the excluded particularly sexual minorities; the extended empowerment of women; the existence of a truly empowered leadership headed by women. The IAWS is indeed honoured to be holding this conference in Tamil Nadu, in association with one of the most prestigious universities in the country.

“Rise like Lions after slumber  
In unvanquishable number –  
Shake your chains to earth like dew  
Which in sleep had fallen on you –  
Ye are many - they are few”.

- Percy Bysshe Shelley

## **Ritu Dewan**

Director, Center for Development Research and Action, Mumbai  
Executive Director, Centre for Study of Society and Secularism,  
Mumbai

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Women Performers of Parai Aattam, Sakthi Kalai Kuzhu,  
Dindugal district, Tamil Nadu