



Newsletter

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Photos by Pranhita Sen and E. Deepa

Contents

Editorial	2
Margins, Marginalities, Marginalizations... A Cautionary Note	3
Employment Not Protecting Maternity	7
Domestic and International Legal Documents on Persons with Disability	11
Reports	
Archiving the Oppositional Culture of the Women's Movement	12
Women's Studies – Concept and Debates	16
Indian Feminism: Towards New Frontiers	18
Gender and Participatory Evaluation	19
National Round Table On Women's Land Rights	20
IAWS Archives: A Note on the Inventory	22
Research Briefs	24
Announcement	
Negotiating Spaces: Gender Concerns in Conflict Zones	25
Select Bibliography	26
Book News	29

Editor's Note

A Warm New Year Wishes to you all. However, at the close of the year 2010 and at the dawn of the year 2011, the women's movement along with other people's movements finds itself challenged with: an adverse verdict of life term conviction for Binayak Sen, and, with the loss of K.G. Kannabiran who provided the vision and a new meaning to the notion of civil liberty. And not long ago, we lost two other visionaries of people's movement, L.C. Jain and S.R. Sankaran. Around the same time we also lost our feminist friend and writer, Choodamani. IAWS deeply mourns the passing away of these crusaders of gender justice. It was in the IAWS National Conference in Lucknow, 2008, we passed a resolution to condemn the conviction of Binayak Sen and demanded his immediate release. Today, after three years, as we near our next National Conference in Wardha, IAWS along with other people's movements awaits justice for Binayak Sen with little faith in our system of justice. Amidst the hopelessness of our time, we gear up for the XIII National Conference on 'Resisting Marginalizations, Challenging Hegemonies: Re-visioning Gender Politics' hosted by the Department of Women's Studies, Mahatma Gandhi International Hindi University, Wardha. Organizing efforts are on full swing and more than 600 members have already registered to attend the conference with more to follow at the venue of the conference.

Here are some details related to the conference that will be of use to the participants. Wardha, a small city in the Wardha District was known for its cotton production and later the city acquired its popularity during the independence movement when Gandhi founded Sewagram which is now a national institute. Visitors to Wardha cannot escape from paying a visit to this historic site. The Mahatma Gandhi Antarrashtriya Hindi Vishwavidyalaya or Mahatma Gandhi International Hindi University (MGAHV) was established in 1997, to carry out teaching and research in Hindi language and literature. A residential University, it is spread over an area of more than two hundred acres. The University promotes new and unconventional fields of study such as Non Violence, Peace and Conflict Resolution, Women Studies and Tribal and Dalit Studies. In the recent years efforts have been made by the University to produce standard text books and other reading material in Hindi along with an effort to publish an Encyclopedia of Social Sciences in Hindi.

The Conference will have four plenary sessions focusing on the intersectionality of women's struggles with others in the region, especially dalit and adivasi struggles. Kumud Pawde, the revered dalit feminist writer of the region who has been highlighting the inequities of caste in all her writings will deliver the Madhuri Shah Memorial Lecture. The theme plenary will have feminist activists and scholars such as Dayamani Barla, Mahasweta Devi, Chayanika Shah, and Jameela Nishat representing the many and varied forms of resistance politics of contemporary times. The regional plenary will have speakers such as Saroj Kashikar, Rani Bang, Usha Misra and Ilina Sen who will share their vast experiences of being actively involved in women's movements and other civil liberties struggles. This time the IAWS has made special attempt to draw the youth, especially students, into these conversations. The conference thus has one plenary session on youth with speakers involved in struggles in North East, Chhatisgarh, and the Narmada Bachao Andolan representing their voices and concerns. As we announced in the last newsletter, there will be a pre-conference workshop exclusively for students. The South Asia Plenary will have eminent women writers such as Shaheen Akhtar from Bangladesh, Najeefa/ Penniya from Sri Lanka and Zaheda Hina from Pakistan to speak to us the contexts of their writing and reading from some of their narratives. In addition, we have ten sub themes focusing on several issues related to the main theme of the conference, in which

about 300 papers have been submitted for presentation. There will be a number of cultural programmes including performances by Nageen Tanvir and the Bastar band and film screening. IAWS welcomes one and all for the Conference and we hope to have wonderful time together to discuss, argue, and celebrate and also to condemn all forms of injustices.

In this issue of the newsletter, we bring to you three important discussions related to issues of marginality and marginalization. The first one by Mary E. John is a critical yet a sympathetic review of the usage of terms such as margins, marginality and marginalization. Tracing the history of these terms and their shifting meanings over decades, she argues for the need to go beyond enumerating the ever expanding groups of marginalized to engage with relational aspects in the context of exploitation, oppression, discrimination and exclusion. She also emphasizes the need to address issues of differences and diversities within the marginalized in the light of above contexts. In a similar vein, Padmini Swaminathan argues in her piece on implementation of Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, that we need to take cognizance of structures that mediate and rework norms that render women workers as different, thereby making them ineligible for benefit under the Act. In other words, women as workers get marginalized and discriminated in the very manner in which the Bodies responsible for interpreting and implementing the Act choose to define and/or recognize them as such. Rukmini Sen highlights how the state plays a crucial role in marginalizing certain groups among those within the margins in order to deny them the recognition and benefits that might otherwise accrue to them under the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006. We hope these critical reflections on issues of marginality provoke us to come up with the nuanced understanding of several other terms and concepts such as rights and equality that are widely and often uncritically deployed in women's studies.

In addition, there are detailed reports of [a] the IAWS north regional workshop organized by Uma Chakravarti in collaboration with Indra Prastha college in Delhi, [b] workshop on Indian Feminism held in Chennai, and [c] National Round Table Conference on Women and Land Rights. We have also included a short note on IAWS Archives to highlight the work done so far.

In view of the forthcoming IAWS National Conference which proposes to cover several subthemes under the theme of 'Resisting Marginalizations, Challenging Hegemonies: Revisioning Gender Politics', this newsletter carries a select bibliography of contributions from Indian feminists in lieu of the book review. A further addition is the research briefs of three young research scholars who have shared abstracts of their ongoing research. Hope this will encourage other young scholars to share their work through the newsletter in future.

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Margins, Marginalities, Marginalizations...

A Cautionary Note

Mary E. John

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The overall theme of the XIII National Conference of the IAWS being held at Wardha this year is "Resisting Marginalizations, Challenging Hegemonies: Re-visioning Gender Politics". As the concept note for the conference puts it succinctly "the first decade of the twenty-first century is witness to the continuing marginalization of large groups of people, rendered invisible and inconsequential by the power of the state, capital and other forces... There is an entrenchment of older inequalities even as newer voices assert their claims from the margins..."

Clearly, terms like margins/marginalities/marginalizations are evocative, and have become quite popular in contemporary usage. Just in the last few months, several events - from conferences, meetings to research methods courses - have used these terms in their title. Precisely in a context like our conference, which is devoted to women from the margins, I would like to use this opportunity to look more sustainably at this cluster of terms, since I believe that they harbour potential as well as certain weaknesses that need more reflection than they have received so far. These are my own views, of course, and are offered in the spirit of critical engagement and solidarity.

Introducing the "Marginal"

Let me begin, then, with the observation that terms like "marginalities" or "marginalizations" are not concepts, if by a concept we mean a term that is part of a clearly identifiable theory. And yet, like a number of important words, these terms have significant histories, culminating in our present usage. As we might expect, the root word is "margin", and was first used in the 16th century. For centuries, 'margins' has been a rather innocuous term, mainly referring to the notes made by writers in the margins of a page. It also denoted an edge or border, understood in a purely descriptive sense. It is in the late 19th century that it enters the lexicon of Marshallian economics as "marginal utility", something with which students of economics would be familiar. At this stage, the marginal connoted something meaningful only at the edge, "close to the fringes of ordinary consciousness", below or beyond which something ceases to be possible or desirable.

Interestingly, in the course of the 20th century, the term "marginality", as the quality or state of being marginal, undergoes significant changes in meaning. By the 1960s the term is found in studies in sociology and political science

where marginality (in the singular) refers to "the formation of a group that is marginal to the structure of political power and social prestige", to take an example from a 1964 text. A marginal social class, it is said in a 1974 text, is "more likely to be class-conscious than one that is relatively secure and unexploited." (I have obtained this information from successive editions of the Oxford English Dictionary.) Note that it is used in the singular. It is only in subsequent decades that we come across the pluralisation of the term - marginalities, as well as references to the process associated with it, namely marginalization(s).

This little excursion into history and shifts in usage offers us some clues. Terms like marginalities and marginalization first came to carry a social and political meaning from the 1960s onwards, which as we know, was a period of considerable upheaval, characterized by widespread social movements and new directions in the social sciences. Today, 50 years later, "marginalities" has expanded much further to become a vivid spatial metaphor referring to many groups, ideas, resources, regions, and so on, located at some distance from a putative "centre". In its common deployment, as in the concept note for the IAWS Conference, it connotes being in a situation characterized by a lack of power. The contemporary popularity of the term can be explained precisely because it is able so easily to evoke various processes and forms of being at the edges of power, which is also why it is invariably pluralized. We may note further that the usual form in which the centre is identified in mainstream accounts is simply in terms of our "economic growth". The IAWS concept note goes much further in identifying the policies of the state, the role of capital and markets, new patriarchies, among others.

The major challenge confronting us today, however, is that there is no explicit link connecting the term "marginalities/marginalizations" with these variously evoked centres. In the 1960s and 70s, the notion of marginality was used to supplement certain theoretical concepts that were used precisely in order to understand and explain the nature of power relations in society. I am thinking here of fundamental concepts such as exploitation, oppression and discrimination. More recently, other terms have also been used, terms such as deprivation and exclusion. Today, I would like to suggest, terms like marginalities/marginalization are no longer marginal (if I may play on words for a moment) to these other

concepts, and have in fact taken over some of the space they occupied not so long ago.

This, then is my main worry: Whereas terms like marginality in the 60s and 70s were used descriptively along with other -- more central and pivotal -- concepts, concepts that were essential to larger theories on the power relations in society, today the situation has changed significantly. Many of these theories have lost ground or are under considerable contestation, while the use of marginalities (or marginalized groups) to designate the proportion and numbers of groups and sections suffering disempowerment has been rising exponentially. This is particularly true of the last two decades, the very decades associated with liberalisation and globalisation, and the unprecedented levels of economic growth we are currently witnessing. I am suggesting therefore, that marginalities/marginalizations are loose if evocative terms carrying an enormous, if not impossible burden: They describe the location of a very large proportion - perhaps even the majority - of our population and regions today, while refusing to theorize the structures and processes responsible for this situation in the first place. Moreover, it is reasonable to believe that there would be considerable diversity and difference within these very marginalities.

How should we as committed feminists, activists and social scientists respond to this problem? I have two suggestions: The first is to look more closely at a sample of the kinds of "keywords" that were central to our social and political theories not so long ago, to get a better sense of their potential in the present. The second is to look at the range of those who are now populating our margins according to centres of power such as the state. What can be learnt through each of these methods?

Some Keywords

In the short space of this note, I can only offer a brief discussion of the two directions I am proposing for further exploration. Let me begin the first line of inquiry by looking at one of the more well known keywords, namely exploitation. Many of us are quite familiar with this term, given its critical place in Marxist theory, which not so long ago occupied a prominent position in theories of power and change in modern societies. In Marxism, the principle domain for understanding society is that of work and commodity production - capitalist and worker, landlord and peasant are bound together by relations of exploitation, which accounts for the production of wealth on the one side, and the condition of the labouring classes on the other: Capital at the centre and workers at the margins, if you like, but vitally connected through exploitation and surplus accumulation at the workplace. The location of the exploited worker has been a very significant one for

theorizing the nature of power under capitalism as well as for the potential of changing such relations through the conscious struggle of workers, agricultural labourers and peasants. This is not the place to enter into an extended discussion of the nature of the Indian economy and labour relations. At this point, it is necessary to ask: To what extent can relations of exploitation account for the marginalizations that are occurring in the kind of economic growth that India is witnessing?

Oppression is another major concept that has been deployed since the 1960s (though it has a much older usage). Not all power relations in contemporary society take the form of capitalist exploitation, but they nonetheless exert considerable control, such as, for instance, forms of control over women, among others. Thus, the specific control of women in the household, whose unpaid labour belongs to the household and its head, and who have little decision making power beyond it, has been described as one of oppression. The marginality of women, therefore, especially in contemporary societies (including western ones) is quite peculiar. As many feminists and other scholars have frequently noted, women are not a group or a class, but are rather dispersed across all classes and groups, most commonly within households, where the nature of their work within the home gives them little overall value or status, while at the same time being essential for the reproduction of society. This unequal relation of oppression is not unique to the household alone, but is also produced in public spheres, whether of the market or the state. We thus have a different kind of marginality, with considerable variation across classes, castes and communities, ranging from the oppression of elite women to that of the poorest domestic worker, agricultural labourer, Dalit or Muslim woman.

Yet another concept to have been used is that of discrimination. Interestingly, discrimination works a little differently from the first two mentioned so far. Oppression and exploitation are structural relations of power between those in positions of relative dominance and those who are being dominated, whether these be relations of class, gender or others. Discrimination focusses on the kinds of unfair disadvantage a group faces in society vis-à-vis other groups due to relations of inequality between them. Thus women, Dalits, tribals, minority communities (particularly Muslims), non-normative sexualities, the disabled and so on suffer discrimination in many spheres (including in intersectional forms) - in terms of unequal access to education, work, representation in public life and so on. In spite of living in a democracy where every citizen enjoys formal equality, there has been considerable churning over the forms of discrimination - whether old or new - that are effectively

leading to very different life chances for different groups of people. Discrimination acknowledges inequalities between aspirants - as students, workers or representatives, which - if not addressed or compensated for - leads to the relative marginalization of the discriminated group. In spite of the fact that practices of discrimination are quite widespread and structural in our society, it is important to emphasize that the nature of our multiple discriminations remains relatively undeveloped in India, with the important exception of the legacy of B.R. Ambedkar. We do not even have an anti-discrimination law, unlike most other countries in the world.

Yet another concept to have entered into our vocabulary more recently, and important to include in a discussion on marginalizations, is that of exclusion. Interestingly, the term social exclusion began its life as part of the attempt to explain the presence of individuals who were literally living on the margins of societies that thought of themselves as advanced welfare societies with very low levels of poverty. These extremely poor individuals were therefore incongruous to such societies - they should not have been there. But homeless white people living on the streets of American cities, or the elderly dying alone and uncared for in countries like France, for example, did in fact exist. This term has also travelled to India, and has been deployed in rather different ways to make the case that large sections of our populations have been effectively excluded from development. These can range all the way from the practices of exclusion that have characterized our caste structures, to the exclusions of people from development - in specific regions and particular groups, such as the adivasis in particular.

I have done no more than give the briefest of thumbnail sketches of certain major concepts, in order to give ourselves a sense of their roles in accounting for different forms of marginalizations, such as the exploited worker in factories and fields, the oppressed woman within the home and beyond, the discriminated Dalit student, the excluded adivasi. Note however, that these are not discrete processes, but rather overlapping and interlinked, and have only been distinguished for the sake of conceptual clarity. Furthermore, the examples offered are far from exhaustive - people are discriminated against on the basis of community identity (think of the marginal status of Muslims in India today), sexuality, or even the colour of one's skin; disability is another profound basis of discrimination we are just beginning to recognise in its own right, thanks to the new disability movements in our midst, and there are no doubt more such examples.

This brings me to the second line of inquiry that I had suggested: Marginalities and marginalized groups have become something of a gigantic hold-all. The strength of such

terms, not to be underestimated in any way, lies in their apparent infinite capaciousness. Whereas the literal meaning of a margin evokes an edge or border, and hence a very narrow liminal space compared to the main or central portion, the "marginalized" have multiplied and diversified so as to now include a huge proportion if not the majority of our peoples - vast backward regions, the poor, and all those rendered deprived and vulnerable due to a range of processes. Clearly, therefore, the effects of the range of struggles by those who have been dominated in our society are being felt, as the list keeps increasing. In this context we must also not forget that groups which were not being considered in earlier accounts of exploitation or oppression, are being included among the marginalized today.

However, along with increasing recognition of marginalities there has also been a certain truncation effect. This has reached its high point in the current era of liberalisation and the new languages of governance, where the state and international bodies claim that they are undertaking a kind of balancing act, one of whose names is "inclusive growth". The state now recognises that the high rates of economic growth that countries like India are capable of do not automatically translate into the greater well-being of all. Indeed, in some cases, it may even be acknowledged that the forms of extractive capital accumulation in high growth sectors such as mining, land acquisition and real estate are responsible for new forms of dispossession, and therefore of exclusion.

In this globalised moment, the Indian state finds itself speaking the language not just of democracy but of rights and entitlements. It is significant, therefore, that, unlike in the era of Nehruvian development or even the garibi hatao campaigns of the 1970s, the twenty-first century is witnessing an important shift - from identifying those who were seen to have been left out of development, the state is entering a context where the rights of the marginalized are being emphasized. At this very time, as the state gears itself up for the 12th Five Year Plan, attempts are underway, (and I quote here from a discussion paper for the 12th Plan's anti-poverty campaign) "to mark a paradigm shift from the traditional concept of a welfare state ... to a rights-based regime creating legal entitlements for the deprived and marginalized sections of society." This is to be achieved by moving from macro-assessments of poverty to micro-level identifications of the poor. The object of course is that of doing away with BPL calculations and so to enter more fully into the world of effective targetting.

It is not my purpose here to get into a discussion of the problems of targetting. Rather, I wish to focus on how the efforts of social movements, expert academic opinion and

years of activism on several fronts have been successfully annexed by the governmental needs of the state under globalised forms of economic growth to provide an "alternative methodology for insuring inclusive growth". This alternative methodology consists of: a) automatic exclusion of certain groups declared to be the well-off; and b) automatic inclusion of the "marginalized" for government programmes, in the form of prioritised lists. While those who should be pre-emptively excluded are identified by several economic criteria (a certain level of income, presence of above average land holdings, size of house, etc.) those entitled to inclusion have been identified as "marginalized social groups" - by circumstantial calamities, gender and age, displacement, medical calamities, general backwardness, and multiple socio-economic and ethno-cultural factors (Dalits, Tribals, minorities, agricultural labourers, artisans, and fisherfolk find inclusion here).

Here, then, is a fairly extensive and vivid list of the "who" of our marginalized. However, as we can now see, these are no longer people identified by structures and processes that have produced this very marginalization. (Indeed, it is surely telling that in the list of priorities, the first category for automatic inclusion is "households of military/paramilitary/police personnel where the breadwinner has been killed or disabled on duty", while households whose only characteristic is that they belong to the "SC/ST/ minority" categories are at the bottom of the list.) There is no room here for the

frameworks of exploitation, oppression or discrimination, even as these groups are being addressed, not as the beneficiaries of welfare measures but as people endowed with rights who can now be genuinely bring the Directive Principles of the Constitution to their full promise.

Concluding Remarks

The ubiquity and dangers in an easy adoption of the terminology of "marginalizations" is why we must not underestimate the challenges before us. The state believes that there is consensus on how to move forward - protect and enable the growth process, on the one hand, and acknowledge marginalized groups through a language of entitlements, on the other. I have suggested that we must look at the legacy of theoretical and political frameworks that worked through a more sustained examination of structures and processes that produce marginalization in all their diverse forms. These cannot simply be revived but need to be subjected to further critique for their potential at the present time. It is, after all, our task to produce better accounts of the co-production of the centre(s) and their expanding margins. Finally, if indeed the marginalized are being addressed in the language of rights, then I believe that those in positions of authority cannot predict what kinds of claims the marginalized will be making in the years to come. As the IAWS Conference itself attests, what happens when "we" speak back to the centre?



THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES (IAWS)

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Employment Not Protecting Maternity: A Case Study of How the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 has been Rendered Ineffective*

Padmini Swaminathan

MIDS, Chennai

An important piece of legislation in post-Independent India is The Maternity Benefit [MB] Act, 1961. Over the years, the Courts have had to deal with several cases from aggrieved women workers who have alleged denial of benefits under this Act despite, according to them, being eligible for the benefits. We conducted a content analysis of a few cases filed for relief under this Act, to help comprehend, among other things:

- Categories of workers who have been denied, or, given less than entitled benefit
- Nature of establishments that deny such benefits
- Reasons cited by establishments for denying benefits
- Reasons for Courts' acceptance or rejection of arguments by employers/petitioners

The larger question that the exercise hoped to evaluate was the oft-repeated argument that, this country has the necessary laws but that the problem lies largely in their poor implementation. Analyzing the arguments of employers [whether private or public] for example, for denying benefits, should, in our opinion, be able to explicate how 'rules of operation' drafted to operationalize benefits under this Act actually work towards rendering workers ineligible for benefits legally due to them. Put differently, the significance of this exercise lies in unraveling policy practices that shift the policy away [in this case the policy as espoused in the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961] from its stated objectives.

In a Table setting out the effective coverage of workers under different labour legislations, the National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector [2009] among other things, indicates that, as of 1999-2000, the MB Act, 1961, was able to cover only 16% of the total number of workers eligible for coverage under this Act.

We have referred to around twenty judgments among the cases filed under this Act. The cases have been thematically ordered to highlight different aspects as well as the many ways in which the beneficial purpose for which this Act was enacted has been less than what it should have been. A point that we

will note but not labour because of the very nature of litigation process in this country [and which is not unique to cases filed under the Act under consideration] is the enormous time, patience, not to mention, financial resources, that have been expended, in the quest for justice.

Suffice it to mention, in this context, the fact that, even as it takes the aggrieved woman worker almost a decade in getting justice, the interim period was one of unemployment, since, in a few cases the application of the worker for maternal leave with benefit was answered by employers with termination notices. The route that the litigation process has involved, all the way from a local Labour Court/ Industrial Tribunal to the Apex Court of the country, namely, the Supreme Court, has taken upwards of a decade in several cases. Since this exercise is confined to content analysis of judgments, there is no way of ascertaining whether the Apex Court's directives, be it reinstatement of retrenched workers with back wages or any other, have been complied with within the time stipulated.

Themes Covered in the Judgments Studied

Questioning of Constitutional Validity of Acts enacted for the benefit of workers, a recurring example of an Act constantly under litigation being the Beedi and Cigar Workers [Conditions of Employment] Act, 1966.

Private, Non-State Bodies have time and again raised issues relating to Constitutional validity of imposition of whole Acts and/or parts of Acts. It is significant that in one of the important legislations in this country, namely, the Beedi and Cigar Workers [Conditions of Employment] Act, 1966, the Apex Court has not only upheld the Constitutional validity of the Act but has also pleaded with the Legislature to amend the act suitably to make it workable [see Box 1]

That the apprehensions expressed by Justice Alagiriswami way back in 1974 are not unfounded is very evident from the subsequent and continuing cases being filed under the Beedi and Cigar Workers [Conditions of Employment] Act, 1966, by women beedi workers denied maternity benefits

* The Tata Institute of Social Sciences [TISS] along with ILO, New Delhi office, and the Ministry of Labour, has undertaken a study to assess the coverage and effectiveness of national efforts to provide quality maternity protection for all. TISS is the nodal agency for the project. Among the overall objectives listed in the Terms of Reference document of TISS, it is hoped that the study will "bring to light incidences/signs of evasion tactics deployed by employers to avoid paying maternity protection [for example hiring less women, hiring women on casual and contract basis] under the MB and ESI Acts in particular and in other schemes, and assess whether the evasion is aggravated in the case of an employer liability scheme". This, a small part of the above study, was undertaken in early 2010 and will soon be published by the Madras Institute of Development Studies in its Working Paper Series.

BOX 1

Additional noting by Justice Alagiriswami in the Supreme Court Judgment dated 31/01/1974 relating to Mangalore Ganesh Beedi Works vs. Union of India

The Act is a compromise between the original intentions of the Government and the modifications they had to make in the proposed measure as a result of concessions intended to bring the home workers within the scope of the Act. The original intention was not to permit beedi rolling in private homes which will involve thousands of labourers in thousands of far-flung homes and the difficulty of applying the provisions of the measures to them. The result is an act that is likely to give rise to many difficulties in its actual working. It is obvious on a reading of the measure that its purpose is to rope in every possible person who could be brought in as an employer. But the result of the definitions of the Act is that everybody would be a principal employer, employer and contractor and every labour will be contract labour...

The difficulty of applying the provisions of the Maternity Benefits Act is... apparent. The very purpose of allowing the home workers to work in their homes being that the work of rolling beedis is light work, which men and women can do in their homes during their spare hours, the provision of the Maternity Benefits Act regarding women not being allowed to do arduous labour for a certain period before and after delivery is not apparent. And how can the provision be applied to women who cannot be said to be, so to say, employed continuously for a certain period before the confinement.

I must make it clear that my objection is not to any of the provisions on the ground of their unreasonableness or constitutionality... But good intentions should not result in a legislation which would become ineffective and lead to a lot of fruitless litigation over the years... I think it would be good in the interest of all concerned if the Act is amended as early as possible to remove all the lacunae and the difficulties pointed out above. These difficulties have arisen because of an attempt blindly to apply the provisions, which would be quite workable if they are applied to conditions where the Factories Act would be applicable, where the labour is regular in its attendance - every day as well as over a period, to conditions of work which are vastly different as well as to people who work at home without a conscious attempt to mould them to suit those conditions. The sooner that is done the better for all concerned.

legitimately due to them under the Act. What needs to be underlined in such cases is that, the employers through their Counsel do not address substantive issues such as non-recognition and/or termination of the women workers [consequent to their application for maternity leave with benefit] that the Asst. Labour Commissioner had pointed out to be bad in law; rather by questioning the authority of the Asst. Labour Commissioner to pass an order, they generally attempt to convert the cases into one of violation of Article 14 of the Constitution. The Apex Court is compelled to first adjudicate on the Constitutional validity of the case before examining the specific queries of by women workers and provide the workers what is legitimately due to them.

Lack of clarity regarding how the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, is expected to interface with other Acts and/or Service Rules of different establishments governing conditions of employment

A general but important theme that is yet to be resolved is the insufficient attention that has been paid all along to the interface, or rather the lack of it, between the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, and other laws, Acts, etc, governing conditions of employment in particular sectors, industries within sectors, specific establishments, specific modes of employment, etc. The larger question that this raises is the following: given the importance of the Maternity Benefit Act should not the Legislative Bodies of this country have followed up the enactment of this Act with 'rules of operation' clearly specifying how the provisions of this Act needed to be

incorporated, even if it required amendments to other laws/ Acts, so that the beneficial purpose for which the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 was passed served that purpose?

Unfortunately, while to some extent the Apex Court of this country has performed this task, this redressal has been achieved at great personal cost in terms of time and money to those few tenacious individuals who, along with those who supported them in this endeavour, have been able to withstand the ordeal that has taken almost upwards of a decade. Notwithstanding the landmark pronouncements by the Apex Court on very many issues of law, interpretations of laws, etc, in the course of its examination of the cases and subsequent judgments, the reach of these pronouncements have been minimal given that these pronouncements by themselves have not led to changes/amendments in other Acts/ Laws governing conditions of employment as far as women workers' access to maternity benefit is concerned.

Quantum of Benefit: Definition of 'week' and should Sundays be included in calculation of Maternity Leave Wages

A theme that is linked to the issue of non-interface of MB Act, 1961, with other Acts/Laws in operation is the quantum of maternity benefit, be it number of days of leave, before and after delivery, and/or monetary compensation during the period of leave. Whether State or the private sector, the attempt always is to pay the woman employee a lesser [than would have been admissible under the Maternity Benefit Act,

1961] quantum of benefit, be it leave or money. The manner in which lesser quantum of benefit is justified by employers and subsequently dealt with by Courts is revealing. The elaborate discussions relating to what constitutes a 'week', which service rules govern a particular employment and what is admissible under those service rules [even if the latter goes contrary to the provisions of the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961], is the establishment covered by the Act, etc., these are a few of the several themes that have engaged the Courts in deciding eligibility and quantum of benefit.

Provisions of MB Act, 1961 vis-à-vis Service Rules of Establishments: How many Births qualify for Maternity Protection?

It is interesting to note that, while the MB Act, 1961, itself 'does not fix any ceiling on the number of deliveries made by

a female worker' as ruled by the learned Judge of the Madras High Court in a judgment delivered on 09/06/2008, there are several cases where Service Rules of Establishments, including those of certain state governments explicitly deny maternity benefit beyond two living children citing GOI's population control policy.

What needs to be emphasized at this juncture is the following: In the absence of an Apex Court ruling on the important point, namely, whether provisions of the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, over rule service conditions of establishments that may contradict or be at variance with the provisions of the MB Act, 1961, judgments of High Courts dealing with similar issues have been contradictory, some upholding the supremacy of the provisions of the MB Act, 1961, over service rules of individual establishments [whether public or private], while a few judgments have ruled that as

BOX 2

Municipal Corporation of Delhi vs. Female Workers [Muster Roll]: Judgment delivered on 08/03/2000 [Summary of Case and Judgment]

Female workers [muster roll] engaged by the MCD [Corporation] raised a demand for grant of maternity leave which was made available only to regular female workers but was denied to them on the ground that their services were not regularized and, therefore they were not entitled to any maternity leave. Their case was espoused by the Delhi Municipal Workers Union and consequently the following question was referred by the Secretary [Labour] Delhi Administration to the Industrial Tribunal for adjudication: Whether the female workers working on Muster Roll should be given any maternity benefit? If so, what directions are necessary in this regard?

The Industrial Tribunal, which has given an award in favour of the women employees, has noticed that women employees have been engaged by the Corporation on muster roll, that is to say on daily wage basis for doing various works in projects like construction of buildings, digging of trenches, making of roads, etc., but have been denied the benefit of maternity leave. The Tribunal has found that though the women employees were on muster roll and had been working for the Corporation for more than 10 years, they were not regularized. The Tribunal, however came to the conclusion that the provisions of the Maternity Benefit Act had not been applied to the Corporation and, therefore, it felt that there was a lacuna in the Act. It further felt that having regard to the activities of the Corporation, which had employed more than a thousand women employees, it should have been brought within the purview of the Act so that the maternity benefits contemplated by the Act could be extended to the women employees of the Corporation. It felt that this lacuna could be removed by the State Govt. by issuing the necessary notification under the Proviso to Section 2 of the Act... It consequently issued a direction to the management of the Municipal Corporation, Delhi to extend the benefits of the Maternity benefit Act, 1961, to such muster roll female employees who were in continuous service of the management for three years or more and who fulfilled the conditions set out in Section 5 of the Act...

Learned Counsel for the Corporation contended that since the provisions of the Act have not been applied to the Corporation, such a direction could not have been issued by the Tribunal.

The Apex Court however felt that, "This is a narrow way of looking at the problem which is human in nature and anyone acquainted with the working of the Constitution, which aims at providing social and economic justice to the citizens of this country, would out rightly reject the contention"...

Next, it was contended that therefore the benefits contemplated by the MB Act, 1961 can be extended only to workmen in an 'industry' and not to muster roll employees of the Corporation.

Again the Apex Court felt that "This is too stale an argument to be heard. Learned Counsel also forgets that Municipal Corporation was treated to be an 'industry' and, therefore, a reference was made to the Industrial Tribunal, which answered the reference against the Corporation, and it is this matter which is being agitated before us... Now it is to be remembered that the Municipal Corporations or Boards have already been held to be 'industry' within the meaning of 'Industrial Disputes Act'...

We conclude our discussion by providing that the direction issued by the Industrial Tribunal shall be complied with by the MCD by approaching the State Govt. as also the Central Govt. for issuing necessary Notification under the Proviso to Sub-section [1] of Section 2 of the MB Act 1961, if it has not already been issued. In the meantime, the benefits under the Act shall be provided to the women [muster roll] employees of the Corporation who have been working with them on daily wages.

long as service rules have not been amended, the provisions of the MB Act, 1961 cannot be deemed to be automatically applicable.

Status of Employment Impinging on Eligibility to avail of Maternity Leave and Benefit

In a landmark judgment [delivered on 08/03/2000] that touched the core of the nature of employment of large numbers of women in this country, the Supreme Court ruled that the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, was applicable to daily wage earners and women employed, temporarily, casually and/or on contract [see Box 2].

Subsequent to the Supreme Court ruling in the Delhi Muster Roll case, several judgments thereafter reinforced the point that status of employment cannot be made the basis for denial of maternity benefit [See, for example, Anima Goel vs. Haryana State Marketing Board judgment delivered on 17.11.2006 by the Punjab and Haryana Court, Mrs. Bharti Gupta vs. Rail India Technical and Economical Services Ltd. [RITES] and Others judgment delivered on 09/08/2005, etc, to name a few. Once again, while the process of achieving justice through this judgment has been arduous and time consuming, this judgment by no less a Body than the Apex Court itself has not put paid to further litigation arising out of linking woman's nature of employment to her being eligible for maternity leave/benefit.

Reflections on MB Act Case Study

The study of judgments relating to cases under the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, has been an eye-opener in more ways than one. To some extent it throws light on why the coverage of the Act has been abysmal including and even in the government sector.

The manner in which women employed by State have been excluded from provisions of the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, have been several and varied: one, contrary to all norms of justice, the State has employed women workers but used nomenclatures such as daily, ad hoc, casual, etc., and then justified denial of maternity benefit on the ground that even the amended Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, applies only to regular and temporary workers, not casual, daily or ad hoc. Two, while recruitments have followed a set procedure, appointment letters have been arbitrarily changed to render the woman employee ineligible for any benefit, maternity or otherwise. Three, when the Apex Court has come down heavily on state governments for denying maternity benefits to women employees kept for years on contract or daily basis, the bureaucracy has come up with other ways of making woman employees ineligible, namely, by citing, for example, that women employees on consolidated mode of payment of

salary are not eligible for benefit under the MB Act, 1961.

The Government's own Resolutions have become handy for establishments to deny maternity benefit altogether and/or allow maternity leave but without any monetary benefit. To top it all, in a few of the cases, application for maternity leave has been answered with termination notices, an aspect that the Apex Court has specifically underlined as being illegal and bad in law.

From a feminist perspective, this exercise has been a learning exercise in several ways. An important learning is the realization that mere enactments of more laws to address specific feminist demands need to be backed by 'rules of operation' that also specify how binding these provisions are and whether existing laws governing establishments need to be amended in the light of these new women-friendly laws.

The few cases dealt with above relating to operation of the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, has revealed how and why the coverage of the Act even in the organized sector remains abysmal. Hence, while struggle for extending the coverage of the Act to establishments and women workers outside the purview of the Act needs to be strengthened, equally important is the need to struggle to unravel ways and means by which legally eligible women workers get excluded from provisions of such beneficial legislation.

Further, despite feminist opposition to population control policies, service rules of organizations, including some state governments, deny maternity benefit to women who already have two living children. While the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, itself does not state anything on the number of times a woman worker can avail of benefit under the rule, service rules of organizations incorporating GOI's population control policies have taken precedence over the MB Act, 1961, to the detriment of women workers.

In short, this exercise, taking the operation of the Maternity Benefit Act 1961, has revealed how institutional arrangements have contributed to making the Act largely dysfunctional. Viewing the theme from a feminist perspective and 'Asking the Woman Question' [a la Bartlett, 1991] reveals how the position of women workers reflects the organization of workplaces rather than the inherent characteristics of women as workers.

This exposition of the effects of laws, such as the MB Act, 1961, has enabled us to demonstrate how structures, social and legal, embody norms that inherently render women workers different so that legislations directly aimed at facilitating woman worker's maternity role instead become instruments not only for their subordination but also for their dismissal from work. □

Domestic and International Legal Documents on Persons with Disability: Medical to Citizenship Rights Framework

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India was one of the prompt signatories to the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), 2006. However, the domestic legislation that we have for persons with disability is in complete contrast to the spirit of the UN convention. This article very briefly tries to capture some of the substantive differences between the two.

The first major difference is the manner in which the word disability is defined. For the UNCRPD, disability is understood as a combination of a medical and social model where both the mention of physical and mental impairment as well as barriers hindering full and effective participation with equality in society is stated.

The Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995 although in its title has a sub-title, equal opportunities, protection of rights and full participation; but in the definition of the term disability, it is limited to a medical model only restricting to blindness, low vision, leprosy-cured, hearing impairment, loco motor disability, mental illness and mental retardation. Moreover, a person with disability is somebody who is suffering from not less than 40% of any of the above-mentioned disability as certified by a medical authority.

The second contrast is the complete gender blindness in the domestic legislation. The UNCRPD recognizes equality between men and women with disability. It has a separate chapter on women with disabilities where the multiple vulnerabilities faced by women and girls with disabilities are recognized and the need to ensure human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The need to create opportunities for development, advancement and empowerment of women with disabilities is acknowledged. The convention mentions the need to protect persons with disabilities from any forms of gender-based exploitation, violence and abuse. Unfortunately, the PWD Act, enacted in 1995, by which time, there was an already well established women's movement in the country, and also other civil liberties movements for decades. However, the reflection of the achievements of these movements was not found in this legislation which was also a law made for a marginalized category in the society, hoping to bring about reforms through law and not just through charity efforts.

The main chapters that the Indian legislation covers are

prevention and early detection of disabilities, education, employment, affirmative action, and non-discrimination (focusing on accessibility). Reservation in government jobs and educational institutions is an important measure in the PWD Act to ensure representation of persons with disabilities in some public spaces.

However, the more fundamental requirement for people with disabilities to make it possible for their representation to happen is infrastructural accessibility in terms of roads and transportation. Interestingly, this is dependent on economic capacity of the government! On the other hand, the UNCRPD, besides having sections on education, employment, health, accessibility has very specific discussions on living independently and being included in the community.

The independent living movement has been one of the leading proponents of disability movement in the USA. In continuation with independent living as a philosophy, freedom of expression and opinion; respect for privacy; need for leisure and personal mobility are desired objectives of the CRPD. Given that the individual is given importance in the CRPD, the same document mentions the need for respect for home and family-issues relating to marriage, sexuality, parenting, caring for children with disabilities form a part of the provisions.

The Indian legislation of course has no discussion liberty related issues of a citizen. At the same point of time there is no mention of the family also, in a sense that it is taken for granted that the family shall be the main care-giver to the disabled person, who shall remain in a permanent state of infantilizing.

The framework of the citizen, personhood image in the UN convention is very different from what the Indian legislation had envisioned in the early 1990s. Efforts are on to make amendments to the PWD Act. Since the main framework of the disability discourse in India had been charity dominated, service-provider driven; to take the citizenship right rhetoric will take a while. What is definitely required is for the different movements to dialogue with each other in order to share the similar and different discrimination and how each can benefit from the other's experience rather than remaining exclusionary. It is only by collective learning that hegemonies can be countered.

Archiving the Oppositional Culture of the Women's Movement IAWS Northern Regional Conference: Delhi

The culture of resistance is part of our collective historical legacy. The anti-colonial resistance in India, and later the political movement for independence was accompanied by a large number of plays such as Neel Darpan in Bengal, Keechakvadh in Maharashtra and Panchali Sapadam in Tamilnadu. Non-proscenium plays also have a long history, longer than we think. Phule's pavadas or ballads were performed in open public spaces where the audiences were not the theatre going middle classes but ordinary folk. Later there was the IPTA, the Indian People's Theatre Association which was set up in the early forties when war and famine were causing havoc in India and the Tebhaga movement of sharecroppers was sweeping Bengal. Young women and men were engaged in relief work, activism and in using theatre and music to reach out to people, support them in their own movements and bring in others who were not yet drawn into the political movements of the time. Every cultural resource was used to reach out to people. Street theatre in its current form was first popularised by the IPTA, 'the country's first organised political theatre movement'. Its songs are still with us in the sub-continent.

The women's movement of the late seventies and eighties centred on opposing forms of violence against women that had been practised earlier but had now assumed new dimensions where the contexts, or manifestations, of violence had changed. It created a new imperative both in thinking critically about culture and about ways of intervening in the practice of culture, and in democratising it. This was the background for the cultural production of the post seventies women's movement in India with its large repertoire of street plays, songs, poster exhibitions, films, proscenium theatre, sculpture, installations, even handicrafts like kantha, and phads among a range of other forms, drawing upon folk and classical traditions in music and theatre, street performances, indeed the widest possible range of traditions.

The workshop, extending over three days, brought together theatre people, musicians, film-makers, activists and academics who have been working in the field of

culture to critically engage with the cultural production of the women's movement. Participants came from as far as Chennai, Pune and Mumbai although it was meant to be the northern regional conference of the IAWS.

A very large number of activists from Delhi, many of whom were part of the first generation of cultural 'producers' of the artefacts of the women's movement were able to participate and take the older generation on a nostalgia trip as well as introduce the younger generation to the women's movement and give a real feel of the range and vibrancy of the 80s and 90s and the first decade of the new millennium. Since we had only three days in which to compress the wide sample of feminist creativity we could not be exhaustive but we did manage to find time for performances, film screenings and discussions.

Holding the event in a women's college, one where the first generation of feminists in the late seventies and early eighties in the University pioneered the discussions on culture was a fitting tribute to the college and its teachers and the vibrant traditions they introduced into the college. The event also made it possible for the current generation of women students to ask questions, interact with theatre activists and the creators of the famous songs of the women's movement, and debate the finer points of documentaries. The event was a tribute to the late Sudesh Vaid, feminist and democratic rights activist and the wonderful theatre activist, Rati Bartholomew, now unable to actively participate in cultural events as she is housebound, both of whom taught English in Indraprastha College and contributed enormously to the women's movement in the 80s and 90s.

The program opened on 8th September 2010 with Neeraj Malik of the Department of English in Indraprastha College, who was the co-ordinator of the three day event along with Uma Chakravarti from the IAWS, and Babli Moitra Saraf, Principal of Indraprastha College expressing much delight in the inauguration of their newly renovated seminar hall with the Cultures of Resistance program. Then the hall resonated with the songs that have become flag bearers of the women's movement, giving voice to the theme of the first session: 'singing to break the silence'.

The session was chaired by Gauri Choudhury who recalled her association with Sudesh Vaid and Premila Lewis and their collaborative efforts in the anti-dowry demonstrations in the early 80s in north Delhi in which the students and teachers of Delhi University had played a significant role. Then Kamla Bhasin, Jaya Srivastava, and Runu took over singing the songs created in the early 80s, often as all of them, and others, sat in a bus or van to reach the venue of a demonstration.

The impromptu creations became legion: 'tod tod ke bandhano ko dekho behne aati hain' is still sung at openings of meetings and never fails to draw an enthusiastic response from younger generations of activists. Kamla also regaled the audiences with the ideas that informed the creation of songs, violence against women, the machinations of politicians in stoking communalism, globalisation and its advocates all through catchy phrases. Jaya described the way the melodies of folk songs were used with new words to articulate the oppositional imagination of the women's movement. And Runu lent her powerful voice to belt out the clarion call of women committed to struggling against violence and oppression. The 'sahelis' from Delhi then sang some of the songs they had created as part of the street plays on sexual harassment, as well as women's complex and shifting identities as a precursor to the afternoon discussion on street theatre.

Hasina Khan who had come all the way from Mumbai to be with us described the poignant and beautiful composition created by women in Awaaz e Niswan titled 'main acchi hoon ghabraon nako, aisa khat mein likho'; the song describes a young Muslim woman's letter dictated to a friend and addressed to her husband who is away in Dubai and sending money home. He is also being fed with allegations of his wife going astray, going out of the home to keep her responsibilities going, but also attending meetings of the Awaaz e Niswan. Composed in Bambaia Hindi, this song has an amazing appeal and was thoroughly enjoyed by students and teachers.

The session then moved into a solo, reflective mode with Vidya Rao whose theme was broadly titled: 'singing journeys into the self'. She enchanted the student-teacher audience with an account of her learning thumri, a form originally associated with 'baijis', women who sang mainly for a male audience, and the music they created. Vidya, alternated between talking about her journey in the world

of music and singing snatches of wonderfully evocative songs of yearning, the seasons, and playful encounters with cuckolding lovers! It was clear to all of us that Vidya was a huge hit with her audience for whom such a journey into a feminist self was fascinating.

Vidya's session was followed by the screening of the MTV version of Shubha Mudgal's rendering of 'mann ke manjeere' visualised around a woman truck driver who rises from a battered existence to find freedom for herself and her daughter on the road, as it were, visualised magnificently and enacted by Mita Vashist.

The session was provocatively titled 'For a Wider Reach' to interrogate notions of the reach of TV to carry feminist messages, the costs of 'production,' the assemblage of talent, and the attention span of the TV viewing and screening system and its internal dynamics especially since the TV version could not easily fit into the activist-feminist-workshop mode like the other songs created and sung by a range of women, tunefully sometimes and not so tuneful at other times but always with gusto, in keeping with the spirit of the moment.

The afternoon session was chaired by Pragati Mohapatra of Indraprastha College, herself a wonderful singer from pratidhwani, a progressive singing group of the 80s and 90s in Delhi and now a teacher of history. Urvashi Butalia the feminist publisher and co-founder of India's first feminist publishing house, Kali for Women, and now of Zubaan, took the workshop on a poster journey in a presentation titled 'The Visual Cultures of the Women's Movement: Making the Poster and Documenting It' alternating between talking about making posters and showing us clips of them. An early poster titled 'meri bibi kaam nahi karti hai,'(my wife does not work) which had done a take on the multi armed goddesses of hindu tradition to detail the never-ending chores of women in India had been turned into a poster for the workshop.

Women across India have made hundreds of posters and written thousands of pamphlets which we haven't collected as we should have, with no one having time to think about archiving in the midst of having to deal with one crisis after another. The story of the attempt by Zubaan to collect the posters was quite fascinating as it threw up modes of archiving no one would have thought of: stored under mattresses, or at the bottom of trunks, rolled up to gather dust or simply thrown away as feminists moved house or overused the spaces they lived in.

The visual journey was followed by a presentation by Neeraj Malik of Indraprastha College, who is writing a book on the contexts for the emergence of the street play and providing the scripts of some of the most popular ones, which would be an important part of the archiving of the women's movement. Giving a theatre activist's performative take on women's issues in street theatre Moloysree Hashmi of the Jan Natya Manch, who has played the main protagonist in the famous street play *Aurat*, performed in hundreds of locations blending class and gender issues through a working class woman's experiences, spoke about the making and performing of *Aurat*. She recounted her own journey with the play describing how the text and the performances changed over the years to fine tune the production and enhance its message.

Bringing the session on street theatre to a close, Saheli recounted two plays it has performed in recent years: 'mahaul badalna hai' on sexual harassment and 'kaun jaat' on caste and ethnic identities as they play out in the lives of women. While the former was an experience that many young women identify with and respond to especially its comic but dead serious take on stereotypes women always confront in bringing sexual harassment into the public domain, 'kaun jaat' was a moving enactment of experiences rarely confronted by the women's movement with a fragment from the play performed marvellously by Vani Subramanian. That brought the first day's archival journey to a close.

The morning session on the 9th was chaired by Lata Singh, a feminist theatre analyst and was devoted to feminist journeys beyond street theatre. In a vibrant and amazingly interactive session Maya Rao spoke about her experiences in making solo performances and the strategies she has come to use in developing this form. The older group in the audience remembered Maya's powerful performance as the young bride in *Om Swaha* the very first time it was staged, in the lawns of Indraprastha College. Maya remained in street theatre for a number of years before going into solo performances, where she uses irony, humour and drama with amazing felicity, a sample of which we got through the clips she showed us of some of her performances. We then got a sample of women's poetry read by the students of Indraprastha College.

In a session aptly titled *Writing Resistance: Readings from Women's Poetry* which actually began with a poem written and read by Babli Moitra Saraf who said she was

inspired to write the poem in response to controversial and objectionable comments on women writers in Hindi by a male Hindi writer. The poem and the lead taken by the Principal of Indraprastha College was hugely appreciated. Tripurari Sharma followed Maya to talk about transforming and recreating while working with different performative traditions. Tripurari who has worked with a range of theatre persons from college students, to the students of the National School of Drama, to nautanki and pandvani artists, spoke about her own journey into feminism and the impact of the women's movement upon all her work. Thoughtful and reflective Tripurari brought the story of a feminist director working in mixed locations up to present. Her reflections on Azizan Bai in her work on 1857 picked up on the tawaif theme that was central to Vidya Rao's presentation.

In the afternoon session chaired by feminist scholar Kumkum Sangari, Sushama Deshpande and A. Mangai spoke about their work in theatre. Sushama is well known for her solo performance on Savitribai Phule which brought a somewhat neglected historical figure back into conscious memory through a feminist recovery of history, and taking her beyond Maharashtra into other regions. This initiative of hers she said was widely welcomed but when she went on to direct a play about lavani performers there was much less approval since the lavani dancers did not come off as victims with no agency in her play written and performed in collaboration with them. Her presentation was nicely titled 'contexts for performance' and showed the fractures within the women's movement on cultural performances and their meanings for different women.

Mangai then took us from Maharashtra to Tamil Nadu through an overview of her work on a range of feminist issues: female infanticide, the amazingly free representation of the wise woman sage Auvaiyar, the moving rendering of the inner lives of transgenders, and the history of the raga Kalyani, which was sought to be appropriated, tribalised, circumscribed and communalised over many locations but managing to retain its free spirit. Mangai used video clips from her plays to let us go with her on her journeys in feminist theatre. And that brought day two of the workshop to a close.

The third day of the workshop (10.9.2010) was devoted to both the direct and indirect fallout of the women's movement on films. The morning session was chaired by Swati Joshi who teaches english literature in Miranda House and is an avid film watcher herself. Ranjani

Mazumdar spoke about the ways in which Bombay Cinema sought to handle the women's question in mainstream as well as in the new cinema of the 80s. Clips from various films interspersed her presentation, always an enjoyable experience, ending with the hugely popular, but intensely powerful Mirch Masala, perhaps Bombay cinema's most enduring portrayal of feudal patriarchal power, oppressiveness at many levels and the power of collective resistance when women come together.

Shohini Ghosh took us through a thoughtful working out of the documentary film as a genre and its changing contours over the decades while Saba Dewan talked about her work in documentary films beginning with straightforward message films to a more exploratory and nuanced handling of women's lives as she herself opened up to different ways of doing cinema through the work of other film makers. The experience of making a film centred around the lives of underprivileged young adolescent girls who had never seen snow and were taken on a journey so that they could see it, was part of the making of the film as was its theme.

Finally everybody watched Saba's new film titled 'The Other Song' which took us back to Vidya Rao's tawaif, her music and the transformation of a whole way of life through the collapse of a tradition of performance. This was a very fine and fitting closure to the workshop and its many themes, as it was a powerful way to think about culture and resistance and feminist engagements with it, through writing, scholarship, singing, theatre and the visual medium.

The Indian Association of Women's Studies which has a long history of trying to focus on issues pertaining to women through national and regional workshops held over a 30 year period, had not yet focused on 'culture,' especially on cultures of resistance, except to incorporate such issues as late night events at the national conferences. Beginning with this workshop it is poised to seriously engage with the theme to create and sustain an archive of cultural products that will help to document the women's movement and facilitate research on a little known field within the women's movement. Thanks to a wonderful grant to build an archive it was possible to visually document the entire proceedings of the workshop which will be housed in the archive of the IAWS, located in the SNDT Women's University, Mumbai and made available to scholars and cultural activists for their research and/or their creative work.

Uma Chakravarti

THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES

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Women's Studies – Concept and Debates: Reflections on CWDS' Research Training Course

Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi.

The Centre for Women's Development Studies (CWDS) conducted a six week Research Training Course with support from the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) from November 1st to December 10th 2010. This full-time intensive course was planned in the form of interactive sessions between faculty and participants, supplemented by supervised library research.

The course followed a cluster approach, and was structured around 10 thematic clusters or units. Each cluster consisted of a number of interactive lecture sessions, library work and assignments to students. Running in tandem with these sessions, students prepared a research proposal on a topic of their choice, which was presented to the group during the final days of the course. The course was planned and conducted collectively by the CWDS team along with some lectures from guest faculty.

The cluster approach was deliberately chosen to provide some depth and an engagement with issues, with about three days available to each theme. After a set of introductory lectures locating women's studies and the scope of the course, the following clusters were offered - history; concepts; family/caste/tribe/community; development; labour, class and gender; state, citizenship and rights; law, justice and equality; health; disability; and culture and representation. The sessions composing a particular cluster aimed to go beyond the topic in itself, so as to include debates as well as some of the methodological issues that a gender perspective for conducting research in the area would require.

Though 25 participants were shortlisted from the large number of applicants, due to various reasons, 16 finally joined the course. Five were from Delhi, while the remaining came from many different parts of the country - Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Meghalaya, Bihar, Punjab and U.P. All students had completed their Masters degree in various disciplines including a few in women's studies, most were already in or planning to join a Ph.D. programme, while two had completed their Ph.D. The strength of the course and its overall success can largely be attributed to the keenness of this group, whose growing involvement in the course made the experience worthwhile.

Women's Studies is now at an interesting and critical

stage in its institutional development in India. One clear sign can be seen in the emergence of more teaching, and in many forms. While refresher courses for lecturers are being offered in a growing number of universities since over a decade, various certificate and degree courses have also been stabilizing in recent years. CWDS' own interest in expanding its teaching grew out of the early initiative to introduce the Refresher Course to the UGC in the mid 1990s, and more recent plans to offer doctoral level research training to students. The six week course represented a kind of compromise (in lieu of a doctoral level programme), and had the advantage of an intensive all day course structure in which lectures alternated with library and reading related sessions.

In the feedback session with the students, many of them emphasized the value of such a course: The exposure to a range of different themes which they were otherwise relatively unaware of; the presence of multiple perspectives on a given issue; and a democratic approach to learning. It was telling and not a little sobering to learn that many university contexts including women's studies centres are falling far short of providing students the necessary background for conducting research. The course itself was supported by funding from the ICSSR which has a provision for short term research methodology courses, usually no longer than two weeks. These courses are generally expected to follow a format that focuses on specific research techniques - whether qualitative or quantitative.

In CWDS' own conceptualization and planning for the course, it was clear that we did not see ourselves as offering this kind of methods course. Rather we felt the need to firstly provide research oriented students a sense of major thematic areas in the field of women's studies (since it is not possible to assume any detailed knowledge in advance), and, secondly, that we wished to weave in the question of "how" one goes about doing research with "what" it is that one is researching. We are indeed grateful to the ICSSR for having willingly modified their existing format in terms of both time period and overall design to enable us to teach this course.

Students were strongly in favour of such an approach, though they did feel that questions of method did not receive enough attention in the process. A very interesting question raised by some of the students at the conclusion of the course

had to do with how to teach women's studies in the first place. How does one convey the politics of the subject matter? What if different students are grasping the issues very differently, including from conventional points of view?

One issue that struck a particular chord with us as teachers concerned the sense of a certain divide between the life experiences and historical worlds of the students and those of us who were students in the 1970s and 80s. To put it most starkly, we were teaching liberalisation's children (as one of the students informed us!). In our discussions afterwards we asked ourselves, what pedagogies do we need to devise to address such "gaps" in our respective frames of reference? This is a question that obviously has repercussions well beyond women's studies itself. After all, most of us are still sustained by experiences of social movements and an oppositional politics that are not easily available today.

Even questions of colonialism and nationalism, or the critique of the state are experienced differently today compared to a generation ago. The easy recourse to a language of rights in the present time also produces its own dilemmas, when, for instance, we problematized notions of reproductive rights to a young researcher who could not share "our" history of the health movement. At the same time, we too were frequently destabilised as teachers, as students raised questions which placed a strain on our ways of approaching a particular problem.

Since this course was not only meant to be a thematic overview of the field of women's studies, but enable students to develop their research potential, an essential aspect of the course was the research proposal. We wanted the students to draw on the lectures, copious reading material and discussions with faculty to develop a research proposal, and not a research paper. We were keen, in spite of the shortage of time available, to give students a sense of the importance of developing the question that they were to investigate (whether in the form of a possible PhD or as a research project).

We were struck by the extent to which students benefited considerably from the few sessions devoted to this aspect of the course. In part, it also revealed how little actual sustained training is given in our systems of higher education to enabling students to develop their research interests. Apart from the general practice of listening to lectures (at the MA level and beyond) in how many departments are students engaged in learning how to read the main arguments from a given text, how to build their own ideas in written exercises based on the existing literature, and, most important of all,

recognize what makes a good research question? In how many women's studies centres and departments are the miniscule number of faculty in a position to train students to do research in this sense? The students in our classes were clearly wrestling with this aspect and it mattered to them a great deal to evolve their research from the perspectives of women's studies. A number of them changed their topic along the way in the process.

In the end we listened to an extraordinary array of research proposals, coming from diverse regional, disciplinary and political locations. Here are their titles: The Nature of the institutionalization of resistance in the women's health movement; The Bhopal Gas Tragedy struggle: Contextualising the Women's Question; Deconstructing 'Violence', Unmasking the 'New privates'; Identifying multiple actors in mediating cases of violence against women in Kerala and Haryana; Desertion and Deception in NRI Marriages: A case study of Punjab; Changing attitudes among Muslims to women's education in U.P. and Kerala (by an Aligarh student); Women, the welfare state and institutions of confinement: a Study of Women's welfare homes; Matriliney and Property Rights among Jaintia Women in Meghalaya; Irretrievable Breakdown of Marriage: a ground for divorce?; Gendered experiences and the trajectories of engineering students; Women, Entrepreneurship and Capacity Building; Gender and the Informal Sector: The case of Paid domestic workers; Folklore and Urban Women's Lives; Panchayati Raj and women's empowerment in contemporary Bihar; Narratives from the "othered" side: Gendered experiences of urban homelessness; Dalit women and Reproductive Health: An anthropological Perspective.

There is no question that the teaching of research in women's studies is at the intersections of some of the most critical issues affecting the future of higher education and research. Too little attention is being paid to the changing face of higher education, even though it is going through a historic phase in our post-independence history. Even less attention is being paid to what kind of research we need and what we are doing to engender a new generation of researchers. The institutionalization of women's studies as a new field, if not discipline, also hangs in the balance, as questions about the changing nature of our movements and politics have no obvious answers. But while we may feel the failures of our institutions to rise to the challenges before us, the struggle of new generations to evolve a politics and set of questions that can confront their worlds can never be disavowed. Above all else, this is what we have to learn.



Indian Feminism: Towards New Frontiers

A National Conference titled Indian Feminism: Towards New Frontiers was organized by the Asian Centre for Cross-cultural Studies (ACCS), Chennai, from 26-27 August, 2010. The conference served as an occasion to take stock of Indian feminism as it engaged theorists and activists from different parts of India in a feminist discourse on issues affecting the life of Indian women. Dr Felix Wilfred, the founder director of ACCS, on introducing the Conference, focussed on the need of taking the feminist discourse forward to new frontiers, in response to the changing reality of women in India.

The conference was inaugurated by Ms. Sheela Rani Chunkath IAS, Chairperson and Managing Director, Tamilnadu Industrial Investment Corporation Ltd. In her presidential address, Ms Chunkath pointed out that the time has come for Indian women to take the reins of life in their own hands. She stressed on giving visibility to women's power through economic inclusion and political participation whereby women can influence the state in its policy making and decisions.

The keynote address was delivered by Dr Uma Chakravarti, the well known feminist historian and writer from Delhi. She clarified that feminism addresses the oppressive ideology underlying the many forms of oppression women experience today. A feminist consciousness is like opening the third eye, which demystifies the ideological falsities that define womanhood. Feminism as a mode of thinking, challenges the hegemony embedded into our culture which is inscribed by patriarchy and so, women's movement needs feminism to go ahead. Dr Meena Gopal, Fellow, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi addressed the issue of marriage, family and women's sexuality from a feminist perspective. Analyzing the Indian reality of marriage and family, she pointed out how women's sexuality is constructed to fit male sexuality and desire and how the normative ideology of marriage and family is challenged by the feminist discourse.

The question of women and economy was addressed by Dr Kalpana Karunakaran, Asst. Professor, Indian Institute of Technology, Chennai. She spoke about gendering of the development discourse, whereby women are dependent on the economy generated by men, and focused on the need for strengthening women's productive contribution to economy and society. Prof. Kalpana Kannabiran, Fellow and Director, Chityala Ailamma Centre for Interdisciplinary

Research, Secunderabad, dealt with the question of women and politics. She drew attention to the fact that politics is both an aspiration for power as well as a contestation of hegemony. Hence the question whether the entry of women will make a difference in politics. In her presentation, she argued that political empowerment of women ought to be addressed along with household politics.

The last presentation of the first day was on women's movement and it was dealt by Ms. V. Geetha, feminist historian and editor, Tara Publications, Chennai. Taking stock of women's movement in India, she pointed out that the history of women's movement has to be expressed in the context of women's engagement with local or contextual issues. In her critical reading of women's movement, she observed that it is important to identify the kind of agency women have claimed for themselves in tackling the different regional issues and underlined that feminism is a conscious political choice that challenges women's normative existence.

The second day's sessions began with the reflections on women and religion. Ms. Sharifa Kannan, President, STEPS- Women's Organization, Pudukottai focussed on Muslim women's empowerment. She addressed the relation between religion and women's rights and explained how Muslim women's decision to engage with the Jamat to address their own issues, facilitated the claiming of their rights. The second paper dealing with women and religion was presented by Dr. Monica Melanchton, Professor, Department of Old Testament Studies, Gurukul Lutheran Theological College, Chennai. Speaking on the contours and future markers of Indian feminist theology, she focused on the emergence of feminist theological consciousness in India, and observed how feminism challenges cultural normalization even by religion.

Ms. Mangai (Dr. V. Padma), theater activist and professor, Department of English, Stella Maris College, Chennai dealt with the experiences and challenges of cultural activism in the making of Indian feminism. She spoke of not polarizing the social, economic, political and cultural aspects in women's lives and how women have questioned traditional roles in feminist plays, thus making theater the voice of the voiceless.

The concluding session of the conference was a Panel on 'Feminist Interventions on women's Issues'. Eminent feminists representing four NGOs from south India,

participated in the Panel and drew attention to the translation of feminist theory into real life situations by addressing the concrete realities of women's lives. Ms Aleyamma Vijayan Gender Consultant and founder Director of Sakhi, Kerala addressed the question of the positioning of women in the context of Kerala's development discourse. Dr Subhasri, from RUWSEC, Chengalpet spoke of feminist interventions in the area of women and reproductive health. The question of Indian feminism and Dalit women was addressed by Ms Fatima Burnad of Tamil Nadu Women's Forum, Arokkonam,

and Ms Madhu Bhushan, Vimochana, Bangalore addressed the issue of violence against women by highlighting alternative notions of justice.

The Conference which was an experience of celebrating feminist interventions in the unfolding history of Indian women was well participated by students, professors and activists committed to the cause of women, and was coordinated by Ms. Kochurani Abraham and Flora.

Kochurani Abraham

Gender and Participatory Evaluation

A workshop on Gender and Participatory Evaluation was organized by ISST (Institute of Social Studies Trust) on August 26-7, 2010 in New Delhi, with support from IDRC Canada. Too often, evaluation is seen as a stand-alone activity, carried out in a routine fashion, and not taken seriously by the research community or even, unfortunately, by policy makers.

In fact, evaluation is an integral part of the research-to-policy cycle, can offer insights into how programme implementation is proceeding and what mid-course corrections are called for, and also indicating areas where more research is needed. This workshop focused on the ways in which a gender sensitive/ feminist lens could be used to strengthen the role of evaluation in the social change process.

The workshop highlighted the perspectives of a set of gender equality advocates and social science researchers who have also been engaged with evaluation studies over the years. Among the issues that were highlighted were the importance of local understanding and assessing progress in the light of ground realities.

The papers argued for the use of qualitative and participatory methods in evaluation while also suggesting that quantitative methods and data analysis are useful in contextualization and that evaluations offer the opportunity to strengthen quantitative skills of the implementing agencies. Examples were given of the ways in which evaluation has been able to shift policy perspectives and lead to re-design of programmes.

Some of the papers emphasized the need for attention to the intervening layer of implementing agencies, often overlooked when the focus is purely on ultimate impact or 'beneficiaries'. An underlying sub-text in the papers is that knowledge of context and sector is as important as or perhaps

even more important for 'good'/ useful evaluation than technical expertise in evaluation tools.

Six background papers were prepared for the workshop, including one by Vimala Ramachandran, who reflects on many years of evaluation of education programmes in India and of the ways in which these evaluative studies have shifted the thinking regarding gender and equity within education. Renu Khanna writes about her experiences in evaluating health projects and programmes, the ethical framework within which these evaluations have been conducted and the ways in which evaluation can contribute to change.

Ranjani Murthy discusses her experiences with applying a gender lens in evaluations of, and seeking to engender, micro-credit programmes. Kameshwari Jandhyala discusses the various implications of different evaluation frameworks proposed by different donors for the process-oriented Mahila Samakhya programme. Ratna Sudarshan and Divya Sharma examine the ways in which participatory evaluation of NGO-managed development projects can be a way both of encouraging greater gender sensitivity as well as generating important insights for research on contextually appropriate trajectories of such change. Radhika Govinda carried out a background review of how gender analysis and research on the one hand and gendered evaluation on the other have developed in India over the last 2-3 decades.

In concluding, workshop participants agreed on the need for greater conversations, collaborations and convergences between the worlds of activism, academe and evaluation.

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Ratna M. Sudarshan
ISST

National Round Table On Women's Land Rights

The Working Group Women & Land Ownership (GWLO), a Gujarat based network of 23 organizations, held a national roundtable on 20 August, 2010 in Ahmedabad on " Learning From the Field: Enabling Rural Women's Access and Legal Ownership to Private Land". One of the thematic sessions related to strategies for legitimizing women's land rights socially. Since 86% of the arable land in India was private land, it was important to understand the role of social institutions. Organizations from different states narrated their experiences.

Paliben had agricultural land. She thought of giving two acres of land to her son and having two acres to herself so that she can be independent. However, her son tried to take her two acres of land. He coaxed, threatened and also physically abused her. She did not lose heart. She stood firm and talked her issue to Ekta Nari Shakti Sangathan (ENSS.), a single women's network in Rajasthan. She lodged a complaint at the police station against harassment by her son. The son thought of calling the caste panchayat to address this issue. Paliben immediately contacted representatives of ENSS & police. The caste panchayat immediately withdrew the case and the police admonished her son not to harass his mother. Now Paliben lives a dignified life with 2 acres of land.

The major strategies adopted by the ENSS included the following:

1. Multi- tier support structure engagement at - Block/ District & State level
2. Capacity Building of ENSS workers
3. Immediate response to emergency call of victims
4. Critical engagement with different institutions viz. Panchayat, Police station
5. Steps being taken leading to logical conclusion.

Reflection of each case and learning processes is done and learning is adopted in another case.

GWLO, the only state level network on women's land rights in India narrated the varied phases of its growth and transformation. There were many challenges in mainstreaming the issue in the development discourse in Gujarat. The first and foremost difficulty was that women never considered that land should be in their name. There was no awareness about such issue. So a mass level awareness among women, then among men in the community was undertaken. This was followed by creating awareness of members of political institutions like Grampanchayat-Sarpanch/talati. They are the executive machinery and most powerful people in the villages. Felicitation programmes were organized for women, who have taken initiative, against all odds, fought against social institutions and made an effort to transfer land title in their name.

Thereafter, a research study was undertaken in 11 districts and 23 vilages. The study showed that 11%

women owned land, about 40% of them being widows. Further case studies suggested that in most cases, the land was transferred to the widow to avail of government programs. Looking at the contentious nature of land, the group decided to address widow's claims in the initial phase. In the above context, the Mandvi Vikas Manch shared their experiences. It is a people's organization promoted by AKRSP (I) and works among Adivasis in Mandvi taluka of Surat district. They were linked to GWLO through AKRSP (I) in 2004.. Two para-legal workers were trained to take up issues of women and land ownership. Now 33 women have 70 acres of land worth Rs.70 lakhs. However, acquiring this land was no easy task.

The documents needed for this was not easily available. The Talati (revenue clerk) was not accessible, parents would not co-operate as they consider daughters as "parki thapan" in-laws would not allow them to stay at their place. Dharmistha Chauhan, ex-AKRSP (I), staff member added that, in tribal community, the situation is compounded as the husband sometimes gets married twice. The issue also gets complex when the foster son throws foster mother out of the home and the third issue is transfer of property from father to daughter in tribal community. However, there is acceptance of para-legal workers in the community. This is because of Laxmiben's success story which shaped into a movement.

Organizations that have worked on land collectives and managed to have land titles in their name also spoke. ANANDI, working in Devgadhi Baria, Dahod district, has been working on various issues of women's rights viz. health, livelihood, food security, domestic violence and

children education. Guliben recounted experiences of Devgadhi Baria, where she is a para-legal worker. Work with widows was initiated in their area. They started Resource Centre. In their areas, widows/deserted women were beaten and labeled as "Dakan" (witches/possessed). In such cases, the police do not register a F.I.R. In such cases "Warsai" (inheritance-titling) does not happen. Battered women find it difficult to fight their case and file case with a hostile police environment. Therefore, a Resource Centre was established in Ghoghamba in Dahod district and Shear taluka in Panchmahal district. The main objective is to address issues of women's rights. The resource centre has made a visible impact. The Para-legal workers of Resource Centre take cases of land. They also follow it up at panchayat level and taluka level. She narrated an experience where land titles of 5-6 widows were not entered in the land records. This was because of irresponsible behavior of the Talati. They complained to Mamlatdar, the revenue officer. He reprimanded the Talati and told him to resolve the issue of women. This has been possible because Devgadhi Mahila Sangathan has been able to keep good relations with block level Revenue officials. This has enabled them to get land titles in the name of women.

Seemaben, (ANANDI) shared that there is an institutional mechanism set up to address issues of women violence. Land issues and issues of violence against women are directly related. There were other strategies, which were adopted to initiate the women and land ownership issues. Overall awareness of this issue and sensitivity about this issue in the general public was created through facilitating Warsai camps (land titling through inheritance) along with government officials. Constant dialogues, meetings at various levels of panchayat officials and revenue were done. Sustained linkages were done for trainings, information and capacity building. Manguben added that as awareness increased, there were increased instances of land cases. Initially Nyay Samiti (justice committees) used to take up this issue, but now separate committees have been constituted to take up this issue. An application is filed to get community land. The committee also created awareness of this issue with all stakeholders. She said that in the initial phase the awareness creation programmes focused only with members of the Mahila Sangathan, but later on this was spread to include all stakeholders. Other strategies adopted by varied organizations included the following:

Identifying allies amongst men

Hafiza of SWATI (partner organization, WGWLO) narrated her experience. SWATI operates in Surendranagar, Patan and Mehsana district. SWATI works mainly on issues of Reproductive Health, women and violence, livelihood issues through promoting women's organization. She said in the initial phases, women were not aware of the issues and therefore were not ready to negotiate such issue at family level. She said women feared that if women asked for land titles they would be ridiculed and there would be sanctions imposed against her by the family. Therefore awareness was conducted with women as to importance of land title in her name. Training was also conducted regarding legal documents concerning land titles. This led to change in mind-set of women.

Dialogue with government

Then began a process of dialogue with Government official especially Mamlatdar-(Block Level Revenue Official) to sensitize them about this issue. The other stakeholders especially the youths were also sensitized about these issues. This strategy helped in pushing the movement forward. In Patdi taluka of Surendranagar taluka, village head person became a great support in the campaign. At block level, men are giving support to this issue. The other strategies discussed were:

Identifying role models: Highlighting role models i.e. acknowledgement of couples who initiated the process of land titles in women's name. Panchayat officials who were sensitive to women's issues and transferring the title in women's name were lauded for their efforts and acknowledged in workshop and warsai camps. Ms Meena Rajgour then shared Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan's (KMVS) experiences of influencing Sarpanches for strengthening the movement:

1. Initially Panchayat Mahila Sarpanch Sangathan was formed
2. Sustained & continuous training was imparted to Mahila Sarpanches
3. Helping to study and analyze the type and availability of land, the various documents related to land
4. Setting Panchayat Information Centre to get information related to land documents
5. Monthly training related to revenue from the village level revenue officer.

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IAWS ARCHIVES

Readers of this Newsletter and members of IAWS may be aware that the IAWS General Body ratified the decision to found an Archives to be housed at RCWS, SNDT Women's University, Mumbai. Accordingly, the Archives now has been formally set up and the present Executive Committee of IAWS has finalized the arrangements under the following terms:

- The IAWS Archives to be managed by a Core Management Committee (CMC) consisting of members from the Executive Committee of IAWS, experts drawn from the life members of IAWS and the director of the RCWS.
- The Committee to take overall charge of supervising the Archives, ensuring the digitization and preservation of the its material, generate new material and offer its expertise for further development of the Archives.

At present the CMC consists of the following members: (1) Uma Chakravarthi (Chairperson for two years) (2) Meena Gopal (Convenor) (3) Sumi Krishna (Life member, IAWS) (4) Kamala Ganesh (Life Member, IAWS) (5) J. Devika (Life Member, IAWS) (6) Anita Ghai (President, IAWS) (7) Veena R. Poonacha (Director, RCWS)

The first meeting of the Archives CMC was held on 6 December 2010. In the meantime it may be useful to take stock of the activities that has so far been done and provide here the details of what the Archives contain so far. Readers are already provided with a brief note on the rationale for the archives and the methods used in archiving the IAWS material in an earlier newsletter (VOL II, No.3, December 2007) and what we provide below is another note on the further work carried out by one of the CMC members, Kamala Ganesh who has been in the forefront of setting up this archives. IAWS would like to specially thank her and others who were involved in preparing a detailed inventory of material available at the IAWS Archives. This indeed will benefit the researchers of the history of IAWS, both the institutional and individual histories of those who were associated with the IAWS.

- Editor

IAWS ARCHIVES: A NOTE ON THE INVENTORY

As the first stage of archiving, an exercise has been undertaken by Kamala Ganesh of going through the materials stored at RCWS, preparing a detailed inventory, weeding out a part of the material and handing it over back to RCWS. In the next phase, the material will need to be stored appropriately, accession catalogues prepared, the unpublished material selectively digitised and/or microfilmed, and a system of giving access to readers and researchers devised. Some of the published documents have already been digitised and put on the web by IAWS President Sumi Krishna.

The IAWS material can be broadly classified into two categories: published and unpublished. The published material includes: • Newsletters Membership directories • Brochures announcing the National Conferences • Background papers to the conferences • Presidential addresses at the National Conferences • Reports of the AGMs • Books of Abstracts • Conference, seminar and workshop reports • Conference papers • Books

In addition, there are also a few packets of photographs and negatives of the various conferences. The bulk of the unpublished material consists of correspondence of the following kinds:

- Letters from and to the Gen Secretary on routine as well as special activities during her tenure, queries from and responses to members and non members on a range of topics and issues.
- Correspondence between EC members, on planning, execution and aftermath of the National Conferences, on regional seminars and workshops, on matters concerning elections, on membership, on publications and newsletters, etc .
- There are also the Agenda and minutes of EC meetings, membership lists, registration forms of conference participants, membership forms, copies of papers presented at IAWS

conferences, seminars and workshops, abstracts of papers, reports on workshops and seminars, issues taken up for advocacy, etc.

- Most of the correspondence is in English but there are some in other languages, notably Marathi, connected to the conferences held in different regions.
- A few packets of photographs and negatives of various conferences.

This exercise is a limited one aimed at reducing the sheer volume of the material to make it more manageable and preparing a detailed inventory of what exists and what can be discarded.

All the files have been perused by Unnati Tripathi who worked part time on this project, under my direct supervision. To enable me to keep track of the process, most of the files were brought in lots to my office at Kalina campus, and I went through them after Unnati had weeded out the papers to be discarded. I gave greater attention to the discarded material, to make sure nothing of significance was lost. The retained material may need to be classified under different heads and some further minor weeding out may perhaps be done. The work started in September, 2006. In Oct, 2006, during the EC meeting, I was advised to make a more detailed inventory, and also note the proportion of discarded and retained. So, the files perused till then were redone with the new guidelines.

Outcome of the First Phase: Inventory of Materials and Weeding:

In the first phase, three lists have been prepared: In all the three, the same files are listed but arranged differently to serve different purposes.

1. IAWS Archives Master List
2. IAWS Archives Master List with detailed inventory
3. IAWS Archives Inventory (lot-wise)

The first is a master list of the files arranged alphabetically. The second is the detailed inventory of the files and their contents, with information on what has been retained and what discarded. The files are arranged alphabetically. The third is a detailed inventory of the files and their contents, arranged in 5 lots corresponding to the order in which they were taken from RCWS for working on. This list would be of use only to RCWS staff, when they tally the inventory with the actual files and rearrange them in the space allotted for the Archives.

Naming and numbering of files

Before our work began, the IAWS files had been stored in RCWS SNTD in numbered boxes (not necessarily arranged chronologically or subject wise). Some of the files had titles, others not. They were taken up by us in the same order in which they had been stored. Titles for the files have been given on the basis of a) secretary's tenure, b) venue of the national conference or c) description of contents, depending upon the main content of each file. File Numbers have been added under each title, since there were quite often several files on the same subject. Hence 1, 2, 3 etc following a particular title indicates only the number of the file within that particular topic. We have not attempted to distribute the contents of a file into different files, on a logical basis, but left them where they were, even in the few cases where some papers are on disparate topics and do not fit in with the rest of the papers in a file. If papers on a particular subject were spread over several files, we have not merged them but kept them as they were. Neither have we replaced the files themselves with new ones unless they were in tatters.

The suffix A or B to a number indicates 'retained' and 'discarded' sections respectively of the same file. They have been separated, and handed over in separate piles to RCWS. For every file, a detailed inventory of contents has been prepared as also a rough estimate of the proportion of papers retained and discarded. Some additional notes, where relevant, have been made about the discarded material. For example, in a file titled BHUBHANESHWAR CONFERENCE 4B, 4 indicates that it is the fourth file containing papers on the Bhubhaneshwar conference, and B indicates that it is the section that has been discarded.

Principle of Selection and Weeding

The principle followed in the case of unpublished material is to weed out what is clearly redundant - ie. routine correspondence, irrelevant material, multiple copies of documents and matter readily available in published form. Occasionally, a piquantly worded letter, or a warm letter of congratulations has been retained just for flavour, despite falling into one of the above categories. For example, Letters asking to present papers in conferences, giving details of travels, acknowledging receipt of letter/document, intimating change of address etc. have been kept aside for discarding. Membership queries have been kept aside for discarding, except a few. Abstracts of papers to be presented at conferences, rejected paper proposals have been kept aside for discarding. Letters requesting for participation at conferences are generally not retained. Only where they are from non-social sciences and humanities (medicine, zoology, etc) or voluntary organizations not dealing with gender, or participants from out of India, they have been retained, to give an idea of the range of

people who asked to participate. A few complaints about non receipt of brochure/newsletter, etc have been retained to capture what seems to have been a recurring problem, over several years. Unless they are very perfunctory, communication between EC members, between IAWS and funders has been retained. In the earlier years, before computer print outs and email became common, handwritten letters, carbon copies and telegrams, are part of the correspondence in addition to the conventional typewritten letter. We have kept a few of these, to give a flavour of the times, even though the content may not be significant. In case of published material, we have simply implemented the EC's decision that 5 copies of each publication (or all if less than five) will be kept, and the rest distributed to the regional workshop participants, to others those who may want them, or discarded.

Suggestions for the Next Phase

A comprehensive approach will need to be developed about what materials need to be conserved and preserved, for what purposes, and through what technology. This will then help in decisions regarding documents generated in the future as well. Conserving the paper and photographic originals needs to take into account their potential for physical deterioration and availability of storage space.

For important documents that deserve wide dissemination, digitizing, ie scanning and converting to CDs and/or putting on the web is a preferred method. Cost considerations will need to be kept in mind. For long term preservation, digitising is now seen as less suitable than microfilming, since the latter can preserve for hundreds of years, whereas the former needs to be 'refreshed' every few decades, and moreover the technology can get obsolete quickly. So, for really vital documents that need to be preserved, experts say that microfilming is the best among current options.

The Use of IAWS Archives

Insights can be gleaned from the archival material about the academic, organisational, personal and interpersonal dimensions of IAWS and to some extent of women's studies in India in its formative period. This is because, among other reasons, the members of IAWS have also been leading figures in the field, active professionally in universities, institutes, centres and women's organisations. In any case, this would be one important source material, and in tandem with other sources, can contribute towards reconstructing a history of women's studies.

The material has many possibilities. Popular themes and approaches for research, the calibre of papers, and also participants in the conferences can be tracked over the years. The issues taken up for resolutions, advocacy and campaigns, and the internal debates that went into them can be traced. The composition of the membership, and growth and changes over time, the teething problems of a decentralized organisation, the dynamics of fund raising and many other matters common to organisations without a centralized secretariat, and specific to feminist organizations can be read and inferred from the material. It could thus contribute towards organisational reflexivity.

Prepared by *Kamala Ganesh*, Dept. of Sociology University of Mumbai. Acknowledgements to *Veena Poonacha*, *Unnati Tripathi* and *Shraddha Shah*

RESEARCH BRIEFS

History of Muslim Women's Education in Colonial Tamil Nadu 1873-1947

My research attempts to understand the social and historical aspects of education for Muslim women in colonial Tamil Nadu between 1873 to 1947. The study probes into the colonial government's efforts to educate the Muslim women and the nature and extent of social reform debates on Muslim women's education, which elicited differing responses from within the community, among men and women. As such, the research will systematically document the efforts of individuals and institutions that made efforts to bring education to the muslim girls and analyse these in the context of Muslim women's own efforts to redefine their lives. In particular the research critically looks into the history of the founding of the Government Hobart Girl's School for Muslims in 1873 which focused on industrial training for purdah clad Muslim girls and the role of the educated Muslim women in redefining the gender politics within the community and outside. The women's section of the Mohammedan Educational Conference, established in 1896, passed a number of resolutions in favor of girl's education. Also the first All-India Ladies Conference, 1915 demanded increased education, improved health and maternity services and equal franchise for women. These issues were taken up by the Muslim women through the Urdu Journals like 'Asmat', 'Mushir-e-Niswan' (The woman's Advisor), 'Bazm-e-Adab' (The Literary Society), 'Tehzib-e-Niswan', 'Khatoon', 'Maghzar', 'Al-Nisa', 'Zenana', and 'Taj', which popularised the cause of women's education. Muslim women also played vital roles in politics to promote mainly Muslim women's education. Begum Sultan Mir Amiruddin, M.L.A., passed a resolution regarding the new building for the Muslim Women's College, Madras, and Muslim women's hostel at "Wellington House", Royapettah, Madras. These efforts of Muslim women, largely marginalized within the mainstream gender history, offer an insight into Muslim women's perspectives on modern public sphere and on their struggle for citizenship and subjecthood.

- **Abida Begum, MIDS, Chennai**

Gender and Informal sector: A Case Study of Women Domestic Workers in Chennai

A larger section of women's labour is in the informal sector and the social security for these workers is very minimal with no job guarantee. There are gradations of vulnerability among the workers of this sector guided by gender, socio-economic, religious identity and other disadvantages. With the pre-existing gender difference, large numbers of women occupy the low wage profiles in this sector. And in this low wage category paid domestic work is becoming the single largest work for the urban poor women. The high demand for domestic work within the upper and middle-class is closely linked to increasing access to employment for these classes of women who require the help of domestic workers

especially when there are no major changes in the intra-household work allocation and in the gender division of labour. The emergence of nuclear family, the raise in the household income, the pressure of the capitalist job market and competition lead to more concern for future investment on child care and education have also played major role in the need for domestic help. This in turn opened up survival strategy for large number of poor women (piled up in slums) particularly in urban settings ended up doing 'paid' domestic work of 'other' household. The phenomenal increase in paid domestic work and the simultaneous invisibility of this work, changing nature of this work (part-time), emergence of recruiting agencies, increased number of women entering to this sector with existing gender discrimination, increased number of migrant labourers, non-recognition as work by the state and the society at large, ghettoized based on caste, class and gender, issues related to conditions of work and sexual abuses, all these need to be critically understood. My research intend to probe on these specific issues related to paid domestic workers like how do they perceive their work (paid domestic work) and their unpaid domestic work? And also try to understand the intersectionality of caste, class and gender and its role in the reconstruction (if so) of 'domestic work' and the intra household family relationship which in trying to accommodate itself with the fast changing economic and social relationship. The linkages between the macro changes and its inter-connection with the individuals and its influences within the household in relation to paid domestic worker will be explored especially in the context of Chennai.

- **E. Deepa, MIDS, Chennai**

Gender and Participatory Forest Management in Wayanad, Kerala

In India, one fifth of the geographical area constitutes legally defined forests (Agarwal 2000). These forests are a major source of livelihood for many rural households (Poffenberger 1996, Siva, 2000, Krishna 2004, Agarwal 2009) especially the landless poor, tribals and women (Agarwal 2009). Women are more dependent on forests than on other types of land such as private land. Women are considered to be the collectors, processors and users of forest goods. They use forests to meet their subsistence needs like food, fuel, fodder and grazing (Agarwal 2009, FAO 1995). Moreover, forest resources are part of the larger household income. The 1988 National Forest Policy is often cited as the point at which the discourse of forest management changed. On paper, the National Forest Policy accepted people's dependence on forests and proposed a "people's movement to protect the forest" that emphasized decentralization (Singh and Poffenberger 1996). In June 1990, the government took the initiative to implement Joint Forest Management (JFM). Participatory forest management initiatives such as JFM gave importance to the usufruct rights of

people over forests ostensibly as a means to increase their access (Sarin 1995). More recently, other policies such as ecodevelopment in protected areas have been introduced. These policies are often being promoted today at the expense of the implementation of the Forest Rights Act.

To what extent such programmes/initiatives have increased participation of women is the focus of my research. The importance attributed to women's participation goes well with issues raised in the Women Environment and Development approach (WED). In the context of forests, Sumi Krishna (2004) argues that women's intimate knowledge and connection to nature is not biological or genetic but is the result of their social roles. The gendered approach, moreover, also considers men's knowledge about the environment and their traditional areas of work as well as gives attention to gender politics and the articulation of knowledge (Catherine Locke 1999). By focusing on gender, one needs therefore to go beyond just documenting women's knowledge of the environment and also understand the "dynamics of interaction between gender relations and the livelihood system" (Amita Shah 1998). In the context of Wayanad, Kerala, participatory forest management (PFM) programmes were established in late 1998 and implemented through VSSs (Vana Samrakshana Samitis), AVSSs (Adivasi Vana Samrakshana Samitis) and EDCs (Eco Development Committees). How can we understand the way participation is conceptualized and at the same time see how it works in practice? What are the origins of participatory forest management policies? What is the purpose of gender participation within specific policies? Does women's participation improve 'outcomes' and how do women themselves perceive of 'good outcomes'? Institutions for participatory forest management shape the way in which gender participation is viewed. Hence these three institutional contexts (VSSs, AVSSs and EDCs) provide a comparative perspective through which gender participation can be viewed.

- Nitha.G.Nair, MIDS, Chennai

Call for Research Briefs

- ☞ Please send brief summaries of ongoing research in Women's Studies
- ☞ We specially welcome submissions from Ph.D. and M.Phil scholars and research students, as the aim is to create a research in Women's Studies with each other.
- ☞ Teachers and supervisors are requested to encourage their research in Women's Studies to send in synopsis of their theses/projects to the Newsletter.
- ☞ Each entry should be of approximately 125-150 words, and carry in addition the title of the thesis/research project as well as the name, institutional affiliation, e-mail address and phone number of the scholar.

send to anandhister@gmail.com

ANNOUNCEMENT

NEGOTIATING SPACES: GENDER CONCERNS IN CONFLICT ZONES

*A Two Day Conference by Majlis -
29th and 30th January 2011 Mumbai*

Women are constantly forced to negotiate for their rights between family, community and the state. But situations of conflict, strife and unrest pose myriad different challenges to women and their roles and render their negotiations with these institutions extremely complex. What are the struggles that women encounter both internally within people's movements and externally as equal stake holders in confrontations with the state? How do issues of violence play out in times of heightened conflict, what are the other dangers that confront women and what are the ways in which they cope with them? These are some of the concerns which need to be addressed while we examine the democratic rights and citizenship claims of women. Blatant and gruesome sexual defiling of women's bodies has been the most obvious mark of conflict. As bearers of their community identity, women are subjected to extreme sexual violence. But conflict situations also thrust upon women a new identity as that of protectors of their community, forcing them to become safety shields as well as negotiators of peace in unconventional ways of protest and resistance. Women play an important role, not just as victims but as survivors of violence, as peace keepers of their communities and as bearers of their cultural identities. Do these situations of conflict open up newer spaces for women as equal citizens both in the domestic sphere and in the public and political domain? Are women in these situations able to transcend gender barriers and challenge patriarchal assumptions as active citizens? Or does this participation invoke greater violence and further constrain their spaces? Moving further, how are women who stake their claim within liberation movements treated by their male counterparts? Are these women celebrated as 'heroes' in the post-conflict period. What further tensions and anxieties does the post conflict situation pose for women? Many interlocked and layered questions like these will help us to redefine women's gendered roles in conflict zones. This two day conference will have speakers who have been part of these political struggles providing incisive insights.

Topics covered :

- Militarisation, Insurgencies and Peace Movements Voices of Women Kashmir and North East;
- Grassroot Struggles, State Repression and Gender Roles;
- Women's Role in the Telengana Struggle;
- Communal Violence and Post Conflict Situations - Gujarat and Orissa;
- Dalit Women's Struggles with State, Community and Civil Society;
- What Women Say: Participation and the UNSCR 1325 - Sri Lanka;
- The Way Forward

To participate please register at majliscampaigns@gmail.com or call Sindhu 022-26661252/26662394.

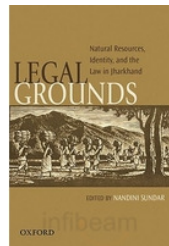
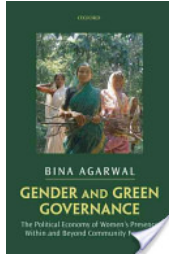
- Flavia Agnes, Director

Select Bibliography

[The contributions of Indian feminists are very significant to understand issues of marginality, violence and the gender politics of resistance. The arguments and debates raised by them have challenged the existing conservative and hegemonic ideologies. Here we have introduced few feminist writings which have focused on marginalization with various perspectives. Though there are innumerable contributions in the form of books and articles, we have restricted our compilation to books only which have been published in the last decade, so that we could get acquainted to recent discussions and debates, basically focussing on the ten sub-themes to be discussed in XIII IAWS Conference, Wardha. This compilation follows the alphabetical order].

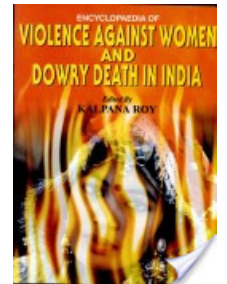
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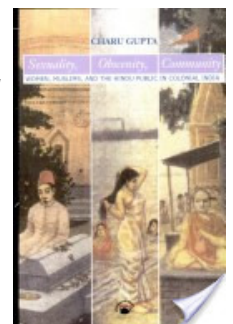


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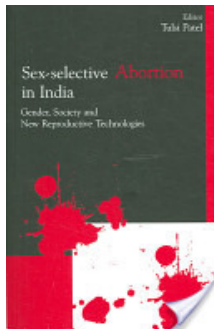
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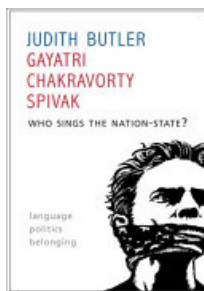
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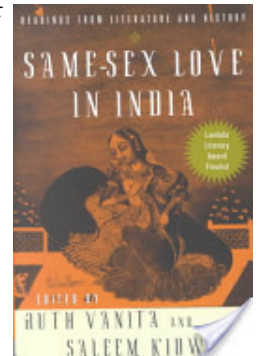
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[compiled by Abida Begum, E. Deepa and Nitha Nair]



BOOK NEWS

Mahadevi Varma: Essays on Women, Culture, and Nation

Anitha Anantharamam (eds)

This edited volume of translations covers the major political essays of India's first feminist Hindi poet. The essays collected in this volume represent some of Mahadevi Varma's most famous writings on the woman question in India. The collection also includes an introduction to her life, with biographical notes, an analysis of her importance in the field of Hindi letters, as well as a selection of her poems. This volume of translations of Mahadevi Varma's feminist political essays is the first of its kind. This volume will introduce Mahadevi Varma's literary scope to an English-speaking audience, and will serve as a reference for feminist historians of the nationalist period in the Indian subcontinent.

Cambria Press, 2010, pp. 224, INR 900, ISBN 9781604976717



Women's movements in the global era: the power of local feminisms

Amrita Basu

Women's Movements in the Global Era are a path-breaking study of the genesis, growth, gains, and dilemmas of women's movements in countries throughout the world. Its focus is on the Global South, where women's movements have engaged in complex negotiations with national and international forces. It challenges widely held assumptions about the Western origins and character of local feminisms. All the authors locate women's movements within the terrain from which they emerged by exploring their relationships with the state, civil society, and other social movements. This book is essential reading for anyone interested in the global scope and implications of feminism.

Westview Press, 2010, pp. 495, \$48.00, ISBN 9780813344447



Gender and Radical Politics in India: Magic Moments of Naxalbari (1967-1975)

Mallarika Singha Roy

Arguing that the history and memory of the Naxalbari movement is fraught with varied gendered experiences of political motivation, revolutionary activism, and violence, this book analyses the participation of women in the movement and their experiences. Based on extensive ethnographic and archival research, the author argues that women's

IAWS Newsletter January 2011

emancipation was an integral part of their vision of revolution, and many of them identified the days of their activism as magic moments, as a period of enchanted sense of emancipation. The book places the movement into the postcolonial history of South Asia. It makes a significant contribution to the understanding of radical communist politics in South Asia, particularly in relation to issues concerning the role of women in radical politics.

Taylor & Francis Group, 2010, pp. 224, Hb, \$ 140 ISBN 9780415562355



The Many Worlds of Sarala Devi / The Tagores and Sartorial Styles: A Diary / A Photo Essay

Sukhendu Ray, Bharati (INT) Ray, Malavika Karlekar

This charming book, as the titles suggest, contain two separate but related writings on the Tagores. The first writing is a sensitive translation of Sarala Devi's memoirs from the Bengali, Jeevaner Jharapata, by Sukhendu Ray. It is the first autobiography written by a nationalist woman leader of India. Sarala Devi was Rabindranath Tagore's niece and had an unusual life. The translation unfolds, among other things, what it was like to grow up in a big affluent house Jorasanko, that had more than 116 inmates and a dozen cooks! The second writing by Malavika Karlekar is a photo essay, creatively conceived, visually reflecting the social and cultural trends of the times, through styles of dress, jewellery and accoutrements. The introduction by Bharati Ray perceptively captures the larger context of family, marriage, women's education and politics of the time which touched Sarala Devi's life. She points out that if memoirs are a kind of social history then women's diaries record social influences not found in official accounts and are therefore a rich source of documentation.

Berghahn Books, 2010, pp. 218, INR 550, ISBN 9788187358312



Gender and Green Governance: The Political Economy of Women's Presence Within and Beyond Community Forestry

Bina Agarwal

In an analysis that is conceptually sophisticated and statistically rigorous, using primary data on community forestry institutions in India and Nepal, this book is the first major study to comprehensively address these wide-ranging issues. It traces women's history of exclusion from public institutions, the factors which constrain their effective participation, and how those constraints can be overcome. It outlines how strategic partnerships between forestry and

other civil society institutions could strengthen rural women's bargaining power with community and government. And it examines the complexities of eliciting government accountability in addressing poor rural women's needs, such as for clean domestic fuel and access to the commons. Located in the interface of environmental studies, political economy and gender analysis, the volume makes significant original contributions to current debates on gender and governance, forest conservation, clean energy policy, critical mass and social inclusion.

Oxford University Press, 2010, pp. 496, INR 625, ISBN 9780199569687



Islam, Women, and Violence in Kashmir: Between India and Pakistan

Nyla Ali Khan (eds)

The author gives an insider's analysis of the effects of nationalist, militant, and religious discourses and praxes on a gender-based hierarchy. This cross-disciplinary project shows the attempted relegation of Kashmiri women to the archives of memory and reveals the women's powerful and persistent endeavors to rise from the ashes of immolated identities.

Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp. 234, INR 395, ISBN 9780230107649



Rebels, Wives, Saints: Designing Selves and Nations in Colonial Times

Tanika Sarkar

This book focuses on women, religion, and nationhood in colonial Bengal. The colonial universe Sarkar describes in *Rebels, Wives, Saints* centers around symbols of women as both defiled and deified, exemplified in the idea of woman as widow and woman as goddess. The nation, Sarkar explains, is imagined as a woman-goddess within a country comprising plural cultural traditions. Sarkar also broadens the discussion to consider male reformers who battle Hindu conservatives, a Hindu novelist who idealizes nationalism as a means for overcoming Muslim influence, male-dominant social norms, and theatre and censorship.

Seagull Books, 2010, pp. 347, INR 695, ISBN 9781906497293



The Power of Gender and the Gender of Power: Explorations in Early Indian History

Kumkum Roy

Drawing upon a range of textual traditions, this unique

collection examines the significance of gender in the reconstruction of India's past. It goes beyond the simple binaries of a high or low status for women to explore the diversities and complexities of gender relations in early India. Kumkum Roy draws attention to distinct strategies through which identities of men and women were constituted. She presents a gendered analysis of institutions and processes, ranging from the household to urbanism to renunciatory traditions to show how they remain critical for an understanding of early Indian history. The book also highlights the ways in which rituals were used for socialization as well as evidence for the subversion of the normative traditions.

Oxford University Press, 2010, pp. 400, \$ 50, ISBN 9780198066767



Women Changing India

Urvashi Butalia and Anita Roy (eds)

This book attempts to map - in words and photographs - some of the change that is both visible and invisible in the India of today. Six writers from India write the stories that six photographers from the world-renowned Magnum Photos Agency capture. Their beautiful and evocative photographs focus on the world of women working with microcredit, participating in grassroots governance, moving into new jobs, working behind the scenes in the male world of the Mumbai film industry, making their individual contributions in varied fields and imagining a new future for themselves and their sisters.

Zubaan, 2010, pp. 220 Hb, INR 1995, ISBN 978818988497



The Washer of the Dead: A Collection of Ghost Stories *Venita Coelho*

A woman haunted by the wind. A land where ghosts speak for the voiceless. A washer of the dead who begins to hear them speak... These are the stories of the unquiet. Women whisper through this collection. They voice their loves, lives, fears and yearnings. To label this collection as 'ghost stories' or 'feminist stories' is to miss the nuances and range of female experience. As ghost stories they make you look uneasily over your shoulder, as female narrative they stun you with the power of their keen insight. Whimsical, terrifying and compelling, these powerful and haunting tales about our commonplace fears and tragedies provide a scathing commentary on the lives of women in India and are universal in their appeal.

Zubaan, 2010, pp 141, INR 199, ISBN 9788189884611





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Education :

Affiliation / Vocation :

Interest in Women's Studies (Please tick categories applicable)

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching | <input type="checkbox"/> Organisation and Activism | <input type="checkbox"/> Media and Communication |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Research | <input type="checkbox"/> Administration of Programmes | <input type="checkbox"/> Any Other (please specify) |

Type of Membership (Please tick category applicable)

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinary | <input type="checkbox"/> Life | <input type="checkbox"/> Student |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Institutional (Ordinary) | | <input type="checkbox"/> Institutional (Life) |

Details of subscription amount paid _____
(e.g. DD no., amount and date)

Place :

Date :

Signature

(photocopies of this form can also be used)

THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES (IAWS)

The Indian Association for Women's Studies was established in 1982 by a resolution adopted by the first National Conference of Women's Studies held in Mumbai in April 1981. IAWS is registered under the Registrar of Societies (No.S/12936 New Delhi) and under FCRA. The Association provides a forum for interaction among institutions and individuals engaged in teaching, research or action. The membership includes educational and social welfare organisations, and individual academics, researchers, students, activists, social workers, media persons and others concerned with women's issues, and with women's development and empowerment.

One of the major activities of IAWS is organising a National Conference of Women's Studies once every two / three years focusing on a particular theme and several sub-themes. Hundreds of members from all-over India and some from other countries in South Asia attend the National Conference. Ten Conferences have been held at: Mumbai, Thiruvanthapuram, Chandigarh, Waltair (Vishakapatnam), Jadavpur (Kolkatta), Mysore, Jaipur, Pune, Hyderabad, Bhubaneswar and Dona Paula (Goa). Themes have included: Women's Struggles and Movements, Women's Perspectives on Public Policies, Sustaining Democracy: Challenges in the New Millenium etc.

IAWS members can

- *initiate activities along with the Association in an effort to augment IAWS interaction, networking, research, documentation and dissemination objectives;*
- *participate in various activities and conferences organised by the Association;*
- *participate in running the Association by voting on the membership of the Executive Committee and standing for the elected offices;*
- *contribute to and receive a periodic Newsletter that disseminates information about Association activities in different parts of the country, explores gender issues, and may include book reviews, announcements, seminar/ workshop reports and lots more.*

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