



Newsletter

Indian Association for Women's Studies (IAWS) • August 2010 • Volume II, No.5

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This issue of the newsletter is mainly a compilation of IAWS activities over the last nine months. IAWS has effectively collaborated with various women's studies centres, development institutes and universities across India, and with individual scholars and activists, to organise a series of regional and national workshops and seminars. As is evident from the reports in this newsletter, the workshops have called attention to those issues and agendas that have been hitherto marginalised even within women's studies scholarship and programmes. The workshops on the evaluation of the women's movement and on feminist research methodology provided an impetus for scholars and activists to take stock of the feminist contribution to the women's movement and to social science scholarship.

Other workshops on disability and gender, women in / and science, marriage and sexualities and on translation drew attention to issues of multiple marginalisation and proffered new and more inclusive directions for women's studies.

The series of IAWS workshops and seminars also provided enormous opportunities to mobilise youth and students - the future stakeholders of the women's movement and of women's history. The Executive Committee hopes this will be reflected in terms of membership and will help build a strong network of students, young research scholars and teachers. During the workshops, they engaged very fruitfully in discussions, made significant presentations and shared their lived gendered experiences and problems. Many students and participants registered as members during the workshops.

The Executive Committee of IAWS now has two student representatives: Sandali Thakur, PhD scholar, Department of Sociology, University of Pune (sojourner.sandali@gmail.com) and Mamta Singh, PhD scholar, Women's Studies, Mahatma Gandhi Antarrashtriya Hindi Vishwavidyalaya, Wardha, (singh_mamta05@rediffmail.com, mrosaline0@gmail.com)

As members are aware, IAWS has been organising the National Conference every three years. The XIIIth IAWS National Conference is being planned in collaboration with the Department of Women's Studies, Mahatma Gandhi Antarrashtriya Hindi Vishwavidyalaya (MGAHV) during 21-24 January 2011 at Wardha, in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra. The theme of the conference is **Resisting Marginalisation, Challenging Hegemonies: Revisioning Gender Politics**. As the Concept Note states, "The IAWS conference provides us an important opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogues where we can articulate, analyse, understand and seek answers to the struggles and movements of Dalits, tribals and women for some kind of equitable society. The engagements will help us put together alternatives that encompass policy, track change, build upon and rely on the insights of the women's movement".

Apart from the regular features of our conferences, i.e. the plenary and subtheme sessions, the Maduri Shah Memorial lecture, and cultural programmes, a unique feature is the pre-conference workshop specially planned for students on "Women's studies: Pedagogy, Curriculum, Experiences and Concerns"; this would enable students and young researchers to integrate their perceptions and

experiences into the women's studies programme and into activism.

The plenary and sub-themes will focus on a contemporary gender politics that captures the resistances and challenges that are offered from the margins. The conference location, Wardha is provincial and is expected to draw in a new constituency, which will help in focusing on regional diversities and their specific complexities regarding women's issues. This would enable IAWS to reach out to the marginalised regions and groups - one of the objectives of the Association. The Conference Brochure will be sent to all members shortly. In the meanwhile some details of the conference are in this newsletter. Those interested in contributing papers and in participating in various sessions may also visit the **IAWS website www.iaws.org** or write to the IAWS Secretariat. A special issue of the newsletter is also being planned to cover the proceedings of the conference along with other forms of documenting the event. The IAWS EC warmly welcomes you to the conference and looks forward to your participation in our collective efforts to carry forward the struggle to re-vision gender politics.

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THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES (IAWS)

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Renegotiating Intimacies: Marriage, Sexualities, Living Practices (II)

December 22-23, 2009

IAWS, Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung Workshop
The School of Women's Studies, Jadavpur University, Kolkatta.

The School of Women's Studies, Jadavpur University, Kolkata organized a two-day National Conference titled *Renegotiating Intimacies: Marriage, Sexualities, and Living Practices (II)* on 22-23 December, 2009 funded jointly by Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, Germany and Indian Association for Women's Studies. This Conference was a follow-up of the National Conference in December 2008 organized on the same theme. Both as a response to the previous conference and to showcase the research work carried out in the third and final year of the Marriage-project, the necessity to focus on some important issues on the theme which were not addressed in the previous conference was felt. The present conference included three themes namely Intermediation of Marriage, Marriage and Violence, Marriage and structures of caste/class hierarchies.

The Conference was inaugurated by the Vice-Chancellor of Jadavpur University, Dr. P.N. Ghosh. He brought to notice how gendered roles in family and marriage are interlinked with the worldwide trends of very few women taking up careers in science and technology. Dr. Rochona Majumdar, Special Guest, made a presentation on her recent book *Marriage and Modernity (2009)* where she problematised the concept of arranged marriage as monolithic and traditional. The evil practice of dowry and forms of expressing women's agency were highlighted in her speech as an integral part of the book.

In the next session, the team members of the RLS project presented the Marriage project findings and analysis. The first presentation by Madhurima Mukhopadhyay with reference to the evolving intermediation process highlighted the role of individual choice and agency in marital decisions and the underlying tensions with the normative structures. Diya Dutta's

paper focused on complexities of caste and class and its importance in marriage in the contemporary globalized Kolkata. Nandita Dhawan, the co-ordinator of the project made a presentation on gender, class and marriage analyzing the ways in which the gender categories of the legal, cultural and social structures of marriage are important in the construction and perpetuation of class differences.

As a continuation to the Marriage project's presentation on marital choice was the paper on violent marital choice in TV reality shows by Swati Ganguly. She spoke on the concept of 'arranged marriage' in India and the indices set by popular media of the patterns of humiliation and abuse that patriarchy routinely and systematically subjects young women to by establishing desirable 'norms' of feminine perfection. The paper focused on the phenomenon of the television reality shows taking Lux Perfect Bride as a case in point. Violence in marriage was also explored by Suvradip Dasgupta who tried to investigate why men take to violence. Suvradip pointed out that some recent surveys have revealed a strong link between masculinity and marital violence. Masculinity is associated with the role of provider, protector and procreator. This notion of masculinity brings to fore an equation of power and maleness. It is observed that whenever the man fails to perform any of the above mentioned roles he perceives it as a threat to his masculinity and consequently becomes violent towards his wife.

Intimacies were viewed through various lenses, Nishi Mitra and Pooja Nair's presentation was very unique and interesting because it deviated from the general structure of academic papers. Instead, their paper

An earlier version of this report has been published in the Sephis- emagazine, Vol.6, no.2, April, 2010.

consisted of a series of letters exchanged between Nishi, Pooja and another person. They read excerpts from the letters that they exchanged among themselves, while leaving out the conversations that they had with the third person. Their conversations were on their life experiences at one level, while at another level they entailed the process of intimate contact. The authors believe that their letters speak for themselves and hence have included the letters in verbatim. It projects a certain process that emerges out of a conversation and highlights the themes that became important to them in the course of these conversations. P.KDutta's presentation was on public deployments of intimacy. As an example he elucidated the Rizwanur Rehman case which had also to a great extent influenced the School's marriage project. He said that this case highlighted two things - a) the alliance between the state and the community which acted as a machinery of prohibition against inter-community marriage and b) manner in which the social movement also counter normalised such marriages. Dutta analyzed some of the nineteenth and twentieth century Bengali literary texts in order to understand the historical trajectory of the inter-community marriages. The consequences of abduction in the texts featured less as acts of transgression and more as acts of love within the communities. The Rizwanur-Priyanka case revealed the power of prohibition that is entailed within modern day inter-community marriages. Both the community and state act as the agents of prohibition. There is a certain politicisation of inter-community love. The social movement borne out of the Rizwanur case aligned love with justice which didn't happen in the previous cases. According to Prof. Dutta, it is disheartening to observe that the social movement didn't address the aspect of mutuality involved in the relationship. While Rizwanur became the self-sufficient icon of inter-community love there was no discussion of the vulnerable position of Priyanka. Her actions were criticized by the state, community and by the actors of the social movement.

The issue of caste being so integral to marriage in India was explored from many perspectives like Kulinism in Bengal during the nineteenth century by Aishika Chakraborty. Carmel Christy engaged with the autobiography by Nalini Jameela in her paper who was a sex worker in the light of understanding how Nalini Jameela emerges as a strong woman activist who challenges the dominant notion of womanhood by constructing herself as a non-domestic woman. Further

Christy explored the implications of Nalini Jameela's intervention in Kerala's feminist politics by analyzing the responses that her autobiography attracted within the feminist circles. On a broader level, the paper explored the complexities of the public and the private which she believes is instrumental in understanding the gendered realities marked by caste.

Legal perspectives on marriage and family were presented in two papers. Srimati Basu's paper dealt with Section 498A - the section under IPC (Indian Penal Code) which is used to lodge complaints on domestic violence. One of the focal points of the paper was to explore how 498 A signifies choices for women. To substantiate her point Dr. Basu referred to court cases and narratives of both women and her family members which she has collected as part of her research in this area. She talked at length about the practical problems of filing a complaint under 498A. The biggest problem that women face while filing a case under 498A is to provide adequate evidence of cruelty. This legal obstacle has resulted in a lower conviction rate in cases of domestic violence. In her paper Dr. Basu focused on the proceedings of three venues - family court, police cell and shalishi sabha where cases on domestic violence are mitigated.

A significant point that emerges from a critical analysis of all these proceedings is that claims of violence in most cases is used as a discursive strategy for fulfilling economic and kinship needs. It seldom signifies any choice for women. Citing some of the narratives as examples she pointed out the paradoxical nature of 498 A. She mentioned that while on one hand this section does identify family violence as a criminal offence and allows women to file a criminal case against her husband and in-laws on grounds of cruelty; on the other hand as several narratives highlighted such legally enterprising behaviour of the women is looked upon with great suspicion and often becomes a subject of ridicule. Rukmini Sen's paper questioned the absence of the definitions of family in Indian laws. Laws compel us to look at 'family' as a monolithic homogeneous category. In Indian jurisprudence there are two kinds of laws relating to family: personal laws and laws relating to violence. In the postcolonial legal system, none of the laws define the family, but claim to 'understand' it. Family is a space of permitted heterosexual union with the purpose of reproduction. Family is also considered as a welfare unit. It is a space of unpaid labour as well as

hostile space. But in all these definitions, the definition of prostitution, married couple and couple living together are missing within the ambit of the institution of family.

The conference also had papers on themes like medical jurisprudence and how elite Bengali conceptions of 'fallen women' combined with colonial conceptions of 'native' sexual deviance to define certain women as 'prostitutes', and how legal and medical authorities employed and transformed these classifications through investigations of women's bodies. Bula Bhadra's presentation was based on new reproductive technology (NRT).

The presentation wanted to see in the effects of medically assisted fertilization and whether it is about rights or about the privileges of a certain class of women? Ideas like donation of ova and outsourcing of babies were also discussed. Bhadra presented her findings from interviews of sixty women in Kolkata aged between 26 to 38 years possessing minimum of a Bachelors degree. Another presentation by Aparajita and Suniti talked at length about an innovative project called Inner Spaces Outer Faces Initiative (ISOFI). The broader aim of this project was to explore how gender and sexuality components can be linked to their ongoing programmes on sexual and reproductive health (SRH). This project was conceived of in two phases as a joint initiative of CARE and ICRW.

There were a few papers which viewed marriage, sexuality and intimacy from the literary perspective. In her presentation Geetika Bapna provided an interpretative reading of one popular Hindu and Islamic religious literature on 'how to become a good Husband or a good Wife', by drawing on Kierkegaardian triad of 'Aesthetic', 'Ethical' and 'Religious' (as three different modes of conjugal existence). Anju Bala's paper attempted to explore the matrix of lesbian relationships in three contemporary novels in English, *Ladies Coupe* by Anita Nair (2001), *A Married Woman* by Manju Kapur (2002) and *Lilacs Bloom in My Garden* by Meenu Mehrotra (2008).

Looking at the novel *Ghare Baire* written by Rabindranath Thakur in 1916, Ritu Sen Chowdhury tried to trace the changing contours of conjugality in its interaction with the nation. Her argument was as follows: on the one hand, the novel depicts the process of how

the individual, society and the nation get associated with the question of conjugality. On the other hand, it traces the renegotiations in the hegemonic notion of conjugality. This continues parallel to the renegotiations that occur between the interior and the exterior, Bimala's coming into her own as an individual and a maturing of her understandings of love and conjugality. Prasita Mukherjee's presentation was based on the concept of feminine utopia based on the traditions of a novel and tried to explore the alternative familial structures.

Anita Ghai's presentation on Marriage and disability highlighted the gendered aspect of disability. She spoke about the right of disabled women to be considered equal to any other woman. She referred to desires of disabled women to be included in the normative practices of the mainstream. This evoked the same theme of inclusion and exclusion in the mainstream as highlighted in the papers on homosexuality in the Conference held in 2008.

In the concluding session, Samita Sen and Ranjita Biswas brought out the main themes that were discussed during the course of the Conference. It emerged that marriage as always was a site of negotiation. Though marriage has emerged as contract, ambiguities prevail in its adjudication which hampers the successful implementation. Legal arenas have also become markers of class difference. Intimacy and Sexuality seen in contradistinction to marriage is more spontaneous, private, not constrained by laws, secret, exclusive, ambivalent, flirtatious. Marriage on the other hand is marked by monogamy, infidelity, jealousy, law, power, rights. Intimacy can therefore become an entry point, a location to think of a feminist politics to create a non-hegemonic, non-exploitative spectrum of relationships.

The politics of inclusion and exclusion created a difference between 'us' and 'them' as it emerged from the paper on disability, this brings out the crucial question of how should differences be dealt? Different lives, living practices, sexualities and marriages answer the question and lead to our understanding of all as different but equal. The conference came to an end with a promise of future possibilities of research, politics and publications around the vibrant themes of discussion.

Madhurima Mukhopadhyay

School of Women's Studies

Jadavpur University, Kolkata

IAWS Seminar on Gender and Science

February, 16 -17, 2010

Mumbai

The Indian Association of Women's Studies, in collaboration with the Research Centre for Women's Studies, SNDT University, Mumbai, organized a Seminar and a Peer Review Workshop on the 16th and 17th of Feb 2010 at RCWS (Juhu campus, Mumbai) on the theme of Gender and Science. We started with the national seminar on 'Women in/ and Science: Taking Stock' on the 16th morning. This was followed by a Peer Review Workshop 'Transforming Science: Feminist Perspectives' for a volume to be edited by Gita Chadha and Sumi Krishna.

The experiences of women in science are crucial to the development of feminist/women's studies in and of science. Though the latter addresses wider issues of the relationship between women and science, it is eventually women in science who will most effectively be able to address the issues of under-representation and under-valuation of women in science. More importantly, in recent years, women scientists too have begun questioning and challenging the very 'nature' of science and its so-called gender neutrality, a critique which is associated with the women's studies of science.

As in other fields, women in science and the women's studies scholars of science have various areas of conflict and friction, emerging out of genuine problems of language on the one hand and a difference in purpose on the other. While women in science feel that the women's studies scholars overlook the unique character of science, carrying their criticism to an extreme, women's studies scholars argue that women in science are not sufficiently critical of and proactive in critiquing and transforming the practice and culture of science. The seminar was intended to build a bridge between the two positions and begin a dialogue. This aim was part of the broader purpose to develop and strengthen linkages between women in science, a feminist scholarship of science and the women's movements.

The seminar panel included theoretical physicist Anita Mehta (Bose National Centre for Basic Sciences, Kolkata), mathematician and National Knowledge Commission Member Sujata Ramdorai and biologist Vidita Vaidya (both,

Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai) and was chaired by Maitreyi Krishnaraj, former Director of RCWS and author of an early book on women and science in India. Chayanika Shah of FORUM and LABIA was the discussant. The participants included, among others Anita Ghai, a psychologist and Senior Fellow, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library Delhi, currently the President of IAWS, the director of RCWS, Veena Poonacha and Meena Gopal a sociologist who did a study on women in science for the Indian National Science Academy, Sumi Krishna, independent researcher and the former president of the IAWS, Gita Chadha, a sociologist and science studies scholar at the RCWS, besides several others. The speakers shared their experiences and trajectories into science. The discussion raised questions related to women practitioners of science; how science represents gender; and the interface of feminism and science. The need to develop science criticism from a feminist perspective at the level of epistemology and practice was highlighted. These issues were also discussed in the peer review sessions that followed.

The Peer Review Workshop followed up on themes discussed earlier at the IAWS regional workshop in Bangalore in 2007 and at the national conference in Lucknow in 2008. It critically discussed 25 working papers in the areas of the philosophy, history, sociology and psychology of science, pedagogy of science and policy and practice in veterinary science, soil management, water management and health. Case studies of pioneering women in psychiatry and medicine, and with a lively interaction on feminist science fiction in India the sessions came to an end. The Peer Review Workshop aimed at sharpening the arguments in every paper and marking the emergent trends in feminist science criticism. The Peer Review sessions witnessed vibrant discussions on every paper and the mood was to nurture each others intellectual efforts. The volume is expected to be a unique contribution to the field in India.

Gita Chadha

RCWS, SNDT University, Mumbai.

Feminism, Literature and a Cry for Translation

February 26 -27, 2010

Aurangabad

The workshop was conducted in collaboration with Tarabai Shinde Centre for Women's Studies at the Academic Staff College of Dr. B. Ambedkar Marathwada University. The broad theme of the Aurangabad workshop was to make feminist theory accessible to a wider audience of persons involved in teaching and learning Women's Studies.

We had planned this Workshop on the regional level as a coming together of creative feminist writers in Marathi, writers from other languages, and those who feel the need for translation of such works into English as well as translation from English to Marathi, and practitioners of translation. At first we had a good response; several translators had agreed to come, and the well-known Tamil writer, Bama, had agreed to inaugurate, but she fell ill, and there were other last-minute cancellations. We were lucky enough to have Najubai Gavit, an Adivasi woman from the Dhulia district in Maharashtra who has written three novels, who accepted our invitation.

The inaugural session on 26th February was presided over by the Vice-Chancellor of this University, Professor Nagnath Kottapalle, who is a well-known critic and short-story writer in Marathi. The Chief Guest of the function was Najubai Gavit, an. Najubai spoke of her life in a family of adivasi agricultural labourers, how she became involved with their struggles for better pay, which led her to participate in all kinds of movements later on. She was critical of the urban-based women's movement, which according to her, was far removed from the problems and the strengths of adivasi women.

After lunch, there was a session of presentations by creative writers, chaired by Vidyut Bhagwat from Pune. Jahnavi and Saraswati, both writers from Karnataka, presented their short stories, originally written

in Kannada. Saraswati, who is an activist, also spoke extensively of how her work in the labour movement and Dalit movement led her to express herself through the short story form. A young student of English literature now studying in Hyderabad had translated Saraswati's story into Marathi, and this was circulated in the audience while Saraswati spoke in English. Najubai Gavit also read from one of her novels.

Babytai Kamble, one of the earliest Dalit women writers, whose semi-autobiographical account of life in the Dalit community in her village has recently been translated into English by Maya Pandit and published under the title *The Prisons We Broke*, had brought a poem which was read out by one of her relatives.

The poem talks about an old man who is present when Dr. Ambedkar's car stops at the roadside near his village. Dr. Ambedkar is on his way to a public function, and asks water to drink. The man who is bringing him the water is stopped by a villager who says, this man is a Mahar. He then refuses to give water to Babasaheb. The old man who has witnessed the incident, brings a matka of water and sits patiently by the road until Babasaheb's car returns.

Susheela Mool-Jadhav, a local writer in Marathi from Aurangabad and Rana Hyderi, the well-known Urdu woman poet, also spoke about their writing and read out some of their work. Vidyut Bhagwat stirred up a lively discussion when she compared Ambedkar and Gandhi during the course of her remarks, before leaving for Pune. Later the rest of the session was chaired by Umesh Bagade, Professor of History in our University.

On 27th February, the first session had paper presentations by Rukmini Sen who was representing the

IAWS EC, Vandana Bhagwat from Pune, Rajni Walia from Simla, and Meherunnissa Pathan who is Assistant Professor of English in this University.

Shoma Sen, who teaches English in Nagpur University, chaired the session.

The post lunch session was chaired by Pushpa Bhave, feminist activist and critic from Mumbai. Presentations on the practice of translation were made by Hameed Khan, Professor of English at the Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, Sandip Gawai, the young translator of Saraswathi's story, and Aruna Lokhande, a retired professor of Hindi who has done many translations from Hindi to Marathi and vice versa. Pushpa Bhave spoke about the need for translation and raised many issues about contemporary Indian feminism in a speech which was much appreciated.

In the Valedictory session, Babytai Kamble was the Chief Guest. The frail Babytai only raised her arms in greeting and gave us all her lovely smile. The session was presided over by Y.M.Pathan, Emeritus Professor

of Marathi of this University, whose seminal life work on medieval Marathi literature has been honoured with a Padmashri.

On the whole, although many of our invited guests could not make it, and one of our limited faculty was in hospital with pregnancy complications (she now has a baby girl) the workshop brought together a number of people interested in feminist writing and the sessions, especially with the creative writers, were enjoyed by all.

There was a wide participation of students and teachers in the workshop from the Marathwada University as well as from states of Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Jharkhand and northern parts of Vidarbha.

Papers were presented in English and Marathi and work is on to publish a volume on translations. Our Centre made an effort to provide translations and make the sessions as inclusive as possible.

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CALL FOR ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REPORTS

Announcements & Reports of

- **courses**
- **fellowships**
- **seminars**
- **conferences**
- **consultations**
- **hearings**
- **workshops etc.**

related to Women's Studies are welcome for publication in the IAWS Newsletter.

Please send them to anandhister@gmail.com, and do try to keep them brief (usually approx.350 words), or they may have to be edited.

The Editorial Committee will select the most relevant submissions for each issue.

Doing Feminist Research: Feminist Research Methodology in Social Sciences

The IAWS -MIDS Workshop on Feminist Research Methodology

Chennai, February 23-26, 2010.

A REPORT¹

*Abida Begum, E. Deepa and Nitha Nair**

The Indian Association for Women's Studies (IAWS) organized a workshop on Feminist Research Methodology at the Madras Institute of Development Studies (MIDS), Chennai, on 23rd to 26th of February 2010. This workshop was co-ordinated by Prof. Padmini Swaminathan and Dr.S.Anandhi. There were forty research scholars including college lecturers and activists who participated in the workshop.

The aim of the workshop was to demonstrate, among other things how feminist approaches to social science research have led to new, varied, though complex and multiple interpretations of the relationship between the social world and people's lived realities; how this critique of mainstream ideas at one level has challenged the accepted premises of doing social science research and at another level has contributed to diversity within feminism; what imparts distinctiveness, if any, to feminist scholarship even as feminists are continually struggling to produce and justify authoritative knowledge of gendered social life. The rationale for the workshop, was the concern of the IAWS and of the coordinators themselves for the need to sensitize the current generations of students entering academic institutions to the fact that feminism, feminist research and feminist theories have offered profound insights, methods and perspectives that have deepened disciplinary understandings and practices. The design of the workshop was such that eminent feminist scholars shared their experiences and thoughts on doing feminist research within various academic fields along with participants doing group reading and critically reflecting on the selected readings. The reading as an important component of the workshop was to allow participants to critically reflect

on the feminist epistemological practices.

The Workshop was formally inaugurated by the Director of MIDS, Prof. Maria Saleth. In her introductory address, S.Anandhi familiarized the participants to the activities of the IAWS. Her presentation touched upon range of issues related to doing feminist research and the history of feminist interventions and contributions in different disciplines to bring about alternate methodologies. For instance, she highlighted how feminist research, concerned with women's experiences, has explored the interconnection between gender, sexuality, class, caste which has led to alternate social and political analysis. Also, explained how feminist research methodology, despite employing varied and multiple research techniques, share a common philosophy, theory and analysis such as the use of gender as a central analytical category, research as political commitment towards liberation of women, the centrality of women's experiences and emotions in doing research (feminist stand point theory) and so on.

Maithreyi Krishnaraj's presentation on the history of the emergence of women's studies as discipline was like a key note address which touched upon issues of linkages between women's movement and women's studies, the problems of making women's studies as a discipline, the need for using key concepts such as patriarchy, women's subordination, women's empowerment and so on against challenges posed by post-modernism that rejects single truth of women's subordination. The need to constantly engage with feminist vocabularies, the dilemmas of various movements in conceptualizing social relations and theorizing feminist issues

¹ We are grateful to Rukmini Sen and S. Anandhi for sharing their notes on the workshop.

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were some of the aspects of doing feminist research that was covered in her presentation. Besides this, throughout the workshop Maithreyi's interventions and inputs into various sessions were much appreciated by the participants.

The Presentation of Padmini Swaminathan critically engaged with concepts such as gender mainstreaming and engendering development through a detailed case study of MV foundations' project for women's empowerment. While critically evaluating the NGO and Government projects on gender mainstreaming, she suggested the need for shift in organizational and institutional cultures to engage with women's knowledge as resource of empowerment and the need also for many of these so called 'mainstreaming gender projects' to take into account feminist understanding of engendering of development in order for the mainstreaming business to be a transformative feminist concept. There were some interesting discussions on feminist research techniques and the problems with existing survey methods that followed this session with many concluding that a combination of methods was required in capturing multiple realities of rural women's lives, in other words, is a call for methodological rigour in doing feminist research.

The Presentation on "Measuring Gender Differences" by Brinda Viswanathan demonstrated how feminist could innovatively use the NSS and NFHS data to prove not merely gender imbalances in nutritional intake and consequent impact on women's health, but also use state wise variations to dispel the myth that the developed state automatically provide for well-being of women. She also discussed how these measurements could provoke in depth research on social realities that are not automatically revealed in this quantitative information. The participants raised doubts regarding the isolated use of quantitative information, as it was done in the presentation, pointing to the dangers of appropriation of such data to justify various discriminatory practices.

How to look at the family more effectively from different disciplines? How do the Indian law and the judiciary in particular look at families and what has been the nature of feminist engagement with the Indian law and legal reforms? These were some of the important issues addressed by Kalpana Kannabiran in her presentation on "Exploring cross-disciplinary Approach to researching the Family". Tracing the historical context of the reform of Indian law in relation to women and family, she contended that despite the series

of amendments and new laws in favour of women the attitude of judiciary towards women and caste had not changed. According to her, the institutional spaces of the court have not imbibed the philosophy of resistance of either the anti-caste movement or the women's movement. Through instances of how court narratives have figured women's body and the caste constructions of purity and pollution, she concluded that the court practices especially of judgements and their narratives require not merely serious interrogation from the feminist activists but also an academic enquiry of how the structures and the politics of courts perpetuate patriarchal values.

There were also two other presentations that directly dealt with law, feminism and doing feminist research. Rukmini Sen's presentation on interpreting laws on violence from feminist methodology urged scholars to critically review the positivistic legal jurisprudence that emphasized objectivity and value neutral aspects of law. Taking the laws related to rape and domestic violence, she explained how one might critically review the court judgements, law commission reports, the provisions within the Indian Penal Codes, legislations and the court proceedings from the feminist perspective in order to expose the male centeredness of the Indian legal system and to understand the contributions of the women's movement in shaping these legal discourses. In a similar vein, Geetha Ramaseshan discussed the court room practices and stereotypes that were held in the family courts of Chennai. Taking the audience through instances of judgments delivered in family courts, Geetha offered a feminist perspective and methods of understanding the complexities of justice delivery system and how laws act against women in the court spaces and how women find it difficult to mediate.

Based on her experience of working with the dalit and tribal women, Sagari Ramdas, contended that there exist methodological differences between science and feminist research since the former is disengaged / neutral while the latter engages with communities and thus produces knowledge through people's lived experiences. Therefore there is a need to discount the hierarchy of the scientists who claim to know the 'truth' and that the women farmers know nothing. Discussing the series of government legislations related to environment protection, she highlighted how women's knowledge and their interests were systematically discounted leading to decreasing interaction between women and the common property resources. She concluded that there

is a need for bringing in feminist perspectives on land, water, livelihood and technology to challenge the corporate- science and patriarchal state nexus.

What is feminist perspective on health? How is the personal / subjective experience of women and its validation become important in health research? What are the issues of ethics in feminist research on health? Is gendered research in health different from feminist research? What are the current challenges that feminist health research must address? These are some of the issues that were addressed by Renu Khanna in her presentation on experiences of doing feminist research in health. There were quite a few responses to her presentation relating to challenges faced by researchers in addressing issues of autonomy, individuality and confidentiality in doing research on sexual health.

Through a comparison of the experiences of children in schools both in the urban and rural areas, V. Geetha in her presentation on 'Caste, Class, Gender: Issues in Teaching and Understanding' explained how caste and gender differences are played out in the class rooms and how they impact on the performances of children. She stressed that feminist research on caste and gender needed to be sensitive to these realities in order to address them within the academic research. The presentation by Sarah Hodges traced the linkages between feminist history writings and the history of feminisms. Through illustrations from her work on the history of birth control she elaborated on the production of feminist histories and its influences on feminist writings on the women's experiences of reproductive control.

In between these different issues that the resource persons spoke on, there were regular presentations made by the participants on the set of readings that were given to them. The Participants were divided into four groups and between these groups the readings were divided. Each reading was asked to be read keeping the following issues in mind : Main arguments of the article, contribution that the article made to the body of knowledge on feminist methodology and a critique of the article. The participants were extremely proactive in reading and analyzing these articles and this exercise definitely made the workshop much more interactive. The individual sessions too witnessed a lot of discussions with the resource persons. It was a very insightful and engaging group, the diversity of the group contributed to the level of intellectual dialogue that transpired among everybody.

□

THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES

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Taking Stock and Seeking Directions

March 3-4, 2010

IAWS Regional Workshop, Central India

A REPORT

The Department of Women's Studies, Mahatma Gandhi International Hindi University, in collaboration with the Indian Association for Women's Studies held a two day regional workshop on March 3 and 4, 2010 at the University premises in Wardha. The workshop was attended by about 40 participants from the Central Indian states of Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Chhatisgarh, in addition to Vidarbha and included two participants from Uttarakhand.

University faculty and students also participated and brought the total number of participants to 85. Entitled 'Taking Stock and seeking directions: evaluating one hundred years of women's struggles', the workshop was designed to relate the present phase of the struggles of the Adivasi and working women of central India to the historical struggles of women for a just society.

To quote from the concept paper for the workshop, "The year 2009-10 marks the centenary of the world's first March 8, when the struggling women of the Cotton Textile Mills in the USA celebrated victory after a protracted battle for the recognition of an eight hour working day. The day was recognized as International Working Women's Day through the efforts of Clara Zetkin and the world's first socialist state. Today it is celebrated worldwide, the original context and the promise often forgotten.

The women's movement both in India as well as the world has a long and rich history in which millions of ordinary women have lived, worked, and struggled to survive in order to remake their family, home, and social lives. Whether fighting for equal wages, safe contraception, resisting violence and sexual harassment,

a vibrant and active women's movement is thriving in many parts of India today. This struggle has drawn on a rich heritage of ordinary women's struggles internationally, of which the struggles around the first March 8, the struggles of women in the textile industry for equal rights as workers, and special rights as women remain a milestone.

These struggles have highlighted the interrelationship of women's struggles with those of other toiling people, and are particularly important to recall today as we struggle the various crippling aspects of globalization and market liberalization.

Underlying this precious history and the tenuous relationships between the women's movement and other equity struggles is the debate between interconnections and autonomy and our understanding of the 'fields of protest' framework, the understanding that women are not autonomous or free agents; rather, they inherit a "field" and it's accompanying social relations, and when they act, they act in response to it and within it.

As rising nationalisms, religious fundamentalisms and fascist pressures sweep the world, they pervade political space and civil society and have become entrenched in institutions such as education, the law and the media.

Instances of virtual genocide against people from the minority communities and increasing attacks on dalits and other marginalised castes, often with state complicity have resulted in deaths, mutilation, widespread fear, insecurity and the aggressive displacement of thousands from their homes even as economic and social boycotts

make their lives more vulnerable. And the system of justice has failed them time and again.

More than a decade of economic "liberalisation" has resulted in the withdrawal of the state from many essential sectors like health care, power and water. As they get privatized, the inequalities between the rich and poor are getting starker, large sections of the people are losing access to them, especially women and girls. The current economic recession has put further pressures on them. Women oppose economic policies which adversely affect the poor and marginalized, especially women, hold the government liable to initiate policies to ensure food security, clothing, shelter, health and education for all and to decrease defence spending.

We oppose policies that fail to protect the environment; we hold liable corporations, both national and multi-national, towards the environment, communities and society. We are committed to economic systems that guarantee peoples' right to livelihood, allow for the participation of all sections of society in economic activity and policy making, and ensure the equitable sharing of benefits among all.

The challenges before us are many, and as practitioners of Women's Studies, we feel it is as important today to take stock of our situation, as it is to look ahead and prepare for the future. According to the founders of the Indian Association of Women's Studies, Women's Studies is an interdisciplinary approach to university study which prepares students to critique power structures relating to sex, sexuality, race, class, age, abilities, belief systems, and other social institutions.

Today, it is important that we approach this mandate with a critical review of our achievements and unfulfilled tasks, even as we begin to plan for the future. Women's Studies and the Women's movement have a strong and dialectical relationship. If as a University department, we are able to contribute towards the task underlined above, our effort will have been more than justified."

The workshop was structured into four sessions, viz an inaugural session for laying down the parameters for the entire exercise, discussion session one entitled,

'Issues of women on the margins: workers, dalit and tribal women', discussion session two entitled 'The challenge of globalization and the struggle against violence' and a concluding, strategy session to discuss future directions.

The inaugural session opened with a welcome address by Shri Vibhuti Naraib Rai, Vice Chancellor of the host University. Prof Samita Sen, General Secretary, IAWS, then acquainted the participants with the activities of the association and Prof Ilina Sen, Head, Department of Women's Studies at Wardha, spoke of the relevance of the March 8th struggles in the context of the struggles of women in the central Indian region today.

The first discussion session opened with the presentation by Sudha Bharadwaj, an advocate from the Chhattisgarh High Court, Bilaspur who spoke on the issues of women workers in the unorganized sector, on the conditions of the working class lives with uncertainties of work availability and on the ways of resisting the patriarchal residues within the working class struggles.

Salge Mardi and Rosalia Tirkey from the National Alliance of Women's Organizations (NAWO) Jharkhand spoke of challenges posed by corporate development projects in the tribal areas, of the hardships of forced displacement, and of the trafficking of girls from Jharkhand into the domestic labour markets of metropolitan India. This session was chaired by Shamim Modi from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, who also has a long history of activism in Madhya Pradesh.

The keynote speaker in the second discussion session was Dr Jaya Mehta from the Sandhan Centre in Indore. Her speech on 'Globalization and Women' summarized the main trends of economic development, the crisis of capitalist development, as well as the tenuous relationship between the labour and women's movements and attempted to lay down a theoretical basis for the discussions that followed. Ranjana Padhi, a Delhi based independent researcher and activist, shared the findings of her own research on what was happening to women in the situation of agricultural and structural crisis in the Punjab. Sanobar Keshwaar, from the Lawyers'

Collective in Mumbai, spoke of the nature of the crisis as it affected urban women in Mumbai as well as smaller towns in Maharashtra in terms of the narrowing of livelihood and life choice options. The session was chaired by Vineet Tiwari, of the Progressive Writers' Association.

The strategy session that followed was entirely participatory, and was marked by a lively interaction and involvement. It was chaired by Dr Uma Bhatt of the Kumaon University Nainital and co-editor of the Women's journal Uttara. The concluding remarks by the workshop organizers highlighted the consensus reached by the participants; the major issues being:

- There is an urgent need to bring back the connection between the women's movement and women's studies, so that the future development of both is enriched.
- There is a need to understand and explain the current stagnation in the women's movement. If we divide the period of the post independence women's movement in India, we can roughly delineate two periods: (a) the post 1947 upto 1990 and (b) the post 1990. The first period was a very active one, a period of raising consciousness, heightening analysis and action strategy and placing demands for affirmative action on the state.
- The second period was taken up largely with seeking and operationalizing state based affirmative action, be it in connection with the panchayati raj representation or other changes in the legal framework, and the obsession is with seeking spaces within the existing legal frameworks, advocating for legal change, and in working through NGOs, using external funding, and in a certain sense, in allowing our analysis of the structures of oppression to take a back seat.
- An aspect of the feminist scholarship has always concerned itself with the relationship of women with the modern state. Do we look upon the state as an instrument of women's oppression and an institution carrying forward the institution of patriarchy, or do we use it to break down patriarchal authority?
- While the answer can never be in black or white, it appears that the abandonment of the critique of the state has been extremely detrimental. For instance Jaya Mehta in her presentation pointed to the historic compromise between capital and labour in the decade of the 1930s, when the issues of women workers was abandoned by the leaders of the labour movement. At the risk of sounding dramatic, we can think of a similar compromise between the state and sections of the women's movement.
- It is absolutely essential to keep our analytical categories clear and to insist on strong organizations. On the one hand, even the legal spaces gained through legislative action demand strong organizations if their promises are to be realized (the Domestic Violence Act is the case in point), today we see, particularly in central India, the state in its most brutal form. Several such instances were woven into various presentations of the workshop. We could only cite the case of how the patriarchal science and technology is contributing to gen(der)ocide, through the collective murder of female fetuses and girl children.
- Women's Studies and the women's movement both need to re-integrate the critique of the state into their practice, and develop methodologies that take this into account.
- There was an urgent need to identify areas of working together, perhaps through the development of joint research programmes, perhaps through the combination of activist and scholarly skills into common areas of work.
- The issue of displacement is a common issue for our entire region. Other such issues could be thought of, for eg., (1) the issue of governance and the creation of small states like Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Uttarakhand - what implications do they have for women? (2) Gender implications of the mainstream development paradigm selected for these areas (3) the issue of genocide for the indigenous and women population in these areas.

Ilina Sen

Department of Women's Studies

Mahatma Gandhi International Hindi University, Wardha

DISABILITY & GENDER

March 27-28, 2010

Workshop organized by IAWS AND EOC
University of Delhi

Owing to the emergence of disability issues in different parts of the world and the concrete role of the United Nations since the 1970s, the issue of disability has shifted from the realms of charity, medical care and welfare to that of human rights. In the light of this scenario, India's signing of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 1st October 2007 is a significant event.

Notwithstanding the legislations strengthening the cause of the disabled, the necessity of Disability Studies cannot be over-emphasized. Women with disabilities make up a sizeable proportion of the global population, and a majority of the population of persons with disabilities in developing countries.

IAWS in collaboration with Equal Opportunities Cell (DU) formulated a two-day module on disability, which could then be integrated in the women studies courses, as well as refresher courses that are offered by different universities.

Over the past two to three decades, the understanding of disability has broadened from a narrow medicalised focus to a social model approach. A review of the curriculum programmes on women's studies indicates that gender and disability issues are studied on an ad-hoc basis.

The workshop was intended to create a module with a detailed structure and a complete set of readings. An attempt was made to engage with the creation of the module from an interdisciplinary perspective and with reference to socio-cultural contexts and subjective experiences.

The objectives of the workshops were as follows:-

□ To gain appreciation for disability issues in women's studies and to understand its central tenets and concerns.

□ To develop tools for analysis that draw from feminist and disability perspectives and theories.

□ To formulate four to five units which could be included in the refresher courses as well as the detailed programmes.

□ To think about struggles for social justice through intersectional lenses which consider multifaceted subjectivities.

□ To draw up teacher training workshops for colleges and universities including summer schools programmes.

Primarily we were looking at the following units. Along with the readings that could be made available to different centers, the goal was to translate the readings into different languages.

The workshop began with short introductions from the participants followed by an address by Rama Kant Agnihotri pointing out the obvious problems with the traditional outlook on disability. This was followed by Meena Gopal's introduction of IAWS, its development and progress since 1982. Subsequently, Anita Ghai shared how the workshop came about. She also substantiated the inseparability of the two issues, namely, disability and gender, from her personal experiences.

Soon after this, the participants were requested to reflect shortly on the whole discourse of the workshop. It was pointed out by Tanmoy Bhattacharya that the disconnect that unfortunately exists in Women's Studies programmes between academics and activism must not be allowed to be replicated in taught courses on disability issues, and that the structure of the modules must reflect this essential connection.

This was supported by Renu Adlakkha and Nishi Mitra, who provided examples of making field work an essential component of Women's Studies courses taught at the TISS, Mumbai; Dr. Adlakkha similarly gave instances of attachment with hospitals or institutions for students of Disability Studies. Nandini Ghosh raised the issue of placement work in the present context since such placements mostly concern rehabilitation and medical issues.

Prof. Agnihotri proposed that participants be split into smaller groups, each group focusing on a single unit out of the six previously identified units and come up with 4-5 sub units and 4-5 primary readings for each unit. It was decided that the groups would present their works in the afternoon session for an open house discussion. About the structure of the module, Prof. Agnihotri felt that refresher courses have their own limitations; therefore, it was better to prepare a course of 40 hours focusing specifically on Gender and Disability only.

For the first day (March 27, 2010), the units on General Disability Issues, Issues of Representation, and Body and Sexuality were taken up and Jagdish Chander, Renu Adlakkha and Tanmoy Bhattacharya respectively were requested to be the module leaders. Participants discussed intensely about the need for introduction of theoretical aspects of disability and the expected level of awareness of the target audience.

In short, concern was expressed with respect to the clarity and efficacy of the units that the workshop was considering. More importantly, it was felt that the course should be able to sensitize society about the much neglected and confused issues regarding disability and gender. The discussion led to some changes in the titles of the previously named units.

Unit 1: Issues in Disability was renamed as Issues in Disability and Gender

- a) Definitions and models: religious, charity, medical, social models
- b) Social movements: disability rights movement and feminist movement
- c) Impairment and disability (issues of Sex and gender)

- d) Diversity, hierarchy and disability (issues of difference and identity)
- e) The language of disability

There was some discussion on including the issues of language and science, which were subsequently included in the above Unit. There was also a discussion on where to include the important concept of Stigma and it was decided that it should be in Unit 2.

Unit 2: Representations as Knowledge production. This was renamed as Issues of Identities and Representations in Culture and Society.

- a) History
- b) Art and Culture
- c) Mythology
- d) Literature and media
- e) Stigma

This unit had a long list of readings, videos/films and a number of references highlighting the voices of people with disability. There was a discussion about contemporary representations and lived reality particularly from the Indian context, examples such as the work of Renu Adlakkha and Anita Ghai were mentioned.

Unit 3 : Body and Disability. This unit was renamed as Issues of Embodiment

- a) Social Construction of the Body (Ontology, Epistemology)
- b) The Impaired Body (disabled, feminine, medicalised)
- c) Body Realities (Critique of the social model)
- d) The Immaterial Body (Performativity, Discourse)

This unit was renamed with the change of title from Body to Embodiment because it was felt that the latter term captures many more connotations and internalization of ideas about the body than just the term Body. The above unit also included the issues of Sexuality, Reproduction and Motherhood. In the discussion that followed it was decided

that since the unit would become too heavy on its own, it should be split into two and hence a Unit 4 was created as the following.

Unit 4 : Disability and Sexuality

- a) Issues pertaining to Disability and Sexuality
(Myths, sexual health, sex education, menstruation, intimacy and relation, pleasure, sexual orientation, reproduction, pregnancy, abortion, hysterectomy, contraception, adoption, motherhood, menopause)
- b) Disability and sexual abuse
(Domestic violence, Institutional abuse, rape, trafficking)
- c) Law/ Policies pertaining to Disability and Sexuality

The second day of the workshop began with a summary of the previous day's discussion. Like the previous day, the architectural concern of the 40 hours module was re-addressed for a short while.

However, the workshop accelerated to its core issues after participants' suggestions of primary readings of disability studies. Though it was decided to work on the remaining units, the units which were finalised on Day 1 were also discussed from the beginning with a new vigour, the presence of Dr Uma Chakravarty and Mary John provided additional inputs. The remaining units and sub-units decided on the 2nd day were as follows:

Unit 5 : Disability, Gender and Development. After much discussion and debate this topic was renamed as Unequal Citizens: The Political Economy of Disability and Gender

- a) Idea of social justice: State and social policy
- b) Structural context of marginality
(poverty, class, caste, religion, region...)
- c) Access to life chances
(health, education, shelter, livelihood, leisure)

It was strongly felt by Dr Bhattacharya that a traditional over-emphasis on issues of development will take the focus away from issues of disability and justice and that to retain a disability-centric perspective, the unit must be renamed. Dr Uma Chakravarty subsequently suggested the title which was accepted by everybody.

Unit 6 : Disability & Caring. This was renamed as Dynamics of Care and Caring

- a) Contested notions of care and caring
(Feminist and Disability Critiques)
- b) Dependence, Independence, Interdependence

This unit engaged the group in a lot of discussion and debate from the title of the unit to the different dimensions that were to be covered under the topics. The voices and lived experience of both carers and the cared for were to be taken into consideration. It was also felt necessary to ensure that the role of the absent or uncaring State is highlighted. It is a unit which will be narrative based.

The issue of Care as being different from Caring highlights the fact that care is much more at a physical level while caring has an emotional connotation to care. Thus both aspects are equally important. The second topic was included to highlight the fact that the whole society lives in a state of interdependence and hence nothing special has to be done for the disabled who can also perform care and caring functions.

Unit 7 : Disability and Law. This unit was renamed as Law, Legislation & Jurisprudence

- a) Policy and Acts: A Critique
- b) Developing Disability Jurisprudence
(judgments, case studies)
- c) Ethics, Morality and Law
(bioethics, euthanasia, mercy killing, pre-natal testing, genetic testing)

This unit is viewed as a unit with a lot of discussion-based understanding through judgements, case studies and films. Dr. Bhattacharya has compiled the final list of reading and it was decided that EOC of the University of Delhi will act as a centralised unit for collecting all the readings in bound forms.

Anita Ghai
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Read...

IAWS Newsletter

IAWS Pre-Conference Workshop for Students**Programme Schedule**

Date : 20/01/2011

- 9:30 am - Welcome, Introduction to the Workshop
- 10 am - 1 pm - First session: Women's Studies: Pedagogy and Curriculum
- 1 pm - 2 pm - Lunch
- 2 pm - 5 pm - Second session : Women's Studies: Experiences and Concerns
- 5 pm - 6 pm - Break
- 6 pm - 8 pm - Cultural Programme

The two themes and their content:

a) Women's Studies: Pedagogy and Curriculum

Students can share salient features of the courses on Gender/ Women's Studies that are offered in their respective Women's Studies Centres/ Departments and so on, and a range of issues can then be discussed- from the pros and cons of standardization of syllabus, to the contribution of Women's Studies in the realm of concepts and methodologies. The following questions can be deliberated upon: Has the Women's Studies discourse succeeded in creating a dent in other disciplines or has it become ghettoized? What are the different spaces in the campus which are available to students to engage in activism- the provision of 'extension' or 'field action' within the UGC women's studies centres/ NSS/ students' union/ cultural, literary, film clubs/ other platforms/ internet? Is the pedagogy transformative or is it taught like any other regular course? What are the different kinds of pedagogical practices being employed? How diverse is the Women's Studies classroom in terms of gender, caste, religion and so on? How is the issue of language being dealt with? How does the Women's Studies classroom respond to the questions brought up by the discourses of other social movements like the sexuality rights movement, dalit movement, adivasi movement and so on? What is the relationship between Women's Studies and the Women's Movement?

b) Experiences and Concerns

In this session, students can share their experiences and concerns which stem from their engagement with

Women's Studies and feminist politics. The students can talk about the ways in which their relationship with the world around has altered, if it has, and how they are negotiating with it. How and in which ways, for instance, has the relationship with the family altered? How is Women 's Studies as a choice of subject perceived? How is Women's Studies Centre/ Department located within the University and what is its relationship with other Departments/ disciplines? Women's Studies is variously perceived as a site for political activism, a space for male-bashing, a "lesser" discipline in terms of academic rigour, a course with no job security, and so on and many a times, students find themselves at a defensive position vis-à-vis the course, its relevance and their own identities. What are the various ways through which these notions affect the lives of the students? This session also aims to discuss the processes through which peer-groups are formed in the campus. Is it true that it is difficult for students of Women's Studies to communicate with those from other disciplinary locations, particularly natural sciences, technology and management, confining the Women's Studies discourses to those who are already converted? There is also a need to interrogate the bases of alignments (particularly peer-groups and intimate relations) in the campus, say, on the lines of caste, region, ideological affiliation, language, religion, gender and sexuality.

We intend to invite 10 students in each theme to present their paper (10-15 minutes each), followed by an open discussion. The names of these speakers will be decided on the basis of abstracts as well as social and regional location, in order to have a wider representation. The abstracts (500 words) have to be in English. However, selected students can present their paper in a language of their choice, provided they submit the English translation to us, at least a month before the workshop.

Please send the abstract to:

Sandali Thakur

sojourner.sandali@gmail.com

Mamta Singh

singh_mamta05@rediffmail.com,

mrosaline0@gmail.com

IAWS NATIONAL CONFERENCE

JANUARY 21-24, 2011

One of the important activities of the IAWS has been organising the National Conference every three years. The XIIIth IAWS National Conference around the theme, Resisting Marginalizations, Challenging Hegemonies: Revisioning Gender Politics, provides us with the opportunity for dialogue, to challenge hegemonies, forge broader alliances and build alternatives. The conference is being organized in collaboration with the Department of Women's Studies, Mahatma Gandhi Antarrashtriya Hindi Vishwavidyalaya (MGAHV) on 21-24 January 2011 at Wardha. The MGAHV is an Indian central university established in 1997 for the promotion and development of Hindi language and literature, through teaching and research. Wardha is rather an unusual location for the conference. There are multiple reasons for which IAWS chose Wardha as its venue. For one, the location is provincial and appeals to a new constituency, which will help in focussing on regional diversities and their specific complexities regarding women's issues. This helps the IAWS in its outreach to marginalised regions and groups - a major objective of the Association.

The district of Wardha lies in a region of multiple social and geographical locations. While it is part of Vidharbha in Maharashtra, it is also situated in central India, and is culturally and linguistically diverse with Hindi and Marathi elements. Its relevance for organising a National Conference is both because of its accessibility from all parts of India and because of the important social and political issues which have been an integral part of the district in the present juncture. Agricultural distress in the Vidarbha region has an important dimension related to the issue of land rights for women. The agrarian crisis has precipitated a spate of suicides in the state of Maharashtra as elsewhere. High levels of suicides among men and women farmers continue to be reported with an implication for the surviving women and their families. The adivasis/tribals, dalits and other disadvantaged groups struggle against the loss of work, culture, space and dignity. These are symptomatic of the crisis of livelihoods and the accompanying social and cultural spaces confronting women especially in villages and forests.

The first decade of the twenty-first century has been witness to continuing marginalisation of large groups of people, rendered invisible and inconsequential by the power of the state, capital, and other social forces. There is an entrenchment of older inequalities even as newer voices assert

their claims from the margins. There are at present sustained and resurgent efforts to resist and challenge hegemonies in the spheres of the state, natural resources, labour, body, markets, culture and ideology, conflict, language, sites of law, boundaries of relationships and the interfaces of these arenas. It is in the above context that we felt the need to engage with experiences from the field, and new areas of research, rethinking several of the old questions and seeking new alliances in the face of emerging challenges.

The IAWS conference provides us an important opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogues where we can articulate, analyse, understand and seek answers to the struggles and movements of Dalits, tribals and women for some kind of equitable society. The engagements will help us put together alternatives that encompass policy, track change, build upon and rely on the insights of the women's movement. Through its plenary panels and sub-themes, the organisers of this Conference invite participants to focus on a contemporary gender politics that captures the resistances and challenges that come from the margins. The following concept note reflects the focus of the conference and contains the core issues around which themes of various plenaries have been crystallised.

Concept Note

Resisting Marginalisations, Challenging Hegemonies:
Re-visioning Gender Politics

The first decade of the twenty-first century is witness to continuing marginalisation of large groups of people, rendered invisible and inconsequential by the powers of the state, capital, and other social forces. There is an entrenchment of older inequalities even as newer voices assert their claims from the margins.

There are at present sustained and resurgent efforts to resist and challenge hegemonies in the spheres of the state, natural resources, labour, body, markets, culture and ideology, conflict, language, sites of law, boundaries of relationships and the interfaces of these arenas. While numerous struggles envision a polity and society with a meaningful citizenship, feminists are having a fresh look at experiences from the field, rethinking several of the old questions and seeking new alliances in the face of emerging challenges.

In the market-dominated trajectory of development

adopted, the state and capital are seeking greater control over natural resources; and they are also facing spiralling resistance, giving rise to varied sites of conflict, especially in the least developed regions of the country. Women are major participants in the new struggles of the day; they are challenging new forms of patriarchies and seeking to forge broader alliances and building alternatives.

It is not just against the state women face conflict and confrontation even within family, caste, religious and ethnic groups, within professional institutions, in regional struggles, and other spaces. They experience conflict as part of collectives from forces outside, but also within them. They are targets of sexual violence within the family, in caste and communal conflicts and in situations of state repression. Social change and radical political movements sometimes provide the locus for challenging traditional gender roles and norms; simultaneously, however, newer forms of marginalisations are being engendered. The state is increasingly complicit with these processes of marginalisations present today more in its repressive, extractive and appropriative roles than the ameliorative one of providing constitutional guarantees. The state functions in the interests of a few and, therefore, fails to provide entitlements and citizenship rights to vast sections of the country. It is based on such an understanding of the state that the women's movements approach law recognising its repressive role, but going beyond this, as a site of possible reform as well. We cannot but recognise that, for the marginalized, the law opens up new vistas through the language of rights, compensatory jurisprudence, legal certification, while also exhorting vigilance to issues such as patronage of vested interests, dominance of customary justice, and other reactionary processes.

The state, market, and family mediate the arrangements of women's labour within the larger domain of work. Recent restructuring of markets and developments in technology have contributed towards the marginalisation of labour, with disproportionate impact on women. One result has been the increasing presence of women in streams of migration. Another has been the interlocking of markets in land, water, labour, marriage, education, health, which serve to perpetuate, even deepen, inequalities of gender. On the obverse, women workers have contributed greatly to innovations in strategies of collectivisation and negotiation, providing new meanings to ideologies of contract and legitimacy of consent. Markets have become the sites of marginalisation as well as of resistance stretching from the local to the international.

Feminist discourses have just begun to understand the significance of the body as a cultural construct and as a site of disciplining. A complex interplay of power configures the body; those that are hungry, impaired, not healthy, considered fat, or altered by technology are an ever-present challenge to the dominant tropes of naturalisation. The body is also central to questions of gender. Women's relationships to their bodies are extended as they continually form, negotiate, re-build, and survive relationships they have with people, locations and ideologies. The most potent challenge is posed by women at the margins of the hetero-normative family, conventional conjugality and patrilineal inheritance; new relationships are forged through migration for livelihood and in confronting notions of stigma.

In the domain of culture and ideology, hegemonic nationalism prevails even as its newer versions are nurtured through the media and other cultural modes. Cultural and territorial hegemony reflected in the idea of the nation-state has been interrogated and articulated in nationality movements, specifically in the North East and Jammu & Kashmir. The misrepresentation and marginalisation of women and their interests coincides with this hegemonic representation of 'Indian culture'. Understanding the significance of language as a tool of dominance has been central to the feminist project originating from international but also national spaces. The diverse voices emerging from the margins those of the queer, sign-language enabled, dalit, adivasi, muslim, are unable to enter into conversation with the mainstream or with each other due to the absence of translation. There are, however, also sites of resistance to sustain and revive cultures at the margin as well as inspire new egalitarian cultures. The new social movements such as the dalit movement asserts its cultural rights through resistance, offering a counter discourse to dominant narratives of power and contributing greatly to an understanding of culture as a site of difference, multiplicity, contest, and negotiation. Women's movements too have contributed to such processes through an articulation of resistance in the form of paintings, songs, films, documentaries, poetry, autobiographies and so on.

We have today a conjuncture of opposites persistent exclusion of large sections of people, increasing privilege of a few and the very real possibility of new connections and conversations. What kind of politics of gender is appropriate for this moment? This conference hopes to survey the existing field, capturing the resistances and challenges coming from the margins as well as prospecting for the future of our movements.

The provisional programme of the conference is given below:

20 January 2011

Pre-Conference Workshop with students

IAWS has aimed to focus on the youth and expand the student base of the Association. The workshop with students of Wardha will be efforts towards understanding the pulse of the youth regarding the current socio-political changes being faced the region. The event will focus on the following themes:

- Women's Studies: Pedagogy and Curriculum
- Women's Studies: Experiences and Concerns

21-24 January 2011

Madhuri Shah Memorial Lecture

Plenary Panels

- I Theme Plenary, Coordinator: Anita Ghai
- II Youth Plenary, Coordinator: Rukmini Sen
- III Regional Plenary, Coordinator: Ilina Sen
- IV South-Asia Plenary, Coordinator: Uma Chakravarty

Sub-themes

- 1: Controlling Resources, Creating Exclusions
- 2: Conflicts and Resistances: Family, Community and State
- 3: Sites of Law, Struggles for Justice
- 4: Composite Cultures, Hegemonic Ideologies
- 5: Languages, Voices, Representations
- 6: State, Nation and Citizenship
- 7: New Markets and Interlocking Inequalities: Labour, Education, Health and Marriage
- 8: Re-imagining Relationships, Transcending Boundaries
- 9: Body Talk: Interrogating Boundaries and Hierarchies in Feminist Discourse
- 10: Women, Labour and Questions of Marginalisation

The Conference programme includes different sub-themes listed above which are related to the theme of the conference in which participants from all over the country are invited to present papers. We have tried to experiment with unconventional analytical grids to identify the sub-themes. The attempt is to replace the usual method of clustering issues premised on identities with conceptual frameworks which will be cross-cutting. Each sub-theme is being coordinated by a maximum of two scholars/activists/organisations working in the respective areas. The sub-theme coordinator(s) will be responsible for finalising the concept note of their sub-themes which will be circulated to those who may be interested in participating in the conference. Once the proposals of the papers come in, they will be required to make a selection and correspond with the selected paper

presenters as and when required. They will thus be responsible for the coordination of the theme presentations during the conference and subsequently preparing a report on the same.

There is a scheduled panel discussion on Women's Studies titled, 'Reviewing Pedagogy and Themes in Contemporary Women's Studies' which is being coordinated jointly by Dr. Rashmi Tikku and Dr. Shoma Sen from Nagpur. The focus will be on issues of pedagogy and curriculum of women's studies along with lived experiences and ideological concerns of students with regard to their engagement with women's studies. This will be an effort towards understanding the impact of women's studies in this region.

In addition, there are plans for a range of cultural programmes, film shows and exhibitions during all days of the conference. Women performers and singers from the region will be invited to perform during the evenings on all days of the conference. Moreover, the MGAHV is a new university with modern technological facilities. Since the university is wi-fi enabled, we plan to put up digital screens throughout the university campus to cover different programmes and aspects of the conference proceedings. This will also result in a more effective and wide media outreach for the conference. A student body has been formed to assist the EC to implement these plans.

The national conference registration process will ensure that we get the required information of members who attend the conference. The registration form needs all membership details from those who register for the conference which include their membership number, type of membership, whether they want to upgrade to life membership, information on change of address, whether they receive newsletter on time, etc.

A five-member local organising committee for the conference has been formed at Wardha. The committee consists of four members from MGAHV and is headed by Professor Ilina Sen, Head, Department of Women's Studies, MGAHV. The fifth member is Dr. Rashmi Tikku from Women's Studies Centre, LAD College, Nagpur. The accommodation facilities have been arranged at four different venues at Wardha in addition to the University premises. Adequate transport arrangements will be made for the delegates and participants in the conference. The Secretariat will play an integral role in planning for the conference.

The IAWS brochures will be posted from the Secretariat by the first week of August with the last date of accepting abstracts being 15 October, 2010, which will be communicated to participants by 15 November 2010. The abstracts will be published as a part of the conference proceedings. The last date of registration for the conference is 15 December 2010.

□

NORTHERN REGIONAL WORKSHOP

Cultures of Resistance: The Women's Movement as Performance

September, 9-11 2010

Venue: Indrapastha College, 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 Shabdham 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. 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 ackground 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 proposed workshop, extending over three

days, will try and bring 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. It will draw participants from as many regions of India as possible and allow 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 will be a fitting tribute to the college and its teachers; it will also provide this generation of women students to engage with the issues discussed and partake of the rich fare that we will try and bring together.

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, but have not as yet focussed on 'culture' especially cultures of resistance except to incorporate such issues as late night events, is now poised to seriously engage with the theme and is delighted to collaborate with the Indraprastha College in holding this workshop from 9-11 September 2010.

We will also try and document the proceedings on camera to create a visual archive of the event. A tentative program is listed below:

Sept 9, 2010

Kamla Bhasin, Jaya Shrivastava, Saheli, Awaaz e niswan
Singing to break the silence

Shubha Mudgal: For a wider reach: The making of the
song and video of 'main akeli'

The Street Play: The making of Om Swaha, Dafa 356,
Maya Rao, Anuradha Kapur

Performance of Aurat (janam) and

Mahaul Badalna Hai (Saheli)

Neeraj Malik will introduce and provide a context for the emergence of the street play.

Sept 10, 2010

Tripurari Sharma : Transforming and recreating: working with performative traditions: Nautanki and Pandvani

Anuradha Kapur: Into the Proscenium: Interpreting Umrao Jaan, Ghare Baire, Sundari

Sushama Deshpande The making of Mee Savitribai Phule

Mangai: A feminist journey in Theatre

Solo performance by Kalairani

Performing Pandita Ramabai for school children, Theatre in education, NSD

Sept 11, 2010

Urvashi Butalia The visual cultures of the Women's movement: Making the poster and documenting it.

Documentary films and discussions with film makers:

Mediastorm: From the Burning Embers

Sabeena Gadihoke :Three women and a camera

Reena Mohan: Kamalabai

Paromita Vohra: Unlimited Women

Deepa Dhanraj: Something like a war

Saba Dewan: The Other Song

Kavita Joshi : Three stories from the north east

Sameera Jain : Born at home

Vani Subramanian: It's a Boy

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

BOOK REVIEWS

- **"Re-negotiating gender relations in marriage: family, class and community in Kolkata in an era of globalization"**, *School of Women's Studies*, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, 2009

Few historical studies on Kerala have examined gender relations, including forms of marriage, to both highlight the shift from matriliney to patriliney as well as its caste, class and community dimensions under the impact of colonization. However, this path-breaking study of contemporary Kolkata, looks at constructions of masculinity and femininity within family and also in the context of wider social constructions of gender and dynamics of the market and how these impact the choices and agency of women of different caste, class, community. Through a statistical survey covering the Municipalities of Kolkata and Salt Lake and three quantitative studies, a complex picture emerges of the processes of negotiating changes in gender relations, with regard to marriage in particular. Three qualitative studies focus on marriage and intermediation, marriage and caste, marriage and class.

Using the notion of intermediation as exchange (of women) and transaction (bride price, dowry), the study points to the mutual and dynamic relationship between changes in forms of intermediation and changing nature of marriage. The changes in nature of intermediation are linked to wider processes- changes in market structure, technology and communication media. The study reveals how notions of "appropriate marriage" work out in everyday practice, the spaces available for young women and men to negotiate the contradictions between individual subjectivities and caste/ community endogamy and family authority on marital decisions, even as the choice to not marry did not seem to nor perceived to exist. There was criticism of women not wanting to marry or married women not wanting to bear children. About 75% of working class single women felt their independence was the main advantage while 75% middle class single women cited freedom to move about as biggest advantage of not getting married.

"Love" marriages did not generally transgress acceptable caste/ class boundaries, the two key elements of endogamy. While "love" marriage was the preferred choice single men and women across classes, among the urban

middle classes in particular, allowing interaction of men and women with persons selected by parents blurred the boundary between love and arranged marriages, giving as it does space for a person to "fall in love" with parents choice. However, quantitative data suggested that while male respondents had chosen love marriage, most female respondents chose arranged marriages. The responses from married respondents, in favor of love marriages, with conditions (education, income, family background), suggest that love and arranged marriages are social constructions, not so sharply demarcated in practice.

Spouse selection was gendered across classes with male respondents, including divorced men, seeking good looking wives while women, including divorced women, want spouse who could provide economic security through steady income. Working class men held strong views against working wives while middle class men wanted working wives in professions, such as teaching, which has fixed working hours (hence time for household work) along with a steady income. Middle class women use newspapers, internet, and references by relatives as mediating agents in marriage while references by relatives and ghatkali were the processes used by working class women. For women across across class, parent's decision was crucial. Disapproval by parents was not an option for middle classes.

It is recognized that marriage, arranged marriage, and sexuality are key to maintaining caste as a social order as well as for hypergamy (moving up the caste hierarchy), in the urban context, marriage rules that operate at the jati level, are changing, despite the limits and contests involved in inter-caste marriage. Spatial relocation, acquisition of wealth has given more flexibility to jati rules while changes to caste endogamy have not changed to the same extent. The study investigated migration, education, mobility, dress, marriage practices, rituals, taboos, work (paid and unpaid), caste perceptions, in this context. The contest of ideas between genders, generations, classes and caste are many. In terms of dress, a move away from traditional moral standards by was seen as deviance since women represent and must uphold the moral code. The observance of practices of purity/ pollution, particularly during menstruation, depends on availability of urban space which in turn depends on economic status, nuclear or joint family settings. However, across castes/class, the Brahmanical practice of prohibition from religious rituals/ puja, are observed. In a region which

historically witnessed a strong movement for widow remarriage among upper castes, the study reveals the startling fact that across castes, there is an assumption that older widows should follow these customs while for young widows, remarriage and leading a normal life was acceptable. However, a widow could wear all colours, except red, the symbol of marriage, according to a working class, low caste respondent.

Upper and middle class women have more freedom in physical mobility despite time restrictions, while low caste working women had the freedom to go out with male friends even late at night. However, among all categories, married women were allowed more physical mobility than unmarried women. There were no restrictions on commensality with other castes and there were more inter-caste marriages in Kolkata than in the villages. Most women interviewed had migrated after marriage. The younger generation of upper caste and middle class men were open to inter-caste marriage and even in cases of resistance, older generation eventually accepted inter-caste marriage within their families. Inter caste marriage was not an issue among the low castes and data suggested that inter-caste marriage was lowest among (14%) among upper caste, compared to middle caste (20%) and low caste (18%). Inter-caste marriages were more likely an outcome of love marriage.

Being able to discuss issues of sexuality was a change. Men and women felt that it was wrong for a homosexual to marry a woman as it denied woman her sexual rights. Marriage was not perceived in terms of procreation and the concern for the individual woman rather than for her role in procreation and family honor, pointed to a significant shift, a social change taking place. Virginity for unmarried women and taboo on pre-marital sex for women, persist, with 86% of men and 95% women stating that female pre-marital virginity was important.

Within marriage, women negotiate in varied ways with the authority structure in the husband's family, invisibilizing the gender inequalities in marriage structure. Domestic violence was reported working and middle classes, with middle classes being able to keep it behind the doors of their flats/bungalows. Middle classes recognized the importance of law in addressing domestic violence. Domestic violence was reported by middle castes and working class, with few also justifying wife beating as a disciplinary measure. Among upper castes, domestic violence was recognized as valid

reason for separation. Quantitative data suggested the low percentage of middle classes taking legal recourse, including 9.1% middle class professional women. Freedom from domestic violence was considered as a middle class privilege and hence their not being part of discussions on gender laws. Legal awareness among working class was even lower. More often, they sought help of neighbourhood groups. Also, legal recourse was expensive and police too could not be trusted. There was a uniform recognition of the importance of registered marriage- Domestic workers however, felt that registration gave security in love marriages. Among the working classes, divorce as a legal measure, had not gained currency while middle classes were more comfortable with divorce and the legality of marriage was important. Hence, legal marriage defined by registration and divorce carried class differentiation. Also marriage and divorce was not defined by personal laws for working class. Gift exchange between natal and marital families was common and also acceptable even as many opposed dowry. 49% of working class women and 21% of middle class women interviewed admitted practice of dowry. While all women professionals accepted property rights (father's property), in day to day lives, it depended on whether they were a single child, or where there were no brothers, only sisters or where it was a self arranged marriage.

The study points out that the term "middle class" includes varied income groups, with their own social and cultural ethos and in a continuous process of transformation and the relative importance given to class over caste in public interaction, point to this change. People from diverse caste backgrounds socialize and eat together. However, caste plays an important role in marriage, parents favoring caste endogamy and young men and women "choose" to marry within their caste boundaries. There was discomfort about working class acquiring status of privileged class with the middle class uneasy about the cultural and lifestyle patterns, consumerism of working class members. Middle class working women are also dependent on women domestic workers while just as domestic women workers too often perform extra work, for refusing to do so may end up in their losing their job. Small changes are taking place in caste, class, choice, agency but the shift is not that of radical social change. The study concludes with a detailed roadmap- on social, economic, legal, cultural process- the process of gendering being both ideological and material.

Meera Velayudhan

□ **Vibhuti Patel** (ed.), *Girls and Girlhoods at Threshold of Youth and Gender-A Vacha Initiative*, The Women Press, Delhi, pp/ xxv 480, Price: 1595.

This voluminous contribution, the twenty one chapters of the book, deals with different aspects of Girlhood. As it has been stated in the foreword of the book, "Girlhood is seldom considered as an important phase in itself in India". The first chapter on the adolescent Girl in India astutely observes that since there has been no consensus on who is an adolescent girl there is invisibility of girls not merely in terms of data or information but also in terms of policies that address range of issues that concern the girls such as menstruations, malnutrition, low level of educations and so on. The authors persuasively argue for affirmative action by the state and by the NGOs in providing overall development that could take care of the issue of school drop outs among the young girls. The Second chapter throws light on the torments a girl child faces in form of sexual abuse, foeticide, infanticide, selling them for prostitution, devdasi system, dowry deaths, etc. It reasons the existence of such practices that these are accepted by the masses with questioning their origin and purpose. It makes a beautiful compilation of factors in the process of Socialization of girl child as 10Fs, Formative Factors: Feudal Societies, Families and Shelter, Foods, Formal Educations, Fashion, Clothing and ornaments, Fairies and other tales, Folk songs, Festivals, Fun Games and Films. It brings out the micro and macro level reforms made to improve the status of the girl child It concludes by stating that in the modern world, there is a need to develop youth as equal human beings without any discrimination.

Cynthia Stephen's essay is about the commitment of the government to the girl child. It shows that though Gender has been mainstreamed at the policy level at the centre and efforts at gender budgeting is visible even at the state and district level in certain states; but resistance to bills relating to women in parliament, existing violence against women, etc show lack of proactive implementation by the state. It supplements the chapter by a compilation of relevant extracts from official reports in connection with the issues of the girl child. It further emphasises on the moral and constitutional obligation of the government to its future citizens and especially to the most valuable human resource: the vulnerable and precious girl child, who will carry the future of the country in their very bodies. The chapter on Declining Sex Ratio in India shows the trends on declining sex ratio across census years and different states.

It highlights the socio cultural factors such as son mania, female foeticides, female infanticide, and change in sex ratio at birth and low levels of female literacy as the reasons for declining sex ratio in India. It further brings attention to the consequences and makes recommendations to bring about improvement in the existing situation.

The Chapter on education and health of girl child in urban India reveals that in India, compared to their male counterparts, girls are statistically less in number, less educated, less healthy and are more vulnerable to neglect, exploitation and abuse. The highlight of this chapter is the discussion on HIV AIDS and STD among girls. In our country millions of adolescents live or work on street, and many are forced to sell sex under extremely barbaric and unhygienic conditions that increase their exposure to STDs. Chapter six of the book deals with the problems of child labour and specifically with the issue of sex discrimination in child labour. It highlights how girls are engaged in low paid or no wage unskilled jobs which do not necessarily lead to skill formation that may help in enhancing future productivity. This is followed by a chapter on child trafficking among the Tribal girl children revealing mainly the intensity of the problem.

The chapter on Existence in Shadows Women and Disability focuses on the multiple marginalization of disabled women's lives. Clichéd as it may sound that women form the 'marginal component' of society vis-à-vis disabled women who are more marginalized. The neglect of these women is to an extent that no reliable data is available with regard to their number and this is more evident in the developing countries. The author highlights how disabled women and girls face more discrimination than disabled men and boys within the family in terms of health care, education, training, employment, income generation opportunities and exclusion from community activities. Chapter nine is a detailed report on the status of girl children in Orissa and highlights in particular the exploitation of female child, involvement of girls in sex trade and health hazards and discriminatory treatment. An in depth study of the sample villages are also very comprehensive and can be used as a reference at the time of framing of policies.

Chapter ten of the book deals with the issues of sibling abuse and sibling interactions within the family. But the concept of 'sibling abuse' is relatively new and untouched. The authors believe that this segment of abuse has almost consistently been ignored. Thus, the main aim of the study is

to explore the nature and different forms of abuse between siblings in urban families. The findings of the study conducted are a clear proof that sibling abuse persists in almost all families. And it was found that despite the fact that parental support was sought, the problem mostly remained unsolved. Acceptance by the respondents about the fact that the abuse affects their lives as adults is also intriguing. The study could have been further enhanced by capturing data on incest relationships in the family. Considered as a taboo, yet many girls are forced to have incest relationships with the male members of the family. Since it is a type which can also be associated with sibling abuse, it could have been included in detail.

Sunita Parmar's paper on Indian Girl Child draws attention to how Indian boys and girls are initiated into adult social world which is enabling for the boys and constricting for the girls. Throughout the lives of the girls, whether at homes, schools or televisions, the girls are ingrained with the society norms of not being ambitious, of being subordinates, of being care takers but not protectors. All of this becomes a part of their psyche. Perhaps a perspective that could be added here is, even if the mothers would want their daughters to break the mould; it would be difficult for them to find the necessary courage to support the girl child in breaking the typecast. Chapter 12 is a close reading of Mirinal Pande's 'Girls' which narrates how patriarchy encompasses the Indian society and its effects on inter-personal relationships even among women within the families. Mira Desai's paper on girl child and television advertising analyses the portrayal girls and women in the TV and its implications for girlhood in India. The author in this paper analyzes four television advertisements all showing communication between a daughter and the father.

Amrit Gangar's critique of the Indian cinema for the absence of the adolescent girls throughs many examples from northern & eastern culture and also from Hindi to regional cinema and draws apt comparisons with world cinema to unequivocally prove how Indian cinema has conveniently misused the cinematic license to edit this age with a single cut, and moved generations in a moment. His examples span generations (from the 1934, Naachwali to the, Kaaree made in the Millenium), genres (from the very arty to the completely commercial Satyam Shivam Sundaram) and even geographies (Bollywood, Bengal, South Indian and Global). He explains with deft examples of how even film makers who ostensibly seem to project a pro-feminine message and a girl child's

growing-up years, are in point of fact, only interested in exploring voyeuristic details for viewing pleasures of a mostly masochistic audience.

Shalini Mathur and Dr Rohini Kashikar Sudhakar have provided us with a case studies relating to 'Adolescent girls' in chapter numbers 15 and 17 respectively. Shalini Mathur's case studies are of the adolescent girls in protective homes run by the Government in North India in the early 90's. She provides detailed information about the working of such protective homes. These case studies reflect the ground realities about the protective homes. Rohini's case studies are related to the girls residing in two slums in Mumbai. The two case studies are very interesting. These are of Sarita and Kapi. Sarita left her drunkard husband and chose to be a single parent. Whereas, Kapi has rendered commendable services which was beneficial for the slum she resides in, even though she was faced by threat at every step she took. Eventually, she became a local political leader. The plight of the educated girls in the slums, as in case studies of Gauri and Chanda was really heart breaking because it shows that there is no recognition of young employed girls in slum areas. The author has provided us with wonderful discussions relating to boys and girls residing in slum areas which are required to improve their situation.

To solve the problems of adolescent girls as mentioned above there is need of an NGO intervention. This can be seen in chapter 16 that talks about Mukta foundation, which is working towards care and empowerment of vulnerable, destitute and violence affected girls. They are providing shelter to adolescent girls, give them support and strengthen their capabilities and work for their improvement in education, health, economical and social rights. To achieve these objectives they have done several activities. In the Chapter 19 Ruby Ojha has also talked about NGO intervention for empowerment of adolescent girls. A question may arise why there is a need for NGO intervention? To which the author says adolescence is a time of increased vulnerability and potential risk and therefore there is a need for preventive intervention.

Parul Sheth's narrative of how children helped in doing research work about the situation of children in village highlights how children were integrated into their research study of the working of Shaishav Balsena in Gujarat, not merely as objects of their research but as subjects to capture their own perspective of childhood. This paper provides the

details of the methodology used to do such an exercise. They conducted their research work in 42 villages and these villages were divided between the team. Each team would have two Balsenas, a male and a female along with four MSW students. They compile all the data's given by the children and make a district level report. Feedback was taken from the children who were working as Balsena and the MSW student.

Vijay Hiremath's analysis of various laws related to girl child provides a nuanced understanding and also a critique of legislations related to curbing of child marriage, juvenile justice prevention of immoral trafficking and the regulation of child labour from the perspectives of the well being of girls in India. The concluding Chapter takes us through the National

Symposium on Girls and Girlhood which was conducted on November 6-8, 2008 at SNTD Women's University, Mumbai organized by VACHA and P.G department of Economics. It is rare to find such a comprehensive publication on girls that is so perceptive, in-depth, multifaceted, rich in facts and figures and analytically sound. We strongly recommend this volume to all women's studies centres, women's rights organizations, NGOs and GOs, media and educational institutions and the UN system.

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IAWS Press Release

IAWS Expresses Concern over the Remarks of the Vice Chancellor Shri Vibhuti Narain Rai*

It is with shock and outrage that we note the remarks of Shri Vibhuti Narain Rai, the Vice Chancellor of MGAHV (Mahatma Gandhi Antar-rashtriya Hindi Vishwavidyalaya), Wardha concerning women writers in Hindi and the feminist discourse (*Women writers vying to be seen as prostitutes: V-C*, Indian Express, 1-8-2010, New Delhi Edition, p. 1). We are doubly shocked since he also happens to head this unique institution in Wardha which is the hosting partner of our 13th National Conference of the Indian Association of Women's Studies (IAWS), to be held in Wardha in January 2011. As feminists, Women's Studies scholars and members of the Executive Committee of the IAWS, we assume that he ought to have taken far greater care, even if he were to speak as a writer and critic himself, with his public remarks and differences with the themes that women writers in Hindi may have chosen to address. His remarks have only indicated his superficial understanding of the complexity of the feminist discourse in India today and the patriarchal challenges that women writers in India continue to face.

The feminist discourse today is one of the most powerful intellectual discourses that challenges structures and relationships of power, having the potential to develop entirely new ways of looking at society and politics. Paradoxically, it all began with the understanding that we would not be limited by the social construction of biological differences. Additionally, women and writers have reclaimed the body for themselves casting away the patriarchal stereotypes, notions and appellations that are used to control women's sexuality and freedom. Therefore, to say that for some writers women's liberation is reduced to 'bodily' liberation and a celebration of infidelity reflects ignorance at best and misogyny at worst. What individual creative writers chose to write about is their prerogative. Further as feminists we do not endorse the moral outrage that the mention of the word prostitute or infidelity seems to invoke. In many ways comments like this are symptomatic of the fear and anxiety regarding women's sexuality that men and society have always had.

The women's movement(s) in India as a political ferment deal with a large number of issues and constituencies having always had a close relationship to other liberation struggles. As an academic discipline, Women's Studies draws its strength from this politics and a deep intellectual heritage drawn from many disciplines, Hindi literature being one of them. The forthcoming National Conference of the IAWS at Wardha on the theme *Resisting Marginalizations, Challenging Hegemonies: Revisioning Gender Politics* will reflect this intellectual and political churning. We note with regret that Shri Rai has totally sidestepped this moment by reducing himself to crass comments that trivialize and mock rather than engage in serious debate.

* IAWS notes that Mr. Vibhuti Narain Rai, Vice-Chancellor of Mahatma Gandhi Antarrashtriya Hindi Vishwavidyalaya in Wardha, has issued an "unconditional apology" for using "inappropriate words which hurt the feelings of women writers". Source : The Hindu , 5/08/2010 (URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2010/08/05/>)

BOOK NEWS

Bina Das, A Memoir, Translated by Dhira Dhar

Bina Das

This short memoir of Bina Das, a well known revolutionary who took up arms against the colonizers, is a recount of the story of her involvement in the shooting of the British Governor of Bengal, Stanley Jackson, at the Annual Convocation Meeting of Calcutta University in 1932, her subsequent incarceration, and her growing involvement in politics. Despite her importance in Indian history, Bina Das disappeared from public view in later life and is rumored to have passed away in Rishikesh in early 1997. This account captures the early years of her life and gives insights into the context and history of the times that inspired Bina to take the path that she chose.

Zubaan, 2010, Hb, pp 128, INR 350, ISBN 9788189013646.

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Cornelia Sorabji : India's Pioneer Woman Lawyer, A Biography

Suparna Gooptu

This is a detailed biography of Cornelia Sorabji (1866-1954) the first woman to study law at Oxford, was among the early Indian women to practice at the Calcutta High Court. Appointed to a senior office under the British Indian government, Sorabji championed the cause of opening up the legal profession to women much before they were formally allowed to plead before the courts of law. Using rich and hitherto unused data and supported by insightful analysis, this detailed biography is a useful source for students and teachers of gender and cultural studies and South Asian history, as well as general readers.

Oxford University Press, 2010, Pb pp. INR.295, ISBN 9780198067924

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Memoirs of a Rolling Stone

Vina Majumdar

This memoir documents the life of one of the leading feminists of the contemporary Indian women's movement. Vina Mazumdar, was one of the key

researchers and writers of the landmark report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India, Towards Equality. An activist and institution builder, Vina Majumdar established the Centre for Women's Development in Delhi. In this memoir she documents her early life, her gradual politicization in a household of liberal, educated Bengalis, and her involvement in women's issues and the women's movement.

Zubaan, 2010, Hb, pp.250, INR 350, ISBN 9788189884529

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Sikhism and Women : History, Texts, and Experience

Doris R. Jakobsh and Eleanor Nesbitt eds.

As in other religions, the situation of Sikh women and their experiences are conditioned by multiple factors including identity, socio-economic status, and the political context. The collection focuses on three distinct themes, texts, conditions of Sikh women in India, and women in diasporic contexts dealing with women's lives and religious experiences. The essays discuss the way aesthetics and religion merges in the unitary experience of the sacred in Sikh tradition. They also explore gender in Sikh theology and society.

Oxford University Press, 2010, Hb, pp. , INR.795, ISBN 9780198060024.

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Land Tenure, Gender and Globalisation: Research and Analysis from Africa, Asia and Latin America

Dzodzi Tsikata and Pamela Golah (eds)

Drawing from field research in Cameroon, Ghana, Viet Nam and the Amazon forests of South America, this book explores the relationship between gender and land, revealing the workings of global capital and of people's responses to it. A central theme is the people's resistance to global forces, frequently through an insistence on the uniqueness of their livelihoods. The book addresses a gap in the literature on land tenure and gender in developing countries. It raises new questions about the process of globalisation, particularly about who the actors are (local people, the state, NGOs, multinational companies) and the shifting relations among them.

Zubaan, 2010, Pb, pp. 312, INR 395, ISBN 9878189884727

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Making Babies: Birth Markets and Assisted Reproductive Technologies in India

Sandhya Srinivasan (ed.)

Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ARTs) are usually publicised as miracle cure for infertility. However, the social and economic contexts in which these technologies are developed and promoted have a strong bearing on their use or misuse. Carefully packaged in the garb of modernity and choice, the efficacy of these technologies is difficult to challenge. On a deeper analysis, their costs seem to heavily outweigh the benefits. This book is an attempt to look into various aspects of ARTs their social, medical, legal and economic implications on women in particular, and society at large. The book comprises seven essays by eminent activists and academics, each exploring a specific aspect of ART.

Zubaan, 2010, Hb, pp 200, INR 395, ISBN 9788189884703

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Women in Malayalam Cinema: Naturalising Gender Hierarchies

Meena T. Pillai ed.

This book focuses on woman-cinema interface, as depicted in a century of Malayalam cinema and addresses a wide range of themes crucial for a nuanced understanding of Malayalam film culture-gender stereotyping, marriage and family, the aftermaths of matriliney, caste and gender relations, hegemonic patriarchy, female friendships and soft porn. Deconstructing patriarchal dominance in Malayalam cinema, mainstream and avant garde, this collection elucidates how films offer stereotypical images of women conforming to subordination. This volume, has diverse contributions from litterateurs, film critics and screenwriters.

Permanent Black, 2010, Hb, pp 252, INR 595, ISBN 978-81-250-3865-8

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Missing Half the Story: Journalism as if Gender Matters

Kalpana Sharma, ed.

This book, edited and written by journalists, for journalists and the lay public interested in media, raises a range of questions related to the invisibility of gender in media reportage. Through examples from the media,

and from their own experience, the contributors explain the concept of gender-sensitive journalism and look at a series of subjects that journalists have to cover - sexual assault, environment, development, business, politics, health, disasters, and conflict - and set out a simple way of integrating a gendered lens into day-to-day journalism.

Zubaan, 2010, pb, pp 304, INR 395, ISBN 9788189884833

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The Peripheral Centre: Voices from India's Northeast

Preeti Gill, ed.

The arrest and the subsequent killing of Thangjam Manorama by the Assam Rifles in July 2004 in Manipur provided an impetus to this collection of essays written mainly by writers from the Northeast and also by other academicians and activists who are deeply concerned with issues that confronted the people of Northeast. Essays in this book not only talk about the pressures, the insecurities, the uncertainties confronting them in an area that has been facing low intensity warfare for decades, but also questions issues of nation, identity, of what makes the people of the Northeast so alienated from the 'mainstream'.

Zubaan, 2010, HB, pp 400, INR 595, ISBN 9788189013608

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The Westward Traveller (Translated from the original Bengali Paschimjatriki)

Translated by Durgabati Ghose and Somdatta Mandal.

In 1932, Durgabati Ghose, an upper middle-class Bengali woman accompanied her husband on a trip across Europe. The Westward Traveller (originally Paschimjatriki) is a depiction of Europe in colonial times by an upper middle-class Bengali woman from her four-month long sojourn. This travelogue not only emphasizes the sense of place, space and landscape, but also an aesthetic, intrinsic appreciation of every destination. The writing comes alive in the author's everyday interactions with ordinary people, be they fellow travellers or hotel owners or even beggars. Focusing on an accurate description of the 'real world', she is always concerned with verisimilitude.

Permanent Black, 2010, Pb, pp. 128, INR, 195, ISBN 978-81-250-3991-4

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IAWS Newsletter August 2010



THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES

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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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