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NEWSLETTER

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EDITORIAL DESK



This issue of the newsletter carries the report of the XV National Conference of Indian Association of Women's Studies (IAWS) on 'Women in a Changing World: Restructured Inequalities, Countercurrents and Sites of Resistance' held in Chennai from 22nd to 25th January.

The conference was held in extremely politically charged times. Tamil Nadu in general, and the Marina beach in Chennai in particular, which was right opposite the venue of the conference, saw wide-spread agitations against the banning of Jallikattu. The conference addressed most contemporary issues such as citizenship, caste, politics of marginalization and the complexities involved in the construction of community identity. Themes also looked at the teaching of women's studies and the possibilities and limitations of the Women's Studies classroom in a changing context. Through the plenary sessions, the world of work, labour and construction of gender inequalities was explored in the Indian as well as the South Asian context, with a specific focus on informal/unorganized labour. Another plenary carrying forward some of these issues looked at the question of social security. Since the conference was held in Tamil Nadu one plenary addressed the complexities of feminist politics in the region. A Round Table on Women's Studies explored questions of marginality of the field of Women's Studies within institutions of higher education, as well as the possibilities of the marginal location in producing oppositional knowledges. Delivering the Madhuriben Shah Memorial Lecture, Aruna Roy argued for the importance of speaking the truth to those in power in the current political circumstances. Another session celebrated 35 years of the formation of IAWS, and felicitated its past office bearers. The Annual General Body Meeting of the IAWS was also held, wherein the General Secretary presented a report of the activities in the last three years, while the Treasurer placed the Accounts, both of which were approved.

We hope that readers and especially those who missed the Conference will be able to get an overview of all these exciting and intellectually stimulating conversations. We thank all sub-theme coordinators for sending the reports for the newsletter.

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REPORT OF THE IAWS CONFERENCE IN CHENNAI INAUGURAL SESSION AND FIRST PLENARY

The inaugural session of the 15th National Conference of the Indian Association of Women's Studies (IAWS) began with an ode to Mother Tamil. M. Sreenivasan, Criminology Department, University of Madras welcomed the delegates on behalf of the University. The chairperson of the inaugural session Yashoda Shanmugasundaram hoped that the conference would debate the possibilities of synergies between analysis and action, advocacy, activism and academics. She remarked on how happy she was to see the University finally have a Women's Studies Centre and it hosting a national conference. Indrani Mazumdar underlined the paradoxes and complexities of volatile and difficult contemporary times and how the sites of resistance have multiplied. She pointed out particularly to the leadership and visibility of young women in movements happening on different campuses across the country, but also the uneasiness in gender relations on campus. Similarly, she pointed out how affirmative action has opened doors for marginalized sections, but this has also led to new kinds of hostility and violence against them. The neoliberal context, which makes collegial, social life difficult is on the backdrop of these developments. She hoped that the Conference would once again be a site for thinking and debating. M.S. Swaminathan in his inaugural address took a review of women in these times, with a focus on the rural, agrarian sector. Ritu Dewan in her Presidential address drew attention to the Jallikattu agitations, demonetization and growing restrictions on individual choices and spaces. She argued for a need to therefore renew and revitalize the activist-academic linkages in this context. Bharati Harishankar, Women's Studies Centre, University of Madras outlined the programme and the sub-themes to follow over the space of the conference. N. Manimekalai rendered the Vote of Thanks.

Delivering the Madhuri Shah Memorial Lecture, Aruna Roy of the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sanghatan (MKSS) shared inspiring stories of battles and struggles against injustice fought by the most oppressed women and raised the important and pertinent question about the massive silence and inaction on part of movements and individuals in a context where as she put it, "democracy was losing out". She took a case of demonetization and its impact and silence on it and raised question that why we are not protesting. She referred to Una/ Rohith Vemula and other incidents to argue that this is a new kind of State, where there is justification by the state for violence against Dalits/minorities, it is not ashamed of the use of force, it is oppressive in its policies and programmes, and spies on its own citizens. She argued that there is an urgent need to unite in these circumstances. She called upon all those present to write/talk/mobilize and send a clear message to the powers-that-be that we do not agree with your policies. She further urged for a symbiotic link between theory and action and urged that our solidarities have to be forged on the streets. She also underlined that we need to revitalize ourselves and use cultural symbols and resources in our fight. She aptly argued, "to sustain activism, we need culture, discourse and theory". She ended by saying that we need to speak truth to power, to question publicly without fear. We need to speak truth to power, as women are the most powerful group, in solidarity with others, who can bring equality and democracy back in the country, she concluded.

In the first plenary on the theme of the conference, Nirmala Banerjee drew attention to the world of work and the losing battle women are fighting in that space. She underlined how women were the worst sufferers of the spectre of jobless growth and how women suffer because of a skill deficiency, stressing the importance of skill-building. She urged for the need to introduce technology wherever possible and not glorify the work women do by hand. Utsa Patnaik argued that we need to see demonetization as an attack on the civil and constitutional rights and drew attention to the nature of contemporary fascism which will inflict slow but sure death on small producers and traders and urged that unity was the need of the hour. Gabriele Dietrich drew attention to how the Jallikattu agitation was a symptom of the crisis in agriculture and also urged for a joint struggle. Faizan Mustafa drew attention to the recent judgements by courts which signal a retreat from the more constitutional, progressive readings. He argued that gender justice and drew attention to the complexities of the issue of uniform civil code and Muslim women's demands around the same.

PLENARY ON CASTE AND GENDER IN TAMILNADU

The plenary began with V. Geetha who argued that the Jallikattu protest was a protest against the unitary Indian State, demanding for the rights of the local, regional community to decide. She however pointed out that we need to see that these demands are being presented in the form of Tamil nationalism, identity and pride. She underlined that paying attention to who are protesting, will tell us the story of the changes which have taken place in Tamil Nadu over the last 30-40 years. She said that the protestors were students from private colleges, IT professionals, far left groups, Tamil nationalist groups as well as environmentalist groups etc. She argued that this group could be described as an aspirational class comprising largely members of the backward and most backward castes, who may be socially-economically-culturally backward but dominant in terms of numbers and local caste relations like the Vanniars/ Gounders/Thevars. She argued that these castes have a sense of self, power and ability to humiliate and punish dalits, which must be kept in mind. While within the caste system, they have been short changed in terms of cultural capital, sometimes not having access to economic resources; their sense of self is also hinged on showing dalits their place. So many of the protesters were actively engaged in anti -dalit practices especially when dalits access education, modern resources and jobs. The mobility of these castes has largely been the mobility of the men. Women of these caste are accessing education and are advantaged than their mothers and grandmothers; but what does this education mean in terms of their mobility, besides being a fit wife for an urban modern husband. Women's mobility is faced with many forms of policing as well. On the other hand, she argued that we are seeing women from these communities using their education and mobility to get into relationship with men from other castes, especially dalits. Irrespective the nature of the relationship (love, friendship) lot of policing, surveillance and violence happens, which typically targets dalit men, killing them.

She further argued that among upper caste women, there is a huge return of conventional ideas of feminine and of not questioning caste privilege. Since 1990s, more upper caste women invest in politics of self-upliftment and individuated self actualization, rather than feminism. She said that it is time to ask what happened to progressive political traditions of the state in the course of time? She argued that we must account for how the legacy of Periyar's thoughts and ideas unfolded and how dominant castes like Vanniars/ Gounders/Thevars managed to get into politics and access bureaucratic power which they exercise with impunity. They find it hard to face dalit assertion. So the dalit critique of Periyar's legacy is angry and negative.

However, some positive things are also taking place, there is growing assertion of dalits and the dalit sphere is very vibrant, there is a emergence of assertive dalit publics. She further argued that feminist movements need to engage with dalit movements.

Valentina from AIDWA speaking in this session, argued that women are oppressed in terms of class, caste and gender, however, what is complex is that women are both victims and perpetrators. She stated that their experience showed that women in power work against other women's interest and along caste lines. She gave several instances of how even cases of violence against women are not registered unless groups push for action to be initiated. She argued that phenomenon like honour killings, violence against women and dalits continued unabated. The violence against dalit bodies and property sends out a strong signal that dalits have no right to autonomy, self-respect and if they dare to lead to such a life they would be attacked and killed. She shared how AIDWA has been taking up these cases and assisting survivors.

She further stated that caste organisations have congealed into caste parties, all of which are extremely violent. Moreover these kinds of caste political parties are restricting girls from using cell phones and gadgets and controlling their mobility. In this context very little head way could be made against such violence; unless there is state guarantee to such women thorough adherence of law. She proposed that IAWS along with other women's groups should push the state for enforcing protective mechanisms for cross-caste marriages. She concluded by saying that gender and caste need to be consistently addressed together in the current moment of Hindutva.

Vincent Kathir's EVIDENCE organisation has documented crimes related to honour for the last few years. He stated that in the last year itself, 160 deaths have occurred only due to violence against people who have married across castes, 80% of them were females and from non-dalit families, 20% were males, mostly from dalit families. The caste men believe that female body carries the caste purity and to retain caste purity, women have to marry within the caste, else fathers, brothers, caste groups kill the lover from dalit community. There is a range of honor crimes such as honor tortures. This is anchored in what people believe to be true about their lives, the truth is something their religion provides them; in particular Hindutva, its ascendance furthers the problem as the religious base of the caste system can't be challenged. He also stated that it is very hard to get the convictions in honor killings- because the honor killing accused escape technically as they burn the bodies, leaving no evidence or pass it as suicide.

When dalits tend to assert themselves then they had to face violence. He stated that there was a very different value system nurtured in dalit families which came from the progressive thoughts that Ambedkar, Periyar or Marx proposed. He shared incidences from his own life to underline how he leant to fight caste stigma by loudly asserting one's identity and argued how asserting dalitness can't be counted as an assertion of caste but it is an assertion self, which is willing to do away with caste and wishes to transcend caste. He argued that the work that needs to be done towards annihilation of caste is two pronged –

1. Remind caste Hindus how dishonorable they are and make them feel ashamed of their caste identities and
2. To persuade dalits that there is a path of progress they own up and follow.

Beside there is a role for love and marriages. He proposed the need for meeting to bridge the gap between academia and activism in order to address these issues holistically.

THE JOINT IAWS-ISLE PANEL ON SOCIAL SECURITY AND INFORMALISATION OF LABOUR

The Joint panel was chaired by Igor Bosco of the ILO. Kicking off the panel, he asked the panelists to highlight how neoliberal policies have an impact on workers' life, what is happening with informality, what are the prospects for workers at this juncture?

Ravi Srivastava in his presentation reviewed the evolution of Social Security measures and highlighted the tensions within it, namely how it centres on paid and formal work and fall in incomes due to contingencies as well as inadequate incomes. However he argued that it needs to be considered as one among several important human rights, mainly to address consequences of fall in incomes of workers due to unemployment, accidents, ill-health, retirement, or maternity episodes. The GC (19) on Gender Equality has made several recommendations for the equalization of social security for men and women. He further clarified the concept of social protection which encompasses the deprivations and vulnerabilities of citizens and builds on a life cycle approach. Social security sees removal of want and vulnerabilities from the prism of paid work (incomes) whereas social protection sees these from the prism of a differentiated citizenry, giving priority to the most vulnerable sections first. He argued that the consequences of following a SP approach are that issues of redistribution and power relations can be cognizable and there is a greater inbuilt emphasis on non-contributory programmes, which need to be at the core of a gendered approach. He showed how Social protection can be seen as a Human right. He further detailed the various approaches to the question of social security in India and critically looked at the proposed SPF architecture in India.

Alakh Sharma stated that internationally the notion of social protection is extended largely due to informalisation of labour and technological changes. Global production network is increasing hugely in the world, and nearly 20 % of the workers in the world are in this Global Production

Network. So who will provide the social security and social protections, has emerged as an international concern. He further stated that we cannot talk of social protection as confined to paid work anymore, unpaid, home based etc which is increasing globally should also be covered. India is also going to enter a phase of other developed countries are in. Indian labour market has only 4% open employment. Informalisation as a goal might be increasing but informal sector has decreased. Labour force participation of women in India is low, one of the lowest in the world. He stated that there is a need of several of the programmes in the country to provide one floor under themes health, education etc. The need of a basic income should be provided.

Geetha argued that since women workers are important aspect within labour economies, we must pay attention to them. She further stated that informalisation is already in and it is closely related to corruption. There is a new system of time-specified bondage that has emerged. There is a chunk of migrant labourers who are bonded. The migrant labour today contributes a sizeable population of women's labour. Child labour is part of migrant labour.

She further argued that welfare board was brought in to address all contingencies, though there are 34 such boards existing, only one of them has any funds. The next hurdle in this process is the GST bill, which limits the collection of CESS, which would fund welfare boards. She asked if the industry or contractor was not responsible for social security measures? There is no continuous employee-employer relationship. Hence CESS was important. Kerala has an example of having many welfare boards with each welfare board collecting the CESS. With the GST it will be difficult for them to continue. This is the crisis.

She also drew attention to loss of employment due to demonitisation, urging that some unemployment allowance should be given to workers. She called for a spirited struggle since all women workers educated or uneducated, formal or informal have a right to social security.

Chandan spoke on informal Workers' Quest for State-promised Social Security. He took an overview of the demands of the various workers' movements and struggles for social protection and did a cost-benefit analysis. He also showed through statistical and economic analysis how the state could make these funds available. For instance he showed that for a particular scheme if the total requirement was Rs. 3.5 lakh crores, which is around 2.3 percent of the GDP in 2016-17, it could be easily covered if even a small percentage of exemptions to corporates are waived off. Padma Sudershan stated that there is a shift away from thinking the work space as site of social security, and we need to look at the home as a site of work. It has become more difficult to separate development from social security. So we need out of the box conceptualization of social security schemes.

Bharati stated that there were already barriers for women to access the social security systems, which have been doubled by globalisation. Women are the invisible workers when it comes to family labour units. All these works lack not only social protection but also basic human rights. There are two constraints namely access constraints and design constraints. She called for critical gender analysis of social protection schemes. For example she stated that the work span of women is shorter, so they should have earlier access to social security. Also the construction of creche is tied to number of women workers and not men. Similarly with child care schemes. Such gender nuances are needed in social protection. The panel concluded that there is need for universal entitlements and the notion of austerity limits it.

SOUTH ASIA PLENARY ON CHANGING CONTOURS OF PAID AND UNPAID WORK BY WOMEN IN 21st CENTURY SOUTH ASIA

The chairs for the plenary, Vanita Mukherjee and Subhalakshmi Nandi began the session by laying the framework for the panel. They delineated the idea of how South Asia is a diverse region and there exist different levels of economic and social developments, yet common characteristics of women's work in the region emerge where women are largely concentrated in unpaid occupation and activities which are generally counted outside the purview of the GDP, as well as the declines in labour force participation and increased participation in unpaid activities by women. The introduction also highlighted the imperative to establish what kind of activities women are involved in with respect to both paid and unpaid/care work and explore factors pushing women's withdrawal from paid work and state support for care work.

Sepali Kottegoda touched upon the themes of women's unpaid care work in the context of Sri Lanka. Sepali's presentation focused on the need to recognize and enumerate care work and burden of women in their gendered roles as wives, mothers and daughters. She talked about how care is conflated with notions of altruism and unselfishness, sacrifice rooted in the family and not with work. She underlined the challenges that economists, policy makers are facing is the exclusion of this unpaid care work from estimates of a country's GDP. She argued that it is the gender inequality in the unpaid care work that is the missing link. She called for giving unpaid care work social value, since it is not recognized as either labor or considered important enough to be added in national income statistics. Sepali also talked about the need to include unpaid care work into sustainable development goals in terms of development and global policy.

Bina Pandey presenting on Nepal laid out the statistical figures of participation of women in the work force. Her major focus was on women's labor force participation and vulnerable working conditions. She drew comparison from 2001 to 2011 and underlined the positive changes in ownership patterns and inheritance rights post 2006. She took an overview of the changing work patterns of women workers. She also underlined how the labor policy of Nepal does not discriminate on basis of gender and how every laborer has the right to practice dignified work with safe working conditions and can form trade unions. She further argued that Nepal's Constitution recognizes paid and unpaid, formal and informal sector laborers as workers as well. She also talked about the Trade Union Act where workers from both formal and informal sectors as well as self employed workers have the power to organize and form unions and can join social security schemes.

She also underlined the challenges ahead which include ensuring constitutional rights and expansion of social protection with the coverage of more women from informal and unpaid sector. She urged for strengthening of networks and engaging with research and study.

Rajni Palriwala and N. Neetha in their joint presentation established the links between unpaid care work and labor markets within the political economy of India. Palriwala laid out the context and concerns about women's employment within women's movement which was further taken up by women's studies. She elaborated upon the political economy of neoliberal globalized India with its expansion and intensification of growth but also increasing economic inequalities along with the rise in right wing fundamentalism. With this as the backdrop, they highlighted a few features of changing contours of work and resistances. Neetha talked about the broad statistical data gathered from NSSO which shows that women's work participation in India are amongst the lowest in the world. She elaborated that the decline has largely been in principle status employment with the general visibility of educated women in white collar employment in expanded IT or service sectors. She further argued that for rural women there has been dramatic fall in Work Participation Rate and for urban women it has been stagnant. Giving an idea of the broad sectoral picture, she touched upon participation of women in agriculture and its linkages with farmers' suicide and increase in the number of women in construction and manufacturing services. They argued for revisiting the nature and sites for women's labor in both operative and constitutive terms. They concluded by

highlighting how growth areas of paid work by women are akin to care work that has long been seen as their responsibility and that devaluation of care work means continued low wages drawn by women. Rajni and Neetha talk about the paradoxical element of commodification of care work that allows for continuance of gendered division of labour within the home, without any redistribution. They urged for a need to have intensive qualitative studies of changing strategies and complexities of paid and unpaid work and of the collective fight for the rights, security and recognition of scheme worker. They underlined that wage workers and domestic workers show the direction of resistance where they fight as women and as citizens based on their unpaid and paid care work.

In conclusion the presentation from Sri Lanka focused on unpaid care work, and questions of valuation and policy attention in context of sustainable development goals, while speaker from Nepal underlined the broad linkages between how governance and leadership can inform and influence policies around work, while the Indian experience highlights the question of women's unpaid work and links between unpaid care work and labor market.

ROUND TABLE ON WOMEN'S STUDIES

The round-table on Women's Studies was jointly organized by Mini Sukumar and Anagha Tambe. Introducing why the round-table, Anagha drew attention to the unprecedented expansion of the teaching programmes in Women's Studies, and the need therefore to map and understand this new moment. She pointed out that at this juncture it is important to map the new challenges and possibilities as the number of Women's Studies Centres is expanding but they remain at the margins in the university structures, the expansion has been in terms of teaching programmes thus important to mark footprints of the disciplines and how they shape trajectory of centres in different locations, new students who are entering women's studies in a context where it is hypervisibility rather than invisibility of women, who are pushing for the democratization of institutions of Higher education, also it is important to look at changing relationship between Women's Studies and women's movement; Therefore, this round-table has individuals working in diverse locations to map the diversity of the practices in doing Women's Studies.

Samita Sen, who was chairing the session pointed out that the institutional context of Women's Studies in the last few years has meant a point of crisis but also a moment of possibilities, where some of the older questions persist, and new crisis have come up.

Smita Patil speaking about the current conjecture pointed out that we need to critically examine how women's studies has looked at caste and the neoliberal economy as well as take note of how the state is responding to policy. She underlined the need to look at the question of gender equality and social mobility in the context of caste on the backdrop of neoliberal capitalism. Also there is a need to root our theory and practice to oppose these changing forms of Brahmanical patriarchy and how do we look at the idea of justice. At the same time the need to examine whether movements of gender look at the question of caste and whether the social location of the academic and activist leadership leads to inertia. She pointed out how the rule of law was manipulated in cases like Khairlanji to Kopardi by the powerful caste-based political class. She argued that the women's movement does not question Brahmanical patriarchy and caste and to avoid fragments it needs to accept the leadership of Dalit feminists, diverse voices and theoretical frameworks under the rubric of women's studies. She saw social media as an important forum for articulation by Dalits/ Adivasis but lamented the hierarchy between popular blogs and academic publications and how this hierarchy denies space to Dalits. She ended by calling for an easy flow between theorization and practice.

Asha Achutan drew on her personal biography to critically look at the space of women's studies in two contexts, namely her experience as a student in the WSC at Jadavpur University and now as faculty at the WSC in TISS, Mumbai. She argued that the urgent task for women's studies is to describe what is meant by terms like institutionalization and revisit its meaning in contemporary times. She said that we cannot talk of W.S without talking of the borders, entrants and practitioners

and therefore she would be tracing her journey, while marking the privileges of her location, which make the journey possible, while also tracing patterns and layers of power that can be inferred from this individual narrative. For her, the space, the political milieu, not just in terms of the political party, but of the city and the political interlocutors is constitutive of the experience of Women's Studies. She traced her journey as a young woman in and out of left organizations in Bengal, a PG location in women's studies with the figure of the male Marxist as the political interlocutor and the layers of power therein, where women's studies was a relatively porous, non-institutionalized, non-disciplinary space. Today, as a teacher she experiences Women's Studies as having far more visible borders, but also with greater diversity leading to the under-cutting of some dominant locations of feminism and the shift is towards more situated knowledges, greater reflexivity of practitioners about their social location and its link with knowledge. She argued that for her location in TISS, the context was of privatization and proliferation of courses in the institute, yet at odds with the state, but still as a deemed university at the top of the pyramid in the hierarchy of institutions of Higher education and therefore her experiences might not be relatable in other contexts. She therefore underlines that if we do thick descriptions of our different experiences and make sense in the context of other experiences, we might be able to define and revisit women's studies for our times.

Suneetha Rani drawing from her experiences of UG/PG teaching and research in women's studies argued that as a teacher of English when she took gender as a category in classroom and research, it led to a questioning of the expertise and skills of the teacher, as if one did gender because one was not comfortable/ confident about the 'core' English curriculum. Another challenge is how do we translate women's movement at the academic level and respond to challenge by other disciplines that is Women's studies academic enough. Thus challenge is how do we balance the demands of the movement and of the academics and the challenge of inter-disciplinarity and how do we bring in intersecting ideologies therein. She raised the question of the autonomy of centres and the way they are perceived by administrators in Higher education institutions. The other challenges highlighted by her were the increasing feeling that students have about the irrelevance of the curriculum to their life and experiences and how do we as teachers work through these perceptions and the need to have more ideological interactions with the other fields like Dalit Studies to prevent women's studies from seeing women in exclusionary ways.

Mary John spoke about how we seem to have come a full circle. If women's studies began with this question of whether it is a perspective/ intervention or a discipline and has always marked it as a perspective, but at the present moment, undoubtedly it is a discipline. The other important point that she pointed out was that the moment of development has been in dark times. The third point that she stressed was that the field of women's studies is not limited to the UGC sponsored WSCs and is much beyond it. She also pointed out that while it is important that there be synergies between the movement and the discipline acknowledgment needs to be mutual. She also argued that thanks to the earlier UGC Standing Committee on Women's Studies most WSCs had a massive influx of funds since the 11th Plan making institutional expansion possible, with the end of the twelfth plan nearing, WSCs are staring into an abyss. According to John, women's studies as a field is more privileged amongst marginalized groups, like Dalit Studies therefore while thinking about the future of the WSC's we need to think about them also. At the same time we need to place anxieties about WSC's in the context of the other social sciences/ humanities in general, because its future is dependent on them. She ended by underlining that WSCs with their long history of dealing with marginalization and instability within the university structure can lead the way.

N. Manimekhalai spoke about her own experiences of doing Women's Studies and also put forth the resolutions of the regional association of women's studies. She pointed out to the issue of the uncertainty of WSC's in terms of continuity of staff and of funding, need to address staff insecurity, sanctioning of proposals for upgradation of centres, fill the already sanctioned posts in WSC's, get concurrence for posts and for the long term sustainability of centres. She has suggested that efforts need to be made to stabilise women's studies by making budgetary provisions for gender sensitization programmes, making women's studies or gender studies mandatory in schools and preference need to be given to women's studies graduates in state jobs related to women.

Kadambari talked about her transition from Director of Women's Studies to the Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD) as a transition from the problem of penury to the problem of plenty. She shared her agony about where to take women's studies and the challenge of how to work with all these constraints.

Samita Sen in her comments, remarked that women's studies has been for long grappling with the problem of funding but in the contemporary moment W.S needs to grapple with the question of social location of practitioners and of institutionalization. She also pointed out that we cannot escape the anxiety of the disciplinary nature of our formation, despite having disciplinary foundations in place. She also pointed out that WSCs on the one hand and the IAWS on the other have very different relationships with the state, with the centres having an overwhelming dependence on the state for their existence.

The discussion was centred around the instability of the WSCs its dependence on state funds, on the frictions of inter-disciplinarity and difficulties in continuing the centre. Questions were also raised about students from marginalized communities coming into Women's Studies and the overwhelmingly western syllabus and readings of the discipline and the question of relevance and how do we address questions of caste/ gender politics in Higher Education in general and Women's Studies in particular.

Samita Sen in winding up the session responded that the larger question is crisis in the university system and at this critical conjecture where we cannot see the problems of women's studies in isolation we need to place it in what is happening in the public university as a whole in India and across the world.

REPORTS OF THE SUB-THEMES

SUB-THEME 1

Women's Work and Employment

Coordinators : Neetha N. and Praveena Kodoth

There was an overwhelming response to the subtheme as we have received 130 abstracts. Only 53 were slated for presentation, 37 presented their papers and the rest of the paper writers participated in the discussion. The panel discussion of experts was organized at the beginning of the subtheme.

One of the core issues raised in the panel discussion was how to make sense of the crisis in women's employment, evident in the declining work participation rates over the past decade. However there is a variation across regions which need to be located and analyzed in the historical contexts and political economies of the Indian states. This analysis was taken further by set of papers that examined a) state level characteristics in women's work which showed that the relatively high urban work participation in poor quality work in Kerala and more girl children in wage work in West Bengal b) village studies that threw light on how women's choices of work are structured by constraints of caste and gender norms, urban governance / spatiality and larger macro policy issues. Sectoral analysis using macro data showed that number of women employed in manufacturing unit is increasing owing to expansion in employment in textile and garments.

A number of papers examined issues related to women's unpaid work and inter-linkages between paid and unpaid work. The questions of visibility, recognition and valuation of women's work were highlighted to have continued to be central in addressing the links between paid, unpaid work and peripheral work. The problem of unpaid work contribution by adolescent wives was taken up in the context of West Bengal. Marriage migration of women, the most prominent reason for migration according to the major national data sources, came up for review as scholars examined the sectors of paid work that women migrants were engaged in at the destination, irrespective of the reason given for migration. Papers presented substantiated the existing understanding that time, mobility

and scarcity of resources are important structuring features of women's work choices which may lead to them being relegated to unpaid domestic work. Women themselves also underlined the importance of domestic work as an acceptable form of work.

Few papers also documented the growing female migration from rural areas either as seasonal workers in agriculture or as informal sector workers in urban areas. Distress migration was identified as an important channel of workers in domestic service, construction and also in spinning and garment industries. The often debated relationship between migration, employment and empowerment was taken up for analysis in the context of women workers in the mall as retail workers, security guards or other workers. Papers also dealt with the diversity of wage and working arrangements in association with intermediaries who are involved in matching demand and supply of workers, the absence of social security and absence of / inability to benefit from regulations. Women's entry into and persistence with poorly paid teaching and as beauticians was understood as part of their negotiations with their social work and the effort to leverage respect through work.

Papers examined women's paid work in two broad categories, feminized work and other forms of work. Multiple factors were at work in structuring women's paid work in feminized sectors such as regulation and employed in organized sector as regular or informal workers. In the case of paid domestic workers regulations are still patchy, dependence is on the market and local informal price setting mechanisms which made bargaining difficult

Dealing with forms of work in which women's entry was previously restricted and into which they are now making their way, there were papers that addressed the routine forms of gendering encountered by a professional elite among women in legal services and consultancy and sought to probe why women's presence is sparse at the higher levels. Multiple hierarchies, gender and caste being the most critical axes, were analyzed in the context of Hindi language print journalism to show that women's lack of time owing to a presumed greater commitment to social reproduction was naturalized and used to rationalize their relegation to 'soft beats'. Caste based reservation in employment are also found to be sites of patriarchal outcomes with few women teachers in reserved posts for OBCs across public universities. The idea of equality was also critically analyzed in one of the papers in the context of 'development' sector, where gender and socio-economic differences are found to be reproduced.

A set of papers examined the ongoing skill development initiatives in 'hard skill' segments in terms of the potential for and women's experience of employment and empowerment. Entrepreneurship of women too was discussed in terms of government policy, the prospects for empowerment and the scale of operation and property rights were important concerns.

One of the important issues discussed was women's negotiation power especially when they were in low paid work how it is significant when they have to deal with stigma attached to a particular form of work or from perceptions related to specific communities. It was discussed in the context of Anglo Indian teachers who are in respected profession but cannot negotiate with management for payment as also how migrated Bangladeshi women domestic workers confronted the social stigma of sexual exploitation by employers and recruiting agents.

Notable 'spontaneous' efforts by women in the private sector to mobilize and demand their rights to fair working conditions was also captured by few papers. This discussion underlined the ambiguous, positioning of the conventional trade unions in relation to women workers in sectors such as retail and new manufacturing occupations as well as the presence of NGOs offering welfare services in absence of trade unions. The specific example of anganwadi workers highlighted the possibility of all women trade unions. Few papers also captured the diversified recruitment and control strategies. Discussion also showed the growing importance of recruitment and labour control using social forms of power such as through the church or through kin based arrangements thus did not formally have formal relation with the company.

SUB-THEME 2

Inevitability of Law and Impossibility of Law: Resistance and Recognition

Coordinators: Rukmini Sen and Saptarshi Mandal

The sub theme 'Inevitability of Law and Impossibility of Law: Resistance and Recognition' discussed the complex nature of feminist engagement with law: law as a site of resistance as well as despair, law as both a site of victory as well as violence for women/in women's lives. This sub theme had received 44 abstracts, from which 32 were selected and finally twenty papers were presented. In addition, there was a curated panel and a roundtable. There were certain constant threads in each of the sessions in this sub-theme:

- i) Re-imagining of the domestic space beyond the married monogamous procreative kinship
- ii) Shift beyond the language of violence to unravel and comprehend the complexity around consent in adult intimate relationships
- iii) Challenging the fixed notions of identity and fore-grounding fluidities in the lived experiences

In the first session 'Ethnography, Evidence and the Working of the law', one paper discussed the fuzzy zone between 'abduction' and 'rape' in what is usually promise to marry cases. Another looked at the working of anti sexual harassment legislation of 2013. A paper which compared the anti sexual harassment policies of various Delhi based universities argued about the pedagogical transformative role of law in institutions of higher education. There was a paper focusing on mahilapanchayats and how that potentially acts as a site of alternative dispute resolution in domestic violence cases.

The second session 'From Violence to Rights' had papers representing empirical work from Goa and the hurdles that women subjected to sexual violence face in accessing the different layers of the criminal justice system. Another paper examined the complexities around 'women as witches', the scope and limits of special laws on 'witch-hunting' and can it respond to public humiliation or 'community shaming' of women? The third paper also pointed towards the paradoxes around the workings of a separate and special law on Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, in Mumbai, especially in relation to consensual adolescent sexual relationships (with the increase in age of consent to 18), their rights over contraception and abortion as well as emotional distress that these adolescent girls experience.

The third invited session was on 'Re-visiting the Women's Question(s) in the Contemporary moment' had four papers. Kalpana Kannabiran in her presentation posed an epistemological question to the discipline of sociology about whether the categories of endogamy and exogamy were ever really neat? If in the 'idea of the family', the analytical entry point is inter-marriage (following Ambedkar) then how does that destabilize sociologically held notions of kinship? Samita Sen in her paper discussed two historical legislative efforts around women and labour—regulating women in the workplace and dealing with wives and mothers as workers. Krishna Menon's paper elaborated the feminist theorizations of the state while elaborating on child care leaves of the Government of India, women's work participation in times of globalization and how the militaristic nature of the Indian state impacts women's lives. Saumya Uma's paper discussed the contemporary attempts towards women's access to places of religious worship through Haji Ali, Shani Shingnapur and Sabarimala cases all of which compel the judiciary to engage with the dichotomies between constitutional freedoms guaranteed to women and community constraints on women's lives.

The fourth session was on 'Citizenship and Identities'. In it there was a paper which questioned the universal rights discourse; which seem to be eliminating differences among women. Another paper focused on the complexity as well as inadequacies of the legal identification of the category 'transgender', and how by creating an identity the legal also excludes many people with non-

conforming gender identities. Next paper took us to the customary patriarchal practices of Naga society and the dichotomies existing between constitutional provisions upholding rights about practicing customary laws and women's equality before law. The other has paper argued that although the constitution guarantees non-discrimination on the basis of both sex and caste. Exploring the debates around reservation within reservation and United States cases dealing with whether black women constitute a class this paper explored the complicated debates on representation based on multiple lived identities especially exclusion of dalit women. Last paper has discussed hijras, devadasis and bar dancers traced a genealogy of the discourses around sexuality, 'obscenity' and labour and the state's endeavour to subject formation, where law emerges as a discursive site.

The fifth session on '(Il)-legitimacies and Intimacies' had four papers raising questions around care, pleasure, cohabitation and violence. First paper looked at parenting by problematizing biologised notions dominating maternity leave and child-care leaves. The paper argued how the state discouraged father's care-giving as well as legitimizes biological motherhood despite the fact that assistive reproductive technologies destabilize parental-child relationships. Another paper drew our attention to the complexities as well as the need to articulate desire and pleasure as opposed to the feminist movements' constant emphasis on violence and victimization of women. By looking at Besharmi Morcha, Pink Chaddhi campaign and Why Loiter the paper talks about disjunctures that exist in the feminist movement along generational and political lines. Next paper has discussed how live-in relationships are coming within the judicial ambit and thereby pushing the boundaries of what constitutes a domestic space and how it is yet skeptical about how the judgments re-inscribe marriage even when talking about a different form of cohabitation. Last paper focused on memory and how judgments normalize / legitimizes everyday violence. It is through memory that the 'other side of silence' is unearthed about loss and grief of intimate relations in violence, the legal terrain only tries to erase that memory.

The sixth session titled 'Domestic Space and its Legal Interventions' had four papers. The paper from Sama Resource group for Women and Health was on the various shifts in Assistive Reproductive Technologies Bill between 2008 and 2015, arguing that the recent Bill restricts surrogacy to the domain of heterosexual marriage only and it takes a critical position on 'bans'. Another paper raises similar critical question around 'banning' commercial surrogacy through this recent bill. Next paper looked at court decisions around unwed mothers asserting their sole legal guardianship on the child. The paper turns to draw attention towards the paradoxical nature of a progressive decision of the court and the real difficult lives of unwed single mothers. The last paper focused on Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 discussing the use of this law by problematizing home as the 'safest' place for women and elaborates the inherent contradictions in the implementation of this legislation in Orissa.

Through all these papers the sub-theme participants discussed laws and court decisions concerning labour, kinship, caste and violence.

SUB-THEME 3

Women, Peace and Peace Movements

Coordinators: Asha Hans & Swarna Rajagopalan

The first day's discussions covered the role of women in peace building in Manipur, post-war situation in Sri Lanka and women in conflict in Kashmir.

Two papers on women in peace movements in Manipur discussed their roles primarily on peace-building and how the State has marginalized them in this initiative, except as what was termed as 'healers' but on their own initiative they have started to contribute to the process at. The second paper described the role of two groups the Kuki Women's Union and Hmar Women's Association in creating space for women in the peace process.

The paper by a Sri Lankan studying in India provided a powerful testimony of her experience in the Sri Lankan crisis and her encounter with war and the struggles for peace. She described her personal journey through the minefield of the war to the efforts at gaining an inner peace so that she could meet the challenges of the two warring sides where violence including sexual violence has targeted the women irrespective of the region and the nature of the conflict.

The six presentations on Kashmir ranged from engagement with women's lives on the border to Kashmiri Pandit women, the draconian law AFSPA to issues of thwarted nationalism. Beginning with the Kashmiri Pandits' endeavors within the fragmented women's movement to make their voices heard beyond the regional and religious divide; the discourse on 'Armed Forces Special Power Act' (AFSPA) caught between the promoters and those trying to overturn it and caught between the two women have spoken out in the discourse for the restoration of peace.

A paper on the 'Kashmiri Nation' argued that this is mediated through a patriarchal context. The issues related to women form an important part of the Kashmiri discourse of self-determination. However, much of this discourse approaches these issues from the perspective of 'honour' of the 'community/nation' rather than from the perspective of the 'rights' of the women. Like every other community, the identity of the Kashmiri community/nation is written on the bodies of women.

Two papers on the border spoke of women's resilience despite the continuous war like situation where villagers are used as cadre and soldiers making them partners in conflict. The first spoke of the role of education in moving out of the situation. The second spoke of 'national' narratives are constructed around the 'militarisation', 'aggression' and 'violence' to defend the dignity of the nation, the cost is borne by these marginalised people, particularly the women.

Two papers raised the question of women's political participation in Jammu and Kashmir and the prevalent political culture which inhibits the participation of women in leadership positions. That despite their remaining under-represented in the decision making positions and have a very poor record of their visibility at the level of leadership and their role in peace building cannot be denied.

The proposed roundtable on peace, gender and intersectionalities and peace work by youth took the form of a lively open discussion, with only the chair and one participant able to be at the venue. They led a dialogue on existing intersectionalities and how we could overcome the gaps. The chair briefly contextualised the notion of Peace Education and the criticality of a conversation around Peace with Justice within some of the extraordinary peaceful expressions of mass protest that we have recently witnessed - including the Women's March in the USA and other countries, as also the unprecedented week long coming together in Chennai and Tamil Nadu around Jallikattu. How do we take these forward and sustain the issues so powerfully articulated? She also emphasised the need to work with women in addressing that most complex intersectionality with nationalism which so often holds people back from taking positions for peace and justice.

The roundtable discussion invited each participant in the room to share personal reasons for their interest and involvement in the work of peace-building, and its intersection with gender. This helped emphasize the importance of powerful storytelling in moving people to transform their attitudes related to communities they fear or dislike. Apart from the traditional modes of activism and advocacy that involve getting out on the streets and protesting against human rights violations, the discussion took into account how social media is emerging as a powerful tool to organize people around concerns related to gender and peace. They also discussed peace education as something that needs to be on-going instead of emerging only in reaction to large-scale violence.

The powerful demonstration of how interventions for peace have proved effective with students across the country, was followed by two interesting presentations, more academic in their discussion of peace from a strategic perspective. This in turn led to a level of deep experiential sharing from the small but engaged participants, together with a consensus that academic and the more abstract work on peace must be in some way converted into popular forms which could be taken to communities and educational institutions to build wider and stronger peace constituencies which should be able to ultimately influence whom we choose to lead nations and exercise political

power. The two papers on SCR 1325 and gender in theory, tried to bridge the gap between theory, international initiatives and women's inclusion. The Sri Lanka panel had to be cancelled as participants could not reach the venue.

SUB-THEME 4

Caste: A Site of Inequality, Discrimination, Violence and Resistance

Coordinators: S.Suba and Christy Subathra

In this subtheme 35 abstracts were accepted, however 25 papers were presented. The multiple forms of caste inequalities, discrimination, violence and resistances came up for discussion.

In the session on 'Sites of Caste Discriminations', 7 papers were presented about the prominent sites of discriminations such as education, water, food, health, religion, and public spaces. These papers explored the unexplored, very minute invisible forms that enforce caste based discriminations, inequalities, violence and have raised valid questions, how the patriarchal gendered caste-centered values and ideas maintain the discrimination and humiliation through social institutions are well-articulated and strongly argued with field evidences. Moreover these papers put forth certain pertinent questions such as; i) how does patriarchy and masculinity discriminate women in general, dalit women in particular through the construction of a patriarchal language that is used to enforce caste inequalities? ii) How Identity politics has constructed the idea of caste hegemony by using women as the symbol of caste mobilization? iii) In what ways the Brahmanical patriarchy control over the inter-caste marriages and how the dalits and women are seen as submissive, subjugated through construction of dominated caste value and its norms?

The paper on "Caste Identity and Women: Reconstruction of Caste Patriarchy in Public Sphere" looked at the construction of caste identity and in establishing the caste identity in the public sphere by portraying women's image especially historical woman figure that help in serving their interests particularly the image of Jijabai a mother of Chhatrapati Shivaji in Maratha (Maratha Seva Sangh) community identity politics through the activities of caste association and analysed how they shape the formation and re-formation of caste identities as well as its impact on the social structure of caste.

Another paper on water as a site of discrimination for dalit women highlighted the multiple forms of discriminations and humiliations experienced by the dalit women in regard to water especially in water collection sites in the name of their caste, sex identity by the dominant caste people based on the notion of purity-pollution in rigid feudal caste ridden rural setting of Tamil Nadu through case studies.

In the session on 'Politics of caste: Intersections of Gender, Class and Patriarchy', 9 papers were presented. All the papers significantly narrated the untouched areas of caste and gender politics and its role to suppress and harass the dalit women to be recognize as citizens. Beside these papers brought out the untold stories of dalit women's oppression and their daily life challenges and struggles to get recognition from fellow persons, state and other institutions of society and how women script their bondage with caste through reviving local, religious and cultural traditions to retain the caste identity

Specifically the paper on "politics of Misrecognition: Case Study of PuthiraiVannan Case Women in Tamil Nadu" spoke of the undocumented oppressions of PuthiraiVannan community which is highly oppressed dalit community and expressed different forms of humiliations, subjugations and exclusions experienced by the puthiraivaannan women in socio-economic and cultural spheres. Another paper "Contemporary Situation of Valmiki Women: A Gender Analysis of Caste and Class" highlighted the poor socio-economic and working conditions and social stigma associated with caste based occupation, faced by the valmiki women.

In the session on 'Women's Writings and Resistance', five papers were presented. The presenters articulated in detail the caste questions and emancipatory nature of writings of Dalit Women in general and the Dalit writing in Bengal. They put forth how these autobiographies questioned the patriarchal system and its various forms of oppression on dalit women. Also papers discussed the struggles of dalit women writers' to overcome their internal and external caste-centric conflicts and also the resistances of Dalit Writings against the caste inequalities. The presenters have analysed the special features of dalit literature particularly emotions, pains and rejections from in feminist perspectives. Moreover, the paper on Dalit Women's Writings in Hindi: Challenging Caste, Challenging Patriarchy expresses the engagements of Dalit women in Hindi public sphere in the last two decades with claiming both their (caste and gender) identities and interestingly explored how the dalit women writers handle the question of caste differently from their dalit male counterparts and their non-dalit female counterparts to create egalitarian society. The paper entitled on Dalit Women Writing in Bengal: Focus on Life and Writings of Kalyani Thakur analyses the struggles of Kalyani Thakur in Bengal literary world as a dalit writer as well as dalit woman activist.

In the session on 'Resisting Inequalities', five papers were presented. The papers attempted to vindicate different ways of resisting inequalities against caste. The papers argued for the role of education, dalit women's narratives and engagement of women in assertion movements to ensure the rights through affirmative action. Two of the presentations analysed education as resistance to negotiate and assert the women's rights in general dalit women's rights in particular. The paper on "Education, Assertion and the Restructuring of the Self: The Case of Dalit Women's Narratives" reflected the literature by Dalit women, in the form of self-narratives, as a means of education and assertion. Based on literary narratives of four Dalit women from Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, this paper explored the ways in which the consciousness acquired through education and writing plays a role in helping Dalit women negotiate their positioning in their social status through socio-political consciousness raising. A paper titled "Dalit girls in higher education: Images and Negotiations" discussed the construction of dalit girls in higher education institutions through hegemonic upper caste ideologies of fellow students and staff as insignificant, invisible, and non-ambitious and highlighted the distinctiveness of negotiation strategies of dalit girls as evolved out of the history of social mobility of their families, father's education and occupation, political linkages and influence, academic merit, individual will to struggle to deconstruct what it meant to be dalit girl in higher education.

SUB-THEME 5

Cultures of Resistance

Coordinators: A. Mangai and Swati Dyahadroy

This sub-theme received eighty-one abstracts with one panel and two presentations on projects by feminist organizations. Out of these eighty-one abstracts forty-five abstracts were selected for presentation and divided in following themes:

- Popular Media- Cinema / Advertisement/ Television
- Reading Literature
- Social Movements/Migration/ Development programme
- Digital Media
- Cultural Traditions

The first day opened with the panel on 'Inside Prison Walls: Resistance, Subversions and Negotiations' where the categories like state, space, gender and power were revisited and reconceptualised. Two papers and audio visual clips of interviews of women who were in prison followed with discussion underlined repression and sexual violence by the state over women prisoners who were protesting against the state repression. Papers for the first day were divided in two sessions one on spaces / mediums of cultural expressions broadly titled as Popular Media-Cinema / Advertisement/ Television and second was on reading literature. In the first session

themes which were explored were film or television as a medium through which idea of culture, gender and motherhood are reimagined / reinforced so on and so forth. Some papers have also looked at the literary texts / authors to understand lives of women and the time and space they as author occupy. Last set of papers in different ways looked at cultural practices to understand community dynamics and attempted to understand how communities express its identity and insecurities through cultural practices. Interestingly some papers have also looked at how cultural practices / processes make and give space to women in social movements. Some papers have recovered texts which explored the politics of narration, bringing wide-ranging and fresh perspective to contemporary debates.

On the second day presentations began with two project reports by two major women's organizations, namely Saheli and Anveshi. Saheli, Delhi based organization presented findings of two day long inter- movements dialogue titled Autonomous politics: kal, aaj aur kal, marking its 35th year in 2016. Bringing together many groups from all around the country that have kept themselves as autonomous movements, the study reflects on questions of autonomy, funding, self-sustenance of the movements and internal hegemonies at work.

Anveshi, Hyderabad based organization presented their study in the light of the recent struggles to take back the night and PinjraTod's attempts to claim their rightful space in the city importantly in public space. Anveshi studied the ways by which young women negotiate the city of Hyderabad. The study based on interviews lays out the field of changing subjectivities and attitudes of women with all their apprehensions and anxieties. It has also highlighted the multiple strands of caste, class, employment, education and personal backgrounds of the informants. Very interestingly papers were there looking at women migrating to cities in search of new life/ identity and space.

Next set of papers were broadly clubbed into the theme of Social Movements/Migration/ Development and Gender. In this there were papers on narratives of women from different struggles in the light of identity such as women in Goorkhland struggle, modes of struggle and gendered interpretations of the role of women in the struggle.

Some of the papers have touched upon changing ways of looking at different issues like sexuality from the site NGO's as well as challenging the feminist rhetoric of NGOisation. There were papers looking at articulation of / narration of sexuality questions in Bhojpuri songs, cinema and literary text, where attempt was made to explore the politics of narration as well as highlight how questions are embedded in the practice and its representation rooted in the political economy. Along with exploring the politics of caste and sexuality, some papers have also explored resistance by and violence on Dalit women.

In the theme on Digital Media, papers were very interesting and traversing into a very new and most contemporary field. The papers in this theme have discussed issues of anonymity, feminist exploration of cyber space and the various unexplored possibilities like agents of ishq.

Papers on the theme of cultural traditions have explored wide range from different cultural expressions and its socio political context. Papers have explored themes such as dance, ritual practices, translation of popular imagination into cinema and standup comedy as well. In this attempt was made to present the analysis / exploration through feminist lens to bring out caste, sexuality and gender in ritual practices like Kodungallur Kannaki/ Kali worship, female figures in Tollywood, dance form like Kathak, beauty parlour culture and also explored extent to which humor has the potential to become a tool for transformative feminist politics. Sub theme ended with a unique presentation by 'RAGA' who made use of songs and vocals to counter fascist forces.

Overall, this subtheme revealed that one is not ready to accept easy definitions of culture and the scope of this area is not only vast but also very over-stated. By studying different forms and its content critically, there is a need to keep the debates going. The range of topics and perspectives came through different papers were really fascinating and thought provoking as this points out the impossibility of monolithic depoliticized understanding/definition of culture, resistance, appropriation or representation.

SUB-THEME 6

Women Farmers: Labour, Livelihoods and Resource Rights

Coordinators: Sejal Dand and Usha Seethalakshmi

We had received 60 abstracts for this sub-theme on Women Farmers: Labour, Livelihoods and Resource Rights. As the coordinators of this sub-theme, we felt a need to encourage young researchers engaged in empirical research around various aspects related to women farmers in different regions of the country. Based on this broad criteria a total of 36 abstracts were selected out of which 17 papers were presented in 6 broad themes or sessions.

The first session on “Agrarian Distress in India: Status and Social Identity of Women Farmers and Workers”, was chaired by Subbalakshmi Nandi. Papers in this session sought to explore the contradiction between single women farmers and social capital, by drawing attention to the gendered nature of responses by the State and society to the situation of women farmers in suicide-affected households; the relationships between women farmers' work and family through the institution of marriage by analyzing how women's unpaid care work in the household and their labor on farms are valorized and harnessed through the institution of child marriage and its implications for women's economic agency in the agrarian economy. Problems of defining the identity of women farmers largely within the marital framework and issues of land ownership were also discussed.

The second session for the day on the theme, “Between Possession and Dispossession: Women Farmers Struggles for Land and Other Resources” was chaired by Chaya Datar. Papers in this session argued for the importance of common property and public lands more than women's rights to ownership of private lands in determining women's land rights and demanding redistributive and gender sensitive land reforms, focused on protection and access to commons. Papers also sought to examine the gender dimensions of the radical left movements and its intersections with questions of caste and class as well as questions for these left movements from the perspective of women who played a key role; the need for secure and long term land leasing for empowerment of poor women engaged in agricultural livelihoods on leased lands; and that any empirical analysis of dispossession must consider social reproduction as a central axis of analysis in order to fully understand how displacement from productive resources negatively alters the balance of inflows and outflows for women and men as individuals, within the households and communities. Discussions centered around what was the content of the land question for women in the current agrarian context and the need for a reorientation of the left agenda towards questions of both gender and caste in relation to defining the agenda of land reforms in the current neo-liberal context.

The third session was around the theme “Mediating Patriarchy, Development and Kinship: Struggles over Resource Rights and Commons by Women in Tribal Communities” and was chaired by Seema Kulkarni. This session predominantly had papers from the North Eastern region and two other papers from the tribal regions of Chattisgarh and Kerala. Issues highlighted in these papers were how customary norms amongst tribal communities prevent women from gaining their inheritance rights over land and asserting their claims over commons, changing gender relations in tribal communities as a result of changes in agriculture and land ownership patterns, the complexity of women's negotiation for rights over CPRs through the intersection of caste and gender, how women are being positioned as the agents of moral reformation and criteria fulfillment for availing various women specific economic and social development schemes, use of exclusiveness as a strategy to edit out women's perspectives within the larger context of sustainability, policy formulation, political assertion and ecological regeneration and how gender relations operate in tribal communities in relation to land rights, through the interface of tribal laws and customs with the changing nature of aspirations for development and modernity amongst these rural communities. Another paper in this session argued how indigenous Irula women and the forest become political allies in critiquing the project of Modernity and development ushered in by the British and continued by settler colonialism, shaping in the process their own “ecosophy of resistance”. Papers also sought to explore how women's traditional rights to land have been eroded

following the implementation of the forest rights act in these areas. Overall, these presentations focused on the current changes in tribal communities and attempted to show how customary and patriarchal practices around resource rights combined with state led or funded developmental initiatives were challenging women's claims to resources, while also offering new spaces for women to articulate their citizenship rights over these survival resources.

The second session of the day, was chaired by Tara Nair and had a paper highlighting the role of fisher women in the struggle against mining initiatives along the coastal areas of Alleppy district and the response of the State to some of the demands raised by the People's Resistance Committee, the broad forum under which the fisher people had organized themselves. In the discussion that followed, the environmental sustainability of alternatives being proposed (both by resistance movements and the State) were called into question, in the context of the long term livelihoods of the people and especially women who are dependent on the coast for their survival.

On the last day, presentations were structured around two broad thematic areas – “Towards Engendering Agricultural Research, Planning, Information and Technology Transfer” and “Experiences of Women Farmers Collectives on Sustainable Agriculture and Enterprise Development: Challenges and Prospects”. The session was chaired by Sumi Krishna. Papers in this session explored issues related to food insecurity in the context of agriculture value chains and how it negatively impacts women farmers; argued that engendering of agricultural policies needs to be done from a rights based framework that challenges the neoliberal paradigms of development; that women farmers have no choices in the context of 'digital by default' and face new kinds of alienation following the withdrawal of cash; gender disparities in the agriculture sector and how information through the use of innovative technologies combined with appropriate policy interventions can be used to address the issues related to women farmers. Other papers in the session attempted to look at both challenges and opportunities for mainstreaming gender in Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), how improved practices in cultivation of tomato crop combined with innovative marketing practices through women's collectivization at the village level enabled women to enhance their incomes as well as food and nutritional status and how women farmers' active participation in a government funded programme enabled the nutritional security of farm households and economic empowerment of women as well.

SUB-THEME 7

Interrogating and Expanding Feminist Questions on Gender and Sexuality

Coordinators: Meena Gopal and Asha Achutan

24 papers were presented in subtheme 7, out of a total of 53 abstracts that had been submitted from which 34 papers had been selected and invited to the conference.

The subtheme was divided into more specific sessions based on the papers finally selected. The interrogation of feminist questions on gender and sexuality happened via movement contexts and individual experiences. It included paper clusters that interrogated gender as a category created in movement spaces, that revisited terminologies, that examined difference and intersections between movements, that re-articulated the category 'body' in representation, that talked of reimagining politics and lives, and that finally looked at the politics of cultural production. Participants in the subtheme included researchers, NGOs, and activists.

The aspects of interrogation included questions to the cis-trans binary [co-authored by Ranjita Biswas and Niharika Banerjea], to normative femininity [by Adrita Dey Ghatak, and Kanaga V], reimagining a politics of life and care [papers by Bina Fernandez, Shraddha Chatterjee, Poushali Basak]. Several of the papers sought to revisit terminologies and categories [papers by Sunny Gurumayum, Shrabasti Majumdar]. These papers attempted to address normative disciplines/ fields like medicine and law, looking, for instance, at what medicalization of gender does, and the negotiations with this. Several papers looked to question heteronormative structures of family and

rigid labels that exclude non-binary experiences and people. Some of the papers focussed on how bodies are produced and structured around structures of power, and possible rearticulations of these structures and their impact on intimacies were discussed. Finally, there were a set of papers that looked at different kinds of cultural production and performance, bringing together questions of caste, sexuality, among others.

The discussions that emerged in the subtheme were far richer than had been hoped for. Crisply, the themes that emerged were as follows: voices that ranged from identity and behaviour labels in medical discourse and critiques of these; movements that have challenged the binary character of feminist discourse with newer shifts that pit cis and trans against one another; the multiple manifestations and layers of normative femininity in heterosexual and transfeminist imaginations; the violence of naming; the conversations between mainstream heterosexist able-bodied upper caste and transfeminisms; the violence of category visibility; meanings of consent as explored in sexual transactions; the meanings of safety for experiences that do not fit existing labels. These were only some of the questions that were heard on the two days of intense discussion. As such, learnings from the subtheme papers allowed us to draft resolutions that challenged the 'one' meaning of transness as described in recent legislation as well as in funded research or political spaces, and on the 377 legal campaign both in courts, but more outside between the intersections of social movements which needs to be pursued.

SUB-THEME 8

Women with Disabilities

Coordinators: Poonam Natarajan and Meenakshi Balasubramaniam

A total of 35 abstracts was received for this theme. The review of the abstracts was based on concept note prepared for the purpose of the sub-theme and the paradigm shift mandated by the Convention on the rights of persons with disability. It was observed that many abstracts looked at persons with disability as a whole without any gender specific outlook or papers had references to literature that are dated and not in line with the changing paradigm to look at the issues of persons with disabilities. Therefore, only 23 out of the 35 submissions were selected.

The Sub-theme was designed in such a way that it had 3 topics and one special plenary. The sessions were planned with article 19 as a basis. The topics included financial inclusion, sexuality and sexual rights and transition from institution to community living with a special plenary on "Article 19: Making the Right real". The Special Plenary had only speakers from the disability movement, chaired by Professor Dhanda. The other sessions had both academicians and experiential experts presenting their papers and experiences.

The first session was on the theme financial inclusion and papers looked at the issues of employment in the organized sector, self employment and skill development, complexities of paid and unpaid work, employment for women with disabilities in the public sector, access to education and employment. The session was chaired by Vaishnavi Jayakumar.

The second session was on the theme of 'Cultivating Relationships' and was chaired by Nidhi Goel. The papers in this session looked at relationships from the perspective of women with disabilities, including friendships, intimate relationships etc. The papers used diverse sources like autobiographies, literature and cinema to underline the different discourses and perspectives.

The third session was chaired by Poonam Natarajan and focused on Transition from Institution to community living. Papers in this session studied assistive devices & support services, Access to entitlements, issues around inclusive education, access to higher education for women with disabilities, rights of women with disability in custody, inclusion of survivors of acid attacks and critique of the mental health policy.

An access form was circulated to all the participants and paper presenters to understand the specific requirements. The access form was prepared in consultation with experts on accessibility. An access audit of the venue was carried out. This facilitated the allocation of appropriate halls and

other reasonable accommodations to be provided in the venue. A battery operated car was organized to facilitate easy movement within the campus. An accessible van was organized for women with disabilities experiencing high restriction in participation to access the venue from the place of their stay. All documents online were converted into accessible word document for easy access through screen reader soft-wares and there was simultaneous translation and sign language interpretation throughout the conference.

SUB-THEME 9

Sexual Violence and Sexualisation of Violence

Coordinators: Aasha Ramesh and Celine Suguna

The sub-theme had received 62 paper abstracts from which 42 papers were selected and 26 papers were finally presented. The sub- theme was divided into six panels based on the papers that were received for on the issue.

'Caste- Gender and Media': This panel brought to the fore how caste subsumes and undermines the sexual violence/abuse that women face. In fact the caste/section to which the rape survivor belongs becomes the focus and the community prefers to highlight this, negating the trauma and plight of the survivor.

Another important aspect flagged was how cinema portrays disability, with disabled characters, particularly women, invoking pity, shame, dependency, guilt complex, and often vulnerable to various kinds of violence and sexual exploitation, both for their 'lure' as women and 'helplessness' as disabled. Another area discussed was how print media addresses issue of rape, how newspaper reporting of sexual violence incidents mars the nuances and complexities of rape debates that women's movement has been engaging with; the complexity of 'retrospective consent', the difficulties of courtroom trials, the over emphasis on retributive notions of justice as the only form of conflict resolution, the interplays of caste-class-religion on trial procedures. The issue of women being pushed from the public sphere into the private by men, using the power of fear, builds up the fear psychosis, which then provides for the men a realm for sexual exploitation. However, legal institutional mechanisms have not sufficiently reduced this crisis of fear psychosis. On the contrary institutional mechanisms have been influenced by an existing patriarchal gender discourse which increases the chances of vulnerability and violence for women in society.

'Trafficking and State Repression': A paper in this session highlighted the problem of social exclusion of commercial sex workers, established the realities of the sexual violence faced by these women and the inadequacy of legislation in protecting the rights of these women when they face sexual violence. Human trafficking and its implications was another area that was spoken about, exploring the problem through the lens of human security issues that need to be addressed to contain this problem. Papers also explored the lived experiences of women victims of sexual violence who approached Women Police Stations in West Bengal and how these spaces were also an extension of patriarchy.

'State Specific Case-Studies':. The paper highlighted increasing insecurity of women in Tamilnadu, and fear psychosis, fanned by the media. The role of the state and society in furthering the control of women's freedom and choices as protective mechanisms for women was underlined. A presentation from Karnataka argued that women's empowerment is incomplete without woman's sexual autonomy which is her right over her body. Another paper highlighted the violence that Rabha community women face, especially as single women vis-à-vis "Widow remarriage" and "witch hunting" prevalent among the community. Child marriage was another issue focused which underlined that girl children are subjected to marital rape/sexual violence. The dowry amount increases with the age and the education level of the girl. Hence, the "incentive" of the system of dowry perpetuates child marriage. A paper highlighted traditional practices in tribal Gujarat where minor girls select their partners who may or may not be minors. However, this leads to problems due

to conflicts in definition of minor in laws regarding child marriage and rape. The paper explored how customary laws and the formal laws intersect and the impact it has on young girls.

'Violence in the Public Domain': The issue of 'Comfort women' and 'Jihadi' brides was focused, where war is that basis to exploit women sexually. The paper argued that these were two historical and legitimized experiences of "Sex slavery", through male domination that subjugates women for the male interests in war. However, it was also argued that women have an important role as mother, wife, daughter and sister in stopping civil conflict and war.

The sexual harassment faced by adolescent girls was highlighted. The paper focused on implications of this violence, including range of health problems and diminishing of the ability to participate in public and private. Another paper highlighted that the reality of sexual violence and its threat in public spaces reduces women's and girls' freedom of movement, including participation in school, work and public life, access to essential services, and enjoyment of cultural and recreational opportunities.

A paper highlighted the vulnerability of women in prison to sexual abuse and the mechanisms used to render them vulnerable. It was also argued that many women institutionalized in mental asylums had no history of mental illness, but it was to curb their spirit of challenge and conduct a social cleansing by isolating them from the normal environment. This paper looked at how writing becomes a tool for resistance by exposing the nefarious acts of violence inside the jail/asylum. The narratives then challenge the dehumanized state actions to argue how 'surgical' procedures of public and private cleansing through incarceration, rape and murders cannot contain peoples' struggles. A paper looked at domestic violence as covert gendered violence through an analysis of domestic violence cases handled by AIDWA for the last three decades, tracing the pre-dominant patterns of violence and locating them in the contemporary context.

'Sexual Violence in Intimate Spaces': Violence faced by Muslim women within the confines of their home was brought forth, as these stories seldom are heard. It is the violence inflicted from outside and other communities on Muslim women that has taken predominance, masking the violence that these women face from their own men. An attempt was made to further the discourse of consent, by analyzing how BDSM (Bondage, Dominance, Sado-Masochism) is able to demonstrate clearly what absence of violence looks like, because consent is at the heart of BDSM and is considered sacrosanct. Another area that was discussed was marital rape that violates the right of dignity of a married woman, but is not criminalized in India. It raises a question, is a married woman being considered an object or the property of the husband. But in a male dominated society, would women be empowered in the real sense without criminalizing marital rape.

'Towards Change': The concluding session brought forth presentations on how issues of sexual violence against women could be addressed and reduced. Suggestions made included awareness generation, the need to educate both men and women. How effective have the existing laws been in curbing violence against women was presented and remedies for bettering them suggested and role of the civil society has been emphasized.

SUB-THEME 10

Gender and Climate Change

Coordinators: Nitya Rao and Amrita Patel

The sub-theme on gender and climate change was introduced for the first time in an IAWS conference, and attracted quite a lot of interest. We received a total of about 25 abstracts. Some were very generic, so we worked with several of the authors to sharpen the focus of their papers. In the end, 18 abstracts were accepted. At the conference, due to disruptions, only 11 papers could be presented, the sessions on Day 3 had to be cancelled as all the participants were scheduled to arrive from out-station that morning.

As indicated in our concept note, the aim of this sub-theme was to explore the implications of climate change on the gendered nature of risks and vulnerabilities confronting people's lives and livelihoods, their increasing unpredictability, and the strategies for coping and adaptation. These are not just differentiated by gender, but also caste and class position.

Women's studies have rightly focused on issues of violence, sexuality and bodily integrity, due both to their immediacy as well as to ensure respect to woman's personhood, as well as women's work, given particularly its precarity in the current context. Climate variability and environmental change are, however, having effects on both women's paid and unpaid work, as well as health and nutritional wellbeing, but these links have hardly been explored in the context of India. Several examples can be given: 1) uncertainty of rain and growing male migration, with effects on livelihood security; 2) flooding and drought both leading to the scarcity of drinking water, with implications for women's time in water collection as well as disease burdens. Shifts in cropping patterns, deforestation and forest closure, and natural hazards also have adverse effects on women's labour, time and wellbeing, yet this is an area that remains less studied.

We clubbed the abstracts received around the themes of energy, adaptation, floods, groundwater scarcity and a few general papers. The discussion on energy, especially the factors driving a shift to cleaner energy like LPG from firewood explored different pathways mediating these shifts. More than income, the panelists found women's time, especially the opportunity cost in terms of work participation to be a central factor, alongside social norms that (de)value women's time. There was also an interesting discussion on collective action to overcome technology and scale constraints, alongside social norms, especially in the domain of production. Interestingly, collective action is less visible in the domain of reproduction

In the context of adaptation and mechanisms for coping in conditions of drought and flooding, different patterns were observed. In the Indian Bengal Delta, for instance, widespread male migration has created new issues for women's survival and livelihood security. Self Help Groups have in some instances created opportunities and spaces for women to seek social and economic stability. It is the organisational space itself that opens up these opportunities rather than specific activities like microcredit.

Unfortunately, we had to cancel the panel on groundwater over-exploitation and scarcity on the final day due to a change in programme.

A good start has been made and we strongly feel that IAWS should continue to support discussions around the theme of gender and environmental/climatic change, as these are realities which are already confronting poor rural women, especially the Scheduled Tribes, but also farming women, and are only likely to get worse. Without a proper understanding of the complexity of issues involved, we will be unable to suggest gender-sensitive policies and support mechanisms.

SUB-THEME 11

Gender, Religion and Democracy

Coordinators: Sabiha Hussain and A. Suneetha

We divided the subtheme in seven broad sessions and two panel discussions. We began with the panel discussion on Religion and Political identities. James Dhabi problematized control of gender relations by the institutions of religion by pointing out that religion itself is a human phenomena that is regulated. Gogu Shyamala discussed Dalit women's religiosity centered around nature, cultivation and labour as different from institutionalized religions. She argued that it is neo-Buddhism as proposed by Ambedkar which is the only accessible religion for Dalits. This session brought into focus critiques of religion as an institution, as an ideology and as a practice from secular Dalit and feminist perspectives. Also important is the question of how and whether the complexity of devotional and religious practices can be reduced to religion, which then is taken as the basis for formulating marriage laws, the practices of which are equally vast, multiple and complex.

1. Religion and Queer selves:

The debate and issues discussed in this session revolved around: negotiating the queer and religious self and the challenges faced by believing queer people in both Hindu and Muslim communities. How does one use, debate, reinterpret established interpretations of social and religious norms in order to build one's self and identity is an enduring challenge.

2. Gender and Religious Devotion

This session brought into focus the gendered roles that women play in everyday religious practices such as Durga puja celebrations in Calcutta and maintaining shrines of little/village goddesses in Telangana. The space that upper caste women make enables them to escape the rigid spaces and form bonds with women in the neighbourhood. But the space Dalit women have had in maintaining and owning the shrines is getting eroded in the context of changing political economy. Is there a way to recover such space for Dalit women was the issue that was raised.

3. Gender, Nation and Religious Violence

This session brought together the way nationalism gets configured at the discursive level of popular cinema and on the ground as upper caste/middle class Hindu. In popular Hindi cinema, this is done through establishing Hindus as the norm in the context of majoritarian violence on Muslims and Sikhs. While Sikhs are amenable for incorporation, Muslims are not. Such norms are effected on the ground by discouraging interreligious marriages, often violently. Political mobilizations on the ground are as important as countering Islamophobia that is fast emerging destination for international war on terrorism and national discourse on terrorism.

4. Debating Marriage Laws

This session brought into focus the extremely complex terrain of working of matrimonial laws: legislative assembly debates on divorce and religious apostacy during 1939 Muslim Marriage Dissolution Act, Hindu Code in 1955 and 2001 changes in Indian Divorce Act; the continuation of customary laws on polygamy and inheritance in the states of Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh; the sustenance of matriliney in the context of changes in political economy and nationalist push for uniformity in Sumatra. The questions raised were: does push towards uniformity guarantee gender justice? can customary practices be taken as inherent guarantees for women's rights and that the working of these laws needs to be placed in the context of changing political economy, centre- state relations and relations between majority and minorities.

5. Muslim women and discrimination in public spaces

This session brought to focus the nature of discrimination against Muslim women in work places/hospitals and terrorizing of Muslim women in the context of anti-terror laws in contemporary India. On one hand, we find that Muslim women are increasingly articulating hijab wearing as a matter of voluntary and personal choice rather than imposition and on the other demeaning such women is becoming more common. Lack of a discourse around discrimination and institutional remedies for countering discrimination is a huge challenge.

6. Gender and caste in new religious spaces

This session highlighted the operation of gender in the spaces and everyday practices of sites opened up by new gurus and maatas in Hinduism, religions like Jainism as well as Neo-Buddhism. Neo Buddhist vihaaras offer space for women to challenge both caste and gender hierarchies in the outside world. But do the spaces offered by Hindu gurus and Maatas do so? Or do we see the presence of Maatas as challenging the male-centric view of Hinduism? Also how do we understand religious fasting that is life-threatening in Jainism – is it violence? How do we understand girls' participation in such practices?

7. Mobilizing women for Hindutva

The set of three papers brought to the fore the ways in which Hindutva formations such as Hindu Mahila Sabha and Rastra Sevika Samiti seek to mobilize women and make space for themselves within their parent groups. Equally important is the way in which women critiques of Islam get mobilized to serve the interests of Hindutva. Are these women agentive? If so, what kind of agency is

this? Are there any transgressive elements to be recovered from the Hindu women who seek to make a mark in the Hindutva formations? In what ways did these Hindu women's formations respond to the challenges posed by contemporary Dalit movements of the 1930s and 1940s?

The final session was of 'Muslim women interrogate patriarchy' that had five presentations. The presentations brought to the fore the wide range of issues Muslim women's groups have been involved in and made a strong case for recognizing a Muslim women's movement in India. It argued strongly against Muslim women's issues being reduced to that of Muslim personal laws. Sharifa discussed the ways in which voices like hers are sought to be sidelined in the Tamil public sphere. She argued that very few cases of Muslim women reach the courts and the significance of laws for daily lives of mostly poor, religious Muslim women is minimal. Haseena discussed the historical transformation of Muslim communities during the 1990s in India wherein they were consciously marginalized and discriminated against but at the same time, women became the ground on which the symbolic dimensions of identity got played out. While recognizing the role of religion in the daily and personal lives of Muslims, she strongly argued that Muslim women should have the right to articulate their multiple identities and claim their citizenship rights, like women of other communities. Zakia argued that the demand for a law against triple talaq is only the first step in the direction of gender justice for Muslim women but in no way favoured Uniform Civil Code. The discussion of these and other two papers brought in questions of Islamic feminism in India as well as the long history of Indian Muslim women's questioning of patriarchy.

SUB-THEME 12

Marginalities and Citizenship

Coordinators: Meena Radhakrishna and Dyuti A.

This subtheme started with focus on denotified communities later due to the word 'marginalities', the scope of this subtheme was extended. A broader concept note was later circulated, soliciting papers on all forms of perceived marginality, specifically adivasis, migrants and northeastern women. We received a total of 44 abstracts. The panel had three sessions of presentations and discussions.

'Session 1: Denotified Communities'*: Issues that emerged from the presentations in this session included continuation of extreme and brutal police harassment of DNT men and women, including arbitrary detention and custodial violence; hostile attitude of civil society towards DNT women affecting their livelihood options and access to public institutions; incidents of lynching and burning property etc. A strong concern that emerged was about the situation of women from the tamasha/entertaining communities in Maharashtra and the nature of their marriage-like relationships with upper caste men. Discussion focused on whether this denotes 'agency' by women; whether this was akin to devadasi-like institutionalization of sexual exploitation by high caste men or a version of the Namboodri-Nair relationships in Kerala.

Papers highlighted the phenomenon of households running with children's and women's earnings, disappearance of traditional occupations due to modern production systems leading to deskilling among the women; family-endorsed inter-generational sex work and trafficking of women and young girls by their own men for sex work; domestic violence within the family; the harsh and patriarchal nature of caste panchayats etc. The progressive aspects of traditional gender relations between DNT men and women have got redefined under the influence of surrounding sedentary communities' customs and norms, to the detriment of DNT women's earlier, relative autonomy.

*The most commonly used term to describe these communities is DNTs, which is an abbreviation of denotifiedtribes. Strictly speaking these are not tribes, but distinct communities. However, the widely used term 'DNTs' will be used in this report to denote these communities.

What emerged from discussions was that DNT women are caught between the extremely patriarchal caste panchayats with patriarchal, orthodox and elderly men as members and the supposedly progressive modern court system which views them as born criminals. The latter also requires an extremely hostile police system to register crimes against women in the first place. Because women have no redressal to the judicial system, they remain victims of domestic violence, violence from the civil society as well as police violence.

Most of the DNT women do not have basic citizenship entitlements like voting cards, ration cards, domicile certificates, caste certificates, birth certificates or access to public services like schools, hospitals is severely limited and when they do access these, they experience discrimination. Mobilisation by NGOs has led to better attendance of children especially girls at school, some respite from police harassment and physical abuse at home. However positive presence of the State is still missing. Women perceive state as the main perpetrator of crimes against them.

Session 2 : Adivasi women/migrant women: The issue of alarmingly poor maternal health services was highlighted by several papers, in case of migrant women in city slums, pavement dwellers and also adivasi women. Issues like ante natal care, institutional deliveries, daiservices, role of ASHAs, auxiliary health workers, family help were discussed. The conclusion was that there is a high incidence of both maternal and infant distress and mortality because of lack of state infrastructure for migrants in slums as well as in adivasi villages. In addition to this, contribution of socio cultural barriers and cultural practices and illegal status of migrants also contributes into it.

While discussing both adivasi and non-advasi migration, one of the important issues which came up was the plight of those women who are left behind when the men migrate. These are female headed households where women negotiate the private and the public domain all by themselves, which take toll on them, and how it affect their physical and mental health, was reported. Issues around ageing and marginality of elderly women in families who are past the employment and earning stage and also lack of government policies for elderly women were also discussed. High incidence of very early marriage for girls amongst some adivasicommunities and difficulties of elected adivasi representative women who stand for panchayati elections were discussed.

Session 3 : North-eastern women: Issues around women's unpaid and invisible work in the household, in informal economy, in forests and arduous hilly areas, work in "care economy" were discussed and how this leaves them out of welfare net was highlighted. The issue of reproductive health being subsumed under 'maternal health' leaves health issues surrounding woman's reproductive health unaddressed. Cultural and infrastructural issues leading to low rates of institutional delivery and high possibilities of mortality for both the mother (often very young) and the infant were discussed.

Issues of frequent displacement, low employment opportunities, lack of education and ethnic violence on adivasilabour by the "non-tea tribes" on Assam tea plantations were also discussed. In addition there are the issues of extremely poor health, domestic violence, witch-hunting and trafficking of young girls and women, often voluntarily because they wish to 'migrate' out of their abusive families.

There was an interesting discussion of a women's federation within the movement for statehood. Important 'women's' issues like police or army rapes during raids get buried because of notions of family honour by the male movement leadership. There is a clash between the women's federation's position on alcoholism, polygamy or witch hunting within the community, and the male leadership of the movement. Another paper highlighted the conservative role that a women's groups can play within a militant movement, when they take on patriarchal notions. These women, apart from demanding statehood, specifically targeted young women for drinking alcohol, and targeted both

young men and women for expressing sexuality outside marriage. Generally, this raises the question of the viability and success of all, not just militant, movements unless they acknowledge and address the issue of gender equality within families, community and larger civil society.

Papers around matrilineal descent highlighted that if there is practice of descent by both matrilineal and patrilineal, within an ethnic group, the patriarchal practices overwhelm, overshadow or wipe out any advantage there might be from the former.

The main point to be noted is the need for new research on denotified tribes and impetus in the form of scholarships/fellowships to women students. The need for focused research on the issue of health conditions of women from marginalized groups and a focused consideration of the issue of public health policy is urgently needed. A third major concern is the continuing role of caste panchayats as a live phenomenon and the need for nuance understanding. And lastly, the need to understand the existing gender relations in adivasi societies has become urgent.

SUB-THEME 13

Teaching Women's Studies

Coordinators: Shadab Bano and Panchali Ray

The sub-theme received 41 abstracts, out of which 38 were accepted and about 20 papers were presented. The sub-theme witnessed diverse papers, touching on different aspects of institutionalization, pedagogy, and the future of 'women's studies'. There were papers and discussions on questions of region and conflict zones where the category 'woman' is over determined by nationalism, ethnicity and motherhood, thus raising questions on the very framework under which women's studies is taught. There were a focus on acknowledging and foregrounding local contexts and region and its role in shaping feminist epistemologies, which can on one hand lay claim to past struggles of women's movements and women's studies and on the other find new ways of challenging the very foundation of knowledge production and disciplinary paradigms. One paper focused on the distribution, circulation and consumption of knowledge of women's studies and its ramification in non-metropolitan centres. A paper discussed how knowledge of sexualities and sexual politics becomes difficult to impart in such classrooms and teachers have to be tactful and sensitive to local cultures. Another paper discussed the problems of teaching women's studies in Hindi, linking the limitation of the language to the patriarchal milieu specific to the Hindi belt. There was some discussion on intersectionalities and the need to bring in and foreground other categories such as disability within women's studies to move towards a more nuanced and critical understanding of some central issues within feminist theory such as the body etc.

Institutionalization and its ramifications informed most of the papers and subsequent discussions: how and what happens when radical theory like feminism is institutionalized and women's studies builds borders to maintain discipline or theoretical purity thus leading to ruptures between the women's movements and women's studies. One of the papers explicitly argued that women's studies as a discipline is caught between a binary of theory and activism and to prove its credibility as a mainstream discipline, it is driven to maintain theoretical purity uncontaminated by politics and activism and in doing so becomes part of the very system/ knowledge production it critiques. One paper from Canada argued that institutionalized feminism in the first world had now become a tool of imperialism and colonialism contributing to racism and Islamophobia, complicit with imperial feminisms. The connections between feminist activism and women's studies programmes were present in the early period, but there were also significant exclusions of anti-racist, indigenous and immigrant/refugee feminist politics. Later when these entered feminist discourses and women/gender studies programs, these still remained 'non-performative'. 'Intersectionality' has not added much to the substantial understanding of inequalities of race, colonialism, and racialization etc, with white feminism maintaining its hegemony. It was argued that women/ gender studies has increasingly become complicit with the state in its neo-liberal imperialist agenda and fight against terror, as it focuses on 'Muslim women's rights' as their common project. There was a lot of discussion on how institutionalization has gradually failed to recognise the historical context

of emergence of women's studies from women's movements and its complete delinking from all other kinds of movements.

Contrarily there were some papers on the lack of institutionalization and the need to build stronger disciplinary borders. There was a push for further institutionalization in terms of foundation courses in technical colleges, universities and the challenges faced in teaching critical/radical theory in elite institutes. Papers discussed the efficacy of the compulsory foundation course introduced by the Telangana government. One paper focused on the progress, challenges and achievements in sensitizing students even in fields of engineering and technology; while another paper flagged a number of issues involved in teaching women's studies as need/value add-on based course. While the complexity of teaching gender studies requires that the instructor creates a non-judgmental classroom environment, promote dialogue and intersectional standpoints; the compulsions of the institutional requirements, adjusting time and credits of CBCS system take away the substance from the course. Besides, the sensitization course forced overworked teachers with little training/orientation to teach and thus curbed its radical potential. One of the papers painted a dismal picture of women's studies' centers in non-metropolitan centers where there were no permanent teaching/ non-teaching staff, thus paralyzing it completely. This opened up discussions on the ramifications of institutionalization: as much as there was a need of funds, teachers, and personnel to run such centers, the demand for centralized boards and committees could lead to appropriation of women's studies. While there was a strong demand for further institutionalization, there were also concerns and fear of appointment of people in decision-making and boards with no background in women's studies and women's movements.

There was a lot of discussion on the question of employment, skills and labour markets for students with women's studies degrees. How does one reassure students that a degree in women's studies would enable them to find employment? This led to larger debates on the relation between university spaces, labour markets and neo-liberal policies and the attacks on critical thinking/radical theory. There were papers that called for reservations in women's studies centers for scholars with women's studies degrees as other academic fields were closed to them. Some of the concrete suggestions that came out of the papers and from the floor were 1) national level boards to monitor centres, appointments, resource allocation and lobby with the government; 2) Need to introduce compulsory foundation courses at school, undergraduate level (a) to generate employment of women's studies degree holders (b) to gender sensitize and 3) regularization of teachers in women's studies centres. There were also demands that IAWS take on a more active advocacy role in 1) engaging with the Ministry of Women and Child Development for evolving policies for introducing women/gender studies components at all levels of education; 2) the inclusion of gender/women's studies personnel in all textbook revision committees at the state or central levels; 3) reserving posts like gender consultants, school counsellors and protection officers for candidates who have studied a paper on gender studies at their UG and/or PG levels and 4) A national level audit of women's studies centers to monitor what is being taught in the centers.

REPORT OF PRE-CONFERENCE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

D Thomas Franco R Dev from SBIOA welcomed everyone and began by highlighting the precarious state of affairs in the world as well as in the state of Tamil Nadu. He pointed out that the policies of the government are making higher education difficult and also rued the practices of the banking sector with respect to educational loans.

Chirashree Dasgupta highlighted the context of organizing this colloquium by pointing to the flux in the system of higher education including the intense attack on it. She underlined that the colloquium hoped to capture institutional and geographical representations for understanding the experiences of students, teachers and educational workers so as to document their experiences of struggle.

Session 1 Capitalism and The World of Education: The chair of the session, Anil Sadgopal stated that even the British Empire had to adjust with the dominant caste, religious and patriarchal trends in colonial India, which the neoliberal capitalism is dealing with as well and adjusting to, without challenging it, in contemporary times. Thus contemporary India needs to be understood through how power was and is negotiated. Madhu Prasad pointed out that the education system has always been a part of the society/ social order. We fail to include what is required to improve the social structure within which the system exists. She looked at the Right to Education Act and argued that while it seeks to make educational practice inclusive/accessible, the provision of 25% does more damage than good. She also looked historically at the relation between capitalism and education and how the idea of a formal education for all children developed in the period of capitalism as there was a need to train children to be a part of the labour force. Raman Mahadevan talking about the nature of higher education in a historical perspective focused on the case of Tamil Nadu. He highlighted how the capital accumulation in the state had happened around caste lines, which did not invest in education which was started by Christian missionaries, later joined by the banking capital. A nexus emerged between capitalists and politicians with the state's active support. He therefore argued that this entry of private capital into education needs to be looked at very critically. Nupur Chowdhury spoke about the GATTs commitment to WTO and its implications on education in India, especially with respect to the setting up of educational institutions by foreign investors. The concerns of how domestic universities will compete, whether state subsidies for these would continue were some of the issues she raised. Thus concern raised about sustenance of different institutions without the state's support. Arindam Bose established that capitalism leads to reflexive modernisation. Furthermore, there is a need to understand what is the crisis in modern education. For this one needs to look at school education and especially maths. As social reproduction constitutes oppression, one needs to see how maths is seen and engaged with. The concepts engaged by them at home or in their everyday life are not touched in school or engaged with in the capitalist system of education. Sudipta Bhattacharyya argued that the educational policy is determined by economic policy (which are conservative) and ideology. Neoliberalism threatens the concept of pluralism and seeks to create a monolithic theory. Thus, academic promotions are linked to the neoliberal ideology. One has to adapt one's professional ideologies to the requirements of promotions such as publishing in journals. In his concluding remarks, the chair argued that the university must serve as the conscience of the nation. The purpose of education is to provide the values for young children to interrogate and transform the world where they live. He argued we need critical thought and action to annihilate caste and patriarchy embedded in the system.

Session 2 The Structure of Higher Education in India : The chair of this session touched upon the issue of the structure of education and also raised the issue of market censorship. He argued that our education spaces are curbed, university systems are under a fascist culture. Neo-liberalism won't be able to survive without such a fascist culture. Satish Deshpande looked at the critical, vexed relationship between "weak students" and the "elite institutions." He argued that "weak students" were not bad students, but ones with prior deficit. He further argued that the democratisation of higher education, in particular of elite institutions is critical and represents the future course for our country. The growth in quantity has not been complemented by equality. Apart from the segmentation there is also a segregation which is vertical. He argued that the 'weak student' is a structural creation through an elitist institution and requires a structural solution. Jyoti Bhosle argued that commodification of education makes education expensive where purchasing power defines the quality of education that is accessed, social consequences as private institutions do not adhere to affirmative action, education stops being a public good and vocationalization of education occurs. She further stated that this means applied ones become more and more mechanised and as a result there is increasing unemployment. Thus capitalism has the tendency to re-create caste in a different way she stated. Rama Naga raised the issue that we need to look at who makes the education policy. He also talked about systematic attempts by the state to destroy the public university and to censor/ eliminate any dissent. He underlined that though enrolment numbers for higher education are increasing, enrolment of students from marginalized backgrounds remains low and caste comes to be practiced in elite institutions of higher education. He gave examples of many student struggles and how students were being victimized for raising their voice, from Rohith to JNU. Aardra Surendran discussed the transitions in private universities. She argued that high fees in private universities resulted in a monochromatic campus upon which a

code of conduct is imposed. Controls like nomination instead of elections to student bodies further ensures no resistance/ dissent. Social science education provides a sense of inequality to elite students but, they do not contribute to the movement. A G Oleena argued that we need to look at the economic and cultural emergency in the educational sector in a historical perspective. Attempts to convert and modify the structure and content of educational institutions in India, including attempts to address issues like gender, caste, regional disparity were made but they bore no fruit since there was no structural change. The issue of equality has remained untouched. In conclusion, the chair argued that there exist two major attacks on Indian higher education namely, Hindu fundamentalism and global capital. He argued that there is a systematic destruction of institutions of higher education and a feeling that whatever little space in Universities was available is now being shrinking. He urged that all democratic forces need to join together to fight against the narrowing of spaces and for the right to education.

Session 3 Education 'Reforms': Intent And Implications: The chair of the session Vasanthi Dev urged the panel to discuss issues like exclusion of women, despite narrowing gender 'gap', exclusion of social sciences/ humanities due to the role of capital and their implication, the outpouring of students for Jaillikattu and how to tap into this group for pushing education reforms so as to lower the gender gap and how to take discussions out of the rooms and build links with larger people's movement. Surajit Mazumdar argued that there seems to be a lack a coherent vision for educational reforms. He underlined that the policy reflects tendency towards fiscal compression, the demand for private capital in education and massive expansion in enrolment of masses. The shift in the ideological discourse in policy for higher education, from a means of 'social transformation' to 'meet global standards' and the question of what could be the medium of education makes the debate more complicated. C. Jerome spoke about the state of students in private universities. He looked at the processes by which brilliant students coming from marginalized backgrounds face marginalization and discrimination on a daily basis, including the language and dynamics of the classroom. The role of university in discrimination can be seen through the application of the UGC credit system in recruitment. The use of identity card in accessibility to campus affects its existence as an open space where people from all backgrounds can enter campuses and questions the access to higher education. Tapati Mukhopadhyay took a historical view of the changes in state policy vis-a-vis gender and higher education. She argued that one needs to see education as a part of the political phenomena. During the NEP of 1986 a new structure was given to higher education, when the self-financing agenda was furthered by the government with the reduction of grants and subsidies to higher education. One needs to look at a gap between men and women in gross enrolment ratio especially amongst the SC, ST and rural women by using different sample surveys to bring forth reality and need to combine activism with academic activism. Arun Kumar argued that the crucial issues for higher education are the autonomy of institutes of higher education especially teaching and research in a democratic environment. The link between education and society, the content and curriculum is different than the issues of in local regions such as the medium in which education is delivered, need to expand access to different caste groups, the mode of examination, the role of technology replacing teachers and the fact that degree of education in the formal system is different from the informal mode of education, which affects skills and employability. Dhananjai Rai underlined that there are two important phenomena that need to be looked at; the shift from the Ambani to the Adani model where Ambani's model was contested and questioned in the process of policy formulation, whereas the Adani model seems to be passed through a consensus and that educational bodies are becoming like the BCCI where a capitalistic class is in charge of governance. He argued that the neoliberal knowledge is based on exclusion in epistemic production of knowledge and on the centralisation of public-ness. Umar Khalid underlined that the state has steamrolled resistance even as the Kothari commission report defined university space as a place to generate ideas. The university needs to provide a space where new knowledge needs to question old knowledge. This idea of university as a space of free thinking is under serious threat. Student and teacher activism is being criminalised in university spaces where legal and extra-legal arms of the state integrate seamlessly to stop politics. The penal regime is brought into university spaces as an extension of TADA, POTA etc. The chair wound up the session by arguing for a need to think about what needs to be done when the state withdraws from all responsibilities. In the age of shrinking of public education, how can we expect private education to address questions of inequality.

Session 4: The struggles in institutions of higher Education: The chair Nandita Narrain in her introductory remarks took a review of the state of higher education especially since 1990s. She briefly spoke about changes in the degree programmes struggle for it as well as domination of higher caste groups in colleges and university spaces. Akshita Chitala who earlier was an activist and now is in Hyderabad Central University highlighted the problems and difficulties students from marginalized sections are facing after the changes in the state policies regarding higher education. She spoke about the tremendous pressure students have to carry as well as subtle casteism in the Hyderabad Central University. She spoke about how privatization is restricting the student politics by penalizing them or putting official restrictions on them. Nilanjana Gupta who represented a state university spoke about the state surveillance and cutting in funds as major problems they are facing in Jadavpur University. She spoke about the struggle they had in last six months in JU and had highlighted the complex relationship between caste, class and patriarchy. She has also highlighted that the courses are going towards skill development and are designed to train students to become a helper in marts or guards or mechanics etc and not to think. Sarah Hilaly argued that for the rest of the country the tribes are the most oppressed but it's a different story in Arunachal, APSU is a supra students body, but the agenda is very different. Most candidates are flaunted by their own clans or tribes. The university association shuts any voice that tries to raise questions. Students also do not complain about their own issues in campus. There is no sustained movement. Thus the marginalization in APSU is entirely different from the rest. Afeefa Cholasseri spoke about how case was filed against 69 female students who have participated in the occupy campus in Calicut university and blocked the Vice Chancellor for 48 hours which finally led to a compromise after university authorities had promised that students would be acquitted. Different innovative techniques such as when they didn't get the fellowship for eight months students went to the streets and started begging were used by students. They have also organized a festival of resistance for the entire university. Almost for two months they had police camp inside Calicut University. Harishankar from Film and Television Institute (FTII) from Pune spoke about the strike they did against the appointment of Gajendra Chouhan as the director. He spoke about how Hindutva fascist forces are operating in FTII and how through history we understand that fascist forces are always using film and audio visual mediums to propagate their ideology. He also insisted that in the contemporary period we do not have any choice we need to be political and use different techniques to resist. Medha from Pondicherry University spoke about how they are witnessing changes over past five years. The strike in 2015 to get rid of the then Vice Chancellor made a drastic change in the University turned apolitical space to political. Both students and teachers were part of the struggle. This later became a platform to begin conversations about demanding rights and raising our issues. Of course when there was 300 % hike in fees ensured a filtering mechanism for the students who now seek and get admission in the University. Now organising students for resistance is very difficult within the campus. Satarupa Chakravarty began by underlining policies in higher educational institutions and spoke in detail about how subjective bias can operate when in new system of evaluation there is more emphasis on viva than the written. She also spoke about the need to fight against the cut in fellowship amount and number of fellowships to non NET / JRF scholars. Also highlighted the problem with new UGC rules regarding number of students Ph.D. and M.Phil supervisors can take and its implications for aspiring researchers. At the end she raised the concern about shrinking space for debate and to express dissent which are crucial for democracy. Yogesh spoke about how and why Ambedkar Periyar study Circle was banned. How no one from the institution supported them. Demands need to be taken to the people. Then he spoke about jallikattu, spoke about why so many people are here now who were not there in 2012 when it was banned. There is a need to learn from the people's movement. Need to listen to what the students are demanding rather than impose self-ideals unto them. Devangana Kalita gave reflexive account of journey of 'Pinjra Tod'. She spoke about how it was not primarily about post neoliberal regime or BJP coming to power. Though the number of women in universities has increased but the terms of this participation is still highly gendered casteist, patriarchal and for generations women are struggling against patriarchy. She highlighted that how Universities while combating with the question of sexual harassment they are locking up women on excuse of security. Thus women who have achieved the ability to reach to university had to compromise their further mobility. In the end chair spoke about the state of higher education in general and shrinking of democratic space in universities to agitate against the state and establishments. Thus we need to unite and need to have collective resistance against privatisation of education and making spaces undemocratic.

National Convention on Women's Studies Centres

IAWS had organised a National Convention on Women's Studies Centres in Delhi on 23rd August, 2017. The convention was organized in the context of the looming crisis of survival of women's studies centres due to the ambiguous position taken by the UGC. The convention started with senior scholars highlighting the history of struggle to establish women's studies centres in India. This was followed by highlighting the contribution of women's studies as a discipline to social sciences and of different centres in enhancing our understanding of the woman question and also contributing into programmes of the state related to gender. It was also highlighted how women's studies centres, located on the site of higher education can play a crucial role in addressing contemporary challenges for higher education. Along with the journey of women's studies and its contribution there was an attempt to lay out the challenges and way ahead for women's studies as a discipline in general and centre's in specific. At the end of the day a resolution regarding an appeal to UGC about continuation of women's studies centres was passed. Large number of students, faculty and staff of women's studies centres across India participated in the convention. Immediately the next day after the convention a notice was issued by the UGC that there wouldn't be any cut in funding given to the centres by UGC. This is clearly a victory of the solidarity which the convention displayed.

IAWS Research Grants for Promotion of Women's Studies in Jharkhand

For promotion of Women's Studies oriented research in the state of Jharkhand, the Indian Association for Women's Studies (IAWS) has offered research grants for the period 2017- 18 to conduct research on themes that have particular relevance for the state of Jharkhand spanning the historical and the contemporary. These grants have been made possible by funding support from Oak Foundation. The following is the list of research grantees for this year.

Sr.No.	Name & Address	Research Area
1.	Ajitha Susan George Bindrai Institute for Research, Study and Action, Singbhum West, Jharkhand	Mapping Changes in Adivasi Women's Access to and Control over land
2.	Amita Kumari Dumka, Jharkhand	Gendering the Study of Santals: An Inquiry into the Portrayal Construction and Agency of Santal Women
3.	Meera Jayaswal Department of Psychology, Ranchi University, Jharkhand	A Study of Perceptions and Attitudes towards Migration and Trafficking among School Students of Jharkhand
4.	Neha Prasad Ranchi, Jharkhand	Gender Gap Profile of Jharkhand: Situation Analysis of Men and Women
5.	Preeti Singh/Anjor Bhaskar Foundation for Emancipation of the Marginalized (FEMALE), Ranchi, Jharkhand	Food for the Footloose: How Participation in the Dal Bhat Yojana affects the lives of Women and the Footloose
6.	Rajni Kiran, Darpan, Jharkhand	A Study of Socio-Economic Status of Women Labourers in Hazaribagh District of Jharkhand
7.	Tanushree Kundu, Institute of Human Development, Ranchi, Jharkhand	A Girl in the City: Higher Education related in-migration of Young Women in Ranchi City
8.	Vasavi Kiro (Kumar Sumveg), Ranchi, Jharkhand	Land, Livelihood, Forest, Customary Laws and Social Movement Related with Identity and Fundamental of Tribal Economy and Status of Women in Jharkhand State

Brief of the Meeting of the Subtheme Coordinators

A meeting of the subtheme coordinators was convened on the 15th September 2017 at Ranchi. Its purpose was to share and understand the issues and questions that came to the fore in each subtheme from the papers and the ensuing discussion. It was also an opportunity to discuss how subtheme coordinators can pursue a plan for publication of selected papers. Most of the coordinators were able to attend the meeting, and made fairly detailed and reflective presentations about the nature of the papers, and the proceedings in their respective sub themes. A common concern was how to assure quality and relevance of the papers. Another was the diversity and unevenness in papers, which was also a result of the manner in which the core idea of the subtheme was interpreted and explored. This posed a challenge for any effort to bind them together by a common thread for the purposes of publication. It was felt that diverse forms could be explored to put the discussions in the sub themes in the public domain. What also emerged was the need to do a process documentation of the efforts made to address and integrate the disability question at all levels and stages of the Conference. The meeting was fruitful and provided the space for a more intense and detailed discussion on academic as well as administrative aspects of coordinating the different Subthemes that can be noted and made use of in the future.

**INDIAN ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES
MEMBERSHIP FORM**

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Name (in full): Gender Age Educational qualifications Permanent Address: City PIN State Phone Mobile E.mail: Mailing Address:
(if different from
above)

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

Teaching/ Activism Writing Research Media & Communication Administration
of Programmes Any other Life Membership (Rs.1500/-) Student (Rs.250/-) (valid for 3 years) (Attach proof of Student ID) (Age limit
is below 35 years as on 01.01.2017)