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EDITORIAL DESK

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hrough this issue of the IAWS Newsletter, we draw the attention of our members and readers to the forthcoming Sixteenth National Conference of the Indian Association of Women's Studies on the highly relevant theme of "Constitutional Principles in 21st century India: Visions for Emancipation". Aptly, the Conference commences just after Republic Day on the 28th of January, 2020 and both the location and venue are appropriately the National Law University, Delhi. The concept note of the main theme, as well as the subthemes are given in this issue, and we hope they will stimulate a vibrant participation from academics, research scholars as well as activists, as has been the tradition of the IAWS conferences in the past. We urge you to register for the conference and also send papers as early as possible and contribute in different ways to making the Conference a success.

These have been turbulent times not just for Women's Studies, but for the sphere of Higher Education in general. The policy direction of the current government is quite apparent in the Draft New Education Policy that was released some time ago. As Prof. Kumkum Roy points out in her article in this issue, despite raising concerns about underrepresented groups, the DNEP fails to mention both Women's Studies and Dalit studies, studies of discrimination and exclusion, etc. This is truly alarming, especially in the context of the recent tragic suicide of Dr Payal Tadvi, a post graduate medical student in Mumbai, and earlier of Rohit Vemula. It indicates certain unwillingness by the powers that be to resolve the important question of multidimensional campus discrimination. It is especially disturbing at a time when Women's Studies Centres are engaged in a struggle to justify their very existence, as seen from the report on the IAWS interventions on the issues of UGC funded WSCs for the last two years, or the article by Dr Dhammasangini that highlights the plight of WSCs in relatively underdeveloped regions. Some of the regional disparities and issues were also highlighted in the report on IAWS's efforts to develop Women's Studies in Jharkhand, or the reports of the different Regional Conferences that were conducted by the IAWS over the last few months that enrich our understanding about how regional political economy and events shape women's lives. The critical standpoint that shapes Women's Studies is reflected in Prof. Rajeshwari Deshpande's piece on how women voted in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. The interdisciplinary perspective is seen in the reports on the Indian History Congress and the joint Panel discussion conducted at the Labour Economics Conference held earlier. Other interesting pieces are the obituary written by Prof. Sumit Sarkar for eminent labour historian Prof. Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, and a book review by Dr. Sneha Gole. We look forward to feedback from readers, and meeting you all at the forthcoming National Conference.

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XVI National Conference on Women's Studies Constitutional Principles in 21st century India: Visions for Emancipation 28th - 31st January 2020, National Law University, Delhi

"On 26th of January, 1950 we are going to enter into a life of contradictions: In politics, we will have equality, and in social and economic life we will have inequality. In politics, we will be recognising the principle of one man-one vote, and one-vote-one value. In our social and economic life, we shall by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one-man one-value.... How long shall we continue to live this life of contradiction? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life?"

These words from Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's last address to the Constituent Assembly of India on November 25, 1949 resonate even today. This contradiction that Dr. Ambedkar cautioned against, about a political democracy ushered in with the adoption of Indian Constitution while socio-economic inequalities persist, and become more glaring than at any time since independence, needs to be challenged. The 16th National Conference of Indian Association for Women's Studies (IAWS), while recognizing the Indian Constitution as a founding document, embodying a moment of transformation from being ruled to becoming a nation of free and equal citizenship, also notes that this transformative promise of the Constitution, over past seven decades, remains to be fulfilled. In this context, the IAWS National Conference in Delhi aims to discuss and think with the Constitution and its principles in order to challenge the prevailing and growing material, social, inequalities and violence affecting women in particular.

The long struggle for women's rights and the persistent and varied forms and levels of engagement of women's movements with the state for equality, liberty and justice for women, have revealed that the dream of ensuring constitutional rights of all women across different social groups is yet to be realized. Women from working classes, marginalized castes, tribes and communities, sexual and gender minorities, the elderly and those with disabilities face violent discrimination and oppression as an everyday experience and in newer forms. The conference aims at unravelling the multiple points and axes of these inequalities, prejudices and discrimination, and power relations underlying the same. The conference will also look at how the intersectional systems of inequalities are challenged by counter cultural discourses and varied social movements discussing power, violence, and justice. This could lead to new methodologies of enquiry and newer understanding of agency.

Today, the stigma and discrimination pervading labour markets are taking on newer forms of labour exploitation. Globalization and changing socio-economic realities are driving people, especially women, to labour migration in risky situations. The gender parity in higher education is being achieved, but with elusive forms of sexism, and with one of the lowest female work participation rates continuing to subject women to the relations of dependency. Violence of development further accentuates the on-going processes of displacement, dispossession and alienation of people from their land, resources and livelihoods. Brutal caste violence and everyday humiliation, especially newer forms sexual violence against Dalit women continues with social and civic impunities, thereby placing Dalit communities and other subordinated castes in peril. The vulnerability of tribals to protect and promote their rights to control and use land and forest is also curtailing their ability to protect their pluralistic cultural identities. The normalization of violence, in its everyday forms, in public and private arenas, calls for its recognition as a crime against the State and the Constitution.

The dynamics of plural and overlapping social identities across different marginalities are producing contentious consequences for citizenship in a democratic society. The freedom to think, dissent and express without fear is vital for building a democratic public culture. There is a need for creating a social environment to think critically, to develop scientific temper that would enhance the ability to make rational and informed life-choices. The media, old and new, is lending itself to a variety of dynamic and contradictory uses. In such a context, we need to investigate what has

become a common sense about women's issues, especially as the discussion around women's empowerment and inclusion is mainstreamed in specific ways, in a context of increasing social and economic inequalities.

The Indian constitution is firmly grounded in the key values of liberty, equality and justice, with the foundational support of the values of fraternity and dignity. As a progressive charter, it had emerged as a radical departure from two legacies of injustice; firstly, the subject hood in colonial regime, and secondly, the social organization entrenched in persistent hierarchies such as caste and varied forms of patriarchies. It sought to reconstruct the state as well as society, for the citizens of republic, altering the legal relationship of individual with the state, and also with the exclusionary social authorities of multiple forms restricting the state authority to intervene in the social. This is reflected in the constitutional provision for horizontal rights i.e. fundamental rights enforceable against groups, communities and private parties, and not just against the state. This transformative vision of the constitution needs to be retrieved and reclaimed today.

The constitution defines women's rights to equality and non- discrimination as justiciable fundamental rights. It explicitly clarifies affirmative action for women as compatible with the principle of non- discrimination, and also recognizes specific freedoms essential for women's equality. The various constitutional amendments in last seven decades or so, as well as the review of working of the Constitution brings out how the constitution has acted upon women and other groups experiencing indignities, and also how the Constitution is acted upon by them. Women's movements and struggles focusing on constitutional rights and its principles to ensure gender justice, often joining other struggles for justice and equality, have resulted in both shaping and enacting several laws and policy changes, and in the process have expanded the concept of justice. Further, the enactment of laws and the widening scope of rights and claims by the women's movement have been accompanied by creative engagement with the Constitution and constitutional morality as in the case of Justice Verma Commission Report and Nirbhaya. These are gains that need to be protected. Some of the recent attempts to interpret the constitutional principles and to assert rights in the 21st century bring out the struggles of a range of groups from sexual minorities, LGBTIQ to sewers and manual scavengers, focusing on issues ranging from entry in religious shrines, adultery, euthanasia, inter-faith, inter-caste marriages to self-identity and citizenship. We therefore need to re-read the working of the Constitution and of constitutional morality at large to fully realize the social, democratic and human values enshrined within. The IAWS 16th National Conference will attempt to foreground the dynamic, diverse voices of women and other marginalized groups, drawing also from the rich and growing data bases, in the discussion on the Constitution and its key principles which carry the emancipatory potential and hopes. We seek to bring out experience of struggles against multi-layered oppressive structures, economic inequalities, hierarchies of caste, social discrimination, poverty and their interlinkages so as to rebuild a gender just Indian society. Our perceptions and tasks for social transformation are hence deeply connected with constitutional interpretations. This conference aims to focus on these struggles, their consequences, and the debates they have given rise to and the ways in these interventions have and can impact the lives of our most marginal citizens. In short, this conference aims to think along with the Constitution and its visions of emancipation.

XVI National Conference Sub-Themes

Last date for Submission of Abstracts: 20th November 2019

Guidelines for Abstract Submission

Please ensure the following before abstract submission.

- The word limit for abstract should be about 700 words.
- Sub-theme name
- Title for the Abstract
- Author/s Name/s
- Institutional Affiliation
- Email Id
- Telephone number
- Full address for Correspondence

Sub theme 1

Displacement, Dispossession, Alienation and the Constitutional framework (Land, resources, livelihood)

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Post-independence development discourses have witnessed many shifts since the 1950s when the Planning Commission unfurled policies for the economic and social development of India; these were designed to reduce inequalities, strengthen the economy so as to enhance the quality of life of the Indian people. Development policies have witnessed many changes since then with a new set of concerns emerging since the 1990s when the move was made to introduce neoliberal policies by successive governments.

Land and resource rights determine to a great extent the wellbeing of populations across the country, providing them with the means for livelihoods, security and income. The Constitution of India has enshrined principles of equality, freedom and justice whereby the right to ownership of property and inheritance, the security of tenure and the access and use of common pool resources have been assured to communities traditionally embedded or dependent on these. Mainstream land and resource rights discourse has tended to foreground the issues of ownership and use of private property. This ignores a most important aspect of the patriarchal gender based division of labour as well as survival strategies of poor households' - the use, collection and processing of land based resources (critical for household subsistence), an extension of women's unpaid household work. If these public or common property resources deplete or are fenced, women's burden and struggle for livelihoods increases.

This is for five reasons - firstly, because a vast section of poor working women are dependent on the use, collection and processing of land based resources from public and common lands, bringing such lands and common pool resources into focus; secondly, land of large number of small landholder households is shifting away from such households through land acquisition and takeover such that dispossession and displacement are marginalizing such landholders, placing an increasing burden on women responsible for family reproduction, bringing resistance to land grab on the women's land agenda; thirdly, widespread eco-degradation due to destructive technology and development policy as well as misplaced forest policy has meant that women's labour drudgery has increased and access to resources and productivity reduced, giving women a huge stake in environmental protection; fourthly, high and growing landlessness is accompanied by dwindling availability of remunerative employment, underlining yet again the centrality of resource rights; and

finally a destruction, displacement or denial of access and rights over natural resources on which communities have depended since ages also denies them the use of traditional knowledge and practices they have lived by for generations, causing them to experience stress and sense of loss and disruption in such situations. Thus, the system of resource use in India is gendered such that environmental degradation affects women more than men. The annexation and diversion of natural resources and CPRs affects women disproportionately given their primary responsibility to collect and manage these CPRs. The processes of annexation diversion and degradation (which have intensified under neoliberal capitalism) have meant that women have to spend longer hours or pay more for what were once easily accessible, and such access is often accompanied by greater risk of violence and criminalization.

Agricultural and rural distress has resulted in gendered experiences of dispossession and displacement. There are two 'dimensions' of agricultural distress - an 'agricultural development crisis' (low growth, falling profitability), and an 'agrarian crisis' (growing landlessness, casualisation of labour, increase in small and marginal holdings and fragmentation, and widening rural-urban gap.). India has both, with institutional and structural factors resulting in the loss of access to and control over land and a contraction in alternative means of livelihood. This has resulted in huge loss of land, displacement and distress out-migration with those remaining sometimes expressing their despair and despondency through the worst expression of this distress, farmer suicides.

The land and resources question for women is not a rural or agrarian issue alone, as urban populations increase and migration due to the agrarian distress rises, urban commons and public spaces shrink, with growing conflict and contestation. For the first time after Independence, the addition to urban population (by 90.99 million people) was larger than of the rural population (90.47 million). Many large cities too have common lands used as a source of fuel, fodder, water, building material and food. Flood plains, tanks, lakes and other run-off based water bodies are used by the urban poor for floriculture, animal rearing, horticulture, pisciculture and traditional work. This land is highly sought after. A whole host of reasons, like large infrastructure and development projects; urban renewal and new urbanization; city beautification; safety and security concerns; sports extravaganzas; industry, industrial corridors and Special Economic Zones (SEZs) are uprooting individuals and communities from their homes and commons in cities. The previous two decades have seen an unparalleled increase in forced slum evictions across the country in urban areas. The question of urban land is even more crucial for women, dependent as they are on shrinking commons for various uses like residence, fuel and defecation.

In India currently we are witnessing plunder and loot of natural resources on an unprecedented scale as the means to boost capitalist profits. The restructuring of the Indian economy through changing laws and policies undermining constitutional safeguards, as it abandoned the post-independence regulatory and protectionist framework and put in its place fiscal conservatism, deregulation, trade liberalization, financial sector reforms and privatization characterizes the current phase. The entire thrust for free trade and a simultaneous attack on agriculture has as its primary aim the re-opening of the lands of the global South. The priority given to attracting foreign investment generated an extraordinary 'race to the bottom' among the state governments, which competed with each other to offer land and resources at more and more attractive concessions to woo national and international corporate capital. This translates into an environmentally unsustainable and inequitable plunder of natural resources and common property resources, to the detriment of the land and resource rights.

Land resources exist in three types of property relations: (a) As the 'common property resources' of often differentiated communities (esp. outside adivasi or forest dwelling communities) usually tended, collected/harvested by women and adivasis (b) As 'state owned resources' which are purportedly being held in public trust for their conservation but in fact are 'fenced' and 'enclosed' to dispossess primary producers and gatherers (c) as private property. The entire thrust of public policy in land in the last decade has been to either privatize or statize land.

Not surprisingly, the process of annexation of common property resources has accelerated and become more ruthless under neo-liberalism. The dispossession and displacement of direct producers from land has been achieved through economic and extra-economic means, through overlapping routes, which are often simultaneous and mutually re-inforcing. These include, for

example,

- a. Fencing of Forests, Diversion and Evictions
- b. Adivasi land alienation:
- c. Land acquisition and displacement
- d. Reverse land reforms:
- e. Land use policies and land banks
- f. Ecodegradation and environmentally unsustainable practices: Plantation forestry
- g. Evictions and enclosure in urban areas
- h. Enclosing through titling; etc

The impact of such processes is experienced most deeply by women among the marginalized and dispossessed and it is these women who are also at the forefront of struggles for rights and survival. We are faced with the ranks of the dispossessed being swollen with new incumbents as many communities are displaced from their traditional habitats, Constitutional protections notwithstanding; this panel will address these and allied concerns.

Processes of displacement and dispossession in their gendered dimensions are now being examined along with the gendered nature of impacts of development by displacement and dispossession. The linkages with policy and how it impinges upon the resource control and resource denial is a realm of research which is beginning to receive some attention but much needs to be done.

This sub theme seeks to provide a space for researchers and analysts to discuss through the presentations of papers (and testimonies?) the above theme:

- a) Analysis of the changes in policy, legislation and governance that undermine constitutional safeguards for women's resource rights, especially in the last quarter century and decade
- b) Identification of processes leading to displacement and dispossession in rural and urban India and its gendered impact
- c) Dilution and non-implementation of both old and new protective measures such as the Fifth Schedule, Sixth Schedule, Forest Rights Act, the amended Land Acquisition Act
- d) Focus on gender dimensions of the processes and impacts of development induced dispossession and displacement
- e) Documentation and assessment of the forms of struggle and spaces within the struggles for gender articulations and women's voices as well as agency in positing the issues and negotiating for their interests
- f) Investigation of the nature of policy and development interventions that give rise to such circumstances and possible feminist avenues and alternatives to address these destructive and adversarial processes

Sub theme 2

Identities and Citizenship

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The transition to citizenship in India was effectively a struggle for constitutional democracy and republican citizenship. The constitutional promise and vision involved the emphatic constitution of the collective political subject - 'we the people' - as the source of authority of the constitution. The durability of the constitution depended on the spread of constitutional morality, which was a precondition for setting up a democratic society and polity in which both the government and the citizens agreed to live by constitutional values which embodied norms of pluralism and freedom, basic rights, and respect for difference. Holding that constitutionalism and constitutional democracy in the Indian tradition may be understood as having distinctive

antecedents and contemporary forms, this subtheme invites paper proposals that focus on different aspects of the past and the present of citizenship, constitutionalism and democracy in India.

In this subtheme we invite papers which focus on specific aspects of citizenship, identities and constitutional democracy in India, to elicit discussions on how to understand constitutionalism and the idea of the transformative in the specific contexts of India? Is there a perceptible notion of modernity and corresponding political cultures and traditions, which mark out a distinctive trajectory which was etched out for democratic futures in India? How do we understand the contestations and promises which surrounded constitution making in India? How did the dominant idioms emerge and what were the strands which were lost in the process? What impact did this extraction and erasure have on how we understand citizenship in India? What are the lifeworlds that the constitution has inhabited over a period of time, to come to us as a living constitution. What have been the challenges in the way of making the democratic constitution work and in what ways has the constitutional architecture changed? What are the constitutional essentials that have emerged in the process, what has become more entrenched and what less so? Which institutions have become more pronounced and which ones have diminished? Are there some key constitutional values which have endured but have also changed in ways which make them more intelligible or alternatively strange and unfamiliar? How do constitutional changes alter the identity of the constitution? How have specific constitutional principles evolved so as to achieve commensurability with democracy? The questions we ask pertain to the ongoing state formative practices and the forms it assumed within a web of debates on contending notions of constitutionalism, democracy, nationalism, religion, political culture and civil society. They also concern themselves ultimately with the relationship between the constitutional architecture, the institutional edifice of democracy in India, and the spaces democracy provides to imagine new futures of citizenship, especially in contexts where they are constrained by state practices of ruling and reasons of state.

Constitutional Promise, the transformative, and memories of citizenship: The struggle for republican citizenship was waged through successive constituent moments, in which the edifice of the future constitution was inscribed in various reports and documents (e.g., the Nehru Report, the Karachi Declaration, Sapru Report among others) which included the declarations of citizen's rights, socio-economic reconstitution of society, forms of representation to ensure equality for all social groups, and institutional arrangements for effective sharing of power. In these documents the democratic future of India was inscribed to embody a prior consensus on the nature of the future polity, in confrontation with the colonial regime which was premised in the idea of difference and deferral, putting citizenship on an interminable hold. The post-independence political world was informed by gendered memories and gendered articulations of constitutional futures. What are the ways in which historical memory is installed in the constitutional text? What is the distinctive conception of constitutional democracy which is presented in the constitution? How do the constituent assembly debates reflect a political self-understanding and what is the organising structure within which citizens were expected to relate to one another and to the state. How are these meanings gendered? What and how did the Partition shape the memory of citizenship? Was the Constituent Assembly a gendered space in the representational tools it deployed and deliberative space it offered? How does one look at the first general election in terms of suturing a democratic identity of citizenship, whereby popular sovereignty was affirmed. How did the consensus over constitutional norms unfold, and contests over constitutional principles like secularism shape citizenship identities. What was the relationship between the nation and constitutional democracy, and how did this relationship get inscribed in one's identity as a citizen.

State formative practices, territory and citizenship: Citizenship is inextricably linked to state formative practices, including mapping of territory and population, enumeration and identification practices, which affirm and consolidate state power over determining the terms of belonging, and making distinctions between citizens and outsider. All such practices are gendered, having implications for how people experience citizenship, and engage with the state and its institutions. The experience with the National Register of Citizens is an example of how national citizenship identification practices unfold in non-national spaces. The protest and debates on the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019 need to incorporate the current additional connotation of citizenship and/or exclusion from it. The sites and scales of citizenship - the city, the nation, and the

transnational, offer insights into citizenship identities which are in flux, liminal, insurgent or 'illegal'. Law and institutions of the state - representative, adjudicatory - often become sites where contests over citizenship play out. How do we see new idioms and categories emerge in these sites, which are often populist and non-representative.

Citizen Democracy and democratic Citizenship:

Citizenship and democracy are deeply intertwined. This relationship has several aspects. While constitutionalism and the rule of law are seen as performing a function of legitimation for the government, they also provide limits to governmental action. The latter has to do with the way in which citizenship transforms and also transforms lives, conveying thereby both the normative concerns of law as well as the kinds of political subjectivities it generates. The struggle for citizenship and the sites for democratic citizenship become important in this context for providing an emancipatory language of citizenship. While the institutional contexts (courts, trials and judgments) are ordinarily seen as constituting the legitimate sites of production of citizenship, the life worlds of citizenship, the numerous interfaces and contestations over citizenship, through people's movements, generation of new legal subjects and political subjectivities, are important for reinscribing the political into citizenship. It would be interesting to explore how particular citizenship categories emerge out of the interface, of politics, policies and political and popular mobilisations which inform each category.

Sub theme 3

Women, Science and Scientific Temper: Exploring Progressive Alternatives

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The relationship between women, science and social transformation has been the site of heated contestations within and outside the feminist fold. However, the contemporary period marks a particularly acute undermining of science compounded by attacks from across the political spectrum. On the one hand is the celebration of a glorious past and the equation of mythology with the history of science. From references to the Pushpak Vimana and genetic science from mythology as historical evidence of India's scientific past, dismissing the theory of evolution as unscientific, to attempts to introduce astrology in universities and the diversion of funds to pseudo-scientific pursuits such as AAYUSH and Panchagavya, there have been concerted efforts especially in the last few years to obscure knowledge and methods of knowledge acquisition. On the other hand is science skepticism, which often collapses science with the scientific establishment, or the knowledge project of science as being similar to faith, or as serving exploitative instead of emancipatory ends. In this version of the attack on science, it is not capitalism, but the science and technology that it employs, that are held responsible for the exploitation of the labouring masses. Technology and by extension science, is caricatured as inherently anti-people, and is therefore to be criticized and opposed. Gender relations are seen as significant by both positions, with vastly different implications. The former chooses to gloss over social inequalities that mar the institutional practice of science, ignoring the inequality in access to knowledge that Indian society has historically been guilty of. In looking at science as an exploitative knowledge project, the latter deems it as patriarchal or brahmanical, and by this very definition, devoid of any potential to liberate women, or any gender. The implications of this crisis for politics are also important. For political projects such as the creation of a theocracy, it is necessary to enforce an almost militaristic supremacy of religion over science. Religion then is not simply a matter of private belief, but a set of rules, regulations, and directions for behavior that govern everything in the public and private lives of citizens. History

cannot be studied objectively as it can potentially lead to the rejection of many ideas of long lost glory that are important for the political project of creating the motherland. Science is to be limited to technological development alone, and not seen as a method to understand the world around us. The preservation and perpetuation of the myth of a superior past also brushes under the carpet the violent and exploitative history of caste and gender hierarchies in Indian society. The claim of scientific prowess that existed in this mythical past only provides fodder for ignorance, or worse, justification of the subservience forced upon a large majority of the population, namely women and those belonging to lower castes. It is evident that the political project of creating such a nation, where religion is a requirement for citizenship itself, necessitates not only an attack on science, but on history and art as well.

On the other hand, the fact that science cannot eradicate caste and gender discrimination from among its own practitioners is seen as a reason to charge science itself with being inherently inequitable. Such a charge dismisses completely the changes (inadequate, but non-trivial) that years of struggle have brought to both the natural and social sciences. While it may still be true that a majority of those who have access to higher education in this country continue to be men from the upper castes, if one looks closely at what constitutes the typical science or engineering lab of today, a slow but sure increase in diversity can be observed. There are more women today in the sciences than there were 70 years ago. The number of women enrolled in university education in the science faculties has increased from 18.5% in 1971 to 39.8 in 2005, a jump of 113%. This increase looks even more impressive if compared with the figures for enrollment in the arts faculties for the same time period which show an increase of only 36% although in absolute terms the enrollment of women in the arts faculties has always been and continues to be higher. It is important to understand how these individuals see themselves and their pursuit of knowledge in the context of structural constraints.

Despite statutorily determined reservation, there is ample evidence to suggest that due to various barriers put up by institutions inherently opposed to the idea of positive discrimination and affirmative action, the number of Dalit students, even in publicly funded central institutions, falls well below the mandated proportion. However, students from Dalit and tribal communities are certainly not absent and have started organising openly on questions of caste based discrimination and injustice within these institutions. The Ambedkar Periyar Study Circle in IIT- Madras or the Ambedkar Periyar Phule Study Circle in IIT-Bombay are examples of this assertion by young Dalit scholars from science and tech departments.

The issues outlined above and a range of other contemporary developments suggest ample scope for deeper and nuanced engagements on the relationship between women, science and scientific temper. This sub theme seeks to reinvigorate such discussions and interrogate notions that characterize contemporary attacks on scientific temper, while fully cognizant of institutional inequalities that exist in the practice of science. It welcomes submissions that outline the challenges to contemporary scientific practice, in the natural or social sciences, or in progressive political movements, at the level of access, infrastructure and content. It also welcomes submissions that analyse the challenges to progressive politics and transformative agendas in the context of attacks on science.

Sub theme 4

Migration, Labour and Constitutional Rights

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The progressive vision espoused by the Constitution of India draws from its key principles and provisions that aim to protect rights of citizens, including those who engage in labour and

employment. Through articles 15-19, the Constitution provides its core principles of justice, liberty and equality and an overarching framework for the protection, promotion and regulation of livelihoods and associated activities. However, the assumed universality of these rights is not unproblematic, and at the ground level mechanisms for the realisation of the same leave much to be desired. The question of constitutional rights and their application are much more relevant today than ever before. This is due to the unprecedented volume and complexity of migration of vulnerable groups within India and abroad, as well as the social change inherent within it. Much of these vulnerable groups consist of rural folks and women from underdeveloped regions seeking labour.

Mainstream development discourse had been silent on the issue of women and gender, let alone labour and migration, until the path-breaking report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India (Towards Equality, CSWI, 1975) drew attention to the 'invisible women' in economic locations. Even though academic studies started pointing out women's presence and their numbers in migration after scholars with a women-centred standpoint criticised the gap, mainstream debates still refused to view this as a serious 'data gap'. While international migration has covered much ground in terms of theories and practices of and approaches to labour movements and even its 'multi-directional' nature, internal migration is an area that needs urgent attention. Not only are numbers missing here, but the drive to emphasise the universality of constitutional rights has also made the complexity and heterogeneity of people's migration within India invisible.

Within this broad framework, the panel based on this sub-theme invites papers with an interdisciplinary focus covering the following broad areas:

1. National level datasets due to conceptual and definitional issues not only have under-represented women's work, but also have failed to capture the scale, dimensions and patterns of female labour migration in India. While men are shown as migrating predominantly for employment-related reasons, majority of women are shown as migrating for marriage. Migration data is skewed in presenting a rather unchanging picture of women migrating mainly for social reasons and men for economic reasons. It is important to note that migrations, both in-migration and transnational migration have an economic genesis which consequently results in socio-political and cultural ramifications. A general problem that relates to both male and female migration is that migration statistics are collected for population movements rather than labour migration. Definitions of migration are based on change in residence either by place of birth or last/usual place of residence. This leaves out circulatory, seasonal or short-term modes of migration which are so significant in understanding labour migration in India. Papers that critically reflect upon the debates, issues and concerns related to migration, labour and constitutional rights and the related data gaps that exist are invited for the panel.
2. While international migration has been sufficiently studied and they have highlighted the 'institutions, infrastructures, processes, practices and consequences' of migration, nature, patterns and processes within India are not highlighted enough. Papers that deal with women's internal migration for labour are invited.
3. In the context of both internal and transnational migration the impact of state policies on labour migration and experiences of migrant workers assume significance. It is true that women workers are the most vulnerable in destination countries. It is also equally true that labour laws and state policies around migration and gender often tend to overlook women's agency when it comes to their making decisions regarding travel, relocation and work. Often, the emphasis of such protective legislative mechanisms is more on curtailing mobility of women than preventing exploitation of their labour, and promoting equality of opportunity as enshrined in the Constitution. In India, while there is no domestic legislation that can cater to the needs of women workers in cases of both inter-state and international migration, the laws that exist lack the mechanisms to resolve some of the challenging issues faced by migrant workers. Here, the absence of gender in labour laws and larger debates around the spectrum of labour legislations, policy perspectives and migration in India needs to be critically explored.
4. Declining female work participation rates in rural India and stagnation at extremely low levels of female employment rates in urban areas indicate an ongoing gendered employment

crisis and segregation in employment, thus compounding vulnerabilities faced by female migrants. The overall multi-sectoral bias towards males in labour migration in India shows how female labour migration is particularly differentiated from male migration. Moreover, traditional hierarchies of caste and entrenched patriarchies are significant in influencing the opening or constraining of migrant women's entry into certain sectors of the economy. This has resulted in lopsided and over-concentrated economic growth, and limited opportunities for diversification of employment for women migrants. In foregrounding the intersections between class, caste and gender inequalities, how are such inequalities being reconfigured through migration? Papers should address some of these emerging concerns.

5. While migration is a complex layered mix of processes, the discourse around trafficking has also raised pertinent questions about social and moral restrictions on women's mobility. The Constitution places no restrictions on the migration of men and women within and across states, both in rural and urban areas, even as it explicitly prohibits traffic in human beings and forced labour. Bonded labour systems that proliferated in conditions of distress migration took more than a century after the adoption of the Constitution to reach the frontiers of labour legislations and development policy, albeit without any special reference to women. Similarly, the anti- trafficking rhetoric in India is driven by an exclusive preoccupation with prostitution and sexual exploitation, without any reference to forced labour. While labour laws lack gender, women centric legislations against trafficking lack any discussion on labour rights. Within the national and global context, public debates and concerns around migration and trafficking have become even more complicated with increasing number of women seeking labour where it is difficult to identify and pinpoint elements of coercion. The trafficking framework today is increasingly influenced by the transnational discourse than ever before. In this backdrop, how does one conceptualise discourses around migration and trafficking, and engage with questions and issues within such frameworks from a gender and labour rights perspective?

Sub theme 5

Caste and the Constitution

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Of all rights affirmed by the Constitution, the right to equality has been the hardest to realise. Given the fact that inequality is built into our social structure, Constitutional provisions and the letter of the law inevitably come up against social habit and historically powerful vested interests, to do with caste and community. These interests exercise control over individuals wanting to lead lives of their own through a combination of affective and coercive methods, and in the everyday space of the home and family. They also seek to confront, sometimes violently, social and political movements committed to equality and justice, and often, they resort to distinctive gendered practices to affirm their authority. Through invoking custom, tradition, and by resorting to a range of acts from sexual shaming to violence, they have acted in ways that affirm their social and civic impunity.

How might we frame issues that have to do with family and community violence and control in this context? And how might we rethink the question of rights in the intimate sphere, given that intimacy, privacy, family and caste are always already intertwined? Further, how have Constitutional guarantees of equality proved useful, where family and caste networks are concerned? What social and legal struggles have been waged, especially by anti-caste and feminist groups and civil liberties organisations in this regard? How have such struggles expanded the meaning of 'equality'? Beyond the law, how has the Constitution inspired arguments and debates

against birth-based discrimination, which affects women as well as the so-called lower castes and those who were historically considered untouchable? How might we address the complicated subject of multiple inequalities, of caste, class, gender, sexual identities and abilities, in light of what Dr Ambedkar defined as 'Constitutional morality'? What specific legal and extra-legal histories would we need to draw upon in doing so?

Sub-theme 6

Normalization of violence & subversion of Constitutional Values

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Right to life and personal liberty are sacrosanct rights guaranteed by the Indian Constitution to all persons. Consequently this fundamental right carries with it a corresponding obligation on the part of State agencies to create a conducive environment for the protection and promotion of the right. Additionally, the Indian State has a clear constitutional mandate to ensure that the said rights are not violated, either by state or non-state actors acting individually or as a group. Violence strikes at the root of the constitutionally guaranteed right to life and personal liberty.

Violence and threat of violence, on grounds including that of gender, caste, religion, nationality, sexual identity, ability and ethnicity, undermine the sacrosanct right to life and liberty. It is inadequate for the government to point a finger at non-state actors and outfits, distance itself and absolve its own responsibility. Recurring violence takes place with impunity primarily due to the laxity, indifference, callous and casual approach, corrupt practices and culpable action/inaction of law enforcement agencies and the administration. Scuttling of justice through a subversion of constitutional values, contributes to a climate of impunity, which emboldens perpetrators, leading to a state of cyclical and escalated violence.

'Normalization of violence' is a process by which violence and threats of violence, which are otherwise considered abhorrent and irreconcilable with the constitutional framework, come to be regarded as "normal", acceptable, justifiable and explainable. Normalization of violence against women, in particular, is effected through a combination of victim blaming and shaming, toxic masculinity, internalized misogyny, patriarchal assertions, public-private dichotomy and manifestations of male, casteist and communal supremacy. Violence perpetrated within the family, in the community, by state agencies and through the market reinforce one another to subjugate women and deprive them of their citizenship rights guaranteed by the Indian Constitution. Such forms of violence are perpetuated through structural discrimination that is embedded in the functioning of core democratic institutions. Normalization of violence takes place through a subversion of constitutional values of justice, liberty and equality, enshrined in the Preamble to the Indian Constitution.

The women's movements' persistent struggle for equality, liberty and justice for women, both in contexts of violence against individual women as well as in mass crimes, in private and public spaces, stands in complete contrast to state apathy, complicity and culpability for violence against women. Perpetrators who enjoy political and economic clout, escape from the clutches of law with impunity, through a deliberate failure of the police to perform their constitutionally mandated duties, with the blessings of the administration. The recent example of a law student who has been arrested for extortion, while her alleged perpetrator of repeated rapes enjoys state's protection in the comforts of a five star hospital, and the dropping of murder charges against an influential politician who is alleged of rape of a minor girl and facilitating custodial killing of her father in Unnao, are stark examples that illustrate that justice for violence against women remains an incomplete constitutional dream. The absence of justice for mass killings, rapes and other forms of violence

against women from religious minority, tribal and Dalit communities, as well as in militarized contexts, further illustrate the complete undermining of constitutional values through a normalization of such forms of violence. Such normalization is often accompanied by the rhetoric of national security and silencing of voices of dissent. However, the phenomenon of normalization of violence and increased repression has also been countered by social movements that challenge such forms of hegemonic power, violence and impunity, through peaceful and democratic means, particularly the use of constitutional values as a counter-majoritarian tool. Individual women and women's groups, have made successful strategic interventions, and assertions of their citizenship rights under the Indian constitution, even in a context where law is increasingly being used to exclude communities from constitutional guarantees of life, liberty, justice and equality. Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons, Naga Mothers' Association, Extrajudicial Executions Victim Families Association - Manipur, Women against Sexual Violence and State Repression as well as several movements consisting of Dalit and adivasi women continue to seek justice and accountability for state violence through constitutional means. An inquiry into such movements, their efforts and strategies, discourses and articulations will lead to renewed hope in constitutional means for achieving justice, and expand our understanding of victimhood and agency.

While this theme is expansive, it hopes to focus more specifically on the following sub-themes:

1. Right to life, liberty and equality: Challenges posed by mass crimes and impunity (Mass crimes include identity-based targeted violence on communities as well as violence in militarized contexts.)
2. Examining the liberal framework: potentials and limits of the Indian Constitution vis-a-vis normalization of violence
3. Everyday Violence, Citizenship and Gender
4. Violence in spaces outside the national constitutional framework - like refugees.
5. Violence in resistance movements
6. Violence and resistance in digital spaces
7. Non-violence as a philosophy and its gendered implication

Sub theme 7

New Media and Inequalities: Surveillance, Regulation and Resistance

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Freedom of expression is a constitutionally guaranteed right and has been interpreted by the courts in India as synonymous with media freedom. As early as 1950, the Supreme Court had ruled in *Romesh Thapar vs Union of India*, that freedom of speech includes "the right to express one's views and opinions at any issue and through any medium". The gender implications of media freedom are many, and include the right to equal access to media use as readers, viewers and users, as well as fair representation across gender, caste and class lines in media content. Yet, as feminist theoreticians have argued, women's presence in the media is often their absence; that there is what Gaye Tuchman framed as "symbolic annihilation" of gender through omission, trivialisation and condemnation. There is also the recognition that global capital flows, corporatization and institutional surrender to market forces have played a disproportionate role in determining the nature of gender representation in the media. Alarming statistics on the absence of women, Dalits, Adivasis, and people of diverse sexual orientations in professional roles in the media, have long been a matter of concern. These absences have systematically contributed to the deprivation of social capital, and have prevented the everyday experiences of these categories from being represented by

the media, thereby rendering such knowledge invisible in the social realm. The accelerating social divide, not only in terms of class, but increasingly in terms of caste and religion, gets reflected in the media, leading to renewed discourses of violence and ethnic cleansing.

Much of the early theorisation on gender vis-a-vis the media had been done in the context of legacy media, comprising largely print and television. Today, with the market-driven consolidation of new communication technologies and digital media, communicative practices are being fashioned and re-fashioned literally by the day. This is all the more so because the internet has engendered a coalescing of media content. Old media draw on new media to create wider readerships and audiences for themselves, even as new media mines the content of old media and circulates it. Old media have had to face up to the challenge of responding to a sudden plethora of voices on the internet, including that of a wide range of women and other gendered and sexed persons, and forced to create new news communities representing a range of interests not usually referenced by them earlier. On its part, new media practitioners have had to understand the importance of the practices of due diligence that had marked an older form of journalism in order to make their content more credible, accurate and trustworthy.

What are the new forms of inequality, disempowerment and control that are emerging in this new media terrain? Conversely, how have these new technologies and social media platforms been deployed to create more equal spaces across genders; how have they helped to counter repression, and build new forms of sociality? Our sub-theme, 'New Media and Inequalities: Surveillance, Regulation and Resistance,' for the 16th IAWS national conference, will seek to address such questions, and we call for papers that would elucidate these and related aspects.

We know that old media, whether print or visual, are today coming under increasing pressure from corporate interests which seek, more and more, to capture them in order to further their own interests. Simultaneously, there is the phenomenon of central and state governments exercising ever greater control on media narratives in ways that make mainstream media narratives homogenous and supportive of the State. We live under a political regime that is increasingly holding the media to ransom; with compulsions to selectively withhold or generate news in order to cater to a narrow, undemocratic and unconstitutional rhetoric of nationalism. Have the internet media, in contrast, been able to strike another path and exist as an independent public sphere that holds the promise of the constitutional safeguards, in keeping with the early ideals of an internet that belongs to all, and which everybody can access? Clearly, as the internet came to be increasingly dominated by giant monopolies like Google and Facebook, those earlier expectations have disappeared. Today awareness has grown about the capacities of social media platforms to create and facilitate the flow of false information on a mass scale. We are witnessing, what media analysts call the 'algorithmic turn', or the automated manipulation of news and the manufacturing of views and arguments -- what has come to be termed as 'fake news' in a 'post truth' era. Alongside this, greater digitalization has also seen the emergence of disturbing trends that further disempowered the unlettered female subject, such as the mandatory use of digital technologies in order to access welfare. Social analysts have also pointed to the limits that the social media imposes on collective resistance, with opposition to power beginning and ending with the keyboard, or what has sometimes been termed as 'clicktivism'.

The gendering of these developments, particularly new forms of sexual preying, surveillance and control, in and through digital modifications of sexed and gendered bodies, have proved consequential. Amidst a patent culture of misogyny on the internet, we are seeing new forms of gender-centric crime, from trolling and bullying, which is today widely prevalent, to specific threats like online grooming, cyber stalking and revenge porn.

While we recognize the dark side of the new media, we also recognize that they lend themselves to a variety of dynamic and positive uses. They have enabled the emergence of political communities that connect across vast geographies. They have also helped foster new forms of feminist creativity within what Manuel Castells has conceptualized as the "network society". The humble mobile phone has enabled flows of information and challenged gender dynamics; the internet and the internet-enabled mobile phone have contributed to the creation of innumerable new sites of resistance. These have ranged from those engaged in anti-caste politics to varying shades of feminist and queer activism; from anti-nuke activism to the struggles of green warriors

trying to raise awareness and combat the deleterious effects of climate change. Older political traditions, including that of the Left, have also remade their presence and relevance, drawing on the resources of the World Wide Web. Having stated this, we also recognize the asymmetrical nature of access to media, especially new media, given the larger realities of social exclusion in India. Gender remains a major aspect of the digital divide, with women and girls less likely to have used the internet than their male counterparts, especially if they also happen to be poor and from dalit or tribal backgrounds. We would like to closely consider the consequences of being a female or a transgendered 'digital have-not' in a world that is increasingly connected.

Sub theme 8

Citizens/People, Laws and Right to Life

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The Indian Constitution has enshrined the Right to Life as a fundamental right according to Article 21. The past 70 years or so have seen a progressive expansion in the understanding and interpretation of the Right to Life and what it entails. Right from reading in personal liberty as an intrinsic part of the right to life; to invoking it as fundamental in a number of recent judgements to do with the right to conscience and life choices, entry of women into religious shrines, laws against sexual harassment of women at the workplace, issue of gender self-determination and embodiment, right to live a life with dignity which is free from exploitation ; as inclusive of right to livelihood, right to shelter, right to medical care and medical confidentiality, right to legal aid, right to education, right to privacy and even in the judgement striking down Article 377 as unconstitutional, right to life has been interpreted progressively to encompass a wide spectrum. What emerges from a reading of the cases and judgements invoking Article 21 is that Right to Life can be read as central to the promise of fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution. However, it must be constantly remembered that law is a contested terrain and this expansion and reinterpretation of rights has come as a result of struggles by social movements in general and women's movements in particular. However, these hard-won rights are being eroded on many fronts today. There are targeted attacks on assertions and claims of these rights, whether in the form of killings in the name of 'honour', violence against women in Sabarimala trying to assert their constitutional rights, through the introduction of the Transgender Bill which minimizes the right to self-determination, etc. Moreover, the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill which criminalises triple talaq, the Independent Thought judgement and other such examples reflect the contested realm of rights and compel further engagement and discussion even within the spaces of the women's movement, as well as Women's Studies.

The right to life is under severe attack on other fronts with systematic efforts to control what we can eat/wear/speak/choose. Phenomenon like atrocities on Dalits and mob-lynchings, many of them tied to the politics of cow protection and resurgence of a politics of hate and violence have posed serious challenge for the enjoyment of right to life for significant proportion of the population. Large parts of the population are denied even the basic rights to move about freely through the enactment of 'state of exception' laws. Many find their citizenship and subsequently the enjoyment of the right to life threatened through measures like citizenship registries. Though the Supreme Court has pronounced that a biometric system like Aadhar cannot be made compulsory for access to social welfare schemes, many continue to be disenfranchised from access to food security and entitlements like health care. The entrenchment of neoliberal policies accompanied by a fragile economy and corporatisation is putting the right to livelihood and work under duress, not only for the workers in the informal economy, but increasingly for the small percentage of workers in the formal economy as well. The politics of accumulation by dispossession has meant that large groups

of people, whether in Odisha, Chattisgarh or the Narmada valley are being driven out of their homes and livelihoods for the pursuit of a mirage called development. All this has meant that there is a severe deterioration in possibilities of well-being and of living a dignified and exploitation-free life not only for women but for many other marginalized and subordinated groups as well. At the core of this is a need to unravel the larger understanding of law, its 'neutrality' or 'rule of law' when laws/legal instruments themselves can be used by the State for overstepping into the civil, political and other rights of people.

The patriarchal nature of the judiciary/legal institution as witnessed in various recent judgments wherein the right to consent and autonomy of women have been under-recognised and diluted, or the weakened response to undertaking of due process in sexual harassment case within the Supreme Court raises fundamental questions of gender bias amongst the representatives of these institutions and poses the need for continued struggles and engagements on this front by the women's movement.

Further, given the centrality of the role of the State in relationship to laws, and upholding of rights, it is important to have critical reflections on the same. With the budget cuts in social sectors- education, health, social security, work entitlements etc; the State is seen to be continuously withdrawing from its role of welfare towards people while increasingly adopting the role of surveillance and policing. Such a scenario inevitably leads to systemic attacks on the rights of the people-right to food, health, work, education - all of which are essential to the meanings of right to life.

Similarly, the constitutional promise through the Directive Principles of State Policy (as per the part IV of the Indian constitution) also holds that the government policies be geared towards the social justice and welfare of people. On the backdrop of constitutional rights, it is essential to look into government policies and efforts in its governance so as to determine if they are promoting the rights of people or not. Unfortunately, there are many government policies which point towards the absence of a rights based framework in their approach, with some of them being coercive, and discriminatory in nature. Reproductive health and rights for example is one such area where concerns have been raised consistently- policies such as 'the two child norm' directly violate the reproductive autonomy of women and couples and interfere with their constitutional rights overall. Similarly, women particularly from marginalised sections have been the targets of 'population control' goals set by the State; access to contraception/family planning methods has been largely instrumentalised towards achieving this goal rather than recognising the reproductive rights of women which is essentially linked to their lives and lived experiences in the society.

In such a context, there is an urgent need to unpack what the right to life means in the present moment, which lives are being talked about when it is invoked, which lives get left out, what does this right encompass, what are the possibilities of its expansion and deepening and what are the challenges to reconceptualize, safeguard and operationalize the right to life in the context of the present State and society. It is important to understand the intersections and conjectures that cause this right to be fulfilled/ violated.

This sub-theme seeks to approach the question of the citizens/people, law and right to life by conceptualizing it as going beyond the letter of the law to enveloping possibilities of right to live with dignity for all. Thus, the right to life should encompass ideas of equality and liberty and how they are to be practiced and ensured for all citizens of the country, without demanding for homogeneity or similarity as pre-conditions for the same. The need to think about citizenship in a substantive way and open it out for scrutiny becomes even more urgent in the context of debates around the NRC etc. where depriving people of citizenship renders them "invisible", how then do we think about citizenship in a context of justice and not within the framework of drawing borders and boundaries to exclude.

The urgent question is how do we operationalize the right to life in a way that not only respects diversities and pluralities but helps reshape our society by bringing the voices and the concerns of the marginalized to the centre. Further how can we look at forging/revisiting solidarities amongst varied social/people's movements to find critical concerns and issues being faced by different marginalized voices. In a context, where the right to life is also being invoked in an instrumentalist manner, to erode rights of women and other groups, how do we reconceptualize and

strengthen its linkages with liberty, equality and most importantly, with ideas of social justice?

This sub-theme invites papers which look at constitutional guarantee of right to life by encompassing all the ways in which it has been theorized and operationalized in judgements and struggles and ways of taking it forward. Papers could explore the expansion of the rights in recent judicial decisions, the way the right is being compromised in the translation of those decisions into legislative and administrative actions, the meaning of right to life in the present conditions, challenges with instrumentalization of the rights and distancing it from the aspect of social justice, and attempts to revitalize it in the larger context of 'nationalization', 'corporatization', and 'criminalization' of human lives. They could broadly address the following sub-themes:

1. Reframing the contours of the right to life: Beyond the law
2. Whither social justice? Introspection on the role of law
3. Problematising citizenship and the right to life

Sub-theme 9

Women, Employment and Education

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Women's employment and education are the crucial factors in addressing the key development challenges such as poverty, inequality, injustice. Across the world, it is proven that ensuring gender equality in education and employment promotes equal opportunities in socio-economic, cultural and political spheres of life. Envisioning the benefits, the constitution of India has enshrined gender equality through Preamble, Fundamental Rights and Duties and Directive Principles. The constitution has also empowered the states to provide specific affirmative actions towards gender equality. Several policy measures have been initiated in the direction of achieving gender equality in women's education and employment. Besides, India is a signatory to several UN Conventions including the ambitious 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) to promote gender equality and empowerment and eliminate gender disparities at all levels of education and employment. However, the outcomes in education and employment towards achieving gender equality still remains a long way to go.

The labour market outcome indicators in India highlight the disadvantages faced by women workers in India. While a lot of these inequalities are a consequence of the existing gender division of labour based on stringent social norms and patriarchal attitudes, a large part of these are also driven by the existing policies or the lack of it. These policies, in turn, have a considerable impact on macroeconomic indicators such as women's labour force participation rates, distribution of employment across sectors, occupational segregations, and re-distribution of income, assets and wealth. It also has its implications on improvements/changes on women's access to resources, basic amenities and thus on overall well-being.

A lot of the labour market inequalities faced by women also arise from the occupational segregation of women into typical occupations and sector that are often low paid, low productive and lack any form of upward mobility within the existing patterns of work and social security benefits and are mostly located in the informal sectors of employment. The rigid segregations in the labour market are often both a reason for women workers being unable to access better forms of work and is also often a consequence of the existing inequalities faced by women. While the causalities operate to act as barriers for women to access remunerative options in the labour markets, the consequences of segregations often result in gender wage differentials, unequal access to social, economic, physical and technological resources, exacerbating the inequalities, thus rendering an inferior status to women in the labour markets. Besides, women workers often experience gender-based differences due to their geographical location, limited mobilities, forced migration for several forms of labour across geographies, lack of safe workplaces and vulnerabilities in terms of violence,

both private and the public that has bearing upon women's engagement in social and economic opportunities.

Further, an important factor that creates barriers for women to access labour markets is the 'double burden' or women's unpaid work. Global figures and statistics have shown that India is one of the extreme cases in terms of the incidence of the burden of women's unpaid work. Household chores, care of children elderly and sick takes away a large part of women's time, which could have been employed for income-earning activities. While these are major issues for women workers in India, women's work cannot also be seen in isolation to the current capitalist conjuncture. Although the nature of women's work continues to broadly depict the characteristics mentioned above, there have been small yet numerous changes in women's participation in the labour market. Changes in the global production processes, organisation of work around the globe in tandem with the changing nature of capitalist accumulation have had an immense impact on women's work. Women's engagement in paid work increased substantially in the last 50 years. Newer clusters of female occupations emerged across the world. India, however, lagged in catching up with these changes. While clustering of women across specific sectors of work such as garments, domestic services, low value-added ITeS, home-based work and so on was not a new phenomenon, low work participation rates of women in India could not improve despite India's high rate of global integration. This essentially is a result of the strategies of globalisation that were adopted in India through its greater macroeconomic and trade policies. Thus apart from the supply side factors of access to education, demographic characteristics, access to resources, rigid patriarchal norms, the demand side determined by the trajectory of capitalist accumulation has had an immense impact on women's work in India.

A lot of the employment indicators of women are driven by access to education, which is evidently gender unequal at many levels. As per the Global Education Monitoring Report 2019, 80% of the seasonal migrant children in major cities in India lacked access to education near worksites and 40% are likely to end up in work, experiencing abuse and exploitation. The report cites that the growth of slums, informal settlements, lack of decent living opportunities, prejudices are major challenges in ensuring inclusive equitable quality education. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) recent survey shows that 39% of adolescent girls in the 15-18 age group are not attending any educational institutions and the majority of them are either forced to attend household chores or begging. Adolescent girls in India are most disadvantaged, economically vulnerable and have limited opportunities to gain the education, knowledge, and skills for the economic advancement. 71st round NSS shows that there is a wide gap between rural and urban areas in terms of quality of education and gender parity.

A lot of children, on the one hand, could not avail of the benefits of the Right to Education Act as they are discriminated based on their social status; on the other, the government schools are neglected in terms of quality and infrastructure. And the absence of factors such as equality to access, equality in the learning process, equality of educational outcomes and external results largely affect girls and poorer sections of the population. Moreover, there is a major gap in ensuring one of the priorities of the RTE Act, gender-friendly infrastructures such as functional girls' toilets, a supportive environment in schools and colleges through a responsive complaint mechanism to address discriminatory attitudes, sexual harassment, and intimidation.

A lot of unscientific cultural practices hinder girls' education, in particular in rural India. The scientific approach is very central to gender equality; it is important to evaluate the role of textbooks in promoting critical thinking among children for questioning stereotypes, myths and misconceptions, customary practices, and also in promoting gender-friendly classrooms and violence-free educational spaces. It is also important to evaluate the content of textbooks in terms of inclusiveness towards caste, class, religion, gender, and space.

The draft New Education Policy 2019 has also raised concerns from several quarters including academia and civil society. Majority of these organisations voiced against the missing secular commitments, centralisation of education and high thrust on privatisation. Given the inequalities, it is important to get more nuanced insights of the proposed draft New Education Policy in terms of equality to access, equality in the learning process, equality of educational outcome and gender-equal education system.

The above clearly indicates that public investment in basic social infrastructure and services such as health, food security and nutrition, social protection are of critical importance in the process of gender equality in both women's employment and education through several interlinked structural processes. With this background, IAWS would like to invite papers preferably under the following themes. These are of course not exhaustive and therefore not necessarily limited to the below areas.

- Women's education outcomes and long-term impact on women's employment
- Rural labour markets and women's work in India
- Urban women's work and emerging opportunities
- Women's labour rights in an eroding regime for human rights
- Migrant women's work and forms of 'bonded labour' faced by women
- Legislative protection and safety of women at workplaces
- Women's work in the continuum of paid, underpaid and unpaid work
- Measurements, underreporting and missing women in the labour force surveys in India
- Equality in access, learning process and educational outcomes in India
- Privatisation and girls' education
- Migration, gender, and educational rights
- Textbooks, Stereotypes and critical thinking
- RTE and Gender friendly measures
- Policies, SDG goals and gender equality in education
- Caste, Religion, Culture and girls education in India

Sub theme 10

The Contested Contours of Cultures/ Cultural texts

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A cultural text-literature, art, music, cinema, media, internet, theatre, dance, fashion, food, and so on-is a creation of human labour and imagination. The forms, careers, flows, and destinies of a cultural text are mired in networks of capital, social relations and political formations. It is a means to recognize and identify power relations embedded in a society. In contravention of the Constitutional principles of justice, equality, liberty, fraternity and recognition of diversity-of gender, sexuality, caste, tribe, ethnicity, disability, religion, and so on-the nexus between knowledge and power creates and sustains hegemonic forms of control over cultures of certain groups by others. In some contexts, culture of the dominant group assumes a representative status-of standing for all cultures, subsuming within itself not only variations and versions but also contestations and subversions, posed by resisting subjectivities. In other contexts, epistemic violence perpetrated on the 'Other' is aimed at its annihilation, particularly from history.

Movements for social justice, cultural recognition and identity have interrogated the very idea of authenticity and purity in cultural texts, which in some cases have compelled not just the revision but re-organization/debunking of artistic, literary canons, genre, curriculum, language, style, form, pictorial vocabulary, idiom, and so on. In other words, whose culture is 'authentic'? What are the processes through which it gets designated as 'authentic'? What are the institutional practices and policies that contribute to the making of 'authentic' cultures?

In post-independence India, the overt and/or spectral presence of the Constitution is palpable in a range of cultural sites-both hegemonic and subaltern-in patriarchal-statist discourses as well as in movements for democracy including within the domain of the 'private sphere'. Equally, increasingly since the 90s, vigilante narratives of justice have emerged as an

oppositional framework, located within an individualist, masculinized discourse. This is perhaps most visible in cinema, theatrical political performances, and in the anonymous zones of social media. Feminist/queer and transgender movements in India have fought long and hard battles to achieve certain historic legal judgements and institutional mechanisms intended to ensure basic gender justice in the face of entrenched power hierarchies and social relations. In recent times, we have encountered new forms of feminist collectives-the #MeToo movement and a range of local and international related articulations-which while demanding bodily integrity and workplace security for women have pushed beyond 'due process' through campaigns such as 'naming and shaming'. Paradoxically, Constitutional provisions include censorship of cultural texts that undermine freedom of expression protected within the Constitution itself. Non-normative expressions invoke obscenity laws, while articulations intended to celebrate resistance, and demand accountability to ensure alignment with Constitutional principles invite charges of sedition. Constitutional commitment of respecting the autonomy and self-determination of cultures that joined the nation on their own terms is disregarded by the State-an entity that is ironically a creation of the Constitution itself. At the same time, one needs to grapple with the renewed visibility of Constitutional articles in popular and 'new' cinema and digital material, foregrounding questions of gender, caste, tribe, disability, sexuality, in ways that seek to, on the one hand, deepen democratic principles, and on the other, argue for their rolling back, as part of backlash from dominant ideologies.

Finally, the Constitution itself is a cultural text in multiple ways. Most significantly, it is an embodiment not only of the normative and aspirational framework of egalitarianism but also a symbol of Ambedkarite cultural politics that stands inseparable from him in the scores of statues across the country.

This sub-theme invites papers on the following or related themes, from diverse locations-viz. oral, written, performative, visual, digital, sartorial, gastronomic texts/ cultures:

- Cultural texts as sites to create and sustain hegemonies of gender, caste, tribe, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, ability: investigation of the 'Centre'/ canon and the 'Periphery'/ margin
- Cultures of resistance; cultural texts of resistance
- Collective, sustainable, 'slow' cultures
- Imaginations of citizenship
- The Constitution as a cultural text
- Historical transactions between cultural texts and the Constitution
- Constitutional consciousness/ backdrops in popular culture
- Digital cultures
- Campuses, Cultures, Contestation

Announcements

Preet Rustagi Research Fund

Indian Association for Women's Studies (IAWS) Invites Proposals for the first Triennial Preet Rustagi Research Fund Award to facilitate field based research on women and work.

Eligibility Criteria

- Research work should be field-based research around 'Changing patterns of paid and unpaid work by women' and should involve innovative feminist methodologies
- Young research scholars, activists and other interested individuals under the age of 35 years (as on 1st Sept. 2019) are eligible to apply

Procedure and Conditions

- The Award is of Rs. 40,000/-.
- The period for conducting the research including field work would be 18 months and the researcher would be given another eight months to submit the paper for comments/ suggestions to the selection committee. Based on these comments/ suggestions, the paper will be revised and submitted to the selection committee. The paper would then be presented at the 17th IAWS National Conference tentatively in 2023. The paper may be written in any Indian language, but should include translation in English.
- Proposals may be sent along with proof of age, residence and institutional location in India.
- Those applying are requested to send proposals along with documents as proof of eligibility
- The last date for receipt of proposals & supporting documents: 15th December, 2019
- The jury will comprise of distinguished scholars nominated by the PRRF and the IAWS
- The proposals should be sent by email to: iaws.secretariat@gmail.com By Post: The General Secretary, IAWS Secretariat

President's Award for the Best Paper Written and Presented in the IAWS National Conference

The IAWS is glad to announce that the best paper submitted and presented in the XVIth National Conference in Women's Studies will be awarded the President's Award.

This award was instituted since the last XVth National Conference in Chennai with the primary purpose of encouraging active and meaningful participation in the conferences and promoting quality research in women's studies.

Only the fully written paper, submitted and presented at the National Conference will be considered for this award. The selection process would consider all such papers submitted and presented by researchers, activists, scholars, students and other categories of participants. The paper can be written in any Indian language, but should include translation into English if required by the jury. The documentation of experiences of women's movements, and development of feminist methodology are some of the criteria for the selection of the paper.

Each Sub-Theme Coordinator(s) at the National Conference would select a set of best papers presented in their sub-theme, which would then be submitted to a jury constituted by the EC from among eminent feminist scholars/ activists. The jury would select the Best Paper of the Conference. The Award would be presented in the same conference.

Congratulations to

Ms Nandini Hebbur N, who has been selected for the Annual Vina Mazumdar Memorial Fund (VMMF)@Centre for Women's Development Studies (CWDS) - Indian Association for Women's Studies (IAWS) Young Research Scholar's Award 2019.

This award has been presented for the best research paper/article that focuses on Women/Gender in Asia that has been published or accepted for publication in peer reviewed journal in Social Sciences and Humanities discipline.

Articles

Engaging with the Draft National Education Policy-Concerns and Implications

Kumkum Roy

The Draft National Education Policy 2019 (henceforth DNEP, available at <https://innovate.mygov.in/uploads/2019/06mygov15596510111>) has been in the public domain for some months now, and there have been discussions and deliberations about its significance. Here I will simply try and flag some issues which may be of particular importance from the perspective of women's studies as well as the women's movement. My approach to the document, which is long (nearly 500 pages) and complex, has been through the lens of intersectionalities-attempting to examine the implications in terms of working towards inclusivity and democratization in terms of class, caste, gender, sexual orientation, disability, communal and regional identities. (Given that the issue of language has received considerable attention, I do not comment on it).

Classifying people

It is from this perspective that some of the acronyms used in the document become significant. One of these, which figures in the context of school education in particular, are the URGs, or under-represented groups. These are: those having given gender identities (including women, and transgender individuals), given socio-cultural identities (such as SC, ST, OBCs, Muslims, migrant communities), given special needs (such as learning disabilities) and given socio-economic conditions (such as the urban poor) (p.137).

What the document glosses over are fundamental questions. Who has the power to 'give' or 'assign' these identities? And if we talk of URGs, do we not need to address the question of the dominant roles of the ORGs (the over-represented groups)? Who are these, and why do they remain unnamed, naturalized and invisible, yet omnipresent? This is a troubling question that needs to be addressed. Further, understanding the processes and structures that lead to the phenomenon of URGs may become next to impossible if some of the changes envisaged in the field of higher education are put in place.

Concerns for higher education

For those of us engaged in higher education, some of the problems that are listed might sound dreadfully familiar, even if all of them may not affect us with the same intensity. The ones that are identified (DNEP, 203-6) include standalone institutions, early specialization, the lack of autonomy, hindrances to leadership, fake colleges, poor working conditions, heavy teaching loads, and infrastructure (p. 257).

The resolutions envisaged include a broad liberal education including an assortment of subjects such as languages, social sciences, humanities, physical sciences, education, mathematics, arts, music, sports, engineering, medicine, pharmacy, agriculture and forestry (p.215). This may seem unexceptionable and broad based, till we notice the disciplines that are missing. These include, unsurprisingly, women's/ gender studies, cultural studies, media studies, dalit studies, studies of discrimination and exclusion, disability studies, environmental studies, development studies amongst others.

Many of these disciplines/ fields have developed in recent decades, through complex political processes, negotiations, even struggles for survival. Each one of these has enriched our understanding and opened up spaces for critical engagement. Eliminating these spaces will mean that future generations will no longer be able to access knowledge and insights that have been accumulated painstakingly, and often in the face of institutional and other opposition, in domains that are closely related to long term and sustained democratization.

In the case of other, 'traditional' disciplines such as history, the DNEP adopts a somewhat different approach. Here we find an attempt to shift attention from history to Indology. At one level, this may seem to be a good thing. Studies of ancient history have benefited immensely from the contributions of several Indologists, who have enriched our understanding of ancient texts and art forms, and have deciphered inscriptions in several scripts and languages. However, what is sadly ironical is that the shift from history to Indology is being envisaged precisely at the moment when

history itself has diversified immensely. History is no longer confined to listing ruling dynasties and the exploits of kings. In fact, the focus has increasingly shifted to ordinary people, who would be classified as the URGs in the terminology of the DNEP. These include ordinary people, working women and men, hunters, gatherers, fisherfolk, those engaged in craft production and commerce, those belonging to marginalized castes and communities, and to relatively neglected regions such as the north east.

While professional education merits a separate and detailed discussion, I will simply flag the way in which the discussion on legal education is framed. On the one hand we are informed that: This Policy envisages a law education that is informed and illuminated with Constitutional values of Justice - Social, Economic and Political -and directed towards national reconstruction through instrumentation of democracy, rule of law and human rights.

At the same time, and almost in the same breath, we are told that:

The law curriculum has to fall back upon the culture and traditions of people, the history of legal institutions and victory of "Dharma" over "Adharma" writ large in Indian literature and mythology. [p.303]

One can only wonder how Constitutional values can be accommodated within the dharmic framework. While dharma is occasionally defined in universalistic terms, it tends, more often than not, to be contextualized in terms of varna, ashrama and gender. In other words, far from a uniform dharma, dharma is supposed to vary according to the varna to which a man belongs, as well as to his stage of life, and is envisaged as ideally being different for women and men. We can only speculate on the implications of such a reworking of legal discourse.

If disciplinary spaces are likely to be reshaped and redefined, and carefully circumscribed to limit the possibilities of inter-disciplinary studies, research is also likely to be carefully regulated. The DNEP states that researchers will be expected 'to connect such research across disciplines with societal needs and with governmental bodies and with industry' (p. 228). More explicitly, it is stated that:

It is also extremely important to note that only the government can have the perspective to drive the research that will result in innovations that will facilitate economic growth(p.267). Funds for research will be available through a National Research Fund (NRF) with an annual budget of Rs 20,000/- crores (p.270). What is more, the Governing Board of the NRF will be constituted by the RSA (Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog), (p. 271) headed by the Prime Minister (p. 391).

At another level, there seems to be an attempt to circumscribe reservations. For higher education institutions, there is provision for a National Scholarship Fund, for students who may need such assistance (p. 245). In the context of professional education, institutions providing these 'will... be required to fulfil their social obligations and provide scholarships to students from the socially and economically weaker sections of society. Up to 50 % of students qualifying for admission must receive some degree of scholarships, and a minimum 20 % must receive full scholarships' (p.300). Ironically, the students who are eligible for such waivers are to be identified on the basis of 'the latest NSSO survey' (p.335), something that may prove increasingly difficult in a situation where the very existence of the NSSO is at stake.

While there have been endless debates about the efficacy of reservations as affirmative action, it needs to be emphasized that this remains one of the most important means of providing the less privileged with access to higher education institutions, even as we need to work continuously towards rendering access meaningful.

If reservations now seem to be a grey area, we simultaneously find an attempt to reinstate modes of governance for higher education which would undo several of the practices that are now common, thanks to teachers' movements that have been active for decades in different parts of the country. As part of this strategy, Vice Chancellors will be designated as Chief Executives. The power to develop institutions plans will be vested in a Board of Governors. The Chief Executive: 'shall be free to close, reconstitute, redefine membership and change structures currently existing within the HEI [higher education institution]' (p. 316). Similar principles will guide the choice of heads of departments and deans (ibid.). The space for elected representatives in bodies such as the executive council and the academic council will cease to exist.

In other words, while higher education institutions at present function through a somewhat

messy negotiation between hierarchical and democratic precepts and practices, this will be streamlined and reduced to a neat hierarchy that will be beyond contestation and negotiation. Sooner or later then, students will be reduced into consumers, and teachers into service providers. The dense, complex, transformative potential of education will be lost, perhaps irretrievably.

Timeframes

Finally, it is also useful to remind ourselves about the pace of change which we may be ill equipped to handle. The DNEP was one of the first documents to be released, on 1st June 2019, after the government took over on 30th May 2019. Responses, in an online mode that was not always easily accessible, were invited till 31st July. According to reports published in mid-August 2019, about 70,000 responses had been received, of which 5 percent were identified as significant. As of now, it is not possible to assess the process by which these responses have been analyzed and classified.

Several far-reaching changes are envisaged by next year. These include updating the National Curriculum Framework, converting all higher education institutions into either research or teaching universities or autonomous colleges, and the setting up of the Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog, to be headed by the Prime Minister. The implications of all these changes, which are promised by 2020, need to be carefully assessed.

Alternatives?

The possibility of envisaging alternatives rests in reiterating our constitutional values. Some of these receive recognition in the DNEP. These include democratic outlook and commitment to liberty and freedom; equality, justice, and fairness, embracing diversity, plurality, and inclusion; humaneness and fraternal spirit; social responsibility and the spirit of service; ethics of integrity and honesty, scientific temper and commitment to rational and public dialogue; peace; social action through Constitutional means; unity and integrity of the nation, and a true rootedness and pride in India with a forward-looking spirit to continuously improve as a nation [e.g. p. 96, p. 201, also p. 202, p. 231].

A significant word that is missing is secularism. Perhaps we need to begin by trying to reinsert it, and move on to reinforcing the other values that are listed, bringing to bear on these the strength, experience, and wisdom that women's movements and women's studies have accumulated over decades, and ensuring that hard won gains are preserved and cherished rather than being consigned to oblivion and obliterated.

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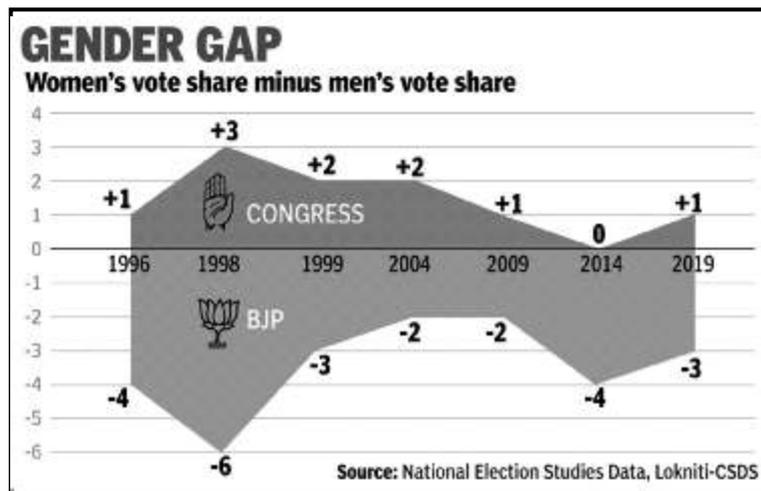
Gender wise Politics: To What Extent did Women's Vote Contribute to the BJP's Spectacular Victory?

Rajeshwari Deshpande

Just as they were about Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Pulwama, the 2019 Lok Sabha elections were also about welfare and women. It is argued that welfare schemes like Ujjwala became popular among women and attracted them to BJP.

Discussion on women's empowerment in Indian politics was revived during these elections in the wake of the gradual increase in women's turnout in state assembly elections over the past few years and the closing of the gender gap in turnout. Although slogans like 'beti bachao, beti padhao' have remained blemished by the growing social insecurities for women, political parties tried to outdo each other in attracting women voters.

More substantial interventions came from regional parties like BJD and TMC when they



reserved candidatures for women. This strategy paid off when the highest ever number of women MPs entered the Lok Sabha this time. If 'winning women' constituted one part of the arrival of women's constituency in the 2019 elections, the distinctive nature of women's vote must be seen as the other important, though neglected part of the story.

What do we know about women's voting patterns in Indian elections? Given the layered nature of gender realities in India, do women always vote as women? The National Election Studies conducted by the Lokniti group may help us answer such questions in a more nuanced way. These data sets track the Indian elections since 1996 and they indicate some long term trends regarding the nature of women's vote. The first is about gender advantage to Congress among women voters. In most Lok Sabha elections since 1996 the party enjoyed slightly higher support among women than among men at the all India level.

The gender gap in favour of Congress is neutralised though in the 2014 and 2019 elections. It also gets neutralised and/or reversed if we disaggregate the women's vote at the state level. What can be termed as a macro level advantage to Congress among women varies considerably from region to region, indicating how women's vote is shaped by the overall regional dynamics of politics rather than forming a distinctive women's constituency at the all India level.

The NES data of the past seven Lok Sabha elections also indicates a clear and consistent gender disadvantage to BJP among women voters. This was a consistent trend so far, both at the macro and the micro level. The big question for the 2019 elections therefore is whether BJP was able to reverse these trends. Was it able to change its image as a less preferred party among women and whether and to what extent women's vote contributed to the making of its spectacular victory?

Empirical social scientific analysis will never give us a black and white narrative. Gender wise voting patterns in the 2019 elections reveal interesting trends in this respect. The first is about continued gender disadvantage to BJP among women voters. Compared to elections in 2014, there was a significant increase in the overall vote share of BJP in these elections. However, the party's support comes more from men than women.

As a result there is a 3 percentage points gender gap against the BJP among women voters. More importantly the gender gap persists even when the influence of other social indicators like caste, class, educational achievements or locality for women voters of BJP is neutralised in the tests of statistical significance.

Trends from NES data suggest that, on average, BJP still remains a less preferred party for women across different social groups. There is no doubt it benefitted from the popularity of women centric welfare schemes like Ujjwala. Beneficiaries of Ujjawla scheme have favoured BJP. However, the support among women beneficiaries is only moderately higher than BJP's average vote share - again around 3 percentage points - and the data does not reveal disproportionate presence of women among Ujjwala beneficiaries.

What does all this mean for the politics of BJP and for women's politics? One, that BJP needs to invest more than its attractive slogans in order to neutralise its disadvantage among women voters in future. Two, the fact that despite its growing political dominance lesser number of Indian

women than men support BJP, perhaps points to a nuanced arrival of a distinctive women's constituency in Indian politics.

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Status of Women's Studies Centre's in Vidarbha (Maharashtra): 'The UGC Neither allows them to Beg, Nor do the Universities Allow them to Live'

Dhammasangini Rama Gorakh

This article looks at the trajectory and current status of Women's Studies Centres in Vidarbha. I am going to highlight my critical understanding on the following three points -

- Teaching and research work done by the centers.
- Infrastructure and administrative status of Women's Studies Centers.
- Obstacles in development of these centers.

Women studies centers in Vidarbha are struggling for their meaningful existence:

There are four Women's Studies Centers in Vidarbha. Two of them are located in Universities (S G B Amravati University and R T M Nagpur University) and two in colleges (J M Patel College, Bhandara and, L A D College, Nagpur); all are UGC sponsored.

The first centre was established by the Nagpur University in 2005 and the Amravati centre in 2010. These centers have miserably failed to promote substantial energy both to academics and the women's movement. It should be noted that unlike the other centers in Maharashtra, the establishment of these centers in Vidarbha was not an outcome of the demand by the women's movement.

Though WSCs had been started in Mumbai and other parts of Maharashtra in the decade of the 80s, and though two of the pioneering activists of the women's emancipation movement, Dr. Seema Sakhare and Dr. Rupa Kulkarni had been involved in the initial interventions, the Centre were set up much later in 2005 at Nagpur, and that too by ignoring these two pioneering women activists. The Center was started under the honorary directorship of a person who did not come from a women's movement/ Studies background. The programmes run by the centre included candle making, personality development, tree plantation, guidance for competitive exams, Mehendi (henna) designing and library courses etc. It was only in 2010 that a P.G. diploma course was started, followed by a M.A. course in 2012. Ironically, not a single subject on feminism was included in the syllabus of the post-graduation degree course of 'Women Studies.' In 2010, a Women's Studies Centre was started at Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University, Amravati. Since their inception, neither of the Directors nor the teaching staff which was appointed in the first phase have any background of the discipline of Women's Studies. Women's studies centre in the J.M. Patel College, Bhandara and L. A.D. College, Nagpur have not started any formal teaching programme yet. Although both the coordinators of these Centres, coming from Sociology and Literature backgrounds respectively are very sensitive about gender issues, they lack the support structure necessary for teaching programmes.

Curricula and Teaching of Women's Studies: Far away from the Gender Discourse

Since the WSCs in Vidarbha have no Directors with a background of Women's Studies or the Women's Movement, the curricula and status of teaching is far away from the gender discourse. Even if one takes into account the interdisciplinary aspect of Women's Studies, the teaching and research faculty have not contributed to Women's Studies or the gender discourse even in their own discipline. They were not even aware about the integrated gender discourse of women's studies. In Nagpur, the curriculum introduced by the Centre was also far away from gender discourse.

An overview of the programmes organized by the centres and subjects or issues introduced

by them makes it very clear that the Centres are just nominally alive. They don't have a sense of gender discourse. The UGC has not taken heed of this grave situation.

Students' issues

In comparison to Universities in metropolitan cities like Pune and Mumbai, Universities of this region which is considered 'backward' in terms of development are lacking in the quality of education as well as infrastructure, which makes it worse for newly established centres. The question is what kind of quality of education students will get from these Centres where only a single teacher is appointed. Without a sufficient number of quality teachers and infrastructural facilities, the surviving Women's Studies Centres cannot offer holistic knowledge to their students. Further, most of the reference books in Women's Studies are in English. Lack of internet facilities, lack of reference books in regional language and insufficient teachers have marked a threat to the employment opportunities for students studying in such universities. In nearly all universities in Maharashtra, Assistant Professors appointed in WSCs under the 12th five year Plan are from the Pune University. Similarly, activists, researchers, etc, who advocate gender issues through big agencies and NGOs are from TISS, Mumbai. This implies that those who receiving education in metropolitan Universities are the ones getting employment as teachers, researchers and activists in these areas, seriously undermining employment opportunities for students from these parts. The absence of teachers coming from rural, backward regions inculcates a feeling of inferiority in students coming from similar backgrounds and it also leads to an absence of a rural and regional critique and understanding in Women's Studies. The students of WSCs here are forced to learn Women's Studies through a metropolitan lens. It appears that metropolitan pedagogy, research, teaching and advocacy are conquering regional spaces and making them colonies in the field of knowledge production.

For Funding: Files are Wandering from Table to Table

The major problem is that although the teaching staff at the centres might get an extension of tenure, there is no permanency, since the UGC doesn't convert Centres into regular Departments. The Maharashtra State government has also shown reluctance to absorb teaching posts as regular posts. Only in the Pune centre, the State government has given concurrence to two teaching posts. However, it is neglecting its responsibility of appointing teaching and non-teaching staff as regular staff in other universities in Maharashtra. Unlike other Universities, which make financial provisions for Women's Studies Centres in the regular budget and provide infrastructure and services, in Vidarbha, WSCs are awaiting basic facilities like internet, computers as well as financial support for day to day expenses.

The Centres have mostly been run with honorary Directors. Whenever staff has been appointed, they have had to wait for months to get their salaries. In case of the Nagpur Centre, all non-teaching staff had to quit for lack of salary for 6-7 months. The Centre struggles with lack of adequate teaching and non-teaching staff, and non-appointments even in case of sanctioned plan posts. At present the Centre nominally runs with two staff, one Assistant Professor with honorary charge of Directorship and one Research Associate. Since the past ten months, both are waiting for their due salary. The University authorities are pointing to the lack of UGC grant. However, when the Centre asked the UGC, they demanded details of the utilization of the grant. The University is not giving advance financial support, as a result of which no activities can be conducted. How is one to arrange for the UC and face and tackle this terrible situation? In short we can say that, 'The UGC neither allows to Beg, Nor do the Universities Allow them to Live'

There is an urgent need to aggressively fight against the undemocratic value system and insensitive attitude towards Women's Studies in the field of higher education. Some suggested measures are:

1. Women's studies should be made a compulsory paper for undergraduate courses
2. It is necessary to institute a National level Board of Women's Studies which can take care, control and monitor the issues related to syllabus of Women's Studies, appointment of teachers of Women's Studies, and also issues related to research and other activities.
3. It is very important to clarify the responsibility regarding funding; it should be made mandatory to convert all Centres into Departments and teachers of Centres as regular fulltime teachers.

4. It is important to bring students, researchers and teachers with a regional background in the field of knowledge production. The UGC and MHRD should endeavour in this regard in terms of policy formulation in collaboration with regional voices.
5. Taking into consideration the purpose of establishing Women's Studies in India, central and states governments should utilize the potential of Women's Studies Centres in policy formulation to bring gender equality in society.

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Reports

The Jharkhand Project: Towards Developing Women's Studies in Jharkhand

Sayali Shankar

The IAWS has been trying to develop a regional focus, specifically through its regional conferences and workshops that seek to document and debate region specific women's issues and their linkages with the wider political economy of the states and regions in India, as also the specific regional experiences of women's movements. One of the key tasks taken up by the IAWS during the recent period has been a dialogue, networking and engagement with issues faced by women's studies centres across India. While addressing the problems in and with institutionalization of women's studies centres, it has also identified a regional imbalance in the development of women's studies and sought to work towards facilitating the establishment of women's studies in institutions and regions where such centres are non-existent or weakly endowed.

It is within this background that the IAWS planned a targeted intervention in Jharkhand through a project supported by the Oak Foundation since July 2016. Jharkhand is a state with a significant presence of several tribal communities and their movements, with extreme poverty coexisting with rapid changes taking place in the state's natural resource base, with long histories of labor migration, and where the women's studies movement has yet to gain momentum. The plan of action, thus, has been of intensive engagement for a prolonged period, and of combining networking, collaborating, conferencing, and alliance building with direct support for research and documentation in women's studies.

The spread of women's studies in India has been uneven across states. In eastern India, while it has struck roots in the states of West Bengal and Odisha - Jharkhand and Bihar have yet to develop. Where even remote states in north eastern India have established women's studies centres, no university in Jharkhand has yet done so and there has been a marked decline in the functioning of women's cells in colleges.

The Economics department at Ranchi University has hosted this IAWS programme. It provided nodal institutional support for the project and a women's studies centre has been set up there. This first phase of the IAWS programme in Jharkhand was aimed at achieving a wider support base for women's studies in Jharkhand, establishing a core group of networked individuals and institutions that can lead women's studies in the state and facilitate its relationship with grass root movements aimed at gender just social transformation, lay the foundations of resources that can be used to formalize women's studies centres in institutions of higher education in Jharkhand, link the Jharkhand based groups and individuals who may be involved in isolated struggles on women's issues within academic institutions as well as in grass root organizations with the pan-Indian movement, and thereby strengthen informed interventions

The project began with the objective of generating interest and sustaining a dialogue between teachers, researchers, students and feminist activists in Jharkhand, and facilitating their interaction with the wider women's studies community in other parts of India. A series of dialogues/discussions were initiated by the IAWS EC with several establishments, institutions and individual academics and activists in Jharkhand, including Ranchi University, Ranchi Women's College, Institute of Human Development (IHD), Jharkhand, Asian Development Research Institute (ADRI), Jharkhand, Centre for Human Rights and Conflict Management, Central University of Jharkhand, etc. Initially a preliminary review of syllabi was undertaken to assess the extent of inclusion of women's issues as subject matter in courses across disciplines. This review pointed out that some aspects related to women and gender issues are covered by all departments in varying degrees. A review of how women's studies is practiced in Ranchi University was also done through an annotated record of PhD theses on issues of women and gender in various social science and humanities departments in Ranchi University. This review brought out that 53 PhD theses on women related issues were submitted in the period of 2012-2016.

An attempt was then made to put together a team of students through a Forum of Research Scholars comprising more than 50 research scholars (both women and men) in Ranchi University from the Departments of Economics, Home Science, Political Science, Sociology, History, Tribal and

Regional Languages. This platform has been useful for consistent discussion amongst researchers on women's/gender issues and for providing them orientation in conceptual and methodological frameworks in women's studies for their research work on women/gender. The Centre has thus developed linkages with development organizations working on women's issues in Jharkhand, such as Jagori, Ekjut, AALI etc. It organized workshops/lectures of resource persons from these organizations during this period in order to introduce university/college students to the insights and experiences of these organizations gained from working at the field level.

Similarly in order to build research capacities of local researchers within academia and civil society organisations to work on women's issues in Jharkhand through field based research, 8 research grants were disbursed and also a PhD scholarship. Some of the research questions pursued through this programme are: 'Mapping Changes in Adivasi Women's Access to Control over Land', 'Gendering the Study of Santals: An Inquiry into the Portrayal Construction and Agency of Santal Women', 'A Study of Socio-Economic Status of Women Labourers in Hazaribagh District of Jharkhand', etc. A Regional Workshop on 'Documenting Women's Experiences in the Movement: Issues, Experiences and Struggles', organised at Kanke (on the outskirts of Ranchi) in September 2016, drew on the experiences of participant activists from Jharkhand and other parts of north India. A special panel focused on current debates in Jharkhand. The workshop was able to document a wide spectrum of experiences of the women's movement in the region. A seminar on 'The Changing Worlds of Tribal Women' was organised in collaboration with Vinoba Bhave University, Hazaribagh in November 2017, where tribal women, specifically from eastern and north-eastern India, significantly spoke about their experiences as tribal, workers and migrants. The differences in their voices brought a new dimension to the seminar.

Encouraged by such a unique intervention to develop women's studies in the space of higher education with the strengthening of and networking between the governmental, non-governmental and civil society initiatives for gender equality, our project is being expanded outside Ranchi, in other sub-regions of Jharkhand.

Report compiled by Sayali Shankar, KSP Women's Studies Centre,
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Report of the IAWS Southern Regional Conference, Kozhikode, Kerala

Elizabeth V. S

The IAWS Southern Regional Conference was held at the EMS Seminar Complex on the University of Calicut Campus, Malappuram District, Kerala on January 30th and 31st, 2019. It was jointly organized by the IAWS, Kerala Institute for Local Administration (KILA) and Department of Women's Studies, University of Calicut. The theme for the conference was Intersectional Approaches to Addressing Gender, Religion, Culture - South India Focus.

Mini Sukumar (the Conference co-ordinator and Head of the Department of Women's Studies of the University of Calicut) delivered the welcome address. Meera Velayudhan, President, IAWS chaired the inaugural session, drew attention of the gathering to the 37 year old history of the IAWS and the changes that have taken place in terms of the conception of issues relating to violence while at the same time providing the context for the selection of the theme the need to look at violence today from caste, class, ethnicity, sexualities etc. At the same time it is important to realise how these identities intersect and this conference is going to look into the methodologies to be used and the implications for agency. Other speakers at the inaugural session were Salma, a noted Tamil writer and political leader, who inaugurated the conference and read a poem she had written on women's experiences of fear. Other speakers at the inaugural were Dr.Mridul Eapen (Member, Kerala State Planning Board), Dr.Indu Agnihotri and K. Ajitha (President, Anweshi, Kozhikode).

The first technical session was on Gender, Religion, Culture: Patriarchies and Power. It was chaired by V.S. Elizabeth, (Southern Region Coordinator, IAWS and Professor, National Law School of India University, Bangalore). The keynote speech was delivered by Gabriel Dietrich, Sociologist, Theological seminary, Madurai. She provided a framework for the theme of the

conference within which the discussions could take place: freedom of religion on the one hand and on the other women and religion. V.P. Sugar from NISA, Muslim Women's Association, Kozhikode discussed the various problems of Muslim women, such as the polygamy and triple talaq, and stressed that the oppression of women in Islam was not because of the religion itself but by the religious priesthood or clergy that functions within patriarchy. Sherin B.S. from the EFL University of Hyderabad analyzed the complexity of the social situation after the verdicts of Supreme Court in the Sabarimala issue. Hameeda C.K. and Aparna Easwaran, Department of Women's studies, JNU discussed the contradictions between feminism and religion. Their focus was on the social circumstances and the responses of various sections of the society after the Supreme Court verdict, in the context of Kerala in particular.

The second session was on Interrogating Violence and Honor in the context of Inter-caste/Inter community Relations. The session was chaired by Dr. Beula Shekhar, Director of Centre for Women's Studies, M.S.University, Thirunelveli. In this session, there were four presentations by Sujatha Surepally, from Satavahana University, Telangana, Mridula Devi Sasidharan, a Dalit activist and writer from Kerala, Dr. M. Meera, Institute of Development Studies, University of Mysore, Karnataka and Celine Suguna from Vimochana, Karnataka. They all provided empirical evidence of the extent of violence due to inter-caste marriages, analysing the reasons for the same and the state response to such violence. Mridula Sasidharan said that instead of referring to them as honor killings they should be called caste based killings. In the discussions following the presentations participants said that there was need for not only the annihilation of caste but the annihilation of gender differences also. There was also discussion on reservation as a tool and the problem regarding reservation for transpersons from discriminated caste and communities such as Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims etc.

The third session was Gender Discrimination in Natural Disaster: Programme, Policy and Law with South Indian Focus. This session was chaired by Gabriela Dietrich, Sociologist from Tamilnadu Theological seminary and the key note speech was delivered by Dr.Mridul Eapen, member, Kerala State Planning Board. She talked about the gender dimensions of the disaster management programmes in Kerala and the practical problems of rebuilding Kerala. The first paper was presented by Anandi T.K. Gender Advisor, Government of Kerala. The next speaker was Dr. Iris Coelho on the "Okhi" Cyclone Rehabilitation Programme and its effect on the fisher folk in the coastal areas of southern Kerala and the influence of the Catholic Church organization, religion, caste and patriarchy on their daily life. Delegates pointed out the double standards of educated Kerala citizens on issues of caste and marginal community status. The discussion also pointed out the ignorance of state actors regarding transgender persons and their special needs in disaster management.

The fourth session on Contemporary Challenges of Women Studies and Women Studies Centers was chaired by Dr. N. Manimekalai (Joint Secretary, IAWS and Professor, Bharathidasan University of Thiruchirappally, Tamilnadu). This session was about what actually Women's Studies centres do, and the challenges and issues faced by them. A. Suneetha, Anweshi, Hyderabad stressed on the need for an intersectional approach. Deepa Srinivas from the Centre for Women's Studies, University of Hyderabad narrated the struggle of teaching women's studies as an academic discipline and the struggle of dealing with the demands of employability from the administration which is influenced by the global agenda of efficiency and liberalisation. The third presentation by Dr. Sheeba K.M. from Sree Sankaracharya University for Sanskrit, Kalady, Kerala drew attention to the experience of starting a UGC-funded innovative post graduate programme on Gender, Ecology and Dalit Studies from 2009-2015. She also mentioned the need for approaching the question of intersectionality in terms of methodological and pedagogical questions and how to approach the question in a meaningful way. The last paper was by Dr. Niyati R. Krishna, Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development, Sri Perumbathur, Tamilnadu. She explained the role of women's studies centres and feminism and explained the need for revision of syllabus through critical reflections on hetero-normativity and the fluidity of gender.

The pre-dinner talk was by Fowsia Fathima, cinematographer and a member of Women in Cinema Collective (WCC), a recently formed union of women working in the film industry in Kerala. She shared her experiences in the male dominated film industry as a woman camera person. She

also showed a documentary film that she had made about an NGO on ethical trade initiatives that emphasized women's participation in economic activities and raise their voices for their rights.

The second day of the Conference started with a joint panel [IAWS and Kerala Institute for Local Administration (KILA)] on Addressing Gender Inequalities in Local Governance and Decentralisation. The session was chaired by Dr. Meera Velayudhan, President of IAWS and the keynote speech was delivered by Dr. Joy Elamon, the director of KILA. Advocate ThulasiBhai (popularly known Thulasi teacher), the President of All Kerala Grama Panchayath Presidents Association talked about the increased political participation of women through reservation in local governance. She talked about the limitations and challenges faced in identifying the LGBTIQ people in her panchayat. The next presentation was by K.T. Kalai Selvi, a researcher, from Pondicherry Central University who talked about women from different communities - class, and caste - and their participation in local governance. The next speaker was Soya Thomas who talked about the Kudumbasree experiences in addressing gender inequalities at local level and presented an evaluation of Kudumbasree activities. Prijith, from Queerhythm talked about transgender policies and the need for representation of transgender communities in the government system.

The next session consisted of paper presentations by young scholars from various disciplines and was chaired by Mini Sukumar and K.M. Sheeba. There were many interesting papers on a variety of topics which was an eye opener for the delegates in terms of the issues that the younger generation is interested in and potential areas for research for the future.

The last session of the conference was on New Modes of Activism: Remaking the Gender Order (Dalit, Adivasi, Muslim Women, LGBTIQ, Disability Rights, Urban Groups, Labour Unions) and was chaired by Dr Indu Agnihotri. The first presentation in this session was by Sana Suman, from Ondede, Bengaluru. She said that most of the transgender members of the community commented on the need for access to food, shelter and health facilities and that safe sex and HIV prevention are secondary for the community. She said that though the transgender community failed to integrate with the women's movement at first, today transgender persons have made significant steps towards convergence, as many of the issues faced are similar. Transgender persons, just like women, are subjected to sexual abuse, insult and domestic violence. She said it is appreciable that the Government of Kerala came up with a transgender policy which is indeed quite comprehensive. This is despite the fact that states like Karnataka have had a much longer history of transgender movements and organizations.

The next presentation was by Viji, from 'Penkoottu', a feminist organization Kozhikode who talked about the struggle against the established trade unions (who never acknowledged the value of women's labor in unorganized work) and also how they had to lobby with the government to formulate policies and laws for women in the unorganised sector. Gumisayi Bonzo, Trans Smart Trust, Zimbabwe, spoke about her work in Zimbabwe while Delfina, Naseema Nasrin and Rachna shared their experience as transpersons and stressed the importance of acknowledging the diversities in the community.

The Vice Chancellor of University of Calicut, Dr. K. Mohammed Basheer delivered the valedictory address. He congratulated the organizers and extended support for programmes in future. Dr. Meera Velayudhan, the President of IAWS and Mini Sukumar, Head of the Department of Women's Studies, University of Calicut shared their extreme happiness in completing the conference successfully under their joint coordination and with the strong support of the IAWS Southern Regional Committee. Some of the participants and delegates also shared their experiences of the two-day conference. Then Ms. Layana Aanand, Assistant Professor, Department of Women's Studies delivered the vote of thanks on behalf of the Indian Association of Women's Studies (IAWS), Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA), and Department of Women's Studies, University of Calicut.

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Report on the Indian History Congress 2019, Bhopal

Akhil Kumar Gupta

The Indian History Congress's 79th session was organized from 26th to 28th February 2019 by RCVN Noronha Academy of Administration and Management at Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. From the six sections, 92 out of 860 listed research papers were related to women.

In Section 1: Ancient India (President: Prof. Om Prakash Srivastava) 142 research papers were read, out of which 16 research papers were centered around different women's issues. In the Women's History sub-section 14 research papers were presented. The main subjects included were Devdasis in early medieval records, Devdasis in southern India, Women's Empowerment in the era of Buddhism etc.

In Section 2: Medieval India (President: Prof. K.S.S Seshan), out of 152 research papers 9 were based on women. In the Gender and Patriarchy sub-section 4 papers were related to women. In the research papers, patriarchal questions in the works of Amir Khusro, a look at the royal women of Vijaynagar, gender in the Sanskrit erotic texts of 15th - 16th century and questions related to women's history were raised.

In Section 3: Modern India (President: Prof. Ravindran Gopinath) out of 362 research papers 41 research papers were related to women. 13 research papers were presented in the sub-section on Women's History. These research papers mainly focused on princely states, Mahatma Gandhi, the role of women from Bihar, Manipur and north Karnataka in the freedom struggle, Dalit Women's Empowerment struggle in Pre- Independent Kerala, women's education and health and women in research.

In Section 4: Countries other than India (President: Prof. Manorajan Mohanty) 38 research papers were read in which not one was related to women.

In Section 5: Archaeology (President: Prof. Susana Ganesh Rao) 41 research papers were presented and none of them were related to women.

In Section 6: Contemporary History (President: Prof. C P Chandrasekhar) out of 120 research papers, 26 papers were related to women. 19 research papers were presented in the sub-section of Gender. Issues and topics related to contemporary women were discussed in this section, such as the health scenario of tribal women of South Odisha, the traditional Rai dancers of Madhya Pradesh, legacy of the Mother in Pondicherry, and Empowering Women through Education. Other than the list of papers, another 340 research papers were also included in the three days, out of which 38 research papers were women related.

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Report of IAWS Eastern Regional Conference

Ishita Mukhopadhyay

The Eastern Regional Conference was jointly organized by Centre for Women's Studies, Rabindrabharati University, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Studies Centre, Rabindrabharati University, Aapne Aap, Sruti Disability Rights Centre, and 21st Century Knowledge Initiative, University of Calcutta on 19-20 November, 2018.

The venue was the historic Jorasanko Campus of Rabindrabharati University, a place where Tagore spent his childhood days and the Tagore family lived. The National Alliance of Women's Organizations was also a collaborator in the event. The theme of the conference was 'Increasing Vulnerabilities, Facing Challenges, Women's Leadership and the Movement'. The conference focused on increasing vulnerabilities against women in contemporary India, particularly in the Eastern states. The subthemes described the different dimensions of vulnerabilities. These also include CEDAW's concluding comments on India in the last CEDAW session. The conference also provided the basis for a consultation in Eastern India with activists on the issues, which then made its way into the preparation of an Alternate CEDAW Report in 2019.

The conference was initiated by a vibrant Round Table on Women's Studies as a discipline. Prof. Malini Bhattacharya gender expert and activist was the keynote speaker. Meera Velayudhan, President, IAWS, Ruth Manorama, NAWO and others addressed the session. Malini Bhattacharya spoke of exclusion and the present ideological crisis in the education policy regarding the status of women's studies. She talked about criticality of the discipline of women's studies, ideology of socialist feminism and the ability of the discipline to deconstruct the existing knowledge base. Meera Velayudhan started with the history of IAWS as well as the debate within IAWS on where should women's studies be located and how it will be institutionalized. She also mentioned intersectionality and regional diversity in our country. Ruth Manorama spoke of the process of CEDAW and the international consensus of the CEDAW process and how the process is carried on in our country. The session was also addressed by GS Muralidharan, National Platform for Disability Rights (NPDR) who spoke on the question of disability and gender. He mentioned the lack of sensitivity about the gender and disability question in our country and intensified problem of vulnerabilities in these cases.

The question of the problems and issues of women's studies also came up during the valedictory session on the second day. This was addressed by faculty members, students and researchers of Women Studies in the region, which included West Bengal, Orissa, Bihar and Jharkhand. Prof. Swati Ghosh, Director, CWS, RBU, Kolkata, Prof. Aparna Banerjee, DHU, Kolkata, Nityananda Barik, Utkal University, Orissa, Veena Kumari Jaswal, Ranchi University, Jharkhand and many others joined in the discussion. It centered on the questions of challenges of Women Studies as an academic discipline, strategies of strengthening Women Studies and women's movement nexus, concerns of emerging grass roots movements and the question of gender, young women's concerns and perspectives in identity politics. Prof. Sanjukta Dasgupta referred to Tagore and the need for women studies to look into the intersectionality of caste, class, and region, religion. Prof. Anjan Chakrabarti referred to the critical lens of Women Studies towards the existing norm of gender, androcentrism, patriarchy and even heterosexuality. He looked at Women Studies as a vehicle of social change. Prof. Swati Ghosh referred to the need for solidarity in the difficult times where vulnerabilities are increasing each day. The session was chaired by Prof. Ritu Dewan, IAWS. The two-day conference had the following subthemes :

1. Issues relating to girl child labor, child marriage and sexual violence
2. Violence against Dalit women, Adivasi women, and minorities
3. Disability and Gender
4. Women's Entrepreneurship and leadership question
5. Employment, migration and wages
6. Trafficking and Prostitution
7. Climate Change as a challenge

Prof. Ishita Mukhopadhyay, IAWS explained the justification of the subthemes. Both academicians and activists participated in the sessions.

Session 1 had participation by scholars from Orissa, Bengal and civil society organizations from all the states in the region. The discussions focused on the recent legal reforms and the existing Acts regarding marriage and divorce. Violation of human rights of girl child domestic workers was analyzed and presented. Hazardous work participation by girl children due to poverty was discussed and evidence analyzed. Rising sexual offences against adolescent girls was discussed in another research paper. Underreporting of cases by survivors is still a major problem and the "silent epidemic" continues. The session was chaired by Kiran Moghe, EC Member of the IAWS.

Session 2 was chaired by Nivedita Sakil, social activist from Bihar. Faculties and researchers from all the states presented their research, while the activists joined in the discussions. The session was initiated by the chairperson wherein she highlighted the vulnerability and social exclusion of Muslim, Dalit and Adivasi women in this region. The discussion went on to focus on their declining socio-economic status through time. Mob lynching is an added atrocity. The seven speakers who presented papers on domestic violence, patriarchal traditional village institutions, discrimination faced by the community in transport and similarities/dissimilarities with North Eastern tribal society also led to thoughtful discussions from activists and researchers.

Session 3 discussed the question of disability. Chaired by Shampa Sengupta, activist and

researcher of Sruti Disability Rights Centre, the interlocking of the issues were flagged off by the activists of Pashchimbanga Rajya Protobondhi Sammilani, Bihar Vikalanga Adhikar Mancha, Kolkata Sannidhya working with acid attack survivors, and parents of disabled children. Researchers in the region presented papers on eye health problems of women in Sundarbans region, impaired ability and gendered health problems, and physical violence on women in Orissa and induced disability.

Session 4 was chaired by Prof. Sanjukta Dasgupta, gender expert and writer. The researchers talked about the process of empowerment, freedom and functioning of women entrepreneurs, and microfinance programmes. The case studies narrated and stories of primary surveys undertaken by them roused interest among the participants. There was huge participation from microfinance recipients and self-help groups of women who spoke of their life experiences, from where the researchers could modify and qualify their thoughts. There was also an exhibition-cum-sale of their products at the venue, which enlivened the event.

Session 5 was chaired by Prof. Swati Ghosh, gender expert. This session had a large participation of women workers from coalmines, centrally sponsored scheme workers and others along with research papers. Oral testimonies of the women workers were heard and they spoke of their own perspective of women's work. Research papers from Census and NSSO data and other primary surveys were also presented. There were also some theoretical discussions on women's work in the public and private sphere and rural and urban areas. Pull and push factors and their intertwining were discussed in one of the papers. The issue of disaster induced migration was also presented. Workers talked about the plight of deserted, widow and otherwise lone women workers, who are impoverished, bound to work at low wages for survival. The total absence of social security was raised. The impact of migration on men and women was found to be different with increased vulnerability for women.

Session 6 discussed the issue of trafficking of women and children and prostitution. The participants were a combination of practitioners, policy makers and theoretical analysts. As the Eastern region is a trafficking prone region there was much to discuss. Policy administrators such as municipal councillors pointed out the total exclusion of women engaged in prostitution and their deplorable condition of survival as well as the mental trauma of children in these areas. An organization working in Bihar and Jharkhand also spoke of the gender discrimination among Adivasis and how brick-kiln women workers are commonly exposed to sexual abuse. Prostitution and work are often seen together. Trafficking for cheap labor and as consequence prostitution was presented with cases in a research paper. Cross-border trafficking was also analyzed in a paper. The role of police and local administration and legal issues were discussed in another research paper. This session was chaired by Dr. Chilka Ghosh, gender expert.

Session 7 dealt with climate change and the increasing vulnerability of women. Chaired by Prof. Ritu Dewan, former President, IAWS this session saw more individual experiences than research papers. One research paper was on women's economic participation in semi-arid rural region and the other was on Sunderbans region. Personal experiences were shared by shrimp cultivators in Orissa, victims who are staying on boats due to river bank erosion and not rehabilitated by the state and others.

More than a 100 researchers and activists participated in the conference. There was a useful exchange between activists and researchers in each session. There were parallel sessions in the two days, which also saw participation by students. Although many students were volunteers in the conference, they also participated in the discussion.

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IAWS and UGC Women's Studies Centres: Solidarity and Collective Action

N. Manimekalai

Women's Studies Centres/Departments have played an important role in building up the discipline of Women's Studies in India. There is a tacit acknowledgement of this in the new Guidelines issued by the UGC (https://www.ugc.ac.in/pdfnews/3849681_Guidelines-for-Womens-Studies-Centres-for-Universities-and-Colleges-05-03-2019.pdf) reflected in the recognition that Departments for Women's Studies need to be created. It may be borne in mind that WSCs have also had more responsibilities than other disciplines in the university system, since they are routinely called upon to conduct gender sensitization activities beyond the confines of their centres, to engage with several disciplines and departments in order to mainstream gender in other disciplines, to serve on sexual harassment committees, and to actively engage in advising and implementing the host of legal and policy measures related to gender that have proliferated in recent times. In sum, WSCs have played and indeed are expected to play an important role in the university system and its outreach into society at large. That they have been able to do so and grow, despite resistance and disdain within university establishments, was because of the support of the UGC. The importance of continued support was reiterated in the public commitment given by the UGC in August 2017.

There have been several issues particularly the non-receipt of grant in time that leads to discontinuity of staff and faculty, stalling of the activities of the Centres and the heavily adverse impact on teaching and research. Several WSCs have either been made dysfunctional or have been merged with other Centres or are just conducting some extension activities. The IAWS organised a National Convention of Women's Studies Centres at Delhi in August 2017, which resulted in the public notice issued by the UGC, assuring continuation of support to the Centres till March 2019. An IAWS delegation met UGC officials and members of the Standing Committee on Women's Studies, to share the anxieties and uncertainties felt by the larger community of students, scholars and activists of women's studies, and to continue the dialogue on sustenance and strengthening of WSCs.

Non-receipt of Funds and Absence of New Guidelines after the 12th Plan:

UGC funding, which is the base on which WSCs function could not be received, nor was there any concrete direction from the UGC about allocation of funding and guidelines for usage. The Public Notices issued in August 2017 and March 2019 did not elaborate on any concrete issues. The WSCs were unable to convince their parent Universities because the public notices issued were for all UGC schemes, while the heads of the Universities or colleges were expecting specific letters from the UGC to WSCs with a clear intimation about fund allocation. Moreover, without any concrete direction from UGC and the non-receipt of grant since March 2017, several WSCs had relieved their staff appointed for teaching, research, professional assistants etc for the 12th Plan period. In some of the WSCs, continuous funding support was extended to get the grant reimbursed. Some other Universities retained minimum supportive staff in order for the Center to remain functional and relieved others. These issues were discussed in the IAWS EC and it was felt that if this situation continues, several other WSCs may also collapse and the very objective and purpose of introducing Women's Studies in academic institutions will be lost. Accordingly, it was resolved to include the discussion about WSCs in regional consultations being organised by the IAWS, and consolidate this and present it to the UGC.

The IAWS therefore constituted a Committee and nominated a Co-ordinator to work on the issues of WSCs. Meanwhile, directives were issued by the UGC to submit UCs till Sept 2017; this put the faculty members of WSCs into further confusion as the Public Notice issued already mentioned that funding would be extended till March 2019. Similarly no new guidelines were issued nor any communication were sent to WSCs as per the earlier practice of the UGC to intimate WSCs before the close of the financial year at the end of the plan period, that previous guidelines were to be followed till new ones were issued.

IAWS Memorandum and Feedback on Draft UGC WS New Guidelines:

In order to draft the Memorandum, the IAWS prepared a proforma that was circulated to all the Centres seeking information on various issues such as status of existing faculty and staff, non-

receipt of phase-wise funds, submission of UCs, present status of the WSCs, teaching programmes, publications, resource materials, faculty development programmes, refresher courses etc. On the basis of the responses received a Memorandum was drafted and the IAWS delegation consisting of Uma Chakravathy (Vice President), N. Manimekalai (Joint Secretary), Ishita Mukhopadhyaya (Treasurer) and Indrani Mazumdar (former General Secretary and EC member) met Archana Thakur, Joint Secretary UGC, the WS Section staff and also the Education Officer on 19th Feb 2019. It appealed to speed up the release of supporting grants and declare the new Guidelines. The UGC responded positively. According to the UGC, since around a third of the WSCs had not submitted the proforma despite several reminders, it had been proposed to flag these Centres as defaulters and reduce their funds. The IAWS delegation pointed out that Directors of WSC often change and that the contacts of the current Directors might not have been updated with the UGC. The delegation expressed its willingness to contact the Centres who have not submitted the proforma if the UGC provided the list. While the UGC agreed to do so, it was ultimately not received despite persistent follow up by the IAWS Coordinator.

The UGC assured continuation of Women's Studies Centres provided the WSCs submitted necessary data in the required proforma along with the UC till Sept 2017. It was further conveyed that the preparation of new guidelines and the communication regarding continuation was in process. The delegation appealed to the UGC to address the grievances of the WSCs at the earliest, and stated that it looked forward to a continued dialogue between WSCs, the UGC and the larger Women's Studies community on multiple issues of concern and on multiple platforms.

New Guidelines 2019 - IAWS Collective Representation:

The UGC New Guidelines for Women's Studies Centres (WSCs) in Indian Universities and Colleges was uploaded on the UGC website on 12th August 2019. The new Guidelines do not mention the historical development of Women's Studies, the general context in which women's studies centres were founded and the important work done in these centres in terms of creating a body of young scholars working on a range of themes. They do not acknowledge the vibrant academic atmosphere in the WSCs which has impacted all other disciplines, especially the impact of gender/women as an analytical category that has begun to impact the social sciences as a whole.

It was expected that the new guidelines would adhere to the public notice issued by the Secretary, UGC on 24th August 2017 which categorically assured the public that there was no proposal to cut funding/support to WSC's being funded by UGC. It has therefore come as a shock to WSCs and particularly those located in the Universities that the new guidelines issued on 05.03.2018 suggest a major cut for all WSCs in Universities. While it is to be appreciated that the grant for colleges is to be raised to Rs. 25 lakhs per annum, the allocation for University Centres has been fixed at Rs 35 lakhs per annum. Such an amount would mean a drastic cut in annual fund allocation by 12.5 lakhs for Phase II Centres, by 29 lakhs for Phase III Centres, and by 40 lakhs for Advanced Centres for Women's Studies in Universities. The budget breakup for the University Centres in the new guidelines further specify that only 45 per cent of the 35 lakhs allocated for WSCs in Universities can be used for staff salaries. From the budget breakup, it would appear that 2 Project Officers, 4 Non-teaching Staff, and a Professor Director are all to be paid out of a monthly budget of Rs 1,31,250. It is quite inexplicable that after stipulating the appointment of a full-time Professor Director with no additional charge, the budget provides for only a monthly allowance of Rs 5000 for the Director, which is apparently meant for additional charge. Indeed no explanation has been given for the reduced allocation anywhere in the guidelines. Nor is there any information on the number of existing WSCs, let alone details regarding how many are in Phase I, Phase II, Phase III, or even the number of Advanced Centres.

This major cut in allocation also means that all the appointments in University based WSCs that have been made during the past ten years according to previous UGC guidelines, will now face summary dismissal, and without any explanation. This will lead to complete disruption of the teaching and research functions. MA students, M.Phil and PhD Scholars in these Centres will all be adversely affected, left without teachers and guides midway in their courses and research activities. Teaching and research activities have not been given their due place in the guidelines, and this is reflected in both the cut in allocations and the lack of provision for personnel for teaching and research. Neglect of students, teaching and research can only lead to shrinking of the community of

Women's Studies students and scholars at a time when the need for their expansion has become even more necessary.

Based on the above identified gaps, the IAWS decided to represent to the UGC to revise the new Guidelines and requested the WSCs to provide it with feedback. Meanwhile, the UGC issued a Public Notice on 20th March 2019, stating that the new Guidelines are a 'Draft' and invited feedback within a deadline of 5th April 2019. The IAWS intensified its efforts and communicated with the WSCs, asking them to send their feedback to UGC and also to the IAWS in order to prepare a collective representation.

Thanks to this initiative, the IAWS collected feedback and prepared a status report of around 70 WSCs across the country that was uploaded to the UGC website on 5th April 2019.

Meeting with UGC Secretary to represent the Issues of WSCs

Having presented the collective feedback on the draft new Guidelines about the need for UGC's continued support, the IAWS Secretariat approached the UGC office for an appointment to meet the UGC Secretary. Accordingly, a delegation consisting of Uma Chakravarty, N. Manimekalai and Indrani Mazumdar met the Secretary on 1st May 2019 and submitted a Memorandum. They appealed on behalf of the Women's Studies community and the Indian Association for Women's Studies, which has played a pioneering role in establishing and creating a scholarly foundation for Women's Studies in India, and urged the Commission to reconsider the lack of emphasis on teaching and research in the recently announced guidelines; it requested that it ensures that the budgetary provisions are revised so that there is no disruption and loss to students, teachers and support staff in the network of WSCs across the country. The Secretary listened to the presentation carefully and directed the concerned section to attend immediately to the issues raised and said that all necessary support would be provided and that it would continue to support Women's Studies. It was appealed that all the Central Universities may be given approval for permanent positions as was done for Jamia Islamia University, New Delhi. The Secretary informed the delegation that the proposal would have to come from respective Central Universities and that necessary action will be taken accordingly.

UGC Invitation for IAWS to participate in UGC WS Standing Committee:

During the meet with UGC Secretary, the history of IAWS and its contributions to Women's Studies, the earlier representation of IAWS in the Standing Committee etc, were shared. As a result, the UGC invited IAWS EC representatives to participate in a discussion with Standing Committee members. Accordingly Meera Velayuthan (IAWS President), Anagha Tambe (General Secretary) and N. Manimekalai (Joint Secretary) participated and made a presentation, particularly about the draft New Guidelines, release of grant, etc. It was well received and the Standing Committee members informed that the issues presented would be taken into consideration while releasing the final new guidelines. They also gave an assurance that the other pressing issue of the release of grants from 2017 to 2019 would also be taken up immediately and that the WSCs were required to submit the UC in the required format.

Due to these concerted efforts by the IAWS and the solidarity obtained from the WSCs, it has been possible to achieve some progress with the UGC: (i) individual letters have been sent to WSCs intimating them that their funding will be extended till March 2020. (ii) funds have been released to various Universities and Colleges (iii) Non-receipt of grant for the complete two years (2017-19) has been taken up (iv) Staff could be re- appointed based on the communication from the UGC for extension till 2020.

However, the new final Guidelines are still awaited. It is expected that they will be a revision to accommodate the funding pattern to retain the 12th Plan structure. The release of pending grants will be completed provided the UCs are submitted in the UGC format.

The IAWS is committed to support the WSCs to continue to function in the academic system. Efforts are also required to get state government's support in the future.

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Report of the IAWS-ISLE Vth Joint Panel

The IAWS - ISLE Vth Joint Panel was organized on 18th of December 2018 as a part of Platinum Jubilee Conference of ISLE. This panel was jointly organized by Indian Association for Women's Studies (IAWS) and Indian Society of Labour Economics (ISLE) and Supported by Work in Freedom Programme, International Labour Organization (ILO). The theme for the joint panel was Framing Migration and Development from a Gender Perspective.

The opening panel was chaired by Uma Rani (Senior Development Economist, ILO Geneva) and Ritu Dewan (Professor and Director (Retired), Development of Economics, University of Mumbai).

In this panel there were four presentations by Padmini Swaminathan, Visiting Professor from Council for Social Development, Hyderabad, Indrani Mazumdar, Senior Fellow at Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi, Igor Bosc, Chief Technical Adviser at Work in Freedom Programme, ILO, New Delhi and Praveena Kodoth, Professor at Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum.

The discussant for the joint panel was Ravi S. Srivastava, Director of Centre for Employment Studies, Institute for Human Development (IHD), Delhi and Former Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi.

Abstract

The session focused on migration from a gender perspective. There are four issues that need to be looked at. These are: (1) macro-level data that records 'marriage' as the major reason for women's migration which is not necessarily true; (2) migration as a process that straddles different sectors and regions with continuous movement of workers and their earnings; (3) issue of local recruitment practices, especially wage theft, gender insensitive laws and concrete strategies for employment in the context of migration; and (4) the role of the State.

1. Presentations

(a) Padmini Swaminathan (Theme Paper)

She emphasized the need to comprehend why the question of framing is important. In the context of migration and development, a gender lens reveals the complexities associated with decisions to migrate whose nuances are not generally captured by standard methodologies that may document data by sex but fail to explain the gendered nature of these decisions. From her extensive study of literature, she classified the issues under four heads: (1) implications of framing migration as "development failure" (2) 'women left behind' with increase in work responsibility (3) pervasiveness of female migration, national and international, the latter leading to the phenomenon of 'men left behind'; and (4) the nature and implications of local recruitment practices.

(b) Indrani Mazumdar

She noted that there are three elements of the policies which affect the life of the women migrants: Labour laws, Anti-trafficking laws and the present thrust of skill training programmes. It is necessary to engage with female migration in a multi-dimensional policy framework. She argued that the approach to internal migration has to be different from the framework of international migration. There are some points that are important to consider while talking about female labour migration in India: 1) relatively less population in urban areas, 2) strong male-bias in labour migration from rural areas, 3) norms of village exogamy and patrilocal residence that leads to most married women being recorded as migrants in macro datasets, 4) caste endogamy, hierarchies, and cultural restrictions against women working outside. She pointed out that macro data does not give us correct estimates for female labour migration and hence the need to look at statistics differently. It is argued that there is a need to bring a gender perspective in labour laws, a labour perspective in anti-trafficking laws, and both gender and labour perspective in the various skill development and placement programmes that have been promoting women's migration in recent years.

(c) Igor Bosc

He critically reviewed common policy paradigms such as modern slavery, anti-trafficking, ethical recruitment etc. all purporting to 'protect' women. He then proceeded in highlighting the practical implications of such policy paradigms. He presented the challenges of policies that actively

promote women's migration (like in Bangladesh) as well as those that restrict women's migration (like age restriction on women in Nepal who can migrate). He concluded on the need for migration and labour policies to uphold the human rights of migrant workers, and remove discrimination based on gender, age, education, class or caste.

(d) Praveena Kodoth

She described the politics of India's migration policy and its implications on overseas migration of women workers with reference specifically to domestic workers and nurses. Even as India has shifted from an idiom of framing women's migration in terms of 'protection', which appeals to a gendered and nationalist logic, to ensuring 'a safe, orderly, legal and humane migration process', it continues with measures that seek to curb women's mobility through the ECR (Emigration Check Required) mechanism. Though the ECR mechanism applies to poorly qualified migrants and only to specific countries (including all of the Middle East), nurses were brought under it in 2015 after a scandal that exposed corruption in recruitment. Legal mobility of women domestic workers was reduced to a trickle after private recruitment was banned and only notified public sector agencies were permitted to recruit. The net result of these interventions is a drastic reduction in the number of women who have migrated through legal channels even as there are reports of considerable irregular mobility. Another outcome is that the direction of legal mobility has changed from substantial mobility previously to Kuwait, which also promised higher salaries to Saudi Arabia, where conditions of work are poor and salaries are comparatively low.

2. Comments by discussants

(e) Ravi Srivastava

Migration is a complex process, especially female migration. In the context of women's mobility, commuting is also important along with migration. There are three broad issues: patriarchal norms, social reproduction responsibility and labour market discrimination. In the course of uneven development, translocal nature of capitalism has emerged. Women who are left behind have to carry the dual responsibility of social reproduction and economic subsistence. Women's migration is not well studied. At the lower end of occupational hierarchy, two types of migration patterns have emerged: women migrating with children and single women migrating. In this context, it is important to study how labour market is shaped for female migrants and its connection with patriarchy. Skill-initiative programs focused on catering to a pool of low-paid women workers. Laws like anti-trafficking are restricting the autonomous movement of women and hence we need to look into the question of "unfree labour". In the case of internal migration, there is no policy and a negative stereotype is present which is a serious issue.

3. Questions and comments

Q. How can a distinction be made between economic and social networks that facilitates women's migration?

While it may often be difficult to distinguish between the two, it needs to be noted that migration mainly emerges in relation to social networks. There are also other processes at work which are independent of economic and social networks that need to be considered.

Q. How should one look at the issue of women's migration from a capability approach?

It is not the case that female migration is expanding at the expense of male migration or vice versa. 'Bread-winning mother' and 'left-out husband' phenomena are also emerging because of capability expansion.

4. Conclusions

The chairpersons Uma Rani and Ritu Dewan summarised the issues into three categories: migration patterns with distinction between paid and unpaid work, recognition of the State as a major employer of migrants; and rights of mobility, labour and gender.

In their concluding remarks, the panelists agreed that there is a need to focus on several topics including reframing the issue in the international context; the problem of reliable and regular statistics; large policy gaps, as well as questions of power associated with mobility decisions.

Prepared by Tanu Gupta,

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Obituary

My Friend Bappa - Sabyasachi Bhattacharya

Sumit Sarkar



(Photo source: the wire)

Sabyasachi Bhattacharya (1938-2019)

I still find it difficult to talk about my oldest and dearest friend in the past tense. I think Bappa represented a rare combination of profound scholarship with a remarkable lightness of touch and sense of humour. There was no pompousness in him, no cant, no undue reverence for big names or ideas. This may have been epitomized by an early habit he developed as a PhD student. He used to keep his entire research material in numerous shoe boxes, of all places! Much later, he told his student Bodhisattva Kar that he should never flaunt his theoretical tools in his writing: one cooks with ladles and other utensils, but one does not serve them at the table along with the food, he told him, in typical Bappa-style.

I was a year junior to him in Presidency college where our friendship began, though our families were also close to each other. A particular memory - perhaps my first vivid recollection of Bappa - leaps to mind. There was some commotion outside the classroom of a particular teacher who, obviously, couldn't control the class. I found Bappa striding up and down the corridor, saying "chaos, chaos, complete chaos", in excellent imitation of the way the teacher used to say it.

But my most sustained memories are about the long walks that we soon began to take almost every evening around the Ballygunge Lakes - Bappa, me and Saugata Mukherjee, another great friend who passed away in 2016. The three of us were so much together that historian Bimala Prasad Mukhopadhyay dedicated a book to us as the Three Musketeers.

Bappa often said with great affection: "what would have happened to the PB if the Lakes weren't there! The B can go to Park Street restaurants and bars but the PB?" B here being bourgeoisie and PB being petit bourgeoisie. He was fond of using initials. The late fifties - early sixties were a time of Congress repression of Left parties. Some communist leaders had gone underground and one evening Bappa very worriedly pondered over where to find shelter for "JB and PDG" - Jyoti Basu and Promode Dasgupta.

Somewhat later, Bappa and I were sent to the Metiaburz area where jute mill workers lived and we did a survey of how workers were responding to CPI - then undivided - efforts to politicize them. That was a very important time for us as we talked to worker trade unionists and learnt much about the everyday risks to their lives that their employers and their hired goondas posed. Bappa regularly attended the monthly Janashiksha Parishad and Marx Club discussions that my father organized, he also once presented his own research at a session there.

When we moved to a new house next to Tolly's Nullah, on the southern fringes of Kolkata, Bappa made gentle fun of my father, because the house had quite a large garden. He named it Xanadu after Coleridge's poem, and he would often gleefully recite these lines from the poem: "where Kubla Khan, the stately pleasure dome decree/ where Alph the sacred river ran/ through caverns measureless to man, down to the sunless sea". We always knew when Bappa was visiting us. The bell would ring and we'd open the door to find no one outside. Bappa would be standing some distance away, looking firmly into the horizon. He did have an unexpected streak of nervousness in him.

We spent hours together at the College Street coffee house discussing everything under the sun, but especially politics, History, Marxism. Bappa would make even these solemn discussions

entertaining. Once, while explaining the dialectical concept of negation of negation, he used a rather difficult classmate Ahin to illustrate his point. "Imagine Ahin becoming Not Ahin and then, again, Not Not Ahin", he said to us. Then he suddenly stopped and added - "No, I wouldn't have the heart to negate Not Ahin, so I'll let him stay." Ahin left the table, fuming.

In a totally non malicious way, Bappa often made fun of people and underlined the joke by first breaking into his hallmark uproarious laughter, then abruptly stopping himself and saying sorry - leaving no one in any doubt about who the target was. After a seminar lunch, organized by a famous historian, he told the host with great satisfaction : " You are a very fine caterer ". He was not amused.

We came to Delhi for our first research trip together. I also so clearly remember Mala as a very young bride- to- be, shy, quite *comme il faut*, a bit awkward at first till we got to know her better. I had to accompany Bappa to visit a senior college professor with his wedding invitation because Bappa was a bit drunk and felt that he may inadvertently blurt out inappropriate things. Fortunately for us, that teacher regaled us with a theory that periods of great literature are also periods of great pornography. Bappa was struck cold sober and, for once, remained speechless the whole time.

When we first came to live in Delhi, Bappa and Mala immediately invited us to spend the day with them at JNU. We fixed up a date with Bappa who completely forgot that it was the day of Mala's Spanish exam. So when we came across him on our way to his house, he turned away abruptly and walked very fast in the opposite direction. Then repentantly he turned back again, and firmly overrode our demands that we go back home and come back after Mala's exams. When he dragged us home, Mala was a bit grim at first, but then she very happily came with us to a restaurant and then to a film - and then insisted that we spend the night at their place. There were many such days and nights. When we didn't meet for a while, Rana Behal ferried news of each other. Bappa occasionally said, you know, we don't need to meet at all, thanks to Rana's news agency.

We had a great trip together to Agra with little Oli. On the way back, Oli insisted on sipping rum which we had disguised in a coca cola bottle. She got quite tipsy and asked for " dink, dink " in slurred words, making Bappa look nervously at other passengers.

A younger acquaintance, who later became a financier, often visited our two families. Later, he mysteriously disappeared. One day Bappa called us up in great excitement, with the theory that since he had been a CHS student with Trotskyist leanings, he must have engineered the East Asian meltdown as his blow against world capitalism. He remained very proud of this theory.

When our son was born, we were told to keep him in the sun as much as possible. Bappa turned up to visit us and was most indignant : Is the baby some sort of mango achar that you oil him and leave him in the sun ? Later, that mango achar became his student. He used to talk so much during Bappa's tutorial sessions that Bappa once said resignedly : you know, the only way to stop Aditya from talking is to let him talk.

We were quite taken aback when he accepted the vice chancellorship of Vishvabharati. I warned him : "do you know that when students gherao teachers they sing Rabindrasangeet ?" Bappa was unfazed : "What of it ? I will also sing back to them". He was most successful as a vice chancellor in a place which has been a terror to all VCs, before and after him. Few scholars have been such great institution builders as the Labour History group would testify.

I once faced a very bitter and hostile press campaign from some of my departmental colleagues. One day, a line came from Bappa which touched and comforted me greatly : "Never mind, Sumit, worms like these can do nothing to people like you or me." After the Babri Mosque was destroyed, he wrote me a letter with these lines from Tagore : "Break down the shrine which is awash with blood : Hurl thunder against the prisonhouse of blind faith : bring the light of reason to this hapless land." Later, he put the poem on the Viswabharati new Year greeting card : a daring move for a VC of a Central University.

Once he retired from JNU and went off to Kolkata, he was constantly trying to persuade us to join him : "Kolkata will be great fun, it is a wonderful place for retired people ", he would say again and again. Indeed, he proved that it was so - he had never written so much before, nor on such varied themes before he went to live there. It was a time of constant intellectual experiments for him and he was at his happiest. Whenever we were there, he would try to drive home the point by giving

us royal treats at home or at his beloved Calcutta Club.

There was a very tender streak in Bappa for all his apparent gruffness. Some years back, when I was very ill, Bappa would often set little intellectual puzzles to stimulate my thinking. I remember one of them : who had the more interesting mind, Tagore or Gandhi ? We argued long and hard, without reaching a conclusion. When my sister passed away, he wrote a most beautiful and moving piece about her for her memorial meeting. He also rang up Tanika every day to ask how I was coping with her death.

Our friend Saugata died in great pain after a decade- long illness. We went for his memorial meeting in Kolkata. Bappa was not planning to say much there. But he felt provoked when other speakers did not even mention Saugata's work which was of a very high quality but not voluminous. So, on the spot, he made an incisive analysis of each and every one of his essays, pointing out all that was original and important about them.

Then he and Mala took the two of us out for dinner : he told Tanika that I would be terribly depressed about Saugata and would need this distraction. The thought was typical of him. He was a year older than me and he always took his elder- brotherly responsibilities very seriously.

It was at that dinner that we first realized that Bappa himself was very ill, he was in such pain all the while that he was literally bent double at times, he could not sit at the same place for any length of time. Soon, it turned out to be cancer. But he went on to plan three volumes on the history of modern Bengal, and to organize two conferences around them, even as his terrible illness devastated him. He meticulously tracked the progress of each and every author himself. He also began and finished his last book on archiving British India.

He stayed only for a short while the first day of the first conference, he stayed just for our talks. But before that he delivered the welcome address from the wheelchair while swallowing literally fistfuls of painkillers every few minutes : and curling up tight in unspeakable pain from time to time . But his voice was as firm as ever and his speech - lasting forty- five minutes - was sheer brilliance. As he left, he held my hand for a moment. That was the last time I saw him.

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Book Review

Passion for Revolution or Revolutionary Passion?

Sneha Gole

The book 'Revolutionary Desires' by Ania Loomba is a much-needed contribution to the recent works which are complicating the narrative about the history and trajectory of women's movements in India by drawing out the many hidden and ignored legacies. It joins a long line of works, starting from Stree Shakti Sanghatana's "We were making history" to Urmila Pawar and Meenakshi Moon's "Amhihi Itihaas Ghadavla" to Ilina Sen's "Spaces within the Struggle" and more recently Kavita Panjabi's "Unclaimed Harvest" among others, which have challenged the assumptions of mainstream as well as feminist writing on the women's movement. This includes, the rendering of social reform and Gandhian nationalist movement as the legacies for the contemporary movement, marking the 1950s and 60s as relatively "silent" decades for the history of the women's question in India and accepting that the nationalist "resolution" of the woman question was final. These works have collectively highlighted how the gender question was debated on sites like the anti-caste and peasant and labour movements and how these addressed women as citizens/peasants/workers as against the image of the mother/wife centred within the social reform and nationalist movement; how female subjectivities and models of female agency were being crafted on these diverse sites both at the moment of the "nationalist resolution" and in the period of the "silent decades" and therefore challenged the equation of the women's movements in India to the autonomous women's groups and issues of violence. Recent works on the Naxalbari movement, like Srila Roy and Mallarika Sinha Roy, have laid bare the gender secrets of revolutionary movements and also opened out the discussion on the gendered contours of revolutionary violence. Ania Loomba's work can be seen as part of this project, and owing to her own location as a 'communist child' is a work of passion that sheds light on a very important and often neglected legacy of the contemporary movement - the histories and voices of "revolutionary" women in the period from 1920s to 1960s. The "revolutionary women" Loomba writes about were women who were part of the militant and nationalist underground movements of the 1920s and 30s, many of whom went on to join the communist and socialist parties. She also looks at "communist women", that is members of the undivided Communist Party of India. Her major argument in the book is that these women were fashioning a new model of political subjectivity, which was in contestation and conversation with the Indian nationalist, liberal feminist and European left activist models of womanhood. She argues that while none of them would identify themselves as "feminist", they were making unusual choices for their times and some of these legacies did shape the contours of feminist subjectivity in India. She thus, wants to reclaim these legacies through a study of the militant-nationalist and communist women and how they grappled with the questions of public/private; the complex intertwining of love and revolution in their lives and how they confronted and negotiated with the normative ideal of a revolutionary which was imagined in masculine terms. It allows a peek into the ways in which these women were being constrained by, but were also challenging the gendered ethos and norms of political culture in India as a whole, and of the communist parties specifically. The book seeks to explore and answer questions like what was the place of desire in the lives of revolutionary women, were their political actions and commitments driven by their romantic desires, did they find fulfilment for their personal and political desires within the party, what price did women pay for choosing the path less taken, what were the attitudes towards love, marriage, romance, desire, conjugality, motherhood, sexuality and the family within radical left parties, how did left parties conceptualize and address the questions of dominant sexual mores, what were the models of femininity and masculinity that were shaped within the party, were there revolutionary mores of love, romance and conjugality within the party, did the party open up ways for a transformation in the personal lives and relationships of its members are some of the questions that the book explores. Loomba draws from her own experiences of having grown up in a communist, whole-timer household to underline the peculiar mixture of radicalism and prudishness that she saw in many women around her and uses that as a starting point to understand the party's stand on

sexuality, love, romance and family and the price particularly that women had to pay on the altar of the party's norms.

One of the most interesting and exciting things about the book is the range of source material that Loomba uses. This includes autobiographies, memoirs, party documents, interviews, newspaper articles, but also significantly novels and other literary texts. In her choice of women who she has interviewed, Loomba goes beyond the well-known leaders to talk to more ordinary women, the "whole-timers" of the undivided communist party. She embraces what she calls "methodological promiscuity" in order to make her matter speak. This she argues is especially necessary for many of her subjects are women who led public lives, but due to the dominant construction of the communist activist, would not talk about their private lives. How then can "one recover it if those who lived it do not share, or do so very circumspectly?" (pg.9) The multiple resources then, she argues help in uncovering the communist self-fashioning in modern India. Loomba underlines that it is this radical self-fashioning that the book explores, by looking at both the moments which index the reshaping of norms and practices, as well as the moments which mark the enduring capacity of conventions to limit change.

The first two chapters of the book examine women revolutionaries in Bengal and Punjab. Loomba rightly asserts that militant nationalist groups should be seen as pre-cursors to the communist party, rather than the liberal nationalist or militant Hindu modes that they are often located within. She argues further that though the political connections between these two groups have been examined, the issues of the continuities and discontinuities in their attitudes towards domesticity, renunciation, sexuality, and the family have received very little attention. Chapter 1, 'The romance of revolution,' looks at the representation of women revolutionaries in two Bengali novels and juxtaposes it against women's own subjectivities, to argue that gendered mores of different kinds of Indian nationalism both seeped into, and were contested by, the values and actions of revolutionary nationalists in Bengal.

The next chapter, 'Love in the time of revolution' concentrates on the life of one woman revolutionary from Punjab- Prakashvati and the story of her romance with Yashpal within the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA). Loomba uses the multitude of available resources like novels and autobiographies of Yashpal and Prakashvati as well as memoirs of other members of the HSRA like Harivanshrai Bacchan, using the event and its afterlives to shed light on contemporaneous debates about the proper place and attributes of political women. She argues that Yashpal especially used his novel to underline the idea that revolutionary change needs to extend beyond the sphere of economics and politics, into the arenas of gender and familial relations, sexuality, intimacy, and personal freedom. The third chapter takes on debates around whether communists believed in free love etc. by examining the experiences of women living in Communes. This chapter explores how Indian communists explored alternative models of inhabiting personal relationships - parenthood, conjugality, and friendship. Loomba argues that the boundaries between the personal and the political were redrawn in the communes, but they were also interrogated within communist families outside the commune. Sometimes the refashioning of private and political spaces was heady and liberating for women; at other times, it could result in despair and misery because it placed particular burdens upon them.

In Chapter 4, Loomba explores a world, geographically not too far from the Bombay commune, but a world apart in all other ways, through the autobiographies of two women organizing the textile mill workers in Girangaon - Ushabai Dange and Parvatibai Bhore. She argues that their memoirs illustrate both sides of the 'personal is political' dictum. She also uses these narratives to argue how despite talk of declassing, and inter-class mingling that took place in the communes, class continued to both structure Party hierarchy and deeply fracture female solidarities. In Chapter 5, 'The dance of hunger', Loomba brings together the different forms of communist activism in the times of the Bengal famine, to show how they expressed and reshaped ideologies of gender within the communist movement. In Chapter 6, entitled 'The family romance', she examines the narratives of four women whole-timers married to whole-timers, which meant that they devoted their entire lives to the party. Loomba uses these narratives to highlight how they tried to inhabit coupledness and family life differently, according to what they understood to be the communist ideal. These stories attest both to the abiding power and the failure of the ideal of the

'communist family', imagined as an alternative kinship structure critiquing and transcending conservative social structures in India. The sixth chapter, 'Becoming Indian', reads the story of Sheila Didi, to illustrate the simultaneity of political and personal consciousness and decisions.

Thus, the book explores the theme of revolutionary desires from different angles, and, of how women's very entry into the underground, and in active political participation as such, challenged the CPI's conceptions of Indian femininity. It also attests to the fact that even when gender inequities were not the primary focus of their political agenda, revolutionary and communist women expanded the stage on which women acted in India. Loomba therefore makes a powerful case for why the lives and subjectivities of these women are important to the story of Indian feminism. This book would be useful to anyone seeking to understand women's movements in India, but also the contours of collective action more generally. It is also an extremely important resource for understanding the organized Left and its gender ideology. As a book, it lends itself to multiple locations within the curriculum - in teaching Indian nation, Gender in revolutionary movements, legacies of women's movements as well as methodologically to using memory and literary sources for excavating lost and forgotten histories.

Loomba, A. (2018). *Revolutionary Desires: Women, Communism, and Feminism in India*. Routledge: London. Pgs.324, INR 695.

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