

IAWS Statement

IAWS Salutes a Fearless Feminist Pushpa Bhave (1939-2020)

Pushpa Bhave, a veteran women's rights Activist dedicated her life to fight for dignity and citizenship rights of socio-culturally oppressed sections, persecuted religious minorities and residents forced to live in dilapidated buildings due to callousness of landlords and builders.

In her student days, she actively took part in Goa liberation struggles against Portuguese rule. She was a champion of democratic rights and civil liberties and was actively involved in anti-emergency protests during 1975-77. She was vocal, sharp, and erudite against sectarian forces who engineered atrocities on Dalits at the time of renaming of Marathwada University as Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University during 1978 as per the unanimous resolution of Legislative Assembly of Maharashtra. After communal riots in Bhivandi 1984 and riots after breaking of Babri Mosq 1992, Pushpatai was at the forefront of peace-making efforts. She was active in a united front of secular humanists and progressive women, *Dharmandhata Virodhi Mahila Kruti Samiti* right from its inception in 1984. She always stood by women survivors of sexual harassment at workplace and relentlessly mobilised public opinion to get culprit, in several cases powerful men with political clout, to book even at the risk to her life. Even with their ill-health, in 2016, veteran feminist journalist Vidya Bal and Pushpatai supported young Muslim women's efforts for entry in Haji Ali Dargah, Mumbai and young Hindu women's movement for temple entry at Shani Shingur.

Prof. Pushpa Bhave was highly respected teacher of Marathi literature, art critique whose scholarly reviews of theatre, films, and literary works were a treat for students and teachers, social activists, and highbrow intellectuals. Her books on wide range of socio-political, literary and gender issues in Marathi have a wide readership. She was a mentor of hundreds of students and social activists. Firm in her ideological moorings, she was courteous with fellow travellers in the social movements who did not share her political positions. She was warm and caring with her colleagues, students, neighbours, social activists and always gave helpful suggestions.

Pushpatai was active in *Vidrohi Sahitya Parishad* and was also elected its president during 1990s. She was a mesmerising orator, spoke with meticulous detailing and put forth analytically rigorous ideas in a lucid manner. She was invited by women's studies centres of all universities in Maharashtra that has a unique body of Women teachers, Marathi Pradhyapika Parishad. She was a founder member of Maharashtra Women's Studies Association.

Over last 2 decades, Pushpatai travelled extensively throughout India and contributed to building the IAWS. She was IAWS Vice-president also. In memory of her mentor, Mrinal Gore, she founded Interactive Centre for Social Justice and *Peace in South Asia* and collaborated with President of IAWS, Ilina Sen to organise a memorable International Conference inviting women's studies scholars of IAWS from South Asian countries.

Prof. Pushpa Bhave's passing has caused a great loss to both women's studies and women's rights in these difficult times.

IAWS conveys solidarity and condolences to Prof. Anant Bhave, the lifelong companion of Prof. Pushpa Bhave and their students who have been besides both till now.

IAWS salutes Pushpatai for her lifelong commitment to people's movement for social justice, economic justice, and gender justice.