



IAWS

Indian Association for Women's Studies

Plenaries:

- Plenary Panel I: Building Women's Studies in the North East
- Plenary Panel II: Women's Movements in the North East
- Plenary Panel III: Women in South Asia: Contemporary Challenges

Special Session:

- Exploring Plural Identities: Women's Studies to North East Studies
- Sexual Violence against Women: State Responsibility and Culpability

Pre-Conference Workshops:

- Engaging with the Voices of Women with Disabilities
- 'Young Women': Resisting Violence and Exploring Legacies

Sub-Themes:

- I. Women's Rights and Entitlements to Land and Land-based Resources
- II. Encountering Globalisation: Women and Access to Social Security.
- III. Women in Urban India: Debating Labour/Employment, Poverty and Violence
- IV. Pluralities: Caste, Ethnicity, Language and Gender
- V. Pluralities: Ethnicity, Language and Gender
- VI. Equality, Conflict, Pluralism and Women's Studies
- VII. Education, Knowledge and Institutional Space(s)
- VIII. Culture and Region
- IX. Women, Peace and Security in India
- X. Documenting Gendered Histories: Nation, State, Region and Local
- XI. Women's Movement's Engagement with Policy

<http://www.iaws.org>

Indian Association for Women's Studies XIV National Conference on Women's Studies

Equality, Pluralism and the State: Perspectives from the Women's Movement

4th to 7th February 2014



Organised by: **IAWS**
at **Gauhati University, Guwahati**

XIV National Conference on Women's Studies
4th -7th February 2014
Guwahati

Equality, Pluralism and the State: Perspectives from the Women's Movement

Organised by
Indian Association for Women's Studies in collaboration with
Gauhati University, Cotton College State University, Guwahati,
Tata Institute for Social Sciences, Guwahati and
North Eastern Network

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XIVth NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON WOMEN'S STUDIES Guwahati, 4-7 February 2014

 **Equality, Pluralism and the State: Perspectives from the Women's Movement**
organised by Indian Association for Women s Studies

The nation has recently witnessed huge protests and intense debates on the context, forms and scale of gender-based violence, including, more specifically, sexual violence in its various locations. These encompass vastly different sections of society, movements and organizations and address the multiple sites of violence extending across regions, social classes and communities. This increasing violence points to the fact that women are directly in the line of fire in the current scenario. Equally significant, it shows that the message of the women's movement and its struggle for the rights of women can no longer be seen as a movement for sectional rights. This highlights immense possibilities even as it starkly poses challenges before us.

There is enough evidence to show that in the two decades since the initiation of the 'new' economic policy and imposition of a monolithic market-driven model of development, the challenge of ensuring the well-being and quality of life for the masses has become greater. Gender gaps in various indices of development have widened and social inequalities, including those premised on historically determined exclusions, have deepened in numerous ways. This is manifested in inter- and intra- regional divides, ownership and access to resources, especially land, housing, food and water and for more specifically gender-based hierarchies, with regard to labour; wage disparities; rural-peri-urban-urban livelihood and employment patterns and the feminization of poverty. With the increase in 'developmental' imbalances and unequal access to basic entitlements, there is a blurring of the distinction between 'inclusionary' policies to address 'exclusionary' practices. There is a persistence of caste, tribe and community based disparities, of discriminatory attitudes towards issues of disability, and towards expressions of non-normative sexual orientations. In short, the structural barriers to attaining a human and 'humane' life appear to have become more rigid.

There is a long list of challenges faced by women in contemporary Indian society. Equally striking is the way in which the prevalent monolithic paradigm of development has gone hand in hand with monocultures of the mind and intolerance and dominant hegemonic perspectives seek to replace the pluralist heritage of our cultural past. In a nation committed to diversity in faith, languages, and ways of living, we see greater aggression and an attempt to present homogenized notions of the

nation, nationhood as well as of Indian womanhood. While political formations actively propagate such strident assertions with moral overtones, the media and the market play their part in defining these. Such homogenized 'mainstream' articulations seek to marginalize critical discourses and further, to even delegitimize them, thereby also exacerbating exclusions and denials in both, the cultural and the political domain. These patterns of exclusion and marginalization of women cut across religions, communities and regions, erasing the rich variety of customary rights and cultural practices and pose a complex set of challenges at the individual and societal level.

The central concerns of equality and pluralism cannot be perceived in isolation from the State, its policies and the changing terms of its interface with citizens. The withdrawal of the State in favour of the private sphere in recent decades also marks a departure from fundamental concerns of wellbeing; a change in the character of the judiciary; and increasing use of military and para-military forces against citizens and people's movements. Reduction in investment in social and public goods in the name of reducing fiscal deficits has seriously affected educational institutions as well as citizens' ability to garner their rights. The retreat from universal commitments, accompanied by withdrawal of subsidies and support has resulted in a rising burden on the poor, especially women. As protests against these policies and their impact on the lives of the people gather momentum, the State, in an attempt to contain the tide of unrest, appears to have embarked on a mission to carve out an artificially generated consensus and hold together a fragile coalition on behalf of the ruling elites. This only adds to the vulnerability of the masses and of women.

The women's movement has engaged in debates on these issues from its myriad locations. It has critically engaged with processes of policy formation to argue that these need to be democratized along with the content of policies. Similarly, the movement has actively worked to preserve the pluralist culture and historical legacies of our people against fundamentalist assertions of women's rights and womanhood per se. Commitment to equality and pluralism is both an underlying principle as well as a necessary condition for women's democratic advance in Indian society today.

We hope that this National Conference will reflect on the complex set of challenges facing our democratic polity and the nation state from diverse disciplinary perspectives and experiences from the ground. This reflection is needed to redirect attention to some of the fundamental challenges. This also demands sensitivity to the diversity and complexity of the situation in the North East. As we hold our National Conference for the first time in this region, we wish to learn from experiences here and elsewhere, in terms of both, seeking alternatives as well as constructive ways to engage with strategies to advance democratic, egalitarian and pluralistic perspectives.

PLENARIES/ SPECIAL LECTURES

All Plenaries to be held at the Central Conference Venue in Gauhati University

Madhuri Shah Memorial Lecture

Exploring Plural Identities: Women's Studies to North East Studies

Speaker: Nandita Haksar

Date: 4th February 2014 Time: 11:30 a.m -12:15 p.m

Plenary Panel I:

Building Women's Studies in the North East

Coordinator: Archana Sharma

Date: 4th February 2014 Time: 12:30 p.m -01:30 p.m

Plenary Panel II:

Women's Movements in the North East

Coordinator: Monisha Behal

Date: 5th February 2014 Time: 09:30 a.m -01:30 p.m

Plenary Panel III:

Women in South Asia: Contemporary Challenges

Coordinator: Seema Kazi

Date: 6th February 2014 Time: 09:30 a.m -12:30 p.m

Special Lecture:

Sexual Violence Against Women: State Responsibility and Culpability

Speaker: Vrinda Grover

Date: 5th February 2014 Time: 11:30 a.m -12:30 p.m

IAWS General Body Meeting (Members Only)

Date: 6th February 2014 Time: 04.00 p.m. onwards

Report from Sub Themes:

Date: 7th February 2014 Time: 09:30 a.m -12:30 p.m

Valedictory:

Time: 09:30 a.m -12:30 p.m

I. SUB-THEME

Women's Rights and Entitlements to Land and Land-based Resources

The lack of a productive asset base for rural poor women was raised by the international women's movement as early as the first UN Conference on Women in Mexico (1975). In India, the report of the Committee on the Status of Women (CSWI, 1975) noted the sharp decrease in numbers of female cultivators and an increase in the number of female agricultural laborers in India. The CSWI also identified land reforms as a key measure to improve the condition of rural women. Women - in particular single, female headed households - are the poorest of poor.

Entitlements to land are determined by diverse socio-political systems that have evolved over time and sometimes exist concurrently. In South Asia, for example, inheritance patterns in land vary within and between countries and further by region, religion, caste, community, and ethnicity. Inheritance rights to land, particularly agricultural land, have been most difficult to enact. In India, it took almost half a century, to amend the Hindu Succession Act (HSA) of 1956, in 2005. This amendment, overriding the varied tenorial laws of different states, enables daughters, including those who are married, to become coparceners in joint family property.

Studies have shown that a key factor linked with rural poverty is land. In the South Asian context, arable land has been analyzed as the most valued form of property, for its economic, political and symbolic significance. Research has shown that individuals who own land generate much higher rural non-farm earnings from self employment than people without land.

In regions facing hunger and chronic under-nutrition, women are often the main food growers. Rural women are responsible for half of the world's food production. Secure property rights for women can have an impact on women's overall role and position in the household and community. A large percentage of households, estimated to be between 20 to 35% in India and Bangladesh, are de facto, female headed. For widows and the elderly, in particular, ownership of land also creates possibilities for drawing support from relatives. Land titles also serve as collaterals in accessing the benefits of development programs such as production credits for

farmers. In regions with high male migration and where women are the principal farmers, such support is critical for their households.

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II. SUB-THEME

Encountering Globalisation: Women, Land and Access to Social Security

Politicians and media commentators of a particular persuasion never tire of showcasing the ubiquitous presence of tribal women from the Northeast in the service sector in urban India. For them, these women stand out as examples of how globalization has created niche markets for marginalized communities. After all, it is difficult to grudge tribal women their chance at social and political mobility from the margins to the centre of the supposed Indian dream. As a matter of fact, the so-called Indian dream has become a South Asian template, where local elites are able to capture and sequester resources by force. For them, globalization has been an opportunity to showcase indigenous culture and products to a curious world of consumers and the market outside.

The opening up of India's economy coincided with increased assaults on public goods and common property regimes in all parts of the country, including the Northeast and the wider South Asian region. Hence, for many marginalised sections of society, the need to find alternative livelihoods and incomes was not just another choice flowing out of an assembly line of job opportunities for the new millennium.

This was a need forced, sometimes even coerced, upon those who were most vulnerable. Empirical studies and advocacy work has shown that women – especially those already suffering caste, class and tribe related marginalization – have been hardest hit by this economic transformation.

For every story of upward mobility for women in the broad region we call South Asia and in India in particular, there are inconvenient questions of marginalization and increasing exposure to violence. If one were to follow the trajectories of women whose social security and access to resources have undergone a violent transformation, one would have a more critical view of globalization and of those who claim to be its champions.

This concept note is an invitation for those who wish to present papers on the broad issues raised by the narrative above. To reiterate, it invites researchers and activists who are working on issues related to: (a) women's access to resources, (b) migration, (c) land use; (d) agrarian change; (e) livelihoods and social change and any pertinent issue that can show creative connections and linkages leading to a more gendered, layered and textured understanding of globalization

Coordinators

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III. SUB-THEME

Women in Urban India: Debating Labour/Employment, Poverty and Violence

The Census of 2011 has shown that the decadal increase in the number of people in urban India exceeded that of rural India for the first time since independence. Greater absolute growth in the urban population is based on the relatively greater increase in numbers of women in urban areas in comparison to rural areas.

This subtheme invites papers that examine how various sections of women are engaging with urban spaces. Although the contemporary period, its development/growth/accumulation paradigm, and related configurations and reconfigurations of urban spaces will frame the discussion, historical perspectives will also be welcome. The discussion will be organized around three areas.

The first relates to labour and employment. Aggregate female work participation rates (FWPR) in urban India have remained low. However, statistical definitions of work, labour and employment have long remained a matter of debate. Papers are invited on formal or informal urban employment, based on macro trends or micro issues specific to regions or sectors of trade and industry, including sex work and entertainment work. Studies focusing on the specific laboring experiences of groups marginalized on the basis of caste, class, community, sexuality or gender are also invited.

The second area relates to gender dimensions of poverty in urban areas, where dependence on the cash economy is more marked. Especially in the context of the debates around the feminization of poverty, concerns have been raised about the definition and centrality of women headed households. Some feminist scholars have suggested a shift to the concept of women maintained households where we see a feminization of responsibility and obligation without a concomitant rise in entitlements. This area would also include social, political, and planning approaches towards urban poverty, issues of food security, housing, civic and social amenities, as well as the cycles of displacement faced by the urban poor.

The third area relates to violence against women. The wide ranging public anger and mobilization following the Delhi rape and murder of December 2012 is indeed a historic moment in the struggle against violence against women. Apart from urban women's experience of specific forms of violence including engagements with law and

law enforcement agencies, exploration of the urban dimensions of everyday social, cultural and economic practices that underpin various forms of violence against women, and the specific vulnerabilities of working class women may be included in the discussion.

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IV. SUB-THEME

Pluralities: Caste, inclusion and Intersectionalities

Diverse cultural practices and traditions in India deny justice, dignity and equality to Dalits in general and Dalit women in particular. Brahmanical patriarchies have pushed the Dalit women to the margins and this is manifested in all aspects of life in varied forms. With globalization and changing dynamics at national and international levels, the elite dominant classes are accommodated into the new economic and social order while the poor are further denied their due share right from resources to politics. The post-1990s, with the state's withdrawal from public sector and all the major welfare schemes and the multidimensional dynamics of caste, class, and religion, have pushed Dalit women beyond the peripheries of all margins. This combines with persistent violence and varied forms of exclusions, alienation of community's access to natural resources, particularly land.

Dalit women's movements, since the 1990s, have evolved alternative ideas of

their own development, forming networks, literary forums, activists groups etc, impacting the feminist discourse itself in redefining notions of violence, work, poverty, etc. Dalit women's writings are complex yet point to an ongoing process of self definition in varied contexts. Recent engagements within the dalit women's movement suggest their diverse cultural practices and how these are linked with their past and present life world, work and sexualities and how these were being transformed. There is, thus a need to highlight the varied forms of dalit women's engagements in diverse contexts, the internal dialogues. This will also enable identifying areas of conflict or disagreement with feminist and other movements and sites for better dialogue. One of the key concerns on the intersectionality of caste and gender discrimination concerns dalit women's work. What forms have hereditary caste based labour including sexual labour assumed and what are the underlying processes? This is an area requiring more data bases as well as dialogues. In this context, the ongoing dialogue on sex work and sexualities needs to be carried forward.

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V. SUB-THEME

Pluralities: Ethnicity, Language and Gender

The Indian subcontinent is peopled by a variegated multitude of populations, belonging to many ethnic, and at least seven major language families. This linguistic and ethnic diversity is however always under threat, from the state, the dominant development paradigm, as well as from social and educational practices that privilege Hindi and English in education and public life. The low social and cultural prestige

accorded to non-Scheduled languages means that the vast majority of Indian languages are regarded as “primitive”. Responding to this, speakers 'choose' not to access education in their mother tongue(s); this, in turn, ensures that a small language remains, at best, a small one; at worst, it shrinks by the day. In a parallel process, the dominant mainstream policies of market liberalization are today pushing many small ethnic communities and their livelihood systems to the brink of extinction.

We seek to examine some questions the current scenario raises: what accounts for the devaluation of minority languages? How has this affected their socio-cultural identity and relations with the dominant population in social, economic and political terms? What implication does this have on gender and the process of development among the ethnic and linguistic minorities? What could be a viable development model and terms of integration of different ethnic groups into the Indian mainstream? How do we resolve the debate between full integration and separate development?

To what extent is the shift away from one's language, a shift away from its public use? What role does gender play in determining the extent of such shifts? Does societal multilingualism play any role in furthering language maintenance? How is ethnic identity presented and maintained in groups that have shifted away from their language(s)? How do such groups negotiate their relationship with Hindi, English, or the dominant regional languages?

Answers to the above questions are critical if the problem is to be resolved and we move towards a more equal and harmonious society.

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VI. SUB-THEME

Equality, Conflict, Pluralism and Women's Studies

Divided into three sessions, the first will focus on the challenges of raising issues of equality within. Women's Studies have taken diverse paths seeking to transform disciplinary structures/ frameworks of analysis. However the challenges posed by other excluded categories, those of caste, community, region, sexuality and disability which play an important role in maintaining the hierarchical social order need far more attention.

This session will focus on the following: How can we analyze the contentious intersections of gender, caste, community, region, sexuality and disability in terms of relationality? How can curriculum take these into consideration? How can feminist movements and research translate into curricular concerns and practices? How do we deal with diversities, inequalities, and unevenness of cultural capital and the aspirations of practitioners-- researchers, students, and teachers-- of Women 's Studies? Why is the 'language question' crucial? How can women's studies interrogate the assumed binary of quality and equality in higher education?

The second session will focus on gender, conflict and the state, exploring how Women's Studies allows for an interdisciplinary interrogation of the fraught relationship between the 'nation' and the 'region,' situating this conversation in the 'Northeast' of India - a 'region', a political space, an embattled killing field of insurgencies, where 'Northeast' is continuously reproduced through the narratives of militarism and counter-insurgency. Can Women's Studies offer a way to disentangle the enmeshed webs of violence and conflict which relentlessly produce an 'Other'?

Some possible questions include: How far is the interdisciplinary space of Women's Studies useful in initiating new ways of producing knowledge that does not reproduce the lines of the nation, the region, and the international with pristine territories and borders? How do we think through the overlap between the distinctive characters of exceptional and everyday forms of violence in the North-East, especially because of the ways in which women's bodies become sites of militarised violence?

The third session will focus on Gender, Pluralism and Religion, opening up discussions on at least two levels. First: debates on gender issues in relation to religion, and faith practices, in south Asia. Second: initiating a conversation between two interdisciplinary formations: religious studies and women's studies. Papers are invited

to reflect on (and not only) the following: feminist reinterpretation of religious, textual traditions; new interpretative frameworks in feminist inspired religious studies; gender, faith practice, and new religious cultures; popular religious practice, marginal discourses (caste/sect etc), and their engagements with questions of gender.

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VII. SUB-THEME

Education, Knowledge and Institutional Space(s)

After a considerable gap in time, since the publication in 1975 of the Towards Equality Report, there has been a recent and renewed realization among feminists of the need to engage critically with the theory and practice of education in institutional spaces.

It was the blatant attempts by the BJP led NDA government to “saffronise” school textbooks that alerted a public (beyond a few committed educationists) about

the importance of investing critical attention in educational matters. The efforts by the same NDA regime to rename “Women's Studies” as “Family Studies” revealed the continuum of the efforts of a right-wing government to impact education at levels ranging from school education to higher education.

The more recent drift in educational policies has again revived feminist interest in education since these policies seek to include girls and women in greater numbers in educational institutions. Feminist critiques of these policies are seeking to assess and analyze the manner and implications of “feminizing” education in this moment.

There is also the need to explore the gender dynamic in relation to a range of themes and areas of emerging focus in education, such as in educational leadership and management as well as teacher education at all levels. It is pertinent too that our studies attend to the manner in which the institutionalized space of education gets constructed, negotiated and re-configured in a given socio-political setting. Undoubtedly, the changing nature of the dynamic between the state, market and educational institutions is significant.

Also the kind of promise that modern educational institutions offer to marginal groups, women among them requires investigation. Development related debates and discussions have been focusing on women's education for some time now and it is imperative to engage critically with these, understand their implications and extend them in directions that ensure equity, pluralism and substantive justice.

In this subtheme, we invite papers on any one or a combination of the following issues:

- ❖ Gender issues in the teaching profession,
- ❖ Teaching materials and textbooks
- ❖ Policies on gender and education
- ❖ Identity formation in educational spaces
- ❖ Gender issues in educational leadership and management
- ❖ Mainstream and alternate pedagogies
- ❖ Knowledge production in disciplinary domains
- ❖ Women, work and education
- ❖ Marriage, education and domesticity
- ❖ Role of women's organizations in education

A special session within the subtheme will focus on the North East where in addition to the issues and themes flagged above, presentations exploring the gendered dimensions of education within the colonial period in the North East will be included

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VIII.SUB-THEME

Culture and Region

In recent times regional politics has emerged as one of the greatest challenges to the Indian state. It is now recognized that underdevelopment, that is, in relation to the current paradigm of 'development', is largely due to cultural factors historically determined by geography, ecology, and ethnicity. Contrary to popular perception these so-called backward regions are not arid deserts but ecologically diverse and rich in natural resources. Historically these areas and the diverse ethnic groups living there and who have developed rich and unique cultures through centuries, have been exploited, both materially and culturally by the more developed neighbors.

In India, culture has traditionally been the site, through institutions like caste, to create hierarchies of power and privilege, and the peoples of these regions have been

relegated to the lowest rungs of the caste ladder or totally set outside the caste hierarchy as outcastes or barbarians.

Papers are invited focusing on the cultural specificities within the region or across regions to discover patterns of unequal treatment and exploitation between different groups and between men and women. The disruption of the old structures has brought new conflicts and contradictions.

Inter and intra regional cultural specificity in conjunction with market forces has also affected the patterns of migration and immigration in the region. They are victims equally of the cultural insensitivity of centralized development planning attuned to a linear concept of development, building mega projects involving de-forestation and occupation of 'wastelands' (jhum-lands), leaving the erstwhile inhabitants, who had nurtured the environment for centuries through ecologically sound practices, without livelihood or occupation, the only options being to migrate peacefully and join the faceless urban work-force or erupt in violent protest as is happening now all over India and not just in the Northeast. Is it too late to search for alternative roads to development, and thus ensure both equality and plurality? Can we look to state intervention to include cultural rights as part of human and fundamental rights, with provision for equal gender opportunities in framing culture policy?

Coordinators

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IX. SUB-THEME

Women, Peace and Security in India

There is now wide acceptance of the fact that modern armed conflict has a disproportionate impact on women and girls even though most are not directly engaged in combat. The long years of conflict in various parts of India have left several communities bereft of the peace and development that they rightfully deserve.

Arbitrary application of security laws at the national and state levels directly affect women's lives. In India at least nine national laws and ten state laws form the framework of Security Laws. Amongst these the most discussed because of its gendered impact are the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (No. 28 of 1958), Armed Forces (Assam and Manipur) Special Powers (Amendment) Act, 1972 (No. 7 of 1972), Armed Forces (Jammu and Kashmir) Special Powers Act, 1990 (No.21 of 1990). . Needless to say, the impact on women over decades of militarization has been particularly acute.

Irom Sharmila from the North East has been on a fast for about ten years protesting the AFSPA in the North East. Unlike other protesters in India she has had to face imprisonment as fasting is considered as an attempt at suicide. From a feminist or human perspective the narrow focus of the national security paradigm as we have observed in the North East and Jammu and Kashmir, aims at protection of territory by use of force and ignores and negates feminist thinking, women's lives, their concerns, their self-esteem, and other related issues of equality, social justice and poverty which are marginalized. Women's survival is linked to the search for alternative paths to peace, progress and development.

There would be three sessions. The first is titled 'State and Security Laws: Women's Perspective'. Paper presenters would be expected to critically evaluate the legal framework of the Indian security system from the gender perspective. Debates around the AFSPA will also be covered. The second session, linked with the first, is titled 'Alternative Feminist Security Paradigm'. Critiquing the existing militarized and masculinized security perspective, it will attempt to offer an alternative security perspective from a feminist standpoint. The third session is titled 'Women's Initiative for Peace' and it will provide a conceptual framework, the possibilities as well as real cases of women's interventions in peace building. This sub-theme will also focus on Security Council Resolution 1325.

With the objective of providing fresh and promising perspectives on the most severe challenges to women in conflict situations in India, these three subthemes are aimed at bringing together academics, activists, media reporters, researchers to discuss, widen and deepen the current discourse on women and security. For all the three sessions, media remains a connecting strand.

Coordinators

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X. SUB-THEME

Documenting Gendered Histories: Nation, State, Region and Local

This sub-theme seeks to focus on areas which the so called "mainstream" historiographies have ignored especially with respect to the forgotten histories of women in struggle in the national, regional and local contexts. The discussions in the session should be a step in the right direction with respect to the development of a gender sensitive knowledge system which addresses the various gender inequalities, injustices and disparities in our society. The themes that the sessions can focus upon are as follows:

Conceptualising and Documenting Gendered Histories: This session can focus on ways and means to conceptualise the idea of gendered histories so that the documenting can help in the building up of oral and documentary histories of women in mass struggles in the colonial and contemporary periods. The session can deal with

methodological issues in historiography and the problems of writing histories of issues like matriline and its impact on women's rights, and women's participation in regional autonomy movements. The aim will be to explore ways of laying the basis of a gendered knowledge system.

Autobiographies of women in mass struggles: The theme will focus on the use of testimonies, biographies, oral and archival histories to recover women's voices from nationalist and local struggles since the late colonial period. The focus will be on the nationalist movement, local struggles over natural resources, and the role of women in militant movements. It can also cover the participation of women in trade unions, peasant organizations and the formation of women's groups and organizations especially after the CSWI report. Documentation of on-going struggles can also be one of the aims of this endeavour. Participants compare the experiences of India with other regions such as Africa and Latin America if possible.

Voices from the past and present: The main aim of this section will be on inviting women activists to talk about their own lives and recording oral histories. This session will largely be based on invited activists from north east, central India and other parts of the country.

Coordinators

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XI. SUB-THEME

Women's Movement's Engagement with Policy

Indian women's movements and women's studies scholarship have together brought to bear a critical lens on the shifting ways in which state developmental policies have constructed women's identities, subjectivities and citizenship in the decades since Independence. Over the years, women's groups, activists and scholars in India have challenged the welfarist bias of the Community Development Programmes that invisibilized women's labour contribution to the economy, demanding that women be recognized as workers and peasants in the urban unorganized and agrarian economies of the country. Women's movements have fiercely opposed the targeting of women by the state's family planning policy and its manifestation as state-sponsored violence against the bodies of women of the laboring classes and subordinate castes. Since the 1980s and the 1990s, women's movements have engaged in increasingly complex ways with government policies following the emergence of women as central actors in economic development programmes (such as women-targeted microcredit or the Self-Help Group phenomenon), the mainstreaming of rural poor women within micro-enterprise and income-generation oriented anti-poverty schemes and the positioning of women as agents of gender-transformative change within their communities (via initiatives such as the Women's Development Programme (Rajasthan), the Mahila Samakhya and the nationwide literacy campaigns that mobilized women neo-literates en masse).

This sub-theme invites its paper presenters to reflect on the rich, complex and fraught engagements that women's groups, activists and scholars have initiated and sustained with state policies and developmental projects/initiatives over the years as well as to reflect critically upon the debates, issues and concerns they have raised. What dangers, opportunities, conflicts and challenges have been generated by a plethora of governmental programmes that solicit women as the principal actors/ targets/ recipients and sometimes even include women's groups and NGOs as 'partners' in implementation? If we have had to move away from condemning the exclusion/ marginalization of women from state developmental policies and resources in the earlier decades towards critically interrogating the terms on which women have been included and incorporated within these, how successful have women's movements been in negotiating this shift? Have we paid sufficient attention to rigorously documenting and understanding how the existing social hierarchies and solidarities of

gender, caste, class, region and religion are being re-configured through the new spaces and resources that state developmentalist projects make available for women? We invite paper presenters to situate ourselves – our own academic and activist engagements with governmental policies, in the light of the rich legacy of engagement that we have inherited and to ask what new questions we should be raising and what insights/ perspectives should we be refining to better understand the emerging political economy of gendered citizenship in India.

Coordinators

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PROGRAMME

3rd February 2014 (Monday)

Pre-conference workshops

- (a) Engaging with the voices of women with disabilities
 Coordinator: Anita Ghai, Arman Ali and Gayatri Buroghain.
 Venue: Bosco Reachout, Ullubari
- (b) 'Young Women': Resisting Violence and Exploring Legacies
 Coordinators: Akhila Singh and Geeta Thatra
 Venue: Cotton College State University

4th February 2014 (Tuesday)

08:00 am Registration

10.00 - 11.15 am

Inauguration (Venue: Gauhati University)
 Speakers: Ilina Sen, President, IAWS
 Vice Chancellor, Gauhati University

Dr. Syeda Hameed, Member
 Planning Commission
 Representatives of Institutions supporting the Conference

11:15 - 11:30 am Tea break

11:30 am - 12:15 pm

Madhuriben Shah Lecture
 Exploring Plural Identities: Women's Studies to North East Studies
 Nandita Haksar

12.30 pm - 1.30 pm

Plenary 1
 Building Women's Studies in the North East
 Coordinator: Archana Sharma

1:30 pm - 2:30 pm Lunch break
2:30 pm - 5:30 pm Subthemes (Parallel sessions)

5th February 2014 (Wednesday)

9:30 am - 1:30 pm Plenary 2
Women's Movements in the North East
Coordinator: Monisha Behal, North East Network (NEN)

1:30 pm - 2:30 pm Lunch break

2:30 pm - 5:30 pm Subthemes (Parallel sessions)

6th February 2014 (Thursday)

9:30 am - 11:30 am Plenary Panel 3
Women in South Asia: Contemporary Challenges
Coordinator: Seema Kazi

11:30 am - 12:30 pm Special Session:
Sexual Violence against Women: State Responsibility and Culpability
Speaker: Vrinda Grover

12:30 pm - 1:30 pm Lunch break
1:30 pm - 3:30 pm Sub themes
4:00 pm IAWS General Body Meeting
(Members only - Agenda to be notified separately)

7th February 2014 (Friday)

9:30 am - 12:30 pm Reporting from the subthemes
12:30 pm - 1:30 pm Valedictory

Note: (Also planned:)

1. Cultural programmes in the evenings.
2. Screening of FILMS on Women's issues.
3. Interaction with WOMEN WRITERS from the region in collaboration with Zubaan.
Details to be announced later on the IAWS website.

* The programme is subject to change due to unavoidable circumstances without prior notice.

Information on Participation and Paper Presentation

Participation

- Participation is open to all those who register for the Conference.
- Conference Registration is compulsory for all.
- IAWS life membership is optional but we strongly urge participants to join the Association.
- Please note that participants who are not IAWS members have to deposit Rs. 200 (for general participants) and Rs. 50 (for students) as Conference Membership Charges.
- The subscription details and membership form are included in this brochure and are also available on the IAWS website www.iaws.org.
- All participants and paper presenters are requested to complete the registration formalities and make travel bookings by the prescribed date.
- Please intimate your itinerary at least two weeks prior to the Conference.

Paper Presentation

If you would like to present a paper in one of the sub-themes/ Pre-conference Workshops, please prepare an abstract of about 500 words. Abstracts should be sent to the subtheme/ Pre-Conference Coordinator concerned, preferably by email.

The abstract should clearly contain the following:

- Title
- Name of the author(s)
- Full address for correspondence
- Telephone and Email id

Abstracts should reach coordinators by 20th November 2013
Acceptance will be communicated by 5th December 2013.

Following acceptance of abstracts, the coordinators will communicate with you regarding paper presentation.

Abstracts will be published as part of the conference proceedings.

PRE CONFERENCE WORKSHOP - 1

Engaging With the Voices of Women With Disabilities

3 February 2014 (Monday)

Northeast India has an unhappy and traumatic history of neglect, apathy and insurgency, and despite popular positive perceptions of the status of women, actually has a rather poor track record in terms of gender based violence, specifically, sexual violence in its various locations.

The 2001 census stated that 2.2% of the Indian population was living with a disability. However disability rights activists, NGOs and even many government agencies estimate the real prevalence to be 5-6% of the total population. The rights of people with disabilities get low priority in India and more so in conflict zones like Jammu & Kashmir and the Northeast.

There are both pragmatic and sociocultural issues in identifying, locating and reaching women with disabilities. Many disabled women are confined to their homes and thus less likely to access the state's mainstream programs or services. Many factors compound their situation, such as terrain, weather, lack of mobility aids; being single and female in a traditional setting; and fear prompted by experiences of stigma or harassment.

Lack of comprehensive data on women with disabilities adds to their 'invisibility' and marginalisation that keeps them out of the ambit of engagement and interaction with women's groups and movements.

The proposed preconference will address the concerns of women with disabilities especially in the context of conflict-induced trauma. It will highlight the issues of women with disabilities to initiate a dialogue within and between women with disabilities and members of the IAWS, identify gaps in both acquiring knowledge and the statutory provisions of the State and the existing scenario such as support services, resources and advocacy. There will be discussions about the livelihoods of women with disabilities, especially in situations where they are generally single and are part of and head female headed households. Another aim is to understand the challenges faced by women with disabilities with regard to sexual and reproductive health, and extend the discussion on issues of disabled women to other states that ignore the reality of disability in the context of gender.

The workshop will attempt to draw up an action plan to educate mainstream organizations on disability issues, so as to encourage inclusion of women with disabilities in their future policies and programs. It will underscore the lack of inclusion of women with disabilities in mainstream policies, programmes and schemes. It is hoped that as an outcome of this workshop participating women and all stakeholders will work with IAWS to conduct orientation programs on sexuality, reproductive health care, sexually transmitted diseases and enable access to available support services for women (with disabilities) in different parts of the Northeast and hopefully other parts of the country to make them more 'visible' and empower them with better control over both their bodily and livelihood integrity.

Coordinators

Anita Ghai

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Gayatri Buragohain

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PRE CONFERENCE WORKSHOP - 2

'Young Women': Resisting Violence and Exploring Legacies

3 February 2014 (Monday)

This pre-conference brings exciting possibilities for exploration and raises some critical questions, like how does 'age' become an important criterion for 'difference' among women? What is the nature of its intersection with categories, like caste, gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, etc.? What challenges do these intersections pose to processes of gender justice? The attempt is to raise questions related to different axes of intersections, exploring their meanings, and the interplay of various categories, in the context of marginality that gives rise to complex manifestations of injustice. The workshop will be organized in two sessions.

Session 1 - Interrogating Violence

In the midst of far reaching changes that are ensuing in contemporary times the challenges faced by marginalised groups and young women are manifold. On the one hand, there are denials, exploitation and marginalisation; while on the other, there are assertions for dignity, self-respect and autonomy, which are more often than not met with violence - both in overt and covert forms. In this session, we invite presentations that explore the contentious intersections of caste, gender, community, sexuality and labour, which get inflicted in terms of violence against young persons in contemporary times.

Session 2 : Exploring Feminist Legacies from the North East

While violence against women is endemic, it is important to raise and understand the specific issues arising out of women's location in conflict areas. The status and gravity of the condition of women from these regions could be located in the framework of collective violence - against entire communities, disappearances and mass killings of men, and sexual assault on women. Further, in the context of uneven economic development, in ecologically fragile regions, there are instances of displacement and loss of livelihoods. What are the women's struggles emerging from such contexts and

what is the history of their resistance? How are women negotiating various institutions, like the family, community, state and market, in which they are embedded in complex and at times contradictory ways? What is the nature of diversity within the North East region itself, which necessitates moving beyond generalised presumptions? What are the newer possibilities for modes of organising, strategising and political initiatives? In this session, we invite presentations that document and reflect on the negotiations, struggles and resistance of women from different north eastern states, and the challenges these pose to feminist politics and the women's movement.

In these sessions we wish to engage with the themes through conversations and dialogue; hence, we propose to include diverse forms of presentations, including paper presentations, short films/documentaries, plays and/or performances, etc. The time limit for each presentation will be 15 minutes. If the presentation is going to be in a vernacular language, then advance information is required so that translations can be arranged. For further details see information on participation and paper presentation.

Coordinators

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Geeta Thatra

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GENERAL INFORMATION

How to Register for the conference? Registration forms should be filled in clearly and completely and sent to: iaws@cwds.org / iaws.secretariat@gmail.com. For online registration, please visit www.iaws.org. For online bank transfer of Registration and or/Membership fee, the details are as follows:

For Electronic Bank Transfer

Name of the Bank	: HDFC Bank Ltd.
Branch Address	: Gole Market Branch, New Delhi
Account No.	: 5841000003034
IFSC Code	: HDFC0000584

Note: Please mention the Transaction ID, Date and sender's details (Name and City).

Last date for Registration: 10th December 2013

Details of Conference Registration Fee

Non member Student (without accommodation)* (150+50): Rs. 200

Non-member Student with (with accommodation)* (500+50): Rs. 550

Student Life Member (with accommodation) : Rs. 500

Student Life Member (without accommodation): Rs. 150

Non-Student/Non Members (without accommodation)* (1000+200): Rs. 1200

Non-Student/Non Members (with accommodation)* (1500+200): Rs. 1700

Life Members/Non-Students (with accommodation): Rs.1500

Life Members/Non-Students (without accommodation): Rs. 1000

- ☛ The charge includes Rs. 200, Rs 50-Students as conference membership fee.
- ☛ Registration for International participants US \$ 100 (See Bank Details Given Above for Electronic Transfers)
- ☛ Accommodation for participants is being arranged at different venues in Guwahati

- ☛ Further details of the programme and specific registration issues will be available on the IAWS website, closer to the time of the conference, at the Central Office or through enquiries at the following email id: secretariat.iaws@gmail.com (Central Office), New Delhi
iawsgu2014@gmail.com (Local Conference Secretariat) Guwahati.
- ☛ Local transportation will be provided from the State Bus Terminus/ Railway Station/ Airport to the Venue on 3th / 4th February 2014. Please intimate time and mode of arrival to the Local Conference Secretariat at: iawsgu2014@gmail.com and a copy to iaws.secretariat@gmail.com. All the participants are requested to report to the Conference Registration Counter at the Women' Studies Centre, Gauhati University on their arrival.
- ☛ Accomodation cannot be ensured for those registering after 10th December 2013 or in case of spot registration.
- ☛ No accomodation will be provided to the accompanying person without registration.

Completed conference registration forms and membership forms along with cheques/demand drafts drawn in favour of the Indian Association for Women's Studies payable at New Delhi to be sent to IAWS Secretariat:

The General Secretary
Indian Association for Women's Studies
C/o Centre for Women's Development Studies
25 Bhai Vir Singh Marg, New Delhi-110001
E.mail: iaws@cwds.org / iaws.secretariat@gmail.com

For further information see:

<http://www.iaws.org>

THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES
CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FORM 2014
(Last date for Registration 10th December 2013)

Name (in full) _____

Gender _____ Age _____

Educational Qualifications _____

Permanent Address _____

City _____ PIN _____ State _____

Phone _____ Mobile _____

E.mail _____

Are you an IAWS Member? Yes No If yes Membership No. _____

Check Appropriate category:

Paper Presenter Participant Sub-theme Coordinator

Do you require Accomodation? Yes No

Any special assistance required? Yes No

If yes check appropriate category:

Senior Citizen Disabled Wheel Chair traveler Any other (specify)

Do you need crèche facilities? Yes No If yes, age of child

Details of Payment:

DD/ Cheque* No. _____ Date _____ Rs. _____

* (Rs.50/- additional for outstation Cheques)

Cheque /Draft may be made in favour of Indian Association for Women's Studies (preferably payable at par in New Delhi).

Bank _____ Branch _____

Place _____ Date _____ Signature _____

For Electronic Bank Transfer

Name of the Bank : HDFC Bank Ltd.

Branch Address : Gole Market Branch, New Delhi

Account No. : 5841000003034

IFSC Code : HDFC0000584

Note:

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Non-member Student with (with accommodation)* (500+50) : Rs. 550

Student Life Member (with accommodation) : Rs. 500

Student Life Member (without accommodation): Rs. 150

Non-Student/Non Members (without accommodation)* (1000+200): Rs. 1200

Non-Student/Non Members (with accommodation)* (1500+200): Rs. 1700

Life Members/Non-Students (with accommodation): Rs.1500

Life Members/Non-Students (without accommodation): Rs. 1000

Please ensure that the Membership form is completed in all respects and sent to the following address:

The General Secretary

Indian Association for Women's Studies (IAWS)

C/o Centre for Women's Development Studies,

25, Bhai Vir Singh Marg (Gole Market), New Delhi 110001.

For online Registration:

<http://www.iaws.org> & <http://www.cwds.ac.in>

By e.mail: iaws@cwds.org & iaws.secretariat@gmail.com

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

Name (in full) _____

Gender _____ Age _____

Educational Qualifications _____

Permanent Address _____

City _____ PIN _____ State _____

Phone _____ Mobile _____

E.mail _____

Mailing Address (if different above) _____

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

Teaching Activism Writing Research

Media & Communication Administration of Programmes Any other

Type of Membership (Please tick categories applicable)

Life (Rs.1500/-) (or) Rs.800/- (upgradation from ordinary)

(Ordinary Member can become Life Member by paying the difference (Rs.800) within the three year period of their membership (w.e.f. 2011)

Student (Rs.250/-) (for 3 years) (Attach proof of Student ID) (or) Rs.5000/- (upgradation)

(Ordinary Institutional member can become Institutional Life Member by paying the difference (Rs.5000) within the three year period of their membership (w.e.f. 2011)

Friends of Association \$100 (in Rupees equivalent)

Details of Payment:

DD/ Cheque* No. _____ Date _____ Rs. _____

* (Rs.50/- additional for outstation Cheques)

Cheque /Draft may be made in favour of Indian Association for Women's Studies (preferably payable at par in New Delhi).

Bank _____ Branch _____

Place _____ Date _____ Signature _____

For Electronic Bank Transfer

Name of the Bank : HDFC Bank Ltd.

Branch Address : Gole Market Branch, New Delhi

Account No. : 5841000003017

IFSC Code : HDFC0000584

Note:

Please mention the Transaction ID, Date and sender's details (Name and City).

Cheque /Draft may be made in favour of Indian Association for Women's Studies (preferably payable at par in New Delhi).

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The General Secretary

Indian Association for Women's Studies (IAWS)

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For online Membership:

<http://www.iaws.org> & <http://www.cwds.ac.in>

By e.mail: iaws@cwds.org & iaws.secretariat@gmail.com

Rememberances

The Indian Association for Women's Studies (IAWS) is a professional association that aims to further the perspectives of women's studies within and beyond educational institutions. It endeavours to strengthen the movement for women's equality through networking, conferences, workshops and research, and through collaboration with institutions and groups working for similar objectives. IAWS provides a forum for interaction among students, researchers, academics, activists and practitioners in different fields, both men and women.

IAWS was established in 1982. The XIV National Conference focusing on Equality, Pluralism and the State: Perspectives from the Women's Movement is the first to be organized in the northeast. The four day conference is being organized in collaboration with Gauhati University, Cotton College State University, Guwahati, Tata Institute for Social Sciences, Guwahati, and the North East Network. The conference will be held in venues in Gauhati University and Cotton College State University from 4th -7th February 2014.



Dr. Madhuri R. Shah (~ 29-06-1989)



Dr. Lotika Sarkar (1923-2013)



Dr. Leela Dube (1923-2012)



Dr. Neera Desai (1925-2009)



Dr. Vina Mazumdar (1927-2013)



Dr. Sharmila Rege (1964-2013)

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