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# Newsletter

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Newsletter No. 7 & 8, 1989  
SPECIAL NUMBER ON

*Fourth*

THIRD NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON WOMEN'S STUDIES,  
WALTAIR 28-31, DECEMBER 1989

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RURAL WOMEN: POVERTY, SURVIVAL  
AND  
STRUGGLE FOR CHANGE

INDIAN ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES

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### RURAL WOMEN: POVERTY, SURVIVAL AND STRUGGLE FOR CHANGE

REPORT  
SURINDER JETLEY

#### Editorial

"Poverty, Survival and Struggle for Change" was the broad theme of the Fourth National Conference on Women's Studies, sponsored by the Indian Association for Women's Studies, which was held at the Andhra University, Waltair from 28-31 December, 1988. This biennial feature of the IAWS has now come to be an event which all those who have a stake in Women's Studies and Women's Development look forward to.

The conference focussed on rural women, particularly those of poorer households, that are seeking sheer survival in the face of multiple odds as well as struggling to transform the condition of their existence.

The objective was to understand the social context of gender inequalities within the families and outside in access to basic needs and productive resources; the decision making processes; the opportunities and so on. There were twelve subthemes ranging from women's access to productive resources, the impact of technological changes, environmental degradation and regeneration on women's work, health and survival, women's instrumental value in family survival, the formal and informal processes of change such as education and socialization, the role of ideology, culture and politics, the gender violence generated by family, community and state, and the form of state intervention, legal processes and collective struggles for change by poor women. The overlapping subthemes had joint sessions. There were three plenary sessions. One as always, was on women in the State where the conference is organized; this time the focus being on Andhra women. The other two focussed on Feminism and Forms of Interventions in their various manifestations.

The inaugural address by Prof. K.V. Ramana, Vice Chancellor, Andhra University, set tone for the conference by suggesting the need for a network of rural women's organizations, a close linkage between research and action and a triangular set of activities involving research, teaching and action in the universities. Welcoming the participants, Dr. Ila Pathak in her Presidential address echoed the same concern by calling for a close cooperation between the academic community and women's organizations. The Valedictory session was presided over by Shri E.D. Subha Rao, Mayor of Vishakapatnam.

A recurrent theme in every conference is the perception by some activists that women's studies are not part of the women's movement. The fact that the former is one kind of intervention which is as essential as the struggles for reforms needs to be articulated in more fora. Perhaps we need a redefined conceptual perception.

Following is the brief presentation of the discussions held in the sessions in various subthemes and panels. There were a total of 56 sessions in which 316 participants exchanged their perceptions on the issues of poverty, struggles and survival of rural women in India.

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**Sub Theme 1: Access to Productive Resources and the Social Organization of Production; Coordinator : Manoshi Mitra**

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The sub theme on Access of Women to Productive Resources concentrated on the following areas of concern:

- Impact of privatization of common property resources on rural poor women.
- In the absence of other inputs, inability of rural poor women to make productive use of land even when they gain ownership rights to land.
- Need for rural women to be organized to gain access to the means of production on a collective basis.
- The appropriation of women's labour with the evolution of tribal societies from food gathering to agriculture.
- Increasing loss of women's autonomy with the rise of private property.

The theme identified for the first session was the changing patterns of women's access to productive resources due to macro impinging on the local level agrarian social structures. These macro forces comprising of imposition of colonial rule, alien legal systems, rise of colonial state power, bureaucratization, commercialization of subsistence oriented economies, and privatization of productive resources, led to the shrinkage of common property resources (CPRs.), erosion of women's usufructory rights; and particularly in tribal societies, it led to loss of women's autonomy in society and in family to the extent of women becoming property of men. The papers highlighting the above theme were:

Minoti Kaul's "Women and Common Land Resources in the Villages of the Union Territory of Delhi", Devanathan's "Changing Patterns of Women's Access to Productive Resources and the Control over the Fruits of Their Labour among Tribes of JharKhand", and "Access to Productive Resources and the Social Organization of Production- A Case Study of Patharghatta in Deoghar District" by J. Sinha and S. Das.

In her paper, Minoti Kaul charted the course of the impact of the growth of Delhi on the villages surrounding it. As a result of this growth, the autonomous existence of the villages was greatly disrupted, affecting the common property resources in the village. Prior to the urban explosion, the

rights to use homestead land in the villages were controlled by a local elite. There were restrictions on transfer of agricultural lands to 'outsiders'. This automatically limited the use of common property resources to the inhabitants of the village. On the other hand, increasing over-use of common property resources could not be prevented as landless households, which could not get rights of decision-making but could use the common property resources, increased.

However, the local decision-making was gradually superseded by the extension of the state power in 1954. Under the new laws the villages were opened to outsiders. Common property resources were increasingly leased out to those households that could show themselves as being 'poor'. Women were not specifically targetted. As of now, the actual poor households which acquired such lands are marginal farmers. The well-to-do farmers are keen to give up portions of their agricultural holdings and get themselves registered as 'poor' in order to get allocations of residential plots from the common properties to be sold thereafter to land speculators.

Women have not benefited from the distribution of common property lands. This was due to increasing costs of cultivation and low productivity which led to lack of marketable surpluses. Women have suffered from the reduction of common property resources due to both legislation and encroachment.

The suggestions made in the paper were to associate women with the management of water resources and afforestation of the leased out lands rather than the use of these lands for cultivation. Afforestation with fodder species will ease the livestock burden on the common properties and will also add to women's income through dairying.

The next paper presented by Devanathan dealt with the historical and contemporary forces leading to male appropriation of the means of production, and of women's labour leading to their loss of access and autonomy. The author began with the need felt by the tribals to preserve their own identity. What struck him about the tribal way of life more than other features was the hard, labour-intensive work performed by the women.

Looking at the process of transition, he found that the phenomena of male appropriation of women's labour started

even prior to the rise of private property. He used the term 'lineage mode of production' to understand societies where groups of families had special access or privileged access to good quality lands and forests. These were not classes, but privileged groups. Among the Kolarian tribes of Jharkhand, this kind of access was limited to office bearers in the village society. Women's labour was used to exploit this preferential access to resources. Patrilocal marriage ensured that accumulation took place in the husband's house.

Despite prevalence of preferential access for certain families, the precolonial situation in these tribes (which ranged from gatherers to agriculturists) was marked by the absence of indigenous state formation. With British rule, the exogenous agents of the new state emerged as the *Dikus*, the new exploiters. Land access patterns also changed. Earlier patterns based on usufructory land rights of households were replaced by ownership rights. Outsiders came to occupy positions of power. This led to a situation full of contradictions. While the new legal system was based on absolute ownership, customary rights of women based on usufruct remained in some instances, e.g. the rights of widows to a life interest on husband property. This right is not tolerated by male agnates anymore. Characteristically, women without adequate male support become victims of violence and witch-hunts leading to physical elimination. The nature of witch-hunts has changed to become an instrument of physically eliminating any female claims to male agnatic property.

Another area of loss of women's autonomy is in the control over their own labour and the fruits thereof. Increasingly, with differentiation in tribal society, women's labour was appropriated by men. While this happened in varying degrees among different groups, among the Kolarian tribes the women still retained control over the fruits of their labour. Among others, like the Kherwars for instance, women's labour was appropriated and women lost access to the market.

Janaki Sinha next presented her paper which dealt with the present impoverished situation of the Santhal women, and the need to organize them towards greater access to resources. She discussed the efforts of an NGO with these women, and the problems related to such efforts.

In the discussions which followed the presentations, several points were raised. First, it was important to study the actual impact, on rural poor women, of individualized limited access to resources granted under government programmes. Most of the time they are left as vulnerable and

assetless as before, or perhaps more burdened. Secondly, the loss of access to common property resources leads to increased marginalization of rural poor women. Thirdly, policy implications arising out of these were:

- a) Need to foster the growth of organization of rural poor women;
- b) Collective access to productive resources is more relevant for rural poor women than individual access, where they lose out to better-off men;
- c) Sustained wage support is essential for the creation of economically productive assets in backward area;
- d) Training in organizational management is essential to enable poor women to manage their own organizations/enterprises.
- e) Infrastructural facilities have to be built up by the state to enable rural poor women to run their own enterprises on a viable basis.

In the second session two studies from Haryana were presented, on patterns of women's decision making. The first by Indirawati et al., pertained to rural women's role in work and decision-making patterns in the domestic and farm sectors. The data presented showed women's overwhelming work contribution in the domestic and the farm and livestock sectors. The second paper by T. Verma et al., related to rationality in decision-making of farm women under adverse conditions in Haryana. The differential level of rationality in decision making of these women was found to be very high in case of the death of the earning member, followed by heavy indebtedness, family conflicts, illness and theft.

The discussion that followed raised several fundamental questions regarding research on rural women, such as: who decides criteria for rationality? and, are women regarded as irrational creatures? It was also proposed that research needs to be done on the backgrounds of those who judged the rationality, or otherwise, of rural women's decisions in order to expose the prevalence of biases which operate in a large gamut of women's studies. It was suggested that decisions which appear perfectly rational from the point of view of the poor rural women, may appear highly irrational from a male urban middle class perspective. Here a note of caution was to be exercised regarding the undue stretching of the gender divide among middle class professionals as many of them share biases of their male colleagues. Top down mentalities will have to be avoided to make women's studies more meaningful to the women's movement.

The next four papers were discussed in a joint session with



sub-theme 8 which was organized around relationships between changes in the social organization of production, technological change in this sphere, and ideological changes affecting women's position and status vis-a-vis control over resources and decision-making. The first paper was by G. Dietrich on Women, Ecology and Culture. Her presentation concerned the issues of the environmental crisis and communalism of which women were primary victims. Hence, women have to come up with alternatives. Dietrich elaborated the concepts recently thrown up by Maria Mies and further elaborated by Vandana Shiva. These relate to the historical growth and domination of male, western, colonial power which destroyed the access to resources, knowledge and productive work which women did in the erstwhile agrarian societies, and replaced it with the profit motive. While Mies has argued about capitalist patriarchy from European history, Shiva has extended this to the area of ecology, based on the destruction of pre-colonial systems where women played valuable roles in management of resources and production. Colonial and western patriarchal models destroyed and replaced these systems of production and knowledge. As a result of this, women were confined to production of labour power and the obligation of the state to make provisions for this sphere was negligible.

Dietrich, while agreeing with Mies' and Shiva's extension of Mies' concepts upto this point, regards the outlook of Shiva on patriarchy in the Indian context as being a western intervention, as naive. Sources of patriarchy have predated colonialism in the sub-continent and it was important to keep this in mind. Again caution must be exercised when stressing the slogan of women as Shakti and Prakriti as these slogans can be communalised. This came out recently in communal riots when Hindu upper caste women were used against Muslim/Dalit women. Discussion following the paper brought up several key issues.

First, the participants found links demonstrated between environmental crisis and the rise of communalism and their debilitating impact on women most illuminating. These linkages were sought to be more clearly established. Secondly, most agreed with the critique of patriarchy and its manifestations in the context of India, as contributing to the subjugation of women. Thirdly, a need was also felt to examine the other dominant ideologies and concepts which had shaped women's role and images and were distorting reality.

**Tribal Matriliney in Transitions: The Garo, Khasis and**

Lalungs of North East India presented by Bina Agrawal tried to trace (a) the interlinks between ecology, economy, technology, marriage norms and women's social and economic position; (b) the historical and contemporary factor leading to changes in the various elements which constitute the fabric of these communities; and (c) the variability in responses and adaptations to these factors which help question unilinear and unidimensional interpretations of social and historical changes.

Bina Agrawal further highlighted several explanations, more in the nature of myths, which are usually forwarded for explaining the marginalization of women. These were the pressures of population on a limited natural base; the adoption of new techniques of cultivation; the spread of commercialization and the penetration of market forces; and state policies. She stated that these factors provide only a limited picture of the nature of changes and the implications for women. Development conceived only in economic terms, based on a model of patriarchy and individual project-consideration, were the more important factors that have led to the erosion of the traditional institutions with unfavourable repercussions for women at large. While there was general agreement with the author on the need for reconsidering development patterns in rural society, a strong concern for widening the context of discussions to include rural poor women in general was expressed by the participants. A plea was also made for a more exhaustive analysis of the factors that were responsible for the loss or continuity of women's status.

Rajni Palriwala's paper on Property, Family and Gender presented a case study based on field work in a village in Sikar District, Rajasthan. While examining the rights to different forms of property, movable and immovable, productive and non-productive, the paper elaborated on the linkages between property, family and gender in the context of class, caste and kinship. Access to new productive resources follows the patterns of control of earlier resources. Ultimately, the paper highlighted forcefully, despite women's labour being crucial to the organization of production, the denial of rights to productive resources controls them, practically, and ideologically. The need to evolve suitable strategies to deal with such constraints, social, ideological and political, for the ultimate empowerment of women can hardly be overemphasized.

Most of the presentations and discussions that followed expressed such a concern.

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## Sub Theme 2: Technological Change, Labour Process and Employment; Coordinator: Nata Duvvury

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Eleven papers were presented under the sub-theme "Technological Change, Labour Process and Employment" in five sessions, namely: the female labour participation and the household; adoption of domestic technology: prospects and problems; dimensions of female wage employment in rural India; impact of agricultural technology on women and technological change in fishing sector and its implications for women.

Throughout the sessions, the discussions centred around the following major issues: (a) subsistence contribution of women to family income; (b) factors contributing to women's participation in economic activities; (c) technological change and its impact on women; (d) sexual division of labour; (e) the problems of separating household and economic activities; and (f) the process by which women are moulded to suit the needs of capitalism.

The group highlighted the substantial contribution of women to family income in subsistence economy, especially in rural areas. However, this situation is undergoing rapid change with mechanization and technological changes. Sexual division of labour which leads to differential income earning by men and women workers, and concentration of women in unskilled occupation are some of the reasons responsible for the low level of earnings of women.

The discussion on the factors contributing to the entry of females into labour force revealed that poverty is the most important factor. Other factors are desertion, widowhood, illness and disability of male members to earn income etc. which lead to the formation of female headed households. Internalization of the ideology that domestic responsibilities like the care of children, and the welfare of the members rest with women also has an important role in pushing women to join labour force. Periods of stress and strain such as drought, famine, poor harvest etc. force women and even children to join labour force to keep up the real income of the family. Hence any study of the household should be linked to the broader processes that take place in the world system. It was also highlighted that the Capitalist system perpetuates the subordination of women by pulling them into low wage employment and through the putting-out system of production. The system fully exploits women using the ideology that women are supplementary earners. Thus, the capitalist intervention into the family further degrades the position of women.

Another issue which was examined was the role of women in the decision making regarding the adoption of domestic and farm technology. The group felt that it was largely influenced by the scale and level of investment of the technology. Women's role in decision-making is meagre in the adoption of technologies involving more capital even when they are for domestic use.

The impact of technology was examined with the experiences of adoption of technology in agriculture and fishing industry. In both cases, it was found that new technologies have an adverse impact on women in the long run. First, it leads to the displacement of a large number of women workers and reduces the employment opportunities. Secondly, women are forced to concentrate in unskilled or semi-skilled works with low returns and poor working conditions. Thirdly, it causes the migration of workers from one area to another in search of jobs. Technological change in some industries like fish processing affected the break down of caste occupational barriers. Fish processing, where once only women of fishing community were engaged, changed the social composition of the work-force with the introduction of new technology and work setting. Women from outside traditional fishing communities also started taking part in fish processing. It was also pointed out that many occupations in which women concentrated were characterized by occupational health hazards. Thus, women in agriculture are prone to rheumatism, backache etc. and in fish processing they are prone to malnourishment, rheumatism, stomach ache, back pain, pain in joints etc.

The last issue raised in the panel was the problem of separation of household from economic activity. The group pointed out that it was very difficult to separate these two spheres of activities, especially, in rural households where women combine their domestic work with cattle rearing, processing of foodgrains etc. So, it was suggested that effective means be developed to identify these two spheres.

### Research priorities

- (1) Develop a common and viable method of identifying household work and economic activity separately.
- (2) Develop technologies that will reduce the drudgery of women and at the same time will not displace them. The scale and capital investment level in technology should be kept low so that decisions regarding its adoption rest with women.
- (3) Evaluate gender difference in productivity across

operations and across regions.

### Recommendations

(1) Policies should be framed and implemented to ensure equal wages for men and women.

(2) Effort should be made to minimise the displacement of female labour resulting from adoption of technology and to provide alternative employment for the displaced women.

(3) Protective measures should be provided to women working in hazardous occupations.

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### Sub Theme 3: Environmental Degradation and Regeneration; Coordinator: Kumud Sharma

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Environmental issues cannot be separated from development issues. Development priorities, policies and strategies have been responsible for environmental degradation. The dilemma of development today is which way to progress, at what cost and at whose cost? People's struggle against poverty and survival is also an ecological struggle fighting against environmental degradation which is both politically and economically produced and is linked to the concept of need, consumer habits, life styles and production methods. State interventions in the form of policies, laws, regulations, etc., for the management of natural resources, redefine people's relationship to resources and their access and control over it.

The dominant development paradigm where technological choices are made is usually considered unproblematic. However, technology has paid more attention to maximising utilization of resources rather than ensuring its sustainable use. For example, the technological progress in harnessing water resources has paradoxically coincided with water scarcity in thousands of villages. Large valley projects have dislocated millions of people and destroyed their livelihood base through submergence of irreplaceable forest wealth and agricultural land and destabilization of the ecology in the catchment areas. On the other hand, increasing privatization of ground water resources in cash crops and in green-revolution areas, to which only rich farmers have access, has resulted in the lowering of the water table and an increase in the number of water-scarce villages. Both drought and flood are the result of mismanagement of our water and other natural resources.

Chitra Ghosh in her paper raised the issue of the decline and deterioration in the management of traditional sources of water in rural areas, exposing people, particularly women, who are the carriers of water, to various health hazards. She pointed out that in India 70% of the surface water is polluted and the principal victims are the underprivileged class and a majority of women. She argued that the Government's health programmes cannot achieve their objectives if we neglect the sources of many of the health problems.

The claims on water resources by agriculture, industry, energy etc., apart from its demand for domestic use, have created another set of problems resulting from pollution of surface and sub-surface water from disposal of industrial waste, use of pesticides and the biological pollution of water where only a single source is available.

During the discussion it was suggested that women's organizations should not only pressurise the local panchayats to maintain the traditional source of water by utilising existing source of funds available from NREP, and RLEGP, but also evolve systems of community management of water resources like Pani Panchayats in Maharashtra.

We know that bio-mass based rural energy systems are facing crisis due to deforestation, degradation of common resources, increasing privatization of land etc. The forest management policies have concerned themselves more with commercial interests and raw material needs of industries and market economy rather than the day to day subsistence needs of rural poor households. Women's ecological struggles have pointedly focussed the links between deforestation and the rural fuel wood crisis, women's increasing work load and the deterioration in nutritional and health status of the family. Afforestation efforts to produce biomass to meet the fuel, fodder and small timber needs of rural households have gone off the rails.

Three papers presented by R. R. Alluri, Lalit Yadav & R. K. Sharma, and S. Nirmala Kumari examined the environmental and energy constraints in rural areas.

R.R. Alluri presented a comparative study of various types of fuel utilization patterns in the rural sector and conversion costs for replacing one fuel by another. He argued for the judicious mix of commercial and non-commercial sources of energy. During the course of discussions it was stressed that the presentation was largely concerned with safety, availability, efficiency and cost-effectiveness of various domestic fuels and it totally lacked rural women's perspec-

tives about availability, use and management of bio-mass based energy sources.

The joint paper by Lalit Yadav and R. K. Sharma was presented by Ashima Sharma titled "Constraints in the Use of Conventional Energy Sources in Rural Households and an Alternative Strategy". It dealt with the problems faced by rural women with the existing energy use system and how they perceive energy problem. The data for the study was drawn from a sample survey of 250 respondents spread over the three agro-climatic zones of the State of Haryana.

The study observed that the existing energy consumption system is not only time consuming, but also involves high cost of labour and health problems. It was observed that rural women are in favour of non-conventional technologies. However, problems related with cost, availability and practicality of these technologies in rural sector, were posing a problem. Keeping in view the cost aspects, the authors suggested the need to make available efficient and smokeless cooking stoves and the installation of bio-gas plants and solar cookers and heaters on a cooperative basis.

Nirmala Kumari's paper on "Increasing Work Burden of Rural Women in Changing Environment of Villages" was based on data collected from two villages in the Chandragiri Mandal of Chittoor district in Andhra Pradesh. The paper argues that collection of fodder and fuel wood has turned to be a major item of work for rural women. The increase in their work burden was contributed by indiscriminate felling of trees and allocation of waste land to different categories of people in villages. Interestingly, her data shows that due to increasing work burden many families have preference for girl child although it was not clearly articulated by them.

Two papers by Manoshi Mitra from ILO and Minothi Padhi from Gram Vikas, Orissa, examined the role of community based organizations in environmental management and alternative strategies of meeting the basic subsistence needs of rural women. Manoshi Mitra's paper on "Environmental Degradation and Regeneration: Alternative Strategies for Development" stressed on community based environment management with a focus on women. Environment defined as access to food, water, shelter and medicine for all, irrespective of any distinctions of age, gender and class, denotes the totality of the production-base of a region. Public intervention, in the name of efficient management of resources have, since colonial times, resulted in denial of access to food, water, shelter and medicines to the poorer

strata of women in villages and tribal communities, whose lives are inextricably linked with the environment for ages and whose deprivations are related to the degradation of environment.

In this context, she stressed the need to promote projects such as rotational harvest, among others, for providing sustainable livelihoods to women. She cited three case studies where approaches have been adopted for wasteland development involving poor rural women's organisations and for providing collective access to land with a view to ensure self-reliant livelihood to rural women. While the ultimate success of such projects depends on institutional linkages, technical and other inputs, women's control over assets, decision making etc., the issues of organizational structure and collective action are important.

Minoti Padhi in her paper 'Environmental Degradation and Struggle for Change—Kerandimal Experience', drew attention to the environmental degradation and the consequent problems faced by the tribals in Kerandimal Hill range situated in the eastern part of Ganjam district of Orissa. The hardships faced by women of the region who are not only poor but are denied the basic minimum needs as a human being, despite trekking long distances to fetch water, collect fodder, fuel and firewood. Though the Gram Vikas is working with these tribals since 1979, it could not do much to mitigate the hardship of these hapless women because of a lack of women volunteers willing to work among them. Based on the experience of the community forestry programmes in operation in the area since 1985, the author, however observed that "once women become organized and get an opportunity to prove their capabilities they can improve their situation through their organized action".

On a different level, Chatrapati Singh's paper on "Community Resource Management and Law—Alternatives for Curriculum Development" highlighted the fact that the feminist critique or the extensive ecological discourse has not made much impact on curriculum development and courses that are currently being taught. This is not due to any dearth of knowledge on the subject of women and ecology. He strongly felt the need for incorporating the available knowledge into the courses taught in universities and colleges for the transformation of current thinking on these issues by critically analysing the ways in which state marginalises women. He pointed out that the way in which the management or rural management courses are structured pushes people out of knowledge systems and does not take into consideration grass root realities.



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**Sub Theme 4: Education and Socialization: The Formal, non-formal and informal process; Coordinators:  
Lalitha Ramdas and Prabha Mahale**

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The sessions were organized on the basis of certain broad themes, given the focus of papers:

(A) Regional case studies which dealt with the implication and nature of educational and training processes, in the formal and non-formal context for rural women/girls.

(B) Examination of curricular, formal, and non-formal and educational material for gender differentiation and sex-bias.

(C) Literacy as a tool of empowerment for women and girls.

The group started out with the hope of sharing strategies and recommendations. However, the range and nature of discussions touched on varied, complex, philosophical, political and structural issues pertaining to education and socialization which left us with many questions but few answers. These issues have again been divided into certain broad areas.

One of the basic issues that emerged as a result of the various presentations and discussions was the questioning of the role of education. This is a question with serious implication for the women's movement. It was discussed whether the role of education was to provide the opportunity for social and material mobility and competitiveness with regard to occupational placement, or whether the role of education was to stimulate questioning, release creative energies and generate self awareness. Those roles of education were also discussed in which the realities of education for rural women and girls were best answered. The feeling was that, education should be in tune with a fair and equitable vision of social reality. Education should encourage self-reliance, and independent decision-making, rather than be a concept of knowledge as a commodity. It is not simply the acquisition of the three r's that the rural women need. It was stated quite clearly that education for rural women/girls had to be context specific and need based both in context and methodology. Another key area which is directly associated is that of alternative value systems. The women's movement needs to take stock of and examine the present value systems and its implications for women's education. The dichotomy between the values and social attitudes that the present system demands and elicits and the value system that it hopes for was elaborated.

The aggressive mode of the present value system can be seen in its expectation with regard to education. Concepts,

such as, success in society are largely determined by the input of formal education. Moreover, this success is associated closely with aggressive competitiveness, and quite clearly couched in masculine terms. The central dilemma then, is to ensure that an alternative value-system be associated with concepts like success. It is towards the creation of a support structure, with an alternative vision of society and the kind of value systems that would prevail there, that the women's movement must reflect upon.

Within the context of education training for rural women, non-formal education was a key area of focus. Even here, however, it must be stated that there was a difference in the approach and the opinion as to what constituted the means and end of non-formal education. It was felt by some that non-formal education need not be bound by any restriction to the formal system and could be a means of empowerment by focussing on issues central to the oppressed and the disadvantaged. If education can be seen as a critical enquiry, i.e. also creative enquiry, then, non-formal education could be a positive experience when viewed in the above setting.

Another major area that came under attention, was the examination of gender differentiation and sex-biases in educational materials, school curriculum and in the hidden curriculum i.e. the class-room environment. Papers focussing on two different states, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat, re-emphasized the fact that text-books in various regions have to be examined for gender biases and alternatives be put forward.

The recommendations placed before the participants at the conference were to systematically put together a programme of action that will facilitate the development of non-sexist training and education material. It is vital, that the findings be disseminated among various women's groups, and especially, inputs be made into teacher training institutes. It is essential, to put together an alternative curriculum, one that will stimulate the need to question and be creative. It is only then that both the content and methodology of the educational process can be truly strengthened. It is hard to isolate content from methodology and clearly both need our special efforts.

It is also important to state that it is not just non-sexist educational material that will spearhead positive change, especially in the rural setting where text-books are not the



reality. Very often, it is the class-room environment in the formal and non-formal sense that is an integral part of the process of learning. Hence, attempts must be made for evolving strategies that will ensure that this class-room environment is altered from its present, blatant sexual discrimination patterns.

The teacher's attitudes and behaviour that reinforce gender biases need to be examined. The role of the teacher, in the rural context, cannot be looked at in isolation as he or she is a part of the community, and hence, strategies for future interventions should be developed with the aim of involving the community at large, i.e., including the health extension worker and other community organizers. It is interesting to note, that despite the overwhelming feeling, the primary school teacher's role is crucial. The absence of primary school teachers among the delegates was noted and its implications are significant. The women's movement needs to bring in these critical inputs.

Yet, another topic that was focussed upon, was the extent of the involvement of the academic community. It was felt that, very often, the distancing of the academic researcher from the realities of rural setting was unfortunate. The experience of most of those present was in the urban educational setting and only very few had actually lived and worked in rural areas. Hence there was an articulation of the need for not just quantitative analysis but qualitative studies as well. Micro-studies paying special attention to the qualitative

content are essential for understanding the composite picture of the priorities of the rural context.

#### Areas for future action

1) Alternative mode of looking at research that is active, dynamic and action oriented. The bulk of material is based on surveys and census data and while these are no doubt essential, it must be stated that research must directly touch upon the realities of rural women and girls. Research cannot be "conducted upon" them. But participatory methods of research and essentials need to be highlighted. In fact training is another aspect that needs this input of a participatory mode.

2) The need for those of us within the women's movement who are interested in education and socialization to bring in women such as primary school teachers amongst others, who have important roles to play in determining educational and socialization patterns.

3) The strengthening of the dialogue and networking between activists and the researchers and partnership and a union of interests are the key for future action.

If there is one word that was constantly highlighted, it is the word alternative: Alternative value systems, and alternative vision for society; We need to understand the components of this alternative vision for society and perhaps this can be the area on which we can focus in the next conference.

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#### Sub Theme 5: Health, Sexuality and Reproduction; Coordinator: Leela Visaria

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The theme Health, Sexuality and Reproduction was organised around three specific issues. The issues were:

(a) Sex differentials in mortality and morbidity and the deficit of women in the population; (b) Differentials in access to and utilization of healthcare as well as intrahousehold distribution of food and nutritional status of women; (c) Gender bias in India's family planning programme including the use of amniocentesis to achieve desired sex composition of children.

In the first session, the two papers which were discussed were Famines and Sex Ratio in the Orissa Division between 1881 and 1921 by Vidyut Mohanty and Sex Differentials in Mortality and Morbidity, by S. Sandhya. These papers pointed out that throughout this century, (except perhaps for the last 3 or 4 years), women in India have experienced

higher mortality from birth upto nearly the end of their reproductive period. Data from Indian Censuses and the Sample Registration Scheme establish these facts. While this is true at the macro level, de-aggregation of data at sub-regional level, in different time periods and during crises like famine, bring greater insights into the processes both biological and sociological, which bring about these differentials. All the same, the macro-data cannot answer questions like: why do these sex differentials in mortality exist and persist and how are they brought about? In order to understand the why and how of this issue, researchers and activists have undertaken, at the micro level, studies related to gender differentials in access to and utilization of health care, in food intake and also the interaction between nutrition and illness. The papers that focussed on these issues were: Gender Differentials in Access to Food and Health

Care by Tejinder Malhotra and Joginder Mukherjee; Nutritional Security: A Distant Goal for Rural Women by Maitreyi Chatterjee; The Effect of Parents' Education on Nutrient Intake of Pre-schoolers by Purnima Srivastava; Women's Role in Family Health Care by B. R. Busi, et al.; and Environmental Iodine Deficiency and its Health Consequences in the Tribal Women: A Study of Andhra Pradesh by B. Swarajyalakshmi and K. V. Lakshamana Rao.

These papers suggested among other things that the whole process of socialization is such that women view themselves as inferior, as not needing medical attention in the event of an illness, (which is often perceived as minor), as not needing additional calories when pregnant, etc. There is an internalization of these views and there are elaborate rituals and belief structures around these processes. Another important area where gender biases have been very obvious is the family planning programme. This was highlighted by the third group of papers, namely: Gender Bias in Family Planning—Preference for Female Sterilization by Satnam Kaur and R. K. Punia; The Good, the Tolerable and the Jarring: on the Changing Images of Women in FP Propaganda by Vimal Balasubrahmanyam; Sex Determination and Sex-preselection Tests in India—Recent Techniques for Femicide by Vibhuti Patel.

Except for the mass vasectomy drive during Emergency,

there has been a steady increase in and reliance upon female sterilization as a method of birth control. Female sterilization has become the method of family planning because the responsibility of limiting the family size falls on women. In the study by Satnam Kaur and R.K. Punia it was revealed that in three districts of Haryana State 76.56% of women adopted tubectomy. The deep rooted cultural and social values make women responsible for the number and sex of the children they bear. The existing programme exploits this situation by setting targets at all levels, by offering incentives, etc.

The group felt that emphasis on terminal methods rather than making available alternative methods is misplaced. In the mad rush to fulfill targets, women as human beings are forgotten and are robbed of their basic human dignity. The quality of care rendered is less than minimal. It is time we demanded that women should not be treated as targets but as human beings and that they should be informed about various birth control methods, the advantages and disadvantages, complications and after-effects of each method. Family Planning has become a misnomer: today it is a family curtailment programme. Perhaps, a departure from target setting is what we need. Equally important is that incentive should be done away with. Money spent on improving the quality of services of health care will go a longer way towards the well-being of women.

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#### **Sub Theme 6: Laws Implementation and Processes of Legal Change; Coordinator: B.Sivaramayya**

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The sub-theme 6 relating to Laws, Implementation and Processes of Legal change was divided into 4 sections, namely, i) Property rights and maintenance, ii) Dowry, iii) Violence against women and rape, iv) General issues. Of these the topics relating to dowry and rape were held jointly with sub-theme 9 dealing with Gender Violence.

In the first session, the topic Property Rights and Maintenance was discussed with Prof. K. Gupteshwar as the chair person. The papers of Prof. Sivaramayya on Patriarchy and Economic Rights of Women: Laws of Maintenance and Dowry and of Lalita Parihar on Right to Maintenance of Muslim Divorcees were read. Prof. Sivaramayya pointed out the patriarchal aspects of the maintenance provision of the Criminal Procedure Code as in actual operation. He referred to the fact that the wife's contribution in terms of sacrifice of her career and her domestic work towards the accumulation of property by the husband is not taken into consideration under the existing laws of maintenance. He pointed out the various modes in which the provisions

relating to payment of dowry are circumvented in actual practice by certain institutionalized practices, regressive judicial trends and existing legislations on the subject.

Lalita Parihar gave an account of the background of the provisions of the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986. She gave a critical account of the various lacunae in the Act, and pointed out that the Act strikes a blow at the secular image of the country. She characterized the Act as ill-advised and ill-drafted and that its repercussions have not been sufficiently appreciated.

The Second session was chaired by the eminent advocate and social worker D. Saraswati Devi. Devi Prasad of the Department of Social Work presented a paper on dowry practices. He suggested the framing of a sound social policy as an effective response to socio-cultural changes in order to tackle the problem of dowry. Explaining the concept and evolution of dowry, Devi Prasad categorically stated the causative factors for the incidence of dowry and the strategies adopted to curb the practice, and also, talked about the

failure of the Dowry Prohibition Act 1961. Another paper on Criminal Law amendments to curb the practice of dowry deaths and marital cruelty was presented by Bhavani Prasad Panda.

The third Meeting on "Rape—Marital Rape" was chaired by Sri K.V. Chalapati Rao, an eminent lawyer of Criminal Law. A scholarly presentation on the subject of Marital Rape was presented by a young Law teacher from National Law School, S.V. Joga Rao. Dealing at length with the legal provisions of Rape and Marital Rape in the Indian Penal Code, Mr. Joga Rao criticised the law declaring the otherwise lawful sexual intercourse of validly married spouses as illegal if the wife is below 15 years, on the ground that sociologically the practice of early marriages is rampant all over the country and all such marriages are valid. In such cases how can the sexual intercourse between a wife below 15 years and her husband be regarded as an offence under the provisions of marital rape. He did not agree with any such situation which has to be declared as legally unpermissible.

Bhavani Prasad Panda, in his paper on rape, categorically stated the various types of rape, the causative factors for its incidence which has different manifestations, namely, physiological, psychological and sociological.

Finally, an eminent social worker Seema Sakhare presented a paper on rape—with special reference to rural rape cases giving the detailed picture about the widespread incidence of rape in urban and rural areas. She stated how innocent girls become victims of rape and how the culprits escape from the clutches of Rape Law and are being acquitted by courts because of corrupt police officers and judges who manipulate the law in order to successfully manage the clean acquittal of those culprits who should have been punished. She suggested certain modifications in the Rape Law.

The session unanimously resolved that the existing provisions of Sec. 114 A of Indian Evidence Act limiting to custodial rape cases falling under the definition of Sec. 376(2) I.P.C. 1860, where the onus of proof is shifted on the accused person, should also be extended to other categories of rape coming within the definition of rape under Sec. 375 I.P.C. 1860.

The Fourth meeting was chaired by Akella Satyanarayana. In his paper on Women and Reservation, Nooka Raju traced the evolution of the concept of women's status from the ancient to the modern time. He stressed that in order to elevate the status of women on par with men, it is necessary that the constitutional provisions relating to the development of women with particular reference to the reservations system have to be implemented.

Indira Devi in "Legal Rights of Women and Ownership" traced the evolution of the legal status of women from the ancient law of inheritance to the modern law of succession. She gave data regarding some cases filed in the State of Andhra Pradesh. She pointed out the failure of women to assert their legal rights particularly the right to property under the Hindu Law of Succession and explained the reasons for such failure. The lack of legal literacy, socio-economic inhibitions and costly litigation were mainly responsible for the absence of due protection to woman's rights in India.

Abha Trivedi spoke on the "Recent Protective Legislation for Women and their Fate". She made a critical analysis of the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, and gave reasons for its failure. Akella in his concluding remarks, gave an account of the failure of many social legislations with particular reference to the apathy shown by the people's representatives who have no knowledge of law and no commitment to the cause of women's development.

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### Sub Theme 7: Political Institutions, Structures and Processes; Coordinator: Sushila Agarwal

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Women are the largest backward group in India. Their political participation is negligible at grass-root level. Political participation includes the gamut of voluntary activities with a bearing on the political processes, including voting, support of political groups, communication with legislators, dissemination of political views and opinions among the electorate, and other related activities. Besides social relationships, there are spheres of power relationships which are generated and institutionalised and are used to encourage,

control or move people's behaviour, attitudes and beliefs in specified directions. Political participation can also be considered to include an involvement in any form of organized activity that affect these power relationships. Within this conceptual framework, women's participation in the panchayat system presents a dismal picture.

In the first session two papers were presented. Pam Rajput's "Women's leadership at the grassroot level in

Punjab" revealed that while 50% women were elected as panchas and other 50% co-opted, none of them had the knowledge about the functioning of the panchayatraj system. After interviewing 30 women panchas she concluded that the majority of them were unaware of their responsible role and they hardly attended the meetings of the Panchayats. The women were neither consulted nor informed of anything. Often papers were sent to their houses for affixing their thumb impressions and they were told to trust their brothers. If the women became active and questioned the deeds of the sarpanch, they faced all kinds of problems including character assassination. Pam Rajput recommended awareness training camps for women panchas to activate them. Also, government policies and programmes should be made available to the women in all regional languages.

Zenab Bano's paper on Women's participation in Girva Panchayat Samiti of Udaipur district in Rajasthan analysed the role of schedule tribes vis-a-vis the Rajput community of the area. She said that the scheduled caste women were more backward and less likely to be affected by development programmes as compared to the Rajput women. Excepting 2%, all the women were co-opted and did not participate in deliberations.

In the discussions that followed, it was pointed out that unless there is a political party of women only, under the auspices of IAWS, and women have bargaining power, their role will remain passive. It was also decided to undertake a study of the panchayat system of all the states in the context of the participation of women.

The second session began with Ranjani Subba Rao's paper, "Role of women in the Panchayat Institutions in Andhra Pradesh". She made a study of six gram panchayats in Vishakhapatnam. She said that 75% women did not know how these bodies functioned and their participation was insignificant. While most members were uneducated and poor at the Gram panchayat and Mandal levels, women members of the Zila parishad belonged to urban upper and middle classes and were educated. The domination of male members belonging to the higher strata hampered women's participation. She suggested that formal and informal education for women and political parties should be encouraged.

The next paper entitled "Women in Politics: A case study

of Bhavnagar District." was presented by Sneha Joshi. According to her study, there were 10.26% of women in Zila Parishad, 12.57% at Taluka, and 10% at Grampanchayat level. She too suggested education for women to bring about social change in rural areas, and towards a more active participation by women.

In the third session, Gita Upadhyay presented a paper on voting behaviour of rural women in Assam with special reference to upper Assam. She interviewed hundred women to learn of their socio-economic and educational background. She concluded that there was little political awareness among women, especially among low income group and that women preferred honesty in politics.

In the fourth session Nikhil Desai discussed "Role of Associations in the Upliftment of Rural Women." He said that the demands of rural women for drinking water, sanitary facilities, health care centre, education for their children, job opportunities etc. can be taken care of by the government if the rural women organize and form an association. The consensus of discussion was that women have to organize and emerge as pressure groups in order to have bargaining power. The example of ox-fam group, which started an association in Gujarat and has helped in improving the lot of rural poor women was cited.

The second paper was presented by S. Girja on the Role of Andhra Women in India in Freedom Struggle. Andhra women joined freedom struggle from 1922, participated in non-cooperation movement, collected Swaraj Fund, and participated in Quit India movement. Special reference was made to Durga Bai Deshmukh's role in freedom movement. Impact of Mahatma Gandhi on Andhra women was also highlighted.

In the fifth session, Rohini Gawankar presented a paper on the Role of Women in Grampanchayat with special reference to Maharashtra. She said that 94% percent women were co-opted and only 6% were elected to Grampanchayats. Women did not take interest in panchayat system, primarily because 90% were literate but not educated, and lacked time for political activities. It was pointed out that politics is not income generating and therefore women find it difficult to participate. Her most important finding was that women from progressing areas were more aware of the functioning of the panchayat system and they participated actively.



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**Sub Theme 8: Ideology, Culture & Politics; Coordinator: Amrit Srinivasan**

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In this subtheme the “super-structural” domain of culture and politics was taken as the main focus in examining the implications of gender ideology for rural society.

The emphasis was on how traditional culture or the domain of custom, religion and art affect women’s self-perceptions about their so-called “natural” biological identity, function and role by giving these powerful aesthetic and moral legitimacy. Equally, on how the contemporary political culture of the Indian state skilfully utilises these ideologies in the pursuit of its own ends without giving thought to the destructive effects this might have on women and their lives and minds. Indeed it has even been suggested that the state is consciously motivated in its efforts to suppress the potentially subversive political role of women. The old cultural and ideological constraints have been constantly sought and adhered to by the state in order to prevent women’s participation in decision-making processes at any level.

It was considered imperative to caution therefore, that however progressive, modern and apparently “neutral” the languages of “scientific progress”, “national integration” and “development” utilized by the state in both its theory and practice, they conceal a worldview and technology which has massive anti-women potential.

Some of this has certainly been realized and in fact demonstrated to be true in the other sessions of this conference. In subtheme-8, however, we only attempted to state the case and rather than examine the extremely thorny question of

how exactly structures of rural inequality and oppression relate to the symbolic languages of rural social and political life, we preferred to pay more attention within the ideological domain to how various systems of cultural and political communication reflect, re-inforce and support one another to assume their peculiarly dangerous and all-embracing power, which is often the more potent for being unconscious in its manifestation.

Indirectly and in a very small and experimental way, therefore, subtheme-8 also tried to make good what was perceived to be a shortcoming or a lacuna in the existing state-of-the-art with Women’s Studies as a whole, wherein, two kinds of research have gone on side by side but unfortunately without reference to one another. On the one hand, studies made of women within particular Indian cultural and philosophical milieu such as those of caste, rural myth and legend, including cosmologies of “purity/pollution”, shakti etc; and on the other, research made into the more clearly political economic aspects of the women’s question, which highlight structural inequalities.

It was the sub-theme’s intention to suggest that it is only when both these domains become aware and cognizant of one another that we can hope to unearth the total and continuous nature of the gender ideology. On the basis of such knowledge then, a more cautious and critical attitude could be adopted towards policies and programmes whether economic, legal or political, which may on the surface appear as good and necessary but which in the long run might become the means of increasing state intervention and interference in the private and social life of the people.

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**Sub Theme 9: Gender Violence: Role of the State, Community and Family; Coordinator: Seema Sakhre**

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The major objective of this sub theme was to assess the roots, nature and context of gender violence within the extended family; within the community by upper classes/castes on women of poor, low- caste households; and by the state and its machinery. Factors underlying increase in gender violence were also sought to be assessed.

Thirty Six papers received on the above theme were broadly grouped in the following seven sessions: (a) general violence, (b) dowry; (c) prostitution, (d) family violence (e)

rape, (f) religion, and (g) caste.

The papers dealt with the multifarious forms of oppression of women by both male and female patriarchs and by the society at large. Violence and its forms ranging from dowry, wife battering, rape, caste oppression, forced prostitution, female infanticide to familial torture and denial of property were discussed. It was pointed out that the patriarchy-based social and familial structures provided ample scope for perpetrating violence against women at the slightest oppor-



tunity. Women's subordination and violence against them cannot be traced to individual male dominance, but to patriarchy and exploitative relationships. Also highlighted were the often subtle yet more destructive forms of socialization through the agencies of religion and education.

Some of the macro-level factors, that contribute towards violence against women were identified in one of the presentations. Sex-role stereotypes, efforts towards equality between sexes, social conditioning of women such as passivity, low self-esteem, powerlessness all contribute to what is termed as "a sense of learned helplessness" inculcated in women who learn to accept violence as a way of life.

Specific forms of gender violence, such as dowry, rape, prostitution, were also elaborated upon by many of the participants. As regards dowry-related violence, it was suggested that certain fundamental changes in the cultural norms that prescribe inequitable relations between sexes have to be brought about. Both male and female roles have to be redefined and transformed. Added to this is the need for overhauling the police and the judicial attitude in this regard which greatly obstruct and impede investigations. Parental attitude and gender discrimination, defective role modelling of girls in the name of moral behaviour, ignorance about personal rights, lack of support structures are other areas that require speedy yet careful attention.

Devadasi practice, in which over ten thousand girls are condemned every year to a life of sexual servitude (concubi-

nage) and subsequently dragged into urban prostitution, was also discussed. The practice was found to be particularly peculiar to the border districts of Karnataka and Maharashtra states where these devadasi form 70-80% of the total women in prostitution. The explanation put forward for the spread of such a practice is that the dominant feudal class, besides exploiting the labour, has extended its "Will" to sexual exploitation too in the name of religion and the chief instrument for this has been violence or its threat. In this way both the interests and needs of the landlords as well as gaining an ideological hold over peasants were assured. The paper suggests socio-economic transformation as well as ideological clarification in the form of education as necessary steps towards a process of change. Rehabilitation of the children of prostitutes and their health problems were other dimensions that were highlighted.

Certain autonomous women's group like Forum Against Rape, Nagpur etc., have taken up individual cases of women's oppression. Such reports were also noteworthy in the larger context of struggle against women's subjugation and exploitation.

Exploitation of the schedule caste women both on the pretext of caste and of gender, was also elaborated upon. Variables such as population, literacy, indebtedness, work participation rate, percentage of agricultural labourers, were employed to cast light on particularly the schedule caste women workers in the rural areas. The need for unionizing women workers by voluntary organizations was also emphasized.

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#### **Sub Theme 10: Family Survival Mechanisms; Coordinator: Surinder Jetley**

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Sub Theme 10 was organised around the theme Family Survival Mechanisms. The contributions to this theme dealt with three main aspects of a family's response to crisis situation. First, the female headed households including those of widows and daughters as primary earners; secondly, migration as a coping mechanism; and lastly, variations in the pattern of family adjustment in situations of poverty, seasonal fluctuations, and modernization process.

Three papers were presented in the first session. K. Annie Nirmala described the struggle of rural women of East and West Godavari districts of Andhra Pradesh who migrate to Gulf countries to work as housemaids or hospital ayahs, leaving their husbands and children behind. These women are pushed out of the agricultural economy due to the season-

ality of agriculture component often forced by their husbands and other family members. In the Gulf countries they work for thirteen to fifteen hours under highly exploitative conditions. While they live a life of misery, the husbands acquire new assets and educational facilities for the children. These women thus share the bulk of responsibilities for the maintenance of the family and ensure better opportunities for its members.

The second presentation was "Women Assist Change by not Changing Themselves" by Maitreyi Krishnaraj and Divya Pandey. This study traced the linkages between the macro-level changes and family on the one hand, and women's work and family strategy for survival and mobility on the other. The study was conducted on the Cane Bamboo

workers of the South Ratnagiri districts now called the Sindhu-Durg. These are harijan communities plying their traditional caste-based occupations for centuries. On the basis of twenty case-studies in the village, the authors concluded that the options for new employment opportunities with better income are first open to the males. Yet women remain the basic support for the family with regular income from traditional occupation. Within the traditional craft too, men undertake the commercially attractive work while women remain confined to low-paid caste-contract work, thereby making them dependent on the local economy. Women's work provides insurance against risk while allowing men the chance to diversify. This appears as yet another example of modernization process bypassing the women in the family.

A study of Brahmin widows was presented by S.A.T. Adilakshmi. Like other papers this presentation also revealed that women shoulder the main responsibility of managing the family.

The discussions following the three presentations focussed on how women are particularly disadvantaged as they struggle hard for improving the family situation without enjoying the benefits of their efforts. It was also felt that the various opportunities available for development are beyond the reach of women. The processes of commercialization and out-migration heighten gender inequalities. The group discussed the methodology of each paper and agreed on the need for innovative methodology for women studies.

The first presentation in the second session was on "Widows Survival and Struggle for Change". Neglected by in-laws and even children, the widows in this study find it difficult to survive if there are no assets owned by them. They seem to pull out of crisis better if they are in employment when their husbands die. It was felt that these women need the strength of organization which could fill the void created by the loss of men in their lives on whom they had complete emotional and often financial dependence.

Another paper by D.S. Leela also dealt with such households where women became the heads with the death of, or desertion by, husbands. The average Indian women is not prepared for the eventuality of life after the death or desertion by her husband. Socialized to be dependent, they find that they are constrained by social disapproval when they try to become independent and self-reliant.

In a micro-study of three villages in Bangladesh, Mahmuda Islam's presentation reiterated that socio-cultural

context across the borders being the same, the female-headed households offer little opportunities of mobility, leadership and decision-making. The women in these households suffer because of lack of access to available institutional and state help.

In the third session two papers dealt with women members of the family shouldering the primary responsibility of family survival. Lakshmi Lingam's paper titled Women's Role and Family Survival Mechanisms in Wet and Dry villages of East Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh explored the relationship between the agro-ecological conditions and socio-structural aspects of village societies. In all circumstances, women's contribution to family subsistence in terms of physical labour and money income was found to be substantial. This was more so among the poorest rural households. Examining the castes along the purity/pollution divide, she found that worst sufferers were the women among families experiencing downward mobility from the non-polluting (and therefore, ritually higher castes), caste groups where women's work is restricted to home-based production system.

Prabha Mahale presented the findings of an empirical study of what is called "sanctified harlotry" whereby consecrated women are obliged by custom to prostitute themselves. The paper was based on the study of village Tikota in Bijapur district and the dedicated girls belonged to the Holeya and Madar castes. The primary motive of consecration of girls is to earn money through control of female sexuality. While the family gains religious merit by dedicating the girls to deities and ensures regular income, the girls too are conferred some special privileges often associated with a son. However, the girls look for a steady provider and desire relationship with a single man which is seldom achieved. Now with commercialization of their occupation, these women are losing the socio-legal sanction of their communities. They may also lose the right to their assets and property with the state determined to abolish this institution and replace it with monogamous marriages and further patriarchal controls.

Nagma Yasmin's paper examined the work distribution among family members. In a study of two villages in Varanasi district she studied 60 families to trace the role performance of rural women and the role expectations of their husbands and mothers-in-law. As has been observed elsewhere, this study too concludes that much of women's work revolves around household but the husbands and mothers-in-law expect more.

In the fourth session all three papers dealt with the lives of migrant women workers. The first presentation by the AWAG group described the plight of coal-dust workers, primarily migrant workers from Rajasthan. They had come to participate in the conference and related how they work under hazardous work conditions in a large city without much improvement in their life-chances. Many contract serious diseases and their babies too suffer from lack of health facilities. The earnings of these women often go into unproductive items like silver ornaments while their nutrition level does not change substantially.

The presentation by T.A. Hema Kumari and U.Tataji discussed the role played by women in poor rural households engaged in tobacco-grading in Andhra Pradesh. The employers prefer women for this work as it was available only part of the year. Majority of the women migrate on their own while the men look after the residual family. The channels of communication in the process of recruitment are through such traditional institutions as the church and kinship. These women acquire better say in decision-making and are quite independent being used to travel back and forth between the village and the work-place. However, the dislocation in the family hits the children hardest as they remain educationally and emotionally deprived due to the changes in the sex roles of the family.

The third presentation in this session was by P. Tarakumari who jointly wrote the paper with D. Harinarayan. It dealt with rural migrants in Vishakhapatnam city, 44% of whom live below the poverty line. Struggling to provide the basic needs such as food and clothing, the women in these families do not find the conditions significantly changed even after migration to the city.

Speaking about the "Shattered Migrant Widows, the Victims of November '84 Riots" in Delhi, Kiran Sharma in the concluding session, focussed on the psychological and economic problems of the Sikh widows. She felt that the state assistance in the form of a lump sum of money has failed to provide them a steady means of livelihood and

suggested training for new skills leading to income generation as a lasting input in their rehabilitation.

Rajesh Patnaik, in his study of Women and Foraging: a study of Forest Shompen Band of Great Nicobar, discussed the relationships between ecology and sex-roles. It was interesting to note that inspite of there being no clear-cut sexual division between foraging and cooking, the women concentrate primarily on processing of food while men engaged in foraging.

All in all, in sub-theme 10, a variety of patterns of survival mechanisms among families in the face of a variety of macro-level forces were revealed. In most situations, the family strategy placed the primary responsibility on women often on an unequal basis.

#### **Recommendations and suggestions:**

1. Women should be given special treatment in the form of institutional support by way of training, and information.
2. The traditional land/property/asset rights of different groups of women should be examined. Very often patriarchy is reflected in the statutory laws which erode their traditional rights, as in the case of the 'dedicated' girls called Basavis who when forced into monogamous marriages, would lose a great deal of their autonomy and control over income and assets. Similarly instead of giving lump sum grants to widows such as riot widows, the help should come in the form of training in a skill which could be linked to the market economy and would therefore provide a steady source of income.
3. Due to the lack of availability of opportunities to rural women, they are confined to traditional crafts/occupations with low income. There should be an intensive campaign to inform them about the available alternatives. Planning for rural development should not look at the family as a monolith but as an institution with diverse interests of the members. Since women are burdened with extra work in order to facilitate mobility and promotion of other members, the state machinery and NGOs must concentrate on women as a category requiring special focus and support.

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#### **Sub Theme 11: Government Policies and Programmes: Political and Economic Perspectives; Coordinator: Maitreyi Mukhopadhyay**

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The first session began with presentation, on the Employment Guarantee Scheme in Maharashtra, by Chaya Datar. It was pointed out that this scheme was linked to the constitutional right to work. It has been found that women are the main participants in the work programmes. Factors

responsible for the large participation of women in the scheme include:

- The low wages which attract women more readily than men;
- The relative immobility of women EGS which makes a

convenient programme for women since it is available locally;

—Land ownership patterns which determine the family members who will be pushed out of family owned farm land: inevitably the women are the first to be pushed out;

—Technological inputs/innovations which push women out of employment in agricultural work and into government sponsored work schemes.

The findings of the study also indicated that subsistence farmers must be the primary target of EGS. There are many similarities in the conditions of subsistence farmers and women who form the primary participants of EGS. Some of the recommendations made as a result of the study are:

—a component of non-formal education be included in the scheme for women participants;

—subsistence work of women like water/fuel collection, care of animals etc. be compensated for, with time or in kind;

—the maximum number of assured work days be hundred. The EGS, merged with NREP and RLEGP, is likely to be extended to all states. The discussion which followed focussed on the wage structure, the minimum/average wages, the number of assured work days and maternity benefits. It was recommended by the group that NGOs be involved in implementation of the Scheme, that without decentralization of planning the possibilities of the programme were severely restricted, that women's work gangs and cooperatives be given priority in allotment of the Scheme.

In the second session in conjunction with sub-theme 12, Vina Mazumdar presented a case study of the KVIC as an employment programme for women. The study found that KVIC is a heavily centralized body. The KVI Boards at state level are powerless and ineffective. The registered societies which implement the programmes are middlemen depriving women of just wages and the possibility of developing the industries to provide gainful employment. It was recommended that the state level KVI Boards be strengthened, that the procedure of implementation through the agency of registered bodies be scrapped and replaced by producer group organizations, capital availability be linked to the IRDP programme whereby allocations are made directly to producers and the subsequent assets created belong to the producers.

Another joint session followed with sub-theme 4. The two papers presented were "Government Policy and Approach to Women—the Case of Education" by Madhumita Pal, and "The National Policy on Education and Women" by Shama Dalwai and Shailaja Satpute. The first paper was a historical

analysis of the state policies regarding education of women which clearly indicated the approach of considering women as primarily home-makers and their education to be tailored accordingly. The second paper discussed the effect of the New Educational Policy and its discriminatory attitude towards women's education—both from the point of view of curriculum construction and the elitism of the programme.

In the next two sessions, eight papers were presented. In the first session Rakubai Ramchandran presented a paper on "Role of Women Veterinary Experts in Improving Socio-economic Status of Rural Women through Modern Methods of Animal Husbandry Practise". Besides this, Sakubai also provided a moving account of her experiences as one of the first trained women professionals in this field. Her presentation was juxtaposed with comments by Sagira Ramdass who has recently completed veterinary studies and is working in the rural area. Since the care of milk cattle and domestic animals is primarily the role of women in rural households, the importance of having women vets cannot be undermined. Government extension programmes do not aim at women and this is likely to be overcome with the introduction of women in the profession. The situation today is that the training of para-vets and women vets poses a threat to the male dominance in this profession.

The second paper was by Sandhya Vikram Singh on "The Mahila Police Thana in Bhopal". Her findings were that women feel more secure to report oppression in the home to women police officers. Although a number of patriarchal values determine the dealings of women police with such clients, Sandhya felt that these could be overcome by proper training. This contention was hotly debated by a group from Kerala whose experience with the Mahila police thana at Trivandram indicated the acute exploitation and oppression of women through the agency of this thana. It was recommended that the setting up of women's thanas should not be the general policy since the dominant police ideology of repression cannot be overcome in this manner.

Sharada Rath presented a paper on "Employment and Income Generation Programmes and its Impact on Rural Women". This was a case study of a Block in Orissa. The IRDP and NREP implementations were reviewed. Her main contention was that the utilization of the programme by women is poor because of poor information availability among potential beneficiaries. The paper generated a great deal of discussion. Some of the recommendations made were:

—that women's work be reviewed carefully to design meaningful programmes;



—the needs of women be carefully studied before programme formulation; and

—group management by women of income-generation programmes should be encouraged.

A paper on "Sericulture as an Employment Programme" was presented by Durga Naidu. In line with her presentation, participants too claimed from their own experiences that often the technology of sericulture and the costs involved do not lend themselves to the needs of employment for poor rural women.

Following this, Mamata Jetley presented a case study of the NGO involvement in a government programme, IDARA. The NGO was involved in the Rajasthan government programme of training rural women. A number of conflicts were evident in such collaborative efforts. The NGO was expected to meet government targets whereas it was more interested to work on processes of women's participation. The government became unable to control the questioning of its programmes by women who have grown in awareness as a result of participation. The question that remains unsolved is to what extent this collaboration with the government is possible without the NGO losing its

original objectives.

In the last session D.S. Leela presented a paper on the problem of "Women-headed Households". These households, she contended, are not adequately reflected in any census and, therefore, are neglected in development planning. Discussions on this paper led to the following conclusions:

—The need for introducing this category in population enumeration.

—The need for housing/shelter for such families.

—The need for better child care facilities to enable women to work.

A paper by Sadhna Arya entitled "Patriarchy: The State and the Women Question" was presented and discussed. It raised a number of very important points and showed how the notion of woman as housekeeper and child-rearer influences social policy issues.

Dr. Vina Mazumdar discussed the National Perspective Plan for Women, pointing out the centralizing tendency of the plan, the attempt to jettison democratic principles, and women's democratic rights.

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#### **Sub Theme 12: Collective Struggle for Change; Coordinator: Renana Jhabvala**

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The sub-theme commenced with a discussion of rural women's self perception and perceptions by others, and how these perceptions hinder or help the organizing process or the struggle for change.

In this regard, Krantikari Mahila Sangha in Pune, as pointed out in one of the presentations, has helped women change through interaction and joint efforts. Whenever women are raped or become victims of an attempt of rape, they do not disclose it but experience the feeling of guilt. So the Krantikari Mahila Sangha takes such cases to public. These "Peaceful Janata Courts" do not give severe punishments but try to initiate a process of fear among men by mock courts leading to social boycotts. Women emerge stronger and more organized after attending such Janata Courts and meetings. Usually the Janata Courts are conducted only in areas where constant follow-up is possible. Also, Janata courts are convened only in strong cases, where the women are firm. Collective struggle in the form of Janata Courts can break the isolation and helplessness faced by women and thus can be seen as a viable alternative for struggle, especially for small groups.

Another strategy adopted since 1985, was of workshops conducted with small groups of poor rural women, to identify the discriminations which these women experience in their own lives. In the beginning, women found it difficult to identify problems. Hence the need for awareness-raising was increasingly felt. The group felt that awareness-raising has to be a continued process, as it is deep-rooted in women to accept their inferior status. Protests occur in the form of closed door meetings, press coverage etc., but rarely on the streets. The fear of retaliation also appear as a detrimental factor in any organized struggle for change.

In the session on rural women activists, discussions centered around how women develop as activists; about support/lack of support in their families and surroundings; sexual harassment while at work; and also their individual struggles. The presentations from Rajasthan revealed that the government has launched an integrated programme wherein academicians as evaluators, network of NGO's at resource and field level, and the state government work together. These programmes provide strong support and make women realise that they are not alone, and that their



sufferings are being shared and looked into.

The first training begins at the village level, as village level activists are trained to mobilize other village women. Many issues are identified which require support and need to be looked into greater detail, and ultimately accelerate a struggle encompassing the Block level. An attempt to set in motion a process of struggle and change by women themselves is apparently more successful than imposing a change from above. Women are thus made to view their suffering as a collective experience which is converted into knowledge and are given enough confidence to act upon this collective knowledge.

Anila Dholakia in her paper further revealed how women emerge as activists from their struggle against lack of support from their surroundings. In the drought-prone areas of Gujarat, most of poor and landless women used to work as agricultural labour, which gave them only partial work. Dairying was proposed as an alternative for rural women as it is women who do 95% of the work in dairying, thereby building on the existing skills of women. Hence it was decided to register a cooperative for women. The struggle started from here. Loans to purchase cattle were not sanctioned by the Nationalised Banks. After overcoming many hurdles the cooperative was ultimately registered.

Various forms of struggle that women face were categorized: Struggle against the state, struggle against vested interest, and struggle against the higher castes of the society. However, with the support of voluntary organisations women acquire the strength and confidence to face these struggles and consequently emerge somewhat more powerful. The case of the Fishing Industry in Kerala and the women's role therein, issues raised by their struggles; states' response; their achievements; and lessons learnt from such experiences, were highlighted.

It was also revealed that when women's struggles cross the narrow confines of their immediate concerns and assume larger proportions, the response of men often becomes a detriment. It was apparent that women's growth and achievement were faster where men were not immediately affected. For example, in the Fishworkers' union, the women came forward with the suggestion of rotating leadership among two or three women, who could substitute each other, but this was not accepted. Men were not supportive to issues of (1) wife beating (2) women's leadership and (3) house-work sharing (so that women are able to attend meetings) (4) rape leading to humiliation of men or community. It was also experienced that women break easily under

pressure because when the desire for equality grows, disillusionment usually occurs when it is not fulfilled. Another presentation reported further that when women's struggle aided the family income men were supportive, but when women struggled against patriarchy men became non-supportive. When male bonded labourers were released as in the case of Eastern Madhya Pradesh, women continued to render the services, but were paid no wages either in cash or kind. Both social and economic pressures were responsible for this. Women therefore need to be organized in larger context and the cadre of the union working for women's liberation and development must strive to create space to help women equally. The National Commission on Rural Labour could help in this regard.

The theme for Session 5 was the forms of collective struggle, such as Co-operative, Trade Union, Mahila Mandals and other types of non-governmental organisations.

It was pointed out that a number of NGOs work towards bringing revolutionary changes. Development-oriented organizations take up social and economic issues. As a case study, Bhavatulla Charitable Trust Workers strove for integrated rural development in an unified manner. With the integration of women in all the developmental activities, a greater degree of success was observed. But it was realised that income-generation per se does not result in the emancipation of women but the struggle for an issue does add to it.

However, the role of NGOs in economic survival also needs to be clearly perceived. At what point does the NGO begin the economic activity? If the activity is started at the initial stages the women do not see it as a struggle for survival but consider the NGO as provider. However most of the NGOs do not have the required training and so economic activity does not become profitable. But mobilization of women without getting into economic activity is very difficult as economic activity is their immediate need. The level of literacy and social awareness being low, there is seldom any discussion on subjective issues.

A case of struggle in the form of a Trade Union in Chittoor district of A.P. was also discussed. This is a drought-prone area, with concentration of schedule caste population working mainly as agricultural labourers. The aim to organize a trade union was to create awareness and leadership among agricultural labourers, and to bring about structural changes. Trade Union as a strategy was particularly chosen because it has legal and political status, and can operate as mass level organization. It can also form an umbrella for Mahila Sanghs to come up, its main activities being: (1) Awareness camps

in villages (2) Non-formal education for children and (3) Identification of men and women as organizers. The Mahila Mandals on their part, participate in many meetings and take stand on major issues. for e.g.,- illicit distilling, boring of

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wells, wage issues etc.,. The issues that emerge out of Mahila Mandals are converted into collective struggles at community level. Such initiatives have positive and sometimes negative results, yet the struggle for change must go on.

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**General Panel 1: Over a decade of Research Policy and Activist Intervention: Achievements, Limitations and Future Prospects; Coordinator: Vina Mazumdar**

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In this plenary session, 3 overview papers presented trends in development of research, policy and activism. The most significant trends in research were (a) breaking the invisibility of women, especially in the economy; (b) a deepening focus on issues of development and the survival of the majority of women who are poor and form the army of invisible workers in the Indian economy in both rural and urban areas; and (c) a move away from single issues like education, employment, health etc. to complex questions of macro policies and development models.

On the achievement side is the successful forcing of women's issues on both national data collection agencies and academia. Concepts, definitions and biases were challenged, invoking a description of women's studies as a "thrust from below" and "the most significant development in Indian Social Sciences" (M.N.Srinivas) during this period. Feminist vocabulary and concepts like patriarchy, gender, sexual division of labour etc. became part of the common discourse in both academia and activism, indicating growing legitimacy. But misguided enthusiasm also promoted a lot of superficial and meaningless research, raising several dilemmas and questions.

Is the emergence of women's studies only a reaction to earlier neglect of women's issues by that academia? Does the slow but gradual acknowledgement of its legitimacy represent a move for co-option or the validity of its challenges?

A major achievement of women focused research has been increased awareness of diversity in life situation/ experiences of different groups of women, even from some research of indifferent quality. Superficial and trivial research, merely because research on women is 'in fashion' should certainly be discouraged, but how does one maintain the continuous search to understand India's unique heritage of multiple historical trends, affecting different groups of women, if we start insisting on 'directed', 'controlled', 'high standard' research with the primary objective of building "a coherent theory to encompass the complexities of Indian societies"?

Is women's studies a subject, or a discipline which should, at all cost, avoid compromises in direction and standards? The widening arena of enquiry noted by Krishnaraj has been possible because of risky explorations, scaling disciplinary boundaries, finding experimental methodology to build information from below, to question historiography, literary criticism, methods of social analysis and even concepts of political action. Can such multi-faceted growth be sustained through any single solution or centralized directions?

The first expansion of women's studies was undertaken by committed, involved persons. Would the spread of Centres in universities dilute this personal involvement and transform women's studies into another academic subject? But is it an objective fact that everyone began research on women from a sense of personal involvement? Is it not equally true that more people became involved only after they took up research on women's issues?

These dilemmas provide some priorities for the future. Whether a coherent theory to include Indian complexities can be built remains to be seen, but some consolidation is undoubtedly necessary. The critiques of established disciplines have to continue, especially of those which have been tardy in entering this arena. Above all, analysis of the perceptions, perspectives and personal transformation of researchers themselves requires much greater attention than it has received so far.

The overview paper on policy noted that the "internationalization" of the women's question during the decade, coupled with the highly critical findings of the Committee on the Status of Women in India (1975) succeeded in giving women a measure of visibility on the policy front. A number of new laws, amendments to existing social and labour laws, attempts to create mechanisms within various agencies of the Government and in the public domain in general (Women's Bureau in the Ministry of Social Welfare which later became the Department of Women and Child Development in the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Women's Cell in the Ministry of Labour and

Employment, Women's Division in the Department of Rural Development, Women's Development Corporations in some States etc.), the incorporation of a chapter on women and development within the Sixth and Seventh Five Year Plans and recognition of women, especially poor women as targets of government's development assistance within various anti-poverty and human resource development programmes may be noted among the achievements.

The paper, however, argued that all these efforts still remain a kind of "sub-culture": a parallel but underground stream which has not really influenced "mainstream" development policies. Nor has policy paid much attention to the issue of power relations within Indian society. The State has continued to see the role of policy more in terms of providing goods and services rather than of re-defining development in terms of devolution of power.

The policy debate conducted through the decade, however, did address the complex issue of the role of the State in changing women's status. A major dilemma that has not been resolved is of operationalizing the planning, implementation and monitoring of this complex responsibility. Should the entire mandate be the responsibility of one agency of the government such as the Department of Women and Child Development? Or will the Department's role be that of a catalyst, promoting the internalization and development of this concern by all agencies of government? Most of the major policy documents recommended the latter role, but the frustrations of failure in playing a catalyst's role tend to generate a move towards centralization of the mandate. Such a trend has its dangers. It would certainly act against the process of devolution of powers, and strengthen the 'sub-culture' or subordinate status of policies for women's development.

The review of activist interventions observed that the word 'activist' is misleading and lacks clarity. Women's conscious intervention in social struggles have a long history, but during the 70s and 80s their participation in movement against various forms of oppression—agrarian, working class, ecological and human rights—widened on a scale perhaps unmatched since the struggle against imperialism

before independence. The term 'activist' is seldom applied to such women. Instead, activism in the women's movement is narrowly defined as referring to the small group of middle-class, educated women working full time or for a major part of their time in organisations working for women.

In addition to the older generation of welfare or service oriented women's organisations, women's wings of political parties and trade unions, a large number of new groups have taken up activities for women's empowerment through educational, economic and health related matters, along with awareness-raising, mobilization, promotion of solidarity and support against violence and oppression.

The new inflow of funding for such activities has helped to promote a culture of 'professionalization' of activists which sometimes has a negative impact on the concept of organization for a common political cause. Many individual activists are aware of the structural weaknesses of this process.

On the other hand, women today are much more conscious of their specific oppression as women, something which was possibly lacking in their participation in mass people's struggles in the past. The most important role that women activists have played is in raising this consciousness, and their moves to reduce the gap between women of different classes by talking to and learning from each other. This sense of collective strength outweighs the dangers and pitfalls that face the women's movement and may give the movement both courage to question and to attack the oppressive system, and the humility and honesty to keep searching for clarity of perspectives.

A fraternal delegate from Pakistan spoke with some optimism of the resurgence of democracy in Pakistan, and conveyed her hope that the new political atmosphere would strengthen the women's movement and accelerate both research and policy interventions.

While there was little time for discussion, the presentations evoked a lot of interest among participants who continued discussing the issues in small groups afterwards.

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#### **General panel 2: "On Feminism and on being a feminist"; Coordinator: Bina Agarwal**

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The plenary panel entitled "On Feminism and on being a Feminist" generated a great deal of discussion and passion. Over 400 persons debated this issue for more than four

hours, in the longest lasting session of the Conference.

Bina Agarwal, in introducing the panel, said that the term

'feminism' was understood in diverse ways by different people; in India it was still in the process of being made and of being defined. There were twin issues before the women's movement in India today—that of personal transformation and that of socio-economic transformation. On the first, she posed the questions: How far have we moved in our search for self-identity? To what extent has involvement in feminist research and activism helped us to evolve as better human beings, to connect with others, and to transcend the boundaries of our individual existences? On the issue of socio-economic transformation, again, several questions were posed: Have we as women brought a special perception to bear on social and economic change, and on the process we call 'development'? Are our dreams, our visions, and our methods of protest different? Where are we going? She especially emphasized the need to move beyond feminist critiques to frame feminist alternatives.

Indu Agnihotri spoke of the attempts of the Janwadi Mahila Samiti (JMS) to take up issues relating to the status of women, particularly of the working class. She talked of the responses to JMS activities at the political level, that is of the State; at the social level, that is in the family; and at the level of women's own awareness during the course of their participation in organized struggle. Citing many examples of recent struggles in the Delhi region, she emphasised the increasingly repressive and violent forms in which the State machinery has dealt with women activists in their struggle

for democratic rights, and of the women's courageous responses to that repression.

Govind Kelkar, critiqued State policies in relation to women, focussing especially on the perception of the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) on feminist issues, and assessing the role of mass movement leadership, particularly in the rural context, in dealing with the woman question.

Madhu Kishwar, made a strong personal statement on why she chooses not to call herself a feminist, despite being deeply involved in women's issues. She spoke in particular of how she began to mistrust any defining of her own politics and the politics of others based on the adoption of any 'ism'. She felt such categories mystified reality and she had therefore sought to evolve her own criteria for evaluating the worth of any political action or idea.

The presentations were followed by several hours of discussion during which participants from the floor spoke on the aspects on which they agreed or disagreed with the views of the panelists. Madhu Kishwar's presentation, in particular, provoked strong responses from many participants. Many also made moving personal statements about how their own consciousness on women's issues had grown over the years, and the ways in which their involvement in women's struggles had been an empowering experience.

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## RESOLUTIONS

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As secular and humanist minded citizens and delegates at this Fourth National Conference on Women's Studies, we the undersigned express our deep shock and condemnation at the presence of the stall of the infamous 'Brahma Kumari' sect at the Conference's Poster and Book Exhibition.

We strongly feel the forum of the I.A.W.S. has to be protected from such distortions so as to fulfill its cherished role.

Proposed by : **Maitreyee Chatterjee**  
Seconded by : **Rajeshri Mukherjee**

The Fourth National Conference on Women's studies resolves that Child Care may be included forthwith as a minimum needs programme in the Eighth Five Year Plan

currently being formulated.

Proposed by : **Vina Mazumdar**  
Seconded by: **Ila Pathak**

In one of its informal discussions some of the members had analyzed the implications of the Law Commission's proposal on "Irretrievable Breakdown of Marriage as a ground for Divorce". The Association invites a nationwide debate on this issue and resolves that the women's studies group and women's development organizations all over the country may initiate such debates and send their views to the Law Commission.

Proposed by: **Susheela Kaushik**  
Seconded by: **Lucy Jacob**



The Fourth National Conference on Women's Studies resolves that the portrayal of women which is insulting to women in the media and pictures for the sake of commer-

cialization be condemned and efforts be made forthwith to put an end to the same.

Proposed by : Bina Agarwal  
Seconded by: Ila Pathak

## LIST OF PAPERS PRESENTED/CIRCULATED

### SUB-THEME 1: Access to Productive Resources and the Social Organization of Production.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Title of the paper</i>
1. Debal K. Singharoy:	Agriculture Development and Cumulative Marginality of Women : A Study of Women's Access to Property.
2. J. Sinha, Sulekha Das:	Access to Productive Resources and Social Organization: A Case Study of Pathalgarha in Deogarh District.
3. M.Indiradevi:	Women's Assertion of Legal Rights to Ownership of Property.
4. M.Asokan, Pradipta Choudhury:	An Analysis of Female Labour Participation rate in Andhra Pradesh, 1981.
5. Nivedita Bhaumik:	Access to Productive Resources and the Social Organization of Production.
6. Indira Wati, Lali Yadav Sudesh Gandhi:	Role of Rural Women in Work and Decision Making Pattern in Home and Farm Sectors of Haryana.
7. Rajni Palriwala:	Property, Family and Gender.
8. T.Verma, R Narwal, I. Grover:	Rationality in Decision Making of farm Women Under Adverse conditions in Haryana.
9. M.Kaul:	Women and Common Land Resources in the Villages of the Union Territory of Delhi.
10. Bina Agarwal:	Tribal Matriliney in Transition : The Garos, Khasis and Lalungs of North-East-India.
11. Abijit Das Gupta:	Women Matka Spinners from Murshidabad.
12. Nita Shirali, Sumitra Das Gupta, Abhijit Das Gupta:	Women in the Silk Industry of West Bengal.
13. Dev Nathan:	Significance of Changes in Women's Access to Conditions of Labour and the Product of Labour in Jharkhand tribes.

### SUB-THEME 2 : Technological Change, Labour Process and Labour Employment.

1. Bibekananda Das and Lakshminarayan Das:	Contribution of Women to Family Income : A Study of Pattipudar.
2. T.A.Hema Kumari, U.Tataji:	Gender, Employment-Earnings and Household Management.
3. P.Cauvery,U.K.Sudha Nayak, K.Kala:	Relative Male Female contributions to Household Earnings.
4. Jeemol Unni:	Employment Strategies Adopted in Wage-Dependent Households.
5. Meena Radha Krishnan:	Formation of Working class out of a Tribe ; The Case of Yerukulla Women.
6. Saroj Kashyap R.K.Sharma:	Time Use-Pattern of Rural Women Belonging to Various Land Holding Categories for Households Chores in Different Seasons in Haryana.



7. Vinod Kumar, Nishi Batra, Chander Bhan: Adopting of Technology by Rural Women : Its Effects on Decision-making.
8. T.Verma, A. Malviya T.Grover: Technological Change Effecting Involvement-cum Health Status of Women Paddy Labourers in Haryana.
9. Nalini Nayak: Technological Change, Labour Process and Employment in the Fishing Sector.
10. Beena D.: Technological Change and Women Workers : The case of Fish Processing Industry in Kerala.
11. Y.Ravini: Impact of Modernization of Marine Fishing Industry on Women Employment : A case study of Vishakapatnam.
12. Anjali Bahuguna: Technology Programme of Women : A Study of Garhwal-region.
13. T.Nalini: An Exploratory Study of Migrant Women Construction Workers.
14. G.V.L.Durgadevi: Sericulture is an Employment Oriented Agro Industry for Rural Women.

### **SUB-THEME 3 : Environmental Degradation and Regeneration.**

1. Chatrapati Singh: Community Resource Management and the Legal Processes.
2. Manoshi Mitra: Environmental Degradation and Regeneration : Alternative Strategies for Development.
3. R.K.Sharma, Lali Yadav: Energy Crisis,Development and Technological Options for Rural Household Sectors—an Analysis.
4. Minoti Padhi: Environmental Degradation Struggle for Change : The Kerondinual Experience.
5. Radha Bhatt: Ecology and Women.
6. S.Nirmala Kumari: Increasing Work Burden of Rural Women in Changing Environmental of Villages.
7. R.R.Alluri: Domestic fleu Utilization in the Rural Sector—Environment and Energy Constraints.
8. Lali Yadav, R.K.Sharma: Constraints in Use of Conventional Energy Sources by Rural Women and an Alternative Strategy.
9. Priya Prakash: Environmental Degradation and Regeneration through Afforestation Programme.
10. Budhdeb Chaudhari: Forest, Forest-Development and Tribals: Some Crucial Issues.
11. Chitra Ghosh: Water Management and Rural Women : A Selective Study of an area in West Bengal.

### **SUB-THEME 4 : Education and Socialization : The Formal, Non-Formal and Informal Process.**

#### **I REGIONAL CASE STUDIES—EDUCATION/LITERACY FOR RURAL WOMEN.**

1. Sister Alice Lukose: Women's Education—Experiences among the Fisher-folk Women of Kerala.
2. Srilata Swaminathan: Present Education System and the Average Bhil Tribal Women of Rajasthan.
3. Seemantinee Khot: Presentation on the Role of Education and Socialization Using Rural Narrators.
4. Sagari Ramdas: An Experiment in Non-formal Education of Rural Women : Bhagavatula Charitable Trust's Para-Vet Programme.
5. M.Indiradevi: Rural Female Literacy in Andhra Pradesh : A Study of Spatial and Temporal Variations.
6. C.S.Veeramatha: Usha Ramkumar: Female Literacy in Western Ghats Region of Karnataka and Impact of Adult Education Programme on Female Literacy.
7. Snehlata Panda: Continuity and Change:the Role of Female Education, a Study of Orissa.
8. Godavari Patil and A.G.Mudbidri: Women and Educational Disparity in Karnataka.

## II. SEX DIFFERENTIATION AND GENDER BIASES

### (A). Implication of Sex Differentiation and Biases in Curriculum Instructional Materials.

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| 9. V.Rajeshwari:  | Sex Differentiation in the School Curriculum and the Status of Rural Women.                      |
| 10. Usha Rani:  | Evolving Non-sexist Instructional Material for Non-formal Education.                             |
| 11. Poonam Batra:   | The Hidden Curriculum: its Impact on Gender Consciousness in Early Childhood.                    |
| 12. Neela Rakshit Shah<br>Sophia Lukhandwala<br>Ila Pathak: | An Assessment of the School Text Books Published by Gujarat School Text Book Boards under N.P.E. |

### (B) Gender Bias in Education and Socialization.

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| 13. Kiran Bhatia,<br>Kiran Sharma: | Conjugal Power Structure in Haryana.   |
| 14. I. Grover<br>P. Hurst:         | Gender Differentials in Access to Schooling and Causes of Non-enrolment and Drop-outs. |
| 15. Uma Vennam:                    | Factors Behind High Female Drop-out Rate.  |
| 16. A.Ramanamma:                   | Eradication of Illiteracy Among Rural Women in Maharashtra : Problems and Strategies.  |

## III. EDUCATION (NON-FORMAL AND FORMAL) AND RURAL WOMEN

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| 17. Ila Pathak, Niranjan Patel,<br>Mridula Shah<br>Pragna Shukla: | Non-formal Education through Positive Awareness Raising Workshops:An Experiment. |
| 18. Sneha Joshi:  | Non-formal Education for Rural Women.  |
| 19. Lakshahira Das:   | Non-formal and Informal Education for Rural Women.                               |
| 20. P.T.Oswin:  | Education and Socialization:The Formal, Non-formal and Informal Process          |

## IV. NEEDS OF RURAL WOMEN WITH REGARD TO EDUCATION.

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| 21. Ila Joshi:                         | Access to Higher Education   |
| 22. V.Aminabhavi<br>A.S.Dharanendriah: | Education and Quality of Life of Women with Rural Background.      |
| 23. S.Satputo, S.Dalwai:               | N.P.E. and Women.  |
| 24. Swati Shirwadkar:                  | Education and Development of Rural Women: A Study of Indian women. |
| 25. Gomathi Mani:                      | Literacy-An Indispensable Tool for the Empowerment of Rural Women. |
| 27. S.K.Jindal:                        | Education and Empowerment of Women                                 |
| 28. Zeenat Hussain:                    | Education : The Formal, Non-Formal, Informal process.              |
| 29. C.Aruna:                           | Education and Socialization : The Formal and Informal Process.     |
| 30. Shashikala Katgeri:                | Literacy/Education as a Means of Empowerment of Women.             |
| 31. Jaishree Misra:                    | Empowerment of Women through Language Teaching.                    |

## SUB-THEME 5: Health, Sexuality and Reproduction.

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| 1. Satnam Kaur, R.K.Punia: | Gender Bias in Family Planning:Preference for Female Sterilization.                        |
| 2. M.Roopali:              | Female Sexuality and Reproduction Choice   |
| 3. S.Sandhya:              | Sex Differential in Mortality and Morbidity.   |
| 4. Mira Chatterjee:        | Organizing for Maternity Benefits : Some Experiences of Agricultural Labourers in Gujarat. |

5. P.V.Rajalakshmi: Co-relation between the Low Status of Rural Women and Deficiencies in the Knowledge and Utilization of Health Services.
6. Purnima Srivastava: The Effects of Parent's Education on Nutrient Intake of Pre-Schoolers.
7. Jatinder Malhotra: Gender Differentials in Access to Food and Health Care in Morbidity, Mortality Rates and in Survival Chances in a Rural Area.
8. Joginder Mukherjee: Nutritional Needs of Rural Women.
9. Maitreyi Chatterjee: Changing Images in Family Planning Propoganda : The Good, the Tolerable, and the Jarring.
9. Vimal Balasubrahmanyam: Changing Images in Family Planning Propoganda : The Good, the Tolerable, and the Jarring.
10. Alka M.Basu: Ethnic Similarities and Differentials when Accessibility is Held Constant.
11. B.R.Busi, M.Saileela, A.D.W.Rector Babu, P.R.Subha Rani: Women's Role in Family Health Care.
12. Lata Shah: Foetal Sex Determination and Female Foeticide.
13. Bidyut Mohanty: Famines and Females in Orissa Division Between 1881 and 1921 and Some Policy Implications for the Present-day Famines.

### **SUB THEME 6: Laws Implementation and Process of Legal Change**

#### **(A) LABOUR LAWS AND GENERAL ISSUES**

1. Manjula Batra: The Enforceability of Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 with Special Reference to Unorganised Sector.
2. G.P.Sharma, Suchitra Vishwakarma: Laws, Implementation and Process of Legal Change with Special Reference to Chhatisgarh Villages
3. Ranjani: Laws, Implementation and Process of Legal Change.

#### **(B) PROPERTY AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS OF WOMEN**

4. S.Ramani: Uniform Civil Code for all Women
5. Rema Devi: Women's Property and Laws
6. P.C.Mehta: Right to Maintenance of Second Wife
7. B.Sivaramayya: Patriarchy and Economic Rights of Women : Maintenance and Divorce

#### **(C) CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN AND DOWRY:**

8. Nishi Batra, Vinod Kumar: Anti Dowry Laws and the Changing Attitudes of Women Towards Dowry system
9. Shaila Konchur: Dowry and the Criminal Laws
10. S.V.Joga Rao: Women and the Criminal Law
11. Saroj Gulati: Sati Custom: A Historical Perspective
12. Sripada Sumitra: Matrimonial Rights of Women in India
13. Lalita Parihar: Right to Maintenance of Muslim Divorcees : Judicial Benevolence and Legislative Despotism.
14. Abha Trivedi: Recent Protective Legislations for Women.

### **SUB THEME 7: Political Institutions, Structures and Processes**

1. Nikhil Desai: Political Institutions, Structures and Process
2. R.P.Joshi: Women's Participation in Panchayati Raj : Demands and Dilemmas.
3. Veena Mutraja: Women and Political Institutions in India.
4. Shefali: Political System, Political Processes and Political Participation of Rural Women.
5. Suguna Pathy: The Articulation of Power in Indian Social Structure.

6. Pam Rajput: Women Leadership at the Grass Root Level in Panjab.
7. Zenab Bano: Women's Participation in Girva Panchayat Samiti of Udaipur district.
8. Gita Upadhyaya: Voting Behaviour of Rural Women in Assam.
9. Sneha Joshi: Women in Politics: A Case Study of Bhavanagar District.
10. S.Girija: The role of Andhra Women in India's Freedom Struggle.
11. Rohini Gawankar: Role of Women in Gram Panchayat with Special Reference to Maharashtra.

#### **SUB THEME 8: Ideology, Culture and Politics**

1. Leela Mullatti: Bhakti Movement and Rural Women
2. Kameshwari, Rekha Pande: Transition, Ideology and Women's Status
3. Deepa Das: Socio-cultural Sanction to Flesh Trade among Bedias
4. A.Kiran: Poraja Women: Role in Child Rearing.
5. D.L.Prasad Rao and V.Kanak Durga: Gender Ideology: A Comparative Analysis of Tribal and Non tribal Women.
6. V.Bhavani: Feminism: Political Ideology.
7. Gabriel Dietrich: Women, Ecology and Culture
8. Prem Chaudhary: Ideological and Cultural Pattern: Rural Women in Haryana.
9. Madhu Kishwar: Ideology of Nationalism.
10. Uma Chakravarty: Which Way do We Go? Ideology as Praxis.
11. Kathryn Hansen: Folk Theatre and Ideology: Case of Nautanki Theatre.
12. Aloka Parashar: Nationalist Historiography and the Invisibility of Rural Women.
13. Swati Joshi: Gujarati Folk Poetry
14. Neela Shah, Rasheeda Cutteriwala, Sarla Dhruv Sofia Pathak & Ila Pathak: Presentation and Distortion of the Sati News in Dailies of Ahmedabad.
15. Malladi Subbamma: Humanist Feminism.
16. Charu Gupta: Representation of Rural Woman in Premchand's Novels.

#### **SUB THEME 9: Gender Violence: Role of State, Community and family**

1. Kunja Medhi: Gender Violence: Role of the State, Community and Family
2. Geeta Mishra: Gender Violence: A Survey of Sroblems Related to Violence Against Women, Their Opinion about the Causes; and Suggestion Regarding the Remedial Measures.
3. Minaxi Shukla, Jyoti Gade: Gender Discrimination Between Boys and Girls in Parental Family.
4. A. Suryakumari: Violence in the Name of Religions : Torture Leading to Infirmity or Death Caused by, Witchcraft, Sorcery, Mendicants etc.
5. Forum Against Rape: A Critical Study of Rape Law : Rape Cases in Rural Area and Application of Evidence in Courts.
6. Ulhasini N. Kamble: The Agony of Prostitution : Some Case Studies from Bangalore City.
7. Devi Prasad: Gender and Dowry-related Violence.
8. T.Nirmala: Gender Violence as Exemplified in Some Telugu Novels by Women Writers.
9. Veera Shekhar Appa: Schedule Caste Women Workers: The Most Exploited Class
10. All India Anti Dowry Movement, Nagpur: A Critical Study of Socio-legal Implication of Dowry Evil in India
11. Sukala Mitra: Violence on Women
12. Kiran Sharma: Women, Violence and Socialization: Some Observations
13. Stri Attyachar Virodhi Parishad, Vidarbha: Violence Against Women in the Name of Religion.
14. Vibhuti Patel: Class, Violence and State: Another Mathura in Gujarat: Guntaben Anti rape Agitation—Gujarat.



15. Neelam Gorhe: Atrocities in the Name of Religion: Death Caused by Witchcraft, Role, Rules, Remedies.
16. Neeroj Sinha: Gender Violence Profiles of Family Violence: Female Infanticides.
17. Gail Omvedt: Women and Violence
18. Shamala Abrol: Exploitation and Violence Against Girl Children in Rural Families
19. Rita Aggarwal: Wife Battering: Psychological and Clinical Aspects of Battered Women.
20. Aparna Mahanto: The Incidents of Mass-rapes by Army Political Persons in Tribal Movement of the North East.
21. Chandra Bharill: Violence in the Name of Religion: Sati-Widow Burning in Independent India.
22. M.B.Singh & Sunita Sharma: Gender Violence among Fourth Class Employees in Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana.
23. Usha Kanhere: Violence in Family-its nature, Factors, Eradication plan.
24. Shantkala Waghmare: Violence Against Scheduled Caste, Rural Women.
25. Asha, Suman, Anu and Prabha: Psychoanalysis of the Cross Relationship of Son, Mother-in-law, and Daughter in-law in Rural Families and Violence Against Women
26. Indu Prakash Singh: Mauled Minds and Bodies: A Saga of Bete Noire Patriarchs.
27. Kiran Sharma: Women, Violence and Socialization: Some Inedpth Observations.
28. Legal Literacy Movement (for women), Nagpur: Rural Women in Urban Prostitution.
29. Seema Sakhare: Rape Law and Rapes in Rural Areas.
30. Gilada I. S.: Devdasi: A Link Between Religion, Culture and Child prostitution
31. Ravindra: Amniocentesis, Female infanticides
32. Sandhya Ray and others: Rural Women in Urban Prostitution.
33. Manjari Acharya: A Study of Opinion of Selected Charotar Patel Youths on Dowry and its Effect on Living Pattern Mauled Minds and Mauled Bodies.
34. Neela Shah, Varsha Dave, Usha Upadhyay, Ila Pathak:
35. Seema Sakhare: Violence Against Women in the Name of Religion.
36. Chetna team: Gender Discrimination Between Boy and Girl in Parental Family.

#### SUB THEME 10: Family Survival Mechanism

1. T.A.Hema Kumari  
U.Tataji: Women Migration and Family Survival (A study of Tobacco Graders in Andhra Pradesh.)
2. D.S.Leela: Problems and Survival Mechanisms.
3. Rajesh Patnaik: Women and Foraging: A Study of a Shompen Band of Great-Nicobar Island.
4. K.Annie Nirmala: Rural Women's Struggle for Existence: A Case study of the Indian Rural Women Working in the Gulf Countries.
5. D.Harinarayana:  
P.Tarakumari: Rural Migrants and Levels of Living: a Case Study of Women Workers in Vishakhapatnam city.
6. Kiran Sharma  
Kiran Bhatia: Shattered Migrant Widows; Struggle for Survival
7. L.Lakshmi: Women's Role and Family Survival Strategies in Wet and Dry villages of East Godavari District, Andhra Pradesh.
8. M.Asokan,  
Pradipta Choudhury: An Analysis of Female Labour Participation Rate in Andhra Pradesh, 1981.
9. Molly Mathew: Widow's Survival and Struggle for Change
10. Ishrat Shamim: Migrant rural Women and the Informal Sector : Case Studies of Survival Strategies
11. Mahmuda Islam: Female Heads of Households: Crisis of their Lives and Mechanism for Survival.
12. K.Shanthi ,  
G.Dhanalakshmi: A Case Study of Women Labourers in Wholesale Trade in Dindigul
13. Ilaben Pathak,  
Achala Desai  
Sofia Lokhandvala: A Study of the Migrants from Rajasthan Engaged in Coal-Dust-Transfer in Ahmedabad

- Vanitaben Damor  
Kanak Chavda  
Aruna Parmar  
Duraiya Subuvala:
14. Anil K. Gupta: Why are we Studying Women's Perspective in Homestead Utilization
  15. Prabha Mahale: Consecration of Daughters: The Family survival Mechanism among the Scheduled Castes of Tikota.
  16. R. Hazarika (Kakati): The Role of Nishi Women in Their Economy.
  17. Marty Chen: Women and Household Livelihoods
  18. Maithreyi Krishna Raj: Women Assist change by Not changing Themselves
  19. Divya Pande:
  19. Nagma Yasmin: A Study of Self, Spouse and Mother-in-laws' role Expectations and Performance of rural house-wives.

**SUB THEME II: Government Policies and Programme: Political and Economic Perspective.**

1. Madhumita Pal: Government Policies and Approaches towards Women and Women's Development Programmes.
2. Sandhya Vikram Singh: Mahila Police Thana of Bhopal
3. D.S. Leela: Female Headed Households: The Neglected Factor in Planning.
4. Nirmala Banerjee: National Perspective Plan for Women
5. Chhaya Datar: Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Scheme
6. Jasodhara Bagchi: Women's Studies in Universities
7. Himani Bandhopadhyay: Construction of Gender in Social Policy Planning
8. Sutapa Neogi:
8. G.V.L. Durganaidu: Sericulture as an Employment Oriented Agro-industry for Rural Women.
9. Sakkubai, Veenat, Ram Chandran Girija Prem, Nalini: Role of Animal Husbandry in Karnataka in Improving the Status of Rural Women.
10. V. Majumdar: KVIC
11. Sadhna Arya: Patriarchy, the State and the Woman Question
12. Manoshi Mitra: Restructuring Dairy Development to Reach Poor Rural Women—case Studies.
13. D. S. Leela: Women-headed Household: Neglected Factor in Development Planning.
14. Mamata Jetley: IDARA: A Case Study.
15. Sharda Rath: Employment and Income Generation Programmes and its Impact on Rural Women.

**SUB THEME: 12 Collective Struggle for Change**

1. Neelam Gorhe: Peaceful Janta Courts by Women: A Case Study based on Experiences by State Aadhar Kendra and Krantikari Mahila Sangthana
2. Neelam Gorhe: Perspective and Issues About Gender Bias and Women's Oppression in Dalit Movement led by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar.
3. V. Vindhya: Voluntary Organizations and Women's Struggle for Change: Experience with BCT
4. V. Kalpana: Collective Struggle for Change : Experience from Rajasthan
5. Sharda Jain & Kanchan Mathur:
5. Viji Srinivasan: Equitable productivity or Productive Equality? (Some Thoughts on Women's Struggles in India with Regional Variations, Issue, Form and Responses)
6. Monisha Behl: Women's Organizations of Assam: An Overview of Traditional and Formal Group Dynamics
7. Aleyamma Vijayan: Collective Struggle for Change (Women's Role in Fisher-workers Struggle, States', response, Achievement and Limitations- Lessons Learnt, Question of Gender Bias and Women's Oppression)

8. Manju Gardia: Breaking the Shackles: A Report on the Role of Women in the Struggle for  
Irina Sen Freedom of Bonded Labourers in Eastern M.P.
9. Deepti Mehrotra: Women's Lives and Gender Dynamics in the Context of a Forest Based Peoples'  
Movement
10. Mira Savara: Women and Organization in the Informal Sector  
Jana Everett
11. Nandini Narula: Role of NGOs in Women's Economic Survival
12. Subhash Mendhapurkar: A Case Study on a NGO becoming Pro-women Organization.
13. Gabriele Dietrich : The Fishworker's Collective
14. Anila Dholakia Struggle for Change.
15. S.D.Jyoti: Women Cooperatives
16. Annie Nirmala: Prajawala: A Trade Union.

#### **GENERAL PANEL I: Feminism and on Being a Feminist**

1. Indu Agnihotri: The Women's Movements and JMS Experience
2. Madhu Kishwar: Why I am not a Feminist
3. Govind Kelkar: Feminism and Mass Movement.

#### **GENERAL PANEL II: Over a Decade of Research Policy and Activist Intervention: Achievements, Limitations and Future Perspectives**

1. Maithreyi Krishnaraj: From Reactions to Alternatives
2. C.P.Sujaya: The Sub-culture of Women in Development-Policy Making in the Last Decade.
3. Vina Majumdar:

#### **GENERAL PANEL III: Women in Andhra**

Note: This list is based upon the "Abstract of papers" volume and the coordinators' reports. Any error or omission is regretted-Editor.

The Research Centre for Women's Studies at SNT Women's University, the first unit on Women's Studies to be set up and another earlier unit on women's studies at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences left out in our earlier issue ( Newsletter No. 6, December 1988 ) as we had included only the recent UGC sponsored list of Women's Studies Centres / Cells.

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