

IAWS

Newsletter

Indian Association for Women's Studies
Newsletter No. 9
July 1989

Editorial

The Association elected its fourth Executive Committee in May 1989 for a period of two years. In its first meeting the following office bearers were elected from amongst the E.C. members:

Kamalini Bhansali	President
Sharda Jain	Vice President
Surinder Jetley	General Secretary
Kumud Sharma	Treasurer
Manoshi Mitra	Joint Secretary

The E.C. unanimously decided to coopt Dr. Vina Mazumdar. As per convention, Dr. Ila Pathak and Dr. Susheela Kaushik the ex-President and ex-General Secretary of the last E.C. are the Ex-Officio members of the fourth E.C.

The report of the Returning Officer, Dr. Bina Roy, reveals that out of a total of 117 ballots received, 36 were declared invalid. The reasons being: ballots without identity for checking on voters list (10), institution's identity given (not voter's identity) (9), single envelopes used for mailing (14), personal envelopes used but no inner envelope (2), and not listed in the voters list (1). There were other problems such as differences in the addresses and name-spellings of the voters. We hope that in future, the voters will be more careful and make elections a smoother exercise. The Returning Officer has given us some valuable suggestions to systematise the process. An alphabetically arranged voters list with correct names and addresses alongwith their registration number will be prepared to avoid wastage of time.

The E.C. has decided to bring out edited volumes based on papers from the four IAWS Conferences. Dr. Susheela

Kaushik is appointed as the convenor for the Editorial Committee. In its subsequent meetings, the E.C. will spell out its plan of action.

The E.C. also felt that the two years biennial period between the national conferences is too long. There should be regional conferences in between to feed the national conference. It was suggested that there be two regional conferences, one in the North East of India and another in the Hindi speaking region comprising of U.P., Bihar, M.P., Rajasthan and Haryana.

Women need to respond to what is happening around them and take action. One very significant change around us is that the air is full of talk about women's rights. Ever since the introduction of the Panchayati Raj Bill (the 64th Constitution Amendment Bill) in the Lok Sabha on May 15th, 1989, which provides for 30 percent reservation for women through direct elections, every political party is trying to compete with the ruling party's record. However, there are serious implications of this development in view of its timing. There are already constitutional provisions for women's political participation. If women could not gain much, the constraints are to be traced in the all-pervading societal patriarchy informing various institutions of society, including the state. With the constraints remaining the same, one wonders what are the possibilities of enhanced political power for women.

Nevertheless women's groups, infact all the voluntary action groups, must play a definite role in mobilizing women both as voters and as candidates, so that the politicization of women yields maximum mileage out of the democratic process.

Surinder Jetley

"HUMAN RIGHTS WITHOUT CONCERN FOR WOMEN, WHO ARE HALF THE HUMANKIND, HAVE NO MEANING AND ARE BOUND TO FAIL."

Madhuri Shah

PASSING AWAY OF A PHENOMENA

We, in the Indian Association for Women's Studies, mourn the passing away on 29 June, of Dr. Madhuri Shah who played a key role in the development of women's studies in India. As Vice-Chancellor, SNTD Women's University in the late 70s, she helped to establish the first Research Centre on Women's Studies within University system and to shape its three thrusts: research, teaching and action. This was the model which she carried later to other Universities in the country, persuading them to accept action/intervention/extension as a third dimension of universities' responsibilities. As Chairperson of the National Organizing Committee, she convened the first National Conference on Women's Studies at Bombay in 1981. Two months before the Conference, she was appointed Chairperson, UGC. She inaugurated the Conference in the latter capacity and assured the Conference of the UGC's support in promoting women's studies in the country in the coming years. Between 1982 and 1986, she remained the President of the Indian Association for

Women's Studies, which was born from a mandate given by the first National Conference. Apart from providing the Association with guidance, advice and unstinted support, she worked in many ways to encourage the development of women's studies within the University system—addressing letters to Vice Chancellors and establishing first an Advisory Committee and later a Standing Committee on Women's Studies within the UGC. The guidelines for establishment of women's studies centres or cells in universities and colleges were issued three months before Parliament adopted the National Policy on Education, recognizing Women's Studies as an essential instrument to enable the National educational system 'to play a positive interventionist role in the empowerment of women'. It is important for all of us to recognize that without her personal letters to Education Ministers and the interest which she had generated in women's studies within several universities the new Policy Statement might not have included any specific reference to women's studies.

Members of the Fourth Executive Committee

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JAWS MEMBERSHIPS AS ON 31.3.89

1. Ordinary 5 Years	115
2. Ordinary 1 Year	274
3. Institutional 2 Years	13
4. Institutional 5 Years	14
5. Life Membership	202
6. Associate	14
7. Corporate	11

The membership has substantially increased in the past year, mainly because of it being a conference year. All the members of the Association are requested to lend a hand in membership drive. All those whose membership has expired by 31st March, 1989, kindly renew your membership by writing for forms to the Treasurer, Dr. Kumud Sharma (address given elsewhere in this newsletter).

Categories of Membership and subscription rates:

(a) Ordinary Members	Rs. 25 per annum or Rs. 100 for 5 years.
(b) Life Members	Rs. 250
(c) Institutional Members	300 per annum or Rs. 1000 for 5 years.
(d) Corporate Members (Institutions only)	Rs. 2,500
(e) Student Members	Rs. 10 per annum
(f) Associates	Rs. 25 per annum or Rs. 250 for 10 years.

NEWS FROM THE REGIONS:

Arunachal Pradesh

A Seminar on Nehru and Women Welfare was held in February 1989, under the auspices of the State Level Committee for the celebration of Nehru centenary in Arunachal Pradesh, the first such exercise in this region. A report about the Seminar highlights the pressing problems of women in

this area, and the trends in the thinking of some of the women activists there.

The following papers were presented:

- (i) Polygamy: Yari Dolum
 - (ii) Property rights for women in Arunachal Pradesh:
Odi Dai
 - (iii) Forced Marriage: T.J.Khrimey
 - (iv) Need for Inter-Tribe Marriage: Dishu Mihu Male
- After discussions, the following resolutions were passed unanimously:

1. On Forced Marriage

The Seminar on "Nehru and Women Welfare" requests the Government to;

- a. Consider and evolve a system to discourage forced marriages, against the wishes of the girl, which are practised in tribal communities of the State.
- b. take appropriate action for registering marriages and ensure that the girl attains the age of 18 at the time of her marriage.

2. On Polygamy

- a. abolish the practice and custom of polygamy followed in the tribal customs of our society;
- b. legalise marriage and divorce through registration for all the people in the State irrespective of caste, creed, community or clan to which such persons belong.

3. On Inter-tribe Marriages

The Seminar exhorted the people of the State, in general, and government, in particular, to encourage inter-tribe marriages within the state.

Delhi

The Counselling and Aid Unit at the Women's Studies and Development Centre, Delhi University, started functioning from January 1988. The Centre reports that the Unit has received a very good response from women and men belonging to both the University as well as the wider community. The Unit has been able to make an impact by way of awareness on women's rights and women's conditions. The Unit works for education and prevention of atrocities against women, and also for providing support facilities for those who need active help, in coordination with various resource persons.

Besides two full-time social workers, the Unit has a set of experts belonging to various fields: medical, legal, psychiatric, social work, etc. from within the University for help and guidance within easy reach. People have approached the Unit seeking assistance for mental discords resulting from alcoholism, harassment for dowry, mental torture, desertion etc., for emotional as well as legal support. Career counselling and guidance to pursue their interests in leisure time; advice on legal issues like property rights of women, resti-

tution of conjugal rights, equal remuneration and employment rights, and medical assistance are some of the services being rendered by the Unit.

Himachal Pradesh

Ph.D/M.Phil. Thesis

Life Stress, Anxiety & Depression in Working and Non-working Middle-class Women of Shimla and Jalandhar: A Study of Moderators by Shivakshy Khanna.

Oppression of Women: An Analysis of Socio-psychological Basis of Violence in the Lives of Lower-working Class Women by Sushma Tyagi.

Kishwar Shirali

Hyderabad

Workshop

A Workshop on Training and Orientation in Formulation of Projects and Management was conducted in Rajbhavan, Hyderabad, on 28th February 1989. An analysis of the various schemes, now being implemented for the welfare of women and children, and also guidelines on how the organizations should approach the government for funds and how the schemes should be implemented were discussed.

J.Varalakshmi

Maharashtra

Some of the important events of this year were:

Health Awareness Programme sponsored by Sri Narsi Manjee Education Trust held from 13th February to 16th February, '89.

A three day gathering 'Sadak Chhap Mela' was organized by voluntary agencies of Bombay for the rag-picking children who live on the streets. This was held at Don Bosco School on 18th, 19th & 20th March 1989. R.C.W.S. contributed by preparing posters.

Seminar on "Working Women-Challenges Ahead"-31st March to 18th April 1989, was organized by S.N.D.T. Women's University and National Association of Women Entrepreneurs and Executives. (A division of IMM).

Max Mueller Bhavan, Bombay in co-operation with SNDT Women's University and Tata Institute of Social Science organized a workshop "The Equality Principle of the Constitution and the Family Law in India and Germany", 6th to 11th March 1989.

The Council for Fair Business Practices in association with Consumer Guidance Society of India, Consumer Council of India, Giants International, Lions Club of Cuffe Parade, Maharashtra State women's council, Grhak Panchayat, Rotary club of Bombay, S.N.D.T. Women's University and Women Graduates union, or-

ganized "Year of the consumer" on 15th March 1989.

A three day National Seminar on "Research and Development in Home Science" was organized by the Department of Post Graduate Studies and Research in Home Science on 18th to 20th March 1989 by S.V.T. College of Home Science, S.N.D.T. University.

Write for reports to Director, RCWS.

The Forum against Oppression of Women (FAOW) brought out a March 8 Special issue, to report on the various activities organized in the city of Bombay.

Panjab

Centre for Women's Studies, Panjab University, organized the following:

A seven day training programme for police personnel regarding Crimes Against Women from 12-18 October, 1989.

National Consultation on National Perspective Plan for Women—Strategies for Implementation in January, 1989. Write for reports to Pam Rajput, C&WS- Panjab University.

Uttar Pradesh

The Centre for Women's Studies and Development, Banaras Hindu University, has taken up an extensive programme on environmental improvement in rural Varanasi with a focus on women. It is engaged in organization building among women through orientation and training in joint action in twenty seven villages. The issues presently are confined to safe drinking water, and sanitation. B.H.U. will provide the software and the State is committed to bring the two amenities to every village in the area.

The Priyadarshini Centre for Women's Studies, Kanpur has been actively engaged in the organization of a series of workshops on "Education for Women's Equality", in collaboration with the NCERT. (For further details write to Dr. Hemlata Swarup.)

A three days workshop jointly sponsored by National Council of Educational Research & Training, New Delhi and S.D.Girls' Polytechnic, Muzaffar Nagar was held between 31st March and 2nd April, 1989. It finalized several vocational courses, viz., Computer Application, Nursing Assistant, Commercial Art, Food Technology, Gardening & Nursery, Textile Designing, Dress Designing, Beauty Care, and Library Science, for women in Uttar Pradesh, in particular, with a view to bring about women's equality and development through reforms and renovations within the existing education system. The workshop not only made discussions regarding these courses but also reviewed such dimensions where trained women may

successfully be absorbed through institutional assistance for rightful placement.

(For a detailed report write to Principal, S.D.Girls' Polytch., Muzaffar Nagar.)

**NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON WOMEN,
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY-NOV 2-5, 1988.
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE,
BANGALORE- 560012**

Short Report: Rajeshwari Chatterjee (Convenor)

The main theme of the workshop was to discuss whether women in India have access to science education and whether science is affecting their daily lives so that an improvement of life can be brought about.

Detailed studies of science and mathematics education of girls upto the PUC level in seven states, namely, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Delhi, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala were presented and discussed. While in the southern states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala, all girls and boys who went to school upto SSLC were taught science and mathematics compulsorily, science and mathematics is taught only in a few schools to girls in the northern states of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Delhi and Gujarat. This brings about a result that most girls in these northern states are not exposed to mathematics and science and hence they have very limited opportunities to go ahead for higher education in science and technology. On the other hand, in the southern states, especially in Kerala and Karnataka, larger numbers of girls are going to professional courses like engineering and medicine.

Another revealing factor which emerged is that the teaching methodology of science is in a very sad condition, the pupils learning the subject by rote and reproducing it at the examinations. This has resulted in low level understanding of science and also to no development of a scientific spirit or attitude among the students. Unless something is done drastically to improve the situation, the country's science education will continue to decline and there will be no point in our priding ourselves as the third largest scientific community in the world.

The recommendations of the workshop include:

- (1) Proper training of science and mathematics teachers at school and college level to enable them to create a better understanding of the subjects and the creation of a scientific spirit among the students.
- (2) Improving the laboratory and other facilities available at schools and colleges so that better training in experimental methods can be given.
- (3) Improvement of text books and their availability ensured.

- (4) Better access to proper science education for girls and women.
- (5) Creche facilities for the children of women teachers.
- (6) All polytechnics including women's polytechnics be provided with more funds so that more girls are admitted and given useful courses which will result in better employment opportunities.
- (7) A survey be undertaken of many mushrooming polytechnics and colleges which are not functioning in a proper manner.
- (8) More and better community science centres be opened.
- (9) Skilled women workers of industries be provided opportunities to improve their qualifications on a continuing education system to help them in securing better employment opportunities.

**XIX ALL INDIA SOCIOLOGICAL
CONFERENCE, HISSAR**

Report of the Sub-theme on Women's Movement:

Satnam Kaur

XIX All India Sociological Conference was organized by the Department of Sociology of the Haryana Agricultural University, Hissar on March 3-5, 1989. The broad theme of the Conference was 'Development and Social Change' with a sub-theme on 'Women's Movements'.

A total of 29 papers were presented, of which 8 papers directly focussed on women's movements in India. One of these papers dealt with the emergence of the deserted-women's movement in Sangli and Satara districts of Maharashtra. The movement began with a conference of 700 deserted women at Vita in Sangli district on 25th of September, 1988. The resolutions were passed regarding provision of homes, facilities for those under poverty line, separate Mahila Kaksha in police stations, free legal aid for claiming right from husband's property, educational facilities for children and work in the nurseries etc. After this meeting, the representatives of both the districts met their District Collectors but could not get their demands fulfilled. Then an indefinite dharna of 300 deserted women was organized in front of the office of the District Collector, Sangli (on 15th Feb. 1989) and was withdrawn only after assurances were given on 16th February, 1989. Thus a movement of deserted-women has emerged in Sangli and Satara districts of Maharashtra.

Another paper presented an overview of the women's movement in Maharashtra. It emphasized that the women's movement in Maharashtra is the outcome of unjust treatment, status inequality and denial of opportunities for self-actualization. Now women's passivity,

unjust treatment, status inequality and denial of opportunities for self-actualization. Now women's passivity, apathy and inability is giving way to strong protests crystallizing in a movement.

Another paper from Maharashtra revealed a new consciousness among women who neither want stereotyped femininity nor a second hand masculinity. Their demand is for a just share in opportunities for development. The Roop Kanwar incident was also discussed in one paper in the context of women's movement. It pointed out that it is only after the countrywide protest by women's organizations that Rajasthan State and Central Government passed Anti-Sati laws. After one year of this incident thousands of women celebrated it as 'Nari Chetna Divas' in Jaipur in which rural women also participated along with teachers lawyers, doctors and others. The impressive role played by women of Garhwal in the maintenance of ecological balance in the sub-Himalayan region was highlighted in one of the presentations.

One of the papers also discussed the role of women's movements in obtaining franchise rights during British rule. At that time there were two types of women organizations viz., regional and national. Bharat Stri Mahasang (1910), Women's Indian Association (1917), Bombay Presidency Women's Council (1915), National Council of Women In India (1985) as regional organizations, concentrated on general upliftment of women and their protection. Extension of voting rights to women was considered as one of the major demands of national level women's organizations like AIWC (1927), National Council of Women (1925) and others. The paper concluded that the women's movement at that time suffered from a cultural lag between the ignorant masses and leaders of women's organizations because of which demands were delayed and a mass movement could not materialize. A presentation from Orissa discussed how in the second half of the 19th century, Gandhi's call for women's emancipation became the basis for the origin of women's movement. In the Satyagraha Movement women leaders like Rama Devi, Sarala Devi, Godavari Devi and several others emerged into the political arena. The role played by women in the consumer movement was highlighted in one of the papers with particular reference to the significant role of women in organizations such as Consumer Guidance Society of India with headquarters at Bombay, the Consumer Council of India, New Delhi, the Grahak Panchayat, Pune and Bombay. The papers on women and rural development described the role of women's activities at the grass-root level, role of non-formal education and training in preparing women for participating in development and psychological barriers

in women's participation in development. It was emphasized that the designing of special programmes for increasing their participation in the national development must have the essential ingredients of catalyst forces like education and effective use of mass media so as to make fuller use of the resources represented by women.

The papers on urban working women focussed on career aspirations, sex-role orientation, attitude of working women on marriage, dowry, and career, and job satisfaction. It was pointed out that the traditional concept of womanhood is undergoing a change in contemporary Indian society. Women are refusing to fit into the traditional mould of the home maker.

The issue of the victimization of women was discussed in three papers. The main points discussed were: nature, causes and forms of victimization and its analysis from an historical perspective. One paper, based on a study of a village in Punjab, discussed the socio-economic reasons in different caste/class groups which are responsible for female foeticide and overall implications of this problem. The status of women was discussed by the participants. One of the papers on the status of Muslim women emphasized the need to change attitudes towards them within the Muslim community. Another paper strongly opposed the monetization of household work as a means of valuation of women's works. It was felt that the job of the housewife cannot be equated with that of a man nor can it be quantified monetarily. Some participants advocated the idea of man-woman relationship as exploiter and exploited be replaced by one of mutual good will. Academic meetings however, cannot engage in wishful thinking; they can only present reality.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

WORLD CONGRESS OF SOCIOLOGY, MADRID

1990:- Sessions on Women Related Issues Designed by Research Committee 32 (on Women and Society)

For further details write to the Chairperson:

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Mahim, P.O.

BOMBAY- 400 016

FOURTH INTERNATIONAL INTERDISCIPLINARY CONGRESS ON WOMEN:

WOMEN'S WORLDS 1990:- Realities and Choices, to be held at Hunter College from June 3-7, 1990. For further information write to Marsha Frankel, Department of Anthropology, Hunter College- CUNY, 695 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10021, U.S.A.

Ms. Rohini Gawankar is the new editor of the IAWS Newsletter. Please send all information concerning women's studies and women's movement to her (address given elsewhere in this newsletter).

Editorial Board

Dr. Surinder Jetley (Editor)

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