

# INDIAN ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES

## newsletter

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### Editorial

#### Dr. Ambedkar and Women's Liberation

IWAS pays its tribute to Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar in his birth centenary year for his courage of conviction. Dr. Ambedkar, an incarnation of Dalit identity, mainstay of constitution of India and a crusader against oppression of dalits and women has a proud place in the minds of all progressive and gender-just people.

Dr. Ambedkar was born in a Dalit family (in a subcaste called Mahar) in Maharashtra. Due to its association with the British Army, the Mahars had an exposure to education and different life-style. Dr. Ambedkar's sisters and auntie were literate (against all odds, of course!) and could explain the PURANAS in the public meetings, even in the presence of men.

Dr. Ambedkar was committed to the cause of women's education not from an instrumentalist angle i.e. to make our women "ideal wives" or "good housewives". His support for this cause came from the perspective of gender-justice. He believed in equality principles. He was opposed to any form of discrimination on the ground of sex, caste, religion and class. Due to his dedication to the equalitarian principles he saw women as 'individuals in their own right'. He believed in healthy interaction of men and women. He encouraged co-education. In his own college he gave first preference to girl-students and even arranged free bus services for their conveyance. He maintained that education for women is not only a means of livelihood, but also a tool enabling them to live as independent free persons. He encouraged his wife to educate herself. Even when he was away in England for his higher education, he took keen interest in her progress.

Dr. Babasaheb was against purdah and he insisted that the Dalit women should not cover their heads and faces with Pallu. His writings and speeches instilled new self-confidence among Dalit women who had to and have to cope up with triple oppression in their lives.

Commenting on the wedding system of Dalits he said, "The parents marry their daughters quite early, in a very young age of their lives. If a boy can give preference to a girl of his choice, why is that right denied to a girl?" He advised the young students to accept that the women too have their own views, aspirations and individuality. Speaking to a big rally of Dalit women in 1942 at Nagpur, Dr. Ambedkar requested the women not to marry their children till they were economically independent. According to him child marriage was a hurdle in the development of girls. He believed that wife was not a slave of

husband but an equal partner in conjugal life. He supported small family norm on the ground of women's health and personality, so that her energy could be utilised for social and political work. He argued that the responsibility of family planning lies with both men and women.

Supporting a bill on the Welfare of women workers he stated that women should get equal wages and they should get maternity leaves with full pay and other facilities. Here it is essential to note that this speech was in 1938 when the number of women workers was comparatively small and even the trade unions were not taking any cognisance of the problems of women.

Dr. Ambedkar was well aware of women power. He firmly believed that like domestic problems, that societal problems also should be solved by men and women together. Without the help of women, men alone will not be able to eradicate untouchability. The removal of untouchability is a serious problem more for women than men. He told to his women folk that they should not forget that they also have talents and qualities like boldness. Yet their children do not get even the basic rights of humanity. why so? He used to urge women to think over it. On many occasions he said that there are two alternatives before women: the first is to stop giving birth to many children and second is to see that their children also get good education to come up.

A big number of Dalit women from Maharashtra, had to practice prostitution for their livelihood. Some of them wanted to participate in the Satyagraha movement started by Dr. Ambedkar. He told them that unless they leave this profession, he would not allow them to work with him. Those who were ready to live the profession were rehabilitated and some of them got married. Thus Dr. Ambedkar was pioneer in rehabilitation of Dalit prostitutes in Bombay.

Dr. Ambedkar's movement was not only for the liberation of Dalit society but also for the emancipation of Dalit women. However while talking on the aims of Dalit liberation movement he specifically told his fellow men that the movement will be a success only if their women participate in it whole heartedly and in large number. The men should be particular to see that the women in their family would not lag behind in the liberation movement. It is always argued that women first participated in Satyagrah in 1930 which was led by Mahatma Gandhi. But it appears that even before that hundreds of Dalit women had participated in the Satyagrah led by Dr. Ambedkar in 1927 at 'Testy water Lake at Mahad in Maharashtra'. Unfortunately none acknowledged their participation. Since that time women started coming out in more and more numbers in his Satyagrah. Today we see a very significant number of women participating in Dalit movement and its credit goes to Dr. Ambedkar.

Dr. Ambedkar could notice and observe the progress of Dalit women and in 1942 he expressed his happiness over the issue. He believed that if women become conscious she can lead the society to progress. The women have done the best to remove vices of the men. Dr. Ambedkar said that he had started his movement keeping in mind that equal participation of men and women is the back-bone of the movement. Since 1927 to the present time, we observe that Dalit women have contributed a lot to Dalit movement. Some times the contribution of women is more than that of men. They are now conscious about their rights and self respect and their confidence was certainly awakened by Dr. Ambedkar.

Dr. Babasaheb was also the visionary of Hindu Code Bill which he wanted in different way. Unfortunately his outlook was

not appreciated by leaders in the Congress Party and the then Government who did not want to pass the bill in its original form. Being a man of principles, he immediately resigned on this issue. The debate on this issue, displays Dr. Ambedkar's sincerity and integrity to women's cause. In the constitution of India he established the principle of equality. To remove the inequality among men and women in the matters of marriage, divorce, custody of child, maintenance, property etc. he supported the cause of gender-just family laws.

Once again, IAWS pays its homage to Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar for promoting principled programmes and policies in his personal and political life.

*Rohini Gawankar*

## Progress in Literacy in India

It is now well accepted that there is a strong correlation between several development indicators and level of literacy of the population. Correlation is particularly strong with the female education. It is shown that the relation between the age of marriage of a girl and her achievement in the education is positive and so is the prevalence of use of contraception and education of the woman. On the other hand infant mortality, birth rate and total fertility rate or the number of children the woman bears, are negatively correlated.

Census defines literacy as the ability to read and write with understanding in any language. Census of 1961 reported 24.0 percent population as literate. For 1971 this percentage had gone upto 29.5 and by 1981 it was 36.2. It is therefore seen that almost 2 out of 3 Indians were illiterate when more than four-fifths of the twentieth century was over.

More depressing is the fact that the literacy rate discussed above is only an average and there were wide variations by sex, by rural/urban residence and by States. Also it needs to be noted that even when the literacy rate showed an increase, it could not cope with the rate of growth of the population. As a consequence the number of illiterates increased from 325.3 million in 1961 to 376.2 million in 1971 and to 424.3 million in 1981.

Census data for 1981 show that the literacy rates for females for the three years of 1961, 1971 and 1981 were 12.9, 18.7 and 24.8 respectively and for the same years, for the males they were, 34.4, 39.5 and 46.9 respectively. It is therefore noticed that the ratio of literacy rate of females to that of males was 37.5 percent in 1961, it increased to 47.3 in 1971 and to 52.9 in 1981. Thus indicating that only half as many women were literate as the men.

Again there were wide-differentials in the literacy rates of

the rural and urban population. In 1981 literacy rate for the rural females was only 18.0, for rural males it was 40.0. For urban females the rate was 47.8 and for urban males it was 65.8. The data therefore show that though the average literacy rate for females was lower than that for the males, the rate for urban females was higher than that for the rural males. The data therefore shows that the bias against rural population was greater than the bias against females. This finding must be read with the fact that, in 1981, majority, i.e. 76.7 percent of the Indians lived in rural areas.

Literacy rates also showed considerable variations by States. Looking at the populations of the 21 States it was observed that, in 1981, the literacy rate for Kerala was 70.4, Next in rank were Maharashtra (47.2), Tamil Nadu (46.8), Gujarat (43.7), Orissa (42.5) etc. At the other end with low literacy rates were, Rajasthan (24.4), Bihar (26.2), Jammu and Kashmir (26.7), Uttar Pradesh (27.2) and Madhya Pradesh (27.9).

It was stated earlier that the female literacy rate was 52.9 percent of the male rate. There were differentials in this ratio at state level. In Kerala, in 1981 the ratio was 87.3 with 86.8 for rural areas and 90.1 for urban areas. In Maharashtra the ratio was 59.2. In urban Maharashtra the ratio was 76.1 and for rural areas it was 48.5. In Tamil Nadu the ratios were 60.1, 50.4 and 74.4 respectively. In Gujarat the ratios were 59.3, and 74.5 respectively. In Himachal Pradesh they were 59.1, 57.1 and 82.0. In Nagaland the figures were 67.1, and 82.0. At the other end Rajasthan had ratios of 31.5, 18.4 and 56.9. Bihar had ratios of 35.7, 29.6 and 63.7. Jammu and Kashmir 43.8, 33.1 and 68.0. Uttar Pradesh 36.2, 27.0 and Madhya Pradesh 39.3, 27.3 and 65.6.

The bias against females and against rural populations is clearly indicated in the above data.

*Malini Karkal*

## News from Women's Movement

**Stree Mukti Andolan Sampark Samiti,  
Maharashtra State**

### Our candidate for the election

The member of women M.P.s and MLAs seems to be

steadily decreasing. Women usually avoid contesting elections due to the extravagant expenditure involved and the use of character assassination as a weapon in election campaign.

All political parties proclaimed allotment of 30% seats to women. However, in practice, all of them sidetracked the women aspirants. Even as voters, no consideration is shown to women. The manifestos of political parties are almost devoid of any commitment on important women's issues.

'Your vote is Valuable' shout the media over the rooftops. But how conscious are women about exercising their right of franchise? In most cases, women simply follow the dictum of the head of the family. However now the time has come for us to ask ourselves the question: "whom shall we vote for?"

## Who is our candidate?

In today's society, it is rather difficult to find a candidate who could pave a way out of the growing atrocities and pressures on women. However, anybody attempting to push aside the ascending violence and tensions would be 'our' candidate!

We think that all citizens, specially women should consider the following important issues –

1. Growing religious fanaticism — New political parties and alliances indulging in selfish politics under religious garbs have emerged. Growing religious fanaticism would mean more dangers to women. Whatever may be the religion concerned, the rise of religious fanaticism would result in atrocities, rapes and murders. Whether it be the revival of the inhuman tradition of 'Sati' or the denial of just rights like maintenance to divorced Muslim women, such incidents are equally reprehensible and dangerous. Hence, electing candidates who exploit religious feelings for social – political gains would be an open invitation to growing insecurity for women! Our first duty should be to defeat such candidates!
2. We have different family laws for different religions. Our experience shows that none of them are useful in ensuring justice to women. Hence, our choice would be a candidate committed to secular values who would attempt to bring about a new family law based on equality and gender - justice.

3. Lately, women are being considered as an important factor in 'planning'. However, our development schemes are still being planned in total disregard of women and their development. Even factors like dams, irrigation, power and education, which usually aid in development have added to women's miseries. The nation cannot progress if the most exploited of its members (the women) are not allowed to develop. Hence, we must seek a candidate believing in 'women-centred development', one who would accord highest priority to issues like water, food, fodder, health, education and employment.

4. It would be in the interest of all women to elect a candidate who would take a firm and principled stand against social, domestic and political atrocities on women.
5. Obscene jokes and women's characters assassination have become an order of the day. We should categorically set aside candidates who, in their social life and election campaigning indulge in character assassination and insulting womanhood.
6. Dalit, Adivasi and other rural women as well as their counterparts from the urban slums are denied basic amenities like water, sanitation, health or maternity services. A candidate striving to make available these services on a priority basis would be 'our' candidate.

These are some of the issues we can raise and discuss with other women and conscientious citizens. They can guide in the selection of the proper candidates. We can also ask these questions to candidates during their election campaigns. After election, we can ask them what they have done for fulfilment of their promises. What we need is the organised strength. Let us join hands and use our collective strength as an effective pressure group.

Contact Address: Stree Mukti Sampark Samiti,  
Maharashtra

C/o. Shanta Ranade, 6/1, Budhwar Peth, Laxmi Road, Pune.

*(Translated from original manifesto in Marathi by Ravindra R.P.)*

## National Meet on Rape, Bombay – April 23-24, 1990.

Women's rape and how women's groups have dealt with cases that have come to them; and rape as an issue to be addressed in the social-legal-political economic context. Both sets of strategies would need to look at how we have dealt with these aspects in the past; how our campaigns have evolved and how we should strategise in the future. Again, the discussions were not conclusive but various questions were raised and debated.

"There is a lot of hope and expectation from women's groups. Cases keep coming into women's centres but it is not possible to take up each one. We have not been successful in creating activities who could take up various issues by themselves. Perhaps we need to shift the responsibility to society and the men who commit the crime-women's groups can't take on the whole burden".

"It is necessary to shame the Man-many groups have used this tactic. But men don't always feel ashamed of what they have done and so punishment is also important".

"How do we make the link between individual cases and

the concept of rape? We need to find a via Media between our different strategies. In Supriya's case, should we see it as an individual party aggression?" We seem to be rather negative about our achievements in the last 10 years. But there has been a fantastic rise in consciousness. Battering away at the legal system has helped the movement".

"How do we work with other groups with different political interests?"

## The Question of Individual Women

It was suggested that there could be three ways of looking at individual women's problem: a) through her own understanding of sexuality (this is particularly important with regard to marital rape); b) her class/cultural position; c) her need for shelter, counselling and rehabilitation.

One of the main criticisms about our response to rape is that sometimes it is removed from the individual context of the victim:

- a) In the Narvekar case from Goa, though the local group was effective in being able to publicise the case, the victim subsequently stated that she would have preferred not to have come to the women's organisation. The effect of the publicity was having to break off with her boyfriend since his family did not want such a "famous" daughter-in-law. In the case of the migrant labourer who was raped in Goa, the incident was viewed by her as an act of fate. For her question of survival was more important.
- b) The Maitrie group from Hyderabad also raised the issue of how to reconcile the victim's response with the group's response. Although in their case, the rapist is currently serving a sentence in jail, the victim's sole demand was to get the rapist to marry her so that he is bound to her and unable to marry other woman. Ironically the rapist is demanding 30 laks dowry in return. Such situation have an individual as well as social context, not always easy for a feminist group to address.
- c) Provision for shelter and counselling are prevalent needs for most victims, though there was some fear as to the effect of uprooting a rape victim from her natural habitat, how "short term" shelter would be defined, and whether such a shelter would be cross-class and caste. Counselling should ensure that the victim does not fall prey to the notion that she is thereafter worth nothing.

### Campaign/Community Response:

- a) Criticism across at the inability of women's groups to carry on a sustained campaign against an individual rape until the conclusion of a case. Even then, such campaign generally adressed themselves to well-known or politically sensitive cases such as Suman Rani, Kashtakari Sanghatana, or the Air India case. There was negligible response to lower class/caste, ordinary rapes by both the press and women's groups, rape which take place every day. This highlighted the importance of keeping both the "Banner" cases as well as the issue of rape in mind, and perhaps devising strategies that could work in tandem.
- b) There was need for a long-term educative process which would mean involving individual communities in rape cases in their area, and a need to dispell the notion of rape as being irredeemable.
- c) The importance of the media was stressed, in rendering men more accountable by putting the rapist in the limelight rather than the women and her rape. While there was need to publicises a case, there was also the fear of the media being a double - edged sword which could verge on sensationalism and insensitivity. Journalists also cautioned that the media itself operates within a power structure beyond individual persuasions.

### The Questions of Legal Redress

"The history of rape law is a history of disbelieving what women say". "The legal process can take upto 15 years and then you get 5 years imprisonment for the rapist. I say, what the hell ....?"

An extended discussion on the law and the possibility of obtaining justice for a raped women from the existing legal system, that was adequate and timely, indicate the general disillusionment with legal redress that most of us felt. Every aspect of the law - its definition of rape, due process, the law of evidence, the burden of proof, and not least, the evident prejudices of the judiciary-militated against victims of rape. Should we not therefore de-emphasise legal remedies, and concentrate our energies on mobilising support for raped women on counselling and rehabilitation, which are a more concrete and necessary from of assistance to them? Money raised to help a woman now when she needs it, is more useful to her than her rapist getting 5 years, 10 years, after he committed the rape, for example.

All its disabilities notwithstanding, it is felt that the importance of challenging the legal system is symbolic as well as strategically necessary, legal and religious texts are among the most important codes that we are governed by that regulate society and social and moral conduct. Both have defined and institutionalised women's subordinate status-then ensured that they remain subordinate through elaborate, interrelated and very patriarchal mechanisms. They embody the power of men over women, and if ever challenging the assertion of this power in other domains, how can we not in law? Thus, even while we recognise the difficulties of overthrowing powerful, vested interests, the fight to change the status quo has to continue. Take for instance, the question of burden of proof. Shifting the burden of proof to the accused is an important actual and psychological shift, because it presumes the man rather than the women guilty, and acknowledge that, unless proved otherwise, a crime has been committed. The same is true with regard to consent, conduct and all the other burdens that the women currently bears.

Apart from the definition of rape itself other changes suggested were: amedments in the Evidence Act; making rape a non-bailable offence; inducting feminist judges; making the payment of compensation to the women compulsory, creating alternative courts for rape trials; and pressing for time bound judgements. Although these are not new demands, women's groups have so far met with little success on them even from "progressive" lawyers.

Forum Against Oppression of Women (Organising Group)  
Bombay.

## National Commission on women

Towards equality report recommended the need for National Commission on women way back in 1974. But it was not brought on the political agenda by any of the previous governments. The National Front government presented the Bill on National Commission on women in Loksabha which provoked heated debate among women's groups. Scope for government interference, lack of autonomy and authority to the commission were some of the major criticisms made by the women's

movement. Mahila Daxta Samiti of Bombay and IWAS. S.N.D.T. Women's University organised a one-day seminar on the subject in which noted lawyers, activists, community workers, journalists, acadamicians participated. A national level conference to discuss the technicalities and objectives of the commission was organised by the department of women and child development, government of India. Some of the recommendations of these two gatherings have been accepted by the

government and new bill on women's commission is prepared. We hope the commission takes up multifaceted problems of Indian Women in a concrete way and does not remain one mere decorative piece to boast about.

*Dr. Vibhuti Patel.*

## VICTORY ..... !!

In response to the Chief Justice Rangnath Misra's statement that if women are working without any economic reason then they should go back to the home and build a heaven on earth created great indignation among women's groups. His remarks "Love dies, (when) love is substituted by an (equality) frame" provoked great opposition from the section of media, women's groups, lawyers, citizen forum, NGOs and democratic rights groups. As a result he withdrew his statement. Women's groups organised signature campaigns, demonstration and public meetings in response to his statement.

It came as a big shock to every progressive citizen that the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India would make such a billitting remarks that "women should go back to their homes and not think of competing with men on everything".

The constitution of India guarantees equality, equal opportunity, freedom and dignity to women. For the Chief Justice to say that he does not personally believe in some of these provisions is quite surprising. In that case why did he swear by the constitution? Can a person holding such a high public position compartmentalise his statements as "made in his

individual capacity" and "made in capacity of a Supreme Court Judge"?

Many people hold the same views on women's role. But what makes the Chief Justice, Rangnath Mishra's statement highly objectionable is the power and authority, a person like him holds in terms of giving judgements. If such regressive views are held by our judiciary what type of justice a women (both 'working' and 'non-working') can expect? If the very people who are supposed to give 'Justice' have such deep-rooted prejudices against women, who are totally imenitive to the plight of million of women (for whom "job" is not a luxury but the only means of getting the next meal for their family-members) and want to perpetrate subordinate status of women; women are not going to get justice. Whether a woman is discriminated in her office or sexually harassed on the road or battered in her home, such judges will resort to victim-baiting. Biases of judiciary and the legal system have been revealed in the last one and half decade by women's groups in case of rape, dowry murders, sexual harrasment at workplace, family disputes concerning marriage, divorce, custody of children, alimony, property, access to matrimonial home. They have revealed the same type of sexist attitudes as expressed by Justice Ranganath Mishra on 7.11.1990 at a conference of Brahmakumaries in New Delhi. Under public pressure he has withdrawn his statement but as he said he stands by his belief. He also expressed his inability to understand how his statement affects the status of women and women's movement.

— *Dr. Vibhuti Patel.*

## Report

# Seminar on Women's Development and Legal Literacy

## Department of Home Science, Amravati University

Postgraduate Teaching Department of Home Science Conducted the Seminar on 'Women's Development' and Legal Literacy's on 18th & 19th January 1990. It was sponsored by Indian University Association for Continuing Education.

The broad objectives of the Seminar were to create awareness about the status of women and use of laws and legal processes for women's Development.

Prof. S.C. Bhatia, Hon.Secretary Indian University Associations for Continuing Education, New Delhi in his inaugural speech highlighted various problems of women and child education. He unfolded the reasons behind early marriages of girls and atrocities against them.

Dr. Mrs. Asha Kasture, Head, Department of Economics, Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Amravati illustrated the reasons for the lower status of women and the barriers to change the status of women. Dr. Mrs. Sneha Mahajani, Head, Department of Home Economics, Radhadevi Goenka Mahavidyalaya, Akola, narrated the problems of rural women. She said, "Rural women are still entrapped in the vicious circle of poverty, illiteracy, customs and traditions". Mrs. Malti Khandwe, Director, Anganwadi Training Centre, Amravati, elaborated the problems of urban educated women in her lucid style. She strongly expressed deep feelings about attitude towards working women in family and society. Mrs. Kalpana Ghatol, Lecturer in Home Science, Vidarbha Mahavidyalaya, Amaravati, described various miseries faced by the girl child. Further she pointed out that parents should change their negative attitude towards girl child and should not

differentiate between sons and daughter. Mrs. Pushpatai Bonde, Director, Amravati, District Co-operative Mahila Bank and an eminent social worker of Amaravati presented details of various Government schemes for women's development in Maharashtra, and advised that women should take advantage of these welfare schemes.

## "Legal Literacy"

Advocate Mrs. Laxmi Pangarkar elaborated various laws such as Hindu Marriage Act 1955, Custody of children, Maintenance to wife, Adoption Act, etc. Mrs. Nalineetai Ladhake, an eminent and social worker of Amravati expressed her deep feelings about the atrocities against women. She suggested that collective and sustained actions can bring the change in the attitude of the society. Advocate Miss Asha Ghurde explained laws pertaining to improvement of the conditions of working women. Dr. Mrs. Maniktai Patil, Principal Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Amravati, in her concluding address stressed the need of women's Development Programme and importance of "Legal Literacy" amongst women. The seminar concluded with a vote of thanks by Miss Pramod Roodkar, Lecturer in the Department.

In all 83 participants — Resource persons, women teaching staff from local colleges and the students of postgraduate Teaching Department of Home Science of the university actively participated in this two days seminar.

*Dr. Vimal Biwe*

# Survival and Struggles of Women Casual Labourers in Gujarat

## (A Note)

The present study is about female workers who assemble at Casual Labour Markets (CLMs) in Gujarat towns and cities. By definition, the CLM rules out any stable norms regarding workload, wages and other related aspects. Recruitment is arbitrary and labour turnover is quick. Labour becomes a 'casual' commodity at a total dispensation of employers. The CLM thus epitomises the extreme form of workers' subordination and dependency.

Our study seeks to examine the socio-economic status of the female casual labourers, and their perceptions and experiences with regard to labour market, family milieu, and community structures around. The study covered 1000 female workers from six urban centres of Gujarat, namely Valsad, Surat, Bharuch, Vadodara, Kheda and Ahmedabad during 1988-89. We also interviewed indepth a sample 200 CLM households to gain deeper understanding of their socio-economic problems. The study report has been divided into seven chapters.

Major observations and findings are as follows. The CLM is socio-economically a very complex setup with intricate relations with wider structures of status, power and authority. A majority of female casual labourers are migrants from rural landless or land-poor households. In urban areas they lived in slums or footpaths, short of any basic facility worth the name, leave alone amenities.

They faced insecurity with regard to employment tenure. Low and uncertain income did not allow them to maintain even bare minimum standards in food consumption, clothing, health, education and housing. Health hazards were too many. They

faced gruelling daily routine at home. Their male members did not help them to lighten their burden on domestic front.

The work and conditions of employment of the CLM labourers leave much to be desired. They faced series of severe constraints ranging from poor wages, long working hours including risks to their life. Contractors - mukadam combine to extract the labour and exploit the labourer without giving the latter their due returns. Female labourers are totally at mercy of the contractors, mukadams, etc. They often pay them less, get more work and sometimes swindle their wages. The labourers live under constant threat of under-employment, joblessness and semi-starvation.

Despite constraints and unsettling experiences, the female labourers have not lost their confidence in secular modes of change and transformation. A majority is in favour of mobilisation, unity, unionisation and collective struggles to improve their occupational conditions. They plead for equity and parity, with men in all aspects of working life. They are also becoming conscious of larger social structures and forces that tend to marginalise them and push them below poverty line.

In a concluding chapter, the study offers suggestions on micro and macro strategies to counter the enormously pitiable status/conditions of these female casual labourers. The study was undertaken by S.P. Punalekar and Arjun Patel of Centre for Social studies, Surat. The study was sponsored by the Union Ministry of Human Resource Development.

*Dr. S. Punalekar.*

## Forth Coming Events

✓ ICSSR (Western Region) has sponsored a two day seminar on "Women Voluntary Organisations and Rural Development" on 23rd and 24th February, 1991 at N.S. Fatel Arts College, Post Box No.39, Bhalej Road, ANAND - 388 001, Gujarat. Contact person: Mr. Arunapali Merchant.

The Fifth National Conference on Women's Studies is being organized at Jadavpur University, Calcutta, from 9-12th February 1991. Members of the Association as well as those who are involved in Women's Studies and Women's Development are welcome to participate.

**THEME:** The broad theme of the conference is Religion, Culture and Politics. the main objective is to assess the contemporary interaction between religion, culture and the economic and political process for their implications on the status and rights of women.

The following sub-themes have been identified:

**Sub-Theme 1: The demographic context and patterns of women's relationship to religion, culture and politics.**

**Co-ordinator:** Iliina Sen  
C/o. Mission Hospital Tida (P.O)  
Neora, (Dt.)  
Raipur - 14.

**Sub-Theme 2: Family and socialization**

**Co-ordinator:** S. Anandlakshmy  
Director  
Lady Irwin College  
Sikandra Road  
New Delhi - 100 001.

**Sub-Theme 3: Mass Media**

**Co-ordinators:** Jasodhara Bagchi  
428, Jodhpur Park  
Calcutta - 700 068.  
Ella Datta  
The Economic Times  
105/7A S.N. Banerji Road  
Calcutta - 700 014.

**Sub-Theme 4: Religion, culture and politics: The economic context**

**Co-ordinator:** Nirmala Banerjee  
Centre for Studies in Social Sciences  
10, Lake Terrace  
Calcutta - 700 029.

**Sub-Theme 5: State policies and their implications**

**Co-ordinators:** Vibhuti Patel, Reader  
Research Unit on Women's Studies  
SNDT Women's University  
Santa Cruz West  
Bombay - 400 049.  
Manu Bhaskar, Reader  
Department of Sociology  
University of Kerala  
Kariavattom  
Thiruvananthapuram - 695 581.

**Sub-Theme 6: Religion, culture and policies: The impact of women's rights and legal system**

**Co-ordinator:** Indira Jaising  
Senior Advocate, Supreme Court  
4th floor, Jalavam Jyoth  
63, Ghoga Street  
Bombay - 400 001.

**Sub-Theme 7: The role of education in religion, culture, and politics and gender justice**

**Co-ordinators:** Vina Mazumdar  
Centre for women's Development Studies  
B-43, Panchsheel Enclave  
New Delhi - 110 017.

Aparna Basu  
Department of History  
University of Delhi  
18 Teen Murti Lane  
New Delhi - 110 011.

**Sub-Theme 8: Political use of religious/cultural idioms**

**Co-ordinator:** Nirja Mishra, Pratibha Jain  
Kanodia College  
Jaipur.

**Sub-Theme 9: Religious organizations and Institutions, fundamentalisms and reformism**

**Co-ordinators:** Govind Kelkar  
98, Nehru Apartments  
New Delhi - 110 019.

Vasantha Kannabiran  
128-East Maredpalli  
Secindrabad - 500 026  
Andhra Pradesh.

**Contact:**

1. Prof. Jasodhara Bagchi, School of Women's Studies, Jadavpur University, Calcutta - 700 032. India. Tel: 72-4044.
2. Dr. Surinder Jetly, General Secretary, Indian Association for Women's studies, C/O. Centre for Women's Studies & Development, Faculty of Social Sciences, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi - 221 005. India. Tel. 311419.

**Conference Fees:**

The registration fee for participating in the conference is Rs.250/- per head. Students will be, however, required to pay Rs.150/- All those who want to participate will be required to register, to a particular sub-theme. They will get the papers of the concerned subtheme free as part of the kit.

**Please Note:**

- Registration fee will not be returned
- Abstract of papers should be sent to the co-ordinators concerned on or before 31st December, 1990. Paper should be sent to the co-ordinators and to the organizing secretary in Calcutta so as to reach on 15th January, 1991 or else the paper-writer will have to bring 150 cyclostyled copies of her/his paper and the paper-writer will have to bear the cost of cyclostyling.
- Paper-writers should explore all possibilities of financial support to attend the conference i.e. registration fees and travel cost, however, if it is not possible for them to do so then they will be re-embursed II-Class Train fare and registration fee.
- On arrival at Howrah station, please contact the conference counter.

## International Seminar on Feminism Across cultures on 25-27, March, 1991 At Mother Teresa University, Kodikanal - 624 102, Tamil Nadu.

**Objectives:**

- To clarify feminist issues such as what constitutes Oppression? What is Liberation? What is meant by Equality?
- To probe into the plurality within Feminism and to see if Feminists can accommodate these differences and still press ahead?
- To debate whether a culture like India's can contain Feminism or if it is antithetical to Indian values.
- To decide whether we can speak now of an Indian Feminism without shaking are socio-cultural foundations.
- To evolve a brand of Feminism in consonance with Indian values.

Contact Person: Dr. Jaya Kothai Pillai

### Networking

Finrrage (feminist International Network of Resistance to Reproductive and Genetic Engineering) is an international network of feminists with contacts in 34 countries who are concerned with the development of reproductive and genetic

technologies and their effects on women. These technologies offer a variety of different forms of reproductive control over women, following two basic directions: pro-fertility on the one hand, anti-fertility on the other. Women in what is called the developing world and poor women in the industrialized countries are increasingly being offered more unsafe, harmful and coercive contraceptives. Other women are the subjects of experimental pro-fertility technologies, such as in vitro fertilisation, which involve the use of harmful drugs and invasive surgery. Anti-fertility and pro-fertility technologies are two sides of the same coin; they share a common purpose of controlling population quantity and quality through controlling women's reproductive capacity.

### Aims of the Network

- to monitor international developments in the areas of reproductive medicine, contraceptives, 'fertility drugs', in-vitro fertilization, embryo transfer, surrogacy, sex selection and determination, cloning, genetic screening and genetic manipulation etc.;
- to assess the implications of these and related technologies for the socio-economic position and well-being of women in

different situation, cultures and countries, as well as the impacts on the environment and other life forms, today and in the future;

- to raise public awareness about contraceptive and reproductive technologies and genetic engineering and the ways in which they are linked;
- to analyse the relationship between science, technology, and social relations in patriarchal societies underlying these technologies and the implications for the feminist movement and the development of alternatives which respect women and nature;
- to extend our links with women internationally to pool information and insights and to develop a set of strategies for women and women's groups to consider and discuss;
- to develop a global movement of feminist resistance to population control policies and reproductive and genetic engineering, while confronting the issues that divide women because of differences in their social, economic, political, and cultural situation.

#### Contact Address:

Finrrage International Coordination  
P.O.Box 201903  
D-2000 Hamburg 20  
FR Germany.

Worldwatch offers its paper #97 "The Global Politics of Abortion" to those who are interested in issues of health, human rights and social costs of restrictive abortion policies worldwide, and would respond to the findings.

#### Their address:

Worldwatch Institute  
1776, Massachusetts Avenue N.W.  
Washington D.C. 20036  
USA.

## Felicitation

..... To Mary Robinson who sworn in as Ireland's First Women President.

Robinson, a libertarian lawyer/ has championed feminist and human rights causes.

In a country, where abortion, divorce and homosexuality are out lawed. She campaigned for liberalisation of some of the most draconian laws in the European community.

She won the election last month defeating big party candidates whose loyalties date back to the civil war that followed independent from Britain in 1920s.

## News from the Centres

- Women's Studies Research Centre at M.S. University, Baroda was inaugurated on 16th November, 1990 by Prof. Kamlini Bharsali and Keynote address was given by Dr. Neera Desai.

This is the first interdisciplinary centre in Gujarat and the milestone in the development of women's studies at the M.S. University. Prof. Amita Verma is Hon. Director.

- The Women's Cell, Bharnagar University organised a seminar on "Gender Equality and status of women in Gujarat" during Dec. 8-9, 1990. The seminar was co-ordinated by Dr. Neera Oza, Dept. of Economics, Bharnagar University, inaugurated by Ms. Renana Zabwala (SEWA, Ahmedabad) and presided by Dr. Neera Desai.

All those whose membership has expired by 31st Dec., 1990, kindly renew your membership by writing for form to the Treasurer, Dr. Kumud Sharma, B-43, Panchsheel Enclave, New Delhi - 110 001 to qualify for voting in the next election.

#### 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	Rs.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.

## DOCTORATE

No girl in her twenties has a right to choose  
not to get married  
Even for a while.

The twenties are crucial, you know  
Ten best years of a girl's life,  
to be offered to a man.

Duly to a man.

So, when I choose  
to get engaged with my work  
when I chose

to create a thesis  
it was just too much.

all the way to the library,  
past the stacks,  
searching the desks,  
they came,  
warnings.

One after another

Good grooms never wait  
Grooms don't like well-shaped brain

grooms prefer young brides  
Children come to young mothers

Year after year

Step after step

They hovered the skies around me  
Even now,

as they search,

My face for wrinkles,

My certificate for regret,

Even now,

as they sympathise

with the girl nextdoor

whose groom gardening

has yet to flower,

they cannot forgive me,  
my smile.

Late marriages have to happen,

They can not be chosen.