

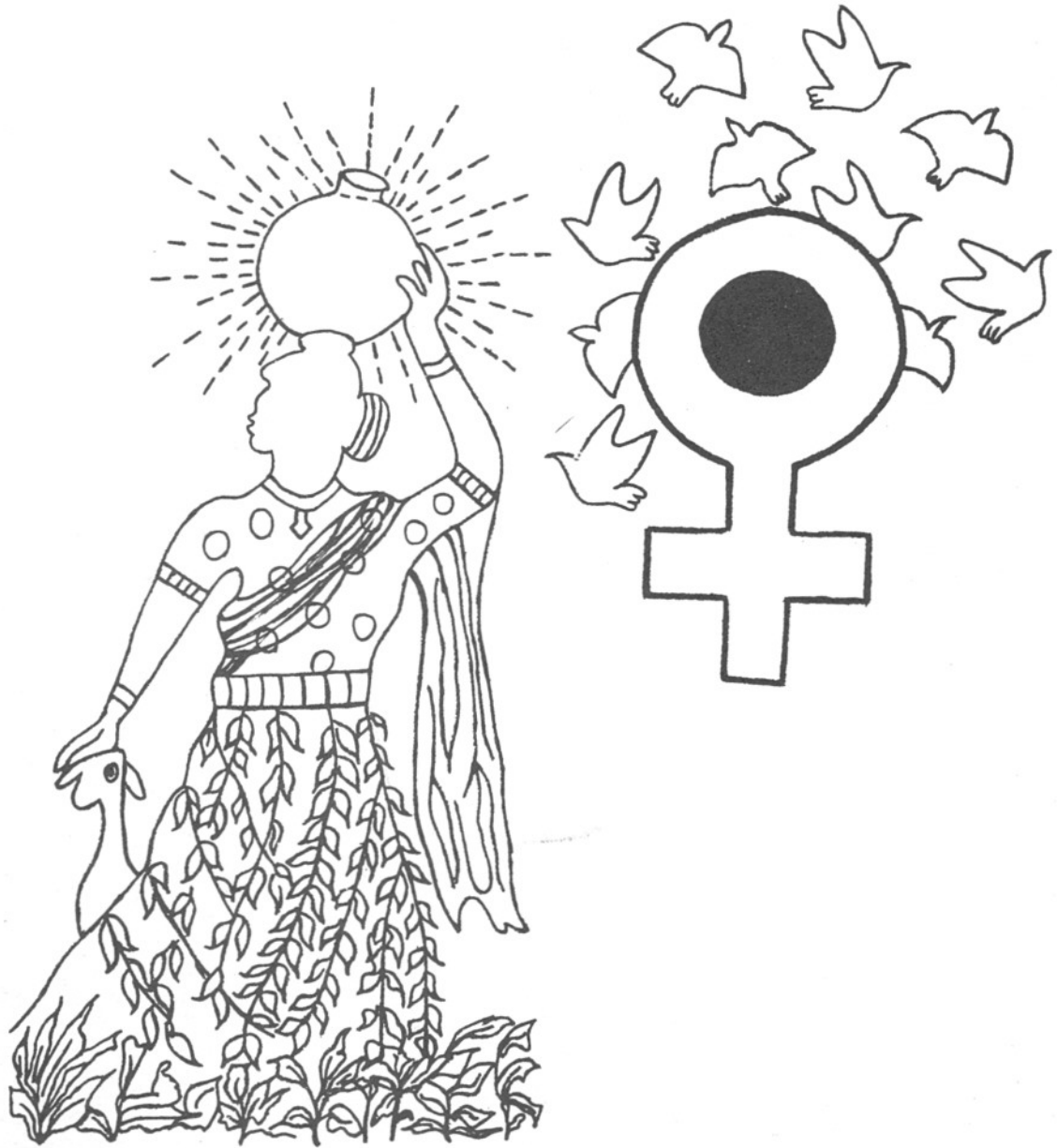
Indian Association for Women's Studies

NEWSLETTER

No. 12

CWDS LIBRARY

January, 1991



SPECIAL NUMBER

Decade of IAWS

Editorial Board

Dr. Rohini Gawankar (editor) Dr. Neeraben Desai
Dr. Usha Thakker Dr. Vibhuti Patel
Dr. Maithreyi Krishnaraj Smt. Sujata Gotoskar

Advisors

Prof. Kamalini Bhansali Dr. Divya Pandey

Membership

All those whose membership has expired by March 1990, kindly renew your membership by writing for forms to the Treasurer, Dr. Kumud Sharma. B-43, Panchsheel Enclave, New Delhi 110 001.

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.1,000 for 5 years.
(d) Corporate Members (Institutions only)	Rs.2,500
(e) Student Members	Rs.10 per annum
(f) Associates	Rs.250 for 10 years.

Emergence of the Indian Association for Women's Studies

IAWS (12)
Jan. 1991

— Dr. Veena Mazumdar

INTRODUCTION

The first National Conference on Women's Studies, held at the SNDT Women's University, Bombay in April 1981 had resolved that an All-India Association should be formed to carry on the momentum and interest that had been generated by the conference and to organise periodic conferences and other activities with the following objectives :

1. To provide a forum for interaction amongst individuals, institutions and organisations engaged in teaching, research or action for women's development;
2. To provide and establish information centres at different parts of the country for promotion of Women's Studies and scientific analysis of action for development promoting women's equality. To this end to develop a network for collection of information relating to teaching, research and action programmes;
 - a. to develop documentation, bibliographic and other services;
 - b. to disseminate needed information to all agencies, engaged in teaching, research and action programmes.
3. To organise periodical conferences to carry forward the awareness and momentum generated by the First National conference which was organised by the SNDT Women's University, Bombay, Kanpur University and Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi in April 1981;
4. To organise specific action programmes for the development of Women's Studies perspectives in different disciplines and for the development of appropriate indicators for measuring women's participation in social and economic development.

5. To mobilise necessary services and resources, with a view to strengthen and assist women scholars, writers, communicators etc. to develop their talents;
6. To assist institutions seeking to develop programmes for teaching, research and action for women's equality and development.
7. To take all such action that may be deemed necessary, to bring about a change in social values with a view "to eliminate attitudinal, conceptual and class biases that hinder understanding of the role and situation of women and their movement towards equality", and
8. To collaborate with institutions and agencies working for similar objectives at the national and international level.

The responsibilities for bringing the Association into existence was entrusted to the National Committee that had organised the first Conference, with the addition of a few other members. A few months after the Conference, a foundation meeting was held to decide on the structure of the Association. The Association was finally registered in 1982.

ACTIVITIES

A National Conferences

Since its inception the Association has organised three National Conferences in 1984 (Trivandrum), 1986 (Chandigarh), and 1988 (Waltair). The Fifth National Conference is scheduled to be held in February 1991 at the University of Jadavpur, Calcutta. Each of these Conferences focussed on a particular theme, adopting a modality of a series of workshops around sub-themes. In addition, each conference also had two or three special plenary sessions.

Each Conference was hosted by a University, and the number of participants have shown a gradual increase over the years. The Executive Committee of the Association has followed a convention since 1983 of co-opting an authorised representative of the host university to the Association's EC and the Conference Planning Committee that the EC constituted for each conference. Coordinators were selected for each sub-theme well in advance. They, in turn, identified some persons to write papers for the sessions to be organised under their particular sub-theme. Once the full theme of the conference along with the names of coordinators for each sub-theme is notified to all members and a large number of Universities, colleges and activist groups, the Coordinators receive several papers offered by individuals for presentation at the conference. The themes of the various National Conferences are given below. Summary report of the presentations are enclosed.

(i) Second National Conference, Trivandrum, 1984
Gender Justice.

There were three workshops planned during this conference on (a) Law and Legal Studies, (b) Work and Employment and (c) the Political Process.

(ii) For the Third National Conference, the theme was 'Women's Struggles and Movement's — 13 sub-themes were identified for workshops. These were:

1. Women in Agrarian Struggles;
2. Women and the Industrial Working Class Movement;
3. Women, Informal Sector and Forms of Struggle;
4. Professional Women's Struggles;
5. Women in Youth and Students' Struggles in India;
6. Women and Indian Nationalism;
7. Regional and Sectional Movements and Women's Rights;
8. Religion, Secularism and Women's Rights;
9. Women and Violence;
10. Ideology, Political parties and Groups and the Women's Question in Post-Independence India;
11. Women's Struggles for Education with Special Reference to Weaker Sections and Minorities;
12. Women's Struggles for Health and Nutrition with Emphasis on Weaker Sections and Minorities;
13. Sexist bias in Media.

The Fourth National Conference adopted the theme 'Rural Women: Poverty, Survival and Struggle for Change' — with 12 sub-themes :

1. Access to Productive Resources and Social Organisation of Production;
2. Technology change, The Labour Process and Employment;

3. Environmental Degradation and Regeneration;
4. Education and Socialisation — the formal and the non-formal process;
5. Health, Sexuality and Reproduction;
6. Laws, Implementation and the Process of Legal Change;
7. Political Institutions, Structures and Processes;
8. Ideology, Culture and Revivalism;
9. Gender Violence — the Role of the State, Community and Family;
10. Family survival mechanisms;
11. Government Policies and Programmes : Political and Economic Perspectives;
12. Collective Struggles for change.

The theme selected for the Fifth National Conference is 'Religion, Culture and Politics', with sub-themes :

1. The demographic context and Pattern of Women's Relationship to religion, culture and politics;
2. Family and Socialisation;
3. Mass Media;
4. Religion, culture and politics — Economic context;
5. State policies and their implications;
6. Religion, culture and politics — the impact of Women's Rights nad legal system;
7. The role of education in religion, culture and politics and Gender Justice;
8. Political use of religions/cultural idioms;
9. Religious organisations and institutions, fundamentalism and reformism.

Plenary sessions organised at successive national conference are indicated below :

**Second National Conference
(Trivandrum, 1984)**

- (i) Symposium on Status of Women in Kerala, organised by the Kerala University and the Institute of Management in Government, Trivandrum, who acted as co-hosts for the conference.
- (ii) A public lecture on Gender Justice Past, present and future by Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer.

**Third National Conference
(Chandigarh, 1986)**

- (i) The relevance of Women's studies in the Indian context;
- (ii) Alternative perspectives on Women's roles in Development;
- (iii) Symposium on problems of Women in Punjab, organised by the Punjab University.

Fourth National Conference (Waltair, 1988)

- (i) On Feminism and being a Feminist;
- (ii) A Decade of Research, Policy and Activist Intervention; achievements, limitations and future perspectives;
- (iii) Symposium on Women in Andhra, organised by the Andhra University.

B Asian Regional Conference

- (i) Regional Conference on Women and the Household

In January 1985 the Association organised an Asian Regional Conference on Women and the Household in collaboration with the Commission on Women of the IUAES and the Research Committee 32, on Women and Society, of the International Sociological Association. The Conference had the following sub-themes :

1. Structural and cultural dimensions of intra-household relationship;
2. Women and Home-based production;
3. Structures of production, Kinship Systems, and the household;
4. The State, the household, and Women;
5. The household as the Cultural Unit of Data Collection and Analysis in Research and Surveys.

Participants at the Regional Conference included, in addition to scholars and activists from various Asian countries, a large number of Asian studies specialists from Europe, United States, and a few from Latin America and Africa.

In all the National Conferences, participants included some representatives from neighbouring countries of South Asia, who went back to initiate similar activities in their own countries. Many of them as well as quite a few scholars from the United States have enrolled as Associate Members of the Association. The preparation for each of these conferences has thus steadily widened the members' capacity for networking with scholars and activists from various countries and to become involved in collaborative research, publication and other activities.

- (ii) Regional Conference for Hindi Speaking States of Haryana, UP, Rajasthan, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh — Kanpur, 1985

In 1985, the Association lent support to Dr. Hemlata Swarup, founder member of the Association, in organising this regional conference on Women and Public Policy. Tremendous enthusiasm was generated among the participants, many of whom were being exposed for the first time to the problems and perspectives of women in

policy studies. Several of the institutions participating in that conference have since taken up research and developmental action in these areas. It was, however, difficult for Dr. Swarup to follow up this mobilisation in the absence of an active regional Association.

C Task forces, working groups and small workshops/ seminars

- (i) While the conference involved large gatherings ranging from 250 for the regional conference on the household, to nearly 500 at the Trivandrum Conference, planning each of these events had to be entrusted to a number of broad as well as specific task forces/working groups. Such groups were appointed by the Executive Committee, drawing on the basis of talent available in the country. Some members of these groups were not initially members of the Association, but eventually enrolled as active members.

The participants of First National Conference on Women's Studies with a background of economics formed a special group called Economists Interested in Women's Issues Group (EIWIG). It provided a forum for systematic critique of the traditional statistical system that maintained conceptual and empirical invisibility of women in data system. Four workshops organised by EIWIG on women's work, women and poverty, impact of technological changes on women's work participation and occupational diversification of women workers helped a great deal in understanding women's contribution in the economy.

Apart from these conference related exercises, the Association also undertook, through setting up small task forces, the organisation of smaller workshops on relatively neglected areas with a view to identifying needed action and research strategies.

One such task force was appointed soon after the Trivandrum Conference on the basis of a resolution adopted by the Conference. This group sought to promote research on the Role of Women in the Indian Freedom Struggle. The Conference had identified this as a neglected area. The Task Force identified research strategies and approaches, bringing them to the attention of research funding agencies like the Indian Council of Historical Research, the Indian Council of Social Science Research and selected Universities/scholars working on the freedom struggle. As a result both the Councils have stepped up their support to research in this field and renewed interest in this theme has been noted amongst doctoral students in many Universities. At the Third National Conference, where Women and Indian Nationalism was adopted as a sub-theme, 27 papers were presented, many of them being young doctoral students.

In 1987, the Association appointed two Task Forces to examine the implications of the section titled "Education for Women's Equality" in the National Policy on Education adopted by Parliament in May 1986.

The first Task Force took up the issue of access to education for the large majority of women who are currently victims of lack of education or discrimination. Small diagnostic studies were undertaken in different parts of the country on different aspects of this major problem and a workshop was held in July 1987 to identify needed areas for intervention by educational institutions as well as voluntary organisations committed to gender equality. The programmes of adult education, non-formal education and universalisation of elementary education, training/reorientation of teachers and the use of mass media being implemented by the Government of India were subjected to extensive criticism on the basis of the evaluative and diagnostic exercise undertaken by different members of the Task Force, and recommendations were formulated for the Government as well as for the members themselves. A press conference was held immediately after the workshop to draw public attention to these findings and recommendations.

The second Task Force examined the role of Science and Technology, particularly of institutions responsible for education in this field, in promoting gender equality.

Since the previous workshop had identified discrimination in access to science education at the school level, the Task Force undertook some critical investigation of this issue in six selected states, and in the field of provisional education in science based areas at the university level. The findings of this investigation were presented and discussed at a national workshop on Women, Science and Technology, hosted by the Indian Institute of Science, at Bangalore in November 1988.

This exercise brought in, for the first time a number of scientists — women and men — into the Association's field of activities. It has been a fruitful relationship, resulting in considerable sensitisation and a feeling of concern among the senior scientists who participated in the workshop, through identification of structural and institutional biases which were found operative in women's access to education, training and employment in science based fields.

In 1989 the Association appointed two other task forces. The first was asked to prepare an approach paper to women's studies in the Indian context, particularly at the University level, delineating its conceptual framework, social perspective and operational methodologies, especially for bringing about closer links between teaching, research and action. A small workshop was held for this purpose and the paper is under preparation.

(ii) A second team was deputed to participate in the review and planning exercise being designed by the UGC on the achievements and problems experienced by the Centre for Women's Studies and Development established in selected universities/colleges with support from UGC. The

group helped to design the review exercise and participated in the national workshop of coordinators/Hony. Directors of all the university centres organised by the Research Centre for Women's Studies, SNDT Women's University, Bombay in October 1989.

The idea for this workshop was initiated during the National Conference in December 1988, in consultation with the representatives of various centres. The UGC was approached thereafter and two members of the Association's Task Force volunteered to design the review. The responses received from the various centres provided the base for discussion in the workshop, and the presence of members of the UGC's Standing Committee on Women's Studies enabled the Association members to develop an approach to further strengthen this programme of the UGC in the VIIIth Five Year Plan.

The close interaction with the coordinators of the Centre for Women's Studies also enabled the group to suggest some collectively undertaken projects by the centres which could help them to overcome some of their major problems e.g. lack of interest on the part of the general faculty of the universities, and relating research to action and teaching.

Since 1990 had been declared as the year of the girl child for the SAARC countries, all the centres volunteered to participate in a joint research project on this theme with the objective of identifying areas of intervention that their universities (including different sections of the faculty) could take up. While this project was identified during the UGC workshop, the entire planning, mobilisation, training and finding funds for this project has been done by the small team of the Association present at the workshop, drawing into the exercise various centres for Women's Studies and other members of the Association. The project is being funded by the Department of Women and Child Development, Government of India, which has started looking to the Association as a mobilising body to activate educational institutions in playing an interventionist role in such major problem areas.

D Publications and Dissemination

The Association's executive committee has been trying persistently to arrange publication of selected papers presented at its various conferences in the hope of making such material available for teaching in universities which are beginning to introduce changes in the curriculum of different disciplines. Lack of resources to support editorial functions had proved to be a big handicap. The funds mobilised for the Asian Regional Conference had included partial support towards publication, so editing of five volumes was taken up. A similar exercise had also been initiated after the Trivandrum Conference of 1984.

In 1989 the Association's executive committee decided to commit the entire savings from grants obtained for the 4th National Conference, to follow up publication activities. A committee of editors was appointed to prepare 11 volumes of papers selected from those presented at the various national conferences and some support was assured to those who had been editing the volumes of papers presented at the Regional Conferences on Women and the Household. The Association's support is confined to editorial expenses and a small honorarium for editors. The volumes are being brought out by commercial publishers. Three volumes from the Household Conference have been already published. It is hoped to send the other 11 to publishers within 1990-91. Copyright for these volumes rest with the Association.

A summary report of the Second National Conference was published by the Association itself and a large number of copies have been already distributed. Sets of papers (cyclostyled) presented at the various national conferences as well as the regional conferences were bound in limited numbers and have been made available to various institutions, individuals on demand at cost price. They were also sent to the donor agencies which helped to support such conferences.

From 1985-86 the Association started bringing out a periodic newsletter. One member of the executive committee was entrusted with the job and provided with a small support to undertake this exercise twice or thrice a year. 10 issues of the newsletter have been published so far. The third issue contained a summary report of the Third National Conference. A double issue containing Nos. 7&8 contained the Report of the Fourth National Conference. Since the Fifth National Conference planned for February 1991 will coincide with the conclusion of a decade from the First National Conference (held in April 1981), which gave birth to the Association, the executive committee has decided to bring out a decade issue in time for the Conference.

The proceedings of the various workshops conducted by the Association will also be published before that date. Most of them are already in draft shape, awaiting finalization by the coordinators.

While publication has undoubtedly emerged as a major activity of the Association, over-commitment and multiple responsibilities of the members entrusted with these responsibilities and the absence of supportive staff who can give more time has remained a major constraint.

E Providing Pressure Group for Policy Dialogue

Between 1982-85 the Association's activities helped to promote widening interest in Women's Studies. In 1985 when the Government of India announced the beginning of an exercise to formulate a new Education Policy, the President of the Association, late Dr. Madhuri R. Shah, wrote to the education minister,

proposing the need to incorporate Women's Studies within the educational system as an instrument to bring about changes in societal values and perspectives.

In April 1985 the Association collaborated with the UGC to organise a national workshop on Organisation and Perspectives for Developing Women's Studies in the Indian University System. In November 1985 the Ministry of Education was persuaded to convene a national seminar on Education for Women's Equality in which the Association was widely represented. A draft was prepared on the basis of the national seminar's recommendations and given to the Education Ministry. A small section of this was incorporated in the National Policy on Education (NPE) in May 1986. Three months before the NPE's adoption by Parliament, the UGC issued guidelines for development of Women's Studies in Universities, in the drafting of which Association members played a leading role.

Since then the Association has taken considerable pains to mobilise faculty support within institutions to accelerate the implementation of Women's Studies.

In 1988 several national women's organisations decided to organise a debate on the National Perspective Plan for Women which had just been formulated by the Government of India. The Association participated in the debate as a body.

One of the demands coming out from the above mentioned debate was for establishment of a National Commission on Women. The present National Front Government introduced a Bill for establishment of the proposed Commission during the budget session of Parliament in 1990. Since the Bill did not satisfy the national women's organisations, the Government of India decided to hold widespread consultations. The Association was co-sponsor of a consultation held in Bombay early in July and was invited by the Government to participate in the national consultation held on the 28th of July 1990, indicating its recognition, for the first time as a national body concerned with women's issues, though it is technically not a women's organisation as it has many male members.

The Department of Women and Child Development has now started looking to the Association as a mobilising body which can help identify educational institutions in different parts of the country who can contribute, in an active manner to effective development programmes involving women as partners, as well as an advisory group capable of identifying scholars who can take up research in needed areas. The IAWS and the Department of Women and Child Development can make concerted effort to remove gender biases in the planning process, Census and other data-gathering agencies, legal system, communication networks and other developmental institutions.

F Funding

The Association has had to mobilise resources for each conference and some of the smaller workshops that it organised during the last eight years. However, for an all-India body to function in a sustained and effective manner some core funding is essential. The Ford Foundation's generous grant has been fully utilised by March 1990. The Association has applied to the Department of Women and Child Development for a recurring organisational grant and to the ICSSR for a similar grant. If these come through, the maximum amount that the Association can expect to receive on an annual basis will be Rs.60,000. This will be utterly inadequate to maintain activities that it has already initiated. Project support has been obtained from time to time from some UN Agencies, but the escalation of travel costs makes it impossible for the Association to function effectively without some core funding.

G Membership of IAWS

Being a democratic and all-India body, members of the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE are elected from different corners of the country. During the last eight years there has been repeated suggestions from members to

organise more regional meetings and to assist the new members to form regional branches of the Association.

The present executive committee also feels that holding of a series of local and regional level meetings prior to a national conference would assist the process of mobilisation as well as development of perspectives for Women's Studies and its essential link with action in the future. Two such regional meetings were planned before the Fifth National Conference. However, constraints in mobilising resources has resulted in limiting it to one only.

CONCLUSION

IAWS is throbbing with ideas and actions. Researchers, academicians and activists find a common forum in IAWS to articulate their ideas, programmes, policies concerning crucial problems of Indian women. Theoretical input needed for evolving strategies for women's development can be ensured only if there is dynamic intellectual discourse among all those committed to women's cause. IAWS has served the purpose of enriching Women's Studies in India by promoting, sharing of ideas, rigorous intellectual input and evolving an alternate vision of Indian women's survival struggle.

An Uneasy Relationship

— Dr. Ila Pathak

To me IAWS has symbolised the highest pinnacle of learning in the matter of women's studies in our country from the very beginning. It was in 1981 that I participated in the first conference at Bombay as an activist. I had taken with me a display entitled, 'Insult and Injury to Women through Commercial Ads.' The conference proved very instructive to me. I thoroughly enjoyed attending plenaries, as well as listening to various presentations in sub-theme sessions. I kept in touch with IAWS and AWAG activists sent papers to the conferences thereafter, but we could not attend till 1988 at Vishakhapatnam.

In the meantime, I was invited to contest elections and then to be the president of the association. From that vantage point I have been able to view the association's working more closely. The scholastic perception and feminist zeal with which Dr. Vina Mazumdar plans its seminars and conferences deserve respectful acknowledgement from all concerned. More than that Dr. Vina Mazumdar is a person with a warm heart and deep concern for everyone who contributes her/his mite to the association. It is her personality with a fine blend of intellectuality and emotionality that keep IAWS' two wings of researchers and activists together.

There have been various experiments in IAWS of bringing activists into the fold of researchers which IAWS pronouncedly is. In the Chandigarh conference some

activists were invited to speak of their experiences. In Vishakhapatnam some other activists came to attend. About their presence a very senior researcher remarked in a general meeting publicly that the tribals (among the group of activists there were two tribals who dressed as they do in their native places) were seen and photographed by many and that in a sense they were exploited. The tone was that this should not be. One could concede the point but there is another side to it. These tribals are labourers in the coal yards of Ahmedabad and are office-bearers in the union. A study concerning their health status was being presented in the conference and they also knew about other studies that were being presented by AWAG activists. They attended the sub-theme-session and were happy that discussion was allowed, even encouraged in Hindi by Ms. Surinder Jetly, the co-ordinator of the theme. To them the conference was a wonderful opportunity to gain exposure. They looked upon the goings on in the plenary/sub-theme sessions with as much hungry eyes as they looked upon the crashing waves on the beach of Vishakhapatnam. They tried to keep step with the learned sisters in the matter of eating and drinking too.

However, all was not sunshine for them. They were deeply pained that some of the scholarly friends asked them to raise protest about Hindi not being allowed in sub-themes. They wondered why those who suggested that did not

protest themselves. They did not want to be used by others and their experience was to the contrary. Then there was a bitter experience too. They wanted to go round the city of Vishakhapatnam and so on the last day of the conference they asked a tourist bus to come for them and paid Rs.200/- as advance on the previous evening. When they came back from the office of tourism, some Gujarati friends came to them and said that they had arranged sightseeing for them. They went back for cancellation but the office was closed. Next morning they again went to the office, it was not open. So the tourist bus arrived on the campus. As the conductor started looking for the team some realised that they could use the bus. More than twenty educated persons got into the bus and enjoyed sightseeing, paid the remainder amount collectively and came back. On their return I asked two of them to organise to get the amount of advance from her co-travellers. Her response was angry and aggressive, she asked why they should pay any more money. She knew all about the advance paid by some other group but when she found out who the other group was she did not want to reimburse. The reply was that the activist group should have looked after itself better! During our conversation she gave me some names of the persons who were with her. I later wrote to two of them suggesting that they could send their share. One chose not to reply and the other asked why she and her friend should pay when others did not. I told my activist friends about this and we ceased writing further. Some of these activists are daily wage earners. They do not get work everyday. On an average they earn about Rs.15/- per day. On an average a lecturer earns at least Rs.80/- to 100/- per day. Had they chosen to pay, they could have done so collectively or even singly. But I have seen this attitude of defending one's own rights in every little thing. Nobody is ready to concede others' viewpoint, leave alone claim on money. I am not sure

whether this would not happen among the researchers' interse' but the activists have had a memory they cannot cherish.

As it is, the relationship between the researchers and activists is uneasy. There are a few like me who keep balancing. There are some others who want to call themselves activists by virtue of going to some hutments to collect data. I have always wondered why researchers want to call themselves activists because I think that by making a single forage into a slum or making sporadic visits to a rural area nobody becomes an activist. Activism is sustained activity in an area with a group of persons towards their development. Researchers cannot indulge in such activism but it is very heartening to hear them making claims of being activists as it is a step towards building the bridge between the two.

If this bridge is to be built anywhere, it will be in the conferences of IAWS wherein activists are invited with open arms. There has been a search to find new methods of research to bring out the predicament of the pulsing humanity. Activists can help forge these. Their methods could be tried out by the researchers. But to reach the seething vibrating humanity and to represent their thinking and aspirations the researchers will have to cloak their intellectuality with emotionality. In order to get beyond questions and figures, acceptance of people as they are, is a prerequisite and that also necessitates an approach that blends the head and the heart. Together, couldn't the researchers and activists arrive at brilliantly researched study that also throbs with the frustrations and aspirations of the target group? If we could achieve such wonders, the mutual relationship of researchers and activists will no longer be uneasy.

“My Impressions”

— Dr. Iliana Sen

I first heard of the IAWS when someone told me about the notice for the Bombay conference of 1981. At that time I had already been several months in the Hoshangabad district of MP, researching on women's work and survival for a what seemed to be a nowhere in the near future thesis on women in the population. I had of course already an interest in studying the condition of women; from the time I had begun to study demography, I had wanted to investigate an issue in demography that had a bearing on women, and in the question of women's proportions in the population, I had found this issue. However, I had never before heard of women's studies.

I found the idea of the conference interesting, although at this stage, I had not written or presented anything outside my university department. I was also going through an intense phase of what is the purpose of all this research which had largely been brought about by my interaction with my 'subjects' viz the women of rural Hoshangabad. In the first month of field work I had gone forth brightly to

canvass to them the carefully prepared schedules on their work patterns. Their murmuring had begun even then, and by the end of the second month had grown to a loud roar to which I had no answer. 'It's alright for you to come talking to us about our lives' they said. 'Its your job. But what is all this writing and reporting going to do for us?' Even at that stage I did not have enough faith in the system to say that this information package would lead to a change for the better in their situation at the directive of some benevolent authority. So, what really, was the purpose of all this?

Nevertheless I found the idea of this conference interesting, and did go as a listener and a looker on. The conference did not disappoint me. I have always later thought that the Bombay conference was the most graceful of all IAWS conferences, with its exhibition of women's history, book exhibition, the wide ranging parallel sessions. This was the first time that so many people had come together in an effort to conceptualize on the women's question. At this time the women activists did not have a well developed

circuit of their own and many were present at the conference, and contributed to its spirit. I took IAWS membership, and over the next ten years, my own development and the development of the IAWS ran parallel courses, and I was witness to both processes.

Shortly after the Bombay conference my own questions took me on to more or less full time work with women mine workers in Chhattisgarh, and my research was for the moment, abandoned. In a situation of relative isolation from mainstream academia, and mainstream women's movement, the IAWS newsletter and the IAWS conferences helped me to stay in touch with the mainstream, as well as served as a clearing house for ideas and formed a forum for meetings, discussions, and debates. By this time the autonomous movement meeting circuit had also become active and was organizing its own conferences, and some of the exhilaration of the IAWS Bombay conference had passed to these, and the IAWS conferences themselves had probably grown more staid. However, one aspect of the IAWS conferences that was missing in these, and which one appreciated very much, was that while by and large women from parties and the organized left stayed away from the autonomous movement conferences, they were present at the IAWS conferences, and one was pleased to have the chance to have discussions and interaction with them.

It was Vinadi's insistence that I document the mine workers movement and women's role in it that forced me to prepare a paper for Trivandrum and to begin to think about women's political participation. This process helped me enormously later on for just as I was uncomfortable about research divorced from commitment to action, I was unable to think of action or politics without conceptualization. This unacceptance of the caste divide between academics and

activists eventually brought me back to writing, although by a rather circuitous route.

I admired the IAWS because it did not follow caste system rigidly; however it was at Trivandrum that a sort of tension within the forum between activists and researchers first made itself felt, and later at Chandigarh, this crystallized into open hostility and confrontation. For a person who did not perceive a basic divide between the two categories of researchers and activists, this was a bit unfortunate, however one was aware that there was much to be said on both sides. While the researchers bemoaned the anti intellectual bias of many activists, the activists were also upset by the expropriation of their work for adding to the curriculum vitae of academic researchers. The inflow of funds into women's studies during the women's decade had also attracted to women's studies some mediocrity, and in the context of IAWS the greatest dissatisfaction was felt about the opulent and conformistic rituals (inauguration etc.) which did not fit in with the status of women's studies as a movement discipline.

I have always felt that it goes to the great credit of the IAWS that these tensions could be expressed within the forum and that both activists and researchers remained in IAWS, that the membership held and grew through all this debate, and that the conferences built on the criticism and discussion. The tensions have not necessarily been resolved, but we are in the process of working them out and today as we come to Jadavpur I feel we do so in a spirit of confidence and faith in our organization.

If I have written the above lines in the first person, it is not out of latent narcissistic tendencies, but because in women's studies, the personal is at least the general.

The Prose And Poetry Of The Life of Dr. Madhuri Shah

— Prof. Kamalini H. Bhansali

The IAWS Newsletter of July 1989 mourns the loss of Dr. Madhuri Shah as a 'passing away of a phenomena'. All those who came in close contact with her can appreciate the aptness of this description.

With her deep insight in the educational process, her academic innovativeness and fresh outlook, she laid the foundation of Women's Studies in the higher education system. It was at a roundtable at SNDT Women's University in 1973 that she initiated the idea of setting up a Women's Centre at the Women's University which gave shape to the first such programme in the country. As chairperson of the National Organising Committee, she convened the first National Conference on Women's Studies in 1981, which gave birth to the Indian Association for Women's Studies, which was guided by her as its president between 1982 and 1986. Her sound and practical advice lent great value to the

building up of the Association, which is celebrating its decade this year.

Her mission was to help women determine their role towards attaining equality. To put this into practice, as chairperson of the University Grants Commission she gave priority to Women's Studies by supporting setting up of Centres and Cells at universities and colleges and establishing an Advisory Committee on the subject, thus giving it an acceptance as an essential instrument of social change. This thrust got recognition and was reflected in the programme of Action of the New Policy on Education as empowerment of women as a part of the process of equity and justice. The key role that Dr. Madhuri Shah played in this respect is one of her major contributions among several pioneering efforts. In fact, she enriched all stages of education from pre-primary to post-tertiary, striving for

excellence and relevance for a better 'quality of life'. In addition, her interest and activities covered a wide canvas at national and international levels and she was the recipient of several awards and fellowships. In brief, she led a full life with no regrets. These achievements are the most outstanding and glorious chapters in the prose of her life.

What enthused those who came in contact with her was her optimism, summed up beautifully in the felicitation citation presented to her on her 60th birthday which gives evidence of the poetry of her life. It mentions — "Madhuriben was one of the few people who never complained that the rose bush has thorns, but always rejoiced because it bore roses." Joined with the optimism was her attitude to emphasize.

This bears testimony in the thoughts expressed by her in her book 'Harmony'. She states "... Memories are not like the footprints in the sand but they are like footprints in the sky. Footprints in the sand can be wiped out by the rushing waves, but footprints in the sky are never seen but felt within. They are unfathomable but are true and genuine ...". The spectrum of such characteristics reveals the philosophy of her life, the base on which her achievements were realised.

While remembering Dr. Madhuri Shah during the decade of IAWS, let us remember the footprints in the sky left behind by her for posterity. This will be our tribute to her memory.

Call for Action

The FIRST International Conference
on:

Women in Africa and the African Diaspora: Bridges Across Activism and the Academy

To be held in

Nigeria, West Africa

June, 1992

Papers and activities will reflect every discipline in the academy as well as the contributions of practitioners and activists outside the academy. This will be an opportunity for researchers and activists inside and outside Africa to discuss mutual/collective interests and plan collaborative work.

The response to the conference has been extremely enthusiastic.

COME JOIN US.

"DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS AND ABSTRACTS: FEBRUARY 15, 1991

Please indicate your interest in the following categories:

Suggest/Contact funding agencies.

Attend the conference.

Present a paper.

Title: _____

Organize a panel, workshop, exhibition or reading.

Area of interest: _____

Chair a session. Area of interest: _____

Serve as discussant. Area of interest: _____

Serve as resource person. Specify: _____

Other. Specify: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ (Work) _____ (Home)

Please mail to:

**Organizing Committee, Women in Africa and
African Diaspora, 1992**

**C/o Professor Obioma Nnaemeka, Department of
French, The College of Wooster, Wooster,
Ohio 44691, U.S.A., Tel: (216) 263-2403 (Work)
Or your Regional Representative:**

Dynamics of Women's Movement & Women's Studies in India

— Dr. Vibhuti Patel & Sujata Gothoskar

Relation of women's movement and women's studies has been a matter of serious concern among activists, researchers and activists — researchers over the last one decade. Vinadi's article has given detailed profile of origin, development and direction of women's studies in India. In this write-up we have given the genesis of women's movement in India with special emphasis on historical background, highlights of events, action — programme and issues taken up by the women's movement. About women's studies, we have concentrated on the problematic areas only. The main objective of this exercise is to put on our political agenda the exercises, feelings, debates vis-a-vis dialectical relationship between 'Pedagogy' and 'Praxis'. In other words 'women's studies and women's movement' we have tried to cover as many areas as possible of this sensitive subject as both of us have been witness to the discourse on this subject for the past one and a half decade.

The Evolution Of The Women's Movement

The women's movement in India is extremely diverse — the cultural, historical, geographical, religions, political and other specificity contribute to this diversity. This has been explicitly recognised by the Fourth Conference of the Women's Movement in Calicut in December 1990, when women's groups acknowledged that the conference represented the women's movement(s) in India. This rich diversity makes it difficult to comment and oralise the movement in its entirety. It may be possible merely to talk about the women's movement and the factors in its evolution in terms of its main currents and broad trends.

The women's movement in India has had a long but not unbroken history and hence the recent resurgence has often been described as the new women's movement. This new women's movement was born out of the radicalisation of Indian politics in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The late 1960s witnessed an upsurge internationally of different radical movements — the black movement, the women's movement, the anti-war movement, workers' movement. These were independent, self-determining movements which had evolved spontaneously as a response to the crisis which had exposed the anti-democratic and repressive character of the system.

In India, the nationalist movement had long ago given rise to the national government. However, the indigenous Indian government had not been able to win the confidence of the people. Repeated crisis, droughts, famines, increasing cost of living, pauperisation of the rural poor had continued unabated. The new generation of the late 60's had not participated in the dreams of the nationalist movement. The Indian government was a *fait accompli* and was totally ineffective in meeting even the basic survival needs of the people. This had increased the

disenchantment of large sections of people vis-a-vis the situation prevailing in the country then.

All these factors culminated in the upsurge of various movements of rural poor, urban poor, dalits, women, minority communities etc. Some of these movements consolidated and formed strong organisations. Widespread discontent, open expression of this discontent in the form of actions, organisations and movements dotted almost all the length and breadth of the country. These movements raised a number of diverse issues — land rights, wages, security of employment, right to livelihood, water, against age-old historical and persistent discrimination, against destruction of nature which is the source of survival for millions in this country, policies of the official left parties, etc.

Women participated in most of these struggles in equal numbers with enthusiasm, responsibility and creativity. Especially in times of acute crises, when the very source of survival and dignity is at stake, women pitted their lives for their struggle.

In the meanwhile 1975 had been declared as the International Women's Year by the UN. Their own experience of struggle, the declaration of the International Women's Year and the imposed relative inaction of the Emergency Rule generated some amount of debate and rethinking especially among women who were active in different movement and facing severe state repression.

In 1977, when the emergency was lifted several women's groups had evolved out of these processes. The atmosphere of relative non-repression after the post-emergency period gave rise to many more women's group. The press too swung into "action" after the imposed silence of the nearly two years. The atrocities on women were openly documented also in the press. These experiences of atrocities struck a chord in most women's own experience in the family, streets, workplace and political groups and the year 1980 saw the culmination of this process when many women's groups took to the street to protest against these atrocities.

In the initial period, most of these groups were based in the major cities — Ahmedabad, Bombay, Delhi, Madras, Pune, Patna. Most women from these earlier groups came from a left and progressive background and were largely drawn from urban educated middle class. Though they had experienced oppression as women, their political and class backgrounds were important reasons for their feeling that their own needs were comparatively less significant compared to the life situations, oppression and heads of the large poor majority of Indian women. However, the experiential aspect of women's oppression was the primary focus and the common thread of the women's movement since its evolution at a national level.

This experiential aspect took stronger roots during the decade of the 1980s as more women began to get more involved in the women's movement. The 1980s saw the issue of women's oppression and struggles being depicted not only in discussion forums, seminars and "serious" articles, but also in the popular media — films and plays. Women who had on their own isolatedly identified the sources of their problems and indignity, began to acquire a language, an organisational platform, a collective identity a legitimacy they did not have earlier. Women from very different backgrounds, with different experiences, aspirations and needs began to become a part of the women's movement and shape it. By the late 1980s, the women's movement was much less dominated by women who had come from political backgrounds. Women from political backgrounds too looked at the women's movement from a different perspective — not only or even primarily as politicist agenda, but as a political expression of their own experience as women. The women's movement of the 1990s has changed, developed, diversified and deepened with women from different backgrounds—class, caste, politics, experiences coming together. Often some women have preferred to not come together with women from other backgrounds and form instead their own space within the women's movement. It has been an uneven process, with many contradictions and divisions within the "Movement". But these contradictions and divisions have raised new issues which challenge another aspect of women's existence, hitherto invisible and not so visible, and created greater space for experiencing the struggles of women in all their diversity.

Evolution Of Women's Studies

The evolution of women's studies on the other hand has been quite different. One can discern a number of strands within this too. On the one hand was the patronage the state has offered to women's studies after the declaration of the International Women's Year by the UN. The mandate of the ICSSR to take up research on women in poverty groups was an important aspect of the evolution of women's studies as a large body of research and knowledge on women was generated.

In 1974 itself the Government of India had commissioned a report on the status of women in India. The report, titled 'Towards Equality' included very detailed and sympathetic documentation of women's situation, basically in two aspects: (1) the declining sex-ratio; (2) declining rate of participation of women. This report was a very forthright statement on the situation of women in India. Though it did shock the upper echelons of power and had the potentiality to wake them out of their complacency, the report did not have much of an impact at the grass-roots levels as it was brought out during the Emergency. Besides, the report showed no recognition of the work of women's groups and organisations. Another important aspect of the report and of women's studies in general in the earlier phase was the complete obliteration of the issue of violence against women.

Over the years, women's studies patronage by the state as

well as international funding agencies has continued to rise. Many departments have been set up by universities and are headed by individuals, men and women, who have little concern for women, to say nothing of the women's movement.

The women's movement in its initial phase had not felt the need for women's studies and by the time the need was felt and expressed, Women's studies had developed into a system of its own with no dependence on or accountability towards the women's movement. Throughout the period of the 1970s there seemed to be no convergence between the women's studies and the women's movement. The beginning of 1980's however saw the widening of the women's movement. This was accompanied by visibility and recognition of the women's movement by the media, the political parties and the state. A fallout of this was that women's movement also began to recognise the experiential dimension of the women's movement and 'Women's Movement' itself. Hence the subjects such as rape, infebattery, dowry, murder which were anathema to academic discourse and treated as 'sensational' topics worthy of attention of yellow journalism got credibility in the women's studies.

Changing Scenario

In the first National Conference on women's studies in 1981, for the first time many activists had dialogue with women's studies researchers on the issues such as violence against women—rapes, domestic violence, prostitution, sexism in media, gender-bias in education, developmental process bypassing women, relationship of women's movement with the mass movements. Due to visibility of women's issues in media, governmental bodies, international agencies, slowly and gradually activists were being accepted in the academic seminars, training workshops and consultations with the higher authorities in police-force, state-government departments, educational institutions etc. Recognition of experiential dimension in the academic discourse came with acceptance of participatory research and action research. Clarity about the definition of women's studies evolved during this period. Pioneers of women's studies in India declared that women's studies was pro-women, not neutral and it involved research, documentation, teaching and action. Action could mean striving for change at policy level, in curriculum development, in critiquing mainstream academic and creating alternatives, lobbying for more space for women's developmental needs in the economy and in the society.

"Uneasy Relationship Between Women's Studies & Women's Movement"

"Women's movement contributes to women's studies but not vice-versa", said many academicians and activists at the end of the III National Conference on Women's studies at Chandigarh in 1986. Is women's studies parasitic on women's movement? Are activists and grass-roots organisations just used by women's studies researches as instruments for data-gathering and experience-sharing?

Is the relationship between women's studies institutions and women's groups exploitative? What is the answerability of women's studies to the women's movement? How do hierarchical relationships, authoritarian structures, non-recognition of the 'subordinate' staff's contribution and cut-throat competition existing in women's studies match with the ethos of collective functioning, non-hierarchical structures and participatory decision making process promoted by the women's movement? Many NGOs, mass organisations and women's rights activists expressed their resentment against women's studies for their unethical dealings with investigators, research associates and for their extortion of information by hooks and crooks, in the IVth National Conference on Women's studies in Kozikode.

Activist Researchers

During the decade (1980-1990) increasing number of women's rights activists got involved. In women's studies either as independent researches, consultants, trainers, resource persons for seminars-workshops-conferences on women's issues or joined institutions promoting women's studies. As a result, pathbreaking contributions on crucial issues concerning women such as sex-determination and sex-preselection techniques, ecology, working class women, single women, violence against women, family laws and criminal laws concerning women, impact of religion on women's survival strategies come out here. As a result the line dividing 'researcher' and 'activist' is getting blurred. In some places, women activists collectively formed women's studies groups such as "Anveshi" in Hyderabad and "Alochana" in Pune. Can one call this process as "cooption" of women activists by women's studies or diversification and enrichment of the activities of women's movement? Here "money" "chair" and "status" bought the activists or activists pursuing women's studies brought deeper and realistic understanding of women's issues that can aid the process of social transformation?

Challenges Ahead

International and national level patronage that women's studies has acquired, has converted it into an industry.

A plethora of literature on women during this decade, increasing number of women's studies cells/units in the mainstream academia that were considering it as "soft option" or "lacking intellectual rigour" have posed newer challenges to women's studies. On the other hand, the emergence and proliferation of women's rights groups have played vital role in developing data-based and logically sound campaigns and further generated material and methods of functioning which is innovative and reflecting 'grass-roots' needs in the process of conscientization collaboration of women's studies centres and women activists in Delhi, Bombay, Pune, Baroda have helped in building 'trust' between the activists and researches. Dual role of 'theory' and 'praxis' has been succinctly articulated by Dr. Maithreyi Krishnaraj, women's studies provides contextualisation of knowledge in the process of both understanding and changing women's reality. As a movement it emphasizes the need of providing material basis for quality and independence of women.

Conclusion

Women's Movement in India has posed many pertinent questions concerning women's studies:

- ❑ If researching on women or teaching women's studies do not lead to awareness about the problem or anger at the existing, condition of women, is it worth doing?
- ❑ Will conventional techniques of research and teaching help the objective of sensitizing the society or of consciousness raising among women?
- ❑ Who should determine the topics of research, needs of the movement or the founders?
- ❑ How can women's studies ultimately perform the balancing act between the women's movement the state and the funding agencies when the principles, the goal and processes are conflicting and antagonistic?

Many other questions continuously crop up in any discussion between the women's movement and women's studies. Ideally speaking, the relation between both should be complementary as both have great deal to contribute for women's liberation.

International Women's Studies Movement Inputs from Indian Feminists — Some Impressions

— Dr. Neera Desai

Indian Association for Women's Studies (IAWS) from the beginning had encouraged collaborations with institutions and agencies working for the movement to promote teaching, research and action in women's studies both at national and international levels. The review of a decade of IAWS therefore cannot be complete without evaluating the inputs of Indian feminists to the International Women's

Studies Movement.

During the last ten years on various occasions, women researchers and activists have contributed to knowledge and perspective of women's studies globally and occasionally provided direction to the women's movement through specific Indian experiences and perceptions.

In this article there is no claim to cover all the different conferences, seminars and workshops organized at international level during the decade, in which Indian feminist researchers and activists participated. I am confining myself to a few occasions such as Women and the Household, Regional Conference for Asia, January 1985, The Nairobi Conference 1985, Women and Society Sessions of International Sociological Association 1986, 1990 Women's Commission, Sessions of International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES) Zagreb 1988 and Workshop on Changing Family Patterns and Gender Roles in Asia, Surajkund, Delhi 1990. I am concentrating on these meetings as I am personally more familiar with the nature of issues raised, tenor of discussion and style of participation. The exercise is more by way of reminiscing the events which helped strengthen the concern both in research and action.

Soon after the establishment of IAWS the first International Conference on Teaching and Research related to Women was held at Montreal, Canada in August 1982, where both researchers and activists from India participated and the first report of the National Conference on Women's Studies was distributed and the establishment of IAWS was announced. The conference has significance as the Asian Women's Research and Action Net Work (AWRAN) was born; AWRAN subsequently became an important focal organization to ventilate Asian Women's concerns.

The major event which IAWS supported wherein Indian feminists were able to contribute significantly to conceptual discussions and where certain crucial issues such as patriarchy, the power relation in household, the role of fundamentalism, the plight of women workers in unorganized sector and others, which are to dominate the next few years were raised. It brought together scholars and activists from the entire Asian region and gave opportunity of closely interacting with each other and sharing experiences with one another. As the main organizer of the conference, Leela Dube mentions, "The conference thus proved to be an event in as much as it succeeded in bringing together scholars working in South Asia, South East Asia, East Asia and West Asia for the exploration of various facets of theme that has tremendous relevance for the Asian region as a whole."

Recurring themes in all sessions were the concept of patriarchy, the problems in defining the term, questions of women's collusion in their own oppression, ideologies affecting women's work because women are treated as supplementary earners and the generation of a segregated labour market. In the issue of Islamic fundamentalism the question of the State religious ideology was raised in context of developments in Iran and Egypt. The assumption of a harmonious household in which interest of all its members are taken care of which underline many of the State policies as well as thinking of the mainstream social scientists which has adverse impact on women was questioned frequently. Intra-household gender inequalities have been the continuous concern of both researchers and the activists. The conference reiterated the existence of various systems of production which provided a context for

understanding lives of poor women. One of the significant highlights of the conference was that along with the experiences and insights of Asian scholars, the discussions at various points referred to the global character of gender differentiation and use of economic vulnerability of women in Asian countries by the International Capitalist System. Five volumes brought out under the series "Women and Household in Asia" constitute a very meaningful contribution to the debates and also pave way for continuing explorations into the wide range area of women and household.

The Nairobi conference in 1985 organized at the end of women's decade was a different experience. The NGO meeting prior to the official conference of the heads of various governments was a huge assemblage of more than 10,000 more women researchers and activists and development workers. A very crucial document analysing women's situation as articulated in the Development Alternatives with women for a New Era (DAWN), providing rigorous systematic socio-economic political analysis of the third world pattern of development in the context of macro situation of world development crisis affecting adversely the position of poor women particularly, became the basis of discussions in various panels at Nairobi. AWRAN focussed on women's problem in Asia and a 14 country alternative Report on the impact of the UN Decade for women was brought out. In both these major events contributions from Indian researchers and activists were noteworthy. In fact gradually a climate was being generated that Indian feminists are dominating various discussions as they were more visible and articulate.

Active participation in these two crucial Asian and International events paved way for associating actively and concertedly in discipline based meetings. Further the organization of ISA in Delhi in 1986 gave not only space in the deliberations to participate but made it possible for larger number of women scholars which in fact contributed in maintaining continuous dialogue among women's studies in the country. Women in Society Committee of ISA 1986 organized 10 sessions concentrating on themes like advances in feminist theory, sociology of work, women and social policy, women's culture and politics, protest movements and women, State of women's studies in disciplines such as economics, sociology, anthropology and others. The sessions were bringing more and more women together arguing and developing paradigms incorporating women's experiences and issues from different parts of the world raising both conceptual and policy problems. By now Indian feminists seem to have decided to enter disciplinewise conferences and utilize the special structures provided in the organization to press for women's issues.

The pre-congress symposium "Anthropological Perspectives on Research and Teaching Concerning Women" at XII ICAES in Zagreb 1988 helped articulating varieties of cross cultural problems in incorporating women's studies in the mainstream education system and also provided a forum to discuss in depth the feminist and reflexive questions on anthropological field work. The

Commission is further planning to assemble comparative data on the teaching of gender issues in anthropology, its impact on students position of women anthropologists and related issues.

During the Congress sessions issues such as "The plural meaning of feminism" "Female-headed' female supported households", "Revivalism and fundamentalism, religious, ethnic and national" focussed the attention of the international community to growing problems of fundamentalism and the myriad ways in which it is manifesting.

More recently the organization of nine sessions for RC 32 — 'Women in Society' in the World Congress of Sociology at Madrid (1990) six joint sessions with other research committees and pre-congress symposium on Family, Women and Development at Segovia, reasserted the significance of inputs by Indian feminists both in organization and debates. In the pre-congress, discussions focussed on presentation of cross national perspectives on family and development related issues such as gender relations, women's work, rural-urban migration, cultural models etc. and time was further spent on preparing research guidelines for studying various issues and dimensions in relation to family as a precursor to the UN International Year of the Family, 1994.

Recurring discussion on the theme of Family/Household-women and Development in various international meetings could be ascribed to the insights provided by women's studies scholars and activists particularly drawing attention to the non-egalitarian intra-relationships of members of the family, to discrimination in allocation of resources, labour, decision making, entitlements etc. challenging the mainstream concepts of familial consensus. The reality of facades of unity and peace often at the cost of subordination and oppression of women has been surfacing quite often. Global issues like rising indebtedness and poverty, ecological imbalances and environmental degradation, the role of transnational corporation in development choices at the national or international level pose serious implications for family survival.

The interface between family, gender roles and development which was identified in the group of studies on Women's Work and Family strategies in South and South East Asia and the Workshop on Changing Family Patterns and Gender Roles in Asia, Delhi 1990, drew attention to the danger of a culturalist attempt to define family and gender roles which could weaken the ideological underpinnings of the new State systems and strengthen disruptive movements which also threaten the universal values of human rights, equality and gender justice.

Specifically, sessions in the main congress in RC 32 such as on Women's Movements, Global Perspectives on Women, Fundamentalism and Religious Revivalism, Gender Discrimination and its articulation with Race, Caste and Class discrimination raised both conceptual and action issues. Critical evaluation of pluralistic approach to feminist theories, concern over growing decline in the action orientedness of the women's studies scholars thus

distancing theory and action, the down to earth experiences of poor rural women significantly altering the text book definitions of feminism, patriarchy, discrimination etc. the disturbing growth of revivalism taking various forms and using violent means and the substantive influence of social stratification on gender discrimination, were some of the issues where Indian input was contributive and reaffirmed the global similarity of certain oppressive structures and emergence of common issues in development of women's studies.

The decade of inputs by the Association through its own specific involvement by supporting meetings or through the active participation of its founder members/office bearers/ other members has been of significance both for the international community and for the growth of IAWS. Entering into the debates on vital questions of character of feminist movements, diverse patriarchal structures, intricate operation of macro-policies, the cultural diversity, issues of violence and fundamentalism, the need to accept new methods to understand complex social reality, focus on studies of poor and socially deprived women, use of regional material incorporating experiences of women into the body of formal knowledge system have been rewarding experiences both personally and institutionally. Participation in the organization of the events and providing a distinct third world (or is it correct to say Asian) style of working, where both young and old, researchers and activists work shoulder to shoulder in constantly reiterating the concern over retaining research and action orientations, determinedly attempting building solidarity of women all over the world and modestly (perhaps less aggressively but firmly) presenting their perspectives are some of the features of Indian participation which seem to be drawing attention.

Let us hope that in the coming decade, we are able to move more concertedly on the path of decreasing violence and achieving human justice.

OBITUARY

On this occasion, the IAWS pays its tribute to the memory of Dr. Urmila Phadnis who contributed to the activities of the Association with great sincerity and dedication and was a pillar of strength as one of the founder contributor.

Presidents — Past & Present



Dr. Madhuri Shah
1982 to 1986



Dr. Ila Pathak
1987 to 1989



Prof. Kamalini Bhansali
1989 to 1991

Current Executive Committee

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
| Prof. Kamalini H. Bhansali | — President |
| Dr. Sharda Jain | — Vice-President |
| Dr. Surinder Jetley | — General Secretary |
| Dr. Manoshi Mitra | — Joint Secretary |
| Dr. Kumud Sharma | — Treasurer |
| Dr. S. Anandlakshmi | — Member |
| Ms. Nirmla Bannerji | — Member |
| Dr. Rohini Gawankar | — Member |
| Dr. Veena Mazumdar | — Member |
| Dr. Ila Pathak | — Member |
| Dr. Zoya Hassan | — Member |
| Ms. Neena Kaplash | — Member |
| Dr. Susheela Kaushik | — Member |
| Dr. Iliana Sen | — Member |
| Dr. J. Varalakshmi | — Member |
| Dr. Jashodra Bagchi | — Member |

Conference Titles

First National Conference
 Theme — Women's Studies
 Year — 1981
 Place — Bombay

Second National Conference
 Theme — Gender Justice
 Year — 1984
 Place — Trivandrum

Third National Conference
 Theme — Women's Struggles and Movements
 Year — 1986
 Place — Chandigarh

Fourth National Conference
 Theme — Rural Women: Poverty, Survival and Struggle
 for Change
 Year — 1988
 Place — Waltair

Fifth National Conference
 Theme — Religion, Culture and Politics
 Year — 1991
 Place — Calcutta

Song on 'Personal laws & woman'

We raise our voice
They raise a storm
We move forward
They get jealous
One who produced children
raised them carefully
does not get
guardianship rights
We want to get these rights
We raise our voice...
Tell me : what is difference
between son and daughter!
Woman does not get
equal share in property
We want to get these rights
We raise our voice

We want to challenge
the basic premises of
personal laws based on religion
We want to tell our law-makers
that a woman is a human being.
She has her own identity
She will bear it no more.
She will break open the closed doors.
Her voice shall soar to the skies
A new law, we want
should give us justice & honour,
equal share in property
maintenance & custody

We will raise our voice
We will march ahead
They may join us, who knows!

Originally written in Hindi
by *Lata P.M.*
Translated by *Vibhuti Patel*