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EDITOR'S DESK

As creatures of history we search for landmarks to map time, but we also create them in celebration of our collective efforts. The Baroda seminar, **'Early Years of Independent India: Women's Perspectives,'** was both. While it commemorated 50 years of independence, it also created a historical landmark for the women's movement, with the oral narratives of women who had fought for India with Gandhi and Netaji as well as in the national liberation struggles from below, in Telengana and Tebhaga, articulating some of the silences of this period.

The collective experience of sharing these inspiring histories of political struggle, with the very women who had shaped them, joyously reaffirmed the bonds between women's studies and women's activism, and between us as Indian women. Their testimonies will be published shortly by the IAWS.

Now, as we work towards the VIIIth National Conference on Women's Studies, we come back to our original theme of regional workshops: **'Survival & Sovereignty: Challenges to Women's Studies,'** this time for assessment on a national scale. This issue carries the announcement and details of the sub-themes. All members are encouraged to participate; others interested can become members now or at the time of registration-by-mail. All abstracts for papers should reach subtheme coordinators by **March 15, 1998**. The final conference brochure will be mailed to members later.

We will still be needing material for the newsletter. Send us:

- > **analytical reports** - (max. 750 words) of seminars, workshops, etc.;
- > **brief announcements regarding upcoming events** - seminars, workshops, campaigns, new feminist publishing houses, bookshops, etc.;
- > **critical and constructive reviews** - (max. 700 words) of recently published and significant books or research on women;
- > **creative writing** - we can print only short pieces like poems, songs, etc.
- > **letters** - (not more than 300 words each).

Send all newsletter material to: **Kavita Panjabi, 67B Ballygunge Circular Road, Calcutta 700 019.**

Looking forward to hearing from you and meeting you at a large and successful event in Pune in May.

Editor





Indian Association of Women's Studies

VIIIth National Conference

May 30-31 & June 1-2, 1998

Venue: SNTD Campus, Pune, Maharashtra

Survival & Sovereignty: Challenges to Women's Studies

Plenary Panels

- I *Food Security: Macro & Micro Levels & Response from Women's Studies*
Coordinator: Kamala Bhasin
- II *Ecology & Economy*
Coordinator: Chhaya Datar
- III *Our Households, Ourselves: Bodies Subsistence & Resources*
Coordinator: Nirmala Banerjee
- IV *Culture & Resistance*
Coordinator: Kalpana Kannabiran

Subthemes

- 1 *Intrahousehold Access to Resources: Padmini Swaminathan*
- 2 *Reproductive Autonomy: Lakshmi Lingam*
- 3 *Violence Against Women: U Vindhya*
- 4 *Water & Forest: Equity & Sustainability Issues: Rukmini Rao*
- 5 *Land Alienation & Displacement: Impact of Industrialisation & Urbanisation: Ritu Diwan*
- 6 *Food Security & Entitlements: Amita Shah*
- 7 *Globalisation & Culture: Meera Velayudhan*
- 8 *Culture, Representation & Movements: Jasodhara Bagchi*
- 9 *Women, Work & Resistance: Samita Sen*
- 10 *The State & Sharing of Political Space: Medha Kotwal*



Survival & Sovereignty: Challenges to Women's Studies

Fifty years of Independence have brought economic growth, expansion of markets, wider spread of democratic institutions, as well as growing violence and erosion of the fabric of political and economic institutions. The gap between the rich and the poor is widening the world over and in our country as well. We have witnessed the feminisation of poverty. With the unorganised sector constantly expanding under the New Economic Policy — now covering 92.7% of the work force — unions in this sector play an important part in defending the survival rights of marginalised peoples. Rampant land and water alienation are having critical consequences on agricultural labourers, small peasants, workers in the unorganised sector, vendors, slumdweller and sustainers of families.

Levels of violence against women have been rising alongside an increase in communal violence. There has also been an increase in violence against dalit and tribal populations. This goes along with the cultural hegemony of global media and consumerism. We are facing the erosion of our cultural fabric — its pluralism, diversity and richness — at the hands of religious nationalism and fundamentalism, both actively supported by an affluent diaspora with vested interests. Under such conditions, despite appreciable rise in life expectancy since independence, the question of survival and sovereignty has once again dramatically come to the fore.

People's movements have been the primary vehicles of resistance, foregrounding problematic questions as well as encouraging alternatives. There has also been a groundswell of affirmation of cultural identities among dalits, tribals and minorities. Women have had a critical role in ensuring that these identities are not put in the service of patriarchal identity politics.

We are entering a new era in history where as women we can refuse to be victims of violence and alien decision-making, be it at the levels of the household, the local eco-region, the district or the state and even at national and international levels. We now have the opportunity to come into our own through our own movements and research infrastructures, in interaction with all progressive and democratic forces in society. For this we need to examine our own perspectives and conceptualisations and understand and enhance other conceptual, ideological approaches as well.

This conference will explore diverse issues related to survival and sovereignty at every level while also exploring alternatives thrown up by people's movements, unions in the unorganised sector, women's movements, and dalit and tribal movements.



Themes for the VIIIth National Conference

PLENARY PANEL II

Ecology & Economy

Catching up with the North syndrome has led us to embark upon the fast track of industrialisation, disregarding the environmental impact as well as the impact of displacement on millions of people, men and women. The selective industrialisation of agriculture, horticulture and fisheries, is taking place rapidly, causing concentration of resources in the hands of a few, and is being used to cater to the superior purchasing power of the Northern consumers. The energy sector and lack of investment in the infrastructure sector has come under severe attack since the New Economic Policy was launched, precisely because these two sectors are the backbone of the intended fast industrialisation which will link the economy to the global markets.

Unfortunately, the craze to integrate all productive activity with the markets creates pressure to make the products competitive and, in return, earn very little for the real producers. The craze blinds businesses as well as policymakers towards the regeneration of natural resources. It involves both maintenance of primary productivity of natural resources, on one hand, and reproduction of labour power on a daily and generation basis, i.e. maintenance of nutritional and health level of all the toiling people, on the other. Markets and technology have become magical institutions and are promoted at the cost of other institution-building processes, some of which do aim at the redistribution of assets, and creating access to newly-developed assets. There are also other types of technologies and skills which are low-cost and facilitate decentralised production activities. These activities are more empowering for women and are likely to enable them to keep control over resources.

Failure of the trickle-down theory and consequent marginalisation of the poor due to encroachment of resources by industrialisation processes, can only be stopped if the state intervenes to resolve the contradiction between ecology and economy and helps different institution-building processes where livelihood needs are given priority, and for which initiatives have come from the poor, men and women. These new institution-building processes will empower poor men and women, as well as sustain the ecology and economy in the long term.

Thus while globalisation processes are inevitable to a certain extent, strengthening the poor through protecting their traditional rights over common property resources and, in return, creating their stakes in regenerating those resources, will also help build up their bargaining power vis-à-vis the mainstream economy.

The contradiction between ecology and economy will be posed in terms of four dimensions — issues related to access to land and landuse, crucial issues in the energy sector, laws and their enforcement related to impact on the environment, and contribution of environmental

movements towards that. Many other issues will be covered through the subthemes.

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PLENARY PANEL III

Our Households, Ourselves: Bodies, Subsistence & Resources

Survival strategies for most households depend to a crucial extent on the controls that the latter exercise on their women over their labour, their sexuality and their reproductive capacities.

Fifty years of social and economic change have done little to alter this basic imperative of the households. Nor have women been able to resist these pressures to any significant degree in spite of an apparently sympathetic state machinery as well as laws that are passed under the constitutional guarantee for equality between sexes. Demographic trends in the 80s exhibit a rather surprising outcome of these contradictions: the sex ratio of the population has fallen further although the expectation of life of Indian women has gone up faster than that of men. In other words, Indian women's chances of survival are improving faster than men's but increasingly fewer of them are around to enjoy that privilege. This inconsistency has roots that go deep in our history and culture which need to be probed further.

Public policies vis-à-vis women are also fraught with similar contradictions; more and more, they pay lip service to ideas of women's empowerment and to policies for their total health. But at the same time, the growing national and international paranoia about an impending population explosion, specially in this part of the world, leads policymakers to continue to treat women both as the culprits creating the crisis as well as the passive conduits they can use for some drastic measure against it. In the process, women's access to information and to choices in their reproductive behaviour remains severely constrained and their perennial problems, such as high maternal mortality rates, continue to be neglected.

This panel is to discuss issues connected with women's chances of survival and their strategies for acquiring sovereignty over their own lives and functions.

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PLENARY PANEL IV

Culture & Resistance

The proposed panel will explore issues related to culture and resistance in south Asian communities, both in the subcontinent as well as in the diaspora. Central to this exploration will be an interrogation of notions of nation and nationality and community that are constantly being reconstructed within the subcontinent and comparable notions among immigrant communities abroad. It has been the experience of those working in the UK, USA and the West Indies that much overt as well as covert violence against women is justified in the name of cultures of subservience and subordination, and a serious interrogation of these cultures is often hampered by pressure to demonstrate a concern for a greater cause of humanity.

This panel hopes to extend the scope of the debate on culture, diversity, resistance and citizenship in ways that broaden the base of collective action.

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SUBTHEME 1

Intrahousehold Access to Resources

We have, particularly over the last decade, a wide and diverse range of writings, attempting in their own way to grapple with the phenomenon of intrahousehold access to resources from a gender perspective. These vary from discussions — extending the concepts of *entitlements* and perceived notions of *legitimacy* that operate in the spheres of distribution of resources *within* the family — to analysis — exploring how the notion and the theoretical construct of patriarchy can be fruitfully employed to understand the changing yet survival capacity of inequitable social arrangements. A different but related set of studies documents the experiences of diverse organisations working at the grassroots which have nevertheless come to a common conclusion that women's empowerment can happen only if special attention is given to women's needs, at least until such time as they are more able to hold their own within their family and community structures.

The conference provides an ideal opportunity to bring together these diverse perspectives to strengthen our understanding of the changing yet continued subordination of women at different levels — theoretical, policy formulation and action programmes.

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SUBTHEME 2

**Women's Autonomy & Reproduction:
Public Policy & Private Lives**

Women's low status is at the root of women's low health status. Over 50 years of India's independence, though there have been steady improvements in several demographic indicators, the perspectives on women's health have remained largely confined to maternal health. Through a lot of lobbying at the Cairo Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Conference on Women, women's groups of the world have attempted to broaden the scope of viewing women's health by coining the terms 'reproductive health' and 'reproductive rights.'

These concepts attempt to move beyond the focus on family planning, albeit in a limited way. However, countries that adopt these terminologies, seem to not necessarily replace the agenda of population control. India had adopted the Reproductive and Child Health programme with a 'target-free approach' as part of the Family Welfare Programme. In the same breath it also has a draft Population Policy and is planning to launch an aggressive one-child family campaign.

The sustained campaigns against invasive contraceptives, coercive population policy and slogans such as 'control over our bodies,' 'reproductive self-determination,' 'choices' and so on of the women's movement have received a setback in the recent past.

This subtheme will attempt to examine the challenges that the contemporary scenario is throwing to the women's movement and women's studies.

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SUBTHEME 3

Violence Against Women

The use of violence against women is a striking aspect of the historically unequal power relations between women and men which relies on intimidation and fear to subordinate women. In our country it was the issue of violence that had galvanised the women's movement in the 70s and served to initiate a heightened awareness of gender-based inequalities, of which violence against women was such an extreme manifestation. Efforts of the women's movement over the past two decades, while identifying the range of violence and broadening the definition itself, have focused on:

- (i) understanding of violence not merely in terms of a 'generic male violence versus female victims' but in



terms of how aspects of social location such as caste, class, religion and so on mediate the use of violence against women;

- (ii) the linkages between violence and processes such as economic marginalisation of women, and the aggressive response of fundamentalist forces to perceived transgression of given norms of social behaviour by women; and
- (iii) campaign for legal reform and at the same time a critical scrutiny of legal formulations that are directed against women.

While these efforts have resulted in visibility of violence as a political issue, activists and scholars have had to contend with an increasing social acceptance of violence as well as an alarming increase of violence itself. For the subtheme on violence against women, papers focusing on conceptualisation of the issue in relation to the specificities of socio-economic structures, cultural practices, and state policies, as well as on empirical research are invited.

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SUBTHEME 4

Water & Forest: Equity & Sustainability Issues

Shrinking forest cover and diminishing water resources in the country are undermining people's capacity for developing sustained livelihoods. The process of globalisation unleashed in the country is continuously impinging on people's rights to natural resources on the one hand and making the same available to multinationals and local elite for creating private profit on the other. Women are the most burdened by this process. To

TO IAWS MEMBERS

Many copies of the *Newsletter* have been returned to us, so in order to help ensure that it reaches you, please check the name and address on your label. Make sure they are complete and correct, including the pin code.

In case you have not received your copy of the *Newsletter*, please let us know. In both cases write in to the IAWS central office in Mumbai.

strengthen people's movements, we need to promote not only alternative theoretical paradigms, but alternate actions to promote local self-sufficiency leading to sustainable development.

The conference will provide space to explore issues of equity-access and control of natural resources and sustainable paradigms of development.

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SUBTHEME 5

Land Alienation & Displacement: Impact of Industrialisation & Urbanisation

The major concern of all economies today is accelerated economic development within the context of globalisation. Consequently, the debate needs to be focused upon and located within the context of the current patterns of economic development and their correlation with the goals of growth and social justice. Land is an inheritable livelihood-producing asset and both incompatible and incomparable to the inadequate 'one-time cash payment principle.

Empirical evidence reveals that displacement leads to a process of impoverishment through eight recurrent characteristics:

- (i) landlessness; (ii) joblessness; (iii) homelessness; (iv) marginalisation; (v) morbidity; (vi) food insecurity; (vii) loss of access to common property resources; and (viii) social disarticulation.

Issues that could be restated in detail:

- (i) specific impact on women and children, though it is quite obvious that they would be more intensely affected;
- (ii) displacement and resettlement of slum-dwellers under the guise of improving urban facilities;
- (iii) impact of displacement on child labour;
- (iv) migration from rural to urban areas, and hence an intensification of typical urban problems of 'over-populated' cities/towns, slum and pavement dwellers, street children, commercial sexworkers, unemployment, the unorganised sector, non-implementation of labour laws, shortage of facilities, specially for drinking water, thus affecting women more and more, etc.;
- (v) priorities of investment in a situation of shortage of capital/resources, and identification of the primary needs of people — people-oriented investment; and



(vi) ideology of mega-projects, perceived from both within and outside the dominant paradigm of development.

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SUBTHEME 6

Food Security & Entitlements

Achieving self-sufficiency in the production of foodgrains is certainly an important step towards attaining food security. However, the mechanism for ensuring actual access of foodgrains to the different categories of households is much more complex than merely attaining the targets on the production front. To a large extent, the complexity is governed by the nature of entitlements at household as well as intrahousehold levels, especially in a gender-specific context. For, as argued by A K Sen, given the aggregate supply, a person's ability to command food is primarily affected by what she/he owns, what exchange possibilities are offered, what is available free, and how much is taken away from her/him. Some of the important facets of the entitlement relationship are: (i) ownership; (ii) traditional rights and access to common property resources; (iii) market/institutional support; (iv) employment guarantee; and (v) social security through public distribution of food.

At present, per capita production of foodgrains in India is somewhere around 180kg per annum, which is certainly higher than the officially accepted norm for minimum calorie requirements. Nevertheless, despite this achievement, a large proportion of people do not have access to the minimum requirement of foodgrains.

In a most simplistic form, the issue is being seen as primarily a problem of the public distribution system. But, viewed from a broader perspective, food security seems to have been endangered by some of the more serious entitlement constraints like declining size and quality of the 'owned' land; limited access to common property resources; inadequate market support needed at the stages of production and/or exchange of foodgrains; uncertainty of employment opportunities particularly under unfavourable weather conditions; and the declining public expenditure on social security schemes, etc.

At the intrahousehold level, the problems could be of gender discrimination, both in terms of ownership, especially of land, as well as in terms of actual food intake. It is, therefore, useful to examine the nature and magnitude of these aspects of entitlement and suggest ways to strengthen them through various interventions. Three types of analyses might be useful in this context:

(i) conceptual discussion and policy implications of the 'entitlement approach';

(ii) interface between entitlement and food security under the changing scenario of the landholding pattern, traditional rights, market development, and the policy interventions for various social security programmes including the PDS; and

(iii) empirical validation of the intrahousehold gender discrimination and implications of ownership of land by women under various contextualised situations.

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SUBTHEME 7

Globalisation & Culture

The predominant ideology of globalisation and 'open economy' challenges the goals of economic self-reliance and import-substituting industrialisation upheld by several of the newly independent nations, such as India, which experienced colonial rule. These goals were projected as one of the cornerstones of the Non-aligned Movement and its struggle for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) by the governments of these nations. It was, however, the women's movement in the developing countries which, since the mid-70s, sought to redefine the concept of 'development' and stressed the need to make gender integral to perceptions of social transformation, within and outside national boundaries.

Today, globalisation, the 'global village' and ideologies of the 'free market' define what is known as the NIEO, throwing the vast social and cultural terrain into turmoil. Increasingly aggressive assertions by political and social forces basing themselves on majoritarian notions of a homogeneous religious 'community', strengthened by media blitz and even by state-run media, have led to the creation of more fissures in the relationship between civil society and the modern state. Disillusionment with the role of the state and promises that it held for the oppressed, have led to the marginalised sections (tribals, dalits, religious minorities, etc.) working out their own future and identities. On the other hand, powerful, propertied, upper-caste sections are tracing their 'origins' and 'traditions,' and constructing images and roles for women, using the modern technologies of the mass media. Modern technologies and feudal ideologies go hand-in-hand in constructing the 'traditional Indian woman.' Slogans of the women's movement (such as *nari mukti* or women's liberation) are replaced by symbols of *nari shakti* (female power) which assign women agency to inflict violence on the 'enemy within' — the minorities, low castes, men and women.

Globalisation's byproduct is the large middle class (200 million in India), the consumer and consumed by the 'free market.' Unbridled individualism — the one with 'merit,' the 'complete man,' the 'woman of substance', the '*grihalakshmi*' — are images packaged, homogenised and



sold through both the print and visual media even as the lives of the millions who toil, women and men, remain invisible. The free market (increasingly multinational-controlled) set the standards, project lifestyles, eating habits and, most of all, reinforce as well as widen public sanction to cultural codes which devalue women. The role of the media in projecting the female body to sell products, the use of dangerous reproductive technologies on poor women in the garb of 'right to choice', the growing trafficking in women and girls increasingly linked to tourism and 'selling the country aboard', all point to the violent environment to which women's lives are abandoned.

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SUBTHEME 8

Culture, Representations & Movements

One of the major challenges before Women's Studies is posed by the role of culture and representations in regulating the myth and reality of women's lives. After 50 years of independence, women in India are facing the threat of being mowed down by homogenising trends coming from two directions. The first is that of majoritarian fundamentalism that tries to usurp the spaces opened up by searches for identity that help the women's movement to ally with other movements for social justice. The second is posed by globalisation that negates the internationalist edges of all democratic struggles on one hand, and the freedom, however limited, offered by civil society and market on the other. As a result, cultural assumptions and the representations embodying these have acquired noxious prominence in the gender stereotyping that is being reproduced in the simultaneous explosion of media and information.

The sessions in this subtheme welcome analysis and demonstrations of the positive and negative ways in which culture and representations impact on the women's movement.

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SUBTHEME 9

Women, Work & Resistance

We are gradually coming to terms with the fact that most women work and that many women, especially the poor among them, have always worked at a range of occupations. Women are sometimes rewarded for their labour but, in many cases, intangibly. They strive to meet social expectations and are promised physical and social

security. The promise is often broken and women end up with too small a share of the social product.

Since it is by the reward they earn and not by the effort they expend that performers of work are valued, women remain cast as secondary workers. They are thought to work less, or less effectively and efficiently. One means of combating this stubborn fiction is to delve into the complexities of the very notion of work to understand the specific mystification around it. What does work mean for women? Clearly, it is not only the intrinsic nature of the particular task that is significant in this regard. The conditions in which women undertake their tasks is equally crucial.

Work, then, is socially and historically constituted. Since such a constitution is the key to the process of expropriation of women's labour, the constitution is itself a central arena of contestations. Resistance — both by women and to women — is critical in shaping the processes and organisation of work. Equally, the gendered terms set on work are enforced through patterns of exclusion which in turn invoke different and gendered modes of resistance.

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SUBTHEME 10

The State & Sharing of Political Space

There is an apparent creation of 'political space' for women in decision-making by the passing of the 72nd and 73rd amendment bills. To what extent have these 'institutional props' helped women to become more effective in their role as decision makers? The tremendous opposition to the 82nd amendment from various political parties and the let-down by the present government speaks volumes for the political will of male politicians. Are questions of caste and gender justice really opposed to each other? The appalling figures of women candidates that finally contest elections and get elected exposes the real will of political parties.

The rapidly increasing communalisation and criminalisation of politics, on the other hand, leads to a shrinking of political space created by these legislations and effective participation by elected women. What really is the nature of the state? What are going to be our survival strategies and tactics for retaining our sovereignty? These are some of the questions that we need to ask ourselves.

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The Era of Silence or Struggle?

A Report on the Seminar on The Early Years of Indian Independence: Women's Perspectives held on August 9-11, 1997, at MS University, Baroda

This seminar, which critically examined the historical events of the early years of independence from the women's perspective, was jointly organised by the IAWS, Centre for Women's Development Studies, Delhi, and Women's Research Centre, MS University, Baroda. In her welcome address, Padma Ramachandran, Vice-Chancellor, MS University, observed that the seminar was not simply an occasion for stock-taking but rather reviewing the present in terms of the past.

The objective of the seminar was explained by Nirmala Banerjee, IAWS President, in her opening remarks. She said the seminar hoped to examine the women's situation from three angles: the way in which state policies looked at women; how popular movements arose and affected state policies; and the way in which cultural images of women were formed. The period covered was confined to the first 25 years after independence, since these years did not have the lively women's movement that the later years have witnessed.

An interesting and inspiring component of the seminar was the testimonies section in which several women, who had taken the lead in the many popular struggles, shared their enriching experiences. These included Manavati Arya, Mallu Swarajyam, Rani Dasgupta, Ila Mitra, Tara Reddy, Mrinal Gore and Dasheriben Chaudari.

In her inspiring inaugural address, Ela Bhatt charted the course of SEWA's (Self-Employed Women's Association) experience of the past 50 years in achieving what she called the 'second freedom' that envisaged the economic empowerment of poor, toiling women of Gujarat. 'When the SEWA member has a room of her own, a farm of her own, a wall of her own or a forest of her own, she experiences economic freedom, and operational freedom where she is in a bargaining position in her dealings with local vested interest groups, both inside and outside her home,' she said.

In her keynote address, Vina Mazumdar stated that the rationale for introspection of the women's movement in the early years was to examine the question whether the first two decades after independence were the 'silent years' of the women's movement which declined during this period, subsumed by the national movement.

The seminar comprised six sessions, spread over three days of presentations of two or three scholars followed by intense discussions on the papers. The focus of all the papers was women's perspectives in the early years after independence, specially the first two or three decades, as it was felt that these years have remained largely excluded from analysis and reflections. Linkages to contemporary situations were continuously made. The testimonies followed the presentations at the end of the first two days. Totally, there were 20 presentations and seven testimonies.

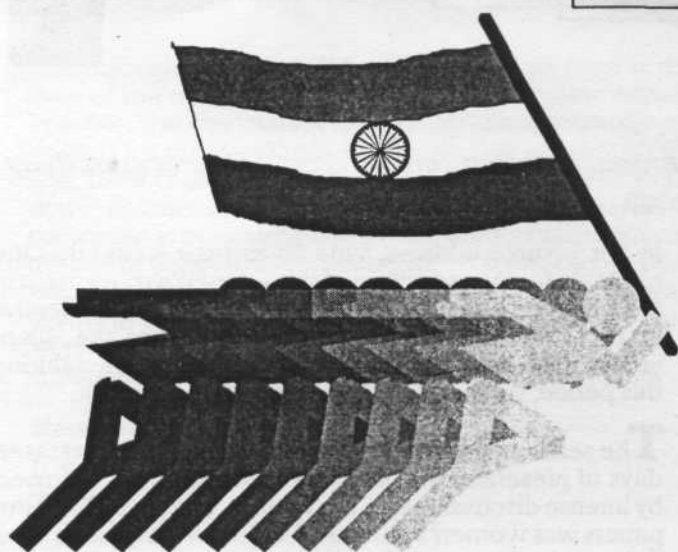
The first session of the first day, chaired by Prof. Thomas Pantham, examined the strengths and weaknesses of the Nehruvian paradigm of socio-economic development of the country based on principles of equality and justice and the various state policies, particularly the central social welfare board and the grants-in-aid programmes, for the empowerment of women. This session included presentations by eminent scholars — Nirmala Banerjee's paper on the larger perspective on planning titled 'Whatever happened to the dreams of modernity? The Nehruvian Era', Madhura Swaminathan's review of 'Women and work: 1947-97' and Nirmala Buch's discussion on 'State welfare policy and Women' — who have not only done extensive research in these fields but have been personally involved in the analyses of such issues.

The second session, chaired by Devaki Jain, continued with the critical appraisal of the Nehruvian era. The papers covered various aspects of women's development — from employment opportunities, family planning and

ANNOUNCEMENT

IAWS Executive Committee Elections

The election for the next Executive Committee will be held some time in May through postal ballot. The first communication about the election procedure will be sent to all valid members in the beginning of January. The general body meeting will be held during the VIIIth IAWS National Conference in Pune on June 1, 1998. Changes are needed in the constitution and also in the bylaws. Those who wish to send in their suggestions please write to the General Secretary.



its implications, state welfare policies and the broader perspectives on planning, to responses of Muslim women to those turbulent times and the role of the All India Women's Conference.

There were three very interesting presentations from very diverse fields — Malini Karkal spoke on family planning and its implications for women in her presentation 'Population policies around the world with special reference to family welfare: women, development and NGOs,' Zarina Bhatti on 'Indian Muslim women's responses to independence' and Aparna Basu discussed the 'Role of AIWC'.

After exhaustively discussing the macro perspective of the state on women's issues and some of the women's responses to them, the third session explored the different movements, both people's and women's, which to some extent did question and address the growing marginalisation of women and men, particularly of the lower castes, that the Nehruvian paradigm sidelined. It analysed the various protest movements by women and other deprived groups in response to state interventions and their own exploitative patriarchal domination, which prepared the groundswell for more bargaining spaces for women to acquire equal status. These included the Periyar and Srikakulam movements in the south, Tebhaga movement in the east and the Maha-Gujarat movement in the west. The role of women's groups such as the Progressive Organisation of Women and dalit organisations was also looked at in this session.

The first part of this session was chaired by Kumud Sharma and an indepth critical analysis of two movements was presented — 'Periyar' by V Geetha and Srikakulam by U Vindhya — with special emphasis on women's role and impact on them. Meera Velayudhan focussed on the relationship between the state and the dalit organisations. Further exploring the other movements in the early years after independence, the fourth session included presentations on 'Progressive Organisation of Women' by Vimala, Sandhya and Ambika, 'Women in the Tebhaga Movement' by Kavita Panjabi and 'Maha-Gujarat Movement' by Varsha Bhagat. This session was chaired by Sushil Shrivastava.

After an inspiring and extensive discussion of the various movements that dominated the post-independence socio-political scenario in India, the final day's session focussed on the sensitive issues of Displacement and Rehabilitation following the traumatic partition which has left an everlasting emotional scar even today on the psyche of men and women who experienced it. This session was chaired by Kamala Bhasin and included presentations by Jasodhara Bagchi on 'Partition, Abduction and Recovery of Women, Bengal' and Ritu Menon on 'Partition, Abduction and Recovery of Women, Punjab'.

The final session explored the cultural representations of those traumatic times by women and men in the literature of the east, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh; in theatre, mainly the role of IPTA in Bengal and Maharashtra; and, finally, in cinema.

The first part of the session was chaired by Siddhanshu Mehta and focussed on 'Dalit Literature in Telugu' by Swarooparani, 'Literature in Gujarati' by Sonal Shukla and 'Literature in the East' by Nabaneeta Dev Sen.

The second part was chaired by P C Kar and included presentations on 'In Search of New Roles — Women Activists in IPTA, Bengal', by Malini Bhattacharya, 'IPTA in Maharashtra' by Pushpa Bhawe and Gayatri Banerjee on films and women in her paper, 'Nationalism, Gender and Sexuality in the Decades after Independence'.

The presence of so many activists and scholars of the women's movement was used to pass a resolution against the new population policy of the government, specifically the two-child norm for holding public office. Malini Bhattacharya briefly discussed the provisions of the People's Representation Act, 1992, sparking an intense debate on the detrimental effects of the new policy on women's health and status.

It was suggested that a committee be formed with Malini Bhattacharya, Jaya Velanker, Devaki Jain, Kamala Bhasin and Malini Karkal to work towards strategies for opposing such policies and also to carve out a role for NGOs in raising public awareness through debate, networking and so on.

Neera Desai concluded that such an exhaustive and interesting presentation of papers and discussions of varied women's perspectives on the first few years after independence could not be adequately summed up. She was happy that the seminar did provide a forum for exploring the so-called silent years of the women's movement that had largely gone unresearched. Perhaps linkages between different movements and influence of other movements could be explored.

In the end it could be said that the early years after independence were certainly not the silent years of the women's movement and women did respond in various forms and struggles to the exploitative and chaotic environment of those times within the constraints of the socio-cultural context. Shall we say it was an 'Era of Struggle' if not that of 'Euphoria!'



Women's Studies and Development Centre, University of Delhi

PROJECT REPORTS

- ☐ *Child Labour Among Girls — An Analysis of Data Extracted from 'Girl Child & Family' Studies, 1994*
- ☐ *Report on Curriculum Development in Women's Studies, 1986-93*
- ☐ *They too are Children — A Report on the Rehabilitation of Children of Prostitutes, 1992*
- ☐ *Report of the Training Workshop on Girl Child and Family, 1992*
- ☐ *Briquettes from Coffee Plantation Waste, 1992*
- ☐ *An Appraisal of Awareness Generation Projects for Rural and Poor Women, 1989*
- ☐ *Report on Evaluation of the Scheme of Short Stay Homes for Women and Girls, 1988*

BOOKS

- ☐ *Family and Rights of Girls, Sushela Kaushik, Delhi: Har-Anand, 1993*

BIBLIOGRAPHIES

- ☐ *Child Labour in India*
- ☐ *Crimes Against Women in India (forthcoming)*
- ☐ *Girl Child in India*
- ☐ *A Select Bibliography and New Economic policy*
- ☐ *Panchayati Raj*
- ☐ *Prostitution*
- ☐ *Sati*
- ☐ *Women and Education — Post-Independence (forthcoming)*
- ☐ *Women and Political Participation*
- ☐ *Women, Health and Population Policy (forthcoming)*

DOSSIERS

- ☐ *Child Labour in India (forthcoming)*
- ☐ *Panchayati Raj — A collection of journal articles 1989/90-91/92/93*

- ☐ *Reservation for Women in Legislative Assemblies (forthcoming)*
- ☐ *Women and Panchayati Raj — Selected clippings from newspapers*

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- ☐ *Commitment to Children: Miles to Go — Report of a Sub-Regional Workshop on Rights of the Child in the context of Social Development, 1996*
- ☐ *Migrant Labour: The Gender Dimension — A Study of Women Migrant Workers in Coastal Andhra Pradesh, T A Hema Kumari & U Tataji, 1996* Rs45
- ☐ *No Safe Spaces ... Report of a Workshop on Violence Against Women, 1995* Rs50
- ☐ *Voices of Peasant Women — Report of the Eastern Regional Conference* Rs25
- ☐ *Voices of Peasant Women — Report of the Northern Regional Conference* Rs25
- ☐ *Confronting Myriad Oppressions: Voices from the Women's Movements, series no.1, CWDS, 1995* Rs25
- ☐ *Shifting Sands — A Report of the Workshop on Gender Implications*

of Structural Adjustment: Perspectives from India and Canada, April 11-12, 1994

- ☐ *In the Search for a Secure Future: Everybody Counts — Report of the 3-day South Asia Consultation with the Independent Commission on Population and the Quality of Life, April 25-27, 1994*
- ☐ *From Network to Movement — A Report on the Forces Meeting and Workshop, July 21-23, 1993*
- ☐ *National Colloquium on Role of Women in Water Resource Management — A Report, August 16-18, 1990*
- ☐ *Whither Child Care Service — A Report compiled by Mala Khullar, 1991*
- ☐ *Partners in Grassroots Democracy. CWDS, 1990* Rs21
- ☐ *Who Will Save the Earth? CWDS, 1989* Rs21

OCCASIONAL PAPERS

- ☐ *Education and Rural Women: Towards an Alternative Perspective, Vina Mazumdar: CWDS, 1988* Rs15
- ☐ *The Silent Transition from Womanhood to Personhood: Can Education Help?, Malavika Karlekar: CWDS, 1989* Rs15
- ☐ *In Search of Relevant Education, Mala Khullar: CWDS, 1991* Rs15
- ☐ *A fieldworker in Women's Studies, Malavika Karlekar: 1993* Rs25
- ☐ *Women and Indian Nationalism: Some Questions, Leela Kasturi & Vina Mazumdar: CWDS, 1994* Rs50
- ☐ *Amniocentesis and Sex Selection, Vina Mazumdar: 1994* Rs30
- ☐ *Grassroot Empowerment (1975-1990): A Discussion Paper, Narayan Banerjee* Rs40
- ☐ *Reflections on Kulin Polygamy — Nistarini Debi's Sekeley Katha, Malavika Karlekar: Rs40*
- ☐ *Women's Movement and the Legal Process, Lotika Sarkar, 1995* Rs45
- ☐ *Development, Patriarchy and Politics: Indian Women in the Political Process, 1947-1992, Leela Kasturi*



South Asia Citizen's Web

The new South Asia Citizen's Web site (<http://www.mnet.fr/aiindex>) is intended as an open-ended and independent space on the NET to promote sharing of information and dialogue between and about citizen's initiatives (and about Civil Society at large) in South Asia (Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka).

Some of the major rubrics and categories are :

- 1 **Citizens' dialogues for peace**
(various items like citizens' vigil on Wagah border, articles on Kashmir, women connecting across borders, etc.)
- 2 **Pakistan-India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy**
(declarations and statements)
- 3 **Secularism, democracy and civil society**
(Communalism Combat, activities; Progressive South Asia Network (US); alert from Sri Lanka on excommunication of Catholic priest; appeal for trial of war criminals from the 1971 Bangladesh War; special section called Peddlers of Hate in the Name of Religion or FASCISM WATCH — a description of the Hindu fundamentalist web sites and on doings of Muslim religious right in South Asia; human rights in South Asia — resources, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Coordination Council for Human Rights, Bangladesh)
- 4 **Women's movement initiatives in South Asia**
(Manushi; South Asia Feminist Declaration;

Feminist Movement in Sri Lanka and so on

5 South Asia labour movement information

6 Resources

6.1 Audiovisuals — films and videos

(Anand Patwardhan's films, *Garam Hawa*, *War Crimes File*, etc.)

6.2 Newspapers and periodicals

(*Dawn* (Karachi); newsheadlines from India; *Himal*; *Sunday Times* Sri Lanka; *Samar*)

6.3 Contents pages of progressive South Asian journals

(*Indian Journal of Gender Studies*; *Social Scientist*; *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*; *Berkeley Journal of Asian Studies*; *Indian Economic and Social History Review*; *Journal of Arts and Ideas*; *Indian Journal of Secularism*)

6.4 Publishers and bookstores

(Kali for Women, India; ASR, Pakistan; Streelekha Bookstore, Bangalore; Feminist Bookstore, Dhaka; Other India Bookstore (full catalogue)

The site has existed since August 1996 and has had very positive reactions from within South Asia and many groups outside. It is getting referenced and listed on some directories, web sites and on major internet search engines.

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