



# Newsletter

**IAWS**  
Indian Association  
of Women's Studies

April 2001



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## Editor's Desk

Dear Friends,

Many thanks for your very appreciative and critical comments on the first issue from our new Editorial Board. The second issue carries the Address from Prof. Bhatta, President, IAWS to the members. As announced in the earlier issue, the present issue is a special issue on 'No Right to Say No: Violence Against Young Girls'.

Across the country, violence and atrocities against women have been on the increase. Increasing market and religious fundamentalism have given rise to new forms of violence even as older forms are being recast. One such form of violence has been the increasing attacks, often fatal, on young girls by the so called 'jilted lovers'. In Western India, in the last year, more than hundred such cases have been registered. Feminist activists and scholars recognise that this issue is complex and cannot be attributed to impact of increasing violence projected by media alone. Several women's organizations have held many ongoing campaigns on the issue and feel the need for a wider debate on the issue.

On the one hand, women's empowerment has become a catch phrase and media too sells different 'brands of feminism'. Yet on the other hand, younger women belonging to a generation that benefited from the struggles of the '70s and '80s are almost 'allergic' to feminism. In the context of growing violence against younger women this has become a matter of serious concern. In this issue of the Newsletter, some of the feminist groups who work with college students and are campaigning against this violence were requested to share their experiences and analysis.

'In News' is a new photo-feature which we have started with this issue. We appeal to all our readers from different regions to send to us captioned photographs for this 'In News' feature.

Friends from some regions have responded to our appeal and sent in reports, articles and outlines of women's studies courses. We thank them and once again underline the importance of the expression of voices from different regions in the Newsletter.

So please do send: Brief Reports of Seminars, Workshops; Announcements of Courses, Workshops; Reviews of Books (especially significant works in regional languages); Letters of protest for circulation; Your viewpoints.

Vidyut Bhagwat  
Editor

## President's Address



Chandrakant Kodam

Dear Members,

We are now entering a new millennium with renewed hopes and aspirations for a more value oriented, caring, gender just and happier society. We have left behind a millennium in which man revolutionised the means of production, harnessed science to reach the moon and also fashioned new ideologies and concepts to visualize a freer, equal and just society. But, alas, we also witnessed the negative side of man's achievement.

India gained independence in the middle of the last century and ushered in an era of national reconstruction. It gave to itself a liberal democratic Constitution which guarantees equal opportunities to all its citizens irrespective of caste, creed or gender.

However, we are experiencing an erosion in the ideological content of the Constitution as some disruptive forces distort the concept of nationalism to serve sectarian purposes, strive to impose obscurantist ideas and behaviour norms and subvert secularism as well as the tradition of tolerance which has been the mainstay of our plural society.

As the first President of the IAWS in the new millennium, I am deeply conscious that we must garner and consolidate the gains of the last millennium and strive to counter the negative side of these gains and to counter the forces of obscurantism and intolerance. This is a great responsibility that we bear towards our society in general and towards women in particular.

We in the IAWS are committed to fully establish the ideals of freedom and social justice by providing leadership in the fields of education, research and training.

Towards this end the IAWS has a dual objective: To enrich the store of knowledge and scholarship through the pursuit of academic excellence, and to

employ the results of scholarly endeavors thus secured in providing meaningful inputs for the formulation of policy as well as its implementation. Not to be lost sight of at any time is the ultimate goal of IAWS, which is, to help establish a more gender just and socially humane society.

I wish us to pledge with a renewed vigour our unstinted commitment to women in a just and equitable society and particularly to our youth in universities, research institutions, Women's Studies Centers and work places. The future is always in the hands of young men and women. It is they that shall carry the torch into the next millennium. May I seek your active co-operation in fulfilling the tasks that lay ahead?

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### ERRATA: IAWS Newsletter, Issue November, 2000

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*Page 1:*

Correct Email address is: [laxmi1@hotmail.com](mailto:laxmi1@hotmail.com)

*Page 13:*

Please read as **Important Announcement of Maharashtra State Stree Abhyas Vyasapeeth**

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# How Dare You Say No: Analysis of Violence Against Adolescent Girls

Shruti Tambe

The Indian women's movement took the issue of violence against women in the post-emergency period on a large scale. The campaigns showed the magnitude and intensity of violence faced by women and also substantially proved that women become victims of violence due to the age-old patriarchal structure. Often caste, class and gender together result in various forms of violence like rape, dowry deaths, sexual harassment at work and within the family, female infanticide and female feticide. As women are subordinated in all aspects of life they become the most vulnerable victims of violence.

In Maharashtra, the last three years were marked by increased violence against women. The number of dowry deaths, in the year 1991 was more than 2000. This supposedly 'advanced'; 'developed' state also witnessed increase in violence against young adolescent girls. Again the specific form that it took was also totally new.

The New Economic Policy and the 'Structural adjustment' related to it had many implications. Multinational products flooded even the small village markets.

We should try to understand why exactly adolescent girls are exposed to severe direct and indirect violence against them in the 1990's? Is the temporal context significant?

This paper therefore attempts to examine the incidence of growing violence against adolescent girls



Chandrakant Kadam



in Maharashtra in the context of the structural changes or reforms initiated by the New Economic Policy. Part one of the paper examines the different cases of violence. Part two reviews the overall implications of this form of violence. Part three tries to show how violence against this particular section is a significant symbol of the gaze of world economy.

## PART I

Ulhasnagar is a small suburb of Bombay Metropolis, infamous for small assembly workshops, illegal pursuits like smuggling, unauthorized constructions or green belts, etc. A common place notorious for its association with smugglers and underworld dons as it is the preferred resort of all such personalities. The politicians, the administrators and the policemen are allies of smugglers and builders. The population is mixed with

Gujrathis, Sindhis and Marwaris being prominent. But these groups maintain their distinct ethnic identities through community gatherings, etc. Functional ties are alive and behaviour of members is tried to be controlled.

Rinku Patil – the eldest daughter of a semi-government employee was burnt alive on 30th March 1990, by four armed youths at 11.30 a.m. Rinku was 16 years old. She was writing her Secondary School Examination in a school campus with hundreds of other students. Armed Policemen were present in the

campus when four youth in their early 20s entered the premises. Before anyone could understand their motives, they reached the examination hall where Rinku was writing her exams. They went to her, poured kerosene on her body and burnt her to death. No one could save her. She died on the spot. The boys then coolly left the premises. There was no resistance, no retaliation and no chase. The incident was so shocking for the suburb that nothing could be done immediately. The Police caught two of the suspects on the next day and one more on the following day. But the main suspect – Harish Patel was absconding. On the third day a dead body on the railway track was identified as Harish by the Railway Police.

According to the accounts of the witnesses and Harish's friends, Harish killed Rinku as he thought she was disloyal to him. It was suggested that they were married to each other secretly in a Hindu temple when Rinku was 14 and Harish was 20 years old. But she continued to stay in her parental home, as she was a minor. Her parents eventually came to know about her ties with Harish. Her father forced her to sever the relations with him, as he wanted her to marry within the caste-circle. He was also worried about the younger daughter's marital prospects. Harish did not have a job and was suspected to have associations with smugglers and other such elements. But Harish kept insisting that Rinku should meet him and publicly solemnize the marriage. She could not do that and did as her father asked her to do. As a result he decided to punish her for not complying to his wishes and murdered her.

The media reports were sympathetic to Harish, referred to him as 'Jilted Lover' and painted him as desparate 'Devdas' Rinku was projected as 'oversmart', 'advanced', 'bad' girl who asked for punishment.

From the metro-canvas of Bombay, we have to shift to Aurad-Shahajani a village in Ahmedpur Taluka of Latur District. This is an important trading centre in that region, the village has one Arts, Commerce and Science College. In the last decade Latur has become an important educational centre. To prove the academic excellence of the district, renowned teachers were invited from outside. This certainly made an impact on the overall atmosphere. The importance of agriculture, close-knit community

structure and feudal patriarchy dominate the scene. Girls attending the college are comparatively few and are often viewed with suspicion. They have to prove that they are good, 'proper' and 'non-controversial'.

In the last week of September 1991, Satvaguni Jadhav daughter of Prof. Jadhav from Mangeshkar College was raped and then burnt in her house. Satvaguni was the eldest followed by a sister and a 12 year old brother. The family owned some agricultural land in a nearby village. Satvaguni's mother had to stay on the farm very frequently to manage everything. Her father also visited the farm quite regularly. Satvaguni, her sister and brother used to manage on their own in the absence of their parents. Satvaguni was a S.Y.BSc. student. They were staying in an old 'Wada' – a two storeyed chawl like structure with two or three neighbours. The Wada had only one entrance. The Jadhavs had one room on the ground floor and two rooms on the first floor. One young servant from the farm was also staying at the Aurad Shahajani residence.

A group of college boys used to continuously tease, taunt and follow Satvaguni in and outside college. They wanted to become "friendly" with her, which she resisted repeatedly.

The boys were furious with the fact that how a girl can say no to them? The group consisted of sons and brothers of local elite including a brother of the sub-inspector posted in the village. Satvaguni wanted to stop this. Her father therefore lodged a complaint of molestation and eve teasing against the troublesome group. No action was taken, but the group decided to take revenge. On Kojagiri – the Ashwin Poornima – Night, Satvaguni was at home with her brother and sister and the servant boy. The troublesome gang was totally drunk. They were roaming on the streets. After midnight they locked all the houses in the neighbourhood from outside and then came to the room where Satvaguni was sleeping. She was gang-raped and then burnt to ashes. The reports said that they wanted to punish this 'stubborn' girl for her resistance and courage to reach the police. After her death, the police refused to register it as a murder case and filed it as a suicide attempt. Her father had to fight for proper filing. The officer whose brother was involved in Satvaguni's rape and murder did the interrogation.

The third case is from Aurangabad, the fastest growing city in Asia with its peculiar mixture of feudal – industrial elements. Not only national but also international capital has flown in this area after 1960. The city has around 30 colleges including the professional ones, and industrial estates and international tourism. Before independence this walled city was a major trade and administrative centre in the Nizam State of Hyderabad. Today it shows a peculiar combination of feudal, patriarchal values, with modern industrial preferences.

In this city, Veena Deshmukh – a Brahmin girl of 19 years was burnt by Pramod Rajhans – her future husband, fiancé in October 1991. Veena was a cricketer who had represented Aurangabad in many tournaments. She was a confident girl, friendly with all. She was doing a job in a small private company after completing her B.Com. Pramod was also a cricketer. Both of them were friends. Later on they were attracted to each other. When they decided to get married both the families were informed. The elders supported them and the wedding was fixed for 27th December, 1991. But before that Pramod started insisting on breaking the relationship. Veena insisted on continuing. Pramod was suspicious about Veena. He was always afraid that she would leave him and get involved with some other fellow. His friends repeatedly taunted him saying that Veena is 'smarter' than you, she will not adjust with you but find someone else. Pramod felt that he was very inferior to her and therefore wanted to call off the wedding. She kept assuring him and proving her loyalty to him. Pramod as a solution made a proper plan. He asked her to bring petrol for the vehicle as they were going

for a picnic. When they left his house, he burnt her with the same petrol. Veena struggled for life for almost 24 hours. In her dying declaration she clearly said that "Pramod Ne Meri Rinku Kar Dee", but in the same statement she reported that she loves Pramod.

In 1992 Shobha Tandale, Manasi Shah and many others lost their lives in the same way, only the methods were different, stabbing or burning.

## PART II

Though violence is inflicted on all women – irrespective of their class, caste, ethnicity and age, the result and implications and other intensity varies significantly. The functions of violence as Govind Kelkar puts it are as follows:

"It keeps women where they are that is within the house, in powerless positions.

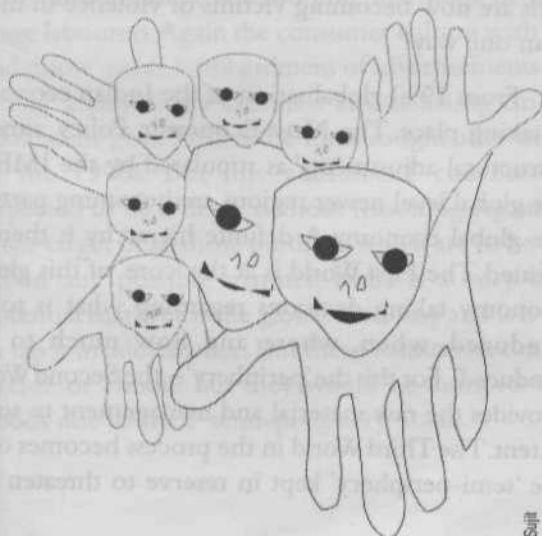
Women become instruments through which the social system reproduces itself and through which systemic inequality is maintained.

The specific incidents of violence are thus warnings and threats given to all women. The hidden message is to show "see – this is the result of deviance". The social stereotype of a girl demands obedience, loyalty, sacrifice and softness. She is expected not to assert her identity or her preferences. Again, the girl is expected to be inferior to her brothers and later in life to her husband in all respects."

The cases against adolescent girls that I mentioned above are worth analyzing from this aspect. What were the apparent reasons given by the murderers in each case?

In the case of Rinku, Harish was insisting that Rinku must consent to public solemnization of the relationship. Again he did not want her to marry anyone else but him. He was afraid that she would get married to a groom chosen by her parents.

Pramod could not tolerate Veena being different than the stereotypical fiancée. As soon as they were engaged, he did not want her to be friendly with anyone else but him. Her emotional and economic



independence made him feel inferior and insecure. He was apprehensive about their relationship after marriage because equality was the main problem according to him.

The group, which raped and murdered Satvaguni was taking revenge of her guts to resist their demands. They wanted to 'punish' a girl who did not comply with the wishes of males.

All these reasons are not put forth in a vacuum. They have solid ideological material base. The ideological principles are as follows:

Marriage is inescapable, inevitable and essential for girls.

"Love" or involvement with a male must result in marriage only, as involvement or "friendship" has only one end.

The stereotype of a girl prevents her entry in the 'public' sphere. Her place is supposed to be within the four walls of the household in the 'private' sphere. Those girls who indulge in love affairs are entering a prohibited area, which can result in violence against them.

A girl who is emotionally independent, assertive and confident is considered as "Available", opposite of the Pativrata or Sita/Savitri. It is commonly believed that such girls are ready for multiple relations and are therefore disloyal and dishonest. Such girls are preferred as girls friends or companions but they are not preferred as wives.

Once you are friendly with a person or get involved with somebody, there is no way back. As in marriage, you are supposed to die for the relationship but not give it up due to any reason what so ever. A girl is expected to comply with whatever demands that are made and surrender to 'his' wishes.

If a girl is 'deviant', then the police, the judiciary and the state are all apathetic to the girl and treat her as the criminal. As is the experience with rape victims, these agencies try to see how the girl herself asked for the trouble and is therefore responsible for the crime.

I would like to share with you two public reactions to these incidents. First was three days after Rinku's death. In Pune, a University student was cycling on the road. Two boys on the motorbike were

commenting on her and laughing at her suggestively. Then at a traffic signal she stopped. The boys, to tease her, speedily came very close to her and suddenly stopped by. By then she was totally disgusted with the whole thing and therefore only stared at them angrily. The boys in broad daylight in the presence of the traffic police and at least fifty other people said "Tumhari Rinku Kar Dalenge" and giggled.

Second reaction came from one of my friends, who is a university lecturer of Electronics. She said, "You continuously sympathise about Veena and say that women are oppressed and all, but do you know a secret? Veena was four months pregnant when Pramod murdered her. Obviously who will rear somebody else's child borne by one's own wife?"

Both the reactions quite vocally prove how violence is a systemic weapon, how the society accepts rationalisations of the crime and blames the victims more than the criminals. Individual's rationalisations are validated by the social ideology.

### PART III

The incidence of violence and the ideology behind it is rooted in the way production, distribution and consumption in a society is structured. The mode of material production and the relations of production play a defining role regarding violence. As a result the resourceless become powerless and thereby vulnerable and susceptible to violence. Is this true with the adolescent girls also? What are the important features of the economic processes in the 1990s? In what ways do they affect the social relations? Why adolescent girls are now becoming victims of violence in more than one way?

From 1990 globalisation of the Indian economy is taking place. The New Economic Policy aims at 'Structural adjustments' as stipulated by the IMF. At the global level newer regions are becoming parts of the global economy. A definite hierarchy is thereby created. The First World is at the 'core' of this global economy taking decisions regarding what is to be produced, when, where and how much to 'be produced'. For this the 'periphery' – the Second World provides the raw material and management to some extent. The Third World in the process becomes only the 'semi-periphery' kept in reserve to threaten the

periphery when needed. It is the source of cheapest labour available and potential large markets. This is already visible in India. Every day we read about a big multinational company swallowing at least two – three Indian companies. The workers are sacked making their value of labour all the cheaper in the world labour market.

Similarly within India, newer and newer sections are assimilated in the economic process – rather they are sucked in. After 1960s women entered the public sphere on a large scale in India. More and more women being thrown in the informal or unorganized sector marked the period after 1980s. Today with the liberalisation and globalisation, women are fast becoming the ‘periphery’ of the Indian economy, inevitably the elite males being the ‘core’. The new Free Trade Zones, electronic industries and other hi-tech production units prefer adolescent girls as the cheapest section of the labour market i.e. the ‘semi-periphery’. The Malaysian FTZ brochure best represents this process. The brochure reads –

**“The manual dexterity of the oriental female is famous world over. Her hands are small, and she works fast with extreme care... who, therefore, could be better qualified by nature and inheritance, to contribute to the efficiency of a bench-assembly production line than the oriental girl?”**

The adolescent girls with their uncertain socio-economic positions and with some skill training are the preferred lots. They are now not only potential wives and mothers, but also potential wage or non-wage labourers. Again the consumer culture with ‘use and throw’ items, bombardment of advertisements and global audio-video channels are focussing on the adolescent girls. That is the most sought after image of the 1990s. But this ‘adolescent’ consumer is expected to be a ‘dope’ without reasoning. Again she is the target of all those products which are to be sold off in any possible manner. India is a very large potential market for the global economy and it is best to tap it in adolescence. But these consumers can not decide or choose but they would be dumped with goods due to their ‘semi-periphery’ status.

## PART IV

But then why violence? Because violence is the means to ensure willing obedience and appropriation is of future wives, mothers and wage-non-wage labour consumers. These incidents of violence, in this way show following connections:

Not only women in general are the targets of violence, but also increasingly, adolescent girls are the targets of violence. Younger and younger sections of women are exposed to violence. Different forms of violence against adolescent girls are being used. Violence is coming down to ‘the sooner the better’ theory. (Conditioning women when they are girls.)

The economic gaze on the adolescent girls as the most sought after section is only for the convenience of the global economy.

These girls are most vulnerable and susceptible to violence, as there is an absence of legitimate, indigenous adolescent culture enabling their harmonious development. Today there is a dilemma regarding having mixed groups of boys and girls and regarding to what extent they should mix and interact. Still there are some questions, which remain unanswered.

In spite of a number of progressive laws passed like the Land Reforms and the Hindu Women’s Right to Property Act, why girls in India remain resourceless? Why healthy communications and communion between adolescent boys and girls is rarely observed? Why cases are not filed under Molestation and Eve-teasing Act? Is there a possibility of this specific form of violence spreading all over India? Can status of Indian adolescent girls as ‘semi-periphery’ turn them in an all time flexible resource? Can this lead to the creation of a healthy adolescent culture?

■ ■

## No Right to Say No: A Brief Report on the Violence against Young Girls

Anagha Tambe

The last decade in Maharashtra saw a spurt of violence against young girls, specifically due to 'one sided love' or coerced love. Many young girls were killed, some committed suicide, several were harassed and attacked, sometimes by stabbing or burning alive or by throwing acid. There were some attempts at threatening, disfiguring or sexually assaulting them. Many young boys committed/tried to commit suicide after killing the girl. This violence among youth has increasingly become an issue of public concern. This is an attempt to report the details of the few much discussed/undisclosed cases of such violence so that many common 'facts' about the incidents become clear to us. An attempt will also be made to outline the main issues raised in the public debates and to give a sketch of the public protests against this violence. This is of course not an exhaustive report.

The series of these incidents started with the horrifying murder of Rinku Patil (16) in Ulhasnagar, a suburb of Mumbai, followed by those of Satvaguni Jadhav (20) from Aurad Shahjani and Veena Deshmukh (19) from Aurangabad. These cases have been analysed in details by Kosambi (1995) and Tambe (1995).

The year 1992, started with the murder of Manasi Shah (15) studying in standard IXth in Kagal. Dinakar, who was studying in the same school, stabbed her to death in the school campus during lunch break. He was enraged as she responded to his love letter by



enclosing a rakhi. Later, he stabbed himself. In the same year, Shobha Tandale (19), an undergraduate student was chased through the streets of Islampur by a gang of boys carrying knives and was stabbed to death. It was followed by the murder of a school going girl Aarati Joshi (14) in Shirola. Babu Shinkre (19) told the police that he was provoked by the Islampur case to take such a drastic step.

The city of Pune saw the first murder of this kind when Janhavi Tupe (20) was shot dead in the college campus during college hours on 24th December, 1992. Prasanna Pandit (21), her classmate was frustrated as she 'retreated' from their romantic relationship and after killing her, he shot himself on the spot.

On 19th June, 1993, Bindu Vishwakarma, a young girl of 12 years lost her life in Airoli, Mumbai. A group of boys from her neighbourhood

including some schoolboys harassed her repeatedly. When she complained to her younger brothers about it, the enraged boys beat her brothers up, burnt her brutally in her own home and portrayed it as suicide. In the same year, Sharmila Kamble (20) was burnt to ashes in Ulhasnagar, by her fiancé, Gautam Nagare, who was a welder. She was repeatedly pleading him to marry her as promised and he refused to do so. However, he insisted that Sharmila committed suicide





in his presence when jokingly he declined to marry her.

In March 1994, Vajjayanta Jadhav (16) was burnt alive in Mumbra, a suburb in Mumbai. Her 'boy friend', Naresh Rathod, who had a criminal record saw her with another man, her acquaintance, and therefore killed her. He allegedly attempted suicide before the arrest. A few months later, people in Pune were numbed by the news of a brutal murder of Bharati Ramchandani, college-going daughter of a cloth shop owner. Her boyfriend Danish Kazi (17), son of a well-known physician who went to a coaching class same as hers, pushed her down in the nearby stream. She was even sexually assaulted before that.

In July 1996, Vaishali Patil (19) an undergraduate student and the daughter of village sarpanch in Nashik was burnt to death by Mukesh Patil and his mother in a strange incident. As Vaishali complained to her parents about her harassment by Mukesh, the two families in the neighbourhood quarreled which resulted into the shocking death of Vaishali. In a similar way, Lata Satankar was burnt alive in Yavatmal by her old fiancé because she broke off her engagement with him. In August 1999, Bharati Patil was killed in a village in Malakapur. Gajanan Wankhede who was studying in XIIth Std. with Bharati, slit her stomach with a scythe in the packed classroom and stabbed himself too. In the same month, Rukmini Mhaske, a school going girl was stabbed to death in Powai, Mumbai by 17 years old Prakash Mehra. She had not responded to his repeated overtures and hence was killed while returning from the night school with her classmate. After the murder, Prakash stabbed himself but was recovered. There was another incidence of stabbing in a village in Pune in the same year. Ashwini Kamathe (19) who was working in a small firm was murdered by Bandu Balghare, who was also working with her. He 'punished' her for refusing his marriage proposal on the grounds that he had a bad reputation.

In the next year, Aarti Satkale (17) was burnt alive in Yawal, a town in Jalgaon. She had retorted to the obscene remarks made by the four youth who had harassed her repeatedly. The boys 'could not' take the insult and stormed into her house immediately and killed her to 'punish her'.

On 2nd September, 1998, Amruta Deshpande (17) was stabbed 18 times in a busy street in Sangli by a spurned suitor Baban Shikalgar who had planned her murder alongwith his friends. After a fortnight, Malati Jagtap (20) was stabbed to death in Pune by Mukesh Mehta (23) who ran a tea stall on handcart. She had rejected his proposal for 'love'.

In the same year, Tanya Pathare, a school going girl of 16 years was killed in Bhosari, Pune by her cousin Raju Aawati (21) who ran a cycle-repairing shop. He forcibly poured poison in her mouth in a public place because she repeatedly rejected his overtures. The year 1997 saw one more death. Jayashree Jadhav (16) was killed in a village in Junnar by Bansi Narawade (24) who was working under her father. He had felt insulted and dejected by her. Manisha Mohite (16) was burnt alive by Ashok Bhoje (32) as she refused to have sexual relationship with him.

After a month, Roopali Patil (16) was burnt alive in Dombivali, Mumbai by Neeraj Parmar (15) and Yogendra Rao (13). They 'taught her a lesson' as she disclosed Niraj's affair with a girl to that girl's mother, which resulted into the break-up of their relationship. There was Suman Sathe (15) who committed suicide by throwing herself in a well because she was being continuously threatened and coerced to accept the proposal of one-sided love. Vaishali Tekwade was killed in Jejuri while a young girl of 11 years Sunita Jodhare was killed in Malad.

In a strange incidence a 41 year old single woman Vidya Prabhudesai was burnt alive in the busy streets of Mumbai in June 1999. 55 year old Rafique Solanki who was working as a tailor killed Vidya who was working as a typist with RBI as she rejected his marriage proposal. Later, he tried to commit suicide.



In the same year in a village Murashi, Archana Shedge (16) was poisoned by Bandu Balghare (22) who was an agricultural labourer. It appeared that she had committed suicide as she was threatened with murder for turning down his marriage proposal. A month later, Anita Shrikhande (16) who was working as a domestic maid in Mumbai was murdered by an unemployed youth in her hometown Nashik. Hemant Aaware who was harassing her to accept his love killed her. In Belapur, Nashik, Mustaque Shaikh despite their steady love affair burned a woman home guard alive.

In 1999, there was another killing in Latur. Poonam Patil (18) was stabbed to death in the college campus after her examination by Sham Chare (22) who committed suicide later. In the same year the city of Pune received another shock when Neeta Hendre (16) a college going girl was allegedly abducted by a neighbourhood boy Satish Bhavbande (24) who was doing small electrical jobs after failing in the Xth Board examination. She was brutally killed by him.

The New Year started with the suicide of Anuradha Sawant (17) in Valchandnagar. She was forced to end her life as Sanjay Bhosale, a boy infamous as a goonda coerced her repeatedly to accept his marriage proposal. After a month, Neeta Sawant (18) was brutally murdered by Nandu Salve in Nashik for rejecting his overtures in one-sided love. He took this revenge as he was beaten up by men in her community for harassing her continuously. In September 2000, Vaitarana Jadhav (14) was murdered in Phaltan by Appa Tembre (19) for turning down his proposal of love. He committed suicide later. After a month, a school-going girl, Aarati Raut (16) was stabbed in Manore, near Mumbai by Rajesh Date (21) who was less educated than her and ran small family business. He attempted suicide later.

In March 2001, in a strange incidence, a young girl, her mother and aunt, killed a boy, when he assaulted the girl. He was repeatedly harassing the girl and her family to accept his marriage proposal. In the same month, a 17 year old girl studying in XIth committed suicide in Walchandnagar being continuously harassed by Anil Bhagwat and his friends despite her family's intervention.

Thus the violence against young girls is on the rise. In the four years (1996-99), at least 65 girls lost their lives. More than half of these girls were below

18 years and 2/3 of the accused were below 25 years of age. This has aroused tremendous public concern over the issue of violence among youth in particular and changing nature of young generation in general.

In several cases, the local people including those in the girl's neighbourhood took initiative and pursued the case with the police and in courts till the accused was punished. This happened in the case of Amruta Deshpande and Neeta Hendre. After Rinku Patil's murder case, Samajik Suraksha Prabodhini was set up in Ulhasnagar.

These incidents of violence were always followed by public discussions, especially in the areas 'affected' by the incident. Panel discussions, symposiums were arranged by colleges and various organizations for eg. Stree Mukti Sanghatna, Anushka Stree Mukti Manch in Mumbai. These would often include a psychologist, an official from police/law, a college principal/teacher and sometimes someone from the women's organisations. The psychological explanations of this violence ranged from imperfect socialization of the youth or their maladjustment to social environment, to their inability to channelize their sexual energy. And thus the need for sex education came to be emphasised. The college teachers generally highlighted the culture of 'days' – rose days and chocolate days – in the colleges, increasing consumerism, declining values and morality among the youth and hence the need for more regulation in colleges. The law/police officials often pointed out the lack of initiative among girls to take up cases of harassment with police. They considered this violence as a problem of law and order.

Newspapers and magazines published articles, interviews on this issue. Many newspapers organised discussions among readers. Satellite channels organised panel discussions. Most of these revolved around two issues. The onus of violence was put either on media or on the girls themselves. Violence was considered as an impact of satellite channels portraying 'foreign' culture of violence and immorality and especially the films from Darr, Anjam and others which depicted the obsessed lover as a hero who harassed and killed the 'innocent' heroine. Another issue which always came up in the discussions was that the girls are getting 'too much of freedom' and with that they are inviting violence. A daily, Lokmat had invited readers' responses on this issue with a note entitled 'What do you think?'

Are girls deceitful?' The responses to this note included several letters by young girls who confessed how they deceived and used their boyfriends and played with their emotions. Another daily, Pudhari invited responses with a note titled 'Why follow unrequited love?' (the original article uses the metaphor of Shama and Patanga). A panel discussion on ETV which tackled issues of youth highlighted how girls provoke boys by their clothes and behaviour and play with the emotions of boys by giving them false promises of love and loyalty only for money and thrill.

These explanations of violence always suggested more policing of youth, especially of girls by the family, college authorities and the police. On the other hand responses from women's organizations were different. They discussed this issue in the overall context of violence against women and their oppression in general. They saw its link with the nature of man-woman relationship, concept of masculinity and increasing consumerism. They emphasized the need to initiate a dialogue between parents and children, teachers, students and also among friends and peers. But the question has been 'How to do it?'. Many young girls have argued that the 'dialogue' with parents on the issue of their harassment has often meant more restrictions on their mobility and advice to behave properly in public. Thus the emphasis on dialogue at an individual level has often ignored the hierarchical structures of family, college and even divisions among peers which inhibit such interactions among their members.

However women's organizations have come up with some novel attempts to reach out to the youth and people in general, alongwith protest marches, signature campaigns, lectures. In Satara, Stree Purush Samata Manch and Saad Yuvati Manch initiated a discussion with college students. They undertook a campaign to collect signatures of college students on a letter not only protesting this violence but also vowing to active and committed intervention on this issue. The college students vowed to accept their female friends' right to say 'no', to treat their peers with dignity and justice, to intervene if they witnessed such incidents. In Mumbai, Stree Mukti Sanghatana undertook a consciousness-raising campaign among college students. Yuva and Anubhav Shikshan Kendra organized 'Maitree Sandesh Rally' among college students emphasising the significance of healthy friendship. Nari Samata Manch organized a gathering

of college students - 'Dosti Zindabad' and invited film-star Aamir Khan as the Chief Guest, expecting that he would influence the youth. He spoke of the need to accept 'no' from the girl.

Women's Studies Centre and 'Samvaad' of Pune University organized 'Nirbhay Bana Abhiyan' which involved a series of workshops for college students and teachers in different parts of Pune District. This was to encourage young girls to speak out their insecurities and violence faced by them, through group discussion. Attempts were made to understand the questioning minds of young girls and to claim the legacy of fearlessness in India. Satyashodhak Vidyarthi Sanghatana organized Samata Hakka rally to protest against this violence and to claim the right to education in secure environment. It points out that such violence against young girls often meant more curtailment of their right to be in the public to take education.

Alongwith various articles, interviews and lectures, some booklets (written by feminist scholars) were brought out by students' organizations. These booklets were not only distributed among college students all over Maharashtra but discussions and lectures were conducted over this issue. These booklets have pointed out that the violence against young girls is neither entirely a new phenomenon nor is it just as an impact of media. It cannot be explained in terms of uncontrollable young girls or as a case of only 'one-sided love'.

Rather it has been argued that there is a need to trace the history of 'love', of the man-woman relationship in the changing political economy. The linkages between the caste and class location and this violence need to be underlined. The booklets also explained the lack of alternatives for the young generation trapped as they are by the onslaught of consumerist culture and of fundamentalist forces.

They suggested the alternative conceptualisation of love which is not individual centred but which underlines the exchange of thought and commitment to the society. They also highlighted the need of mobilizing and acting at the organizational level to deal with the questions of youth in the wider context, instead of dealing with them at an individual level.

*Continued on page 19...*

## **No Right to Say No: Violence against Young Girls**

Sister Rani

Violence against young girls is on the increase all over India. In 1998 there were 11,000 reported rape cases and 22,000 of other sexual harassment. (From Newspaper Malyala Manorama dtd. May 30th 1998.)

### **Reported Rape Cases:**

State	Number
Madhya Pradesh	2800
Uttar Pradesh	2021
Maharashtra	1275
Rajasthan	1000
Bihar	800
Andhra Pradesh	800
Tamil Nadu	265
Karnataka	261
Kerala	360
Union Territories	281

In Lakshadweep, Daman Diu no rape cases were reported. The highest number of rape cases was in Madhya Pradesh. Also the highest number of cases of sexual harassment too was in Madhya Pradesh. Reported cases 6362 in 1998. In Uttar Pradesh 2891, Maharashtra 3000, Kerala 1129.

Kidnapping girls in India: 12000: 1998

Kidnapping in Kerala: 178.

In the last 10 years violence by jilted lovers. In Maharashtra 64 cases, in Kerala 40 cases (murdered the beloved who dared to say no and then ended their own lives).

The issue of violence against girls cannot be reduced to male ego, media, etc. It is high time to look into the why of increase in violence against girls in this era of sociocultural and socio-economic development. For the question why, I would say, "there is no proper

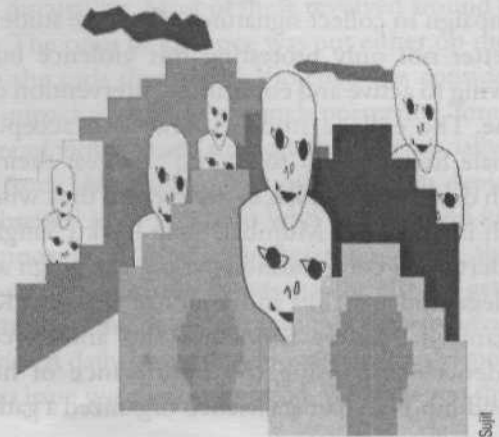
human development. We have given hardly any attention to this area, the area of proper human development.

During the transitional period of teenage, the youth (which is 30% of our population) need to be helped to understand the changes taking place in their minds and bodies. They also have to be guided to direct their feelings, views, ideas and thoughts to be more creative, useful and benevolent to themselves and to others especially to the opposite sex and then to the whole humanity.

The youth have a tendency to be very emotional at times and lose balance and become incapable of judging what is right and just. The youth must be helped to become mature individuals with integrity of body, mind and spirit and use their intelligence and not to be carried away by emotion. The youth are to avoid alcoholic drinks and drugs through counselling. Education must help every student to rise to his/her full spiritual stature. Education is to direct our minds from things, which are temporary to things which, are eternal and enable us to perceive values, which are ultimate. The aim of education is not just acquisition of knowledge.

Legal education is a must for young girls and boys emphasizing article 354 and 509. To put a stop to injustice, false promises, young girls must be given courses on rights, law and counselling and guidance clinics must be established.

Sister Rani Josepha  
Member of IAWS  
'Ushus' Medical Mission Sisters  
Collectorate P.O. 686002, Kottayam, Kerala  
Tel.: (0481) 563870



## Gendered Codes of Violence: A Report from Haryana

Violence against women will have to be seen in the context of enforcement of cultural codes and the rural base of capital in India, said Prem Chowdhry while underlining the interconnections between acts of direct violence and inter-caste, inter-class marriages in Haryana. She was presenting the data from Haryana region in the Refresher Course for Social Science Teachers organised by the Women's Studies Centre at the Pune University. Young girls like Asha, Roshni, Poonam were tortured, hanged, set on fire, hacked only because they dared to cross the caste boundaries. These crimes are conducted in public in order to teach lessons to the Dalits and even to the state machinery.

Mahindra Singh Tikait, the peasant leader supported such actions as important interventions. At times courts and even Jat Panchayats are rendered helpless due to the brute force. The concept of 'ijjat' is used seductively. She also gave detailed information about how even intra-caste marriages are prohibited with a compulsion of village exogamy. Young couples are compulsorily declared as brothers and sisters. The terminology of 'Sala', 'Jeeja', have become bad words as those are connected with 'wife giving' activity.

Binaries between upper castes and lower castes are evident in the Haryanvi folk songs. Prem Chowdhry also pointed out that the changing political economy of rural Haryana has made 'land' a very scarce resource. In order to avoid land alienation, daughters are denied the right over landed property and compelled to marry outside the village but within the caste boundaries.

She pointed out that one could easily see why Karewa (widow remarriage) is so popular within the landed families. New forms of Karewa and violence against widows have been noted after the compensation for Kargil martyrs were received.

Reported by  
Dr. Vidyut Bhagwat  
From a talk delivered by Dr. Prem Chowdhry  
in Pune University in January 2001

## Violence Against Women: The Case of Kerala

In a report filed in the state assembly on 9-12-97, the state Chief Minister admitted that cases have been registered against 14,566 persons of which 10,308 were arrested in 7,415 cases of violence against women in the last two years. In 10 organised sex racket cases 231 persons are found guilty and 117 persons were arrested.

The state women's commission has received about 15,000 complaints in two years of its existence, 80% of which are related to sexual and family violence.

Some criminologists in the state would like to view this as an increase in reporting of cases because of rising consciousness about such crimes. An analysis of the nature and type of crimes points out to an increase in crimes against women. It is very important to either note that organised sex rackets are operating in the state that entice young girls with the promise of marriage without dowry or providing jobs in the cities or visas to the Gulf. These girls are sold into 'flesh trade' for money or favors from influential persons. What is startling is the involvement of top political leaders, bureaucrats, highly placed police officers, etc. Such highly influential persons are in close collaboration with traders, blue filmmakers, underworld businessmen and international smugglers. It is not just a case of immoral traffic or sex trade alone but is often well connected to other anti-social tendencies, which are gaining stronghold in the state with political patronage. That makes the busting of these rackets more difficult and complicated.

An analysis of some cases will reveal the issues involved.

1. A class IX girl from a remote village (Suryanelli) in Idukki district of Kerala was enticed by the conductor of a private bus – promised to marry her. He eloped with her and sold her to an advocate who sexually abused her and exchanged

and sold her again to about 42 men over a period of 45 days. She was drugged so that she could not run away. Finally she was let off when she became extremely ill. Although her father filed a complaint in 1996 February and investigations are complete, so far the trial has not started. The state government has decided to set up a special court and requested the high court for sanction. But nothing has happened in the last eight months. Meanwhile the girl and the whole family are under threat and six policemen are posted to 'protect' them. The victimization continues in other ways.

2. Another case which created sensation in Kerala, is the infamous 'Icecream parlour sex racket' case in Calicut, which was brought to light by a women's organization 'Anweshi' headed by K. Ajitha. The owner of the icecream parlour Sri Devi was tempting young girls and women with promise of employment or visas to gulf. Those who showed interest were then trapped and offered to highly placed people. Some of the accused in this case are: a former minister, former mayor, top IAS and IPS officials, several customs officers, big businessmen who often commute between gulf countries and Kerala etc. So far only 12 of the accused have been chargesheeted although 20 girls were being 'employed' by Sri Devi. Only two came forward to file an affidavit and both of them later retracted after receiving a heavy bribe and a death threat.
3. A third case known as the 'Vithura case' in which a 16-year-old Muslim girl from a very poor family was promised a job in the city by a female neighbour and sold to a man named Suresh for lakhs of rupees. Suresh kept her in custody and used her to run a brothel. It is only months later in a police raid that she and the broker were arrested. Of the 25 accused in this case are names of Add. Public prosecutor, Asst. Commissioner, M.D. of a private company, Asst. Excise Commissioner, Manager of Beverages Corporation, a Cine Artist, etc. This case created a controversy when a division bench of Kerala high court quashed proceedings against five of the accused on the ground that it was sex between consenting adults, the girl was being treated as a mature person, since she was over 16! The verdict

and facts laid out in it are deplorable, cruel and ridiculous.

4. A college girl was sexually exploited by four of her own lecturers in Pandalam.
5. An engineering student trapped by her boyfriend and offered to four of his fellow students who raped her in Trichur.
6. Hundreds of tribal women in Wynad and Kasarcode districts have been sexually exploited and are now in the category of 'unwed mothers'.

A number of other cases where even little babies, older women and even corpses kept in mortuaries were raped or molested have come to light.

Besides sexual violence, family violence and violence at the work place is also increasing in Kerala. It has a very high rate of suicide, as many as 28 persons per one lakh commit suicide in a year against a national rate of nine per one lakh. Out of the total number of suicides in the state 15-20% are family suicides. In a number of such cases the husband or wife decides to kill the children and commits suicide in order to punish the spouse for some reason or the whole family makes a suicide pact and kill themselves. This clearly illustrates the deteriorating condition of mental health in Kerala. Excessive alcoholism of the husband, debt and unemployment are said to be the reasons. The need to maintain social prestige forces families to purchase consumer goods by participating in installment schemes. But poverty, unemployment, lack of support from friends or extended family forces them to end their lives. Increase in social stress, decrease in social support systems have jointly contributed to family and individual suicides.

From Violence Update No. 1: April 2000.  
Courtesy: Centre for Social Research, New Delhi



Chandrasekhar Kadam

## Some Suggested Readings on Violence against Girls and Young Women

Compiled by Smrita Gopal Singh and Ujwala Mehendale

Extracted from Violence Update No. 1, April 2000

Aalochana, *Violence Against Girls and Young Women: Newsclippings Compilation*, Pune, Aalochana, Centre for Documentation and Research on Women, 2001:

Newspaper reportage and editorials on the phenomena of violence against girls and young women. It gives us an insight into how widespread this form of violence is and what have been the media reactions as also those of teachers, parents and women's groups.

Bohmer, Carol and Parrot, Andrea: *Sexual Assault on Campus: The Problem and the Solution*, New York, Lexington Books, 1993:

The authors, experts on acquaintance rape in the USA, look at this problem which affects young women on campuses across their nation. According to recent statistics it is estimated that 25% of all female college students in the USA will experience some form of sexual assault by the time they graduate. This is a conservative estimate given the fact that many of those assaulted drop out and do not pursue charges. Very few cases result in conviction and the authors plead that there is need to look at the whole issue much more sensitively than has been done so far. The book combines social science evidence, analysis of legal doctrine and cases, and interviews with victims, their parents, campus authorities etc. to offer new guidelines on how to deal with sexual assault against female students in educational institutions.

Cheung, Fanny M.; Karlekar, Malvika, et al. (ed): *Breaking The Silence: Violence Against Women in Asia, Hong Kong*, Equal Opportunities Commission in collaboration with Women in Asian Development and UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines, 1999:

This collection of papers looks at the issue of violence against women in nine Asian countries. Though it



does not focus specifically on the issue of violence against young girls it has been included as a recent and significant addition to our body of knowledge on the subject of violence. It also indicates that the problem of violence against girls/young women needs to be addressed as a separate issue and can no longer be subsumed under the general rubric of violence against women.

Kosambi, Meera: *Romantic/Sexual Coercion Leading to Murder: Rinku Patil in Women's Oppression In The Public Gaze* edited by Meera Kosambi, Bombay, Research Centre for Women's Studies, 1994:

This paper describes the causes that lead to the murder of 16 year old Rinku Patil in Ulhasnagar, Mumbai, by a gang of young men led by Haresh Patil, the enraged young man whose romantic overtures Rinku had rejected. The author reconstructs the events that led to her murder, the judicial case and the impact of all this on the families of the victim and the perpetrator. She also examines public reaction as well as some other parallel cases.

Dr. Kosambi's paper was one of the first that tried to understand and analyse this new form of violence against adolescent girls/young women that continues to date.

Rege, Sharmila. *The Right To Love and The Issue of Violence* (Premacha 'Adhikar' Ani Hinsecha Prashna), Pune, Satya Shodhak Vidyarthi Sangathana, 2000:

This booklet in Marathi places the issue of violence in a historical perspective. By tracing the history of love and the changes in its concept, it presents a historical review of the changing relationship between men and women with the changes in the mode of production. The links between the material base of patriarchies and the socialisation process that are



differentiated by caste and kinship are underlined. Rising fundamentalism and globalisation with its attendant consumerist culture are underlined as two sides of the same coin. This booklet analyses the complexity of the different eco-social, political forces at play.

It definitely sharpens the awareness of the reader about our social reality and puts into perspective the issues of love and that of violence. Its historical review of violence also helps us understand how there was always violence against young girls at every stage in history which was sanctioned by the structures of brahmanical patriarchy.

Sonalkar, Vandana. *Love, Rejection and Violence* (Prem Nakar Ani Hinsa), Nasik, Krantisinha Nana Patil Academy, 2000:

This thirty page Marathi booklet discusses many pertinent topics related to the question of violence committed against adolescent girls. These include adolescent love; ethics of love; love, art and literature; commercialisation of the media; love and changing reality; love and the institution of marriage and increasing violence against young women. Gender discrimination, double standards of behaviour, manifestations of male dominance, all integral aspects of our social reality have also been dealt with, giving suitable examples while simultaneously drawing attention on the caste, class and gender matrix. It is argued that violence depicted in popular films and television is not solely responsible for its alarming increase. The booklet aimed at college youth, presents a comprehensive and realistic picture of the psyche young people today and the alarming trend of rising violence amongst them. This booklet has been received well by college teachers and students across Maharashtra.

Vyas, Anju and Madhushree, Naheed Mohsini, compiled by: *Voices of Resistance Silences of Pain: A Resource Guide on Violence Against Women*, New Delhi, Centre for Women's Development Studies, 1996:

This invaluable resource guide consists of an comprehensive annotated bibliography as well as resources on violence against women. However, once again there is no focus specifically on the kind of violence we are looking at in this issue of the Newsletter.

## Book Review

Cheung F. M. and Karlekar, M. (eds)  
*Breaking The Silence: Violence Against Women in Asia*  
Equal Opportunity Commission Hongkong: 1999

The book is an important contribution by women leaders and women scholars towards the transformation of culture of violence into a culture of peace. The book attempts to confront the root causes of violence, economic and social deprivation, exclusion, discrimination and intolerance faced by women in Asia and intends to fill the void of reliable data and research on VAW in Asia. The book has writings from China, Hongkong, India, Indonesia, Korea, Taiwan as well as Nepal, Philippines. The introduction tells us that many of the authors when asked to contribute a chapter on VAW in their own countries have converged on the topic of domestic violence. These articles warn us that though domestic violence is no longer a family matter, there is still a long struggle before the issue is transformed from a private matter into a public agenda.

The book points out that neither the family nor the state responds positively towards the issue of VAW. The family as a structure denies individuality to women. The state usually relies on the reported crime rates or mortality statistics and since official statistics is lacking, the state denies the very existence of such a problem. The role of the government remains peripheral. Moreover the government strategy to promote effective prevention or to address the various forms of violence against women as a whole is not unified.

The book has suggested a strategic approach to combat violence against women like strengthening legislation to criminalise various forms of VAW. It also recommends training and education for judges, law enforcement personnel, provision of social service to educators and school children and mainstreaming the concern within each country through mobilisation and political advocacy. The book recommends that VAW be viewed in the wider framework of violations of human rights.

Vidyut Bhagwat



## Rescue of Young Girls from Pornography Racket

Sangeeta Punekar (for FACSE)

The 16th of December 2000 was like any other day for most Mumbaiites, but for some of us it has been a turning point. Life will never be the same again. The day has left an unforgettable impression on our lives. Most of us have read about child pornography some time or the other. It involves very young girls and boys in making of pictures and films in a particular way which are viewed by certain people for sexual stimulation and pleasure.

We were able to identify and then catch an elderly Swiss couple red handed; Marty, the man aged 59 years and Lily, the woman 56 years of age, while they were getting ready for the shoot with two Indian pre-pubescent girls.

The couple had lured the girls from the streets and had taken them to a suburban five-star hotel in Mumbai. We had a tip off of the Swiss couple coming into Mumbai with the purpose of making pornographic literature in the city. Along with the sleuths of the Crime branch, we laid a trap. The case seemed almost foolproof as our information was accurate.

The couple was with the children in the room when the police entered with the Master key. In the room they were all naked getting ready to shoot. The couple had with them the two girls who were probably not more than 9 and 11 years of age.

Inquiries revealed that the couple had been coming to India almost every year for the past 10 years. They sent regular mail to their contacts in the city, kept in touch with some of the children whom they had used more than once. It was well organized and the couple's itinerary was very clearly indicative of the purpose.



Chandrakant Kadam

We also got to understand that the couple was showing the children the so-called 'blue films' and asking to act it out with this particular couple. Everything that we saw and understood that day was extremely scary and brought before us an awful horrifying truth of child pornography and trafficking of children.

Soon enough the couple was arrested. The 'Panchanama' of the room showed the following:

There were bagful of gifts for children such as clothes, toys and games, electronic items like tape-recorders, watches, musical toys and other very attractive items which will definitely lure a child.

Marty owned a laptop computer which was something he kept going to time and again. But it was well guarded by the police.

The room also contained lots of sweets, chocolates, dry fruits, fruits, canned juices and many more goodies. The children were picking up some of these things and having them freely.

There were attractive dolls, which were given to the children, probably some time back which they carried around the place. There was a lot of lingerie for children, which was very lacy and the type made for sexual provocation.

There were a large number of expensive perfumes and cosmetics, which were probably gifts for people.

The couple had almost no belongings of their own except a few clothes which would amount to an overnight bag each. Apart from laptop computer, a digital camera, an ordinary camera, a mobile phone, both of them had their own medical kits.

None of us were able to access the files on the laptop. Marty who was continuously smoking kept saying that all the Indians are corrupt and that he is a rich man. He had an almost arrogant air about himself, which made us feel that he was confident of getting out of the situation without difficulty.

We went with the police to their headquarters at the Crawford market office. With the help of a professional very soon they were able to access the files on the laptop. This spilled out all the literature that the couple had been creating over the years.

The laptop also had files of their visits to Sri Lanka and Thailand showing similar activity.

After a lot of paper work, we were able to leave the following morning. We felt dazed while leaving the police station on 17th early morning. It took some time to realise the huge baggage of questions that we had carried back. Questions kept popping up in our minds.

Do we care for this vulnerable population

Do we really understand the implications to opening ourselves to tourism? Are we willing to do absolutely anything for foreign currency?

How many of us are really aware about the problem of child pornography and paedophilia? The extent of it, and how organised it is.

Where do we go if we have information of this kind?

Is there a reporting mechanism?

Do we as citizens of this country come together to fight this kind of invasion in our country?

We are aware that pornography or paedophilia is not limited to foreigners alone. The question is how can we be vigilant to save our children from such exploitation either by Indians or foreigners?

There are many more questions that are still unanswered. This episode has probably left many of us shaken and we have started looking into the systems and into ourselves very carefully and more seriously.

Let us wake up to the challenge and join hands to create a secure country for our women and children.

FACSE – Forum Against Child Sexual Exploitation is a network of organisations, professionals and people coming together to stop the sexual abuse and exploitation of children. The Forum addresses this problem by creating awareness among different target groups and by working with the law and judiciary.  
email address: facse95@hotmail.com



## In News



A Meet of Ragpickers Union, Pune, 5th May, 2001. Over 8,000 ragpickers from across Maharashtra attended. 'Avate Aaji', the oldest member presented a Charter of Demands to the Minister of Labour, Dr. Deshmukh (For details contact: Purnima Chikamane, SNTD, Dept. of Adult & Continuing Education, Pune 411 004)



Women of the Laxminagar slum, Pune, led an anti-arack agitation on 25th April, 2001. The shirts of men who dared to drink were tied to the public board in the basti. Janwadi Mahila Sanghatana is leading a 'Janjagan' on the issue (For details contact: Shubha Shamim, Navankar Apts., Paud Road, Pune 411 038)



Comrade Sarlatai Mhase who led an all woman 'Kalapathak' (with guidance from Comrade Annabhau Sathe) was felicitated at a 'Shahiri Jalsa' organised by the Vidrohi Sanskritik Movement, Pune. Women Shahirs (composers of ballads) are rare and need to be documented (For details contact: Kishor Jadhav, 754, Kasba Peth, Pune 411 011)

## The Impact of Globalisation on Women's Lives:

A Report of the Regional Seminar  
Organised by IAWS, Jharkhand  
4th, 5th November, 2000

A regional seminar was organised at the Xavier Social Work Institute by the IAWS to discuss the impact of liberalisation on the lives of women in Jharkhand. The seminar opened with a Jharkhandi Geet and a traditional adivasi felicitation of the team from Calcutta. Prof. Jashodhara Bagchi inaugurated the proceedings and Vasavi read out the message of the IAWS, President, Prof. Zarina Bhatti. Vasavi introduced the theme, underlining the impact that appropriation of forest resources was having on the lives of adivasi women. The multinational, she argued were intensifying this exploitation and that women would have to be in the forefront in the struggles against global capital. Prof. Nirmala Banerjee underlined the globalisation in the region to be at least 2000 years old and argued how it was not possible to set the clock back. But strategies to regulate the process require organised and collective efforts. Dr. Indu Dhan highlighted the importance of co-operatives in getting fair prices. Dr. Ramesh Sharan, put forth a detailed review of the education levels of women in Jharkhand (15-44 age group) and underlined how development policies had in fact widened the gap between women and men. Dr. Rose Kerketta – highlighted the special vulnerability of the Jharkhand region to global capital due to its rich mineral resource. Kavita Rai delineated the pre-colonial status of Jharkhandi women and argued that the power structures were controlled by women. The penetration of global capital has meant an attack on the identities of adivasi and dalit women. Dayamani Barla – noted the specific impact of globalisation on villages, especially the rise in fuel prices that was affecting the mobility of women.

The second session was chaired by Jayanti Sen and Dr. Kiran and Prof. Malanch Ghosh presented their papers. Faisal Anurag underlined the backtracking of the welfare state and highlighted the history of protest and resistance in adivasi communities across India.

In the session chaired by Prof. Nirmala Banerjee, Munni Hansda and Dayamani Barla put forth their views. Sankhi Sahu who had dared to plough and had been ostracized by the villages (Kaliga in Gumla District) narrated her struggle. The differential sex ratios in the adivasi – and non-adivasi regions of Jharkhand were discussed.

The proceedings concluded with a presentation by comrade A.K. Rai. He highlighted the relationship between women's labour and the atrocities against them and pointed out to the dangers of privatisation and liberalisation especially for women. In response to comrade Rai's presentation, Prof. Bagchi underlined the need to understand better the significance of feminism.

The two-day workshop had been organised in the wake of the formation of Jharkhand as a new state. The workshop ended on a note of thanks by Chayna Moena to Sachetna, Calcutta for providing economic support and to Shravani, Rosaliya, Kanti, Mira, Phulomoni, Piyala, Prakash and Biju Toppo for making the arrangements possible. Rapporteurship was done by Tete, Kavita and Phulomoni. Vasavi was thanked for arranging this much needed workshop.

This report is abstracted and translated from the original Hindi report by Dr. Sharmila Rege

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... Continued from page 11

Thus, this brief report on the issue of violence against young girls suggests the need to probe further into the cases of such violence. To understand this phenomenon by placing it in the context of larger social structures in India.

## CWDS Seminar on Women's Studies: A Report

Mary E. John, Smita Tewari Jassal and Vasanthi Raman

As part of its 20th anniversary celebrations, the Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi, hosted a seminar "Interrogating Disciplines/Disciplining Gender? Towards a History of Women's Studies in India". The seminar was organised by Smita Tewari Jassal, Mary E. John and Vasanti Raman, colleagues at the CWDS, from February 19-22, 2001, at Jamia Hamdard University, New Delhi. Bringing together 45 invitees from outside Delhi and about 100 local participants, the seminar successfully drew on a range of experiences, spanning pioneers in the field and younger scholars, and from all regions of the country. The purpose of the seminar was to initiate a collective mapping of the field of women's studies in its broadest sense, and so enable an appraisal of its transformative impact on institutions of higher education, disciplines and fields over the last decades.

Spread over three and a half days, there were paper presentations on the interface of "women" with the following disciplines – economics, sociology, political science, the law, history and literature. Precisely because scholarship on women has been produced in response to different pressures and beyond disciplinary boundaries, the seminar also included papers in the areas of demography, health, sexuality, violence, the media, caste, tribe and communalism. Two round-table discussions – one on action-research, activism and women's studies, and a second one on women's studies and higher education, played an integral role in the proceedings. In this report, constraints of space make it impossible to do justice to the depth of the presentations, the comments of the respondents, and the wide-ranging discussions of each session. What we present below is therefore a very brief summary of the main points raised by the speakers.

The seminar opened with a welcome to the gathering by Narayan Banerjee, director of CWDS, followed by a felicitation of Vina Mazumdar and



Lotika Sarkar, founder-members of the CWDS and guiding spirits in the subsequent two decades. They were presented with a shawl, a plaque and a gift in appreciation of their dedication to institution building.

After a brief introduction to the seminar by Mary John, the first session on economics, chaired by K. Saradamoni, began with Maithreyi Krishnaraj's discussion of the regime of economics, its changing frameworks and methodologies in the international context, before dwelling on developments in India. Empirical contributions here have been manifold – in areas relating to work, sectoral studies, colonialism and pre-colonial economies, unpaid labour, migration, and so on – and theoretical forays somewhat more uneven. As she summarised it, "women's studies" may have achieved visibility, but not yet power. Nirmala Banerjee's presentation focussed on problems of generalisation in the field of economic theory for thinking contextually about gender issues.

Drawing on many examples, she argued against trying to fit the diverse experiences of women within a single economic model, whether about labour, trade, feminisation or empowerment, and the consequent questions this raises for policy interventions. The second session, chaired by Zoya Hasan, was on political science and the law. In some contrast to the previous session, Nivedita Menon emphasized the relative immunity of the discipline of political science to gender. Moreover, most feminist issues have been raised by scholars outside this discipline. She also referred to recent attempts to introduce a gender component into the syllabus at the B.A. level in Delhi University, and the difficulties they encountered in politicising women's issues in a depoliticised university environment. Usha Ramanathan spoke on the law, and on the courts as a site where women's voices and the women's movement have been heard. While the courts balk at recognising constitutional equality for

women in mainstream justicing (inheritance law, marriage and divorce), the voice of the women's movement has been evident in instances such as dispensing with corroboration by rape victims, in guardianship issues, or in forcing the judicial mind to recognise that dowry deaths actually happen. The last session of the first day was on the discipline of sociology, which was chaired by Neera Desai. Sharmila Rege offered rich and critical reflection on sociology's past and present relationship with political agendas as represented by feminism and women's studies. Her paper looked into the history of the discipline, examined the Sociological Bulletin for its coverage of "women", and concluded with a discussion of the classroom as a site for interrogating power and for engendering new pedagogies.

The second day of the seminar began with a session on history. Chaired by Narayani Gupta, the first speaker Kumkum Roy provided an overview of studies of early Indian history – nationalist and Sanskritic, Marxist, among others – in their relation to women, gender and sexuality, and the dangerous revival of the "Altekarian paradigm" today. She also offered her own sense of the history/gender interface in the classroom and in research, concluding on a note of qualified optimism. Tanika Sarkar's reflections on modern history and feminist scholarship drew attention to early histories of politically active women. She discussed the problems and possibilities these histories offered, their subsequent stagnation as a field of inquiry, and the present resurgence of interest in women's cultural worlds. The next session on health and demography was chaired by Imrana Qadeer. Malini Karkal's presentation on demography highlighted both its sexism as well as its powerful bias towards population control even when family health was the main research focus. Her paper provided a wealth of statistical information on the subject of sex ratio disparities in the Indian context.

Lakshmi Lingam provided an account of the intersecting trajectories of the women's movement and health issues, where violence, fertility and contraception, sexuality, women's work and the household have all been critical. However, major areas of health research continue to be neglected from a feminist perspective, such as gender differences in major diseases and subjects like breast-feeding. She concluded that body politics and gender strategic concerns needed to be prioritized. The final session

of the day, chaired by Malavika Karlekar, was on sexuality and violence. V. Geetha began her presentation by drawing attention to the new visibility of sexuality in the public domain, as well as contentious issues such as sex-work, AIDS research, gay and lesbian rights. Her paper used "four stories" in the contemporary context of Tamil Nadu, to look at difficult questions of sexual intimacy. V. Geeta argued that though the women's movement has directed attention to issues of power, violence, and legal rights, the terrain of desire and intimacy remains largely untheorised. Kavita Punjabi's paper "Responses to sexual violence: Towards contesting the dominant logic(s)" also focussed on the lack of sufficient attention to sexuality, as a meaningful aspect of one's being, rather than as an act of physical violence, with legal and socio-political dimensions. Citing the growing literature on the subject, she also drew on one of Mahasweta Devi's short-stories "Choli ke pichhe" to argue for a radical transformation in social culture outside the logic of the state.

The first session of the third day dealt with the subject of literature. Chaired by Jasodhara Bagchi, Rajeswari Sunder Rajan began her presentation on feminism, literature and women's studies with the early focus on patriarchal ideologies, representation and literary women, which culminated in critical interrogations of "the canon" of western literature. In the Indian context, feminists produced a critique of English literature via colonialism, when gender issues were often as yet incipient. She also discussed the "cultural turn" in literature, as well as present-day backlashes against perceptions of a "doctrinaire" feminism. Kumkum Sangari focussed on the simultaneous gains and losses in the last two decades of feminist intervention within and beyond literature departments – concerning its institutionalisation, literary form and genre, translation, historical texts and women's writings. Thus, for instance, even while a lot of good work has been done on the joint formation of Indian and British literatures, wider Indo-Persian configurations have remained invisible. Or again, historical density has been privileged at the cost of aesthetic value where women's writings are concerned, she felt.

In the next session on communalism, chaired by Sumit Sarkar, Vasanthi Raman began by pointing to the vexed location of communalism for social scientists and historians of the sub-continent. Her paper

mentioned important aspects of the gender-communalism interface and argued for the critical place of inter-community relations, specifically Hindu-Muslim relations as majority-minority, for approaching the question of gender relations within the Muslim community. In the third session on the media, Tejaswini Niranjana's paper on relations between the women's movement, women's studies and the media addressed the ways in which critiques of the media seem to have suffered from a "feminist common sense", with the media question being reduced to that of censorship. Her paper looked at reviews and articles published in *Manushi* to illustrate some of these problems, and briefly discussed anti-censorship positions, before arguing in favour of historicised approaches to the material and social practices which constitute us as subjects in relationship to the mass media.

This was followed by the round-table discussion on action-research, activism and women's studies, chaired by Devaki Jain. Narayan Banerjee noted the pre-history of action-research in the field of social work, with women's organisations such as SEWA, WWF and AMM providing the impetus for new conceptions of research and action, even though they shared no common methodology. For all its richness as a learning laboratory, however, many questions and problems remain concerning the relations between support groups and local people, sustainability, democratisation and local leadership. Kalpana Kannabiran drew on her own trajectory to discuss the interface of activism and women's studies as a member of a women's organisation, a research student and as part of a politically active family. The IAWS and autonomous women's conferences were themselves critical forums where tensions between women's studies and activism surfaced, including the majoritarianism visible in the works of feminist academics, the relation of funding to the movement, controversies over homoeroticism, or the gap between "domestic violence" as a subject of research and as an issue on the ground. Indu Agnihotri's presentation emphasized the need to contextualise the radical period of the 1970s when women's studies began in comparison to the contemporary political moment and its challenges, so as not to lapse into self-congratulation. The distancing between the women's movement and women's studies also needed to be acknowledged and actively combated on a number

of fronts. Kalpana Viswanath focussed on the linkages and dialogue between women's studies and the movement, and the degree of overcoming of earlier distrust and lack of tolerance. However, many gaps remain, whether it is the wealth of movement narratives not well documented, or lived experiences concerning sexuality, lesbian and gay issues, which have yet to merit serious study.

The fourth day of the seminar began with the session on caste and tribe, chaired by Leela Dube. Uma Chakravarti began her presentation on the subject of caste by referring to its problematic and often absent place in contemporary politics and in mainstream academic deliberations. It is imperative therefore to locate practices like endogamy within questions such as land rights and women's labour, and acknowledge the complicity of upper caste women in the maintenance of hierarchical structures. Conditions for productive dialogue between dalit and feminist scholars needed to be fostered, as they exist in south and western India. Virginius Xaxa provided a fine overview of gender issues in the study of tribes in India. In the context of historical shifts in the conceptualisation of tribes over the last two centuries, he highlighted changing conceptions of tribal women – as primitive, amoral and promiscuous, as having a higher social status in dichotomous contrasts to caste society, and so on. He especially dwelt on acute dilemmas concerning individual citizenship rights and the gendering of community identity, as a problem facing both men and women in contemporary tribal struggles against outside exploitation.

The closing round-table discussion on women's studies and higher education was chaired by Karuna Chanana. Manoranjan Mohanty reiterated the importance of consolidating the gains made by women's studies as a base area of democratic thought, especially in the current historical moment epitomised by views of higher education as an instrument towards building a market-oriented society. Women's studies had the potential even to discover as yet undiscovered modes of oppression. Kumud Sharma began by noting that two decades ago "women's studies" was not at all a clearly articulated concept, and noted the massive developments since then at many different levels. Today the challenges and contradictions have sharpened, given new conservative agendas; a different question to be addressed was whether women's studies discourses have in turn become exclusionary.

Vidyut Bhagwat's paper drew on experiences, debates and the micro-politics of autonomous versus integrated models for women's studies centres in the university system. After a decade of involvements in research, teaching, extension and publication, she raised questions for the future – the problems of degrees in women's studies, reaching larger audiences and genuine interdisciplinarity. Yashoda Shanmugasundaram described how a separate women's studies department was set up at Mother Teresa University, Kodaikanal. She underlined their pragmatism, close networking, and fundraising activities. Maitrayee Chaudhuri's presentation drew on her years of experience teaching gender in a post-graduate sociology department to emphasize the kinds of challenges ahead. Differences and conflicts in the social backgrounds of students, and in sustaining feminist approaches beyond the initial phase of enthusiasm, are genuine issues that require serious attention.

Rekha Pappu raised a number of issues concerning the demographics of enrollments within higher education. She both referred to the gap between addressing women's issues at the state or judicial level without adequate understanding of ground realities, as well as the need to look at our school systems.

The seminar was significant in many ways. It forced everyone to take stock of our accomplishments and problems in women's studies from diverse locations and perspectives. It also enthused many who were present to plan ahead and take the deliberations forward in their own contexts.

## Salutation

**Maltibai Bedekar** (Vibhavari Shirurkar)  
(1905–6th May, 2001)

We mourn the death of Maltibai Bedekar whose writings in Marathi are recognized today as having introduced a strong, feminist note in Marathi literature. Maltibai, born and brought-up in a small town in rural Maharashtra worked in the field of Education and wrote about the marginalised groups.

## Announcements

1. All ordinary, Institutional members who have become members in the year 1999, should renew their membership, as their membership has expired on 31.03.2001.
2. A Regional Workshop is being organised by IAWS, for the Western Region, some time in the first or second week of August 2001. The said workshop will take place in the "Tata Institute of Social Sciences", Deonar, Chembur, Mumbai.

The theme of the workshop will be "**Dalit Feminism: A critique of Difference**". Those members interested in presenting a paper or taking part in the discussion should contact Dr. Lakshmi Lingam, General Secretary, Indian Association for Women's Studies, c/o. Women's Studies Unit, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, P.O. Box 8313, Deonar, Mumbai 400 088 by 15th May 2001.

3. Refresher Course in 'Gender and Social Sciences', University of Pune, October 2001.

In the last two decades, theoretical and empirical work in the area of Women's Studies has seriously challenged the accepted theories and methods of Social Sciences. These developments in Women's Studies have been across the disciplines of Literature, Sociology, Economics, Political Science, History, Anthropology and Philosophy. This rich body of knowledge needs to be conveyed into mainstream teaching at the Undergraduate and Postgraduate levels. In this context, the Women's Studies Centre, University of Pune is organising a Refresher Course from 1st October, 2001 to 27th October, 2001. The highlights of the course would be:

- Introduction to Feminist Theory
- Impact of Women's Studies on major Disciplines and their practices
- Gender Issues in "Studying Culture"
- Engendering analyses of major contemporary issues in the Indian context
- Understanding Caste, Class and Gender in the Indian context
- A focus on integrating Gender into curriculum, Pedagogical practices.

For details please contact:

**Dr. Vidyut Bhagwat**

Course Co-ordinator, Women's Studies Centre,  
Department of Sociology, University of Pune, Pune 411 007  
Email: vidyutbhagwat@rediffmail.com

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