



# Newsletter

**IAWS**

September 2004

**Indian Association  
of Women's Studies**

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## Editor's Desk

The editorial team wishes to thank the members who sent in their comments and appreciation of the special issue on Bharatiya Stremukti Divas. We hope to bring out many more thematic special issues and look forward to your suggestions and contributions.

This issue brings together reports of the IAWS regional workshops at Mumbai and Allahabad. The report of the national workshop on curriculum development, gender and pedagogies organised at JNU in March 2004 puts forth for reflection several issues concerning the relatively uncharted terrain of gender studies in education. The other three papers also address questions of curricula in gender/women's studies; questions of feminist critiques of school pedagogies, the 'many worlds' of doing women's studies in Tamil Nadu and experiences and dilemmas of disciplining gender at Pune University. The reports and papers call for reflections on the legacies and futures of women's studies in India. We hope that some of these issues will be addressed in the plenaries, sub-themes and workshops at the XI IAWS conference in Goa in May 2005.

The UGC X Plan Guidelines have been released and require discussion and deliberation. For many Centres, which do not have State government concurrence, like the one at Pune University from where the Newsletter is published, the new guidelines have meant cuts in staff and fellowships. We would like to put together responses of different centres to the new guidelines and their vision of doing women's /gender studies in the X Plan period. Do send in your responses to the editorial office or email [wsc@unipune.ernet.in](mailto:wsc@unipune.ernet.in).

**Sharmila Rege**

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# Announcing the XIth National Conference on Women's Studies

Organised by the  
Indian Association of Women's Studies (IAWS)

on  
Sovereignty, Citizenship and Gender  
at  
Goa from 3rd to 6th May 2005

The IAWS, established in 1982 to promote Women's Studies scholarship and activism in India, announces the dates of its Eleventh National Conference scheduled from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> May 2005 in Goa; on the theme 'Sovereignty, Citizenship and Gender'. Proposals are invited for sub-theme sessions.

Sovereignty and citizenship are the foundational principles of a nation state and determine our lives in multiple ways. Defining, on the one hand, the political boundaries/autonomy of each nation state, these principles, on the other, determine the rights and entitlements of its citizens. Having grown out of the various expressions of people's socio-economic and political struggles, these principles are conceptualized in various national and international instruments of human rights.

The ongoing processes of socio-economic and political transformations, globally as well as nationally, have raised many issues and challenges with erosion of citizen's rights and weakening of the nation state. Several contradictions and tensions are apparent in these constructs. The rhetoric of patriotism/nationalism constructs national sovereignty and real and imagined threats to it, through the vilification of other countries; and arming itself with many repressive powers but at the same time does not question the ways in which international bodies such as the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO are shaping economic policies of each nation state, that denies the basic economic right to its citizens.

When viewed through the lens of citizenship rights (as articulated in India) other contradictions emerge. The growing identity politics, for instance, is creating differential sets of rights/entitlements within the parameters of caste, class, religious and gender/sexual identities. The scuttling of the 'welfare state' and the collusion of dominant groups reinforcing a culture of violence, are inimical to secular democracy and progressive changes to reduce disparities among different

social groups. The ensuing jingoism justifies draconian laws that deny citizens their fundamental rights.

In response to these developments, progressive movements are increasingly asking for progressive political decentralization and rights of local communities over local resources. These political articulations do not necessarily acknowledge the exclusions that women and other marginalized members within local communities experience.

Women's Studies scholarship needs to interrogate these complexities from the standpoint of women's experiences. Treated as second-class citizens, women (despite the constitutional guarantees of citizenship rights) experience various kinds of discriminations, deprivations and denials, particularly when they bear the double jeopardy of class, caste, religious and sexual identities.

We have tentatively identified the following broad areas exploring a number of issues. We would like to explore both the national and international dimensions of sovereignty and citizenship; global and national politics; culture, ideologies and issues of pluralism and diversity; dislocations, marginalisation and exclusions and so on. The areas given below are only suggestive. We invite your suggestions urgently.

1. Pluralism, Nationhood and differential citizenship: contemporary issues
2. Lives and Livelihood: Right to National and Natural Resources
3. State Civil Society and Violence
4. Conflict and Militarization: War or peace
5. Citizenship and the Politics of Sexuality
6. Migration, Displacements and Borders
7. Impaired Citizenship and Forms of Exclusion (aging and disability)

There are many more areas and dimensions that could reflect aspects of the conference theme. Those

interested are requested to submit a sub-theme proposal on the areas cited herewith or on any other aspects of the conference theme.

### Guidelines for Sub-Theme Proposal

- The proposals have to reflect some aspect of the conference theme: be original and innovative and bring together paper presenters from different regions in the country and from diverse backgrounds,
- The proposal has to contain the title of the sub-theme, a 500 word abstract outlining the theme and the issues that would be dealt with and also the proposed format of the sessions – oral presentations/audio visual and others
- Enclose along with the proposal your name, a brief resume along with a complete mailing address, phone numbers, email id and title of sub theme on a separate page.
- Proposals by snail mail or email have to reach on or before 30 November 2004 at the address mentioned below

### Dr. Veena Poonacha

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Congratulations to Kalpana Kannabiran, Former General Secretary, IAWS who has been awarded the 2003 VKRV Rao award for her work on Social Aspects of Law.

VKRV Rao prizes in Social Science Research were instituted by the Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bangalore. The Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi, administers the awards in grateful recognition and appreciation of Professor Rao's contribution and services for the development of social science research in India in general, and for the establishment of the Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bangalore, in particular.

The Board of Governors of the Institute for Social and Economic Change at its meeting held on 19th January 1977 approved the regulations governing the institution and award of VKRV Rao Prizes for research in social sciences. Three prizes of Rs. 10,000 [now 25,000] each and a citation/certificate are awarded annually for high quality research in social sciences. The main object of the prizes is to encourage young social scientists to undertake original research and to recognise the contributions made by them to the development of knowledge.

The prizes are awarded to persons who have made significant original contributions to human knowledge and progress, applied or fundamental, who are citizens of India, below the age of 45 years, in the year for which the award is made, and engaged in research in any one of the social science disciplines. One prize is awarded every year in Economics. The remaining two prizes are rotated among the other disciplines. After 1989, the awards were discontinued for fourteen years and resumed in 2003. Nominations were invited in three areas: Economics, Management and Social Aspects of Law.



## Gender and Critical Pedagogies

Mary E. John

*Report of the National Workshop on Curriculum Development*

The Women's Studies Programme at Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi organised a two day National Workshop March 19-20 2004 on Gender and Critical Pedagogies, co-organised by Saraswati Raju (Centre for the Study of Regional Development), Maitrayee Chaudhuri (Centre for the Study of Social Systems) and Mary John, from the Women's Studies Programme. The purpose of the workshop was to provide a forum to reflect together on the diverse developments within the broad field of teaching gender and women's studies at different levels of the educational system. As it turns out, in spite of occasional studies and seminars on the subject, the terrain of women's and gender studies in India remains largely uncharted, and significant shifts in the evolution of thinking about women's and gender studies within education have yet to be addressed. The two day workshop brought together teachers, researchers, students, activists and policy makers from different parts of the country, and enabled a sharing of a wide range of experiences from schools, colleges, autonomous centres and universities.

After a welcome by the Director of the women's studies programme, Prof. Jayati Ghosh, the workshop was inaugurated by Prof. Balveer Arora, Rector of JNU. Drawing from developments within his discipline of political science, Prof. Arora shared his own concerns over the problems that can accompany the formation of a new "discipline" such as women's studies. His own example came from public administration, which at one point of time tried to develop as an independent field from political science, but then suffered as the result. The Rector hoped that the deliberations of the workshop would bring out the most significant issues for the future direction of women's studies. In her introduction to the workshop, Mary John provided a brief historical overview of the study of gender and women's studies. The emergence of women's studies in the 1970s marked a distinctly new phase in relation to the pre-independence movements of social reform, with its focus on the education of girls. Conceived primarily as research, women's studies was not projected as a parallel discipline in its formative period, but, as is now well-known, as a "perspective", meant to transform the production of knowledge across the educational system. However, the 1990s have seen further developments and changes from this founding mandate, precisely at a time when women's studies is

attempting to institutionalise itself in various ways. Teaching and curriculum development are now occupying more space, and problems of disciplinarity, the design of courses, questions of autonomy and integration, and so on need to be explored concretely. It is perhaps not fortuitous that this new phase of institutional reproduction through pedagogy is happening at a moment when the educational system itself is in crisis, whether due to the changing nature of the state and globalisation, or the Hindu right's ideological entry into the field of education. The idea of this workshop, therefore, was to enable much needed discussion and debate on a range of issues.

In the first session of the workshop, Veena Poonacha and Vibhuti Patel made presentations on questions of pedagogy and curriculum development in Mumbai. Entitled "Demystifying Knowledge: Reflections on Women's Studies Pedagogy", Veena Poonacha discussed some of the pedagogical principles that women's studies is based on – its critique of the canon and the status quo, its emphasis on women's experiences, ideals of inclusiveness, aims of empowerment and the politics of knowledge creation. Drawing on a study conducted by the Research Centre for Women's Studies at SNDT Women's University on the teaching and learning experiences of women's studies within the university system in Mumbai, she went on to present some of their more disquieting findings. Amongst the interviewed faculty from different departments, many questioned the relevance of women's studies for their respective disciplines, most women's studies courses have remained optional, while students on their part experienced a "gap" between the claims of women's studies and the actual course content. More recently, new challenges are emerging due to the very diversity that women's studies has nurtured, so that it is becoming difficult to demarcate the distinctiveness of women's studies from other studies on women. Has the feminist commitment to a secular and progressive ideology become weakened by its recognition of a relativist position on truth? Vibhuti Patel's presentation looked at the earliest efforts to teach women's studies in the 1970s, when undergraduate colleges in Mumbai were more responsive than the university system. Though initially confined to teaching different schools of thought in feminism, the women's movement in the west, and the findings of the Towards Equality report, new researches in different disciplines from the 1980s made it subsequently possible to revise existing syllabi. The "top down" promotion of women's studies centres and cells by the UGC as well as the parallel growth of training programmes by NGOs in the 1990s has further changed the institutional profile of teaching women and gender. She concluded that a move from women's



to gender studies was required, accompanied by the recognition of the many contradictions in women's lives, and a more systematic challenge to mainstream disciplines.

Padmini Swaminathan and S. Anandhi provided an interesting contrast from Tamil Nadu. Their presentation was based on the first phase of a larger study of women's studies in a number of universities and colleges in Tamil Nadu, both state-funded and private. With different institutional patterns, ranging from Departments of Women's Studies, Centres of Women's Studies and Women's Studies Cells (often more than one in the same institution), the disciplinary nature of women's studies is often a moot point, since many of these institutions thrive on "welfare-oriented activities", and seek relevance by offering degrees such as "women's studies and computer applications", or (as in the case of a few Christian institutions) teach women's studies within the ambit of "value education". Where women's studies is offered as a paper within a particular discipline, there is no critique of that discipline; indeed, the women's studies curriculum can look quite similar across various disciplines – beginning with different feminisms, followed by a series of "women and ..." themes – women and the economy, women and education, women and the law, and so on. The next phase of the study hopes to gain a more in depth understanding of these developments.

The afternoon session of the first day was devoted to various experiences of teaching women's studies as a full-fledged degree course, with presentations by Roop Rekha Varma, Kavita Punjabi, Anagha Tambe, Nandini Manjrekar and Tejaswini Niranjana. Roop Rekha Varma shared her experience of coordinating an MA in Women's Studies at Lucknow University for the last five years. In spite of opposition from several quarters, including malicious gossip and insinuation about the course, it has been attracting students and running successfully. In the face of criticisms of ghettoisation, Roop Rekha Varma responded that this was a ghettoisation she was ready to accept. Possible shortcomings in the overall structuring of the two year course, composed of eight papers on a range of themes, such as Women and the Economy; Women and Politics; Women and Literature; and so on, however, needed to be addressed. Kavita Punjabi, from the School of Women's Studies at Jadavpur University, reflected on the history that enabled the School to be one of the first UGC Centres to plan degree programmes in women's studies. The aim of the M.Phil programme was to initiate interventions within the university system through a participatory process of cross-faculty involvement, that took all of ten years to be launched in 2000. A crucial question is how to

strike a balance between interdisciplinarity and feminist perspectives within disciplines, as well as the "labour of love" of general faculty and increasing full-time teaching posts in women's studies. They are now in the process of initiating an MA course in Women's Studies and Development, designed to bridge women's studies and activism. Anagha Tambe made a presentation entitled "The impossibility of a linear narrative: Pedagogical Experiences at Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule Women's Studies Centre, University of Pune" prepared jointly by Vidyut Bhagwat, Sharmila Rege, Swati Dyahadroy and herself. This Centre has been involved in teaching courses since 1991, first within the department of sociology and from 1999 as an autonomous women's studies centre. In 1995 a part-time Certificate course in women's studies was floated as an evening course; later this was followed by a one year Diploma Course from 2001, and even more recently they are teaching short 3 month courses at the undergraduate level. Looking back, they recognise that their courses emerged as a response to some challenge or crisis, whether of institutional reproduction or of vocationalisation. Has this implied a turnaround from the formative idea that women's studies was a perspective to be integrated into other disciplines? How can interdisciplinarity be actualised, and how negotiate problems around depth of knowledge, expertise and methodology? What models are available or need to be newly forged? Nandini Manjrekar from the women's studies research centre, M.S. University Baroda, described their efforts to introduce a post-graduate part-time Certificate course in women's studies and the different responses from the social sciences, fine arts, home science and social work. She went on to discuss some of the threats of de-radicalisation, due to the political climate and the new sources of gender legitimacy deriving from the development sector. The final presentation of the session by Tejaswini Niranjana from the Centre for the Study of Culture and Society, Bangalore, gave an account of being part of an evaluation process for a Women's Studies Programme in a small university in rural northern Karnataka, which was looking for private financial support for its MA programme. Even though the course was quite poorly conceived, with little knowledge of current issues and developments in women's studies, the interest of the students, more than half of whom were Scheduled Caste, called for a more constructive role on their part rather than outright rejection.

The morning session on the second day was devoted to presentations around schooling and gender, with Janaki Rajan, Dipta Bhog, Sharmila, Poonam Batra and Nandini Manjrekar participating. The purpose of this panel was to initiate dialogue between feminist engagements at the school level and within higher

education. Janaki Rajan from the State Council of Educational Research and Training in Delhi, provided extremely useful and wide-ranging inputs into the gendered aspects of non-access and non-participation in rural and urban schools, problems with international pressures to link primary education with fertility decrease and women's empowerment, the everyday cultures and attitudes of teachers in boys only, girls only and co-educational schools, the virtual absence of gender in teacher training curricula, and problems with the National Curricular Framework for School Education, NCFSE 2000. Dipta Bhog from Nirantar continued the discussion by pointing out the limitations in most planners' narrow concern with "access" and enrollment of girls in school, at the cost of the content and curriculum of mass education. Developing a genuine alternative that goes beyond the substitution of gender stereotypes with positive imagery, requires a deeper critique of how textbooks are structured, where gender intersects with other frameworks of class, caste and religion. She discussed their involvement in producing civics textbooks as part of a larger initiative to devise alternatives to the controversial NCERT textbooks, organised by Delhi's SCERT for classes I-VIII. Nandini Manjrekar's presentation looked at the "hidden curriculum" in schools, first in an analysis of Kaun Kya Banega, a lesson from a pre-BJP school textbook that helps structure children's ideas about the gendered nature of work, and by discussing her experiences during a recently held training session on gender with teachers. These teachers readily abandoned the critiques of gender ideology provided in favour of representations of courageous women, ready to uphold tradition and an ennobled culture, as depicted in the new textbooks. The session on schooling made it amply clear that women's studies practitioners, who work among adults within higher education, need to use their skills to address a different constituency – children, on the one hand, and school teachers, on the other.

The afternoon session involved presentations around teaching gender and women in "regular" disciplines such as history, sociology, English literature and political science. Tanika Sarkar began by sharing the obstacles she has been experiencing in bringing women into the history classroom. Firstly, there are definite problems in the relegation of the subject of "gender and women" to select women faculty. Secondly, she is struggling with difficulties in engendering a sufficiently critical and rigorous attitude amongst students when they opt for gender as a subject of research. Rajni Palriwala provided an account of the history of introducing gender into the department of sociology in Delhi University. She argued how decisive it was to examine changes in disciplines like sociology through

curricular processes, their shifts and inertias, successes and failures. Critical issues include the cumbersome procedure of university committees and ally formation, characteristics of sociology as a discipline, the specific nature of her department, and the strength of the women's movement in and beyond the university. Sharmila Purkayastha from the English department in Miranda House, an undergraduate women's college affiliated to Delhi University, reflected on the limits of the liberal space of the classroom. On the one hand, it was "easy" to draw on Miranda House's legacy of feminism, teach texts by women on women, and develop a certain pedagogic radicalism. However, the newly revised syllabus with expanded papers on feminist theory and women's writing, threw up problems she did not know how to deal with – how make links from theory to women's movements in the West, how deal with the comparative "lack" of systematic theorising in India, how deal with greater resistance among students to theories like Marxism or issues like caste, and how touch students' lives beyond the classroom. Sadhna Arya discussed some of the stumbling blocks she has faced teaching political science and a recently introduced optional paper "Women in the Political Process" in Satyavati college, a coeducational evening college where teaching is predominantly in Hindi. The meagre space offered by one optional paper, the lack of teaching materials in Hindi (the ongoing predominance of women's studies' research in English), the lack of strategies in tackling men as students and teachers, and a backlash of sorts due to the media generated perception among urban classes that women have been given their due, were among the many questions she raised.

The final session of the workshop was devoted to students' perspectives. Geetika Bapna, a research student in sociology at Delhi University reflected on her entry and development as a feminist, first within Lady Sri Ram College, and subsequently in Jawaharlal Nehru University and Delhi University, as well as through interaction with independent organisations such as the Centre for Feminist Legal Research and other engagements. Her current dilemmas focussed on the tensions between the field of feminist scholarship as she has come to know it, and the logic of disciplinary boundaries, such as those of political science and sociology, which cannot be clearly reconciled. Shilpa Phadke talked about "Sexing-up Feminism: the Space-Time Politics of the Classroom", in order to foreground her experiences both as a student and later a teacher in an undergraduate college in Mumbai. She began by describing how she belonged to a generation too young to be part of the protests of the women's movement, and hence acquired her feminist politics largely through books. In her experience, apart from a small minority

of students in Mumbai, for a large group of upper-middle class young women, equality has come to mean a denial of difference, with feminism especially unable to address issues of consumption and desire. Among lower middle class students, the problems she encountered were less those of rejection than of alienation, the belief that feminism could not make a difference to their lives. Asha Achuthan brought in her experiences from Kolkata as someone whose political and intellectual development has taken place within the dominance of a Left-wing political climate, including women's studies. As a research student engaging with and critical of this context, her struggle has been to realise stronger articulations of "sexual difference" and feminist theoretical standpoints without turning this into an antagonism with questions of class, or the legacy of the left more broadly. The final presentation by Navaneetha M. from Hyderabad "Translating Feminism: Thoughts in the Middle of Making a Reader on Gender", concentrated on her efforts to bring out a reader on contemporary feminism in India for a larger audience of college and university students. Drawing from a series of interviews and group discussions with students in Hyderabad, she found that feminism was no longer experienced as a force that impelled them to collective action or mobilisation, but was more evident in the personal choices they made in their lives. For many of these students the classroom has been an important site of discovery of feminist issues; hence the hope that a book enabling students to reflect on the gendered acts of their day to day lives might be politically salient.

The two-day workshop thus opened up major questions besetting the field of the study of gender and the evolution of women's studies as a potential discipline. Whether within elite universities, undergraduate colleges, small town universities, and even schools, the impact of gender is undeniable, if uneven and extremely diverse. The time has clearly come to reflect more rigorously and sustainedly on the kinds of institutionalisation of women's studies that is widely in evidence. It is to be hoped that further forums, such as those of the Indian Association of Women's Studies and networks of UGC supported women's studies centres will take these critical issues of pedagogy and curriculum development further.

*(Mary John teaches at the Women's Studies Programme, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi)*



## Report of the Regional Workshop of the IAWS

*Organised by Research Centre for Women's Studies, SNTD Women's University, Mumbai, and sponsored by the IAWS*

Veena Poonacha welcomed the participants of the workshop and hoped that there would be meaningful discussions emerging from the various disciplinary positions of the scholars and researchers present. Kumud Sharma in her opening presentation of the challenges facing Women's Studies said, the institutional base which had developed had faced challenges as to whether it was a part of the university system or not, whether it was a discipline or a perspective, where it required integrating or mainstreaming? Today the educational system is itself facing challenges, trying to be autonomous, with lack of resources, a conservative agenda being thrust from above, global challenges, students stressed about job prospects. Within the University system, there were various discourses, with the UGC attempting to galvanize WSCs by attempting a change of nomenclature. Next, what was the nature of state support? If it declines then there is a trend to rely on foreign funds, where funders pressurize organizations to modify the content of proposals. There are also gaps in reaching out, while we are caught up in handling our day to day problems. Does the younger generation of academics or students think or react to all this differently.

Uma Chakravarty began the presentation from her disciplinary location. As a Women's Studies person who was teaching History, she found herself on an 'inside-outside location'. Therefore there is considerable self-criticism. She came into the university hierarchy teaching social history but not gender. Later it was the involvement with the women's movement on the streets that prompted an enquiry from a feminist perspective. Activists urged one another to find out what is it that was making families kill their women. One of the first such work was the *Culture and Tradition* booklet. College was an enabling location, which made one become a feminist. Teaching was a dialogic process. Then there was the involvement in civil rights activity. So life was divided into scholarship and activism, both rubbing onto and strengthening each other. There was no location in this uneven trajectory. In history, it has been difficult to dismantle the link of Nationalism, patriotism and partition studies and its hold and



creation by men, even though later Ritu Menon and Kamala Bhasin did work on it. She later moved to modern India in scholarship, where fed up with the obsession with Bengal, she focussed on Maharashtra, thereby creating a controversy about a non-Maharashtrian writing on the history of Maharashtra.

The focus on caste and gender was absent from teaching and shaping Women's Studies. Then she went across the border to Pakistan, where she was part of designing a feminist course for South Asia at the Institute for Women's Studies, Lahore. Recently, she had been involved in the course at the International University in Wardha, where there is a demand from the 'Hindi belt', and from men too for Women's Studies. She believes that challenge to hegemonic knowledge can only be sustained by getting into the curriculum and syllabus. Unlike interventions in disciplinary regimes, in Women's Studies one can attempt a holistic critique of patriarchal knowledge, rather than just have a single paper. Women's Studies came in as a struggle, but seems to have lost its vigour, which is why the UGC can attempt an integration with 'family studies'. But the fight for the institutional space has to be sustained. As long as the women's movement is there, there will be institutional spaces, but need to consolidate and retrieve it constantly outside the framework of funding. We have to look at the internal hierarchies, the spaces that are there and are not being used.

Geraldine Forbes made a presentation on the situation of teaching Women's Studies in the U.S. It exists in quite a marginalized space, being the second major or minor being opted for by students. Recently many centres are renamed as Gender Studies Centres. The participants include men, women, feminists, anti-feminists, coloured students. The administrators are happy with the course as it runs full, but the problem is the students; they are mostly not receptive to the material taught or the ideology of feminism and are either indifferent or hostile. The teachers have to therefore waste a lot of time in attending to simplistic arguments. Besides, with men around, there can be no free discussion on sexual and reproductive issues. Students also believe that there is equality between the genders, and are not attuned to differences on race, class or international issues. In the last few years, due to the increase in work in cultural studies, there is more attention to theory. Another trend is towards inclusivity, with integration of African-American women, women in India, China, etc. But this does not lead to examination of American foreign policy *vis-à-vis* these countries, or the links between consumerism in the U.S. and its

impact elsewhere. The result is that it is pop feminism which thrives and real feminism has moved into the academia, where they are referred to as 'femnazis' or 'victim studies.' Being a Chair in History is better as a change agent! There is also the influx of Men's Studies as in India, with the UNIFEM-sponsored pro-feminist masculinity studies.

In a later presentation, K.K. Shah posed the problems of lack of sufficient feminist material to teach students of history at the undergraduate level. Most of the reading material had to be created from the critical texts that were now being produced by feminist historians.

In the discussion, on Men's Studies, pro-feminist masculinity studies was identified as one among a strand of five. But the issue to focus on is why is there so much and such sudden funding for masculinity studies? What is the agenda? Funding is the big issue. Funds coming for sexuality research is related to the sudden shift to masculinity studies, which then suggests the need for gender studies. It takes away the political sharpness of Women's Studies. Masculinity has to be understood as part of the overarching patriarchy, as a by-product of structures of patriarchy. Today it is unfashionable to address structures. Mainstream disciplines are all anyway masculinist, therefore masculinism cannot be separately studied.

Ritu Dewan in her presentation spoke of the need to integrate Women's Studies and other disciplines, activism and teaching. They struggled for 14 years to get a UGC sanctioned Gender and Economics centre at the University of Mumbai, rather than what the UGC was prepared to give: a multicultural centre. A Gender and Economics centre was necessary to effect the internal changes in the discipline, which only accepted 'fertility' and 'male-female wages' as issues of gender within economics, when issues of violence and availability of transport infrastructure was as much a gender issue.

She then traced the level of integration of Gender and Economics in the various subjects within the discipline, and noted that except for Agricultural Economics, in all others, there was hardly any focus on gender. She stressed the imperative to be rigorous in one's own discipline and thereafter attempt to mainstream gender. The discussions that followed also reiterated the value of integrating women's Studies into formal structures, if it were not to just remain a supplementary subject.

Ananda Amritmahal spoke of Feminist Literary Criticism (FLC) as writing into the history of the world and not just into the canons. In her classroom situation she tries to encourage sharing of one's experience, as in a women's college there still exists the space to share issues of sexuality, reproductive rights, etc. However, there is still a resistance to get self-referential. There is still much resistance to the concept of feminism. She is also worried about fundamentalist responses that come up when she as a nun tries to portray creation as a 'myth'. She feels that need to both mainstream gender into literature as well as attempt internal transformation. Shoba Ghosh spoke up for literature as a bearer of ideology and stated that culture is very political. In transforming the discipline, the focus was on politicizing, particularizing and problematizing the canons and texts. Feminist literary criticism was another pedagogical tool, rooted in the women's movement, focusing on patriarchy. Since feminist literary criticism had become institutionalized, it had lost its political edge. The location of the production of literature and its gendered nature had to read in a nuanced fashion.

Sunanda Pal said her teaching a paper at the masters level on 'Women as object and subject from the canons to contemporary times' did lead to some transformation in students. The use of the interdisciplinary mode of study was also effective. But there were problems encountered where students get stuck to the reading of the text rather than move beyond it. Among some of the issues raised in the discussion was that gender mainstreaming was happening in a globalized world, but subjects such as Marxism and Political Economy was being removed from the syllabi. Similarly critical political thinking was not supported by funding which moved towards the agenda of the countries of the North.

Usha Thakkar made a presentation of the experience of editing (with Neera Desai) a women's studies series in Gujarati. The novel method of making accessible 12 volumes on a variety of subjects such as the women's movement, media, literature, etc. through translations was an exhilarating experience. Anagha Tambe also cautioned translators from English of the responsibility of acknowledging readers who have read similar work in the regional languages.

Mitra Parekh pointed out that Women's Studies looked at knowledge systems, and the 'studies' bring out two aspects: criticality and interdisciplinarity. She said that as far as teaching literature was concerned; Women's Studies seemed to have lost its critical edge. It has not

questioned the approach to education and teaching students.

Putul Sathe felt that she faced 'androcentric closure' while teaching Women's Studies and literature in a Home Science college, both at the level of the system and the syllabus. Her attempt to create a resisting reader in the class room often met with failure as girls were mostly there to pass their time for 3 years. She wondered if there could be any change in the evaluation pattern at the undergraduate level, as institutions also had to live up to NAAC norms.

On the second day, Sugra Chunawala spoke of the experience of integrating gender into science and their work at the Homi Bhabha Centre for science education by conducting Olympiads, having an exhibition on gender and science, with explanations on why there were fewer women in science, why they were marginalized in education, why documentation of women's work is rare, etc. While working with students, when asked to represent a scientist, students usually drew a male scientist. Among the research they had done on science education in schools, portrayals and representations indicate a bias towards men in the proportion of 3:1. The Centre had therefore tried to evolve modules for technology that were friendly to girls.

In the next presentation, Chayanika found herself in the same insider-outsider dilemma, where she found that the constituency did not consider herself part of it, even though she did: the women's movement did not look at science critically and she found herself in a very lonely space. Within the Physics teaching and research community, there was this feeling of being dislocated from society and so she gave up research, and so on. As women students in Physics, there are no women teachers, they are embedded in a totally male culture, and they have to learn to be better than men. And so Physics is still at the level, requiring women in the discipline to enhance visibility for women. In fact the situation is that departments at the undergraduate level are closing down. Her involvement in the women's health movement also made her recognize the biases within the scientific disciplines, in the manner of understanding of women's bodies. At a third level, will more women in Physics change the discipline? It is hoped it will do so marginally. She thanked the Research Centre for Women's Studies, who invited her every year for their certificate course in Women's Studies, which prompted her to stretch her own understanding of what is a feminist understanding of science. Science as currently understood claims to

study nature, while constantly constructing it; the latter insight came to her from her involvement in queer politics, which critiques the construction of heteronormativity. Scientists claim to have no standpoint or do not acknowledge their position. Today all science in our country is funded by the defence establishment. Finally, in the pedagogy of science, there is need to speak of the history of science, which is hardly done. The discipline, which asks questions, does not locate itself historically. Swatija Manorama also speaking of science said that Women's Studies has to recognize science as a cultural space and incorporate it. Science when recognized holistically is a space where natures and cultures interact. Her involvement with reproductive biology research has emphasized the need to restore the rightful place to the active subjects, that it should be ethical and in keeping with the ecological boundaries. She shared her work with pre-adolescents and their perceptions of health, and realized the need to work on women's self-esteem. In her relationship with her body, a woman is constantly compromising her self-esteem.

Kanchana Mahadevan spoke from the discipline of Philosophy, where the canon was all-male. In India, unlike the U.S., Philosophy attracted all the left-over candidates of the humanities and was therefore dominated by women. Further currently there was this urge to Indianize by introducing Vedic Upanishads, Jainism, and some Buddhism, to counter the imperialism of the West. In this context, even feminism is considered an import from the West. She therefore tries to 'disseminate' feminism through its incorporation in the syllabus and in the mode of teaching. In teaching feminist philosophy, she is confronted with critical questions such as relativism versus objectivity and need to have a standpoint, of knowledge being 'value-neutral', the body being an 'obstacle' to the pursuit of abstract thought. Even in the understanding of the body, Western feminist criticism had failed to historicise the body into labouring bodies and privileged bodies. It is only in contexts such as India, does this become clear when the bodies of women, dalits, etc. are considered labouring bodies, and upper caste men are part of the privileged category.

In the afternoon Chandra Malkani spoke of her experience as a teacher of undergraduate students of sociology and the difficulties of getting across to students, especially male students, the ideological underpinnings of feminist influences on social sciences. Ravikala Kamath made a presentation of her dilemmas as a teacher in the Human Development studies in Home Science. The proximity and interaction with the

Women's Studies Centre in SNDT Women's University helped her in a large way in coping with many such issues, but the crises of students' personal problems was something encountered often enough. Divya Pandey shared the dilemmas encountered while conducting research with an inbuilt action component, especially in the development sector. One's capacities as a researcher has to be fortified with inputs to be offered in the field when required. Mary Alphonse spoke of what feminism means to professional social workers, the dilemmas and challenges of a political praxis such as feminism vis-à-vis social work intervention principles. Social work practitioners are confronted with myriad issues such as love and power relationships, lesbian rights, violence by women, rejection of biological differences and so on. Nandita Gandhi started by saying that after 15-18 years of relationship with Women's Studies, it was a challenging period now, when the passion of the movement was less. In the era of globalisation, feminism too has been repackaged and has tried to use a different medium to communicate, campaign, and struggle such as the internet. She spoke of the online course offered with contents such as understanding feminism, Indian feminism, and the globalization discourse, with an interactive format such as chat rooms, discussion rooms, etc. Mira Desai made a presentation on what Women's Studies meant to students of the extension education course, and how the concepts and terminology of academic feminism had yet to make an impact on the students she conducted her survey with, even though they were familiar with issues of power, patriarchy, empowerment. Finally Meena Gopal made a presentation on the need to introduce queer perspectives into development studies, which still approached individuals, households, and communities from a heteronormative framework. The presentation highlighted the need for constructing institutions (to which devolve development benefits whether from the state or NGOs) out of the experience of individuals rather than the individuals being created out of institutions, which have a heteronormative ideology and structure. The day ended with some review comments on how there was a cynicism about the women's movement and its 'absence' or 'ebb'. The movement it was reiterated was alive as long as it lived in the minds of the women, activists and academics of women's studies. Such a perception only prevailed in an environment where there was an overall lack of progressiveness in society. Perhaps the way Women's Studies approaches younger people, the use of the victim mode to represent and identify, the way courses are drafted and taught, if reviewed could reveal why the younger generation stayed away from the Women's Studies movement.





# आधा आकाश सम्भाले महिलाएँ

Report of LAWS Regional Workshop, Allahabad

नये वर्ष की शुरुआत में ही जनवरी की नौ और ग्यारह तारीख को इलाहाबाद विश्वविद्यालय की महिला सलाहकार बोर्ड और इंडियन एसोशिएशन फार वूमैन स्टडीज के संयुक्त प्रयास से महिलाओं के जीवन और विकास के विभिन्न आयामों पर केंद्रित दो दिवसीय संगोष्ठी इलाहाबाद में आयोजित की गई। इस संगोष्ठी का पहला दिन इलाहाबाद विश्वविद्यालय में तथा दूसरा दिन हमीदिया गर्ल्स कालेज में आयोजित किया गया। संगोष्ठी में देश भर से अलग-अलग पृष्ठभूमि और विभिन्न स्तरों पर काम करने वाले लोगों ने हिस्सा लिया। जिनमें उच्च शिक्षा संस्थानों के अकादमीशियन, कानूनविद, महिला आंदोलन से जुड़े कार्यकर्ता, सामाजिक संस्थानों में काम कर रहे शोधार्थी, महिला आयोग की सदस्य, जमीनी स्तर पर महिलाओं के मुद्दों पर काम कर रहे सामाजिक कार्यकर्ता और बड़ी संख्या में विश्वविद्यालय तथा कालेजों के छात्र-छात्रा थे। उद्घाटन सत्र की अध्यक्षता डॉ. कुमुद शर्मा, अध्यक्ष IAWS ने की और अतिथियों का स्वागत महिला सलाहकार बोर्ड की ओर से डॉ. रंजना कक्कड़ ने किया।

## पहला दिन - 9 जनवरी 2004

**पहला सत्र : बदलता सामाजिक-आर्थिक परिवेश तथा जरूरतें**  
पहले दिन के इस पहले सत्र की अध्यक्षता आई. ए. डब्ल्यू.एस. की अध्यक्ष डॉ. कुमुद शर्मा ने की और आधार वक्तव्य डॉ. रवि श्रीवास्तव ने रखा। डॉ. कुमुद शर्मा ने प्रतिभागियों का स्वागत करते हुये सबसे पहले सम्पूर्ण आयोजन के उद्देश्यों को लेकर बातचीत रखने के लिए डॉ. रंजना कक्कड़ को आमंत्रित किया।

संगोष्ठी के आयोजन के उद्देश्यों पर प्रकाश डालते हुये डॉ. रंजना कक्कड़ ने कहा कि यह संगोष्ठी पिछले दिनों महिला हिंसा के प्रश्नों को लेकर चलाये जा रहे कार्यक्रमों की अगली कड़ी है। इस संगोष्ठी में हमने जिस तरह के विषयों को चुना है, चाहे वह सांप्रदायिकता का सवाल हो, चाहे भूमंडलीकरण का प्रश्न हो, सभी महिलाओं पर भारी असर डाल रहे है। बदलते हुये सामाजिक-आर्थिक परिवेश में भी पितृसत्तात्मक व्यवस्था जो कि लिंग-भेद पर ही आधारित है, बनी हुई है! महिलाओं पर विभिन्न कोणों से हिंसा की प्रक्रिया जारी है। हमारा उद्देश्य है कि इन प्रश्नों पर एक गहरा वाद-विवाद यहाँ हो, जिससे आगामी दिनों में महिला प्रश्न और आंदोलन के बारे में कोई रणनीति बन सके और खासकर युवा पीढ़ी जो इस स्थिति को बदलने में निर्णायक भूमिका अदा कर सकती है, वह लिंग संवेदनशीलता के प्रश्न को समझ सके।

पहले सत्र का आधार वक्तव्य डॉ. रवि श्रीवास्तव ने "लैंगिक प्रश्न और विपन्नता" को केंद्रीय प्रश्न बनाकर रखा। विपन्नता या गरीबी शास्त्रीय अर्थों में आर्थिक प्रश्न है, लेकिन आधुनिक समय में यह एक सामाजिक

सवाल है, जिसका अर्थ है जीविकोपार्जन के साधनों की उपलब्धता, चुनने का अधिकार, सत्ता में हिस्सेदारी, शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य आदि। इन सब के संदर्भ में जो कि सिर्फ आर्थिक सवाल नहीं है बल्कि राजनैतिक और सामाजिक सवाल है। विपन्नता को इनसे जोड़कर देखा जाना चाहिए। उपरोक्त संदर्भों से यदि हम महिलाओं की स्थिति पर विचार करें तो पता चलता है कि वर्तमान समय में महिलाओं की स्थिति क्या है और असमानता के स्तर क्या है, महिला-पुरुष के बीच जो असमानता नजर आती है उसके कारणों की तलाश में हम जायें तो पाते हैं कि आज भी प्रापटी पर महिलाओं का मालिकाना हक बेहद कम है और न सिर्फ ये बल्कि वे जो खुद कमाती हैं उसे भी खर्च करने का अधिकार उनसे पास नहीं है। यह स्थिति उन्हें निचली श्रेणी के कामों या काम न माने जाने वाले कामों की तरफ धकेलती है। जिसके कारण शिक्षा और स्वास्थ्य तक उनकी पहुँच कम होती है। सामाजिक रूढ़ियाँ और असुरक्षा सार्वजनिक जीवन में उनकी भागीदारी कम से कम करती जाती है। जिससे यह असमानता बढ़ती जाती है और यहाँ तक कि सार्वजनिक जीवन के निर्णय तो छोड़िये वे अपने व्यक्तिगत जीवन के निर्णय भी स्वयं नहीं ले पातीं।

उत्तर प्रदेश के खास संदर्भ में बात करें तो उनका अर्थ होता है शिक्षा और स्वास्थ्य से दूर, सार्वजनिक जीवन में घटती भागीदारी और काम के बेहतर अवसरों तथा अधिक आय वाले कामों से उनका बाहर हो जाना।

यदि उत्तर प्रदेश में महिलाओं की स्थिति को समझना है और लैंगिक प्रश्न पर कोई दीर्घकालीन रणनीति बननी है तो विपन्नता को न सिर्फ आर्थिक बल्कि एक सामाजिक प्रश्न के रूप में देखना होगा। नये आर्थिक परिवर्तनों और भूमंडलीकरण की प्रक्रिया का भी औरतों के कामकाज पर प्रभाव पड़ा है। उसके क्या लक्षण है? अभी इस पर बहुत कम सोचा गया है, लेकिन इसको भी ध्यान में रखना होगा।

हमें यह देखना होगा कि अवसरों में कमी, सार्वजनिक जीवन और राजनैतिक जीवन में महिलाओं की भागीदारी, उनके जीवन में स्वतंत्रता का अभाव; ये सब मिलकर इस असमानता का निर्माण करते हैं और उसमें निश्चित तौर पर उत्तर प्रदेश का पिछड़ापन जुड़ा हुआ है। मेरा मानना है कि उत्तर प्रदेश का पिछड़ापन इसलिए भी है कि यहाँ महिलायें दोहरे बोझ से दबी हुई हैं। देखना यह होगा महिला नीति निर्धारक संस्थायें इन प्रश्नों से कैसे टकाराकर आगे बढ़ती हैं?

डॉ. रवि श्रीवास्तव के वक्तव्य के बाद प्रतिभागियों ने उनसे सवाल-जवाब किया।

इस सत्र में इलाहाबाद विश्वविद्यालय के कुलपति प्रो. जी. के. मेहता ने अपना उद्घाटन भाषण दिया और अंत में एक प्रश्न के जवाब में बोलते हुए लखनऊ विश्वविद्यालय की पूर्व कुलपति डॉ. रूपरेखा वर्मा ने कहा कि हम पुरुष सत्तात्मक समाज की जगह कोई मातृसत्तात्मक समाज नहीं चाहते, बल्कि महिला-पुरुष की बराबरी घरेलू श्रम, परिवार से लेकर आर्थिक/सार्वजनिक जीवन में चाहते हैं। हम एक ऐसा समाज चाहते हैं, जहाँ स्त्री आजादी और सम्मान से जी सके।

**दूसरा सत्र : जन आंदोलन और महिला आंदोलन का सम्बन्ध**  
 इस सत्र की शुरुआत उत्तर प्रदेश के जिले चित्रकूट में काम कर रही संस्था वानगना की हुमा खान के वक्तव्य से हुई। हुमा ने अपना वक्तव्य अपने काम के इलाके को संदर्भित करते हुये रखा। अपना अनुभव रखते हुये उन्होंने बताया कि चित्रकूट एक पिछड़ा इलाका है; जहाँ जाति, सामन्ती व्यवस्था, सामाजिक रुढ़िवादिता और जमीन का असमान बँटवारा है। पानी के मुद्दे पर काम करते हुए जब दलित महिलाओं ने हैंडपंप की तकनीक सीखी और मैकेनिक के रूप में काम करने लगीं तब जाति की रुढ़ि एक हद तक टूटी क्योंकि सर्वणों को भी उसकी जरूरत थी। लेकिन इस तरह का काम करते हुये हमने देखा कि विकास के क्षेत्र में महिला आंदोलन और जन-आंदोलन दो अलग श्रेणियाँ बन जाती हैं। जब मजदूरी, जमीन आदि का आंदोलन होता है तब यह सबका आंदोलन होता है और महिलायें भी इनमें आगे-आगे होती हैं, लेकिन ज्यों ही घरेलू हिंसा/यौन हिंसा का सवाल उठता है, महिलाओं के अधिकार का प्रश्न उठता है, आंदोलन अलग होने लगता है। कई बार इन मुद्दों को बिखराव के डर से उठाया नहीं जाता है। इसका मतलब है कहीं सार्वजनिक और निजी का बँटवारा है। यह एक जटिल स्थिति है। जन आंदोलन अर्थात् बहुसंख्या का आंदोलन, लेकिन यह बहुसंख्या क्या है इस पर हुमा ने प्रश्न उठाये और कहा कि हमारे देश में चुनाव, सरकार या फिर गुजरात जैसी घटनायें बहुसंख्या के ही उदाहरण हैं, क्या इन्हें सही माना जा सकता है या फिर शाहबानो केस का मामला हो। इसलिए कई प्रश्न ऐसे हैं जहाँ सम्भव है अलगाव हो। मजदूर आंदोलन का जिक्र करते हुये और उसे महिला प्रश्न से जोड़ते हुए, उन्होंने कहा कि दरअसल हमारे समाज में आज भी कहीं न कहीं महिलाओं को दूसरे दर्जे का ही मानने की मानसिकता है। इसी कारण यह अलगाव दिखता है।

उन्होंने लोगों को जोड़ने और आंदोलित करने में अपनाये जाने वाले तरीकों, धार्मिक प्रतीकों आदि के इस्तेमाल पर भी पुनर्विचार करने की जरूरत पर बल दिया। सार रूप में उन्होंने महिला और जन आंदोलन के बीच अंतर और उसके कारणों पर अपनी बात केंद्रित की।

इस बहस को और बढ़ाते हुए दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय से आई और जनवादी महिला समिती की अध्यक्ष रह चुकी डॉ. इन्दू अग्निहोत्री ने अपना वक्तव्य रखा। पूर्ववक्ता हुमा खान की बात से जो प्रश्न उठे उनसे अपनी बात शुरू करते हुये उन्होंने कहा कि आज के दौर में केवल खुद के भीतर झांकने की जरूरत नहीं है क्योंकि दौर बदल गया है। आज एक ऐसा समय है जहाँ एक-दूसरे से अलग अलग नहीं सोचा जा सकता, क्योंकि बदलते दौर में उत्पीड़न की संरचनायें बदली हैं और इनको समझे बगैरे इसके खिलाफ लड़ाई नहीं हो सकती। इतिहास बताता है कि चीजें अपने दौर में बदलती रहती है। इसलिए पितृसत्ता भी वहीं नहीं है जो पहले थी। आज यदि घरेलू हिंसा भी है और उसे करने वाला पति या पुरुष भी एक सामाजिक/आर्थिक संरचना का हिस्सा है जिसमें परिवार और राज्य जुड़ा हुआ है। इसलिए इस संरचना को पहचानना जरूरी है। ग्लोबलाइजेशन के इस दौर में जिस तरह से अंधराष्ट्रवाद ने सर उठाया है उससे हर कौम, हर तबके की अस्मिता का प्रश्न प्रमुख सवाल

बन गया है और यह औरतों की जिंदगी से जुड़ गया है। हर कौम हर तबके की इज्जत औरत से जुड़ गयी है। इसे देखें तो यदि दो कौम या जाति के लड़के/लड़की विवाह भी कर लें तो उनकी अस्मिता खतरे में पड़ जाती है। यह अंधराष्ट्रवाद, सांस्कृतिक राष्ट्रवाद के नाम पर चल रहा है। अगर इसे नहीं समझा गया तो महिला और जन आंदोलन दोनों को आगे बढ़ाना मुश्किल होगा।

इन दोनों वक्तव्यों के बाद प्रतिभागियों की ओर से तमाम प्रश्न आये जो मुख्य रूप से महिला आंदोलन के स्वरूप हिंदुत्वकरण का उसके उपर प्रभाव और उसके उद्देश्यों तथा महिलाओं के भीतर विभिन्न श्रेणियों के विभाजन को लेकर थे। हुमा खान, डॉ. अग्निहोत्री और डॉ. रूपरेखा वर्मा ने अलग-अलग प्रश्नों के उत्तर दिये।

प्रश्न-उत्तर के इस सत्र के बाद महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा और कानून के सवाल पर इलाहाबाद उच्च न्यायालय की न्यायमूर्ति पूनम श्रीवास्तव ने अपनी बात रखते हुए कहा कि पिछले 20-30 सालों में कानूनों में कुछ परिवर्तन हुए हैं, लेकिन आज की तारीख में भी महिलाओं पर होने वाली हिंसा को लेकर कानून में कई दिक्कतें हैं जिन्हें सुधारे बगैर महिलाओं को न्याय मिलना असम्भव है। उन्होंने बताया कि आज भी जो कानून हैं उनके तहत यदि एक महिला घर से निकाल दी जाय या उसका दहेज का कारण उत्पीड़न हो तो कानून उसे तत्काल कोई राहत पहुँचाने की स्थिति में नहीं है।

## दूसरा दिन - 11 जानेवारी 2004

दूसरे दिन का पहला सत्र हमीदिया गर्ल्स कालेज के बेगम खुर्शीद खालदा हाल में शुरू हुआ। अतिथियों, वक्ताओं और प्रतिभागियों का स्वागत करते हुये यहाँ की प्रिंसिपल सुश्री रेहाना तारिक ने सेमिनार के लिए अपनी शुभकामनायें दी।

## प्रथम सत्र : महिला, संस्कृति और साम्प्रदायिकता

सत्र की शुरुआत करते हुये महिला आयोग की सदस्य और लेखिका विचारक सईदा हमिद ने अपना वक्तव्य रखा। संस्कृति से बात शुरू करते हुये उन्होंने कहा कि पुरे साँउथ ईस्ट एशिया में अपनी पुरानी संस्कृति को लेकर लोग गौरवान्वित होते रहते है। लेकिन दरअसल यह क्या है, यह अपने मूल में सामन्ती संस्कृति ही है। जो पुरुष प्रधान है, यह सुपीरियारिटी का कल्चर है जो धर्म, जाति या वर्ग के किसी भी स्तर पर व्याप्त है। हिन्दू धर्म में महिला देवी या दासी थी। और इस्लाम जो आया वह तो बहुओं का कल्चर था। यह बर्बरिक कल्चर था। यही दोनों मिलकर गंगा-जमुना तहजीब हो गया। दोनों ने एक-दूसरे से काफी कुछ लिया-दिया। इसको लेकर काफी बात होती है। लेकिन हमें देखना होगा इसके बावजूद, अलगाव थे। इसके कई उदाहरण मिल जाएंगे। इसलिए ऐसा नहीं है कि यह सांप्रदायिकता कोई आज की बात है, यह पहले से चली आ रही है। उसके बीज हमारे आजादी के आंदोलन के दौर में भी थे। एक जो बात है गुजरात की वहाँ जो कुछ घटा उसमें एक खास बात थी कि वह अर्गोनाइज था, लेकिन हमारी संस्कृति में उसके बीज हैं। जिस तरह की घटनायें हुई उसमें बर्बरयुगन

लक्षण नजर आते हैं। जहाँ औरत का शरीर युद्ध का मैदान बन जात है, उसका शरीर उसका नहीं, बल्कि जाति या समुदाय की अस्मिता बन जाता है। यहाँ सांप्रदायिकता का स्वरूप कितना पुरुष प्रधान है यह गठजोड़ साफ नजर आ जाता है।

अंतिम तौर पर उन्होंने रेखांकित किया विभिन्न मसलों में चाहे वह ड्रेस कोड का मामला हो, सांप्रदायिकता का मामला हो या फिर कल्चर में औरतों को देखने का नजरिया हो, एक पुरुष प्रधान सोच जो सामंती संस्कृति का लक्षण है हावी रहती है इससे जूझे बगैर महिला मुक्ति का रास्ता सम्भव नहीं है।

इस बहस को आगे बढ़ाते हुये इतिहासकार डॉ. लाल बहादुर वर्मा ने कहा कि औरत इतिहास की पहली और आखिरी उपनिवेश है। आज जबकि दुनिया से सारे उपनिवेश खत्म होने के कगार पर हैं औरत उपनिवेश बनी हुई है। यह घर-घर में फैला है। इसे खत्म किये बगैर दुनिया में न्याय नहीं स्थापित हो सकता। महिला प्रश्न केवल समाजशास्त्र या संस्कृति ही नहीं, बल्कि यह राजनीति का सवाल है। हम जिस भारतीय संस्कृति की बात करते हैं, उसमें काफी कुछ त्याज्य है, उसे छोड़ना पड़ेगा।

इस बहस को आगे बढ़ाते हुये हमीदिया कालेज की इतिहास की अध्यापिका डॉ. युसुफा अनीस ने मुस्लिम महिलाओं को केंद्र करके धर्म और संस्कृति के संदर्भ से अपनी बात रखी। अपने चर्चों में उन्होंने कुछ महत्वपूर्ण प्रश्न उठाये। उनका कहना था कि मुस्लिम महिलाओं को किसी एक मोनोलिथिक साँचे में नहीं रखा जा सकता और न ही उन्हें देखने का एक धार्मिक नजरिया होना चाहिए, बल्कि वह जिस क्षेत्र में रहती हैं, उनका जो आर्थिक स्तर है, उनका जो सामाजिक स्तर है, उस पैमाने से उन्हें समझा जाना चाहिए। मुस्लिम समाज में आज जो महिलाओं की स्थिति है, वह सामाजिक/सांस्कृतिक/आर्थिक कारणों से है न कि धार्मिक। इस्लाम में शिक्षा, बराबरी का हक है, जाति नहीं है, दहेज नहीं है; लेकिन क्या यह सच है? सच्चाई यह है कि जो सामाजिक/सांस्कृतिक परिदृश्य है उसका गहरा प्रभाव पड़ा है और मुस्लिम समुदाय में भी वही सब नजर आता है जो समाज में हर जगह है।

इस सत्र के अंत में डॉ. सबीहा आजमी ने 'महिला और वित्तीय प्रबंधन' विषय पर अपना चर्चा प्रस्तुत करते हुए कहा कि महिलाओं को आय के स्रोत का अधिकार मिलना आधी लड़ाई है, यह पूरी तब तक नहीं हो सकती, जब तक कि वह इस आय का प्रबंधन खुद नहीं करती। अभी यह उच्च शिक्षित शहरी तबका है जो इसे थोड़ा बहुत करता है; लेकिन बड़ा समुदाय इसके बाहर है। पुरुष ही महिला की आय का भी प्रबंधन करता है, वही तय करता है कहाँ इन्वेस्ट करना है, कहाँ खर्च करना है? क्योंकि बड़ा हिस्सा इसे जानता ही नहीं, इसलिए उसे यह सीखना होगा, तभी वह अपनी आय पर अधिकार भी पा सकेगी।

#### दूसरा सत्र : महिलाओं के विरुद्ध हिंसा के विभिन्न तरीके

इसके बाद दूसरे दिन का दूसरा सत्र हुआ, इस दूसरे सत्र में औरतों के खिलाफ हिंसा के विभिन्न तरीकों पर चर्चा शुरू हुई। इसमें पहले वक्ता के

रूप में जे. एन. यू. की सरस्वती राजू ने अपना वक्तव्य रखा। उन्होंने जो सबसे पहली बात रेखांकित की वह ये कि आज के दौर में जो ग्लोबलाइजेशन का दौर है राज्य अपनी जिम्मेदारियों से पीछे हट रहा है और स्वयंसेवी संस्थाओं के माध्यम से क्षतिपूर्ति की कोशिश की जा रही है, लेकिन यह सम्भव नहीं है। दूसरी महत्वपूर्ण बात उन्होंने हरियाणा, जो सबसे विकसित प्रदेश है और जहाँ सेक्स रेशियो (लिंगानुपात) सबसे कम, प्रति 1000 पर 850 का है, वहाँ के एक अध्ययन का हवाला देते हुए कहा कि इससे कुछ चीजों में जैसे, बच्चों को लेकर, शादी की उम्र, परिवार नियोजन आदि में सामान्य बदलाव तो हुये, लेकिन लिंगानुपात वही बना रहा, महिलाओं की आर्थिक निर्भरता, राजनैतिक और कानूनी समझ, सत्ता में हिस्सेदारी, निर्णय का अधिकार आदि महत्वपूर्ण स्थितियों में कोई बदलाव नहीं दिखा, जिसके कारणों की पड़ताल करते हुये उन्होंने कहा कि इसके लिए सिर्फ महिलाओं को जिम्मेदार बनाया गया था, जबकि जरूरत थी कि समाज को, राज्य को उसके लिए जवाबदेह और जिम्मेदार बनाना।

इस बहस को आगे बढ़ाते हुये अगले वक्ता के रूप में डॉ. साबू जार्ज ने अपना वक्तव्य रखा। डॉ. साबू ने अपना वक्तव्य उत्तर प्रदेश और हिंदुस्तान में महिलाओं की घटती दर पर केंद्रित रखा। उन्होंने उत्तर प्रदेश के विभिन्न जिलों के शहरी और ग्रामीण इलाकों का उदाहरण देते हुए बताया है कि यहाँ न सिर्फ पश्चिमी उत्तर प्रदेश में बल्कि अन्य हिस्से में भी यह खतरनाक रूप से कम हो रहा है, कहीं-कहीं यह प्रति हजार 850 से 800 तक जा रहा है, तो पंजाब और हरियाणा के नजदीक है। जिसका अर्थ है कि बेआवाज महिलायें गायब हो रही हैं। शिक्षा को भी उन्होंने इसके कारण के रूप में रेखांकित किया और इस भारी पैमाने पर हो रही अप्रत्यक्ष हिंसा पर लोगों को जागरूक होने और इसे बदलने की जरूरत पर जोर दिया।

इस विषय पर अंतिम वक्ता के रूप में वनांगना की माधवी कुकरेजा ने अपनी बात रखी, सुश्री कुकरेजा ने महिलाओं पर होने वाली हिंसा के कई उदाहरण रखते हुए दिखाया कि एक लोकतांत्रिक समाज में जो सुरक्षित और सम्मान से जीने का जो अनिवार्य और न्यूनतम हक है वह भी आज तक महिलाओं को नहीं मिला है और विडंबना यह है कि आंकड़ों में शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य आदि को मापक बना कर बात की जाती है, लेकिन हिंसा का बहुत बड़ा हिस्सा इससे अछूता रहा जाता है।

उपरोक्त तीनों वक्तव्यों के बाद प्रतिभागियों की ओर से विभिन्न पहलुओं से वक्ताओं से प्रश्न पूछे गये जिनमें उनके वक्तव्यों पर कुछ स्पष्टीकरण मांगे गए जिनका तीनों वक्ताओं ने जवाब दिया।

इस सत्र का संचालन हमीदिया कालेज की प्रिंसिपल ने किया। इसी के साथ इस सत्र का समापन हुआ। इसके बाद इस दो दिवसीय संगोष्ठी का अंतिम सत्र शुरू हुआ; जिसमें ए.आई.डब्ल्यू.एस. की अध्यक्ष डॉ. कुमुद शर्मा ने अपना वक्तव्य रखा।

#### अंतिम सत्र : महिलाओं के ऊपर भूमंडलीकरण का प्रभाव

डॉ. कुमुद शर्मा ने अपनी बात शुरू करते हुये कहा कि यह एक जटिल



और विवादास्पद शब्द है। जो कई बहसों को जन्म दे रहा है। जैसे कुछ सार्वभौमिक मूल्य है, जिसमें समानता, न्याय, समान नागरिक अधिकार, मूलभूत मानवाधिकार शामिल हैं। देखना चाहिए कि आज जिस भूमंडलीकरण की बात की जा रही है, क्या यह उस दिशा में जा रहा है? और यह हमें कैसे प्रभावित कर रहा है। भारत में यह जब से शुरू हुआ तो यह देखना चाहिए कि हमारे परिवेश में इसका संदर्भ क्या है? यह किसके लिए अच्छा या बुरा है? यहाँ की बात करें तो यहाँ जाति, वर्ग और लिंग की भीषण विषमतायें हैं और जब से यह प्रक्रिया शुरू हुई है, यह विषमता बढ़ी है। दूसरी बात है कि कहा जाता है कि यह समय आर्थिक रूप से विश्व से अभिन्न रूप से जुड़ी प्रक्रिया है। अतः इस प्रक्रिया को रोका नहीं जा सकता। तब सवाल है कि क्या राष्ट्र की सम्प्रभुता बची रहेगी। तीसरी बात है कि उत्तर औपनिवेशिक दौर में जो कल्याणकारी राज्य की अवधारणा थी, उस पर इस मुक्त बाजार की प्रक्रिया का क्या प्रभाव पड़ेगा? फिर जो विश्व स्तर की आर्थिक संस्थायें इस प्रक्रिया को डिक्लेट कर रही हैं वो कितनी पारदर्शी हैं और ऐसे देश जो कम विकसित हैं, उन पर इसका क्या प्रभाव पड़ेगा।

इस वक्तव्य के बाद सवाल-जवाब के क्रम में यह बात विशेष रूप से उभरी की भूमंडलीकरण की प्रक्रिया से समाज में सामाजिक असुरक्षा बढ़ी है और महिलाओं को एक तरफ तो उपभोग की वस्तु के रूप में पेश करने की प्रवृत्ति बढ़ी है तो दूसरी तरफ उन्हें चहारदिवारियों के पीछे भेजने की प्रक्रिया भी तेज हुई है। उन पर हिंसा बढ़ी है। ड्रेस कोड से लेकर दहेज हत्या तक इसके ढेरों उदाहरण सामने हैं।

इस विचार विमर्श के बाद दूसरे दिन के अंतिम रात्र का समापन हुआ। कार्यक्रम की शुरुआत में हमीदिया गर्ल्स कालेज की छात्राओं ने दो तराने पेश किए। कार्यक्रम के अंत में आयोजकों की ओर से डॉ. कुमुद शर्मा ने और महिला सलाहकार बोर्ड की ओर से डॉ. रंजना कक्कड़ ने सभी प्रतियोगियों के प्रति आभार ज्ञापित किया।



## ‘Making It Relevant’: Mapping the Meaning of Women’s Studies In Tamilnadu

*Padmini Swaminathan and Anandhi, S.*

### Introduction

This summary is based on an extremely preliminary reading of the first phase of a survey on Women’s Studies in Tamil Nadu. Rather than beginning with a literature survey of what constitutes ‘Women’s Studies’ and/or even examining the experiences of other parts of the country [both components to be dealt with in the next phase of the study], we launched our study after a brainstorming session at MIDS where faculty teaching Women’s Studies courses in colleges in Chennai deliberated on several aspects of their experience with such courses. This brainstorming enabled us to put together a ‘Guideline Questionnaire’ that formed the basis of our data collection for this survey. On hindsight we feel that this approach has been instrumental in throwing up a rich variety of institutional typologies, sometimes within the same College/University. At another level, even this preliminary mapping has several revelations, not least being the manner in which it has challenged our fundamental notion of an academic discipline, and has led us to ask ourselves, whether or not what passes for Women’s Studies in Tamil Nadu can be construed as a Discipline.

### Coverage of Survey

Our survey was conducted in three regions of Tamil Nadu covering 30 institutions of higher education. These included 2 Universities, 26 Colleges and 2 private institutions [the latter, not affiliated to any University]. The survey mapped the nature and history [wherever available] of institutions and different departments that offered women’s studies. Within each Institution, we identified the specific Departments/Disciplines that offered a Course/Paper in Women’s Studies. The Courses were then categorized into: whether they formed a core paper, optional, major or allied paper; the duration of the course; eligibility criteria for joining the course; nature of certification; specific requirements of the course, (if any).

Other important components for which we tried to elicit information included: expertise, infrastructure and other facilities available for teaching and carrying out research activities; methods of teaching; specific institutional mechanisms that needed to be created for introducing women’s studies paper or course; specific staff recruitment procedure [if any]; profile of students/participants; nature of networking and alignment with

women's organizations and movement outside institutional premises; and the nature and source of funding for women's studies. Interviews with staff teaching these courses at present and those who have either retired or have given up teaching the courses for various reasons have to be conducted. If possible the experiences of students will also be documented.

## **Preliminary Findings : A Summary**

### **I. Institutional Pattern**

What emerges from our Survey is the extremely complex institutional pattern in place in the surveyed institutions for offering Women's Studies as a course. The following constitute the broad categories into which these patterns can be ordered for analytical purposes:

- Departments of Women's Studies
- Centres of Women's Studies
- Women's Studies' Cells

The complexity arises from the following kinds of information that our survey has revealed and which we are at present trying to comprehend, namely,

1. Very often, a Centre for Women's Studies has been set up in the very Institution which also has a Department of Women's Studies
2. Departments as well as Centres conduct academic programmes sometimes collaborating with each other, at other times separately
3. Centres, unlike Departments, are involved in a range of activities both within the academic institutions in which they are housed as well as outside the institution. They sometimes offer diploma or certificate courses to 'outsiders'- NGOs in particular. Besides, their 'outreach' activities are quite substantial when compared to their 'academic' work. What needs to be stressed here is that, the nomenclature, 'Centre for Women's Studies' is maintained even if very little academic work [in terms of research or teaching] takes place.
4. In the few cases where an Institution has both a Centre as well as a Department of Women's Studies, the former has effectively eclipsed the latter such that while the Department languishes for want of funds for research and personnel, the Centre presents a picture of a thriving marketplace, attracting funds [both national and international] to carry on a range of women-empowerment and income-generating activities.
5. Institutions that have settled for Cells explicitly carry out 'welfare-oriented' activities. There are however differences in the manner Cells operate: some are oriented to train their [women] students

to reach out to less-empowered and less resource-endowed women outside their institutions [the typical National Social Service activities]; others explicitly engage in outreach activities with or without involving their students and staff. The existence of such Cells, we were informed, is essential to enhance the 'star status' of the educational institution when it comes to evaluation and accreditation by bodies such as the UGC.

6. The objective of private institutions to offer 'courses in Women's Studies' needs to be explored further. At the moment, we realize that these courses and their particular specializations are perceived by candidates as enabling qualifications for jobs in the NGO sector.

### **II. Women's Studies Curriculum**

The 'Objectives' enumerated by different colleges for introducing specific papers in Women's Studies, is revealing for the palpable anxiety to be 'relevant'. Looking at the changes in the content of various courses over time and the change in the nomenclature show that this business of making women's studies relevant is articulated in very many ways; further, for the same institution the context of 'relevance' also changes over time.

- Over the years, Women's Studies like many other courses has lost out to more job-oriented courses. Dwindling numbers have even led to change in nomenclature of Courses and contents. For example in one institution, the two-year course leading to a Master's Degree in Women's Studies has been renamed as Master of Women's Studies and Computer applications.
- The anxiety to make the courses 'appealing' to male students has led quite a few institutes to play down the 'radical' potential of women's studies courses. Others have simply substituted 'gender' studies for 'women's studies. Infact, it was reported to us that this change in nomenclature from women's studies to gender studies has increased the comfort levels of male students.
- In quite a few Christian institutions, to begin with, women's studies [which often pre-dated UGC-sponsored courses and Centres] was introduced as part of what they called 'value-education' to emphasize moral values while studying women-related issues.
- Across all institutions and courses, a running theme that we could discern is the need to relate women's studies to women's lived/life experiences. In a different way this theme was also conveyed as the need to 'do something' particularly for economically and socially disempowered women.

How Women's Studies is made 'relevant' is a theme worth exploring in detail. Our survey merely provides a glimpse. What is also worth underlining here is the significance of a particular institutional structure in which a Women's Studies Department/ Centre/ Cell is embedded, for the specific character that 'Women's Studies' takes on, in an institution. We give below a few examples of the manner in which particular disciplines in affiliated and autonomous colleges have defined the objective and contents of papers that they have introduced as part of Women's Studies courses.

*College [Autonomous], Dept of Economics, Paper entitled: Women and Development [applicable to departments of economics in other colleges that have introduced papers as part of their agenda to address 'women's question']:* "To sensitize students on gender perspectives, to build self-confidence and leadership among students, and to motivate them to participate effectively in community building". Reading through the syllabus, it is clear that the course is no way geared to critically engage with the discipline of economics. Rather the paper is structured to 'inform' students of the lacuna in our understanding of economic processes because of the exclusion of 'women' as a category. From a study of the 'economic situation' of women, papers on Women's Studies in Economics Department, in general, end up trying to promote 'women as entrepreneurs'.

Since none of the papers on Women's Studies, that we have come across so far, interrogate their respective disciplines, there is very little variation in the content of the courses that have been introduced whether in the History, Sociology or Economics Department. If it is a paper introduced by the History Department, it generally begins with, 'Women through the Ages', comes down very quickly to 'History of Women's Movement in UK, USA and then to India with a paper on 'Prominent Women Personalities', and from then on the terrain is more or less similar across all disciplines: namely, discussing the different kinds of Feminisms, Women and Economy, Women and Education, Women and politics, Women and the Legal System, Women and Human Rights, etc., etc.

The anxiety to 'sustain' women's studies' departments/ centers [in order also that the staff employed in these are retained] is evident from the change in titles of departments and courses to attract students. Example: *Women's Studies and Computer Applications*.

Our limited exploration of the curriculum introduced in the different institutions has raised more questions than answers. From the survey we are unable to comprehend how the women's studies courses taught as part of various disciplines transcend accepted

premises and methods of the discipline. In other words what are the aspects of the course that challenge particular disciplinary practices such as the mode and content of teaching, the curriculum and the examination models? Does the aspect of making a particular course relevant automatically challenge the disciplinary boundaries of the discipline in which it is taught? Take the discipline of History for example, which is very particular about periodization; how have women's studies courses introduced in History departments engaged with such periodization, methodologically and otherwise and yet remained 'relevant'? This raises a related question about the rationale of introducing a women's studies paper in a particular department. These are as yet questions for which the empirical survey can provide only limited answers, if at all, but which need to be probed further during the in depth interviews that we hope to conduct in our second phase.

Other questions that the survey has raised and which, in our opinion, organizations such as the Indian Association for Women's Studies, need to seriously engage with, include the following :

1. How generalizable is the Tamil Nadu experience as far as Women's Studies is concerned?
2. Since quite a few Centres/Departments/Cells for Women's studies came into existence after a UGC Committee recommended their cases, it is important for us to examine what exactly the UGC sanctioned in each case when its committees visited Universities/Colleges and subsequently approved the setting up of Departments of Women's Studies or Centres of Women's Studies. How did the UGC distinguish between a Department and a Centre?
3. In a few cases the UGC seems to have approved a Centre when a Department was already in existence. The rationale for this decision needs to be explored.
4. The intervention by bodies such as the UGC seems to have bypassed and/or not taken cognizance of initiatives already in place in a few colleges. It is not clear whether a 'rigid' application of UGC norms killed local initiatives or whether College managements found the UGC norms handy to stop activities that had begun to raise uncomfortable questions on a range of issues, not necessarily confined to pedagogy.
5. What is also a gray area is the role that particular Universities have played in translating UGC recommendations in to operational rules and regulations. Again, the continuing involvement [if any] of the UGC and the trajectory that a particular department or center has taken over time needs to be specifically examined.

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## Through a glass darkly: Exploring the hidden curriculum of gender

Nandini Manjrekar

If we accept feminism as a moral and political position, then it is difficult not to see its place in changing worldviews in schools, since, after the family, these are the first institutions to 'teach' children about the gendering of the social world. Developing feminist critiques of school pedagogies and practices are primarily based on recognising the pervasiveness of gender and its relationships to structures of power. Commitment to the idea that pedagogical alternatives are possible and further the feminist ideal of a gender-just society take feminist interventions to a place outside the realm of the purely theoretical. In the west, for example, feminist perspectives on education developed less out of engagement with theory than with the political will of teachers active in or influenced by the women's movement who took up the task of infusing feminist ideas into everyday school practices and school curriculum.

Untangling the relationship of gender to class, caste and other subtexts and how these together construct the nation for the school child helps us to understand how the normalizing of official gender ideologies takes place through the 'hidden curriculum' in school. Along with texts, normalization proceeds through the rehearsing of gender ideologies within the quotidian spaces of everyday school practices (morning assembly, teachers' classroom behaviour, attitudes and statements, sexual division of labour, classroom discussions).

In one textbook lesson (Gujarat State Textbook Bureau, Class 4), evocatively titled *Kaun kya banega*, we see how official school knowledge constructs gender, labour and nation. The lesson is set in a classroom, where the teacher (*Guruji*) is narrating the children about the achievements of *mahapurushon* – scientists, scholars and leaders – of the country and their contribution to the nation's development. In the lesson, the *guruji* asks the children what they will be when they grow up. It is pictorially presented as a masquerade, much like 'a school fancy dress competition, where children dressed as adults play out five of the six characters in the story. The sixth, the farmer, is represented in the more traditional textbook iconography of a man with plough and bullocks. The selection of occupations is interesting because it represents those areas of labour essential to the modernization project – the doctor, the engineer, the teacher, the soldier, the leader and the 'good' farmer.

All characters are male, except the one who says she wants to be a teacher (named, predictably, Saraswati). Four boys are Hindu, and one is Muslim.

The context within which this lesson is set is that of the teacher telling the children of the good deeds of great men. The greatness of the nation is represented by the hard work, sacrifice and nobility of the *mahapurushes* – a trope in the school textbooks used in this school (and perhaps also elsewhere), which is deeply etched by gender (as also caste and class). The ideal of the *mahapurush* is associated with the value of hard work and effort – 'kadi mehnat' – which brings about national progress and pride. *Kadi mehnat* becomes part of the national imagination. It defines citizenship through the selfless service and toil of common people. It is interesting to see in this lesson how the idea of the nation can be mapped on to the labour of its citizens. All the occupations are cast as essential to the maintenance and progress of the modernizing nation state. Boys are shown as aspiring to leadership and productive roles and gaining the approval of the teacher for this; while the lone girl is clearly marked out as a moral agent in the nation's progress, responsible for influencing 'good citizenship'. Dominant gender ideologies pervade the lesson through the exclusion of women – the girl can never be any of the other national 'workers'. She cannot be a leader, because she is not capable of '*tan-man-dhan*' *seva* to the country. She is not part of the industrializing process, can also not inherit her father's capital as an engineer; neither can she go to the village and open a clinic to serve the poor. The masculine heroism and bravery of the soldier also excludes her. She could have been an agricultural labourer, but could not have been shown participating in modernized green revolution farming technologies, and in any case, an iconography would have to be invented to represent her! The *guruji*'s remarks indicate that it is not through imparting knowledge which is what as a teacher she should be doing, but through socialization into values that she helps in the reproduction of the national community. Success, for the girl, would entail working hard at creating citizens through inculcation of national values and norms.

Analysis of classroom interactions around the lesson *Kaun Kya Banega* revealed the overwhelmingly stereotyped responses of the children, which appeared to be patterned on the 'logic' of the lesson, a ritual performance empty of real engagement. What was this logic? Simply put, it revolved around the imagination of the strong nation as built by those who laboured for its progress, where women and men consensually performed their natural productive roles in the economy, strengthening their capabilities through

hard work. Implicit to this understanding is a certain hierarchisation of work, based on gender, class and caste; as well as the emphasis on success in education as a precursor to achieving success in the 'right' occupations. This was dramatically brought out in the narrative of one boy, who told me that he would be forced to be a farmer, since he did not know how to read and write.

Some of these issues were discussed at a recent session on gender for coordinators and teachers of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan in Vadodara, Gujarat. We discussed several issues relating to teachers' practices in the classroom, and activities that could be done with children to think about gender inequality. We also discussed the ways in which textbooks represented women. Finally, there were small group discussions on specific textbooks, based on a framework developed collectively.

Two of the books selected for discussion were Social Studies textbooks for Classes 5 and 6. All three authors of the Class 5 book are women. These books include women in a very focussed manner, as emblematising the glory of Indian civilisation. The textbooks published in 1997 claim to follow the competency-based curriculum following what are called the Minimum Levels of Learning. The syllabus for Class 5 covers two parts. The first part, the Ancient Age (from Vedic times to Harshavardhan) aims to an 'understanding of the Indian cultural heritage in a proper perspective'. Included among the specific objectives (p. iii) are: [the child should] "know about the respectable status of women in Indian culture (1.5.2). The Class 6 textbook on the Medieval Age (from Harshavardhan to the Battle of Plassey) has this as one of its objectives: 'to Understand that the in the south, the torch of culture and Hindu civilisation kept on burning against foreign invasions and also the character and self-respect of the women of India of the medieval age' 9 1.6.2, p. iii).

Since teachers have no control over what they teach, textbooks structure the way they look at codified knowledge. For most teachers, to consider school curriculum a 'selection' would amount to heresy. Almost all of the teachers at the session found that the representation of women was inadequate, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Our earlier discussions of gender ideologies in society, women's autonomy, etc. to which they, especially the women, so readily agreed, were abandoned in favour of demanding more representations in textbooks of courageous women who braved opposition to uphold tradition and commitment, to family, husbands, children and Indian society through which they ennoble themselves and 'our' culture. Apala's story (Class 5) was seen to be

one of a woman's struggle against gender oppression, which is also part of the legacy of Indian culture. That the names of the mothers of the numerable sages and holy men in the history textbooks were mentioned was seen as positive. Ranak Devi's sati when Siddhrāj Jaisingh recovered her from King Khengar, some felt, should have been elaborated since it would have given children insight into the importance of honour for a woman. An official who came for last session summed it up by saying that history was all about facts and that what they needed was 'nari jagriti', not 'naariwaad'.

It is clear that working with teachers on issues of gender is an immense challenge. To extend this dialogue to issues of school knowledge, however, involves certain transgressions which administrators and teachers may not be entirely comfortable with. So while official policy (such as the SSA) seeks to take on the issue of gender equality, a culture conducive to discussing the pedagogical dimensions of the issues involved is missing. What is even more disturbing, if one is to learn from this experience in Gujarat, are the resonances of textbook knowledge about women with the language of ennoblement and sacrifice. Long associated with women's national identity in India, we have been seeing this language assuming an aggressive edge as Hindu women are being seen in public space as assertive and protective of their rights under patriarchy as upholders of tradition. It appears that a vision for education in the Hindu Rashtra, or at least in its laboratory, involves empowering girls and young women for this role.

*(Based on a paper presented at the workshop on Gender and Critical Pedagogies, Women's Studies Programme, JNU, 19-20 March 2004)*

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# The Impossibility of a Linear and Coherent Narrative of Pedagogical Experiences

Vidyut Bhagwat, Sharmila Rege, Swati Dyahadroy and Anagha Tambe

As we collectively reflect, probably for the first time on curricular and pedagogical aspects of teaching courses on gender and women's studies, many of us located in UGC sponsored centres are awaiting the long overdue funds and guidelines for women's studies in the Xth plan period. There is therefore a sense of excitement at sharing our specific institutional histories and curricular journeys but also a sense of apprehension about the course of things to come. The implications of the crisis in higher education for social sciences and humanities in general and women studies in particular and the resurgence of the *Hindutva Parivar* which has in the recent past sought to deflect the agenda of women's studies into family studies further complicates the context of our reflections. While most social sciences in India, marked off their specific disciplinary boundaries through curricula in moments of their usability by the state, we in women's studies are seeking to define our disciplinary status in a period of crisis – hoping that it is in times of crisis that a renewal becomes possible. The questions of disciplinary status - the issue of autonomy v/s mainstreaming so to say, have been with us for a long time but we find ourselves asking old questions in new ways and for new times.

Our histories and experience are much messier and not at all as linear as the narrative we present. (The mess of funding, initiating, and co-ordinating 'The Cell Against Sexual Harassment' on campus and a Day Care Centre are best left out for the moment!!). We are therefore like all storytellers imposing on our story linearity and coherence - that is never entirely there.

The women's studies centre at the University of Pune was granted to the Department of Sociology by the UGC in 1987. In the same year courses on 'Sociology of Women' were introduced at the M. A. and M. Phil level. These courses operated largely within the framework of (Term I)- dedicated to Feminist Thought in the West and (Term II) – issues/problems of family, development, violence, work in the Indian context. When two of us joined the centre in 1990/91 we were assigned the task of teaching this course. The University at that point of time had an external

evaluation pattern and examination papers were been set and corrected externally. This made keeping to the parameters drawn by the syllabus a must. A pattern that we evolved – was one in which we would discuss the sociological (the expected) on the topic and then outline ways in which feminist scholarship had posed challenges to these perspectives. We had often been warned that we were teaching courses in 'Sociology of women' – sociology underlined and not feminism. We perfected that art of making strategic exclusions/inclusions of the feminist challenge in order to avoid the perennial questions about the 'sociological' content of our classroom discussions. These limitations posed by the strict maintenance of disciplinary boundaries in the classroom and supplementary classes in Marathi that we had started opened up spaces outside the classroom for discussions and linkages with the women's movement. *Samvaad* – became a platform for engaging with campaigns of the women's groups in Pune and with the tensions and debates in the women's movement in Maharashtra. Street plays and poster-exhibitions on contemporary themes became a regular activity. Our campaigns on 'No right to say No' and our street play on 'of woman caste and woman in the caste system' directly engaged with the discussions and tensions on the issue of caste in the women's movement. These engagements became ways of understanding alternate non-brahman histories of feminism, which were at that time completely absent in the sociology curriculum. This resulted in students taking a lead in organizing a *yatra* to Naigaon the birthplace of Savitribai Phule and preparing themselves for it by reading histories of Satyashodhak feminism.

As the reframing/revising of the sociology curriculum began in 1997, we sought to mainstream gender in the core courses and to bring to the course on Sociology of Gender, the non-Brahman histories of feminism in the region and the challenges posed to the discipline by feminist scholarship. However, the centre became 'autonomous' in 2000 this meant we were not teaching these courses that we had designed. This autonomy also posed questions about our identities as sociologists. Our applications for recognition as Ph.D. supervisors were at that time rejected. Clearly there were no real institutional frameworks and procedures to work out interdisciplinarity and thus to make it work.

In 1995, a part-time interdisciplinary, P. G. Certificate in Women's Studies had been designed and floated as an evening course – while we were still a part of the Department of Sociology. This course had come as a response to a challenge posed by senior faculty



members about our academic credibility – the issue being our alleged blurring of the divide between the ‘social’ of the activist and that of the social scientist. The course was designed in record time to meet the challenge. The one-year interdisciplinary certificate part-time course was designed keeping in view for postgraduate students on campus, college teachers, and social activists. It promised “an interdisciplinary explanation of the various dimensions of gender construction and gender discrimination” The eligibility condition was fixed at graduation with minimum of second class. This course was designed around papers on Basic Concepts and Debates in Feminist Thought, Women and Development, Women and Politics of Culture, Religion and Ideology and Social History of Maharashtra from Gender and Caste Perspective. The papers were taught in a Block pattern because in the first year only one person taught the entire course. This has now evolved as a pattern at the Centre. In a sense we had at that time defined the women’s studies curriculum around an introduction to feminist theory (hyphenated pattern) and feminist concepts reviewed from a Caste/Class perspective Development debates and issues in the third world/specially India. The Roop Kanwar/Shah Bano cases and Babri Masjid demolition had meant issues of Culture, Religion and Ideology were organized around a separate paper. The paper on Social history of Maharashtra from Gender & Caste perspective (1818-1950) was so to say the ‘special focus’ of the course.

In the first year, 15 participants signed up for the course and included activists, students of Sociology Dept., housewives, and social workers. Each had come with a separate agenda/of what they imagined a women’s studies course would offer – and the uneven academic backgrounds and expectations from the course is a problem that continues to stay with us.

Since this is a self-funded course- we could reframe the course within the broad parameters – but real restructuring had to wait for there was no institutional structure for developing interdisciplinary courses. There was no Board of Studies for women’s studies courses (the problem being its credibility/possibility of existence as a separate discipline) that could approve revised courses and refer them to the academic council. From 1996 we had begun to teach the course – in two batches- one in English the other in Marathi. Though there was a lot of movement literature available in Marathi – the gap in English and Marathi readings could be bridged only by separate lecture sessions. The divide in the two batches – we are aware was

often not just of language of discussion and reading but also of region, caste and class differences. This made us develop a pattern of some combined sessions across the ‘language’ barrier.

After the Centre became autonomous, the certificate course came to constitute the main teaching component of the Centre. The autonomy made us sharpen the academic content of the course as minus the ‘protective’ cover of the parent discipline – we had to as if once again prove our academic credibility. This crisis- pushed us into undertaking two activities - one to promote serious reading in women’s studies and the other to continue our agenda of mainstreaming gender. Many of the participants imagine women’s studies to be a site of debate of opinions. The academic rigor of feminist scholarship comes as a revelation. Reading as a serious activity had to be inculcated. We started special reading sessions for our students in women’s studies classes- in addition to the 4 hours of teaching; participants are expected to come to the centre for two hours for readings and reflections. Reading is serious business and participants maintain a file of their reflections on the readings. This becomes a compulsory activity as these files are evaluated as part of the internal grading. We began conducting Refresher Courses in WS, so that we could continue with our agenda of mainstreaming gender in the disciplines (The UGC rule that allowed for 3 airfares for resource persons meant that women’s studies scholars from different regions could be invited and besides lecturing at the refresher course, the students of certificate course could benefit by meeting the scholars and discussing their work with them).

We have so far conducted 6 refresher courses, while 4 of the courses focused on ‘Gender in the Social Sciences’; two were more specific built around ‘Gender and History’ and ‘Gender and globalization’. One of the research projects at the Centre had focused in the Sociology curriculum in seven universities in Maharashtra and our ‘fieldwork’ with teachers and students influenced the planning of refresher courses. An important part of the refresher course is the paper to be written and presented by participants- this is an area in which we experiment- with workshops that guide the participant teachers to map gender/caste/class/ community biases in their syllabus. The participants are encouraged to reframe at least one topic in their curriculum through gender perspective (some of the papers by participants are being reworked and we hope to build this into a teacher manual).

We sought to democratize discussions in the refresher classroom by providing on the spot-translations of the presentations. The 'translations' provide space to make the presentation more accessible both linguistically and contextually.

In late 2001 as an adhoc Board of Studies was constituted- we sort to reorganise the certificate course in women's studies. The problem of part-time/brief engagement of students with women's studies was sought to be addressed by supplementing the certificate with one year/part-time Diploma in women's studies and credit courses in women's studies for students at the Master's level. The year was marked by winds of 'liberalisation' blowing across the campus- as credit pattern was introduced and technically students were now allowed to take courses across disciplines. But the underside of this liberalisation was academic audits - which meant that disciplines had to expand the base of the optional courses that they offer in order to keep their teaching posts. All kinds of pressures therefore operate to keep students within disciplinary boundaries and almost every discipline has added a 'women and whatever' course or module. The response to the credit courses has been encouraging but unevenly distributed across disciplines. We now wonder if we should consider the possibility of working out the Certificate and Diploma as adding up to a minor-degree in Women's Studies for P. G. students rather than offer Credit courses.

In reworking the curriculum of the Certificate course, the broad frame of four papers designed around issues in feminist theory, History, Political Economy and Culture and ideology was retained. The reworking of the course content was guided by:

- Sensitising feminist theory/feminist movements course to feminist internationalism. We sought to open up the course to Asian/African /L. American and Middle East feminist perspectives.
- Our institutional commitment to caste and gender issues- had sensitised us to the 'whiteness' of the feminist theory courses that we taught. Feminist theory modules were reworked to place the critique of capitalism and race at the centre. This reorganisation has opened up a lot of discussion on caste and problematisation of 'upper caste ness' in the classroom- discussions on race and black feminism as if provided a 'foreign site' on which reservations/prejudices/misconceptions/privileges/ hidden agendas of caste could be discussed.

- In teaching the earlier women and development courses we had often felt trapped in a model that can be best described as a women studies student as an explorer of all women's issues. We tried addressing this by reorganising the course around issues of women and economy, questions of identity and cultural production, rights and citizenship in relation to the state and women's resistance and activism (Literary Texts - used to tease out issues).
- The course on Gender and Politics of Culture, Religion and Ideology was opened up to the new developments in Culture and media studies. The earlier component on Gender and communalism for obvious reasons became a central theme in the new course. Analysis of cases, materials, films- was built into the course.
- The course on Gender and social History had always had gender and caste as a central theme- but there had been major exclusions. The perspective of Dr. Ambedkar on the women's questions was not just an addition as this perspective had considerably reframed the course outline course and our understanding of the history of the feminism in the region.

The new Diploma was organised around three papers and 2 optional modules. The Diploma came up as a response to the crisis of lack of institutional reproduction. We imagined that the Diploma would address those seeking to integrate gender in their research. With this in view the papers were designed to introduce participants to the theoretical developments in feminist scholarship in India, the gender concerns in Global restructuring and debates in feminist epistemology and methodology. The first paper seeks to introduce students to the theoretical developments in gender studies in India and is organised thematically. The second paper on feminist epistemology, methodology and research poses a series of problems - in that while we now have feminist critiques of disciplines, we have not really mapped the possible interdisciplinary contours of methodology and epistemology of feminist scholarship. In 2002-03, when we floated this course the first time- we took an easy way out by focusing on the debates in the western academy. This year we find ourselves struggling to reorganize the course around feminism/science debates in India and the gender implications of epistemological divide between Brahmanical/non-Brahmanical/Dalit perspective. Interestingly we have integrated 'Fact-finding' reports by feminists to discuss methodology of 'activist research'. The third paper, which focuses on gender concerns in globalisation, seeks to promote historical, comparative and relational

thinking on issues of gender economy, identity and representation, citizenship and rights and activism. We made a purposive attempt to look at the reading materials from across South Asia - and experienced more traveling anxieties then - we do in our travels to the First World. The optional modules give Diploma students a choice to read into areas of their interest and do readings that will inform their research project. The Diploma as we mentioned earlier had come up as a response to the crisis of institutional reproduction. Though the 2 years of Diploma teaching learning have been mutually enriching- we are quite sure that in the present structure it cannot be the answer to our crisis of institutional reproduction. The crisis calls for working out Research Degrees in Women's Studies. The centre has designed and submitted for consideration a M. Phil programme in Gender, Culture and Development in South Asia.

The participants in the Certificate and Diploma are required to write a research paper and project respectively. The Centre has published some of the papers and projects and some participants have presented their research in creative formats of film or plays. But the uneven expectations and academic backgrounds of the participants suggests that we rework this requirement of the course. Active work hours with NGO/Women's Groups/ Research Centres /Newspapers may be offered as an option.

The three-month Undergraduate Certificate course in Women and Development was designed and floated at one of the local colleges in Dec. 2003. This course was designed to fit into spaces that were created by the pressures to vocationalise undergraduate education. Local colleges facing the National Accreditation process were keen to float more short- term/practical courses. This course aims to orient and train undergraduate students seeking employment opportunities in the Ngo sector. The first batch of students worked with the Ragpickers union - the Kagat Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat as a part of the fieldwork component. The course will be floated alternatively on an urban/semi rural/rural college campuses. The first batch will receive certificates this April- we are yet to do an evaluation of the course.

We are at present offering a Certificate, Diploma and credit courses to Postgraduate students, an undergraduate course and refresher courses for teachers. Reflecting on our experience - we realize,

- Each of our courses has emerged as a response to some challenge/ crisis- internal or external - The certificate was a response to the challenge posed to

our academic credibility, the Diploma to the crisis of institutional reproduction and the Undergraduate course a response to the spaces opened up by the challenge to vocationalise. We have never really had the leisure of reflection- to think out seriously the different ways in which women's studies curricula may be designed.

- Once again faced with the question of institutional reproduction- we are now pondering over the possibilities of a Masters and Ph. D. research programme in women's Studies. This has meant a complete turn about from our position at inception - and requires us to collectively reflect on some of the notions that we have assumed for long.
- Women's Studies is a perspective to be integrated in other disciplines
- Women's Studies scholarship is necessarily interdisciplinary.
- Women's Studies is an academic arm of Women's Movement.

The consequences of 'inclusion' of women in the disciplines are more than apparent. The assumed interdisciplinarity of women's studies calls for reflection. Much of the research and writing has emerged in working within and against frameworks of existing disciplines. What we mean by interdisciplinarity - needs to be more clearly spelt out. The contours and nature of the movement has changed considerably and the old activist researcher divide is considerably blurred as a lot of serious research is done by women's NGOs. Yet a gender training programmes- cannot be merged into women's studies teaching programmes. This danger is real as UGC guidelines underline NGO networking and training as a key activity for centres. Part-time courses bring together persons from diverse backgrounds/agendas and negotiating this agendas- can result in thinning of content. Diverse disciplinary backgrounds pose problems of translation that are more than linguistic. Despite the sincere engagement of students, part-time courses are like part-time relationships - exciting - spiraling effects but are lacking in accountability/commitment and disallowing legitimate reproduction in the given structure. This has pushed us towards seriously considering the possibilities of a masters and research program. At one level there are serious problems of pragmatic and budgetary kind. But these problems apart - there are several dilemmas and issues that we feel need to be teased out further-



- Is women's studies an interdisciplinary field or a field anchored in existing disciplines? How do we deal with the disciplinary cultures the different ways of reading that operate within Women's Studies? The tensions that arise from interdisciplinary feminist scholarship anchored in a discipline are richly productive but can this stand as a separate body of knowledge relatively autonomous and encompassing usually understood the disciplinary components? We need to think out these intellectual and pedagogical issues.
- We agree that academic disciplines regulate and certify but they also enable a depth of knowledge and expertise. This make us feel a little anxious. While many of us have selected engagements with other disciplines- are we ready yet to design & work out an interdisciplinary masters curriculum? How can such a program foster a minimal proficiency across the divisions of humanities and social sciences? The growing sophistication of methodologies has meant that though we may share research questions we may not have common methodological tools. How do we deal with this?

Some of the anxieties may in part be specific to our particular history and location. Some of them may in part be the resultant of the present crisis leading to a momentary loss of reason and history. Have not all disciplines even the most traditional ones been founded on boundaries that are products of history not a priori essence. Is sociology/Political science for that mater unified or stable entities? Can we not work out a programme reimagining the formations of knowledge in a cash strapped university? We have been doing wild thinking on possible models.

- Bringing together existing course and faculty across cognate units
- Bringing together faculty from several disciplines
- Building programs across different women's studies centres and regions (though even the thought of such a program is enough cause an administrative nightmare), we think its worth giving a thought to!

(Based on a paper presented at the workshop on Gender and Critical Pedagogies, Women's Studies Programme, JNU, 19-20 March 2004)

*(The writers teach at the Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule Women's Studies Centre, University of Pune)*

Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule Women's Studies Centre, University of Pune, Offers UGC Refresher Course on 'Gender in Social Sciences' from 17<sup>th</sup> December 2004 to 6<sup>th</sup> January 2005.

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, Psychology 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 its 7<sup>th</sup> Refresher Course on 'Gender in Social Sciences' from 17<sup>th</sup> December 2004 to 6<sup>th</sup> January 2005.

The highlights of the Course would be:

1. Introduction to women's studies
2. Impact of women's studies on major disciplines and their practices
3. Integrating gender into curricular and pedagogical practices
4. Impact of women's studies on research methodology/methods
5. Engendering analyses of contemporary issues in the Indian context
6. Understanding caste, class and gender in the Indian context

For details, please contact:

**Dr. Vidyut Bhagwat**

Course Co-ordinator, Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule Women's Studies Centre, **University of Pune**  
Pune - 7, Email : [wsc@unipune.ernet.in](mailto:wsc@unipune.ernet.in)

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• Hanging together existing course and faculty across college walls.

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