



Newsletter

December 2007, Volume II, No. 3

25 YEARS

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Indian Association of Women's Studies

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IAWS DIGITAL ARCHIVE

The IAWS Digital-Archive now includes more than 40 Newsletters (many of which are only available as single copies) and some 20 publications in English and Hindi, most of which are out of print (see the accompanying listings in this Newsletter). It also includes Conference brochures, Presidential addresses, Reports to the General Body and other such documents from the First National Conference, 1981, onwards. Other materials including photographs and possibly some grey literature of archival importance are also being digitised. All of this will soon be available on the IAWS website <http://www.iaws.org/>

We are particularly grateful to the following for sharing documents with us:

Vidyut Bhagwat, and Swati Dyahadroy, Women's Studies Centre, University of Pune; Veena Poonacha and Library staff of the Research Centre for Women's Studies, SNDT University, Mumbai; Anju Vyas and Library staff, Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi; Shrabani Majumdar, School of Women's Studies, Jadavpur University, Kolkata; Kalpana Kannabiran, Asmita, Hyderabad; and Chhaya Datar, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai.

For technical help we would like to thank: Vinod, and Charles Prabhakar, Centre for Education and Documentation, Bangalore; and Anirban Dutta Gupta, Ahmedabad.

If members have photographs and any other relevant archival materials, please do share them with us. Contact Sumi Krishna by email <iawspresident@gmail.com> or write to her: #103, Farah Court; 185 Fifth Main, Defence Colony; Indira Nagar; Bangalore 560038. (Tel: 080-25200716)

Thank you!

Sumi Krishna: President, IAWS.
E-mail: iawspresident@gmail.com

Editor's Desk



First National Conference

This issue commemorates the 25th anniversary of the Indian Association of Women's Studies. The history¹ of the IAWS can be traced back to the emergence of the women's movement in India in the mid-1970s and the publication of *Towards Equality*, the landmark report of the National Committee for the Status of Women in India. In 1974 SNDT Women's University, Mumbai, established the first university Research Centre for Women's Studies. By 1980, the Centre for Women's Development Studies (CWDS) had also started in New Delhi.

The First National Conference on Women's Studies was held in Mumbai in April 1981. It defined women's studies as a 'critical perspective' and recommended the integration of the women's question in all disciplines. It adopted a resolution to set up the Indian Association for Women's Studies, which was subsequently established in 1982. Today the membership of the IAWS comprises almost 1500 scholars, activists, researchers and students, as well as institutions related to women's studies, in India and other countries of South Asia.

Conferences held so far include:

- I. 1981 Mumbai: First National Women's Studies Conference
- II. 1984 Thiruvanthapuram: Gender Justice
- III. 1986 Chandigarh: Women's Struggles and Movements
- IV. 1988 Vishakapatnam: Rural Women: Poverty, Survival, Struggle and Change
- V. 1991 Kolkata: Religion, Culture and Politics
- VI. 1993 Mysore The New Economic Policy and Women
- VII. 1995 Jaipur: Looking Forward, Looking Back: In Search of Feminist Visions, Alternatives, Paradigms and Practices
- VIII. 1998 Pune: Survival and Sovereignty: Challenges to Women's Studies
- IX. 2000 Hyderabad: Women's Perspectives on Public Policy
- X. 2002 Bhubaneswar: Sustaining Democracy: Challenges in the New Millennium
- XI. 2005 Goa: Sovereignty, Citizenship and Gender

The IAWS has also been involved in campaigns for the promotion of women's studies and women's interests. Since the late eighties it has actively advocated the establishment of Women's Studies Centres, and it was closely involved with the UGC's efforts in this direction. The fact that Women's Studies has become a force to reckon with in India is revealed in the ideological opposition it has had to confront. In 2004 the IAWS campaigned successfully against the UGC's move to rename and reorient the Centres of Women's Studies as 'Women and Family Studies Centres'. Mobilising women's studies teachers, researchers, and activists of the women's movement, it succeeded in pre-empting the proposed change.

As our activities have built up, so have our documents. As part of the jubilee activities, a physical archive has been set up at the RCWS at SNDT University, Mumbai, to house all the records of the IAWS. An online archive has also been launched at our website: <http://www.iaws.org/>.

This 25th anniversary issue of the newsletter carries two special features.² *Across 25 Years* presents the IAWS highlights of the last quarter of a century through a selection of excerpts from past newsletters, and it also includes three essays on the role of women's studies in India during this period. The *Lucknow Special* looks forward to the Silver Jubilee Conference, *Feminism, Education and the Transformation of Knowledges: Processes and Institutions*, that will be held in Lucknow from 7th to 10th February 2008. It carries brief notes on our joint organizers, The Institute of Women's Studies, Lucknow University, and the Isabella Thoburn College, an essay on the women of Awadh, recollections of IT College, and an IAWS member's remembrances of growing up in Lucknow. It is also cause for celebration that in our 25th year we have finally held our first regional seminar in the North-East, at NEHU Shillong, the report and keynote address of which also find pride of place in this issue.

As we step into a new phase of the IAWS, we offer a warm thanksgiving to all the women and men who prepared the field for women's studies in India with vision and commitment, and brought it to its present moment of confidence. We also look at our troubled spheres today – from Manipur to Kashmir, from Gujarat to Bengal, and from UP to Tamil Nadu – and reflect upon the new challenges they throw up for the women's movement and women's studies. And we welcome our younger members in the trust that together we too will be able to shape the future of women's studies with vision and commitment.

Kavita Panjabi, Editor

E-mail: kavip@vsnl.com

1. Excerpted from the IAWS website - <http://www.iaws.org/>

2. We express our sincere gratitude to Malini Panjabi for the cover design, Rangan Chakravarty for the visual layout of *Across 25 Years*, and Epsita Halder for the Lucknow skyline.

XII National IAWS

Feminism, Education and the Transformation of Knowledges: Processes and Institutions

Organised by: Indian Association for Women's Studies at
University of Lucknow and Isabella Thoburn College, Lucknow

IAWS and XII Conference Secretariat

Centre for Women's Development Studies, 25 Bhai Vir Singh Marg, New Delhi 110001

Tel: 011-23345530, 23365541 Fax: 011-23346044

Conference e-mail: conference.iaws@gmail.com; Website: www.iaws.org

The occasion of the Silver Jubilee in 2007-08 provides a special opportunity to confront the challenges facing the women's studies movement today. The broad theme of the XIIth National Conference is to reflect upon the interventions of women's studies and feminism as forces of transformation in the sphere of knowledge production across diverse institutions and contexts. Education, whether formal or non-formal, from schooling to higher education, has been a critical site for the women's movement and women's studies, since their inception. Today, major global and local developments are forcing us to take particular note of how educational structures and policies are changing and what implications these have for the future of women's studies.

Women's Studies emerged during years of political and social upheaval in India in the 1970s and 1980s. The earliest impetus to developing women's studies came from a generation of scholars, activists and policy makers who were shocked to discover that, far from witnessing genuine development and progress, the lives of the vast majority of Indian women had not improved after Independence, sometimes even deteriorating at an accelerated pace. The context of this discovery, as is well known, was the production of the *Towards Equality* Report at the behest of the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, and its ultimate destination was the United Nation's International Women's Year gathering of 1975. Founders of women's studies questioned the Constitutional

guarantees of gender equality and their own education for having rendered such processes invisible. New researches were conceptualised with the help of major institutions like the Indian Council of Social Science Research that sought to re-open the women's question, generate new data on women, especially the rural poor, and develop critiques of the social sciences and humanities. In the years that have followed, women's studies has expanded and grown, leaving no discipline untouched or question unaddressed in efforts to combat women's marginalisation in society.

Now several decades old, women's studies faces many fresh challenges in contemporary times, and this is an opportune moment for collective reflection and renewal. This Conference, therefore, seeks to provide a platform for reviewing our achievements, paying special attention to our modes of intervention, tools of analysis, political frameworks and institutional constraints. New knowledges have been produced and existing ideologies about women and gender questioned from myriad locations. Feminists have been simultaneously engaging with and questioning conventional disciplinary boundaries, while also initiating new approaches that validate the voices and experiences of those whom existing educational systems have too frequently excluded. While the initial decades of the 1970s and '80s were mainly focused on generating new research, since the 1990s there has been a growing interest in issues relating to teaching and pedagogy. Schooling and

Conference on Women's Studies

the production of textbooks, curriculum development and courses in women's studies, along with action-research and grassroots empowerment have seen greater involvement from among activists and scholars.

Through its plenary panels and sub-themes, the Conference will be an occasion to deliberate on the past, present and possible futures of women's studies as a progressive force of and for change.

Madhuri Shah Memorial Lecture: *Education and Educational Policy for the 21st Century*

Plenary Panel I: Interventions in Education:

This theme plenary will bring out the different dimensions of education, gender and women's studies in relation to schooling, higher education, non-formal education, new pedagogies and the initiatives of women's studies.

Plenary Panel II: Fields of Knowledge:

Women's Studies and feminism have been sources of critique of existing bodies of knowledge as well as contributing to a transformed understanding of the issues at stake. This plenary offers examples of such interventions in the following broad areas — development, history, science, literature and law.

Plenary Panel III: Special Panel on U.P. and Women's Issues

Plenary Panel IV: Special Panel on Women and Knowledge Production in South Asia

Plenary Panel V: Contemporary Challenges and Perspectives: This panel will address some of the contemporary challenges before the women's movement and women's studies. Questions of caste, sexuality, and disability, among others, will be explored.

Sub-themes

1. Issues of Gender and Development: Perspectives and Conflicts
2. Feminism and Knowledges of Violence
3. Rethinking Feminist Methodologies in Contemporary Research
4. Interface between Action and Research
5. Gender, Science and Technology
6. Generating New Knowledge around Sexualities and Genders
7. Pedagogies, Schooling, Gender Studies
8. Tribe, Caste and Minority: Structures and Exclusions
9. Language, Literature and Cultural Production

Provisional Conference Programme

Day One: 7th February (Venue: Isabella Thoburn College Auditorium)

- 11 a.m.: Inauguration
Felicitation of Founder Members
President's Address
Vote of Thanks by General Secretary
Madhuri Shah Memorial Lecture
- 2:00 pm: *Plenary:* Interventions in Education:
Plenary: U.P. and Women's Issues

Day Two: 8th February (Venue: University of Lucknow)

- 9a.m.: Sub-themes (parallel sessions)
4 p.m.: *Plenary:* Women and Knowledge Production in South Asia

Day Three: 9th February

- 9 a.m.: Sub-themes (continued)
3 p.m. *Plenary:* Fields of Knowledge
6 p.m. General Body Meeting

Day Four: 10th February

- 9 a.m. : Plenary: Contemporary Challenges and Perspectives
11:30 a.m.: Sub-theme Reports
Valedictory
Vote of Thanks



Across Twenty Five

Excerpts from the

Jan 86

Jan 1986
The Executive Committee of the Indian Association for Women's Studies has taken a bold decision to bring out a Newsletter - bold because the Association has neither the infrastructure nor regular income to launch such a venture. But we felt the need for a medium through which we can know each other....

Dec 86

Third National Conference on Women's Studies
Chandigarh, 1-4th October 1985
WOMEN, STRUGGLES AND MOVEMENTS

May 86

How educated is the educated woman on abortion and its implications for the status of women in society?

The recent discovery of sex determination prior to the birth of a child has also added to the exploitation and oppression of the female child even before the baby is born.

8000 infanticides - female children aborted over a period of 10 years in one single State of India. This is a good or bad omen for the Women's Movement at present and in the future?

MUSLIM WOMEN'S ACT - DIVORING INDIAN WOMEN IAWS Resolution

This meeting of the Executive Committee of the Indian Association for Women's Studies resolves to request the Prime Minister to withdraw the proposed Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Bill, 1985 as it violates the Constitutional rights of Indian Women and infringes the secular frame-work of the Indian Republic as well as the Constitutional commitment to justice for all citizens.

Sep 86

Calling for Papers National Seminar on 'Women and Violence - Various Manifestations'

The EC appointed a Regional Co-ordinators' Committee for the Newsletter to collect and dispatch information on various activities in the region.

The EC appointed two Task Forces on the National Policy on Education and Implications of NPE for Balance of Technology for Women.

Years



Newsletters

Jul 89

Jun 88

IV National Conference on Women's Studies, 1988
'Rural Women: Poverty, Survival and Struggle for Change'
Concept of Women's Studies from a women's perspective. It begins by treating women as a gender but goes beyond it as a gender analysis instrument into disciplines.
Its scope should reach and include all women and discard previous elitist biases.

PASSING AWAY OF A PHENOMENA

We in the Indian Association for Women's Studies, mourn the passing away on 28th June of Dr. Madhuri Shah who played a key role in the development of women's studies in India. As Vice-Chancellor, SNDT women's University in the late 70s, she helped to establish the first Research Centre on Women's Studies within University system.....

The Year of the Girl Child - None Too Soon
1990 has been declared as the year of the girl child by the SAARC Conference on 'South Asian Children' gave an urgent call for improvement of the mother child life cycle beginning with the girl child....

'Conference of Deserted Women at Bombay'
Mahila Dakshartha Samiti and Samaywadi Mahila Sabha organized a conference of women deserted by their husbands on 14 & 15 April 1990 in Bombay....

Dec 90

Dec 89

'Rural Women: Poverty, Survival and Struggle for Change'
'Rural Women: Poverty, Survival and Struggle for Change' was the broad theme of the Fourth National Conference on Women's Studies, sponsored by the Indian Association for Women's Studies held at the Andhra University, Warangal from 28-31 December 1988.
The Conference focused on rural women particularly those of poorer households seeking sheer survival in the face of multiple odds as well as struggling to transform the conditions of their existence.

Dr. Ambedkar and Women's Liberation
JAWS pays its tribute to Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar in his birth centenary year for his courage of conviction, identification of women's oppression of delicts and women's progress and gender-just people...
Dr. Ambedkar, an inspiration of India and a crusader against oppression of delicts and women's progress and gender-just people...
National Commission on Women, Maharashtra
Mahila Dakshartha Samiti of Bombay and JAWS, SNDT Women's University organized a one-day seminar on the subject.
Report - Seminar on Women's Development and Legal Literacy
Annavel University
International Seminar on Feminism Across Cultures
Mother Teresa University, Kodaikanal, Tamil Nadu, 25-27 March 1991

Jun 91

Indian Women. Endangered Species
In India we have a record deficiency of women over men. This characteristic can be seen in many other developing countries too. What is cause for concern to India however is the fact that the women to men ratio has been continuously declining over the last few decades.

Women Reach for Half the Sky
(IV National Women's Conference on Women's Movement in India)

.....
Action Research Project - Girl Child and the Family
Held in the months of March, April and May 1990.

There was consensus that there must be a component of intervention and affirmative action.



Jan 91

An Uneasy Relationship
As it is, the relationship between the researchers and activists is uneasy. There are a few like me who keep balancing. There are some others who want to call themselves activists by virtue of going to some hutments to collect data by making a single forage into a slum or making sporadic visits to a rural area nobody becomes an activist. Activism is sustained activity in an area with a group of persons towards their development. Researchers cannot indulge in such activism but it is very heartening to hear them making claims of being activists as it is a step towards building the bridge between the two. If this bridge is to be built anywhere, it will be in the conferences of IAWS who researchers are invited with open arms.

The FIRST International Conference on Women in Africa and the African Diaspora: Bridges Across Activism and the Academy to be held in Nigeria, West Africa, June 1992

The response to the conference has been extremely enthusiastic.

Dec 91

Special Issue on Report of the 5th National Conference on Religion, Culture and Politics At Jedsyvar University, Calcutta, 9-12 February 1991.

1992

Women's Studies and Higher Education - Taking Stock
 A Symposium - Maitreyi Krishnaraj
 The role of knowledge...its functions, who generates it and how, are matters of utmost relevance to our view...of society. Here I see much to evoke optimism. There has been a tremendous growth of grassroots organizations. Their articulation of issues holds out promise for women's studies will be by building bridges with them that women's studies will perhaps become flabby, lose content that all this will make women's studies make it not rigour, and the reformed as academic. Rigour has to do with a critical approach to evidence that is scrupulously collected. When our social scientists totally ignore a whole range of human experience, how can they call themselves rigourous?

1996

Report of the VII National Conference - Kamala Bhasin
 The process of organizing this conference in Rajasthan was used very effectively by local women activists and scholars to popularize the concept of women's studies, to revitalize women's groups and to make alliances with other people's organizations... They showed feminist films in colleges, university women's hostels and cinema halls to reach out to younger women and involve them.... All these efforts bore fruit and there were 100 women and men students who worked long hours [as volunteers]. We hope this exposure will attract many young women and men to the women's movements and other people's movements.

1996

Gabriela Dieblich on 'Survival and Sovereignty' (Regional Workshops)
 The trend towards communalism and fundamentalism, which bulldozes women into religious and caste identities and be seen together with economic and cultural globalization. Often this trend appears to be a resistance to globalization as it hurts cultural identities. However, where communalists have come to power, they have been in the forefront of the New Economic Policy (NEP), and retracted completely on any critical stand they might have taken earlier, as the Eran issue in Maharashtra shows... In the women's movement we have not fully succeeded in integrating the analysis of economic conditions with the struggle against communalism and fundamentalism. Integrating these perspectives will contribute a lot towards clarity and unified struggle.

1996

Shanti Chakraborty in Defence of 'Witches'
 ...an evocative conference was held in Jamshedpur Bihar. It focused on 'witches' or dayin.... That women still get stigmatized and killed as witches is the worst manifestation of...social prejudice. Some incidents that get printed in the dailies tell us about the range and variety of torture these so-called witches have to face. But to listen to these stories, or see them enacted by women who have actually faced such tortures, is a whole different experience.

1997

Maharashtra Stree
Abhyas Vidyapeeth
organized a workshop
of college and
university teachers at
Pune.... The objective
of this workshop was
to prepare material in
Marathi on topics
from syllabi related to
women. Teachers of
different disciplines
from eight...
universities in
Maharashtra
participated in the
workshop.



1998

Report of the VIII National
Conference, Pune. Sub-
theme: Women, Work and
Resistance

The papers appear to indicate
a gradual blurring of the
sharp distinction between the
organized and the
unorganized. This carries
enormous implications for
modes of labour resistance.
There was some debate on
whether the convention
'political' trade unions or the
'ten paise' shop/floor based
unions or even smaller, more
informal collectives were the
way forward. The underlying
issue was whether

'consciousness' (with its
association with dichotomies
like 'true' and 'false' and with
teleologies of progress)
offered a viable theoretical
tool for understanding
labouring women's workplace
behaviour, which is
characterized by collusion,
negotiation, contestation and
conflict.

1997

Editorial: Kavita Panjabi

As creatures of history we
search for landmarks to map
time, but we also create them
in celebration of our
collective efforts. The Baroda
Seminar, 'Early Years of
Independent India: Women's

Perspectives' was both
While it commemorated 50
years of independence, it also
created a historical landmark
for the women's movement
with oral narratives of women
who had fought with Gandhi
and Netaji as well as... in
Telengana and Tehnaga,
articulating some of the
silences of this period. The
collective experience of
sharing these inspiring
histories of political struggle
with the very women who had
shaped them joyously
reaffirmed the bonds between
women's studies and
women's activism... Their
testimonies will be published
shortly by the IAWS.

9999

National Consultation on Sexual Harassment on University Campuses

Recent incidents in Rajasthan, MP, Madras and Hyderabad are but a few that have ranged from injuries and rape to death of women on campuses. Apart from these grave incidents, there are the everyday encounters that women students, faculty, and non-teaching employees have to deal with... While it has been possible to raise these issues in public and campaign against them outside, most campuses today continue to be cloistered communities that resist "outside" intervention... In an age when we are saying that the family is no longer a private space and that as citizens we will not tolerate any abridgement of women's right to life within the family, the argument that educational institutions must be allowed the liberty to govern their spaces according to norms that are neither transparent nor democratic can hold no ground.

Apr 2001

Special Issue:

No Right to Say No: Violence Against Young Girls

Nov 2000

IX National Conference of Women's Studies, The Process

The Executive Committee of IAWS decided that the focus of this conference would be Women's Perspectives on Public Policy: Evolving an Agenda for Action into the Next Millennium... we decided to put out an announcement of the conference detailing the focus, inviting proposals for sub-themes, from anyone interested, not only members of the Association... The IAWS has been extremely fortunate in finding financial support for this conference. Every agency we approached was extremely positive and interested... Some serious thought must be put to the logistics of organising events like this in future. With the constituency of the IAWS growing in geographic proportions, conference related work gets more and more elaborate and complicated each time... The Executive Committee over the last two terms has been concerned with the need to decentralise the organising of the conference, delegating and forming out responsibilities as far as possible.

Sep 2001

'Globalisation and its Impact on Gender'

Report of the Regional Conference on 'Globalisation and women's identity in Orissa'

'Globalisation, identity Politics and Regional Violence', abridged report on the IAWS Regional workshop at Gandhinagar Rural University...

Apr 2003

Orissa Conference
Special

'Sustaining
Democracy:
Challenges in the New
Millennium'
Report of the Xth
National Conference of
the Indian Association
for Women's Studies
held at Utkal
University,
Bhubaneswar 17-20
October, 2002.

Aug 2003

Renaming Centres as
'Women and Family
Studies': Need for Debats
and Reconsideration

... We are deeply
concerned by the UGC's
current moves which
suggest an abandonment
of this national mandate
and the broader vision of
Women's Studies. We
strongly feel that it needs
a wider debate and a
reconsideration and a
consultation of the
proposals of the UGC
before they are enforced.
IAWS Executive
Committee

Dec 2003

Bharatiya Stree Mukti Din
Special Issue

Editor's Desk
The last decade has seen the
emergence and assertion of
separate and women's
organisations. At the national
level, the All India Dait
Women's Forum and the
National Federation of Dait
Women were established in
1985 ... The new directions
mapped by dait feminists
activists and scholars ...
have suggestion for the
practices of women's
movement and studies in
India. Hence, this special
issue on the occasion of 25th
December, the day on which
Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar
Manusmriti at Mahad
and which is now celebrated
by some women's
organisations as
Bharatiya Stree Mukti Divas.
-Sharmila Rege



Feb 2005

Guest Editorial

Pushpa Bhave
Spring is around the
corner and we are all
eager to meet each other
at the Xlth national
conference on women's
studies. This year IAWS
has organised a
conference at Goa on
sovereignty, citizenship
and gender ...
Though it is customary
to choose a theme for the
conference, our choice of
venue is also important.
We like to have a view of
the regional and culture
specificity of women's
problems. So ... the
newsletter would like to
project Goa women's
problems specifically ...



May 2006

Amendments to the IAWS Constitution

Two amendments proposed at the General Body Meeting of the XI National Conference on Women's Studies, held at Goa from 3-6 May 2005, have been ratified by a majority of life members.

The amendments to the IAWS Constitution are as follows:

- i) Any member who wishes to be elected to the EC may do so provided she has been a member of the IAWS for at least one year.
- ii) A member can be elected to the EC only 3 times in her life. Of these, only two terms may run consecutively.

Nov 2006

Letter from the President

Greetings! IAWS is now into its 23th year. This significant landmark of an approaching Silver Jubilee provides an opportunity for critical reflection on the functioning and direction of the association and on the wider arena of women's studies in India. A major challenge is to maintain the democratic plurality of our all-India association while refining administrative and financial systems. This is essential to uphold our reputation as a responsible professional association and to ensure smooth functioning and transfers between successive Executive Committees.

-Smiti Krishna

Jun 2007

Inauguration of IAWS Archives

The IAWS Archives were formally given a place in the Research Centre for Women's Studies, SNET Women's University at a simple function on March 14, 2007.

The presence of several founding and senior IAWS members added depth and meaning to the moment. Neera Desai, Veena Mazumdar, Anika Verma, Naitreyi Krishna Reddy, Rohini Gawankar, Usha Thakker, Chhaya Datar and many others.

Selections made by
Smiti Krishna and Zarina Bhatti.



IAWS: NEWSLETTERS ACROSS THE DECADES

All the IAWS newsletters have now been digitised. These will soon be available in the IAWS web archive and on CDs.

<i>Document Number</i>	<i>Year: issue</i>	<i>Theme / Main Focus</i>	<i>Editor, Location</i>
<i>VOLUME I: Series A: 1986-1993</i>			
NLA001 Jan.	1986: 1	Announcement of IIIrd National Conference, Chandigarh; Retrospective on UN Conference, Nairobi	K.Saradmoni, Treasurer Thiruvanthapuram
NLA002	1986: 2 May	EC Resolution on withdrawal of the proposed Mulsim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Bill 1986	Sr. Karuna Mary Braganza, New Delhi
NLA003	1986: 3 Dec.	<i>Special:</i> Report on IIIrd National Conference, Chandigarh, 'Women, Struggles and Movements'	Sr. Karuna Mary Braganza, New Delhi
NLA004	1987: 4 Sep.	Reports of IAWS Task Forces on the National Policy on Education and on Science and Technology in relation to women	Sr. Karuna Mary Braganza, New Delhi
NLA005	1988: 5 Jun.	Announcement of IVth National Conference, Waltair (Vishakapatnam) 'Rural Women, Poverty, Survival and Struggle for Change'	Ila Phatak, (President) Ahmedabad
NLA006	1988: 6	*Issue Missing : UGC Women's Studies Centres	-
NLA007	1989: 7 & 8 Mar.	<i>Special:</i> IVth National Conference, Waltair (Vishakapatnam) 'Rural Women, Poverty, Survival and Struggle for Change'	Surinder Jetley, Varanasi
NLA008	1989: 9 Jul.	News from the regions	Surinder Jetley, Varanasi
NLA009	1989: 10	The year of the Girl Child	Rohini Gawankar, Mumbai
NLA010	1990: 11 Dec.	Ambedkar and women's liberation; News from Women's Studies and the women's movement	Rohini Gawankar, Mumbai
NLA011	1991: 12 Jan.	<i>Special:</i> First Decade of IAWS	Rohini Gawankar, Mumbai
NLA012	1991: 13 Jun	Sex ratio, female mortality; Report on 4th Women's Movements' Conference	Rohini Gawankar, Mumbai
NLA013	1991: 14 & 15 Dec.	Report of Vth National Conference 'Religion, Culture and Politics', Jadavpur, Kolkata	Piyali Sengupta, Kolkata
NLA014	1992: 16 & 17	<i>Special:</i> Women's Studies and Higher Education: Taking Stock	Piyali Sengupta, Kolkata

*One newsletter, issue No. 6 of December 1988, is missing. Any member who can help trace this particular issue may please write to iawspresident@gmail.com.

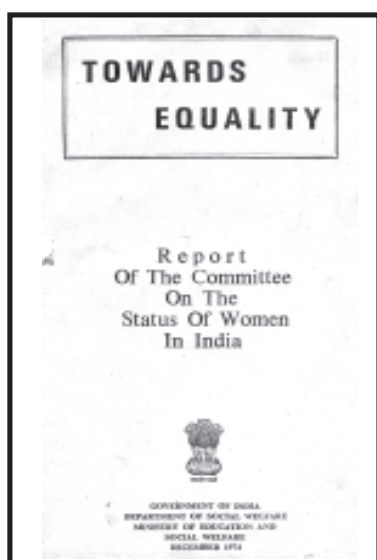
NLA015	1992: 18	Announcement of VIth National Conference, Mysore, New Economic Policy: Implications for Women	Piyali Sengupta, Kolkata
NLA016	1993: 19	Detailed information for the VIth National Conference, Mysore	Piyali Sengupta, Kolkata
NLA017	1993: 20-21	Report of the VIth National Conference on 'New Economic Policy: Implications for Women'	Piyali Sengupta, Kolkata
<i>VOLUME I: Series B: 1994-2006</i>			
NLA018	1994: July	Introducing IAWS to new members	Nandita Gandhi, Mumbai
NLA019	1994: Autumn	Discussion on 'The State and the Women's Movement in India'	Nandita Gandhi, Mumbai
NLB020	1995: Spring-Summer	Announcing VIIth National Conference; 'Looking forward, looking back: In search of Feminist Visions, Alternative Paradigms and Practices'	Nandita Gandhi, Mumbai
NLB021	1996: July	Report of VIIth National Conference, Jaipur, Looking forward, looking back: In search of Feminist Visions, Alternative Paradigms and Practices.	Kamala Bhasin (Secretary) & Juhi Jain (coordinator), N.Delhi
NLB022	1996: Winter	Reports on various activities; announcing theme for VIIIth National Conference: 'Survival and Sovereignty';	Kavita Panjabi, Kolkata
NLB023	1997: Summer	Focus on 'Survival and Sovereignty'; Women, resources and new economic policy; women, media and the internet	Kavita Panjabi, Kolkata
NLB024	1997: Winter	Announcing VIIIth National Conference, Pune, 'Survival and Sovereignty'	Kavita Panjabi, Kolkata
NLB025	1998:	Report of the VIIIth National Conference, Pune Autumn 'Survival and Sovereignty' Mumbai	Geetanjali Gangoli,
NLB026	1998: Winter	Note on women and regional histories Mumbai	Geetanjali Gangoli,
NLB027	1999: Summer	Announcing IXth National Conference, Hyderabad; Report on National Consultation on Sexual Harassment	Geetanjali Gangoli, Mumbai
NLB028	2000: . Nov	Report of IXth National Conference, Hyderabad, on 'Women's Perspectives on Public Policy'	Vidyut Bhagwat, Pune

NLB029	2001: Apr.	<i>Special:</i> Theme : ‘No Right to say “No”’: Violence against Young Girls’	Vidyut Bhagwat, Pune
NLB030	2001: Sep.	<i>Special:</i> Globalisation and its impact on gender	Vidyut Bhagwat, Pune
NLB031	2002: Jan.	<i>Special:</i> Women and Politics; Announcing Xth National Conference, Bhubaneswar, ‘Sustaining Democracy: Challenges in the New Millenium’	Guest Editor: Medha Kotwal Lele, Pune
NLB032	2002: July	<i>Special :</i> ‘Women and Mental Health’	Guest Editor: Sadhana Natu, Pune
NLB033	2003: Apr.	<i>Special:</i> Report of the Xth National Conference, Bhubaneswar on ‘Sustaining Democracy’	Sharmila Rege, Pune
NLB034	2003: Aug.	<i>Special issue:</i> Theme : World Social Forum	Sharmila Rege, Pune
NLB035	2003. Dec.	<i>Special:</i> Theme Dalit issue: Bharatiya Stree Mukti Din (Indian Women’s Liberation Day)	Sharmila Rege, Pune
NLB036	2004: Sep.	Announcing XIth National Conference, Dona Paula, Goa; Reports of IAWS regional workshops, Mumbai and Allahabad	Sharmila Rege, Pune
NLB037	2005. Feb.	<i>Special issue</i> on Goa; more details on the XIth National Conference, Gender, Sovereignty and Citizenship	Sharmila Rege, Pune
NLB038	2005 Apr.	Pre-XIth National Conference issue on the theme of Gender, Sovereignty and Citizenship	Guest Editor: Medha Kotwal Lele, Pune
NLB039	2006. May	Report on XIth National Conf., Goa; Recommendation of UGC regional consultations on Women’s Studies	Kavita Panjabi, Kolkata
<i>VOLUME II: Series C: 2006 - ONWARDS</i>			
NLC040	2006. Nov.: II.1	Announcement of Regional Workshops; News of redesigned IAWS website; Report on 7th Women’s movements conference; Women’s Studies syllabi	Kavita Panjabi, Kolkata
NLC041	2007. Jun.:II.2	Inauguration of IAWS web archive at RCWS, SNDT, Mumbai; Reports of Regional Workshops in the run up to the XIth National Conference	Kavita Panjabi, Kolkata
NLC042	2007. II.3	<i>Special:</i> Silver Jubilee issue; Announcement of the XIIth National Conference, Lucknow, on ‘Feminism, Education and the Transformation of Knowledges: Processes and Institutions’	Kavita Panjabi, Kolkata

Compiled by Sumi Krishna

Books That Changed Our Understanding About Ourselves And Our Society.

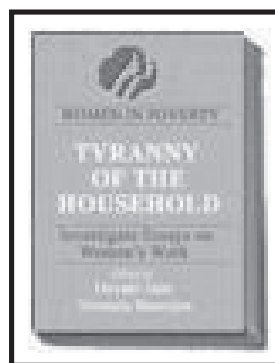
After Independence and the promulgation of our Constitution that promised 'equality and no discrimination on ground of religion, caste or gender women assumed there was nothing more to do. The report "*Towards Equality*" in 1974 startled us out of our complacency. It high lighted the gender gap in critical areas like education, health and employment. Appropriately titled "*Towards Equality*" it was published by the Ministry of Education in 1974¹. It was the first eye opener that was to initiate further explorations into the status of women in India. Programmes for remedial action was called for. A flurry of activity during the International Women's Decade starting with the International Women's Year in 1975, national and international conferences were held that discovered the unfinished agenda of women's equality all over the world when countries were ostensibly marching towards 'development' and 'progress'. This pioneering effort of "*Towards Equality*" led to intensive research initiated by the ICSSR programme of



Women's Studies that turned the searchlight away from middle class and upper caste women's problems that had been the focus of the nineteenth century social reform movement to the masses of women, who were poor, who were working in our factories, farms and home based work of various kinds facing discrimination and unfair work and pay conditions. Earlier, social research spurred by the entry of educated middle class women, engaged with the problem of double role conflict- namely that

despite their employment outside the home they still bore the major responsibility for the care of the family. The new focus on the lower sections of underprivileged women was a strong turn in the tide of academic research, so much so, very recently, an academic commenting on this swing of the pendulum away from middle class women argued that they need not be so completely wiped off the slate. As violence on women has now become pervasive, our answers to women's emancipation demands a more sophisticated answer than what the 1974 report had thought and what we all assumed- give women employment, education, health they will be all right. Unfortunately we did not recognise the power of ideology then- that these remedies were necessary but not sufficient. Women's movement got into action from eighties onwards.

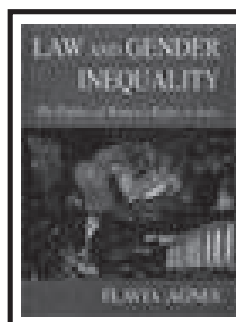
A second book that one may regard as an important contribution was the publication "*Women in Society*" 1987². This was meant to be a text book for classroom teaching. It put together in several chapters the issues that face women-



Picture Source : www.isst_india.com

was "*Tyranny of the Household*" which appeared in 1998³. If earlier we were looking at what happened to women outside the home, here was for the first time a penetration into that sanctum-sanctorum : the family-household, where discrimination began, where sexual division of labour held undisputed sway and where oppression of women was rampant. From then on intra- household division of labour, of resources, of rewards attracted attention of policy and research. One seminal contribution in this collection of essays was an attempt to measure women's contribution to national income. Today a similar effort is on, which shows despite abundant evidence on women's contribution nothing much has changed to value that contribution. The volume "*Visibility and Power*"⁴ brought anthropology's insights to our arsenal. The five volumes of papers during the conference on women and the household by Sage introduced us to many aspects of caste, of patriarchy, of our relationship to the State and the defects in our data system. In other words, the structural and cultural dimensions of gender.

Books on the women's movement began to appear and what was critical to fuel this effort was the establishment of the feminist publishing house Kali. There were many books in this genre and it may be unfair to only quote a few but Radha Kumar's "*History of Doing*" with illustrations was a wonderful survey⁵. Later on analyses of Law addressed the inadequacies and bias in our legal system. Flavia Agnes' s "*Law and Gender Inequality*" inscribed her direct experience of our courts and our legal system⁶. The regular Family Health Survey records the still pitiable state of women's health, ironic in a country that is supposed to revere 'mothers'.



Picture Source : www.oup.co.in

Books on women continue to pour from publishing houses many of which are repetitive, or field projects hurriedly put under covers, or readers in Women's Studies by different universities. And the sifting of the wheat from the chaff is an arduous process. The celebrity standing of a publishing house I recently discovered to my dismay is no guarantee that bias does not exist.

Books and publishing do not survive without support structures which disseminate. The Indian Association of Women Studies formally constituted in 1982, the University Grants Commission encouraging the setting up of Women Studies Centres and Departments in universities gave much needed fillip to the growth of scholarship in this area. However the unevenness of this enterprise does give cause for worry. *Economic and Political Weekly* launched a regular Women's Studies Supplement as a biannual feature.⁷ The launching of the *Journal of Gender Studies* gave special space to us for discussions and debates

This account is seriously deficient in that it only covers English publications. Our regional languages have blossomed too but someone else must cover these to complete this record.

Women's Studies today has developed more depth and out each in these last few years.

To what extent has all this activity touched mainstream needs careful assessment. One victory one can say is the incorporation of women studies scholars in official policy making. Like the recent Feminist Economics group for the XI plan. The internet has widened the communication among scholars. Unfortunately the new fuzzy word of "empowerment" detracts from our original agenda of equality. The bill for representation of women in Parliament is still pending.

So we march along!

Footnotes

¹ Dr. Veena Mazumdar was the main architect of this report who has confessed in many forums how disturbed she was by the findings.

² Authored by Neera Desai and Maithreyi Krishnaraj with contributions from Dr Surinder Jetley and Malavika Karlekar. *Women and Society in India*. By Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1987

³ Ed. Devaki Jain and Nirmala Banerjee, Shakti Books, a branch of Vikas Pub. Delhi 1985

⁴ Ed. Leela Dube, Eleanor Leacock, Shirley Ardner, OUP, Delhi 1986

⁵ Radha Kumar, *The History of Doing* 1800-1990, Kali for women, 1993

⁶ Flavia Agnes: *Law and Gender Inequality*. The politics of Women's rights in India. OUP, New Delhi 1999

⁷ Maithreyi Krishnaraj usually commissions and edits the articles but often guest editors are welcomed.

Maithreyi Krishnaraj.

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Indian Women's Search for Recognition: Three Decades of Policy Dialogue, Advocacy and Action

In the aftermath of the publication and dissemination of the CSWI report "Towards Equality" in 1975, while the accountability of the State to women's equality became paramount, a troubling question that arose (and is still relevant) is the extent to which the State was able to understand the complex and multi-faceted inequalities that shaped the status of Indian women and to which it had undertaken to address itself.

It is significant that one of the (many) recommendations of "Towards Equality" that was ignored by the Government of India (and left by the way side till another 25 years had passed) was the formulation of a State policy on women. A well-thought out and comprehensively debated and discussed policy statement is useful – indeed a vital *sine qua non* – for not only avoiding ambiguities in the understanding of women's equality by different state agencies but also to helping them to steer clear of actions that may go against the interests of women. Such a policy needed to be in consonance with not only the fundamental rights but also the directive principles of state policy inscribed in the Constitution.

For the greater part of the post-1975 period, India remained bereft of a National State Policy on women, which has led to ambiguities and lack of a clear road map. As a well-known

women's studies scholar has observed, *there really has been no 'women's policy' but a series of accommodation to various demands.*

One of the features of the post-1975 period was the process of institutionalization of gender within the structures of governance at both Central and State levels. Influenced by the events and messages of the International Women's Year and Decade, these 'national machineries' (Ministries, Departments, Cells, Committees, Commissions, Boards *et al*) symbolized the principle of State accountability to women by integrating women's interests in all sectors of social, economic, political and cultural development. Evaluations of these institutional mechanisms over the last three decades have revealed strengths but also systemic weaknesses. Whether women's needs and interests have materially affected or been affected by the planning process is very much an open question – as is the question whether women are now counted as an important political constituency for the purpose of planning?

The emergence of women's groups at different levels of society shaping and fighting for a new vision of gender equality was a special feature of the seventies. What can be broadly called the 'women's constituency' were successful in propelling

movements ranging from those of grass roots rural women to those of middle and lower class urban women to women in academia and in the professions. This movement (or movements) was greatly instrumental in influencing the government to look at hitherto neglected issues such as women's work and wages, women's collective mobilization for strengthening their bargaining power, women's access to natural resources and livelihoods and many other fresh initiatives. Working groups were set up by the Planning Commission and the concerned GOI agencies on women's employment and strengthening women's village level organizations, signaling new policy priorities and a decisive shift from the older pre-occupation with social welfare and protection.

As the IWD progressed, the eighties saw an increase in women's questioning of the prevailing development policies. On major areas such as work in the informal/unorganized sector, it was the women's constituency that moved first, by prodding the Government to set up a National Commission to look into the status of women workers and report on the needed policy changes. Another Government-appointed Committee looked into the problems of women prisoners and women in custodial situations. New areas such as the participation of women in science and technology, in development of non-conventional sources of energy, small businesses and industrial employment, accompanied other strategic thrusts such as increasing women's access to credit, which the nationalized banks took up under the Government fiat.

A major area of conflict between the women's constituency and the Government was on the policies relating to population control. Major campaigns were mounted by women's groups to bring to the notice of the government agencies the negative aspects of these policies, especially the two child norm, the exclusive attention to reducing the birth rate without looking at the impact on women's health, the violation of human rights involved in trying out new contraceptives on women without proper safeguards and, more recently, the demographic disaster latent in the worsening of the sex ratio, which has already taken its toll on women through increase in trafficking, violence against women and social tension in villages and towns.

Though women had not yet become a full fledged 'political' constituency, the regular sequence of parliamentary and assembly elections held in the country, backed by data and analysis by the Election Commission, led to a heightened interest shown by the political parties in women voters. Though still a marginal group in the legislatures, the Constitutional Amendments carried out in 1993-94 reserving seats for women – including women from the socially excluded groups – in urban local bodies as well as panchayats was a landmark in the history of women's political representation and participation, placing over a million women in positions of power. In spite of doomsday critics, the elected women are still fighting out their own battles with the entrenched interests and gradually realizing the need to come together on a gender plank, in spite of political divisions.

However, it would not be an exaggeration to say that as the IWD came to a close, efforts towards a deeper understanding of the roots of gender and socio-cultural oppression and why more than three decades of planned development had not substantively improved women's situation (and in some cases actually worsened it) did not seem to get the importance these deserved. Though legal aspects of discrimination against women were addressed through introduction of new laws and amendment of existing laws, women's access to law remained poor. Courts were still largely alien to women, especially the poor and the needy.

Portents of the looming economic crises became visible in the eighties and worsened in the nineties. It was an ironic contradiction that India was moving towards decentralized governance and globalization at the same time. Today, the women's constituency along with many allies, is engaged in measuring and documenting the adverse effects of many aspects of globalization on the poorest and most needy women in the country so that the Government claim of 'inclusive growth' in the Eleventh Plan can become a reality.

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Women's Rights, Law and Feminist Politics

There is a long history of women's engagement with laws and law reforms. The last two decades have witnessed several campaigns and struggles by women's organizations and activist groups to modify or enact new legislation. The concern that has been central to women's movement since 70s is the issue of violence against women. The demands for legal equality and gender justice are based on two constructs – changes in laws discriminatory to women (family laws, inheritance laws); and that the process of legal reform should go beyond the technicalities and conventional interpretation of law if it is to bring about the social transformation. This

short piece does not address the major issues in the debate on 'women and law' or feminist jurisprudence but mentions a few legislations in response to women's movements' engagement with law.

Confronting Violence against Women: Rape Law

The late 70s and 80s was a significant phase in the women's movement. Some significant amendments were brought about in the field of criminal laws. The case, which sparked off country wide agitation by women's organization and civil and human rights groups, is popularly known as 'Mathura Case' (Tukaram

vs. The State of Maharashtra). The rape of a young tribal girl called Mathura and the judgement by the Supreme Court, brought into sharp focus not only the inadequacy of the Rape Law but also the insensitivity of the judiciary, personal trauma and social stigma suffered by women and violation of their basic human rights. It provoked four law teachers to write an open letter to the Chief Justice of India stating that 'a cold blooded legalism snuffs out all aspirations for the protection of sustained strategy to acquaint women of the various provisions and finalise rules to make the Act operational. Recent debates have raised several issues relating to the broad definition of violence and apprehensions about its misuse. The Act envisages a key role to Protection Officers and covers not only an officer appointed by State government but also any institution and organization designated by the State government.

The Missing Girl Child and Sex Selective Abortions

Increasing masculinisation of sex ratio is a by product of fertility transitions, government policy interventions and socio-cultural dimensions of gender inequalities and discriminations which feed into each other.

The first protest against the misuse of Amniocentesis (foetal sex determination) and subsequent abortion of female foetus was launched in July 1982 demanding a ban on the misuse of this technique and asking Indian Medical Council to take disciplinary action against offending doctors. The first successful campaign against sex-selective abortions began in 1988 in Mumbai and resulted in the enactment of PNDT Act (1988) by the Maharashtra Government. The national legislation was passed in 1994.

The practice has not only continued to spread to more areas but the situation is alarming in Haryana, Punjab and Delhi. In the past two decades several organizations have been campaigning against sex-selective abortions and continued decline in the major regions of India. Increasing evidence of the use of sex selection technologies and abortion of female fetuses resulted in a Public Interest Litigation (PIL, 2000) filed in the Supreme Court. The PIL led to the Amendment of the PNDT Act (1994) which came into force in 2003 as the Pre-conception and Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of sex selection) or the PCPNDT Act. The Act prohibits sex selection and seeks to regulate pre-natal diagnostic techniques. Time-bound advocacy campaigns, sensitization and generating public awareness through media; social mobilization and even involving religious institutions to influence public awareness have not yielded the desired results. The fact remains that son preference and prevailing discrimination against girls in inheritance, succession and property laws and growing menace of dowry have all contributed to the most blatant form of the violation of the rights of the girl child.

Affirmative Action for Gender Equality

The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments in 1992 conferred

constitutional status on local self-government bodies and made them an integral part of India's governance structure. The two amendments also mandated one-third reservation for women in all these bodies. Interestingly the Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India (1974) debated the question of reservation of seats in elected bodies and could not come to an agreement. However, it recommended unanimously the establishment of statutory women's panchayats with connection to PRIs. A demand for a similar reservation for women in Parliament and State Assemblies has met with stiff resistance and the proposed Bill has not been debated in Parliament.

The Shah Bano Controversy and the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce Act, 1986)

The Supreme Court's judgement in the famous 'Shah Bano Case' upholding the right of a Muslim woman to secure maintenance under Section 125 Cr. PC (1973) got wide coverage including the Court's comment on the nature of Muslim Personal Law and the reference to Article 44 in the Constitution which calls for the Uniform Civil Code. The conservatives called the judgement as the 'death warrant of Muslim identity'. The then Congress government gave in to the pressure from the fundamentalists due to fear of losing the electoral support and the outcome was the Muslim Women's (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act of 1986. This Act precludes such cases from the purview of section 125 Cr. PC.

Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987

Coming on the heels of the Muslim Women's Act was the Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act 1987. The incidence of a young Rajput girl (Roop Kanwar) being forced to commit Sati on the pyre of her husband in Rajasthan resulted in strong protests from women's groups and human rights organizations. The delayed response of the government in the wake of mounting agitation came in the shape of this Act. It was enacted to provide more effective prevention of the Commission of Sati and its glorification. The offences under the Act shall be tried only by a special court constituted under the Act which has the power to forfeit the funds and property of a person convicted under the Act. Both these laws evoked strong protests from the fundamentalists.

The Family Courts Act, 1984

During the eighties, women's movement demanded laws and mechanisms which would not only ensure women's rights within the marriage but also speedy and less traumatic justice for women in matrimonial disputes. This Act aims to 'promote conciliation in, and speedy settlement of disputes relating to marriage and family affairs and for matters connected therewith'. The 59th report of the Law Commission had stressed that in dealing with disputes concerning the family, the Court ought to adopt an approach radically different from that of ordinary civil court. One major area of difference between the demands

of women's organization and the provisions of the Family Court Act is the argument that 'the institution of marriage and family should not be protected at the cost of women'.

Women Workers and Legislation: Equal Remuneration Act

Till 1975, there was no specific legal provision regarding payment of equal wages to women though discrimination against women was rampant. India has ratified the Equal Remuneration Convention of ILO in 1958. It only enacted the **Equal Remuneration Act in 1976**. There have hardly been a few cases where women have actually gone to courts for staking their claims for equal wages. Since a large percentage of women are in the unorganized sector so the wage differentials continue unchallenged.

The Maternity Benefit Act was enacted in 1961 to ensure health and well being of working mothers. A number of cases were reported where married women were refused employment. Air India Corporation required Air Hostesses to retire on pregnancy, till this rule was struck down by the Supreme Court. Women in Indian Foreign Service were expected to leave the job after marriage till a senior IFS woman went to the court and this clause was dropped. Mixing maternity benefits with population control policies resulted in policies for restricting the benefits to only two pregnancies. The PRI Act in some States decided to enforce two child norms for being eligible to contest elections.

The Maternity Benefit Act was amended in 1995 to provide leave with wages in case of medical termination of pregnancy or tubectomy in order to motivate women to undertake family planning measures.

Sexual Harassment in the Workplace

A landmark decision of the Supreme Court of India in 1997 laid down guidelines on the prevention of sexual harassment in both public and private sectors. A writ petition filed in the Supreme Court by some social activists and NGOs was in

reaction to the brutal gang rape of a woman worker in Rajasthan. The petition argued that such incidents violate the fundamental rights of 'gender equality' and 'Right to Life and Liberty'. The Apex Court took note of the fact that 'the present civil and penal laws in India do not adequately provide for specific protection of women from sexual harassment in work places. The pervasiveness of this problem in educational institutions, public and private sector units indicates that it has yet to become an effective law.

Inheritance: Hindu Succession Amendment Act, 2005

The Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India (1974) endorsed the recommendations of the Rao Committee to abolish the right by birth under the Mitakshara Law and to convert the Mitakshara coparcenary into a Dayabhaga Coparcenary. Andhra Pradesh (1986), Tamil Nadu (1989), Maharashtra (1994) and Karnataka (1994) enacted legislations conferring the right by birth on daughters who were unmarried on the date when the legislations were passed.

Before the Hindu Succession Amendment Act (2005) and deletion of Sections 4(2) 23 and 24 of the 1956 Hindu Succession Act, the inheritance of agricultural land was subject to state government tenurial laws which varied from state to state. The Amendment makes daughters, especially married daughters, coparceners in joint family property. The proposal for abolishing Mitakshara Joint Property System was not accepted.

India ratified the Convention on the Right of the Child in 1992 and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1993. Gender equality has continued to be the desired goal; however, the enormous diversities of region, class and caste pose a big challenge to the contemporary women's movement.

Kumud Sharma, Past President, IAWS.

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Call for Announcements and Reports

Announcements or Reports of courses, fellowships, seminars, conferences, consultations, hearings, workshops, etc. related to Women's Studies are welcome for publication in the IAWS Newsletter. Please send them to kavip@vsnl.com, and do try to keep them brief (usually approx.350 words), or they may have to be edited. The Editorial Committee will select the most relevant submissions for each issue.

The First Phase Of The IAWS Archives

Backdrop

The past few Executive Committees of the IAWS have been mulling over the need to archive the papers and documents of the IAWS accumulated over the last many years.

One trigger has been the sheer volume of the material and the problem of managing it, given the moving secretariat. Successive ECs backed by the general body, had resisted having a permanent secretariat at Delhi, to avoid over-centralization. The secretariat shifted, depending on where the elected office bearers were located. It became quite cumbersome to shift the papers: "6 cupboards, 7 cardboard boxes and a yellow bag" as they came to be known in our correspondence. They needed to be weeded out and made more compact, but the selection had to be made with care.

The history of IAWS is interwoven with the development of women's studies in India. It has links with the women's movement as well. Its papers would be of value to students, researchers, women's organizations. It would also help in its own self evaluation. The impending silver jubilee year became a catalyst for the current EC to undertake the establishment of an archive.

We felt strongly that the IAWS Archives should be located in the western region. A basic (financial) office at Delhi with a permanent address at CWDS had been decided upon. But other activities of the IAWS could be decentralized. Since Maharashtra has a strong membership which has taken a prominent part in all IAWS activities, a decision was taken to set up the Archives in this state.

An Archives Committee was formed to work out the details. It consisted of representatives of IAWS, Aalochana, Maharashtra Stree Abhyas Vyaspeeth,

Research Centre for Women's Studies (SNDT), Savitribai Phule Women's Studies Centre, and Centre for Women's Studies of TISS. The Research Centre for Women's Studies (RCWS) at SNDT offered to house the IAWS Archives. Since there is a historical relationship between RCWS and IAWS, this offer has been gladly accepted.

A formal launch of the IAWS Archives at RCWS was done on March 14, 2007 by Dr. Vina Mazumdar, with a display shelf dedicated to some of its publications.

A larger and more organised space in the RCWS library will be created shortly.

Work Done in the First Phase

In the first phase, an exercise was undertaken by me, with Unnati Tripathi's assistance, of going through the materials stored at RCWS, preparing a detailed inventory, weeding out a part of the material and handing it back to RCWS.

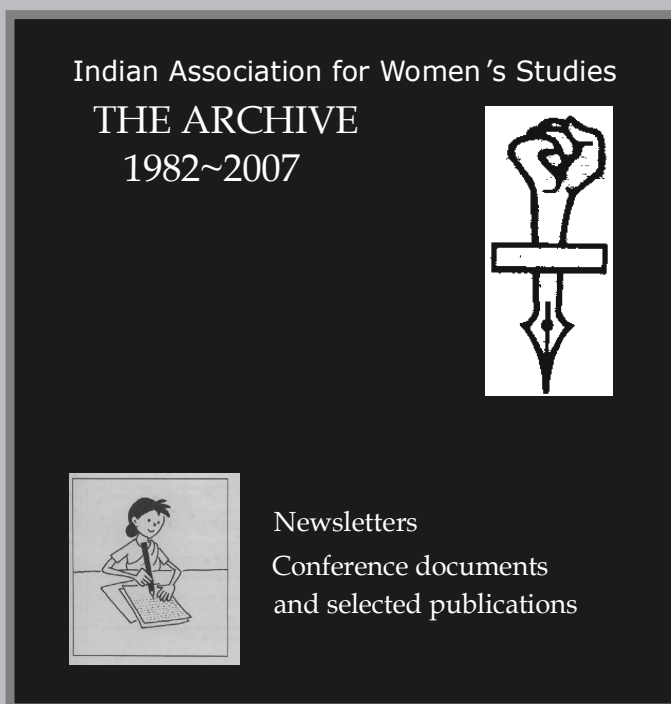
Nature of the material

The IAWS material can be broadly classified into two categories: published and unpublished

The published material includes newsletters, membership directories, brochures announcing the National Conferences, background papers to the conferences, presidential addresses at the National Conferences, reports of the AGMs, books of abstracts, conference, seminar and workshop reports, conference papers, and books.

The bulk of the unpublished material consists of correspondence of the following kinds:

☐ Letters from and to the Gen. Secretary on routine as well as special activities during her tenure, queries from and responses to members and non members on a range of topics and issues.



☐ Correspondence between EC members, on planning, execution and aftermath of the National Conferences, on regional seminars and workshops, on matters concerning elections, on membership, on publications and newsletters, etc .

☐ Agenda and minutes of EC meetings, membership lists, registration forms of conference participants, membership forms, copies of papers presented at IAWS conferences, seminars and workshops, abstracts of papers, reports on workshops and seminars , issues taken up for advocacy, etc.

☐ Most of the correspondence is in English but there are some in other languages, notably Marathi, connected to the conferences held in different regions.

☐ A few packets of photographs and negatives of the various conferences.

Method and Process

This first phase exercise was a limited one aimed at reducing the sheer volume of the material to make it more manageable and preparing a detailed inventory of what exists and what can be discarded, also noting the proportion of discarded and retained material in each file. I gave greater attention to the discarded material, to make sure nothing of significance was lost. Some of the retained material may need to be classified under different heads and some further minor weeding out may perhaps be done.

Before our work began, the IAWS files had been stored in RCWS SNTD in numbered boxes .We have not attempted to redistribute the contents or change the files. But we have given them subject titles and established a numbering system for quick reference.

Principle of Selection and weeding

The principle followed in the case of unpublished material was to retain material that recorded decisions, revealed the process of decision making, or threw light on the conditions under which IAWS functioned and the changes or constancy in the thrust areas and direction of the organization. We weeded out what was clearly redundant – ie., routine correspondence , irrelevant material, multiple copies of documents and matter readily available in published form. Occasionally, a piquantly worded letter, or a warm letter of congratulations has been retained just for flavour, despite falling into one of the above categories. In the earlier years, before computer print outs and email became common, handwritten letters, carbon copies and telegrams, are

part of the correspondence in addition to the conventional typewritten letter. We have kept a few of these, to give a sense of the times and modes of functioning, even though the content may not be significant.

In case of published material, we have simply implemented the EC's decision that 5 copies of each publication (or all if less than five) will be kept, and the rest distributed to the regional workshop participants, and to others those who may want them..which needs to be 'refreshed' every few decades, and moreover the technology can get obsolete quickly.

A comprehensive approach will need to be developed about what materials need to be conserved and preserved, for what purposes, and through what technology. This will then help in decisions regarding documents generated in the future as well.

What Can be Gleaned from The IAWS Archives

Insights can be gleaned from the archival material about the academic, organizational, personal and interpersonal dimensions of IAWS and to some extent of women's studies in India in its formative period. This is because, among other reasons, the members of IAWS have also been leading figures in the field, active professionally in universities, institutes, centres and women's organizations. In any case, this would be one important source material, and in tandem with other sources, can contribute towards reconstructing a history of women's studies in the country.

The material has many possibilities. Popular themes and approaches for research , the calibre of papers, and also participants in the conferences can be tracked over the years. The issues taken up for resolutions, advocacy and campaigns, and the internal debates that went into them can be traced. The composition of the membership, and growth and changes over time, the teething problems of a decentralized organization, the dynamics of fund raising and many other matters common to organizations without a centralized secretariat, as well as those specific to feminist organizations can be read and inferred from the material. It could thus contribute towards organizational reflexivity and help in a road map for the future. I (mostly) enjoyed the task, especially reading the asides in the correspondence !

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IAWS North-Eastern Regional Seminar

Feminist Scholarship on North-East India: Retrieving and Reconstructing the Woman

Organized by the IAWS and the Departments of Political Science and History, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong
15th and 16th October 2007

The two day North-East seminar held on the 15th and 16th Oct. 2007 at the behest of the IAWS in collaboration with the Depts. of political Science and History of NEHU on the topic, **“Feminist Scholarship on North-East India: Retrieving and Reconstructing the Woman”** held at the NEHU guest house, Umshing, Shillong, was marked by a keen participation and presentation of papers by academics, NGO’S and women’s organizations from all the states of the North-East including Sikkim. The seminar was coordinated on behalf of the two departments by Prof, Manorama Sharma of the Department of History with Dr. Susmita Sen Gupta of the Political Science Department as the Co-Coordinator.

Dr. Zarina Bhatti former president of IAWS chaired the inaugural session. The Vice Chancellor of NEHU, Dr. Pramod Tandon, inaugurated the seminar and spoke at length on the phases of the women’s movement in India, and emphasizing the Indian dimensions of feminism. Prof. Manorama Sharma introduced the seminar, and this was followed by the keynote address delivered by Prof. Tilottama Misra, a nationally renowned Assamese litterateur and Professor of English, Dibrugarh University. Prof. Misra, addressed the issue of the “erasure” of the women of North East India not only in the context of writings on women produced from other parts of India, but also from their own record. It is because of this, she asserted, that seminars of the present kind were needed so that the North East could produce material on the women of the region. The inaugural programme concluded with a vote of thanks given by Dr. Susmita Sen Gupta.

The session chaired by Prof. Mignonette Momin saw the presentation of two papers, the first by Dr. Suparna Bhattacharjee on “The role of women in decision making in Arunachal Pradesh”, and the second paper was presented by Anju Borkotoky on “Women and decision making in North-East India”. In the discussions that followed various suggestions were put forth by the members who questioned the roles of women in Arunachal Pradesh asking whether they actually enjoyed decision making rights, any control over

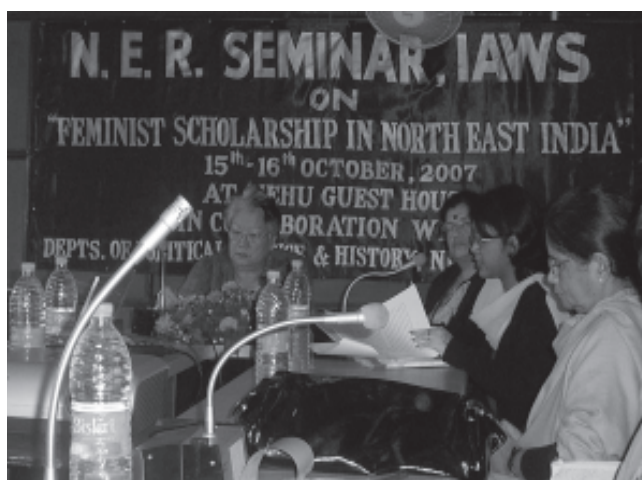
production, inspite of the rise in education. Indu Agnihotri suggested that communities must uphold the rights given by the constitution and work with the customary and traditional rights given to women. Prof. Manorama Sharma asserted the need for some changes in the customary laws that tend to suppress women and the need for women to be sensitized in this regard.

In the discussion that followed Junu Baruah and Anju Barkatoky’s paper on “Women and Decision Making in North-East India”, it was felt that the absence of strong women’s movements among the tribes such as the Tiwas and Mishings have prevented the women of these tribes from participating in political and decision making process. The plight of the Mishing women in the Majuli, the largest river island in Asia, was specially focused upon and highlighted by

the two activists, Ranjana Doley and Renumala Dutta. They felt that religious practices led to glaring discrimination among the Mishing tribes and only education can reform and improve the society as a whole.

In the Second Academic Session, chaired by Prof. A.K Baruah, Dr Salem Irene of the Department of History, Manipur University, made a presentation on “Women in Manipur- Problems and Prospects of Retrieval”, and Mrs T.Gangte Kipgen from G.P Women’s College, Imphal, Manipur, read a paper on “Kuki Women in Manipur-Women and Decision making in North East India”. It was largely felt that women were being used to start various movements, which were then being hijacked by men for political reasons, with women being pushed to the background. Another issue discussed was women’s lack of control over the market, despite their thorough participation in market activities.

The third academic session saw the presentation of three papers by Dr. Sukalpa Bhattarjee, Ms Mahua Bhattacharjee, and Ms Nizara Hazarika on the topics of “Gendered Construction of



Identity: An/other History, an/another subjectivity”, “The Silk Industry and Reconstructing the Women Weaver in Saulkuchi” and “Redefining Female Body and Female Experience” respectively. This session was chaired by Prof. T.Misra. In the discussion that followed, members highlighted the dichotomy that everything related to production is considered inferior even as it is acknowledged as the most powerful tool in Man’s hand. Several examples of women’s subjugation during the rites of ‘puberty celebration’ were discussed, and what this revealed about the cultures in question. Women’s own roles in perpetuating such rituals and practices were also discussed, and it was emphasized that women need to play an important role in their own reconstruction,

The second day began with the Fourth Academic Session, chaired by Prof. T.Ao. The first paper presented was by Anjali Daimari, lecturer in English at Guwahati University, on “Retrieving the Bodo Women”. Prof T.Misra and other participants too raised a discussion on the need for adequate protection for Bodo women when they are seduced, and whether they had the right to exercise any options in a context where the society or state took decisions on such matters. This concern was voiced by as well. Prof A.K Baruah observed that Bodo women had few options in such cases, as the village Panchayats are mostly manned by village elders who are men, leaving Bodo women little say either in matters concerning themselves, or in matters of society as a whole. Kavita Panjabi suggested that more in-depth research be conducted, based on analyses of narratives of the Bodo women, to foreground their standpoints..

Dr. Bolin Hazarika from the Department of Political Science, J.B College, Jorhat, presented a paper entitled “Parity in wage, Disparity In Opportunity: The Case of the Female Tea Garden Workers in Assam”. In the lengthy discourse that followed after the presentation Prof Zarina Bhatti wanted to firstly know if any classifications have been made on the basis of region or tribe. It was then clarified by other members present that tea garden workers come from many tribes and not known by any particular tribe alone; that these workers now call themselves the “Tea tribes” and are collectively seeking scheduled tribe status. Prof M.Sharma also stated that one needs to distinguish between responsibility and power as in a survey made in Shillong it was found that bigger purchases are still made by men and only domestic purchases are left to the women. Dr Anjali Borkotoky also observed that the head of a family in the tea communities is usually a man, and men enjoy family rations, but in the event of a man’s death, the woman loses access to the family rations for her dependents. Even the trade unions of the tea community workers are dominated by men and there are no women in these unions.

The third paper was presented by Prof. Manorama Sharma from the Department of History, NEHU, Shillong, on the topic “Expressed Realities And Embedded Truths: Where Did She Lose Herself?”. A member also wanted to know who the ‘real

woman’ is and how she can be retrieved, and if women’s stand points can be analyzed through other songs and texts as well.

In the fifth academic session Prof.T.B Subba of the Department of Anthropology, NEHU, was the chairperson and presentations were made on three topics. The first one was by Lalruatpuii on “Reconstructing The Women- A Historical Study Of Mizo Women And Rights”, another paper presented by Audry Laldinpuii on “Women and Decision Making and Representation- A Study of Two Villages in Mizoram” and the third by Dr Lucy Zehal on the topic “Anthropology- Gender and Naga Society: An Appraisal”. In the discussion that followed members suggested the importance of referring to other works done in this field and suggested the importance of reviewing the existing knowledge on the subject. Suggestions were also made on the necessity of developing a critique of the existing historiography on Mizo women, and also on the need to question why we continue to define ourselves in terms of community even today. Opinions were also expressed that one should not generalize for the larger Mizo community based on a single Mizo study, because it is the educated Christian Mizo elite women created with the coming of Christianity who are now asserting themselves, but this may not be the case for all the Mizo women.

For the third paper presented by Lucy Zelol suggestions were made on the importance of looking into the belief patterns of a society, as also on the necessity to make a comparative study between societies. Doubts were also raised on whether methods of generalization are useful in drawing up a specific picture of a particular society.

The sixth academic session, chaired by Prof. D.R.Syiemlieh, had three paper presentations. The first was by Prof. A.K Baruah, Prof. Manorama Sharma and Joplin Hek on the topic “Matriliney in Khasi Society”. A.K Baruah first explained the structures and hierarchies of matrilineal society as they exists in Khasi society, and with data he explained the near total lack of womens participation in the practical and public space. He also explained the Khasi traditional land system, and there was now a slowly emerging demand for a patriarchal system as an alternative to the matrilineal system prevalent in the Khasi society. There is therefore a challenge to matriliney and it needs to be seen now if women also have rights under matriliney, or only responsibilities without rights.

Prof. M. Momim’s presentation on the “Lived Reality of Garo Women”, was framed by her as a “preliminary note”, while the third paper presented by Dr Amana Passah was on “Khasi - Jaintia Women In Meghalaya – Roles In Decision Making: Some Insight”. In the discussions that followed, doubts on matriliney were discussed and clarified. Dr Streamlet Dkhar also suggested that questions of inheritance and lineage must not be confused in the Khasi Matrilineal Society, and stated that we must also take note of the poor ‘Khaduh’ (the youngest daughter who inherits the largest share of the property and all the familial

responsibilities) not just the rich 'Khaduh' in the urban areas. In his clarification Prof. Baruah stated that educated 'Khaduh' are now asserting their rights as owners of property and not merely as custodians of society. Aparna Mahanta appreciated M.Momin's approach assessment of the status of Garo woman in terms of their relation to land, and also highlighted that the need to address the range of perceptions of women in their variance across the plains Garos, the Garos living in the hills, and the urban educated Garos.

The sixth session ended with the chairperson Prof. David Syiemlieh commenting on the presentation by making a few comments on the Land Reforms Commission of 1970 which he said needs to be updated as in its present form may not give a proper and realistic position of the present Khasi society of 2007.

The last session held after the tea break, was an Open Season chaired by Prof.Indu Agnihotri. Prof. T.B Subba spoke on society in Sikkim in relation to its people, customs, traditions and culture. A short paper was also presented by Suryasikha Pathak on "Weavers and Witches- Reconstruction of the Bodo

Women". The session was later thrown open for all the members to interact. A participant raised the issue of the necessity of more work on Muslim women in the North East Region, which he felt was not reflected in the Seminar. Members responded pointing out that women were not being studied as belonging to different religious communities, as in the North-East this divide was not yet a very significant divide.

The two day seminar ended with the Valedictory session which was chaired by Aparna Mahanta, Vice -President , IAWS. After the Rapporteur - in - Chief, Ms. Moushumi Dey presented a full report of the two day proceedings. Aparna Mahanta appreciated the organizers' efforts and co-operation in making it possible for the IAWS to hold its very first regional seminar in the North-East. She concluded asserting that the strong participation of both men and women in the two day seminar was a remarkable achievement for Women's Studies.

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Feminist Scholarship in North-East India: Retrieving and Reconstructing the Woman

The Keynote Address delivered by Tilottama Mishra at the first North-East Regional Seminar of the IAWS.

While trying to put together my ideas on the subject of this seminar, the first problem I faced was with the words "retrieve" and "reconstruct", both of which seem to deny an active agency to the object of feminist research which in this case is the woman, though it does assume an active role for the subject whom we can identify as the feminist researcher. This problem of speaking on behalf of another (the marginalized/subaltern) has been the subject of much discussion in recent postcolonial and feminist studies and in this seminar perhaps scholars would discuss how the voices of the women can be heard in apparently insignificant texts by women. The second problem is with the two categories "north-east" and "woman". Each of these categories requires unpacking because each constitutes innumerable ethnic, linguistic and cultural dimensions. While it may sometimes seem more judicious to focus on the differences rather than the similarities in order to preclude the tendencies of reductionism or essentialism, yet I feel that over-emphasis on the uniqueness of individual or group identities may lead to marginalization or denial of the identities of the others. One notices this tendency in the case of all group mobilizations based on ethnic, linguistic or religious identities. The main danger of such mobilizations is that it prevents the bonding of different groups on common platforms to voice their political or economic demands. For, example, in the north-eastern states, though there is a growing awareness about the

marginalization of women in the traditional institutions, yet, women from the different ethnic communities rarely come together to make a common cause against this because in most cases the women consider their ethnic identities more important than their gender identities. They would rather bond with the male leaders of their own communities rather than with women of other communities in their neighbourhood. So, retrieving the 'woman' in such a situation would involve a conscious desire to build up a cross-cultural platform where women of all communities would collaborate to retrieve and reconstruct their shared histories. A woman too can think in terms of multiple identities which a modern individual claims to be his or hers. Her identity should not be defined merely by the cultural baggage which tradition demands of her to shoulder faithfully and silently. Amartya Sen says that communitarian philosophy prioritizes the importance of belonging to one particular community group, as if it is an extension of one's own identity. But we belong to many different groups and by reason and choice we decide to prioritize one identity over the others according to the social context.¹ For the purpose of recovering the woman in the north-east, it would be better to accept/acknowledge our multiple identities. Otherwise there would always be the danger of erasing one part of our history for the sake of foregrounding another.

The reference to the problem of erasure in the preceding paragraph leads on to the question of multiple erasures when we discuss feminist scholarship in the north-eastern states. First of all, one encounters the erasure of the whole of the “North-East” in much of the “mainstream” Indian writings and the women’s question get erased in that larger erasure. To give a very recent example of this phenomenon, when the country celebrated the 150th anniversary of 1857, articles, books, interviews and folk narratives on the subject were collected and published as a part of the national effort to remember an event of national importance. But, though Assamese nationalist historians had always recorded proudly the martyrdom of Maniram Dewan and Piyali Barua for their role in the Revolt of 1857 and the event resonates powerfully in the folk narratives of Assam, yet there was no reference to them in the narratives representing the national memory. Similarly, the recent boom in the Partition narratives has also failed to touch the North-eastern states though the human tragedy associated with the partition has left its indelible marks on this region. Even books written by women and specifically devoted to the trauma of Partition as experienced by women in Eastern India, leave out the traumatic experiences of those who were displaced from their homes during Partition and found a refuge in the north-eastern states.² Their story still remains to be written.

In this general story of marginalization of the north-east in “mainstream” writings, there is a further erasure in the case of the women. Although the women of the north-east have begun to occupy a prominent place in the peace and conflict studies discourse³, their existence had been marginalized both in the national narrative as well as in the regional histories. For instance, it has been acknowledged by some of the nationalist historians who wrote the story of the August uprising of 1942 during those euphoric moments on the eve of Independence, that the August movement in Assam was “largely a struggle of Assam’s womanhood— a credit which no other province of India can claim to the extent Assam does.”⁴ This little known account, narrates the story of the heroic struggle and the sacrifices of the women in the Brahmaputra and the Barak Valleys at a time when most of the male leaders of the Congress were behind the bars. Yet, this story gets only cursory mention in later histories of the Freedom Struggle in Assam. The organizational work of Chandraprova Saikiani, Pushpalata Das, Guneswari Nath, the spectacular deed of occupying the chair of the District Judge for a day by Snehalata Dey in Sylhet, the brave efforts of Amalprova Das, Annapriya Barua and Sudhalata Dutta to bring succour to the villagers terrorized by the armed forces⁵ have gone almost unrecorded in mainstream histories as well as in histories of Assam. Dipti Sarma’s work on the role of the women of Assam in the freedom struggle⁶ has made a significant contribution to retrieving the lost woman in the freedom struggle.

The absence/silence of the woman from the peripheral areas in the emerging academic discipline of women’s studies in India is again a significant instance of another kind of erasure at

work. Either because the woman from the “north-east” does not fit into the stereotypical image of the Indian woman who is often projected as a cult figure representing the cultural identity of the nation, or because she does not fit into any of the structures which are generally addressed by the feminists, she is prominently absent in most of the mainstream feminist narratives. The works of women from this region do not feature either in Susie Tharu and K.Lalitha’s two-volume anthology⁷ or in Sudesh Vaid and Kumkum Sangari’s well-known collection of essays.⁸ The list can be extended. The latest such instance of erasure that I have encountered recently is a veritable tome of 622 pages in quarto size, containing 24 essays by prominent feminist scholars of India. The book is divided into sections— body and sexuality, family, law, work, creativity/voices and politics. Yet I could not find a single reference to the whole of the north-eastern region in that book.⁹ However, one must point towards some notable exceptions, where the editors have accommodated the voices from this region¹⁰.

I do not wish to make this presentation into a story of erasures only. But, since the focus of this seminar is on the retrieving and recasting of women in the north-east, it becomes necessary to find out the reason why the woman has been marginalized in the mainstream narratives and how she can be brought back into the centre again through the efforts of the feminist scholars of this region. Here, to make matters more even, it must be admitted that the efforts made till now have proved to be inadequate and even in the works by women writers of the north-east, the focus on the woman is very often absent. For instance, a book on tradition and modernity in a matrilineal tribal society, published by a woman scholar about 10 years ago, did not consider it necessary to look at the problem from the gender perspective.¹¹ Most academic research in this region comprises a rich variety of ethnographic material, but lacks a clear ideological focus. Feminist scholars however can make use of such material to write their own narratives. The delayed entry of this region into the sphere of feminist scholarship has led to an overlap of the various phases of women’s writings which have been identified as the feminine, the feminist and the female by some western feminists¹². While some continue to write in the old tradition of imitating the master narrative of the patriarchal tradition, others are exposing the misogyny in male texts, and yet others are now involved in the rediscovery of women’s texts. Perhaps the feminist scholarship of the north-east could make a new synthesis of these traditions and arrive at its own style of scholarship, which could also make a meaningful contribution to the new area of ethnicity and gender.

The problematic relationship between gender and ethnicity has increasingly engaged the attention of feminists in the north-eastern states. The assumption that customary laws guarantee autonomy to women has now been contested by many women’s organizations in the tribal areas of the north-east. Women have little decision making power in the traditional tribal councils, and the same pattern is repeated in the higher elected democratic bodies too. In this context, the well-known activist Jarjum Ete

observed that in Arunachal Pradesh women are caught in a situation where they are compelled to keep pace with the forces of modernity, and at the same time adjust to a situation where their communities pin them down with the burden of maintaining the traditional identity of the community.¹³ Ete wrote this with reference to the marginalization of the woman's voice in the project undertaken by the Government to codify the customary laws. Despite such awareness about the adverse effect of customary laws on women, this subject has not yet been seriously studied by feminist scholars of the region. The only significant contribution in this area is Tiplut Nongbri's book¹⁴ which contains a chapter on identity politics among the Khasis, centred round the Khasi Custom of Lineage Bill which has serious implications for the existing gender relations in the society.

The clash, between customary laws, prevalent in different parts of Assam during colonial times, and the codified civil laws reveal interesting facts about the inheritance rights of women and the attempt to make the woman's body the site for legal disputes. The case of Kerry Kolutani, known in Indian legal texts as the "great chastity case", involving the property rights of an Assamese widow who married again after inheriting her father's property, came up before the Privy Council. There were several other cases involving women's 'chastity' and inheritance rights which find prominent place in colonial records. Unfortunately, no serious research has been done so far on women and colonial law in Assam though such studies are essential for understanding changing social attitudes regarding concepts like chastity and the politics of control over women's sexuality.

Feminists have always been demanding the right for women to represent themselves in their own writings. But, whether one group of women can speak for another whose voices have not been or cannot be heard, is a complex issue in feminist scholarship. Representations of women in women's writings have not been free from political or ideological underpinnings and they either reflect the writer's adherence to the dominant patterns of thought or her subversive or dissonant voice. Even her silences are eloquent statements of resistance. In the undivided Assam of the colonial times, the earliest available examples of the representation of women in women's writings are in the missionary writings. Interestingly, in the representation of the women from this region, most colonial writers have displayed an attitude which is clearly distinct from their attitude towards the colonized men. The women have been described in most accounts as fair, beautiful, talented and hard-working, suffering from "no disability in their social life,"¹⁵ whereas the image of the "lazy" and indolent Assamese man is a recurrent one in most colonial writings. Such colonial constructs have unfortunately continued to have currency in the national imagination till today. The missionary women's portrayal of Assamese women as well as of women from the hill tribes, reflects the same tendency to portray them as more delicate and refined than the men. The innocent, childlike quality

of the women has been repeatedly emphasized in the writings of American Baptist missionaries, notably in the accounts of Elizabeth Vickland.¹⁶ For the purpose of proselytization, the women are seen as more receptive and malleable than the men who are corrupted by the Hindu priests. Since, in their perception, women have been given a peripheral position in Hinduism, so they are represented as being relatively untouched by the corrupt practices of the religion. However, in this paternalistic attitude, a bias towards what is known as "feminist-orientalism" is clearly discernible. In a recent significant study on the influence of the 19th century American Women's movements on the attitudes of the women missionaries who came and worked in India, Narola Imchen¹⁷ has pointed out that the women missionaries were deeply touched by the helplessness of the eastern women and they were of the view that "heathenism was especially repressive to women"¹⁸. Feminist scholars of North-east could attempt more detailed analysis of missionary women's attitudes towards eastern women as reflected in their writings. For instance, it would be worthwhile to find out the differences in attitude between the earlier group of women missionaries who came to this part of the world in the nineteenth century, who did not have an independent status as missionaries but merely assisted their missionary husbands, and the later group of American women who enjoyed an independent status as Baptist Women missionaries. Mrs. P. Moore's diaries reflect some of the constraints experienced by the missionary wives which are largely absent in Elizabeth Vickland's works. [It was only since 1820 that unmarried American women were allowed to travel abroad as missionaries. Before that, missionary wives were not given official status]

Finally, a word on the images of women in the creative writings of the women of this region in recent times. In Assamese literature, the post-independence period has seen the rise of the woman writer who is deeply concerned about the status and the identity of women in a society that is becoming increasingly aware of democratic rights and values. Nirupama Borgohain and Mamoni Raisom Goswami have laid the foundation of a new feminist tradition which seeks to resist the tendency to stereotype the woman in the framework of the established patriarchal tradition. Mamoni Raisom's writings present a bold and forceful protest against an oppressive social order which ignores a woman's autonomous existence. She is especially harsh on Hindu religious practices which are oppressive for the woman. Her bold portrayal of woman's sexuality and the repression of it in an orthodox middle-class society have been discussed in recent feminist studies of her novels. The last decades of the twentieth century may be considered as the most significant period in the history of women's writing in this region. The literary scene has been dominated by a new group of writers who have endeavoured to express the deepest concerns of the people of the region about their immediate needs— development, peace, security and an atmosphere of freedom from fear. Though it is not possible to mention all the writers or their works in this brief

survey, I would like to refer to three women's texts of this period that have made a strong statement about the new feminist perception of trauma, memory and responsibility. Tamsula Ao, Mamang Dai and Arupa Patangia Kalita have depicted the survival strategies of women in a violence-ridden world that threatens to destroy a woman's world. Arupa Patangia in her novel *Felanee* (2003) weaves a moving tale of a group of women struggling to survive against all odds in an atmosphere of communal violence and insurgency. In a world that is increasingly becoming univocal and masculine because of the prolonged effect of militancy, *Felanee* depicts the heroic story of a group of timid working class women emerging as not mere sufferers but doers. Tamsula Ao's stories in *These Hills Called Home* (2006) record the anguish of a woman at the effects of a long-drawn battle on the psyche of a whole generation of people. But, through the traumatic experience of violence, the people of Nagaland, especially the women, learn to carve out a new life in a creative manner. Mamang Dai's *The Legends of Pensam* (2006) seeks to tread that in-between place which represents "the hidden spaces of the heart where a garden grows". The author tries to give us a glimpse of the lived life of a small community through the recreation of myths and folk-tales to make them a part of the past, present and future of the small tribe. Feminist scholars could analyse the language, imagery, metaphors, myths and the perception of inner space in all these three texts in order to understand the emerging trends in women's literature of this region.

Conclusion.

The business of the feminist critic/ gynocritic is not merely to interpret or critique the works of the writers but also to induce them to narrate their own stories. Personal narratives of women which include autobiographical writings, diaries, memoirs and interviews have begun to occupy an important position in feminist criticism. A recent addition to such an attempt to map the identity of women through narratives that reflect "emotional lines of matriline within the social structure of patriline" has been undertaken by Leela Gulati and Jasodhara Bagchi in their anthology, *A Space of their Own: Personal Narratives of Twelve Women* (Sage, 2005). Though there is no space for the North-east in that book, yet it can serve as a model for recording the memories of mothers and daughters about societies where matriline is actually practiced. I had talked about the problem of representing the voice of the voiceless in the beginning of this presentation. Recording the personal narratives of women could be one way of giving an active subject position to the women or the subaltern. This and many such issues relating to the representation and self-representation of women may come up for fruitful discussion in this seminar as well as in other academic forums of this region. This brief survey has merely attempted to highlight a few important concerns of feminist scholars of this region.

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Endnotes

¹ Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence :The Illusion of Destiny*, Penguin and Allen Lane, 2006, p.33

² Jasodhara Bagchi and Subharanjan Dasgupta ed., *The Trauma and the Triumph: Gender and Partition in Eastern India*, Stree, Kolkata, 2003.

³ "Indeed, north-east India attracts undue academic attraction for all the wrong reasons" says Sajal Nag in P.Biswa and C.J.Thomas ed. *Peace in India's North-East*, New Delhi, 2006, p.208

⁴ Bejan Mitra and Phani Chakraborty ed., *Rebel India*, Calcutta, 1946, chapter 1.

⁵ Ibid, p.6

⁶ Dipti Sarma, *Mukti Jujot Luitporia Nari*, Guwahati, 1995

⁷ Susie Tharu and K.Lalitha, ed. *Women Writing in India*, 2vols., OUP, 1991.

⁸ Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, Kali for Women, 1990.

⁹ Bharati Ray ed., *Women of India: Colonial and Post-colonial Periods*, Sage, 2005.

¹⁰ For example, K.Sangari and Uma Chakravarti ed. *From Myth to Markets*, IAS, Shimla, 1999, Ilina Sen ed. *A Space Within the Struggle: Women's Participation in People's Movements*, New Delhi, 1990; S.Moitra ed., *Women, Heritage, Violence*, Calcutta, 1996

¹¹ Kumie.R.Marak, *Tradition and Modernity in Matrilineal Tribal Society*, New Delhi, 1997.

¹² Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own*, Princeton Univ. Press, (1977)

¹³ Jarjum Ete, in "The Civil Code: Uniform or Common", The Seminar, No. 441, Delhi, 1996

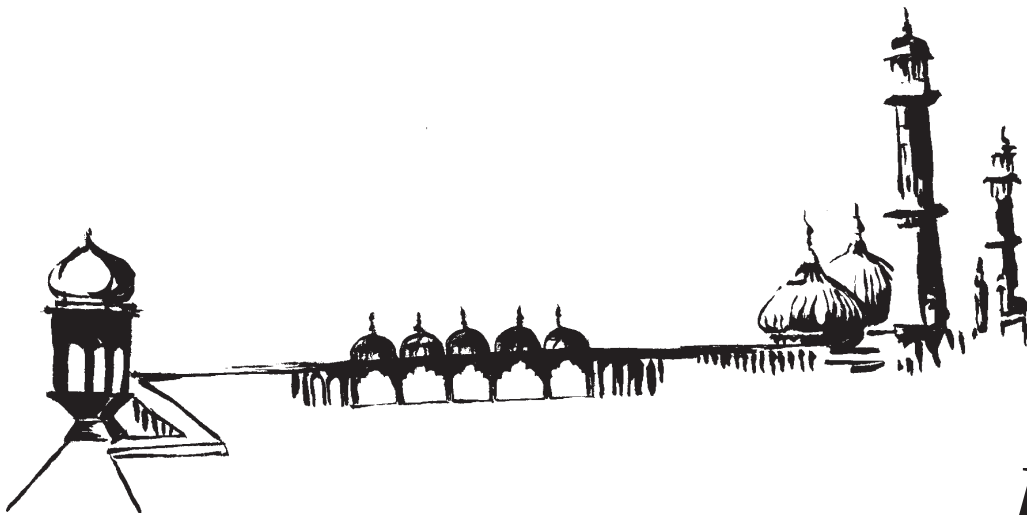
¹⁴ Tiplut Nongbri, *Development, Ethnicity and Gender: Select Essays on the Tribes in India*, Rawat Publications, Jaipur, 2003.

¹⁵ E.A.Gait, *A History of Assam (1905)*, Calcutta, 1963, pp. 258-259.

¹⁶ For instance, in her *Women of Assam (1928)*, Vickland refers to the Hindu women as "these child women" who must be led gently to receive the "sweet comfort of Christianity".

¹⁷ Narola Imchen, *Remembering Our Fore Mothers: The Influence of the American Women's Movement on the Baptist Women Missionaries in North-east India*, Jorhat, 2003

¹⁸ Helen Montgomery, *Western Women in Eastern Lands: An Outline Study of Fifty Years of Women's Work in Foreign Missions*, New York, 1910, pp.21-22.



Lucknow

Of Begums and Tawaifs :

Two women, Nawab Begum and Bahu Begum, were responsible for Lucknow becoming the capital of nawabi Awadh. Wielding power, both real and symbolic, from the original capital at Faizabad, they also played an important role in the survival of Awadh as an independent successor state to the Mughal Empire.

Sa'adat Khan was a Mughal governor (*Nawab-wazir*) of the subah of Awadh. In 1722, he became independent and decided that the governorship would thenceforth be hereditary. He moved from Lucknow, the Mughal capital and established his new capital at Faizabad.. He married his daughter Aliya Sadr un Nisa to his sister's son who succeeded him as Nawab Safdar Jung (1739-54). As daughter of the first nawab and the only wife of the second, Aliya was known as Nawab Begum. Her son Shuja ud Daulah, the next Nawab (1754-75) was married to Amat-uz-Zehra, the daughter of a powerful Persian courtier at the Mughal court. Amat came to be known as Bahu Begum.

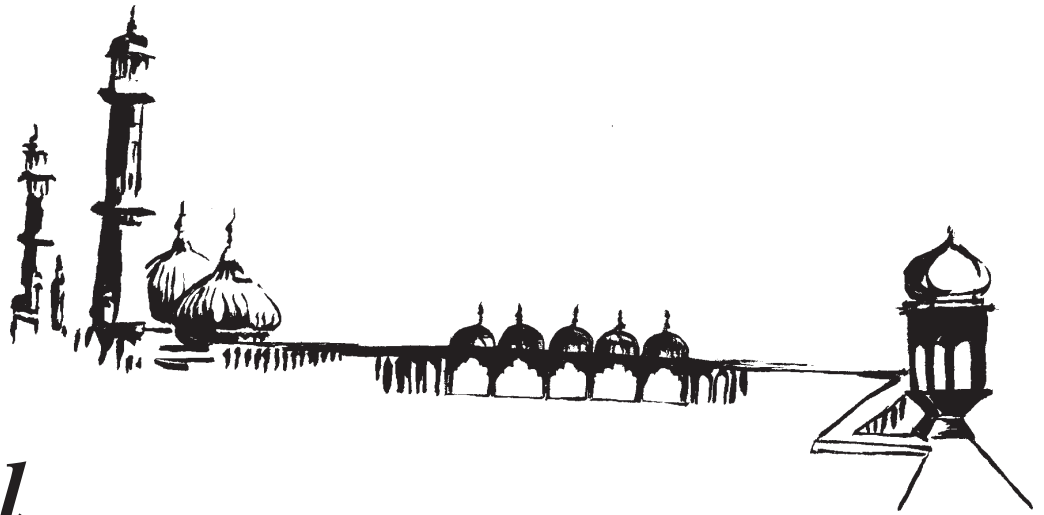
Awadh was a pretender to the glory of the Mughal state. Yet, while Mughal politics featured one Nur Jahan who became a power centre of consequence, Awadh, at its very inception, saw two strong women exercising considerable clout at court. They were rich, hard working, economically independent and expert at court intrigue. Both were personally very wealthy because of the dowries they received as personal gifts, including jewelry and personal valuables, horses, elephants, retainers and troops, as well as ownership of revenues from vast tracts of fertile land. Both maintained their own, independent establishments and a bureaucracy of women, men and eunuchs. Even though they were in purdah, they held regular court and conducted business through an elaborate, theatrical protocol whereby they were neither seen nor heard, yet were overpowering presences. They controlled closely the administration of their assets. Nawab Begum would write in a very fine hand and sign and seal important orders herself. Bahu

Begum did not write, but dictated and signed orders. Bahu Begum is reported to have had a force of ten thousand trained and well-armed troops, good horses, elephants and a fleet of boats.

In 1764, Shuja-ud-Daulah lost a decisive war against the British at Buxar. As a result, the Company helped itself to his kingdom and imposed punitive damages. The state treasury was emptied, yet there was not enough to meet the demands. Bahu Begum helped him out from her treasury, and his mother, Nawab Begum, chipped in with two million rupees in cash. Having spent so much of her money to save a truncated state, Bahu Begum subsequently got involved in managing the state finances. Neither woman allowed herself to be bullied by anyone, be it husband, son, or Company.

When Shuja-ud-Daulah died, Bahu Begum was instrumental in ensuring the succession of her son, Asaf-ud-Daulah (1774-98), despite the Company's opposition. Among other things, the British considered Asaf-ud-Daulah incompetent because he was fat and of unconventional temperament; they also alleged he was a pederast because he was homoerotically inclined. Nor would he play the role that the British had scripted for the Nawab, Once he became Nawab however, Asaf-ud-Daulah came into conflict with his mother and grandmother who had both come to represent power at Faizabad. To escape the court dominated by them, he shifted the capital back to Lucknow in 1775.

Public spats ensued between the Nawab and the two Begums over money, and the Company eagerly got involved. It decided that the power of these women had to be destroyed. Warren Hastings, the Governor-General, accused them of conspiring with the Raja of Banaras to revolt, and launched a violent attack. In 1781, both women were arrested and imprisoned. Their aides were tortured, their establishment ravaged and looted, and the occupants humiliated and assaulted. So vicious was the attack



Special

The Women of Awadh

that even the brazen Company was embarrassed at the way Hastings had treated the Begums. Hastings was impeached after Edmund Burke denounced him in Parliament. Hastings' trial lasted from 1787 to 1794 when he was acquitted. The East India Company paid some of his legal costs.

Nawab Begum lived till 1795. Bahu Begum died in 1815 after witnessing the succession of three nawabs who followed her son. She kept herself abreast of developments at court even though she was in Faizabad. She set up a unique trust, to which she left her entire personal wealth. The Trust gave pensions in perpetuity to her dependents.

Beginning with Nawab Asaf-ud-Daulah who shifted the capital to Lucknow to escape the influence of his mother and grandmother, Lucknow became both a museum and a stage of Awadhi culture. It also grew into an exciting supermarket for the finest in crafts and talents. The best artists, poets and courtesans moved to Lucknow. There was an enormous spurt of creativity. Patronage became a hallmark of elite culture.

Asaf-ud-Daulah, the 'debauched-jester', deprived of nearly all his political power by unfair treaties, inaugurated the cultural and economic renaissance of Lucknow. He undertook elaborate architectural projects as public work schemes. Lucknow came to outshine contemporary Lahore, and even Delhi. It was only economically that the colonial cities — Bombay, Calcutta and Madras— were more prosperous.

Two cultural developments of this period are of special interest. Both are cited when Awadhi culture is labeled debauched for its sensuality. One was the appearance of Rekhti, a genre of Urdu poetry written mostly by men but in the voice of women. Rekhti is the feminine of Rekhta, as Urdu was originally called. Though primarily associated with three important Rekhta poets — Rangin (1755-1835), Jurrat (1748-1810) and Insha (1756-1835) — who had settled in Lucknow, Rekhti was written by many

others, including women, and became popular. Ruth Vanita has argued that the language and idiom of Rekhti is similar to erotic love poetry in other northern Indian languages. Rekhti became notorious because of explicit poems about female sexuality, including same-sex attractions and love-making. Similar poems, with male-homoerotic content have long been part of the larger body of Urdu poetry, and some leading poets have contributed to this 'vulgar' genre yet Rekhta, unlike Rekhti, suffered no disrepute.

Rekhti *chapti-namahs* (female same-sex narratives) were used to brand all of Rekhti as pornographic and therefore an embarrassment to literary tradition. However, Rekhti was subversive in far more serious ways. The Urdu ghazal had superbly mastered the technique of not gendering lovers although indicators were often provided. The nouns were mostly gendered masculine. Rekhti removed all ambiguity by gendering the verbs. Some Rekhti poets further transgressed notions of gender by donning feminine attire during public recitals. Their performances were very popular at mushairas.

Because Rangin, the 'founder' of Rekhti, was unabashed in admitting that he drew from the language of courtesans in whose company he spent a considerable amount of time, it was assumed that all Rekhti was inspired by the same source. The *chapti-namahs* probably had a strong *kotha* linkage. However, much of Rekhti depicted everyday lives within the *zenana*. It was populated with female relatives including in-laws, friends, neighbours, maids, children, lovers and sometimes even a husband. Its language was drawn from within these respectable establishments where women, particularly servants, spoke many dialects. Its concerns were deemed mundane when compared to the mysticised romance of the Urdu ghazal. However, to classify this genre as misogynist or voyeuristic is self-defeating reductionism. Researching its 'mundaneness' is bound to be more fruitful.

The courtesans, who supposedly inspired Rekhti, were the second interesting feature of this period. They are considered another marker of Awadhi culture's decadence and feminization. Though the obvious origin of the *tawaiif* was sex-work, by the eighteenth century many of them had transformed themselves into successful public performers; some were recognized as artists and were in a position to decide on whom to bestow sexual favours. The developing culture of Awadh suited the *tawaiifs*. Patronage was available and liberal. Smart professionals that they were, they were also known for their mobility. Many *tawaiifs* moved to Lucknow to set up establishments. Pretty fortune seekers replenished their ranks.

To become successful *tawaiifs*, young girls were rigorously trained in literature, music and dance and the art of conversation. Unrelated *tawaiifs*, often from different religions, lived in independent establishments called *kothas* (lit. top floor.). Male relatives, attendants and musicians lived on the ground floor. The *kotha* was also the salon where they performed or entertained clients. Children lived with them as did many dependents. The entire establishment was ruled by a matriarch-like figure.

The public perception of a *kotha* has been completely distorted by *mujra*-numbers in big budget Hindi films. However, one cinematic image is very telling. This is the first shot of the *kothas* in *Pakeezah*, soaked-in-pink and dripping with attar. It scans a curly skyline of *kothas* with their delicate architecture and pastel colours, lining both sides of a busy, commercial street. Each *kotha* is dazzlingly alive with light, music and dance. They are open to the sky, the air and the street. In one of these, Sahib Jan sings and dances coquettishly to *Inhin logon ne*, complaining about all those who 'outraged' her modesty by having anything to do with her *dupatta* – the tradesman who sold it, the dyer who dyed it pink and the policeman who pulled it off her in public. Sahib Jan is a virgin and remains so till the end of the film.

While it may appear over-the-top, this one shot shows the profusion, prosperity, energy and openness of the *kothas*. The *kothas* prospered due to extravagant patronage. As artistes, the *kothewalis* were alive to creativity around them were tuned into musical and literary developments. Soon they became the main performers of *kathak* and singers of love lyrics. They often performed at the same gatherings as their seniors and their peers and were close to the literary and artistic mainstream. Since men from different backgrounds, including merchants and neighbouring territorial chieftains visited their *kothas*, they were also well tuned into what was happening around them. They were well net-worked and could even swing royal appointments.

Kothas had two common features with the establishments of the two Begums. They were prosperous, and independently controlled by women. They were also viewed with suspicion by the Company. As a group, the *tawaiifs* became one of the first victims of Queen Victoria's government's policy of

retribution after the *ghadr* of 1857 was crushed. Veena Talwar Oldenberg has found tax records showing that the *tawaiifs* were among the richest citizens on record and the largest tax payers. She has also highlighted colonial policy towards them. The British considered them deeply complicit in the events of 1857-58 and treated them the way they treated armed resisters. *Tawaiifs* were suspected of providing financial and logistical help to the rebels. Their establishments were ransacked; their valuables, their urban and agricultural property and their other business ventures were confiscated.

British fury at the *tawaiifs* was partially understandable because it was a former *tawaiif* who helped make it so difficult for the Company to recover Lucknow. This was Begum Hazrat Mahal, one of the wives of the last Nawab Wajid Ali Shah who had been exiled to Calcutta in 1856 when Awadh was annexed. Wajid Ali Shah had wives in the hundreds but he was allowed to take only a dozen with him. Begum Hazrat Mahal was one of the many he left behind in Lucknow. The rebels approached many Begums who had sons with legal claim to the throne to provide symbolic leadership to the resistance. None agreed. Begum Hazrat Mahal, a junior wife, having stipulated that she would be the regent of her minor son, volunteered and soon became one of the main leaders of the resistance.

Hazrat Mahal, a *tawaiif*, had been sold to talent scouts for Wajid Ali Shah's harem, the *Pari Khana* (fairy house). The *Pari Khana* had an elaborate hierarchy. Entrants entered as attendants but were proclaimed *paris* or fairies once they were allowed to sing and dance. If they became concubines, they also became Begums and if they bore the nawab a child, they were given the highest title of Mahal. *Mahak Pari* (fragrant-fairy) turned into Hazrat Mahal when she reached the top rung.

Begum Hazrat Mahal took very seriously her role as representative of a dynasty of nawabs, and defender of their honour. She proclaimed her son emperor, helped fortify Lucknow, traveled extensively rallying support, dealt with other rebel leaders and participated in planning strategies. A non-combatant herself, she appeared personally with her troops at battles. Allegations about her personal liaisons, or even the paternity of her son, could not stop her from being recognized as the leader who had royal legitimacy backing her, for even Bahadur Shah Zafar recognized her son as Nawab. When Lucknow fell, Begum Hazrat Mahal continued to fight. Eventually, she reached Nepal and was offered refuge by the Raja, whom she had had dealings with earlier. She was offered a pension if she returned but she refused and instead countered Queen Victoria's proclamation as Empress of India, with one of her own, affixed with the royal seal, from exile. She died in Nepal, probably in 1874.

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Isabella Thoburn College¹: Contribution to Women's Education



The College was founded by Isabella Thoburn, an American Missionary who was among the first missionaries sponsored by the Women's Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church to India. Her dream was to bring education to the women of India, and thereby empower them. On 18th of April, 1870, Isabella Thoburn opened her school with just six girls in a small room in Aminabad bazaar.

A year later, the school moved to Lal Bagh - a beautiful building which had previously housed the treasurer of the last Nawab of Avadh.

The demand for higher education grew and Lucknow Women's College as it was then called, began functioning on July 12, 1886 with the Fine Arts (F.A.) classes affiliated to Calcutta University. In 1894, the affiliation shifted to Allahabad University. In 1921 it became one of the core group of colleges that formed Lucknow University, and in 1923, the college moved from Lal Bagh to Chand Bagh, its present site.



Over the years, the College has made its steady contribution to the education of women in India: "In our quest for excellence, we continue to re-examine and re-assess our role and contribution to the field of women's education in India. We endeavour to strengthen our programmes, review the methodologies, build networks for knowledge exchange and continuously strive to keep ourselves relevant in the context of the present times."

Isabella Thoburn College offers a post-graduate degree in Women's Studies* and houses The Centre for Women's Studies and Development (CWSD).

*Cf. W.S. Syllabus section in this issue

Lucknow University²: Institute of Women's Studies



Isabella Thoburn College, King George's Medical College and Canning College provided the nucleus for the establishment of Lucknow University, which started functioning in 1921.

The Institute of Women's Studies, Lucknow University, was established in 1997. It started a two years post graduate course leading to the degree of Masters of Arts in Women's Studies, and Ph.D. enrollments have also been allowed from the session 2003-04. The course adopts a model of critical pedagogy, and the engagements of the institute are geared towards preparing pro-active reflective individuals who can contribute as scholars, activists or development functionaries at national as well as international forums.

The institute attempts to develop a broad gender perspective through teaching, research and extension activities. The faculty has actively engaged with drafting a state plan on education and women, besides documenting and researching rights based programmes for women. Research scholars of the department make regular presentations and are actively involved with workshops conducted by the department.

Footnotes

¹ Information excerpted from <http://www.itcollege.ac.in/itcollege-history.html> and <http://www.itcollege.ac.in/other-wep.html>.

Photographs from <http://www.itcollege.ac.in/itcollege-history.html>

²With contributions from Dr. Rakesh Chandra, Institute of Women's Studies, Lucknow University. Picture downloaded from <http://www.lkouniv.ac.in/>

Remembering Isabella Thoburn College, Lucknow

“We receive to give” was the motto of I.T. College. I do not know whether I have been able to live up to this motto of my dear *alma mater*. Much later in life, whenever the little rowdies of the neighbourhood became too much for their mothers to manage, they were sent to me to do their homework with “Dida”. Sometimes I felt rather irritated by this intrusion, but then I was reminded of the motto—I had received so much, and now I should not hesitate to give!

About sixty years ago, coeducation was neither encouraged nor looked up to. So the few girls’ colleges were much in demand. Yet so far as I remember there was no hassle about my admission to I.T. College. Though a greenhorn like me could have been easily shut out at the beginning of my academic life. I had studied at home and had never been to school. My father was a forest officer and we traveled with him and always had private tutors. I wanted to appear for my matriculation examination as a private student and my centre was I.T College. It was love at first sight! As I looked up at the majestic Doric columns, I longed to become a member of that sorority.

The College was founded by the Baptist Missionary Church and most of the teachers were Europeans or Americans. It was quite a job to understand their accents. But they taught sincerely—not just book learning, but also deportment and manners. Our principal, Mrs. Shanon was an impressive personality who never had a hair out of place. She arranged her white hair in a crown! In those days I had plenty of long tresses which got very wet one day. So I stood in the veranda in a sunny spot and let my hair down to dry it. Miss Shannon must have spotted me from her office. She came close to me and gently said, “My dear, you do have a lovely head of hair, but wouldn’t it be proper to go to the inner lawn to dry out your hair there?”

I.T College edeared itself to me because of the Browsing Room. This room was furnished like a family living room with comfortable chairs, pictures and books. Almirahs full of books—none of them locked! I was so enchanted with this unexpected wealth, that I would often miss my lunch to browse. Bounty over bounties—we were allowed to take books home for the long holidays. I felt drunk! We also had free access to the stack room which contained uncatalogued books.

Then there was the company of young girls of my age! This was something new to me as I had experienced only the solitary life of a Forest Officer’s daughter. There was Prajna Shah, daughter of an I.C.S officer. There were many things common in our attitudes to life—being sort of neo-colonial?—having known English people on our own terms and liking them. On the other hand, the Swadeshi Movement touched us deeply. We were close friends. Then there was Nishat Hassan, daughter of Justice Hassan who was modern enough to wish to give his daughter a good education, but in purdah! I remember her big car rolling to a stop at the portico of the college, Nishat being bundled out by her ayah, wrapped in a burkha. Then she would impatiently whip off her burkha and toss it into the car—as if showing her impatience with the purdah system itself! She was very fair with sharp features and a sharp nature too! So she had few friends of whom I was one. But though the two-nation theory was gaining ground, it had no place in our lives. Then I think of Amy Framroze—a big Parsi girl. She belonged not to the richer parts of the community, but came from a solid trading family which kept big shops stocked with food stuff. She always wore long dresses and never spoke Hindi. All together made for a pot-pourri of young people getting to know the world.

In those days colleges allowed out of the way combinations of subjects, I asked for Sanskrit, English, Child Study and Economics. I wanted this combination because it gave me free periods for going to the Browsing Room—when the Vice Pricipal, Miss Oldroyd was told about this, she smiled. Then it was discovered that only two girls had opted for Sanskrit. As Prajna’s father was keen about Sanskrit, she was finally conscripted and “then there were three!” Child Study was a subject conceived with imagination and intelligence—comprising of the psychology and physiology of the growing child. In these classes, Miss Oldroyd used to teach—her pronunciation of semi-permeable tissues as “se—my permeable” would remain fixed in our minds. I.T College was also famous for its one act plays—both staff and students participated and turned out excellent productions.

Geeta Chakravarti, Homemaker
(entered IT college in 1936).
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“Pledge We Our Faith Dear *Chandbagh* to Thee...”

Long years after having left Isabella Thoburn College, these lines of our College song, which we sang in all functions with full throated strength and head held high, still bring back nostalgic memories of the years spent in the college. I had joined IT College fresh from school, within days of having finished the ICSE, and the sight of the ten imposing pillars of the porch of the College as I entered it, clad almost in my school uniform, with my father filled me with both awe and a sense of alienation. Going from this far off town of Shillong, never having left the shelter of my parents’ protection, I wondered whether I would ever feel at home within the huge building guarded by those ten pillars. The future seemed so uncertain, and I felt so small and insecure. IT College for me at that time was only a building. But after three and a half years of living in it, when I left it, every stone of that structure seemed to have something to say to me, every tree of the lane leading to the Chapel held the memories of our joys and tears, ‘Naunihal’, ‘Maitri’, ‘Nishat’ seemed to call me back to re-live life again as a Fresher, Sophomore, Junior and Senior. The sound of the music emanating from Mrs. Jordan’s fingers busily playing the piano in the music room still rings clear and loud in my ears. The taste of the chocolate fudge that Miss Abraham made for us on occasions like ‘holi’ or Christmas still tingles my taste buds. When I left IT it was no longer a building but my fully alive *Alma Mater* ... “ the chords that bind our heart to thine shall ever draw us home.”

Memories come rushing back as I sit down to write this, Does the Chowkidar in his khaki uniform still call the girls “*babaji*”? Do the hostellers still call out “*Bhishtiji*” and “*Chowkidarji*” when attacked by the monkeys? Is the big tamarind tree home of the monkeys behind ‘Maitri’ hostel still there? These are a part of all those things that made IT College home to a lot of us. But these are not the only things that converted a building into a living memory. There were deeper and perhaps more fundamental aspects of the college which etched deep imprints into the lives of all of us who had spent some formative years of our lives there at a time when our minds were most impressionable. The values of life which the college tried to instil into the minds of the students may not have contained very radical ideas but those were still values which, if understood and accepted rationally, could bring a sense of discipline into one’s life. The College exposed the students to various opportunities in the fields of academic pursuits, games and sports and a variety of other extra-curricular activities. It was through such exposure that a sense of independence, self-reliance and self respect gradually began to take root amongst a large majority of the girls. As a result, IT girls went out to the larger world taking with them a confidence that they would be able to live up to all kinds of situations. This is perhaps one of the important contributions that IT college made (I do not know how it functions today- may be the situation is better than what it was when we were there) to the grooming of women - teaching each the importance of being a woman. The early seventies were not marked by a very strong wave of feminist ideas in India, but many of us in the college began to think and even raise questions about the equality of the sexes, albeit at a very naïve level. But that was a foundation, if not at the level of ideology at least at the level of initial realisations, of my growing sensitivity regarding women’s issues.

If I look at the general college teaching today and compare it with the kind of teaching that we received in IT I realise the vast differences

that exist. The fact that I am a Professor of History today is directly related to the interest in history that Miss Abraham cultivated in us. She made us read many of the original works and forced us to develop our own opinions on many historical problems. That training, and the hours of library work she made us do, got me so involved in the subject that it decided for me what course of study I would follow after graduation. I wonder whether many of the college students today would sit on the steps of the library at 7 o’clock in the morning as we did, and wait for the library to open so that we could reserve not only our seat in the reading room but also reserve the text books. I don’t see even my postgraduate students showing such interest in library work. The habit that I formed then, of sitting in a good library and reading – and IT College did have a very good library in those days – has stood me in good stead, and even today I think I can do the most concentrated reading if I sit in a reading room in a library. That IT College habit has also helped me in my research work, because even today I can sit for long hours and read.

Life was however not all work in the College. We had our opportunities for fun, and the College week, with the inter class and inter hostel competitions in all kinds of sports ranging from athletics to hockey, basketball, base ball, volley ball and badminton, was the time to let our hair down and let loose our creative talents. There were innumerable cheer songs that we composed to cheer ourselves to victory or raise, our spirits when we lost. These occasions were important for the all round development of the girls because it was at these times that many found their un-explored talents that must have helped them on in life later. At least I have benefited to quite an extent from those activities, because I was able to realise the fact that women were capable of doing all those things that a conventional middle class background constantly tried to dissuade women from doing. The mission with which Ms Isabella Thoburn began her school for girls at Lalbagh, and her struggle to get society to accept the idea of educating its women, has actually found its full fruition in the IT College. At least it opened the gates for the higher education for women, and even women from very conservative families that would never send their women to co-educational institutions, could hope for a college education and make a space for themselves in a male dominated society. In fact, in a country like India, any institution that seeks to promote education for girls should be seen as contributing in its own way towards the building of a more gender just society. IT College when I was there was not primarily an elite institution, because it had provisions for for girls from the economically weaker sections to join, even though that facility was open for only a particular group because the College is after all run by the Methodist Mission. But other facilities, like free dental care from the Clara Swaine Hospital, were open for all.

Isabella Thoburn College, with all its plus points and also its minus points, still remains a memorable part of my life spent in the interesting and historical city of Lucknow, although we lived more in the College than experiencing the realities of a city life. I look forward to seeing my *Alma Mater* again in February, 2008.

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Reminiscences of Growing Up in Lucknow

When I returned to Lucknow after ten year's absence in London, my nieces greeted me with the Arabic salutation '*Salaam-alai kum*' (may God be with you); it sounded so alien to me that I could not spontaneously respond with the appropriate '*Wail-e-kum-Assalam*' (God be with you too), the Arabic reply. As a child growing up in Lucknow, I was taught to greet elders with the Urdu (our mother tongue) *Aadab* or *Tasleem*, to which our elders would respond by putting their hands on our heads or embracing us to say, 'Long live child, grow to be beautiful and wise', or some such blessing. It pained me to notice the change, hinting at a separatist communal divide.

My most vivid memories are of going to see Diwali lights and to the Dussehra fair, where a paper effigy of Ravana was burnt. My mother, who was not formally educated, unexposed to the outside world and confined behind the four walls of purdah, used to send us dressed in our best, with some money in our pockets, escorted by a servant, to enjoy the festivities with our Hindu neighbour's children. It is a pity that my nieces and nephews are deprived of such pleasures, because Dussehra and Diwali are now 'their (Hindu)' festivals and not 'ours'.

I also remember that my mother and grandmother used to look forward to receiving *puris*, cooked vegetables and *achaar* from our Hindu neighbours at those festivals, as my mother always said that we could never cook vegetables as tasty as our Hindu neighbours did. I once asked my grandmother why we did not send *sevian* (sweet vermicelli prepared at Eid) to our Hindu neighbours, and my grand mother very nicely explained to me, without any resentment in her tone, that it was their custom not to accept cooked food from us, so instead we sent *aatash bazi* (fireworks) at Shab-barat (a Muslim festival when fireworks are burst). So, we grew up without rancour, aware of social and cultural differences that were to be understood and accepted. Perhaps it was the result of that upbringing, totally free of any communal divide between Indians that I married a Christian, two of my three daughters married Hindus, and we have cordial and friendly relations with their in-laws.

I was born in a Sunni Muslim family in Lucknow. Both my parents belonged to Zamindari families in a *qasba* (a small town) called Rudauli in Bara-Banki district, in the erstwhile princely state of Oudh. The Lucknavis and those living in the surrounding *qasbas* considered themselves somewhat culturally superior to *shahris* (city-dwellers) on account of being land-holders and not 'salaried or traders' as were the town-dwellers. The Lucknavis and the *qasbatis* were very conscious of their language (Urdu) and sophisticated life style. The landed gentry made a virtue of gracious living and an appreciation of the finer aspects of life.

Speaking correctly pronounced Urdu and adopting proper mannerisms were important ingredients of our upbringing. It was emphasised that our '*sheen, kaf*' (specifically Urdu sounds) were to be correct. There was indeed an element of chauvinism in this attitude. We were instructed to deal with respect with our elders, including older siblings. We were taught to say *Aadab* with the right hand cupped a little and head bend slightly. Even our eating habits were monitored closely. I remember being often scolded by my mother for dirtying my

palms with food while eating with hands, as food should not touch beyond the fingers when making a morsel, such were the detailed, delicate daily mannerisms, the hall mark of 'Lucknavi *Tehzeeb*', a culture of 'refinement, politeness and poetry'.

All that is not lost. Even now, as soon as I get down from the train at Lucknow Railway station I sense a lack of aggression; as compared to Delhi, even the coolies and the *tangewallahs* are more polite; they speak chaste Urdu that sounds like music to my ears. Lucknow *tangewallahs* have been famous for their humour: once a very fat gentleman hired a *tonga* (horse-drawn carriage) the tangewallah asked for twice the rate; when the customer protested, the *tangewallah* replied '*Huzoor, do martaba mein le bhi to jana hoga*' (Sir, I will have to carry you in two lots). I miss the poetic chants of the hawkers too. I remember them selling ice outside our house ('fridges were not common in those days), Yelling '*Le jaiye le jaiye, mohabbat mein ghuli ja rahi hai*' ('Please take the ice, it is melting in love'). In the same manner, while selling *kakdis*, a very thin variety of cucumber, the hawkers used to yell, '*Meri kakdiyan kakdiyan nahin hain, yeh majnoo ki pasliyan hain*' (My kakdis are not kakdis, these are Majnoo's ribs - referring to the great romance of Leila Majnoo).

Mushairas (poetry reading sessions) were an important part of the cultural life of Lucknow, and women were seated behind a curtain in the audience. All-time popular poets like Majaz, Sharar, Aneees and Dabeer belonged to Lucknow. In school we used to have *baibazi* (*antakshri*) competitions very often and took pride in remembering, by heart, verses from Ghalib. Majaz and Faiz. We did not use film songs in the competition; it was regarded bad taste.

I was the eldest in the family of nine children. My mother was only 17 years old when she married my father, who was 12 years older than her. My parents had a traditional relationship; my mother never called my father by his first name. My mother's attitude towards my father was respectful but she was not servile. She observed purdah and wore the burqa while going out, which was not very often. Women led a life of seclusion confined to the four walls of the zenana; male first cousins and closely related uncles were allowed access to the zenana, but male relatives by marriage did not have this privilege. Women did not go out to shop; traders visited the homes. All transactions took place through a third person, usually a servant's young son with whom purdah was not observed. In upper class households women did not do much house work, that was done by servants; but they kept themselves busy with sewing clothes and embroidery – outlets for their creativity. They used their imagination and skills to make beautiful covers for *khasdans* and *paandans* (betel leaf containers). These artistically-stitched covers, embroidered with silk or gold thread, formed part of girl's trousseau.

We wore flowing *ghraras* (long, divided gathered skirts), made of six to eight metres of materials. Old *ghraras* were recycled and stitched into colourful quilts. I was taught to sew and embroider. I was not very interested in cooking and other household chores but was coaxed into learning. Seeing my disinterest in domesticity my mother would say, '*iska ulta dola wapas ayega*' (her wedding palanquin will immediately be sent back).

Ramzan (the month of day-long fasting) used to be a month of great activity. Each day was spent in planning *aftaar* (snacks eaten after breaking the fast) and dinner. *Aftaar* was sent to the Mosque and also to neighbours. Friends and relatives were invited for *aftaar*. For us children Ramzan was more a cultural than a religious event. Each year in every family there were one or two children whose *roza kushai* (first fast) was celebrated. Relatives and friends were invited and we waited with great anticipation to be woken up early morning for *sahri* (snacks to be eaten before sunrise). When I fasted for the first time, my younger sister diluted my importance by secretly keeping the fast. As a result, much to my anger, the money and gifts which were given to me were divided between us. I tell her that I still have not forgiven her for that.

On their infrequent visits outside the house, my mother and other female relatives travelled in tongas, curtained on all sides. In Rudauli we went out in dolis (palanquins) also curtained on all sides and carried by four men. When we arrived or departed by train at the Rudauli station, we were carried in dolis which were carefully positioned at the entrance of the Ladies compartment from where we stepped into the train. I remember vividly the noise, clamour and haste to get into the compartment as the train stopped there only for few minutes. It presented quite a funny scene.

I started wearing the burqa when I was 12 years old. I resented wearing it and considered it old fashioned as I was in the company of fellow students who came from upper classes, spoke English fluently and did not wear a burqa. Besides the fact that in a burqa one could not see properly with a netted veil covering the face, it had other perils. For example, my younger sister often requested me to allow her to wear my clothes, which like any older sibling I used to refuse. So she found a way out by quietly wearing my clothes under a burqa to school. There I would find her in my clothes, which was infuriating but I could do nothing. This is one of the fond memories of my relationship with my sister, who unfortunately lives in Pakistan, far away from me, not in terms of miles but emotionally, because of the politically created distance. She is my only sibling who went to Pakistan with her husband.

I was six or seven years old when we moved to Lucknow where my father had taken up a job. This proved to be useful for us. We found a house that was walking distance from Karamat Hussain Muslim Girls School, where I was admitted. Justice Karamat Hussain, an enlightened Muslim lawyer, promoted Muslim girls' education. In 1920, he founded a girls' school in Allahabad and another one in Lucknow, which was a boarding school meant for the daughters of Talukdars of the neighbouring areas. When I joined the school in 1942, it was run in the British style with an Anglo-Indian principal. It offered a liberal and westernised education although the medium of instruction was Urdu. Soon after Independence, an Indian Principal named Miss Roshan Jehan took over; she was big-built and very imposing, rather conservative and very strict. Very soon she changed the flavour of the school environment and the girls were kept under strict surveillance, something I did not like.

My father had taken me to the school for admission. While filling the admission form he stated my real age but the principal advised him to understate my age, as was the custom in those days. My father refused to do so, as he could not think of his daughter working for a living, ever. He was also advised to enrol me as Zarina Farid (Farid being his name) as against Zarina

Khatoon that he would have preferred. After I passed the Intermediate from Karamat Hussain College, I wanted to join Isabella Thoburn College, commonly known as I.T. College. But my father refused to send me there as he regarded it to be too westernised and not suitable for purdah- observing respectable Muslim girls. How little did he know at that time that his daughter would one day go abroad to study and become a feminist!

I was fourteen years old when India achieved Independence. I vividly remember the festivities; sweets were distributed in the school, the whole city of Lucknow was lit up and we all went out to see the illuminations and fireworks. It meant so much to me, the successful culmination of a long-drawn Freedom Movement. While I was growing up and becoming aware of things around me, the Freedom Movement was at its zenith. My father's cousin, Ansar Harvani was fully involved in politics, I remember Dadi (as I called her), his mother, crying for his safety as he was either in jail or 'underground' (in hiding). I remember hating the 'goras' (the white men) who were the epitome of oppression for me, and admiring my uncle along with other freedom fighters who were making so many sacrifices to get rid of the British. My family was strongly against the Partition. Another uncle, the poet Majaz, was one time editor of *Naya Adab* (New Literature), an organ of the Progressive Writer's Movement. Both uncles were my role models and a deep sense of patriotism was instilled into me from childhood. We regarded ourselves Indian first and then Muslim and saw no contradiction in following the Muslim faith and being Indians. There was so much common between freedom fighters of all religions sharing the dream of Independent India. No wonder that even when North India was burning with communal hatred during the 1947 riots, Lucknow remained calm and not one communal incident took place there. How it breaks my heart to find that now U.P has become a hot bed of communal politics.

The Lucknow which is still referred to as a 'fairy tale city' was the Lucknow of my childhood. (I am deliberately using the past tense.) It was a city of leisurely pursuits, of flowers and henna, of perfumes (*ittr*), unique aromas like *ittr-e-gill* (fragrance of earth), and *ittr-e-khas* (that was cool in the summer heat), of poets like Majaz and Sharar, the Marsia writers like Anees and Dabir, of delicate *chikan kari* done on muslin, of zari embroidery with gold thread, of famed *kakori* and *galouti kababs*, not to beat almost a century of *tunda kababs*, of *sheer maal* and biryani. How much all of that has been part of my growing up! Life has changed so much, I suppose inevitably, and even I have not been able to transmit a good part of all this to my children who have grown up in the cosmopolitan and somewhat refugee culture of Delhi. I often lament this fact. One day, my youngest daughter said to me, 'Mummy, today in college (St. Stephen's) something happened which will make you very happy. Prof Amin had asked her if she had any connection with Lucknow. When she told him that her mother belonged to Lucknow, he commented, 'From your language and mannerism, I guessed that you must have some connection with Lucknow'. That certainly made my day. Yes, change is desirable, societies must move on, and cultures must absorb changes in a constructive manner; at the same time cultural continuity and preserving some of the old values are no less desirable.

Zarina Bhatti,
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Academia Reflects on the Women's Question: A Report

A National Seminar titled *Changing Power Equations: A Gender Perspective*, was held at the University of Madras, Chepauk, Chennai, on 21 and 22 August 2007. This seminar organized by the Dept. of Christian Studies of the same university, brought together women and men from the academia as well as activists in order to reflect on the question of power in the context of the changing role of women in society and its implications on gender relations.

The inaugural function was significant as both men and women addressed the issue with a shared concern for social transformation. After the welcome by Dr. Felix Wilfred, Professor and Head, Dept. of Christian Studies, Dr S. Ramachandran, the Vice-Chancellor of the University, delivered the presidential address. He acknowledged that in a patriarchal society like India, men have been privileged to have greater access to power in terms of resources and decision making both within the family and in the public sphere and women have remained dependent on men's good will for their well being. In this context, he suggested that seminars of this nature take stock of the situation and suggest creative responses. Ms Mina Swaminathan, the Economics, Communications and Gender advisor at the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, in her inaugural address, dwelt at length on the problem of women at the informal sector and stressed on the urgency to recognize the multiple domains in which women are acting, in view of creating greater gender-justice in society. In the keynote address, Ms Mythily Sivaraman, national Vice-President of All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA), raised the issue of unpaid labour by women and underlined the need to redefine 'employment' incorporating this reality which is so prevalent in the Indian society.

The paper presentations of the seminar began with Dr Praveena Kodoth of the Center for Developmental Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, who analysed the issue of 'Institutional Change, Patriarchy and the Development Question in India' using dowry as a tool. She challenged the 'normalization' of gender differentiation within dominant disciplinary frameworks and used the discussion of dowry to interrogate select social science domains such as neo-classical economics and anthropology, bringing into relief the gendered nature of institutions and their implications for power relations. Ruth Manorama, President of the National Alliance of Women, Bangalore analysed the issue of women's power in relation to caste and challenged the participants to look into the gender-caste nexus of the Indian social reality which has its implications on power equations at the socio-political, economic and religious dimensions of life.

In the sessions that followed, the question of 'Women's Economic Agency' was addressed by three speakers. Dr Crystal David John, faculty, Dept. of Economics, Stella Maris College, Chennai theorized on 'Challenging Androcentric Economics',

Ms Sheelu, facilitator of Tamilnadu Women's Collective critically analyzed the SHG Movement in relation to women's empowerment and R Geeta the South Region Coordinator, NCC-VSW addressed the economic question in relation to women of the unorganized sector. The first day's deliberations concluded with an insightful presentation on 'Gender, Media and Power' by Ms Ammu Joseph, independent journalist and media critic, Bangalore. She highlighted the need for civil society – including women's movements – to engage with and intervene in media-related developments at the macro level that are bound to have far-reaching effects on citizens, including women.

The second day's reflections began with a paper on 'Re-visioning Power: A Feminist Task' by Kochurani Abraham, a research scholar on women's issues in the Dept. of Christian Studies, University of Madras. Analyzing the question of power taking into consideration its oppressive as well as the emancipatory potential, she argued for a 'politics of inclusion' and a 'culture of partnership' as paradigmatic of a feminist re-visioning. This was followed by a presentation on 'Fashioning Selfhood: Reading Women's Narratives of Power' by Dr. Anandi, associate professor at the Madras Institute of Development Studies, Chennai, where she analyzed the auto-biography of Dr Muthulakshmi Reddi as exemplary to women's assertion of power by defining oneself. The deliberations moved to the domestic front in the analysis of 'Family as Site of Contestation of Power' by two speakers. Dr Arun Kumar MD dwelt on the issue of 'Domestic Violence' and Dr Fatima Vasanth, Principal, Madras School of Social Work focused on the urgency for power sharing within the family.

The discussions continued with a paper on 'Political Landscape of India and Gender Concerns in Relation to Power' by Dr Chandra Athreya, State Secretary, T.N Unit of the All India Kisan Sabha, followed by a presentation on "Engendering Power" by Dr V.Padma (Mangai), faculty of Dept. of English, Stella Maris College. Mangai brought out the challenge posed to conventional heterosexual power equations by trans-genders and commercial sex-workers. In the last paper presentation, Ms Geeta Ramaseshan, Advocate, Madras High Court analyzed the legal issues related to women and power. The seminar concluded with a Panel on the theme "Changing power Equations" during which Dr Sumathi (Dept. of Anthropology), Dr Shanti (Dept. of Econometrics) and Dr Paneerselvam (Dept. of Philosophy) of the University of Madras expressed their position on the topic of the seminar. The deliberations concluded on a note of hope that the seminar would act as a catalyst for social transformation in view of building egalitarian relationships and gender-justice in society.

Kochurani Abraham
Coordinator of the seminar.

IAWS PUBLICATIONS

IAWS publications are distributed to members at the National Conferences. Past priced publications are no longer available for sale. Most IAWS publications will be available as printed copies at the **IAWS Archive** at the Research Centre for Women's Studies, SNDT University, Juhu, Mumbai. Many libraries, Women's Studies Centres and women's resource centres across the country also have selected publications. All the past newsletters and most publications have been digitised. These will soon be available on our website www.iaws.org and may be freely downloaded for personal use. Soft copies of past newsletters and many publications will also be available on a CD at a nominal cost. Details will be announced shortly.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Feminist Perspectives and the Struggle to Transform the Disciplines, 2007.

Proceedings of the IAWS Southern Regional Workshop, IAWS and Dept. of Women's Studies, UTC, Bangalore 2-3 Feb. 2007.

This includes the Report on the workshop, 17 full papers and 5 presentations, besides a selection of other papers and reports including reports of the IAWS Western, Eastern and Northern Regional workshops held in 2007. (available only on CD)

Sovereignty, Citizenship and Gender: A Report, 2005.

Report of the XIth National Conference on Women's Studies. 3-6 May 2005. Dona Paula, Goa.

Sovereignty, Citizenship and Gender: Book of Abstracts, 2005.

XIth National Conference on Women's Studies. 3-6 May 2005. Dona Paula, Goa.

Our Story: Twenty Years of the IAWS, 2002.

Edited by Vidyut Bhagwat and Sharmila Rege.

This collection looks at the IAWS, its objectives and growth. It brings together reflections on the previous decades and organisational strategies for the future. The first section is on the IAWS, looking back and looking forward. The second section explores women's studies and the women's movement, while the third deals with the regional networks of IAWS. Section four is on 'recasting conference culture' while the last section, 'building an archive' includes Presidential Addresses to the National Conferences, which have been compiled by Kalpana Kannabiran.

Sustaining Democracy: Challenges in the New Millennium, 2002.

Orissa Plenary Session. Xth National Conference,

October 2002, Utkal University, Bhubaneswar

The report is a compilation of plenary papers from the Xth National Conference of the Indian Association for Women's Studies. 17-20 Oct. 2002, Utkal University, Bhubaneswar. It includes: 'Changes in Sex Ratio Patterns in Orissa' by Satish Agnihotri; 'Women in a Globalising World' by Vidya Das; 'Ethnic Conflict and its Impact on Women and the Community' by Sandhyarani Naik; and 'Impact of Globalisation on Women Employment in the Unorganised Sector and Rural Women' by Tapasi Praharaj.

Women and Violence in Gujarat. Special Plenary Session. Xth National Conference: Sustaining Democracy: Challenges in the New Millennium. October 2002.

Coordinators: Renu Khanna and Trupti Shah

This report records the Special Plenary Session on Gujarat. Against the backdrop of the violence in Gujarat, it explores the role women played and how they were involved and affected by the Gujarat pogrom. It looks at women and the 'Hindu Right' and women's bodies as 'sites of violence'. It also focuses on Gujarat as 'India's Lab of Fascism' and how women are caught in a cross-fire of the 'relentless siege on a religious minority'.

Globalisation, Women's Identity and Violence. Consolidated Workshop Reports. Lakshmi Lingam, and Shilpa Phadke (Eds.) 2002.

The report looks at how the process of globalisation of the economy, politics and culture has intensified the pre-existing crises of basic livelihoods, unemployment, environmental degradation, class, caste and gender violence, increasing the burdens on women and reducing entitlements to resources. The papers of the various regional workshops cover 'State, Civil Society and Women's Empowerment' in the Southern Region, 'Multiculturalism and Gender Issues' in the Northern Region, 'Dalit Feminism' in the Western Region and 'Impact of Globalisation on Women's Lives' in the Eastern Region.

Sustaining Democracy: Challenges in the New Millennium: Book of Abstracts, Xth National Conference, October 2002.

Xth National Conference of the Indian Association for Women's Studies. 17-20 Oct. 2002, Utkal University, Bhubaneswar.

Women's Perspectives on Public Policy. Theme Paper, 2002
By Maitreyi Krishnaraj

Women's Perspectives on Public Policy. Plenary Abstracts, 2000. IXth National Conference on Women's Studies, Hyderabad. 8-11 January, 2000.

The report abstracts the proceedings of the plenary sessions at the conference. It covers a) Women's Perspective on Public Policy: an incomplete or lost agenda, b) Tribal Issues and the Women's Movement, c) Moving beyond Wombs – Foregrounding Women's Health Agenda, d) Reservation Policies and the Women's Movement, and e) Censorship and Silence: Perspectives on the Freedom of Expression

Women's Perspectives on Public Policy. Sub-theme Abstracts, 2000. IAWS IXth National Conference on Women's Studies, Hyderabad. 8-11 January, 2000.

In Search of Pasts? History, Women's Movements and Women's Studies, 2000.

IAWS 2000. Proceedings of the workshops in the Eastern, Western, North Eastern and Southern Regions.

This compilation of the proceedings of the seminars held in the Eastern, Western, North Eastern and Southern Regions, brings together historical research on gender in the various regions. The aim is to first provoke discussion on the need for a historical understanding of women's current situation and, second, to examine how 'history' is itself a political resource

PAST PUBLICATIONS

National Consultation on Sexual Harassment on University Campuses: A Report, 1999.

IAWS and Human Rights Programme, University Of Hyderabad.

Perspectives on Independence: Through Women's Eyes: Selections from a National Seminar on the Early Years of Independence, Baroda: August 1997.

This collection of papers critically examines the historic events of the early years of Independence from the perspectives of Indian women. The papers study the experiences of Indian women against the background of the Nehruvian paradigm of planned economic development, accompanied by state promotion of social welfare, in order to understand the transition of Indian women from the heady days of the nationalist movement to the grim reality of their situation in the seventies and onwards. It examines various issues and themes and provides detailed narratives of six veteran activists including Manavati Arya, Dasriben Chaudhari, Mallu Swarajyam, Ila Mitra, Rani Das Gupta and Mrinal Gore.

Looking Forward, Looking Back: In Search of Feminist Visions, Alternative Paradigms and Practices. A Report of the Seventh National Conference of Women's Studies, December 27-30, 1995, Jaipur.

By Maitreyi Krishnaraj, Kamla Bhasin, Kavita Srivastava.

The report does a stock-taking of the women's movement's many programmes and alternatives, and a review of how the new trends in the economy and society have influenced women and men and the movement. It provides an analysis and critiques of programmes, projects and experiments, unfolds the visions and hopes of the movement and seeks to develop strategies for the future. Various sub-themes are explored including family and women's sexuality,

culture, identity and women's rights, women-centred natural resource management, and work and workers.

Remaking Society for Women: Visions Past and Present Background Volume for the VII Conference, December 1995.

Compiled and edited by Maitreyi Krishnaraj.

This background volume is a search for alternate paradigms and practices which constitute the invaluable stock of experiences for the women's movement. It contains articulations of visions of future society, based on principles of justice and fairness, for human kind. It traces the contributions of nineteenth century social reformers, including Jyotirao Phule, Gopal Agarkar, Raghunath Karve, Pandita Ramabai, EV Ramaswamy and MK Gandhi; studies the nationalist phase and the early post-Independence period; and examines the present scenario. Searching for and exploring articulations of visions in contemporary society, it expresses concern about how limited these are. It ends by looking at 'new beginnings' such as the declaration of the Beijing Convention and the Women Voters' Manifesto.

The State and the Women's Movement in India: A Report of a Workshop Held in Delhi, Oct.19-21, 1994.

By Kavita Srivastava, Nandita Gandhi and Abha BHaiya, Edited by Ritu Menon

The report looks at the ambivalent relationship between the contemporary Indian women's movement and the State. The movement has forced the State to recognise the subordinate status of women and given women's issues visibility. However, the State has continued to reinforce the inequality between the sexes. The report asks how the women's movement should strategise vis-à-vis the State. It includes six case studies representing a wide range of interactions with the State.

Re-Examining the Indian Family: A Report of the Workshop, Calcutta: July 7-9, 1995.

By Nirmala Banerjee and Jasodhara Bagchi.

The report makes a critical assessment of mainstream theories and of the stances of policy-makers in regard to the family in India, reviews these against findings from field studies and an analysis of the logic of the family organisation. It shows how most studies continue to perceive the family as a benign, altruistic arrangement, despite research findings of on the power structures in intra-family gender relations and on the differences between the reality and ideology of the family.

Feminist Approaches to Economic Theory: A Report of The Workshop, Bangalore: August 5-6, 1995 .

By Maitreyi Krishnaraj, Edited by Jaya Banerji.

The report looks at various feminist approaches to economic theory. The theme paper asks 'what is feminist economics' and identifies three levels: a feminist approach to economics, a fundamental/ radical critique of it, and creating alternative frameworks. The report summarises the deliberations of a workshop conducted to revive the EIWIG – Economists Interested in Women's Issues Group – and take it forward, with a view to influencing mainstream theories and making a dent on policy.

Karuna Aaye Magar is Tarah Nahin: Aaj Ki Mahila Kavita, 1995. Ed. by Anju Daddha Mishra
This compilation of poems, on the occasion of the VIIth National Women's Studies Conference (Jaipur: December 1995), looks at women's status and situation from various perspectives.

Mahila Adhyayan Kya Hai, 1995
By Neera Desai and Dr. Maitreyi Krishnaraj
This booklet, produced on the occasion of the VIIth National Conference, throws light on the field of women's studies, its usefulness, the problems it faces, the principles that govern it, and various other aspects.

A Source Book: In Search of Feminist Visions, Alternative Paradigms and Practices, 1995.
By Lakshmi Menon. IAWS and Akshara, Mumbai.

Women and Violence, 1995 By Radhika Coomaraswamy

Women, Ecology and Economic Globalisation: Searching for an Alternative Vision, 1995.
By Vandana Shiva. Keynote Presentation. VIIth National Conference.

Catalogue of Paintings, Sculptures and Graphics
by Women Artists of India, 1995. Jawahar Kala Kendra and IAWS

The New Economic Policy and Women: A Collection of Background Papers to the VIth National Conference, 1993.

This collection of background papers provides detailed and in-depth coverage of the NEP and its implications for women. It looks at the possible and likely impact on women of these policies, particularly those employed in the informal sector. It explores how to safeguard women's interests within the new policy framework and how to convert crisis into opportunity. I. It looks at the process of feminisation through flexible labour in India and highlights the need for development with a human face.

Collection of the Papers of the VIth National Conference, Mysore, 1993.

Eight volumes in mimeo.

PUBLICATIONS WITH COMMERCIAL PUBLISHERS

Women and Law, 1994
Edited by Lotika Sarkar and B. Sivaramayya.

Participation of Women in Politics, 1993
Edited by Susheela Kaushik, New Delhi: Vikas.

Finding the Household: Conceptual and Methodological Issues, 1992
Edited by K. Saradamoni, New Delhi: Sage.

Struggles of Women at Work, 1992.
Edited by Sujata Gothoskar. New Delhi: Vikas

Women and Indian Nationalism, 1986.
Ed. by Leela Kasturi and Vina Mazumdar. New Delhi: Vikas.

THE CENTRE FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES, DIBRUGARH UNIVERSITY

1. Journal of Women's Studies:

The Centre for Women's Studies, Dibrugarh University, publishes annually the "Journal of Women's Studies: A Multidisciplinary Journal". The Journal is a peer reviewed journal that seeks both multidisciplinary and cross-cultural perspectives and invites submission in the form of scholarly and research articles. The main aim of the Journal is to focus on the issues and problems related to women in general and that of Northeast in particular. The Centre has already published the first volume of the Journal on March, 2007.

Subscription Rates

Institutional	Rs 200.00
Individual	Rs 100.00
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2. *Human Rights & Women of North-East India*, A. D. Mahanta (ed.), Centre for Women's Studies, Dibrugarh University, 2002.

3. Report of the Seminar on Women in Administration and Decision-Making process in North-East India, 2002.

4. ***Women's Studies in Dibrugarh University –A Checklist, 1980- 2004***

5. ***A Profile of Women Employees of OIL, Duliajan, 2004***

6. ***Women's Studies Centre, Dibrugarh University –A Profile*** (Brochure)

7. ***Economic Empowerment of Rural Women of North-East India: Problems and Prospects***, Abstract of the Regional Seminar, Centre for Women's Studies, Dibrugarh University, 2005.

8. Report of North-East Regional Seminar on *Economic Empowerment of Rural Women of North-East India: Problems and Prospects* on 15 – 16 December, 2005

9. Report of the seminar on the *Issues of Research on Rural Women of N.E. India* on 30th-31st May, 2006

Isabella Thoburn College and Lucknow University

M.A. IN WOMEN'S STUDIES

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M.A. I— SEMESTER I

Paper I – Concepts and Theory – Gender Feminism and Women Studies

Paper II — Women, Culture and Society

Paper III — Women's Movements

Paper IV — Gender and Economics

Paper V — Women and Law

M.A. I—SEMESTER II

Paper I – Women's Rights, Feminist Research and Feminist voices

Paper II – Women in Indian Society

Paper III - Women's Organizations and Movements

Paper IV – Women Planning and Economic Activity

Paper V – Legal Structure, Bills and Literacy

M.A. II : SEMESTER — I

Paper I — Women and Education

Paper II — Women and Health

Paper III — Women, Politics and State

Paper IV — Women, Language and Literature

Paper V — Women and Environment

M.A. II : SEMESTER — II

Paper I — Women's Literacy and Education

Paper II — Health, Policy and Practice

Paper III — Development, State and Women

Paper IV — Media, Literature and Women

Paper V — Project work/Dissertation

NOTE : Viva Voce will be held after II & IV Semester.

Centre for Women's Studies, Dibrugarh University

POSTGRADUATE CERTIFICATE COURSE

IN

WOMEN'S STUDIES

(One Year, Part-time)

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Dr. Daisy Bora Talukdar,
Director i/c, Centre for Women's Studies,
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Ph. 0373-2370194;
E-mail: duwomenstudies@yahoo.co.in

Eligibility: Graduate degree with minimum of 45% (Hons.) or 50% simple pass

Objective of the Course: This course aims to introduce the students to the following: - Feminism and feminist theory and concepts; the history of the Women's Movement and its relation to Women's Studies in a regional, national and global context; contemporary issues and debates relating to women in society and Women's Studies in India, with particular reference to North East India. The students will be equipped with critical insights and methodological tools for meaningful intervention on issues of Women's development and empowerment.

Course Description: The Course will consist of four papers of 100 marks each. 70% will be by external evaluation and 30% internal. Internal evaluation will be based on a term paper and oral presentation.

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Paper II: Women in Contemporary India: Issues and Debates.

SEMESTER - II

Paper III: Women and Development

Paper IV: Part A: Status of Women in North- East India.

Part B: Research Methodology and Field Work.

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Zubaan; 2005, 328 pp, hb, INR 495, ISBN 81 89013 61 0.

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Editors: Nalini Visvanathan, Lynn Duggan, Laurie Nisonoff and Nan Wiegiersma

Third World studies were long the undervalued and ignored actors in the development process but are recognized by scholars, practitioners and policy makers alike as playing a critical role. As the first comprehensive reader for undergraduates and development practitioners, this book presents a wide ranging selection of the now vast body of literature that has grown up alongside this acknowledgment.

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Restless Mothers and Turbulent Daughters Situating Tribes in Gender Studies

Shashank Shekhar Sinha

Writing on Chotanagpur tribal women, using the perspective and tools of gender studies, the author raises issues of interdisciplinary interest for scholars of history, anthropology, sociology, gender and tribal studies.

Stree/Samya; 2005, 292pp, INR 550, ISBN 81-85604-73-8

Harvest Song: A Novel on the Tebhaga Movement

Sabitri Roy . Translated by Chandrima Bhattacharya and Adrita Mukherjee Foreword by Tanika Sarkar

Sabitri Roy's trilogy, *Paka Dhaner Gan*, translated for the first time into English, provides an epic panorama of rural Bengal of the late 1930s and 1940s, encompassing the freedom movement, war and the Tebhaga movement. While focusing on a momentous social revolt, Roy weaves in the lives of young women and men wrestling with political commitment and the search for personal fulfilment.

Stree/Samya; 2005, 390pp, INR 350, ISBN 81-85604-50-9

The Violence of Normal Times: Essays on Women's Lived Realities

Kalpana Kannabiran (Ed.)

This volume attempts to look at the experience and articulation of violence against women in relation to feminist debates and organising on the issue, and the positive/ negative responses to that articulation, particularly from the standpoint of law and the institutional apparatuses of the State.

Women Unlimited; 2005, 400 pp hb, INR 500, ISBN: 81-88965-06-5

Men's Laws, Women's Lives: A Constitutional Perspective on Religion, Common Law and Culture in South Asia

Indira Jaising (Ed.)

In all five countries of South Asia, constitutional guarantees of equality and non-discrimination are confounded by discriminatory personal laws that institutionalise gender inequality. The essays in this volume highlight the striking universality of women's inequality in South Asia, and the failure of our states to secure socio-economic, political and human rights for their female citizens.

Women Unlimited, 2005, 400pp hb, INR. 500, ISBN: 81-88965-07-3

Gender and the Built Environment in India

Madhavi Desai (Ed.)

At various levels, from the city to the institutions and from the neighbourhood to the dwelling, the ideal and the real about the social relationship between men and women is expressed in the built form. One of the first publications to look at gender and the built environment, this book examines the role of women as consumers and creators of the built space and focuses particularly on India and parts of South Asia.

Zubaan, 2007, 350 pp hb, INR 495, ISBN 9788189013033

Nuns, Yoginis, Saints and Singers: Women's Renunciation in South Asia.

Meena Khandelwal, Sondra L. Hausner, and Ann Grodzins Gold (Eds.)

This book vividly showcases new ethnographic research on extraordinary South Asian women who have abandoned worldly life for spiritual pursuits. With intimate narratives documenting contemporary women's experiences, contributors explore the lives of women who have renounced involvements such as sex, financial security, kin, and the pursuit of beauty, in favour of higher religious and spiritual ideals. The authors consider the hardships endured by women committed to religious paths more commonly taken by men and warn against any easy romanticization of these women's lives.

Zubaan, 2007, 376 pp hb, INR 595, ISBN 9788189884344

Institutions, Relations, Outcomes

Naila Kabeer and Ramya Subrahmanian (eds.)

The absence of gender awareness in policy in the past has given rise to a variety of efficiency, welfare and equity costs. This book develops an analytical framework and a set of tools which can assist planners, as well as trainers, to ensure that gender is systematically integrated into different aspects of their work. It offers an inventory of the kind of assumptions which lead to gender-blind policy, and assesses integrationist and transformatory strategies by feminist advocates to influence the mainstream policy agenda.

Zubaan, 2007, 422pp, Hb, INR 400, ISBN 818510798X.

Activism and Feminist Consciousness**Neera Desai, *Feminism as Experience: Thoughts and Narratives***

Sparrow, 2006, HB 456pp, Rs. 250

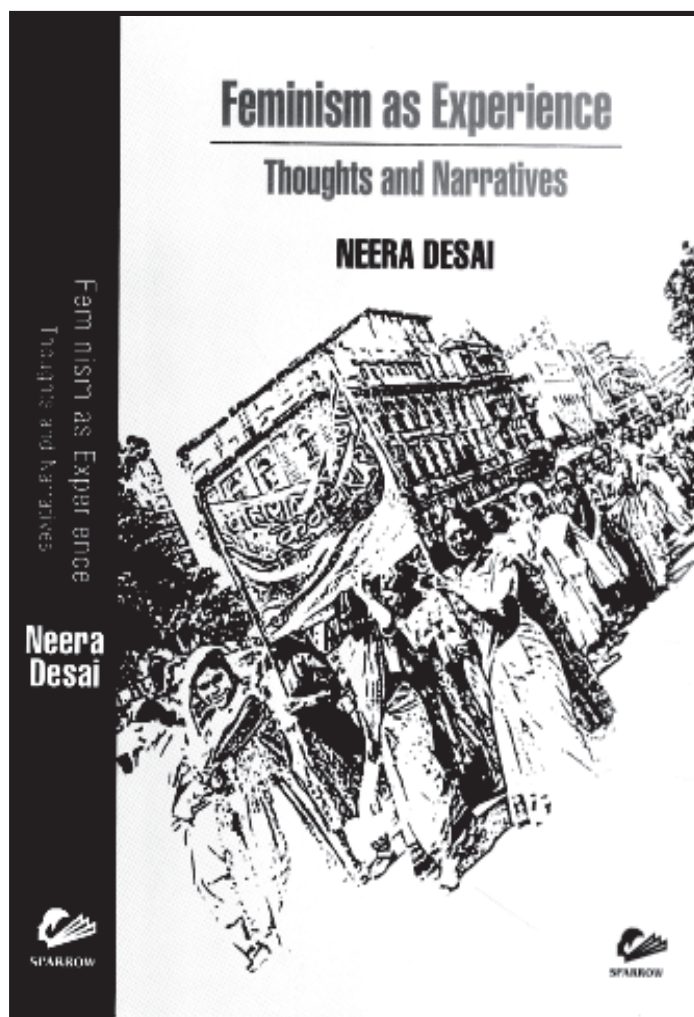
In her book *Feminism As Experience : Thoughts and Narratives* , Neera Desai brings us the crystallisation of thoughts that she had begun explore when she began a research project in the late 80s. Trying to understand the development of different currents of the women's movement and the birth and growth of feminist consciousness in individual activists, Desai had interviewed ninety women in Maharashtra and Gujarat. Some women had been active in the Independence struggle. Younger women were active in the Anti- Price Rise Movement, the Nav Nirman Movement and the anti-emergency struggles. For some, participation in these struggles led the way to joining feminist groups. The report on the study was submitted to the UGC in 1994.

In 2001-03 Desai began taking a second look at the material she had collected during her study. She felt the

need to update her interviews, so that they could address the questions that had begun to confront the women's movement in the 1990s and the first decade of the new century. The questions related to globalisation , communalism and careerism among the young began to assume great importance. The book that was born out of this painstaking effort comprises life sketches of 24 women activists, based on interviews conducted with them, and several analytical chapters that draw out learnings from the interviews and place them in context.

At the end of her book, Desai gives us a list of all the ninety women she had interviewed and their areas of work. The author makes no claims of representation but hopes that the life sketches she has presented will give us an idea of the different concerns, ideas, actions and trends in the women's movement. In the first

chapter of the book, which is called, Let a Hundred Feminisms Bloom, Desai outlines many questions around the terms ' feminism' and ' feminist' that the book sets out to explore. This chapter chronicles the many questions and debates that have beset the terms



feminism and feminists, explaining how both the Left and the Right have been uncomfortable with feminism and feminists. Interestingly, many political activists, irrespective of political affiliation, as well as researchers and academics, have found the term feminism 'western' and thus rejected it.

Many activists, who have worked closely with Communist parties, seem to think that feminism is preoccupied with petit bourgeois concerns. Asserting that she does not consider herself a feminist, Malini Tulpule says that feminism is "a temporary phase devoid of sound ideology". "Women's emancipation is not an isolated phenomenon but a part and parcel of emancipation of all depressed sections of society", she adds.

Echoing many women, who had their political training in the struggle for Indian independence, Tulpule goes on to make statements like, "It is okay to oppose certain familial oppressions but it is not advisable to break the family. We cannot be home-breakers."

The committed feminist scholar, Neera Desai, is not content to glorify the Indian family. The 'subjects' of the life sketches talk frankly about their difficulties in family situations.

Feeling trapped, a 'contented wife' decides to leave her home and marriage; marrying a man from another religion and committed to the ideals of socialism and secularism, an activist is continually taunted by her in-laws for refusing to convert; another activist recounts that despite their initial opposition, her family is now proud that she has done her MA and works as a teacher.

Many of the women featured in this book are from comfortable, upper caste Hindu homes, though most of them have long years of experience of working with poor women. Some have also worked with Dalits, Muslims and women from indigenous communities. Commenting on the Indian Women's Movement, many feel that it is dominated by upper middle class, upper caste women. Flavia Agnes talks about many instances where she felt that co-traveller feminists were unable to understand that they were insensitive to concerns of women from other religio-cultural groups. "Religious occasions like Good Friday or Id did not mean anything to other friends. Conferences or seminars are always happening during Christmas or New Year but never during Diwali or Holi."

Women's activists in India were tuned to thinking that a Uniform Civil Code would promote a more secular, gender

equal India. Flavia Agnes was one of the first to point out that discussions around the UCC tended to promote a majoritarian point of view. Despite the fact that most groups now talk about gender just laws, as opposed to UCC, there are still murmurs of dissatisfaction about the growing strength of identity politics.

This book is a valuable addition to our knowledge of the Women's Movement in India because the author conducts a meticulous exploration of difficult issues. One of the pioneers of Women's Studies in the country, she is proud of its achievements. Yet, she is acutely aware of its problems and contradictions and offers pointers for remedy. Deeply committed to learning and scholarship, she continues to assert the profound connection that women's studies need to maintain with women's activism and feminist practice.

In a historical recounting of the women's movement, there is a validation of the role of autonomous women's groups and an anxiety around NGO-isation. There is no denying that consciousness raising by women's groups in the 80s and early 90s played a significant role in advancing feminist thought and activism in India. However, there seems to be an uncritical acceptance of the term 'autonomous women's groups' and their ways of working.

Concerns around NGO-isation are articulated in the first three chapters of the book, and by many of the women interviewed. While much is said about the pitfalls of foreign funding and a corporate culture, the grassroots presence of NGOs is not adequately analysed. The anxiety around NGO-isation however, appears tempered in the concluding chapter entitled Some Afterthoughts.

Despite the chapter entitled Let a Hundred Feminisms Bloom, Desai has referred to both feminism and the Indian Women's Movement as a singular, unitary entity. In her work to present different ideas and practice, the author demonstrates a strong commitment to plurality and diversity in the Women's Movement. In some places in this volume, she points out that it was her own limitations that have not allowed for exploration of the questions raised by Dalit movements and lesbian movements. Many questions are asked, and there are no claims of right answers. The reader too adds many questions and feels privileged to be guided by a keen and searching mind.

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Declining Sex Ratios : A National Emergency

Tulsi Patel (Ed.), *Sex Selective Abortion in India – Gender, Society and New Reproductive Technologies, Delhi, California & London*

Sage Publications, 2007. 432 pp. US\$31.95, Paperback, ISBN 0 -7619-3539-8 (PB).

This scholarly volume addresses the 'national emergency' i.e. declining sex ratio in India from 1901 to 2007. It increases understanding on a hugely important and challenging subject of female specific abortion, as rightly said by Tim Dyson in its Forward. This collection of 11 essays unravels the reasons for the depleting child sex ratio in India. The contributors, all distinguished demographers and social scientists, describe the political economy of sentiments and sexual mores that leads parents to kill unborn daughters. They examine ways in which reproductive technologies, such as, the ultrasound, are misused at the family, community and state levels. In this alarming scenario, the volume highlights both the participation and defiance of the various authorities dealing with reproduction, health services and the problem of female foeticide. Engagement with the state is analysed in the light of colonial policies, the law of adoption, health policies, family planning programmes and the Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques (PNDT) Act of 1994 and its amendment in 2002.

In a comprehensive introduction, the editor examines the political economy of emotions that govern son-preference and selective elimination of female fetuses with the help of new reproductive technologies (NRTs) such as amniocentesis, chorion-villi-biopsy, fetoscopy, ultrasound and in-vitro-fertilisation. Factors such as the widespread practice of dowry, among all communities in India irrespective of their class, caste and religious identities, perpetuated through patrilineage and patrilocality the popular belief that "A son is a stick for old age" and the cultural legacy of son preference. For ritual reasons and funeral rites, daughters and women are attached lower premium in India.

Part I of the book focuses on 'Missing Girls and NRTs: Ethical and Development Dilemmas'. Leela Visaria in her scholarly paper 'Deficit of Girls in India: Can it be Attributed to Female selective Abortion?' shows a collusion of culture or social norms and NRTs that is all pervasive and promotes pre-birth elimination of girls.

Ashish Bose's article 'Female Foeticide: A Civilisational Collapse' is based on his field study of Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh where sex ratios have become alarmingly adverse for girls and women. He examines the deficit of women as a symptom of increasing crimes against women. In

'Rethinking Female Foeticide', Rainuka Dagar provides a socio-cultural perspective on the sharp increase in the masculine sex ratios in India and concludes that this phenomenon is a direct manifestation of culturally accumulated hegemony of men.

Part II of the volume covers 'Meaning and Social context of Depleting Number of girls'. Tulsi Patel unravels the mindset that considers daughters as burden behind eliminating female foetus. In 'Between a Rock and a Hard Place: The Social Context of the Missing Girl Child', Alpana D. Sagar shows that devaluation of women's work in the market economy devalues women's lives. With fertility decline, son preference becomes acute. She recommends empowerment of women thro' better employment and strict implementation of Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Amendment Act, 2002. Reema Bhatia's article "Health Policy, Plan and Implementation: Role of Health Workers in Altering Sex Ratio" exposes the complicity of health workers and doctors in facilitating sex selective abortions by registered medical practioners as well as by quacks. Reema Bhatia's article 'Abortion: Born to live' conveys that abandonment of more girls in Delhi symbolizes an extreme case of neglect of girls.

Part III of the book is 'Titled: Representation, Articulation and the State'. Historical piece by L.S. Vishvanathan shows linkages between female infanticide, property and practice of hypergamy during colonial rule. Vibhuti Patel examines political economy of missing girls in India in the context of 'women's choice', population control policy, and a consumerist culture that aggravates the greed for dowry.

In Appendix I, Prof. Bijayalaxmi Nanda presents a detailed and lively narrative of perspectives, strategies and experiences of the campaign against female foeticide. Appendices II, III and IV provide the texts of the PNDT Act (1994), the PCPNDT Act (2002), and its rules respectively. This book is strongly recommended to students and teachers of all disciplines, representatives of state and civil society, policy makers, legal activists and women's organizations.

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