

## SONIA VERMA

On any given random day, Sonia Verma moves between meetings at multiple locations, is in and out of government offices, is doing mobilisation of women for upcoming protests, undertaking membership drives, dealing with people who come to her for resolution on wide-ranging issues and is dealing with everyday struggles of an innumerable number of women. It is not easy to get hold of Sonia Verma, the State Vice President for Delhi of Janwadi Mahila Samiti (JMS) or the All-India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA). Nor is it easy to give a mould to the activist Sonia Verma is. This writing is a humble attempt to capture the life and activism of Sonia Verma, the State Vice-President of JMS, Delhi. The writing traverses through the recollections of Sonia Verma, however, is limited by it as well. The expanse of the work and the depth of a life lived often go to the oblivion of many activists of the grassroots like Sonia Verma. The writing should only be treated as a glimpse of the undocumented lives and activism of Sonia Verma, and not an all-encompassing biographical account. Further, it allows us to think about several women leaders like Sonia Verma, whose life and politics are not two separate spheres.

### *From Burma to Delhi*

Sonia Verma was born in Burma. Sonia Verma and her parents landed in Madras from Burma in 1969. The return from the then crisis-ridden Burma was expedited by the policy measures of then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi. Sonia's family was one among several families who returned to the country then. Sonia and her siblings were born in Burma. The family originally from Uttar Pradesh (UP) first took a resort in the Ayodhya district and then settled in the Faizabad district of Uttar Pradesh. She got married in Uttar Pradesh according to her will and later shifted to Delhi in 1974. Sonia Verma and her husband initially stayed at Vasant Gav for rent, they very soon owned a jhuggi in Kusumpur Pahari right from the early years of arrival in Delhi. However, Kusumpur in those years had no availability of water or electricity. So, she, along with her husband stayed in the worker quarters in Vasant Vihar locality, in South Delhi, a locality that hosted diplomats. Her husband was a plumber and was given a worker quarter in one of the houses in the locality. In return for it, her husband would do the plumbing work

in the house for free. Her two elder daughters were born in the said locality. Her youngest son was born after shifting to Kusumpur Pahari.

In 1980, her *jhuggi* in the Jhuggi Jhopri Cluster (JJ Cluster) of Kusumpur Pahari was constructed enough to fit habitation. Sonia's husband, constructed the *jhuggi* himself for a total cost of Rs.100 in the 1980s. Sonia's *jhuggi* has expanded from what it was in the 1980s. Sonia's husband passed away in 1991.

Sonia Verma had education till the 10<sup>th</sup> standard. She also became the supervisor of the Adult Education Project in Kusumpur Pahari specifically for women's education. Sonia used to also work in the Hosiery factory at Vasant Vihar (located at the present-day PVR Cinema) in the early years. Sonia made use of the experience gained during the time to bring together women to make jute bags for the events. Sonia Verma also worked as part of the Saksharatha Abhiyan (Literacy Mission) in 1991 following the death of her husband. Her youngest son was small and she used to take the boy along for the work and used to earn Rs.1500 a month. She has also long worked with the Rotary club that functions at Kusumpur Pahari.

Sixty-six-year-old Sonia Verma had been living at the JJ cluster of Kusumpur Pahari for over 40 years now. Her son and his family at Kusumpur Pahari live along with her these days. Sonia has two daughters as well, one who lives in Bangalore along with her family and the other one an Anganwadi worker at Kusumpur Pahari who commutes daily from Badarpur where she lives with her family. The site of activism of Sonia Verma has for long been the *bastis*. Kusumpur Pahari is a significant part of the life and activism of Sonia Verma. It is important to understand the social and demographic conditions of Kusumpur Pahari. This also tells us about the actual material conditions that have informed the life and activism of Sonia Verma.

### *Life in Kusumpur Pahari*

Sonia Verma and her husband were among the first settlers of Kusumpur Pahari. Kusumpur Pahari is located, behind the CBI colony, near the upscale Vasant Vihar neighbourhood in the South Delhi district. Kusumpur Pahari existed as a glaring reminder of the hierarchies of urbanisation amidst the bustling South Delhi. The settlement is made up of migrants who came to the city in the 1960s when there was a demand for construction workers in that area. The initial settlers were mostly workers in the quarries nearby. Until the 1980s, the entire area was forested (Aravali Ridge) except for a few buildings of the newly constructed campus of the

Jawaharlal Nehru University. The emergency period in Delhi has witnessed the large scale removal of slum settlements. However, Kusumpur Pahari was unaffected in the period.

The initial settlers were mostly workers in the quarries nearby. Some families like Sonia's (not working in the quarries) got access to the land with the help of the caretaker of the quarry at Kusumpur Pahari. 'With one whole chicken and a bottle of alcohol to the caretaker people used to occupy a place and make a jhuggi then. However, earlier people were not greedy. They only occupied what they needed,' recollected Sonia. In the 1980s there was no electricity in Kusumpur Pahari. Settlers fetched water from a government well a little further down, which meant women undertook the strenuous task of carrying several cans of water uphill.

As per the 2011 Census, Kusum Pur census town had an area of 1.66 sq.m with 3782 households. Of the total population of 17,028, 9960 (58 per cent) belonged to Schedule Castes. The DUSIB listed the entire area under 'Kusumpur Pahari Block-B Vasant Vihar' with 4909 households in an area of 173251 square metres. The present residents of Kusumpur Pahari are mostly engaged in informal occupations such as construction work, sanitation work, housekeeping, security guards, and drivers. Some of them are employed in private offices and Class IV positions in government offices. The women of Kusumpur Pahari are seen to be in less diverse occupations as compared to men, as most of them are working in the nearby apartments as domestic workers.

Kusumpur Pahari falls under the first phase of the policy implementation of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana In-Situ Slum Redevelopment and has been surveyed to prepare a Detailed Project Report which will be followed by the identification of a private developer for the redevelopment of Kusumpur. There are widespread fears that this would result in the removal of current residents from Kusumpur. Surveys by the government are a common feature in the Jhuggi Jhopri Clusters such as Kusumpur Pahari. 'So many surveys have happened. A lot of organisations have come here for surveys. They will come and say this will be done and that will be done and leave,' says Sonia. When Sheila Dixit was the Chief Minister of Delhi there were attempts to allocate land to those who have been residing for 30 years at Kusumpur Pahari. The plan never materialised. In the year 2019, there was another survey done and there were plans to allot flats. There exists considerable resistance from the inhabitants of Kusumpur Pahari towards resettlement plans that do not take into consideration the will of the people.

After a recent survey the resistance built up further and an Ekta Manch was formed to oppose any forceful resettlement attempts. Recently, an Ekta Manch was formed with multiple stakeholders to oppose any forceful resettlement attempts without the participation of residents in decision making, of which Sonia Verma was also a part. 'Earlier there used to be constant harassment by the police, now with the people organised the people of Kusumpur Pahari can resist the diktats of police,' asserted Sonia.

### *Beginning of Organisational Work*

JMS had initially started working in Kusumpur Pahari and had started a unit in the late 1980s. In the late 1980s, there was a case of the gang rape of a minor girl at Kusumpur Pahari. There was another case of an abduction of a woman by the rivals of her husband. JMS actively intervened in these incidents and that is how JMS began their work in Kusumpur Pahari. Sonia Verma says she was an ordinary housewife with small children and found any sort of activism outside her terrain. Sonia Verma had not only refused to take membership of JMS but had in fact discouraged others from taking the membership initially. Meanwhile as part of Sonia's work at the Adult Education Centre at Kusumpur Pahari, Sonia worked closely with Anita Dhigge, Director of the Adult Education initiative. The Adult Education centre in those times had undertaken several initiatives that brought women to the forefront of management. Sonia remembers that under the initiative of Anita Dhigge, women were given training in repairing hand pumps placed at Vasant Kunj for Rs.25/-. Sonia used to earn Rs.200/- a month as the supervisor. The project brought women like Sonia to the forefront of managerial roles.

Sonia Verma's association with Anita Dhigge brought her closer to the functioning of JMS and Kalindi Deshpande. Kalindi Deshpande in those years had charge of JMS and its activities in the South District of Delhi. One of the initial struggles against dowry in Delhi was under the leadership of Kalindi Deshpande in South Delhi. Gradually she was given the charge of mobilising women under JMS in South Delhi. The activists of JMS in those times had the special task of bringing women from the grassroots to the forefront. Kalindi Deshpande who lived in the neighbouring JNU campus in those days was a regular visitor to Kusumpur Pahari as well. As part of her job as a supervisor of the adult education centre, Sonia Verma happened to attend a workshop organised at JNU. Sonia met Kalindi Deshpande and interacted with her in the said workshop. Anita Dhigge introduced Sonia to Kalindi Deshpande. Gradually, Sonia Verma also took the membership in JMS in 1989. The membership charge then was 50p.

However, she did not become an active member until a particular incident happened at Kusumpur Pahari.

The then government of VP Singh had surveyed resettlement of settlers aimed at in-situ rehabilitation. In those times several *jhuggi* dwellers in other slums were given resettlement with ownership rights to land and building. She particularly remembers the resettlement of Tamasha singers to Sector 1, Opposite the Delhi Jal Board, which is a prime area now. Sonia feels even the people of Kusumpur Pahari would have got land if not for the trouble created by people with vested interests. Now several old dwellers feel that it was an opportunity for a life that was ruined. Certain vested interests stood steadfastly against the resettlement attempts. In 1990, JMS had taken the initiative to survey to understand the housing needs of the inhabitants of Kusumpur Pahari. Kalindi Deshpande of JMS, the Secretary of the South District from JMS, was in charge of the survey. The survey was mainly intended to give a representation to the government on the need for in-situ rehabilitation of the slum dwellers. However, people with vested political interest at Kusumpur Pahari decided to stop the survey as they were also threatened by the growth of JMS in the locality. According to Sonia, those people felt this may result in the growth of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in the locality as an alternative to Congress and BJP. 'The BJP and Congress even attacked our leaders such as Kalindi. They thought supporting the resettlement will result in the growth of CPIM in the area,' remarks Sonia.

On March 20, 1990, a group of Congress and BJP gheraoed Kalindi Deshpande when she was at Kusumpur Pahari. The 'gundas' did not let Kalindi Deshpande move from the place from about afternoon till night. The bags with survey forms were looted thinking those were money bags. The members of JMS from the locality formed a protective boundary wall around the protestors. The situation was diffused after hours when the police and the then State leaders of CPI (M) like Brinda Karat came to the site. Later on, 7 days of police protection were given to Kalindi Deshpande and other members of the JMS. However, the next day after this incident when Sonia Verma had stepped out of her house to collect milk, she found that Kalindi Deshpande had come to the area again. A surprised Sonia Verma asked Kalindi Deshpande why she was back in the colony risking her life. Sonia clearly remember Kalindi Deshpande had then said, 'if one Kalindi dies, there would be several others who would take charge.' The zeal and zest of Kalindi Deshpande inspired Sonia Verma in many folds. The incident remains a life-altering one for Sonia Verma. 'Why should we bow down in front of anyone?' was the

thought that caught the imagination of Sonia Verma. The thought drives Sonia Verma to date and guides her fight for equality particularly for women in all walks of life. Following this incident is when Sonia Verma stepped into active organisational work, and thereby activism.

### *Initial Struggles*

The initial years of activism of Sonia Verma were mostly to do with getting the basic rights for the people of Kusumpur Pahari. One such fight was for establishing Public Distribution System (PDS) shops at Kusumpur Pahari. In the year 1991, the people of Kusumpur Pahari used to get their rations through a PDS shop near the church in the affluent locality of Vasant Vihar. The shop owner gradually took a position that the 'jhuggi people will no get ration' from the shop. Sonia Verma along with Kalindi Deshpande, and other members of JMS organised a rally at the shop against this. However, the rumour spread in the locality that it is because of the rally and the protest led by Sonia Verma and others, that the ration is denied to the residents. Sonia Verma and JMS took it on themselves to make representation in front of the Commissioner. With their persistent effort, five PDS shops were sanctioned for Kusumpur Pahari in the same year. In the early 1990s, JMS also continued their fight against black marketing in the PDS shops in several localities.

Later on, in the early 1990s, JMS became a compelling voice of the people of Kusumpur Pahari and in nearby localities in South and South West Delhi notably when it came to the demands for rights to housing. There were several attempts at resettlement of JJ clusters in the 1990s. The activism of Sonia always gave attention to dealing with the everyday issues of people and women living in JJ clusters. One of the main issues of people living in JJ clusters of Delhi is the limited access to drinking water. Even though there are provisions for tube wells, however, the water pumped through the tube well is not used for drinking water purposes. All households in the JJ clusters do not have access to tube well water as well. For drinking water many times the residents mainly depend on the public tanker truck. Everyday tankers with drinking water supply water, each tanker caters to about 20-25 households. Each household gets a drinking water supply approximately once every 7 days, depending on how many tankers have their names. Each of the houses in these groups can store 5-6 fifty litre cans of water in one go, decided according to the strength of the family. In the initial years of activism, Sonia Verma has been pivotal in making sure that the residents of JJ clusters have access to basic amenities such as drinking water. Many of the basic amenities in place is because of the struggles of JMS under the leadership of many like Sonia Verma herself. Sonia recollects many such struggles

to get basic amenities for the urban poor residing in informal settlements. Several times delegation led by Sonia has met MLAs. Even today Sonia says, there is a need for better provision for water facilities.

Over the years JMS members have intervened in every aspect of the life of inhabitants whether it be an issue of land, domestic disputes, sanitation issues, sewage troubles or problems in access to PDS. JMS plays a key role in escalating the matters to MLAs, Jal Board, Police and DDA departments. Rights as citizens were always a part of the struggles of JMS. The organisation sees caste and class aspects of the everyday being of women and looks at gender-based discrimination as one of the domains of women's oppression.

### *Everyday Activism*

Sonia Verma says when she is at home, there is not a single day she spends without having visitors. Most of the visitors come to meet her regarding getting access to some of the other government facilities. Sonia also becomes a key figure in conflict resolutions. Putting applications in government offices and following those up is very much part of every day of the Sonia Verma. Sonia regularly visits several areas in South West Delhi such as Rangpuri Pahari, Sitapuri and other places where she is in charge. One of the major tasks that Sonia Verma engages in regularly is to assist beneficiaries in availing various pension schemes such as widow pension, old-age pension, and disability pension. In addition to this Sonia Verma provides handholding support to those in need in the making of disability certificates, voter ID and ration cards. Sonia Verma began doing many of these works at Kusumpur Pahari. Sonia Verma has also been part of protests against the linking of the fingerprint with ration cards. In 2013-14 when the proposal was first made, JMS had led the struggle against it.

Another major everyday struggle done by Sonia Verma has to do with dealing with the police and the elected representatives. Sonia has no two minds before deciding to assist anyone to a police station or going to an MLA office with applications. Sonia is a regular visitor to MLA offices with the application of people, irrespective of which party the MLA belongs to. Now with years of experience, Sonia is well aware of the several nuances of dealing with people in positions of power. Sonia says, she never finds it a task to go to the police stations or MLA offices to get things done. Rather, she enjoys it, the very act of being there for people and getting a task done for those in need. However, Sonia says that each police case has to be dealt with carefully looking at the nuances of the case. In each case, the dynamics of the

complainants need to be closely seen. She gives an example of a recent incident that happened in the colony, wherein a false complaint was put against a person by his neighbour's wife because the neighbour had issues with him cooking meat. JMS also has led struggles against fabricated cases against their activities and their families. The members of JMS become united to fight the cases for a year or more.

Presently, Sonia is also engaged regularly in the process of e-shram registration for the unorganised sector workers. Accordingly, the Ministry of Labour & Employment has developed an eSHRAM portal for creating a National Database of Unorganized Workers (NDUW), which will be seeded with the Aadhaar. The portal designed by the government demands the aadhar number, a mobile number linked with aadhar and a savings bank account number with an IFSC code. It has been a long-standing demand by several trade union organisations to have some sort of a repository on the unorganised sector workers. JMS has taken it upon itself to make the registration process easier for the workers. Sonia is mostly concentrating on getting the registration of women domestic workers done.

Sonia has been over the years organising women to be part of the March 8<sup>th</sup>, International Working Women's Day rally. She leads the mobilisation of the South district and takes the women to the event organised at the state level by JMS. Sonia Verma believes that the organising of women over the years had become increasingly a difficult task. She attributes the difficulties in the organisation at the current juncture to unemployment and inflation. Most women are working the entire day as domestic workers or in any other such sort of casual work. The time that working women can devote to organisation work is extremely limited, says Sonia. In the early years of organising, Sonia Verma says it was possible to organise 200 people. Off late even organising fifty women has become difficult. The covid-19 pandemic has only made it worse. In a cycle rally that was held on September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021 held against inflation, Sonia Verma could mobilise only 9 people partly because of the covid regulations as well. Various strategies such as street theatre are used for mobilisation. When Sonia mobilises women she makes sure that they are aware of the event the mobilisation happens. That is the key difference in the mobilisation done by JMS as opposed to other organisations and key political parties. Here women are aware of what they are protesting for and the need for the protest. Moreover, the mobilisation is cut across regions and castes.

*Creche for Children, Working with mothers*



Another remarkable work undertaken by Sonia in Kusumpur Pahari is the creche she runs for the children of domestic workers. The creche is run from a community centre in Kusumpur Pahari owned by DDA. The community centre was allotted to the Rotary club in 1992. A yearly charge of Rs.5000/- needs to be paid with the DDA for the same. Sonia used to work along with the activities of the Rotary club in the locality. Of late she is associated with finding beneficiaries for free cataract surgery. She took initiation of starting a creche for children of domestic workers a few years back at the community centre. Earlier there used to be children from nursery to 5<sup>th</sup> standard in the 'creche.' Sonia noted that this was primarily because the schooling system was so bad in those years. Sonia used to teach the children who were left with her by their mothers and charged no fees. Since the beginning of the pandemic Rotary club has withdrawn its activities in the locality. Today Sonia single-handedly runs the creche and charges no fee. Now there are 25 children between the age group of 3 and 5 years in the creche. Since the government has also started nurseries some of the children go to government-run nurseries as well. However, she said that since the centre is big, children have enough space to run around a reason why many parents find it better to leave their children there. The centre runs from 9 AM to 11 30 AM. Sonia sometimes takes help from her daughter who is an Anganwadi worker. The resources needed for the running of the centre are single-handedly raised by Sonia. She requests organisations and people to sponsor the food needed for the children, such as bananas and eggs. Of late she is attempting to mobilise funds to install a computer in the centre.

### *Organising domestic workers*

Sonia also says that JMS regularly comes across several incidents of workplace abuses of domestic workers and had put considerable effort into the organisation of domestic workers. Sonia recollected an episode of rape and murder that happened in the DDA flats at Vasant Kunj a few years back which never saw light. 'The employers called the aunt of the worker and asked them to get their daughter as her health was not fine. She was a Bengali girl. Later the parents were given Rs.50,000/- to settle the case. They know they need money for poor people.' Another major problem that is faced by domestic workers is the lack of access to sanitation facilities. Sonia recollected an incident in which a domestic worker was beaten by a colonel when he saw her relieving herself behind a building. The incident was brought to light by the work of JMS and other civil society organisations. Agitations happened at the Vasant Kunj North police station and the colonel publically apologised to the workers. Following the

incident, there were efforts in the DDA colonies to have public toilets. Sonia and fellow JMS members have been trying to get a union of Domestic Workers registered since 2016. The organising was done at Mangolpuri in North Delhi, Kusumpur and Rangpuri Pahari in South West Delhi and Govindpuri in South Delhi. There were over 100 members in the union. The organisation had relentlessly tried moving on from one Labour Commissioner office to another. The process of registration was dragged by the government citing that domestic workers do not come under the purview of labour unions as the category of the employer, employee and workplace are not defined. With the pandemic, the organised crowd of domestic workers gradually disintegrated. In 5 years, it looks like Sonia Verma and JMS have to begin again with organising the domestic workers.

### *Resisting the many mafias*

According to Sonia, a crucial problem faced by working-class women in informal settlements is the rampant alcoholism of men in the colony. Even utensils at home are sold by some men for alcohol. Sonia says that all sorts of drugs are easily available in the colony and nearby places. Even children drop out of school falling prey to such rackets. Police also get their monthly commission from the illegal alcohol trade in the area. In scenarios of conflicts, JMS takes the side of the women and does everything possible to make justice available for affected women. Sonia Verma believes that she may not have been able to have consistent agitations on certain issues regularly. In the 1990s and 2000s, she had taken up the fight against illegal alcohol vending in several localities. However, she says that the nexus between the police and vendors is so strong that the agitations did not bear immediate fruit. There were also instances in which goons had come to her house and warned her. However, Sonia reflects that she had to choose her battles and could not continue the fight against alcoholism and illegal alcohol vending in the area. The alcohol vendors had threatened the women to not follow up on their complaints or else they would kill their husbands. Another mafia that Sonia is constantly in a struggle with is the 'water mafia'. To access water provided by the water board and those pumped from tube wells the residents of the JJC have to pay key people in the locality monthly charges. The system which is blatantly wrong is ingrained in every day of the settlement. The person or household which takes some initiative in getting the water supply also becomes the 'owner' of the supply. Sonia said one relentless struggle of hers is against the water mafia. MLAs also close their eyes before this. Similarly, in the case of protests against dowry Sonia

observes a lacuna in building consistent movements. Even when organisationally JMS takes up issues, the media do not give any visibility to such grassroots taking up of issues.

*Standing up to Pradhangiri, the patriarchal nexus.*

Settlements such as Kusumpur Pahari have an 'elected' Pradhan who is considered the leader of the area. The election of Pradhan happens every three years, a committee is formed that has the charge of conducting elections, support is given by the police as well. In the last elections that were held in 2015, Sonia Verma had contested the elections. It may be for the first time that a woman contested the position of Pradhan in a JJC. According to Sonia, the candidates who contest for the post of Pradhan spend 1-2 lakhs for the elections. Sonia just had the willpower of her supporters. Sonia lost by a narrow margin of close to 20 votes in the elections. Her supporters believe that the election was rigged. However, Sonia recollects that after the results were announced, when she sensed a resentment about the results among her supporters, she herself told them to accept the result. She reassured the supporters that no matter what she will be at the forefront of all their struggles, whether it be for water, electricity or sanitation. She will be the one who will be going to the police station with them. As a matter of fact, Sonia said that is what happened. The elected Pradhan gradually became inactive. In 2018 his term ended and no election has happened since then. 'We have ended the Pradhangiri,' said Sonia.

*The Organisation, 'Junoon'*

Sonia became the JMS secretary of the South District in 1991. She also became a member of CPIM in 1991. From being a worker, Sonia Verma has become a leader. Sonia adds that '*ek thakath sangdan ke hey na. Kuch paane keliye, kuch kone bhi padtha hey.*' Sonia says organisation gives her the strength to fight her battles as well. She had recently won a land dispute case with her relatives in her village in UP. Sonia Verma was the state president for JMS for three terms, i.e for 9 years. The years of which Sonia has difficulty recollecting. However, Sonia says even as the President of JMS she used to do all work from bottom to top. For example, doing membership campaigns in *bastis* is a task she continued doing over the years. This was necessitated by two factors. Firstly, she says the younger cadres had difficulty going around and doing memberships. Secondly, the women who were given membership were often illiterate women living in the *bastis*. This necessitated someone like Sonia who could read and write to do the job. Even as state president of the organisation her responsibility and charge of the locality never ceased to stop. Presently, JMS has about 3000 members in

Kusumpur Pahari alone, which in effect means coverage of close to 900 houses. Sonia Verma says all these members are part of the organisation knowing what the organisation stands for. However, since the people in the settlement are a mobile crowd with respect to migrations, permanent membership is not possible, she said.

Sonia Verma is a regular face in many of the protests that happen in the country's capital against a multitude of issues. In recent years she has been a prominent face of the Nirbhaya protests and many such landmark protests that have happened. Whenever any incident of injustice happens in Delhi, Sonia Verma is at the forefront, however, maintains a low key. Sonia Verma is now the State Vice President of JMS. She continues to be the JMS district secretary, in addition to being in charge of the South-West district. Over the years she has worked closely with Pramila Padhee, Indrani Mazumdar, Indu Agnihotri and several other prominent faces of the women's movement. Through regular organisational work, she has developed the oratory skills needed for being a leader as well. She says JMS had over the years done several training programmes to improve the capability of cadres and also to mould the leader in the worker. Sonia has also been a Central Committee member of JMS from the All-India Conference held at Kolkata, in 2007. As a central committee member, she has travelled to Bengal, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, UP and Bihar. She got relieved in the All-India Conference held in Mumbai, in 2019. She asked to be relieved as it had become difficult for her to travel because of her age now. As a central committee member, she had travelled across the country for several events and meetings, which has provided much-needed perspective to the women's movement in the country as well.

Sonia Verma has never backed down from her fights. Some fights are only kept in abeyance when there are bigger battles to fight. She draws strength for her struggles from her organisation, JMS. There have been several times in which goons had come to Sonia's place of stay to warn her of the 'consequences' of taking up several struggles. To all of them she replies, '*tere peeche gunda baite hey, mere peeche sangatan baiti hey.*' Sonia Verma asserts that she is not scared, however, she does get concerned that her family members get scared at times. Sonia takes her strength from the organisation. '*Sangadan se judna, ek nasha hota hey, ek junoon hota hey andhar se,*' says Sonia.

*'Live for oneself, but sometimes live for others as well. See how it feels,' said Sonia Verma.*