

**INDIAN ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES (IAWS)
SOUTHERN REGIONAL WORKSHOP**

on

Documenting Contributions of Women's Movements,
Women's Organizations and Women

on

18th and 19th February 2016

at

University of Madras, Chennai

This workshop was organized by the IAWS in association with the departments/centre of Women's Studies of University of Madras, Ethiraj College, Stella Maris College, Bharathidasan University and RAWS (Regional Association of Women's Studies). The inaugural session by Dr.Rita John who was the session coordinator. She then invited the dignitaries to the stage.

Inaugural Session

Welcome Address - Prof. Bharathi Harishankar, HoD of the Department of Women's Studies, University of Madras

Prof. Bharathi welcomed the gathering. She expressed her surprise that the department of women studies is only about two years old in a University that is more than 100 years old. She described how she was not sure whether they can take up the task of hosting this workshop at her university. But with the courage of a young child, she agreed to take up the responsibility.

She acknowledged that the task of documenting the rich and varied experience of women's movements, organizations and activists is not without its share of troubles. Although many of the participants of the workshop have been involved in fighting for the cause of women, their engagements and contributions have not been properly documented. She emphasized the need to carefully and consciously document the experiences of activists on the field. Prof. Bharathi expressed her optimism that this workshop will help us to take stock of what have been done in the past and what is being done presently. This will help us to take this knowledge back to our class rooms and re-build theory grounded in our local contexts. She concluded her address by welcoming all the participants to the two-day workshop and thanking all the speakers for their willingness to share their knowledge.

Dr. Sugantha then introduced the speakers in the inaugural session.

Presidential Address by Dr.Ritu Dewan, Chairperson IAWS

Dr. Ritu Dewan began her address by welcoming all the participants on behalf of IAWS. She acknowledged that the identification of issues and conceptualisation of the workshop have been done in coordination with the women's studies centres and departments across the southern states of the country. She appreciated the contributions of the southern region in terms of both activism and development of the discipline of women's studies.

Ritu reminisced over the history and journey of IAWS. She noted how IAWS was born out of the inter-linkage between academics and activism. She remembered how the Mathura rape case and the following student's agitation in 1980s have fuelled the debates on women's issues and contributed to the development of the women's studies as a discipline in India.

According to her, it is important that academicians and activists come together to reintegrate the link between women issues or movements and woman studies. She recognised this as the desperate need of the hour. She explained that we cannot theorize until we understand the local contexts and re-link theory with national and regional realities. She also noted that activists cannot function without being informed by the larger theoretical understandings of social issues. She re-iterated how women's studies as a discipline need to be re-invented by incorporating this spirit of inter-linkage.

She viewed that the Woman studies centres have a unique role to play in universities. They cannot be limited to the role of counselling but needs to function within universities as permanent centres of learning and research. She added that the further debates on this need to be initiated and considered for immediate action. This is important because many universities still do not consider women's studies as a rigorous enough discipline to have a separate centre or department. For example, Mumbai University is 150 years old but doesn't have a women studies department yet. To conclude, her address focussed primarily on the **role of woman studies centres and the importance of integrating academics/women's study centres and activism/movements.**

Special address by Dr. Indumathi Rao, UGC Standing Committee on Women Studies

She began her address by quoting from a dialogue between Saint Vyasa and his scribe Ganapathion the essence of Veda. Vyasa explains that the essence of Vedas speaks about the purpose of human life which is to help others, to support and sustain the universe. Dr. Rao argues that it is women who live this way often sacrificing her lives for others and forgetting to live for her own self. She recognised that women are the most disadvantaged sections of the society and that UGC is concerned about women's issues.

She spoke of the condition of women in present scenario and noted how the status of women has changed over time. She opined that the conditions of women have deteriorated from ancient to medieval period. Speaking about contemporary times, she argued that although women's rights such as equality, dignity and freedom from discrimination are secured under the constitution of India, there exists a gap between paper and the reality that needs to be addressed. She elaborated on the diversity of issues that women face today - problems related to quality of life of woman, declining sex ratio, rising crime rate, challenges faced by women – especially old and disabled women, their needs, women in conflict areas etc and stated that these concerns needs to be the subject matter of Women's studies.

She observed that inspite of adverse socio-economic and political backgrounds; women have made spectacular contributions in diverse realms. But also noted that the mind set of women should change further, for example women still prefer conventional jobs because they are limited by social moralities. Although this is a reality all over the

world, she asserted the need for women to opt for unconventional jobs. She questioned the inclusiveness of the discipline of women's studies and urged the participants to take efforts to include all categories of women in their research endeavours. In her opinion, there are diverse categories of woman which are yet to be included in these studies, for example, women with disabilities, women in extreme poverty, difficult environments, in the riot affected areas etc. She expressed her doubt regarding the availability of reliable database for the research and policy initiatives in this regard. She emphasised on the need to create policies to include the excluded sections of women in mainstream development initiatives.

While talking about the condition of people with disabilities, she mentioned that there are 18 types of disabilities and the issues faced by the women with disabilities need to be documented properly and disseminated very widely at a global level. She then spoke in detail the various issues faced by disabled women such as sexual exploitation and non-fulfilment of basic needs. She threw light upon the vicious circle of poverty, disability and abuse. The atrocities committed against women are rampant and mostly happens within the family but often goes unnoticed. She also spoke of the problems that disabled women have to face in the public sphere, for example, although MGNREGA has provision for inclusion of individuals with disabilities, it is silent on the employment of disabled women. She argued that it is essential to inquire into the problem of falling sex ratio especially in the contemporary scenario of rising life expectancy. She viewed that perhaps the undesirable women such as the disabled women might have been killed or might court death due to negligence of the families.

She calls upon Women's Studies to be rooted in the community, developing new knowledges and sharing existing knowledge in our immediate communities. Women studies also need to focus on developing indigenous ideas, knowledge, strategy, data mining and public policy analysis relevant to our society. She notes that this will help create better credibility and relevance to women studies. She called upon scholars and researchers to use the possibilities of data mining to uncover current social realities and argued that it can be an important tool for public policy analysis.

She mentioned that UGC plans to set up 150 women's studies centres all over the country in memory of Margaret Noble on the 150th birth anniversary. She then elaborated on UGC initiatives that focus on women's studies. She listed the various initiatives of UGC for developing the discipline – (a) the development of research on women in science and technology, (b) promoting the inclusion of women and disabled in the mainstream development discourses, (c) building curriculum in women's studies to meet the diverse needs of Indian women with a focus to building an inclusive society, (d) building conducive environment for new academic leadership, (e) supporting evidence based research on women's economic development, (f) building new knowledge on women from global perspectives / challenges faced by women globally.

She suggested the inclusion of a compulsory 4 credit course on women's studies for all students in universities of institutes of higher education. The main argument of her presentation revolved around the **importance of women's studies centres to look at the issues of poverty, women with disabilities and women in conflict areas.**

Discussion

IAWS, Chairperson, Ritu Dewan in response to Dr. Rao's address pointed out that IAWS has been working on the women with disabilities and women in conflict areas. Dr. Rao

responded by speaking about the lack of easy availability of resources and added that we need to aim for a single window where we can access any studies on women's issues. She suggested that Madras University can take the initiative and create the common window to access information on the works carried out by women studies centres across India. Dr. InduAgnihotri, intervened in this discussed by adding that there are already available sources like reports of regional and national workshops and conferences of the IAWS which are archived in the website of IAWS. NSSO data and other archives also give this kind of information

Equality of women with disabilities - A study done for national commission for women on women and disability issue - Ms. Indumathi Rao

Dr. Rao began her presentation by throwing light on the poor status of women in government run institutions and NGOs. Women with disabilities suffer from multiple disadvantages based on their gender, disability and poverty. Although there are constitutional safeguards for the disabled, owing to women's issues being a State subject, there are often impediments to policy initiatives. This can be tackled with the help of commitment and a strong vision.

She pointed out the invisibility of disabled women in our mainstream society and gave the example of modeling industry to drive home her point. She observed that in other countries like Sweden, disabled women are brought into the mainstream and they are also present in these industries. She argued that is important to ensure that they are visible in the public realm. She noted that out of the 2.7 crore disabled population in India, 1.8 crore are women; yet adult disabled women are barely visible and lack access to education and employment opportunities. She views the low educational status of disabled women as a serious concern for the country. She added that the number of disabled women in higher education is especially low. Although there is reservation in employment in the public sector for disabled individuals, there are very few women who are gainfully employed. This can be attributed to the lack of special provisions for disabled women.

Speaking about the difficulties faced by disabled women in public spaces, Dr. Rao observed that the accessibility features are absent in our public toilets. She also noted that the condition of disabled women in villages needs to be studied to understand the seriousness of the issue. Social exclusion is another problem faced by disabled women. She urged 'Women's Studies' to inquire into the critical areas of impact of disability on women. She concluded by advising the participants to look Look out of the window first and then look beyond and includes or incorporates what is useful.

Dr.YashodaShanmugasundaram, Honorary President, RAWS - Regional Association of Women's Studies

She began her address by speaking about the difficulties of setting up a women's studies department and observed that it does indeed take time for these departments to be fertilized and conceived. She recollected her memories related to establishment of the first Women Studies department in South India in Alagappa University in Karaikudi, later in Thirupati and then at Mother Theresa university and about her unsuccessful attempts in setting up a centre in Madras University when she was the syndicate member.

She re-iterated that the objective of this workshop is the inter-linkage or rather inter-lacing between women's studies, women's movements and women's organization. She spoke of the necessity to identify and document their inter-linkages/inter-dependence, differences and mutuality. Such documentation in an appropriate pattern will add to the existing knowledge system, and will help in accumulation and dissemination of knowledges. She explained that such documentation will serve as primary resource material for teaching and research in Women's Studies. It will help not only the current teaching and research endeavours but also function as archival material for historians and social scientists. She advocated for initiating this process with local and regional documentation. Collecting information is only a first step in this process. There is also a necessity to process and authenticate the information or data collected. She viewed that Women's Studies is in dire need of well structured documentation and noted that this is not the first initiative of this sort but one among the many. Dr. Yashoda touched upon the need to review of the documentation that have been already completed and made a call to integrate such reviews in a scholarly manner.

She then spelled out the differences between women's movements and women's organizations. She emphasised on the non-interchangeability of these two and noted the differences in short term and long goals and objectives between movements and organization. She went on to explain how they are different also in terms of their organization and space and time period of the actions they undertake.

She described the history of women's studies as a discipline. She spoke about the inseparable relationship between the discipline of Women's Studies and activism and noted how it was born out of student activism in Cornell University, USA in 1969. She recollected how the very genesis of women's studies department in Alagappa University was born out of activism. She argued that the entry of women's studies into academia should also be considered as part of the women's movement – an educational movement. She warned us that any hazy conception of women's movement will not serve our cause. There is a requirement to conceptualize women's movements in its entirety and disseminate it on a scholarly platform. She spoke of the need to overcome the issues of invisibility, marginalization and exclusion of women's studies departments. Dr. Yashoda emphasised that it is not the work of academicians alone but activists too; because activists are not apart from academicians. She added that as academicians we are also engaged in activism which is academic in nature.

Dr. Yashoda suggested the need for women's studies to have extensive coverage in terms of curriculum and syllabus creation. She also spoke of the need to arrive at a rational discourse instead of an emotionally charged one. She recollected how in the late 1980s when Women's Studies originated as a distinct discipline in India, they were provided only a single line syllabus, that of lives of women. She elaborated on the role of women's studies departments, women's organizations and movements in engaging in consciousness raising activities. In academia, this has been carried out in classrooms even before the establishment of women's studies departments especially by teachers in the humanities department. She noted that, however, the dynamics of classroom teaching is different from the pursuit of organizations. Although classrooms provide a wider canvas for engaging with women's issues, they are limited by their concern with maintaining the decorum of the classroom.

Dr. Yashoda stressed upon the enormity of the liberating mission we have to undertake. Millions of women have to be awakened individually and politically. This is

an arduous task, where we are yet to arrive. She noted that the treatment meted out to women's studies departments is similar to the societal treatment of women. She called upon all of the participants to empower their own selves and invoked young friends to take up the baton and continue doing great work.

Dr. Regina Papa, Former Prof. and Head, Department of Women's Studies, Alagappa University

She began her address by explaining the importance of blending fieldwork experience with academics. She spoke about the necessity of women being both seen and heard in the public and argued that women's issues should be taken up by women's studies centres/departments, movements, groups and activists simultaneously. She re-iterated that 'women's studies' is an educational movement and pointed out that there existed a general lack of knowledge about the subject matter of women's studies. She narrated her experience of being one of the pioneers in setting up Women's Studies departments in Tamil Nadu and shared how she struggled with the lack of social support. She described her experience of being ridiculed and branded as a love failure by her own male colleagues for having started the women's studies department. There existed many ignorant assumptions about what is being taught as part of women's studies and it was assumed that the proponents of the discipline are family breakers and problem makers. Although women's studies centres originate with the statutory approval of the government, Dr. Regina Papa pointed out that getting social approval and acceptance is the bigger task. She shared how they won over the approval of their subjects – for example, rural women, women members of self-help groups.

Dr. Regina Papa fondly remembered the contributions of certain pioneers like Dr. Yashoda, Veena Mazumdar, and Neera Desai, Krihsna Raj etc who helped in setting up women's studies centres and how they were assertive, adamant and dynamic. She spoke of how they had to fight for funding and acceptance and likened this to the freedom struggle because according to her, both these struggles were fought with the same spirit. Although now there is no dearth to the availability of funding for developing the discipline, there is a tendency to neglect other important factors. She cautioned us against taking funding more seriously than the discipline itself. She reminded us that 'women's studies' is both political and intellectual. She urged that women's studies should be about all women and called for eliminating any north-south-east-west divides.

She advocated that we should never tolerate any attempts to swerve us from the fundamental principles of women's studies and remembered the courage of real firebrands like Maitreyi Krishnaraj. If we hear statements such as "women were treated as equals in the Vedic period", it needs to be questioned.

She raised a serious question on whether we are sociologists or historians interested in women or women's studies scholars who happen to be interested in sociology, history or literature. This is important especially when it comes to recruiting professors in the department of women's studies. She also spoke of structural issues such as exclusion of women's studies in the State Level Eligibility Test for Lectureship in Tamil Nadu and its lack of acceptance in various other employment opportunities. Many a time, those who have degrees in women's studies are not given priority during recruitment in women study departments and centres. Often the only eligibility of the successful appointees are that they are women. She described one of her student's attempts to attain a faculty

position in various institutions and the repeated rejection of her application due to the fact that she had her training in the discipline of women's studies. Dr. Regina remembered her student's talent and academic excellence, sadly which had no role to play in these recruitments to the women's studies departments, even when GOI declared women's studies on par with other relevant disciplines of social sciences. Dr. Regina suggested the importance of framing a national level policy to ensure that such situations are avoided in future. She pointed out that UGC has made no such provisions to protect the interests of women's studies students and scholars. This also leads to erosion of the quality of the discipline because most of the faculty members in women's studies departments are not well-versed in the relevant terminologies and theories.

She also brought to notice the issue of non-revision of the syllabus of women's studies since the past 20 years and in her opinion even UGC has taken no efforts to address this issue. In her opinion, there needs to be a paradigm shift in the understanding of women and their issues. Using the lens of gender, we need to dissect social realities and extract whatever is relevant for women's studies. She urged that all of us gathered there – from movements, organizations and academia should join hands together to frame a national policy for saving our discipline and its scholars and students from the discrimination that they face in the job market and in other arenas. At the same time, we need to ensure that 'women's studies' continues to remain a rigorous discipline.

The session was concluded by Dr. Manimegalai who offered vote of thanks.

DAY 1 - Technical Session – 1: Organizing Women

The first session of the workshop was chaired by Dr. Thavamani, President RAWs and she urged the participants to have clarity about the differences between movements and organisations on women issues. According to her a movement is the one which creates public opinion on issues and thereby pressurize the policy makers to take necessary decisions. Dr. Thavamani spoke about the example of Periyar movement, the activities of which resulted in the initiation of many progressive policies and laws in the state of Tamil Nadu. . Dr. R. Chandra, Ms. Gabriele Dietrich, Aleyamma Vijayan, Ms. R. Parvathi Devi, Sonia George, Celina were the speakers of the session. They all shared their experiences and challenges faced in organizing women with disability, female workers in the unorganised sector and women in political movements. Dr. Rekha Pandey was the discussant of this session.

Dr. R. Chandra: Women in Kisan Movemet, Tamil Nadu

Dr. Chandra began her presentation by mentioning that the history of Kisan movement is very much important for the history of women's movement in the country. She traced back the history of women's involvement in cultivation and the conservation of land, flora and fauna. She then given an account of the women's participation in various pre-independence peasant revolts. She reiterated how the women became a major part of the Kisan movement in India from 19th century onwards. She pointed out that in the 20th century, women played a major role in the freedom struggle and they raised their issues by using this platform.

She talked about the Indigo revolt which could be considered as one of the finest example of women's involvement in the Kisan movement. She went on describing the courageous fight women had put fourth during the Tebhaga movement in Bengal and

the Telengana movement. Dr.Chandra commemorated the role of the brave women like Malluswarajyam and Chakalillamma in the Telangana armed struggle, who could mobilise large number of female workers and make them part of these heroic struggle.

Then she had given an account of the Kisan movement in Tamil Nadu and the participation of women. She pointed out that the first Kisansabha in Tamil Nadu was initiated by a women leader from united Tanjavur district, namely ManalurManiamma and she could mobilise large number of people from both gender. Maniyammai, a hindu widow hailing from a Brahmin family, became the voice of the voiceless class of agricultural workers and organised them against the feudal oppression and exploitation. Dr.Chandra also spoke about the first Kisansabha conference in Tanjavur and its resolution on the importance of revolting against the double oppression suffered as women and Dalits. She also recollected the contribution of AIDWA and Kisan Sabha leader K.P.JanakiAmma as a legislator in the Tamil Nadu assembly in raising the farmers and women's issues. Dr.Chandra described how Janaki Amma used to call upon women to ensure gender equality by taking up the conventional male oriented jobs like ploughing.

She viewed that since globalization the differences between the categories of agricultural labourers and farmers are increasing in the country. She pointed out that, in the agricultural sector the majority of the work is done by women, but they are not being recognised for this. She mentioned that in this sector even when women outnumber men, it is difficult to bring them to the organisation and raise them to the leadership level.

Ms.Gabriele Dietrich: 'Pennurumailykkam' - Women in Unorganised Sector, Tamil Nadu

Ms.Gabriele shared her experience in working with Pennurumailykkam from 1970's which works among the underprivileged women in unorganised sector such as domestic and construction works. She described the slum dwellers' struggles they have been part of, for example the struggle they have carried out in registering the houses in the name of women members of the family. As a result they were able to make 12 houses in the name of women in Madurai and named it as Pennurumai Nagar. She detailed their struggles against domestic violence, slum eviction, sexual harassment etc.

She recounted the events related to the recent Chennai flood and the slum eviction. She told the participants that the key argument of government for evicting the slum dwellers during flood was that they encroached the water bodies and which eventually resulted in the floods. She exposed how baseless this argument is and explained it through pointing out the disproportionality in the landholding. She mentioned that about 1/3 of the Chennai dwellers are in slums and the land they use constitute only 2% of the total land area.

She also described about the success of public hearings that they have conducted relating to the slum dwellers' issues and the wide response they got. She suggested that these kind of hearings should be taken on a regular basis to bring out the ground level reality and need to spread basic awareness regarding the results of these hearings to improve the participation. She criticised the government policy of chasing the women out of these slums and neglecting their rights to have basic facilities and healthcare.

Ms. Gabriele opined that the successive governments are neglecting the unorganised sector workers' issues and their demands. She viewed that these workers in the unorganised sector are devoid of the basic rights such as the right to live and decent livelihood. She observed that the sexual harassment at the work place is a serious issue to be tackled. She spoke about the incidents of doctors misbehaving with the health workers. According to her this is happening due to the lack of collective actions. She pointed out that the participation of women in the unorganised sector workers' unions are very low, more over very few women assume the leadership position in these unions.

She urged for the recognition of the contribution of women in the organised and unorganised sectors by the society and government. She reiterated how the Tamil Nadu domestic workers organised themselves and through constant struggles made a conscience regarding the decent pay and decent work. She reminded that the society should recognise the importance of women's care work in the production of life and livelihood.

Aleyamma Vijayan, Sakhi Women's Resource Centre – Fish Workers' Movement/ Autonomous Women's Movement in Kerala

Ms. Aleyamma Vijayan spoke in detail about the participation of fisher women in the trade union activities and she narrated how these women could form a trade union for themselves. She pointed out that from 1980's onwards all three categories - men, women and children were part of the trade unions in the fisheries sector and carried out many struggles for ensuring their rights. Women were a major part in these struggles. She mentioned about the exclusionary nature of the male dominated trade union structures and how the issues of fisher women did not get much attention in their struggles. She acknowledged the effort of the women groups in organising the fisher women for demanding proper transportation facility and the government accepted their demand under pressure.

She pointed out that with the success of their struggle for the transportation facility, fisher women groups started their deliberation on the question of joining the existing trade unions or forming a new independent union for the fisher women. She observed that, from the previous experiences of these women in being part of the fishermen's trade unions, they could understand that, as usual their issues will be the least preferred in the demand charters. Then these fisher women groups came up with the suggestion of having autonomy within the existing trade unions to organise their struggle on the issues specific to women. Ms. Aleyamma remembered how fiercely these women stood by their demand and fought for it, and made the male dominated unions agree to their demand. She also recollected the favourable response these women groups received on their call for forming the women network by bringing together people from various ideologies and organisations.

Ms. R. Parvathi Devi, AIDWA Trivandrum, Left Politics and Women's Movement in Kerala

In her lecture, Ms. Parvathy Devi primarily outlined the ideological and political line of CPIM on the question of gender, by giving an account of the past interventions of party on gender issues. She set the mood of the lecture by stating that the communist

movement in India played a crucial role in fighting for women's rights all through these years. She mentioned, when the communist party was formed at the meeting in Tashkent, there were two women members in it. She referred that the CPIM's Program explicitly mentioned about party's perspective on gender question. It talks about the elements of democratic family structure, addresses the issue of domestic work, child care and much more. She also spoke briefly on the CPIM's Dec 2005 released draft document on women's question and tasks.

By touching up on party's political stand and work, she spoke in detail about the brave women activists who were part of the Indian communist movement. She listed out some of the famous communist struggles in Kerala such as Punnapra-Vayalar, Karivellur, Kayyur, TholvirakuSamarametc and the major women leaders who were part of it. She also mentioned about the contributions of women communist leaders such as Gouriamma, and Koothattukulam Marry.

She then enlisted some of the major initiatives of the left governments such as democratisation of Panjayats, People's Plan, Kudumbashree (women self-help group), gender budgeting, initiatives for anganwadi and asha workers etc. which benefited the state of Kerala in bridging the gender gap. She also pointed out that the state of Kerala under left leadership reserved 50% seats for women in the district planning committees. According to her the formation of the Working Women Association for the government employees helped in addressing many working women's issues. Then she pointed out that even when the coir workers union was formed in 1937, women were the active members of it. Towards the end of her presentation, Ms.Parvathi mentioned about some of the important interventions by AIDWA as a women's organisation in addressing the women's question such as RappakalSamaram and Women Parliament at the state and district levels. She reminded the audience to be self-critical about the work they do in this regard and improve themselves in the respective interventions.

Ms. Sonia George, SEWA Kerala, Women in Unorganised Sector, Kerala

Ms. Sonia George continued from Aleyamma's talk on fisherwomen and autonomous women's movement by linking it with the larger issues of unorganised sector workers. Her presentation problematized the question of locating the unorganised sector. She elucidated that the definitions or the descriptions about unorganised sector will always be in comparison with the formal sector, which itself is a faulty method of analysis. She mentioned that the organised sector in India is only 7% while the rest 93% falls under the category of informal sector. She exclaimed that yet there is no framework to look at this large unorganised sector and the issues of women working in this sector. She added that this was the motive behind formulating a registered trade union called SEWA in Gujarat in 1972.

She then discussed in detail about the issues pertaining to the unorganised sector. She pointed out the issue of invisible employer as the serious concern while organising the unorganised. She mentioned that the women's work such as domestic work is the most complicated category of work in this terms. According to Ms.Sonia organising the unorganised sector women itself is a question of challenging the existing notion of male breadwinner. For her, the question of private-public distinction also becomes an important concern when the informal sector issues are discussed.

While talking on the specific issues of unorganised sector in Kerala, she identified the progressive nature of the state as the biggest issue in organising the informal sector women. Having said that, she also acknowledged that Kerala can be seen as one of the best example of effectively organising the unorganised. She also touched upon the case of women being effectively organised when state being the employer. Here she specifically mentioned the example of MGNREGA and women's participation in it.

She raised a serious question, "where the collective bargaining process can be started?". She shared the experience of SEWA in taking up the task of organising the domestic workers, which was one of its first initiative of this kind. Their major demand was for regulating the work. She described that the non-visibility of the employer was the major challenge they had to face in this struggle. She then talked about the larger issues of social mobility by raising a question on the composition of this group. Then she moved her discussion to the point of multiple identities of women working in this sector.

She acknowledged that the question raised by Ms. Aleyamma as very much valid. She raised some serious concerns such as low pay, lower status of workers, insecurity at work place etc. in the unorganised sector and viewed that it requires immediate attention. She also mentioned about the issues related to homebased work. She then asked the audience, how far the mainstream trade unions identify and fight for these issues. She ended her presentation by again emphasising on the necessity to have a proper framework to address these issues she raised.

Ms.Celine, Vimochana Bangalore, Fighting Domestic Violence

Ms. Celine in her presentation emphasised on the idea of regenerating livelihoods through reweaving crafts and she reiterated her experience in Vimochana. She mentioned about the interventions of Vimochana in women issues like female infanticide & feticide, domestic violence, dowry death etc. She described about one of the unique print media intervention by Vimochana that is called 'Sthreelekha', the first women bookshop in Southeast Asia. Under this initiative they made a number of books related to women issues available in a library and published books. She also narrated to the audience their struggles for the enactment and enforcement of legislations such as rape law and domestic violence law. She told that her organisation is keen on stopping the violence against women. She opined that, generally violence against women is seen as a domestic or private affair, not exactly considered as a human right violation.

She pointed out that society continuously refuse women a place in the political sphere. She added that there is a necessity to fight against this. She then explained the two ways of interventions on this issue that are rational and intuitive. According to her, rational way is patriarchal and the feminist way is intuitive. At the end of her presentation while discussing about the capital punishment, she made a call for upholding restorative justice instead of retributive justice.

Discussant: Dr.Rekha Pandey, Former Director, Centre for Women's Studies, University of Hyderabad

At the end of the first technical session on 'organising women', the discussant Dr.Rekha Pandey shared her ideas on the topic and summarised the major themes emerged in the presentations. She revisited 90 years of Indian history and the history of organised struggles in the country to identify the challenges and issues related to women's

participation in these movements. She discussed how we create gendered spaces by ascribing private space for women and public for men.

She analysed the role of women in the 3 major movements in Andhra Pradesh such as Telengana movement, Anti-arrack movement and Jai Telangana movement. She explained how women were forced to sleep with the landlord even before they spend time with their husband and how this issue was brought out in the Telangana movement. Andhra Mahila Sabha also played a major role in bringing out these kind of issues. She viewed that, even when women participated in these movements in big numbers, these organised struggles were highly patriarchal in nature. She pointed out that those women who were part of these movements didn't raise to the leadership level. They were always pushed to the background. Then she made a serious observation that the gender always takes a back seat in the larger class and caste struggles and women are tested at every stage. She described how women used a lot of cultural forms like songs, to speak and to protest against this.

In the discussion followed, Dr.Indu Agnihotri raised a point that we need to more importantly discuss what are Indian values and indigenous traditions along with these debates. She raised a question that, in our discussions why we can't emphasise on local women and their issues instead of ascribing more value to other role models. Ms. Fathima raised her concerns regarding the role of dalit and tribal women in organised struggles. She urged the participants to ask some deeper questions while discussing the topic organizing women such as 'who were the ones led these movements and 'which were the communities that have played a major role in the movement'.

Day 2 – Technical Session 5 – Theme – Body and sexuality; Violence, Queer Identity, Media and Cyber Crimes

Ms. Vasuki, AIDWA, Women's Movements and the Media

Media portrays women only as an object that derives its value from its ability to attract and tantalize. Even modern and educated women are portrayed as submissive to men. She pointed out some examples from popular films. In one of the film which ran successfully, the lead character describes the narration of different kinds of women (soft, arrogant, seductive etc) and ends with an advice that women should always behave humbly. Her preferable dress code is traditional dresses such as saree. By looking at her everyone should worship her. Those who didn't follow these rules are not women but demons. Vasuki said these kinds of rules are insisted only for women, and the mainstream media while showing women in very modern dresses, but insists she should be a typical traditional humble person. Vasuki also pointed that these media accuses women for the violence they face. It repeatedly advice women not to stay outside after 10 pm. (Film Chandramukhi --Family women stays at home in 12 in the night) . –If this is violated then no one is responsible for her safety. Are women who stay outside after 12 not family women? She asked. Vasuki further said that media can play a vital role in creating awareness on safety measures to be followed when women are in danger. First Media should be sensitized on gender issues and the rights of a woman. Gender equality should be part of the syllabus for journalism and other related courses. Also like editorial policy there should be a gender policy for media houses. She narrated various struggles of AIDWA against the media. She said, every woman should raise their voice against the portrayal of women as mere sex object. She further said this situation may change a bit if more and more women start working in the Media.

S. Vijayalakshmi, Srivalli, Puthur, Civil Engineer, IAF, MBA – IIMC , shared her experiences as an entrepreneur and a film producer.

Even though she studied IAF, out of her strong passion for films she quit her job and entered film industry. She said how discriminatory the film industry is. Still it is full of strong walls of patriarchy, male domination etc., Women who enter this industry with individuality have to be double strong to find a way into it. She shared that she is discriminated specifically due to her size – being short and young. But she overcomes the problem by just ignoring and continuously performing her responsibility. One of the major issues is lack of women producers in the film industry. If that happens we can expect more gender sensitivity in film industry as a whole and in films also. She ended her speech with saying “ We women should be like a rubber ball. Whenever we are pressed we will come up forcefully. Air may be removed but we have to refill”.

Tamil Selvi from Positive Network, Mobilizing HIV Positive women for Hope

Tamil Selvi said that the women with HIV are facing double discrimination as women, and as HIV patients. Many doubts about sex were being asked to them thinking that since they infected with a disease related to sex. She said that they are not sexologists. The society sees them as experts in sex. She was the only women leader when she joined this network. Now, there are five women leaders. But still at the policy level and the decision making it is by and large with men. Getting a house for rent is very tough and it is a very critical issue for HIV patients. She further said that “To recover for HIV, nutrition plays a vital role. The medicines should be taken on time with keeping alarm in mobiles”. She thanked the government for 1000 rupees pension scheme to HIV patients. Those women who are in villages are largely dependent on the wage they are getting under National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. So they cannot get regular treatment as they cannot afford to lose the job and come to hospitals to get treatment. Doctors are not aware of HIV and its root of transmission. She further said that they also have the right to undergo screening facility. They are also voters. They have every right as any other citizens. She finally said whenever she has to narrate her story she has to tell that she got infected through her husband then only society see her as a dignified person with sympathy. She ended her sharing saying “We don’t want any sympathy. Mostly I face discrimination from the educated people. We should create a through adolescent education which include about HIV also. I have proven the society that HIV people will not die soon we will fight with the virus and with the discrimination. I thank AIDWA for supporting me and inculcate leadership qualities”.

Ms. Aruna, Treasurer, Society for Rights of All Women with Disability, Organizing women with disability

Aruna on the rights of Disabled Person’s Rights said that women with disabilities face multiple discriminations. Accessibility is a big challenge in terms of education, higher education, employment, even in toilets. In Rural areas most schools lack water facility. Accessing quality education is another tough task. As per the government laws, books are given free but no Braille books are provided in all schools. Only special schools have such facility. Methodology is also a problem particularly for blind and deaf students. If 1000 are enrolled at the primary level, only 2% are going to higher education, in employment there is 3 % reservation for persons with disabilities but no specific reservation for women with disabilities. Even if we want to engage in self employment

getting bank loans is a tough process. Banks are denying loans to us saying we will not be able to repay the loan. Every day, in and around villages' we face lot of abuse. There is no special law to protect women with disability. In a case of rape of a disabled woman, police can't understand the sign language. They are disabled to that they can't understand our language. So filing complaint is itself becoming problematic. Violence faced by us particularly in rural areas is not visible. Government is not taking any step to protect women with disabilities. We need to be protected from all laws related to women, need a separate policy to protect women with disability from all types of violence. Don't want sympathy but empathy. We want to be included in the main society.

"This is a wakeup call for us how inclusive are we" said Ms. Bharathi.

Guru Eswari, Thothukudi, Combating Caste Violence

Guru Eshwari is a victim of Domestic violence while sharing her experience. Her husband is an army man. She had married her maternal uncle. He doubted her. Whenever he comes home for leave he will torture her. He shaved her hair because she looks beautiful, and he threatened her not to tell this to anyone. She has two children. Meanwhile his brother tried to molest her, which she informed her mother in law who is her grandmother, but she didn't support her rather asked to cooperate with her younger son. He informed her husband the reverse. When her husband came he locked her in the room poured hot water, chili powder, in her body, vagina, etc. and he cut her hair. Her brother in law forced her to accept that she was having illegal affairs with many men. He threatened her that he will kill her children. So she confessed to her husband that she was having illegal affairs with many men. They called her mother and locked her in the room and beat her severely. Somehow she escaped and informed the police. For 51 days Guru Eswari was treated in a government hospital. AIDWA supported her to come back from her trauma. She said she wanted her children. Her husband went absconding with her children. She got back her children after 90 days through Aidwa. She knows tailoring. AIDWA got her a tailoring machine and helped her to regain her life. A complaint was filed with the defense ministry, following which he was arrested but now he is released on bail. AIDWA took up the matter with defence ministry, and he is now under suspension – 50% of his salary goes to the wife

Chairpersons said they are appalled at the violence - felt like generally problems of women doesn't felt like problems at all, we don't know how to deal with it, hence there are problems. Also they rendered their words of appreciation commending the way she has dealt with it, and said that she is a heroine.

Dr Manimegalai, Director and Head, Department of Women's Studies, Bharatidasan University, Breaking the Silence on Menstrual Hygiene Management

"10 years back during the menstrual time, many of my students were using clothes even for three months till it gets torned. Many cannot afford to buy sanitary napkins. It was an eye opener that this issue has to be seriously taken care. We have to distribute free sanitary napkins to women in rural areas, in jail and maternal hospitals. We created a people-governed organization but faced problems when we tried to open an account in the bank – MHM – Menstrual Hygiene Management account we have to face comments. With the support of Unicef, we focused in Krishnagiri district with regard to opening girl friendly toilets. Access to napkins is an issue in rural areas. Women don't use panties.

We offered training on how to use and type to be used during different menstrual period. 5 day training with a training manual has been given. Hand book and a pamphlet as awareness tool was widely distributed. Disposing the used napkins is still a problem. Social taboos are more. Mothers are the one who mostly gives such false inputs rather scientific inputs. While giving training on menstrual hygiene management, now we try to incorporate gender component, adolescent girls issues also”.

Ms. Ajitha, Advocate, Madras High Court, Importance of women’s movements on legal reform

Indian women got our voting rights on 1950 when women in us and Europe are fighting for. Discrimination is institutionalized. Women lawyers have to take strength to fight for women’s rights from outside the judicial structure that is from women’s organizations, activists etc.,. Women’s rights have to be treated equally with men. Secondly, women’s rights have to be treated unequally from men, equals should be treated equally. This is positive affirmation. In that context only special laws for women and children have been framed. Indian divorce act till 2001 was so discriminatory, when a husband wants divorce he has to prove incest, adultery. But, when women want divorce from her husband she has to prove cruelty and incest, cruelty and adultery. After 2001 it was changed.

DAY 2 - Technical Session – 2: Building Peace Harmony and Gender Equality

The final technical session of the workshop on ‘Building Peace, Harmony and Gender Equality’ was chaired by Dr.Kadambiri. Speakers of the session were Gabriel, Rajeswari, Oviya, R.V.Bindu, Sharifa, Jesu Rathinam and Gayatri and they touched upon many important themes such as justice for women, women theatre group, ground level initiatives, micro-credit initiatives, dignity of women, anti-alcohol movement etc.Ms. Mini Sukumar was the discussant of this session.

Ms. Gabriele Dietrich, NAPM, Feminism and Religion: Building Peace and Gender Justice

Ms.Gabriele shared her experience as a women’s right activist. She remembered that the religion didn’t have much role to play in the early years of her life. Only in the latter part of her life she could understand the importance of learning and knowing about religion. She elaborated this point with an example, that is, in Germany people were killed because of their religion or they being Jews. So, she argued that in order to understand this, the knowledge of religion is very much important. Then she went on to explain the role of religion in various spheres through taking some historical instances. She pointed out that the Shah Bano judgement in 1980s created a debate on the secular law vs religious law. This had led the country to the debate over other important issues like majority communalism and minority rights. Likewise she viewed that the Babari Masjid issue had also opened a new discussion in the country. She mentioned that as a result of all these, debates on uniform civil code, equal justice and gender just laws became the focus points in the country. She was of the opinion that the need of the hour is genuine religious reforms.

She invited the participants' attention to an important point that many poor women are sustained by religion and their protests are also part of their religious belief. She reminded them the point, faith needs to be democratic and it is part of social justice for some people. She argued that history can always repeat itself in various ways.

Ms. Gabriele mentioned that, Hinduism is generally seen as a culture rather than as a religion. Then she added that there is also a tendency among people to consider the religion they follow as only real and will be against all other religions and call them as culture. She talked about the concern raised by men on secular law during the Shah Bano case. People largely viewed the Shah Bano judgement as pampering the minorities. In her opinion in order to appease the majority, Rajiv Gandhi opened the locks of Babri Masjid. She argued that these issues had led to the hijacking of the concept of uniform civil code. Then she added, after the Shah Bano case our country realized that there will be no true secularism.

She advocated for gender just laws and observed that it should come from within each communities. According to her, poor women sustain by religion should get secular gender justice from within their own communities. Only then it is possible for them to have faith in a democracy. She observed that what our country needs now is a genuine religious reform. She pointed out that there was a deterioration in 1990s and cultural became turned into identity politics. That's when people became post-modernists. But she reminded the participants that identity politics cannot be a solution for social transformation. For her it is important to clean up our own backgrounds.

Ms. Gabriele then mentioned some instances of women raising against cultural practices and initiating religious reforms such as solar women against genital mutilation, Muslim women's fight for community reforms. She explained that according to feminist theology, subverting of the religious culture has to happen in our own context. She added that being secular doesn't mean stopping all engagement with the religious community and religion. She ended her presentation by emphasising that it is important to have both freedom of religion and freedom from religion. She opined that we cannot be subjugated by religion and what is important is to subvert, transgress and transcend the religion.

Ms. Rajeswari, Nireeksha Women's Theatre, Trivandrum, Feminist Theatre Movement in Kerala

Ms. Rajeswari the second speaker of the session who is a playwright and the second director in a women theatre group called Nireeksha began her presentation by reiterating the importance of HER STORIES being told. She viewed that history is always HIS STORY and it erases more than what is said. She was of the opinion that the history of feminist theatre movement is very hazy. She traced back the history of plays on women's issues by pointing out that it was always men who wrote about women's issues till 1992. She added that, later a Malayalam play named 'Thozhilidangalil' meaning 'in the workplace' was written and enacted by a group of women. She recounted that after this first attempt there were other initiatives in this line by Manushi by organising street plays by women, Samatha theatre movement and initiatives of women under KSSP. But according to her among these initiatives Koothattukulam women theatre workshop for women organised by Sthree PadanaKendram was a major turning point because this had contributed to the origin of some of the women theatre groups in Kerala. She remembered that Ms. Mini Sukumar,

member IAWS also took part in this workshop. She recalled that from then the movements like Nadaka Kalari and Tanathu NadakaVedi move tried to change the Malayalam theatre culture. Ms. Rajeswary continued explaining the history of women theatre groups in Kerala by talking on the later splits and developments from the original 1992 group. She mentioned that 'Abhinetri', a women theatre group in Kerala has originated primarily out of the split in the 1992 group. Later she mentioned about the 1994 women's theatre festival organised by Kerala Sangeetha Nadaka Academy.

After this initial account on the history of women theatre groups in Kerala, she further observed that during 1980s, it was always in the absence of women issues related to them were discussed. But then after the origin of women theatre groups they used theatre as a medium to expose and tackle women's issues. She told that until then it was not used as a feminist tool. She said, it was with this background she would like to narrate the story of Nireeksha, an all women theatre group in Kerala she is part of. She observed that what is important for her theatre group while pursuing theatre as a medium for intervening in women's issues is 'how women see the world? She told that the origin of this group is also from a later split in the 1992 first women's theatre workshop group. She mentioned that Nireeksha has a theatre space of its own and then she described the experience of her group in various theatre initiatives such as engagement with community theatre with Kudumbashree, theatre workshops for girls from Nirbhaya homes and Children from less privileged homes given Kalari and acting training.

Ms. Rajeswary said that the beginning of their group is with the understanding of the importance of feminist politics. And she emphasized on the point that women should be makers of their own visuals. According to her the only way forward is by searching and documenting the untold stories. She pointed out that in search of this Nireeksha also incorporates local art forms practiced by women in its theatre productions. She viewed that the Women theatre should be to help the invisible to fight against marginalization. She added that this should include the honest documentation of her stories, which will be only possible through searching for HERSTORIES which are excluded from the HISTORY.

Ms. Oviya, Activist & Writer, Dravida Kazhagam Initiatives on Women's Rights, Tamil Nadu

Ms. Oviya narrated in detail the history of Periyar movement and justice party in Tamil Nadu. She described that the justice party under Periyar was one of the most powerful movement which went against all kinds of dominations in the society. She pointed out that the primary target of the Periyar movement was to end the Brahmin domination in the society and believed that women are the ones who are the immediate target of domination by religion and Brahmins. Periyar also identified marriage, family system and caste system as the 3 major reasons of women's suppression in the society. Hence Periyar called upon the abolition of these systems.

She argued that, even when there are no separate women rights movement within justice party they have dealt with the women issues in a big way. She then spelled out the main focuses of Periyar movement such as caste oppression, women liberation and other social issues. Ms. Oviya acknowledged the fact that during 1928-1935 period Periyar's speeches and writings dealt with almost all major women issues of the time. She pointed

out that one of the most striking campaign among them were 'Garbhaachi' (rule of womb) that is the campaign for women's right over her womb.

She explained the participants why Periyar advised men to abolish marriage & kitchen and how women will be oppressed whole throughout her life, if they accept thali, poovu and other patriarchal symbols of male domination. She also noted the importance of the introduction of self-respect marriage system in Tamil Nadu under which there will not be thali or religious rituals or Brahmin priest.

Ms. Oviya explained how the rationalist movement after the demise of Periyar under the leadership of AnnaiManiyammai organised the historical 'RavanaLeela' as the counter propaganda to the periodical celebration 'Ram Leela'. And also another important movement she noted in her presentation was the movement against Devadasi system. This became an important movement on women issues. She remembered how the political part of the movement started with justice party and propagated their ideologies through the official newspaper KudiArasu. She concluded by explaining how in 1940s the movement became become DravidaKazhakam and carried forward its struggles.

Dr.R.V.Bindu, Institute of Technology, Mayyil, Microcredit Initiatives of People's Science Movements: A Tool for Gender Equality?

Dr.R.V.Bindu spoke in detail on the Peoples' Science Movement in Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu. She began her presentation by giving an overarching account on the beginning of science movement in India. She noted that, one of the first initiative of this kind was the BangyaVigyanParishat by S.Bose in 1948. Then she continued by telling that it was in 1962 Kerala Sastra SahityaParishad was formed with the slogans such as science for peoples' wellbeing, science for social revolution. She mentioned that the major focuses of this movement are nature, science and society. One of the recent campaigning by KSSP with these objectives are 'BhoomiPothuSwathu'.

Dr.Bindu observed that from 1962 till 1972 science movement was confined to Kerala and it didn't really spread out of Kerala. But in the year 1973 at IISc Bangalore a meeting took place for spreading science movement by taking the inspiration from the successful experience of KSSP throughout India. She pointed out that this was the time when science movement began to spread out side Kerala.

Then she spoke about the beginning of 'Malar' Micro-credit program in 124 Panchayats of Tamil Nadu and currently around 1954 SHGs are working in the Kanyakumari district. She argued that Malar micro-credit initiative has been creating considerable socio-political and economic improvements in the implemented areas. She raised an important question about Malar being a successful tool for achieving gender equality. She noted that micro-credit is recognized as a tool for social change but criticized for many reasons.

She then described about the SHG women's active participation in the anti-alcohol movements and local governance. She observed how these elected women are carrying forward many struggles to fight the nexus of gender, caste, class issues. She pointed out that 85% of women administrators function as proxy administrators. But the rest 15% can be viewed as an exception to this rule. She mentioned that out of these women local administrators 6 of them are Dalit women and 4 from other communities. They could also form an all women panchayat administration by deciding the panchayat

council members out of their choice. She explained how the activities of all women panchayat enabled them in winning 6 awards. Apart from this she counted their other achievements such as 100% polythene free village and increase in school enrolment. She also talked about the documentation initiatives on all women panchayat and how this has been disseminated in capacity building programmes.

Ms. D.Sharifa, STEPS, Pudukottai, Community based Legal Activism, Tamil Nadu

Ms. Sharifa shared her experience in working with women's movement for the past 25 years by narrating what she learned through women's movement and what exactly drew her into activism. She posed an important question, why people point out her as a Muslim woman. She told that apart from religion, caste they worked as women. She expressed her anguish over the oppression she had faced as a Muslim woman. She observed that there are many wrong assumptions about Muslim women among civil society.

She mentioned that in 1993 she did a survey on the socio-education and economic condition of Muslim women in Tamil Nadu and found that 1 out of 4 Muslim women were physically or mentally handicapped and one was a widow or destitute. And also she could understand the plight of young widows and victims of child marriage.

She viewed that the male Jamat never take into consideration the emotions and opinions of women while deciding on cases and gives no representation for women. She observed that whenever an issue was brought out in front of male Jamat even when it is an issue related to the female member of the family, she will be represented in Jamat by her father or brother. Thus it is always the narrative of men that will be heard and on the basis of which decision will be taken in male Jamat. Then she explained how women are denied justice and protection even when they approach police station for help by stating that the Jamat is the authority to listen to their cases. Similarly she pointed out that the government funds, grants etc., generally be reaching women through these religious institutions.

She expressed her dissatisfaction in people asking her to approach these religious organisations whenever some issues comes up. She noted that the law of the land is not directly applicable to religious communities in many ways and in 90% of Jamat cases women were not served well. She also pointed out that Quran is against dowry, the only provision is for Mehar, but in practice people gives 500 rupees as Mehar and take 50000 rupees as dowry.

She pointed out that these above circumstances made them think about setting up an alternative dispute resolution system by women within the community, and formed an all women Jamat at Pudukkottai. She then described the personal attacks and criticism they have been facing in the process and how they could survive them by sticking to their idea. She mentioned that this initiative had led to the situation that even male Jamat talking about women's issues. She also argued that the women Jamat is helping the Muslim women in their oval development.

Ms. Sharifa observed that now there is a greater space for discussing women's issues even within religion. She views it as a positive change in the community. But she also stated that during and after the recent floods in Chennai and Cuddalore, social work increased and also visible but generally social activism has been reduced. She raised a

serious concern why younger women are not risen up to leadership positions in organizations. And also she want the society to rethink on how Muslim women being represented in women's movements, for her it is a haunting question.

Ms. Jesu Rathinam, SNEHA, Organizing Fisher Women, Tamil Nadu

Ms. Jesu Rathinam, while talking about her experience in organising fisher women in Tamil Nadu acknowledged that within fisherwomen community they had a voice when veteran woman leaders like NaliniNaik was part of their movement. She also opined that the women in fishing sector are generally strong and courageous but the community governance structure usually don't allow women to grow up as powerful leaders.

She viewed that the fishing community's governance structure is highly patriarchal and women were not given any space to raise their voice. But she observed that now with their interventions the scenario has changed and the men realised that it is necessary to listen to the issues raised by fisherwomen though they have not been an integral part of the fishermen organizations. She also raised her concerns that the fisherwomen are still not recognised as workers and the single women are not getting adequate compensation during off season even when the pre-harvest and post-harvest works are completely done by women. Ms. Jesu Rathinam mentioned that the Tamil Nadu fish worker's union is yet be registered and need to try and link it with other worker's unions. SNEHA, the organisation she represents played a major role in mobilising fisher women in asking for their rights and due to which still the coastal people are with them.

She observed that till 1980s there was no concept of dowry in the coastal areas of Nagapattinam, but then there was a practice which is very similar to Mehar. She explained how mechanisation has changed the culture today. As per her account, due to SNEHA's efforts this practice has been getting eliminated from the coast. They called for a meeting and in it they have decided to eliminate that practice in the villages. But then she herself didn't deny the fact that it is still happening there although not very visible. SNEHA along with the help of the community members continuously monitor this and observe the changes closely. She argued that these gender insensitive practices not only as a product of consumerism, but largely due to new forms of gender violence and dowry. Many a time the society invent many socio-cultural practices related to Birth, puberty, marriage, pregnancy, death etc. She pointed out the change now in the coastal villages and they are gifting 2 plantains and betel leaves. According to her dowry has come into the community largely due to the influence of other cultures or communities. The major sector specific issues her group is addressing now are the land issues, violence against women and women rights issues.

Dr.R.Gayathri, Tamil Nadu Social Service Society, Trichy, Women in Anti-Alcohol Movements: A Tool for Gender Equality?

Dr.Gayathri began her presentation by explaining the role of women in the Indian national movement and observed that mostly women from elite class were participating. She argued that largely it was because of the portrayal of women as the ones who should limit themselves to the domestic sphere. She also added that the participation of the women who are relatives or partners of the elite national leaders were only documented and heard as part of history. She pointed out that there is nothing like one women's movement in India because the movements on women's issues are very much diverse and especially in the contemporary women's movements the ideology and engagements

varies. She observed that the larger class based debates are very much important till date.

Dr. Gayathri then explained about the anti-Arrack movement in the Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh. She also noted that these anti-arrack movements are not only happening in Andhra Pradesh but also in other parts of the country. She viewed that these struggles had become grassroots level movements. According to her the interventions of Tamil Nadu Women's Federation (TWF) in anti-Arrack struggle needs special attention. She mentioned that the activities of TWF are strongly determined to achieve self-reliance and sustainability and currently they are lobbying for total prohibition in the state. She viewed that the alcohol prohibition policy is highly challenging.

Apart from these details she also pointed out that the TWF conducted many studies and documented them along with the experiences of its members. These were decimated and also used as materials for their capacity building programmes. She invited the attention of the participants to the issues of shrinking space for the women movements and state itself curtailing their space to raise their issues. In the light of this she argued that it is very much important to document and brought to light the stories of victimized and voiceless women. She also suggested that while theorising the experience of women, the issues of grassroots level activists needs to be also taken into consideration.

Discussant: Ms. Mini Sukumar, Head, Department of Women's Studies, University of Calicut, Kerala

In the discussion participants emphasised on the need to network and strengthen women's togetherness.

Day-1 Session 2 - Theme – Land, Labor and Development

(Chair: Indrani Majumdar, Speakers: Radhamani, Lucy Xaxier, Ajitha, Christina Samy, Olga Aaron, Sugandhi, Discussant: Kiran Moghe)

This session was chaired by Dr. Indrani Mazumdar, Secretary of IAWS, New Delhi. Although the proposed theme of the session was 'Land, Labor and Development', it did cover a wide variety of themes from transgender rights to issues of gender and caste.

T. Radha Mani KSSP – Feminist questions and science movements: Experience of KSSP

She spoke about the journey of KSSP as a scientific movement and its engagements with women's questions. Kerala Sasthra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP) works to instil and develop a scientific rationality and consciousness and its main agenda is popularization of science and development of a scientific temper. She then went on to explain the rationale for dealing with the women's question. Very few women are appointed in positions of importance, for example, Kerala is yet to have a woman as a vice-chancellor or as a PSC chairman. In governance and politics too, women are rarely seen in important positions of power. There has been only one women minister in Kerala. Out of 140 member of the assembly only 8 are women. Political participation of women in local governance has been ensured through reservation. If not for reservation, women's participation and engagement will have been poor even there. Now, thanks to reservation, women are present in Panchayats at leadership level. Although girls perform very well in terms of

their performance at schools and colleges, including professional courses, their representation in the work force is very poor. It is this situation that made KSSP realize the importance of organizing woman and studying about their issues. She argued that without creating scientific temper among woman it is not possible to achieve the goal of KSSP. Vanitha vedis (Women's platforms) were thus formed in all the units, books were published and disseminated to popularize science among women. Camps were also organized for this purpose, such as the 1987 Women's camp in Thrissur. The second international conference of Women and UNESCO conference were attended by KSSP members. Through their involvement in women issues and activities, it was understood that serious studies are necessary in order to properly understand women's problems and offer solutions. Surveys were undertaken, Kala jatha and workshop with women as the major participants were organized. KSSP was also able to disseminate the findings of these workshops and surveys.

Lucy Xavier, TN Women's coordination committee, Raising Feminist consciousness on caste and gender issues in Tamil Nadu

She spoke of how they had started with small-scale activities among women and then went on to organize women's conference, workshops and meetings at the state level.

Small meetings and programs were organised and they also ran a magazine. They organized rallies; hunger strikes etc as forms of protest and resistance. Many of the members had NGO background and leftist thinking. In order to raise feminist consciousness they coordinated with various women groups locally and also support other women movements like health movement and anti-liquor movement. She concluded her short lecture by noting that although it is important that women's groups are coming together, it is only by throwing away caste and religious distinctions that we can make a change that matters.

Ms. K. Ajitha, Anweshi, Calicut, Feminist Movements in Kerala

She began her short lecture by narrating how she started her political life through her participation in the Naxalbari movement in Kerala of which her father was a founder member. Consequently, she was jailed for 7 years due to her participation in the movement. It was after her release from jail that she became part of the feminist movement. Even though the leftist movement was very strong in Kerala, violence against woman was also very high. Dowry deaths and domestic violence are very rampant in Kerala even after progressive leftist movements. This gave rise to autonomous women's movements which were found by former leftist women. Maanushi, Prabodhana, prabudhatha etc were some of the women movements in Kerala. She spoke of how they started a Women's group called Bhodana in Kozhikode in the year 1987. Through it, they attempted to tackle issues of the prostitutes, dowry death, domestic violence etc. She emphasised that nothing is personal and that everything has to be taken as a public relation. The issues of domestic violence and all other discrimination and violence against women should be considered as a political or social issue. She then went on to speak about Anweshi, which was founded in 1993 as part of Kerala Sthreevedi movement which was a radical women's movement. As part of the activities and agenda of Anweshi, counselling centres were run, free legal aid was provided to women, short stay home was organized for victims of violence and homeless women. Anweshi was also engaged in publishing a magazine and run a health program. It is currently also engaged in the maintenance of nirbhaya centres. She noted that although Anweshi as a

political movement is not very active now, it does extend support to all people's movements in Kerala.

Ms. Christina Samy, AREDS/SWATE, Movement against Sand Mining in Tamil Nadu

Ms. Samy explained that SWATE is a movement against illegal sand mining in the rivers of Kaveri and Amaravati in Tamil Nadu which started in 1980. Its roots can be traced back to the sangams which worked in villages to address community issues and served to educate rural population on contemporary issues. Ten years of experience in these sangams, gave the rural women an empowerment since they were given a chance to prove their leadership and had successfully taken up issues of violence against women. There was a shift in focus from issues of basic need to violence. After Tamil Nadu government's order allowing sand mining in river basins, protecting natural ecology became their primary concern since rivers are of great significance to the lives of women. From 1990s, three types of actions were used to register their protest – petitions to government, litigation filing and public protests and demonstrations. This created a threat to the lives of some of the women, especially dalit women who were mostly illiterate daily laborers. Victims were threatened and their social fabric distorted. By the end of 2003 farmers started collaborating with SWATE - our movement for women. This was because with the depletion of water, farming too was affected. Women came prepared for arrests and took part in demonstrations. Many were arrested and conditional bail was granted only after 20 days in prison. Many others were remanded only after 40 days. This incident however bore results in that it led to the decision to stop mining in Karur district. More importantly, it helped develop political consciousness in women; they started becoming more engaged in governance and politics, with two women even contesting for election and many others directly participating in the political sphere. Final fight for sand mining was in the year 2012, when a PIL was filed against 25 quarries, but it has been closed. Unless and otherwise women engage in decision making process nothing will change.

Ms. Olga Aaron, Founder – Bravoh movement, Organizing for transgender rights

Ms. Olga began her speech by drawing attention to the difference between sexual minorities and gendered minorities and asserted that the subject of her speech is transwomen who are gendered minorities. She spoke of the discrimination faced by effeminate boys both within the space of families and in the larger society because of societal inability to understand the child's gender identity. Such rejection or reluctance to occupy the role of male sex is often considered as a taboo in patriarchal societies. She argued that this is honor rejection – an act as grave as honor killing. This rejection is so strongly rooted that even when the mother tries to support her child, her efforts end up being vain. In such cases, the mother's place within the family structure also becomes uncertain. These children are therefore left to fend for themselves and end up being abused physically, sexually and verbally. Their education comes to a standstill and this also results in their inability to learn socio-cultural values. Due to lack of family and societal support, they often end up in streets as beggars and sex workers.

Ms. Olga also spoke of the difficulty involved in transforming from a man to a woman especially since there is no information available on similar experiences; there is no documentation available either as part of history or mythology. This is certainly not because there were no such experiences in the past. She strongly asserted that Transwomen movement is also part of women's movement. She expressed her

willingness in aiding the cause of the discipline of women's studies by contributing study material on Transwomen issues to be included as part of women's studies curriculum.

She critiqued the interventions by activists and academia in the past and argued that the focus of such initiatives was often on the health of the Transwomen, in particular their HIV/AIDS status and its associated problems. She opined that HIV elimination efforts unfortunately pushed them back into the sex trade. Initiatives drawn on both the health approach and the socio-cultural approach neglected the economic issues faced by the group; they failed to understand the real problems of Transwomen and did not inquire into why they were pushed onto the streets.

Ms. Suganthi, Secretary, AIDWA, Tamil Nadu, Combating Caste and Gender Nexus

Speaking about caste and women in India, she argued that caste is one of the major reason for women's suppression. Noting that caste is still very entrenched in our society, she urged that it is important to inquire deeply into why this is the case. She argued that traditions and culture support the caste system and helps perpetuate the same and that this further subordinates the status of women. She referred to the paper presented by Dr. Ambedkar in Colombia University on casteism in India and its role in women's slavery. In Hindu society, as per the Manu Smriti, women ought to stay subordinated to men at all stages and ages. There are many customary practices against women like devadasi system, denial of education, denial of widow re-marriage, child marriage etc. There were also movements in India against these practices. We have pioneered many struggles against child marriages. Yet they are still happening in Tamil Nadu. She narrated the incident that recently took place in Virudanagar district where child marriages were stopped. The struggle against these evil customary practices against women and girl children had been led by visionaries such as Periyar, Ambedkar and is taken up by left movements. Although there have been several movements working to resolve women's issues, pre-modern social institutions like the khap panchayats make sure that the caste system continues undisturbed. Khap Panchayats and caste-based political parties are reinforcing some of the above said anti-women social evils. Honor killing is one such evil. Women are denied the right to choose their partners. She quoted a speech by caste leader in Tamil Nadu "Don't educate our girls after 12th standard, they will love and elope". She noted that in the last 4 years 6500 suicides had taken place in the state, out of which, 50% were because of opposition to inter-caste relationships and marriages. Out of 900 young girls who had died, 60% were victims of honor killings. Such incidents make visible the deep and complex nexus between caste and gender.

Discussant – Kiran Moghe noted that although the session lacked an integrating theme, many crucial points had been discussed. She acknowledged that women's organizations and women's studies has to go beyond what is traditionally considered women's issues and engage with all social issues as they come. She spoke of the necessity for women's organisations to transform from functioning as NGOs to actively resisting and questioning the State; to include and accept into our movements, the new struggles that are coming up and the new sections of women that are being organized. She also noted that movements need to generate its own data like KSSP and we need to adopt this methodology of surveys. Such studies undertaken by movements should also be documented properly.

Day 1 – Technical Session 3 – Theme – Combating Caste and Gender Nexus

This session was chaired by Dr. Asha Ramesh. A.K.Jayashree, Arul Mozhi, Fathima Bernard, Anandi and Abhirami were the speakers in this session and Jayashree was the discussant.

Dr. A.K. Jayashree, Department of Community Medicine, Pariyaram Medical College, Kerala - Struggles for sexuality and health rights

Dr. Jayashree in her lecture spoke on the issue of sexuality and health rights and traced how it had evolved alongwith different movements in Kerala. In particular she focused on the 1980s autonomous women's movements and noted that the questions of body, especially women's body and intimate relations were inquired into as part of the movement. It was observed that in medical colleges, there was no proper documentation of rape cases, partly because even the victims do not want it. She emphasised on the need to integrate struggles for sexuality and health rights with the wider social movements organized by KSSP and other leftist organizations because with platforms such as Kala jatha, they had a wider reach in the society. However, often even interventions grounded in socialist feminist theory fall into the trap of asking 'what are more important – sexuality or economic issues?', and end up sidelining issues of sexuality. Issues related to health rights are contested using the same reasoning and hence receive a priority status. This resulted in many governmental projects that seek to address health issues. Dr. Jayashree critiqued such interventions arguing that as long as they target the family and doesn't deal with the question of women's bodies and their agency over it, they will continue to suffer from major limitations. She spoke of the high rate of C-sections in Kerala which is more than 40% and noted that the feminist movement have not been able to tackle or raise these issues. She suggested that policy needs to go beyond the family and look at women as individual agents. She also critiqued the bias in state health policy and noted that the health status of women from disadvantaged communities such as the tribal women have very poor health indicators. Maternal Mortality Ratio and Infant Mortality Ratio continue to be very low for tribal communities in Kerala.

She criticised that feminist discourses always tend to focus on violence and danger that plague the bodies of women and not enough on the pleasure. She asked whether we can celebrate our bodies and argued that such celebration is tied up with questions of agency. She noted that issues related to lesbians and sex workers are now given some importance and noted the rise in individual women raising their voice against injustices.

Ms. Arul Mozhi, Advocate, Madras High Court – Periyarism and Women's emancipation

Speaking of Periyarism and how it dealt with women's issues, Arul Mozhi argued that 'thali' figured prominently in Periyar movement's battle for women's emancipation. She mentioned that on March 8th 2015, a news channel had organized a discussion on a topic on women and Mangal Sutra or 'thali', which questioned whether it is a thing of emancipation for women. However, the show was not aired due to the pressure and opposition encountered. A women reporter and photographer were attacked for their involvement in what is supposedly a blasphemous idea and act. This is a reflection of political nature of the thali and hints at the importance of what it signifies. She also spoke about a program conducted where 'thali' was removed or rather thrown away on Ambedkar's birth anniversary on 14th April. But there were attempts from the state to stop this by using the rationale that it will create law and order issues. But they

managed to get a favourable verdict from the court to conduct the event and the program was successfully organized and women attended in large numbers. However, it would be immature to argue that throwing away thali is the be all and end all of women's emancipation. She reminded us of the public meetings organized by the periyar movement in the 1920s and 1930s where the 'thali' was tied by devadasi women who do not have the right to be married to a man of her choice. She concluded by arguing that the relevance of Periyar can only be understood by seeing how the movement intervened in various issues according to historical necessities. "Self Respect" is what Periyar fought for throughout his life and it is precisely this that our Indian society constantly denies to our women.

Fathima Bernard, SRED, Thiruvallur - Combating caste and gender in Tamil Nadu

She narrated the history of dalit women's struggle through 3 women who fought on different issues. Subbammal, a dalit woman along with 30 other such women fought for land rights in Andhra Pradesh. They struggled to get land title from the government of Andhra Pradesh for the 1acre of land which was already allotted to them. However they were asked by the officials to provide sexual favors in exchange for giving the title which was already. One such officer, a Thasildar verbally abused them and tried to sexually molest them. They strategically asked him to come to a particular place where they locked him in a room and subbammal with other women beat him severely with broom, slippers etc.

The second one is a story of women who fought against religiously sanctioned prostitution. They are called "Matthamas". Some women were forced into prostitution through a customary practice where they are devoted as matthammas. This is similar to devadasi system. Once the girl attains puberty they have to perform erotic dances in public as part of many village functions and are sexually exploited. During such dances men will pin rupee notes in their dress. One of the reasons many women continue to stay as 'Mathamas' is because of the money involved. They are required to tie a thali called "pottu Thali". While regular Thali means that she is for one man, pottu thali declares that she belongs to many men. She noted that the families of these women are invariably landless agricultural laborers who live in the land of their landlords. So 'matthama' system is also related to land, more precisely, to landlessness. Devi, a matthama threw her pottu thali on the face of god and decided not to live as matthamma. This encouraged other mathammas too, who were previously engaged in prostitution to turn to other means of livelihood as means of acquiring dignity.

The third woman in her narrative was Renuka, a dalit woman who use to carry the meat of cow for sale. She was however forced to do the work and have now turned to selling fruits and vegetables. She with many other such women formed a cooperative farm on the land that they gained through the struggle. She explained how this was also related to land rights. These dalit women became empowered through their participation in the movement and became more active in local politics and governance. Some of them are elected as ward members in the panchayat elections. She said that although all their problems are not solved, they have been minimized and domestic violence has been controlled. Through land reforms, dalit women acquired land and they also gained political leadership. She emphasized that annihilation of caste cannot be achieved without economic empowerment. She concluded by arguing that dalit women have to mobilize as a non party political force, we need to have our own politics which is people's

politics.

S. Anandhi, MIDS Chennai, Caste, Gender and Development

Dr. Anandhi began her lecture with a call for re-centering dalit women's activism as politics. At a time when neoliberal politics helps to create new understandings of caste and gender, it is essential to understand the experiences of dalit women. She argued for the importance of ethnographic studies of government programmes like MNREGA, in order to comprehend how dalit women negotiate and challenge caste in their capacities as workers under the programme. She opined that dalit women are often portrayed as victims; victimhood seems to be inevitable for they are either victimized or discriminated.

With the larger economic changes taking place in rural areas such as the decline of agriculture, non-viability of cultivation, pragmatism of getting out of agriculture into industries, the responsibility of continuing as agricultural laborers has fallen into the hands of the dalit women. This is a challenge brought out by the past bondedness experienced by dalit communities. Although men have been by and large more able to move out of villages, that has not been the case of the women in the communities. They have become landless laborers – agricultural laborers, and reflect the indisputability of caste embodied by dalit women. She asserts that caste continues to operate in all spaces and the operation of such politics further undermines the livelihood of Dalit women. Speaking from her own research in rural Tamil Nadu, Dr. Anandhi spoke of how Naidu women are placed to sit and write inside panchayat offices to collect wages, while other lower castes have to stand outside. She posits the following crucial questions: Should anti-caste politics include Naidu women also? Can they take dalit women's leadership? Is it possible (for programmes like MNREGA) to be inclusive when dalit women are stigmatized for taking up leadership? In this particular case, is it possible for naidu and the adidravida women to work together? Dr. Anandhi argues on the basis of her study that there is no possibility for joint action, there is no way for them to come together. Dalit women complain frequently that they cannot continue working with Naidu women in SHGs. The success rate of SHGs of Naidu women are much higher than that of the adidravida women; a success that can be attributed to their caste position. Adidravida women are seen as having no good habits, they do not enjoy trust and respect in the community and hence such SHGs by dalit women are often failures.

She suggests that what is required is a two-pronged strategy that challenges caste while also incorporating women into programs that provide for means of livelihood. She spoke of how her own study that explore the nature of functioning of MNREGA, dispute the claim that MNREGA neutralizes caste identities. Dalit women are often simply 'inserted' into development programmes and this is a challenge for dalit women's activism. Dr. Anandhi argues that it is such modern re-workings of caste that makes it crucial that questions regarding embodiment of caste are incorporated into the thinking of both dalit and women's movements. She concluded her lecture with a call for women's movements to be self-reflective of mediations by upper caste women.

Abhirami, Surakottai, Thanjavur, Honor Killings in Tamil Nadu

Abhirami, a victim of honor killing narrated her experience. When she was studying for teacher's training, she fell in love with a person who happened to be a dalit. This created

many problems in my house. Her family warned her that if she married him, both of them will eventually be killed, irrespective of where they run away to. Nevertheless, they ran away, got married and came to Chennai with the support of her husband's family. After some years her brother came to know about her whereabouts, he called her and asked her to come back to their village, promising her to give her a good job. So she and her husband sold a piece of their land and some other possessions and gave her brother Rs. 5 lakhs. When they did not hear from her brother even after many days, they went to the village believing that her family will accept them. One day it was found that her husband was missing one day. So she submitted a complaint in the police station. The police expressed reluctance to accept her complaint and didn't take her complaint at first. Then she came to know that her husband was killed and buried near our house itself. Finally her complaint was accepted in the police station, she submitted a complaint against her father and her brother. When the police dug and took out her husband's body, it was a revelation for the whole society how dalits are perceived and treated by non dalits. It was not just a murder, but he was severely tortured and attacked very cruelly. Her child was born later. She explained that she is surviving now only with the support of AIDWA and untouchability eradication front. They also provided legal support. Only recently the judgment was pronounced and both her father and her brother were given life imprisonment.

Workshop reflections and Closing Remarks

Ritu Dewan

Dr. Ritu expressed her happiness with the level of co-operation and co-ordination between universities and departments in TN. She noted that IAWS is representative of all women's studies departments in the country and has been built out of inter-linkage between academics and activism. She emphasised that it is crucial to keep alive and nourish this link between women's movements and women's studies. She argued that the need to re-invent women's studies is a desperate one, for we cannot theorize until we go back to ground realities, and activists cannot function until it is inter-linked with or informed by larger theoretical understandings of social issues. The idea of gender justice is only given token attention both within academia and larger policies and practice, therefore it is important to re-link and re-energise such theoretical concepts with national and regional realities. She acknowledged that the southern region has contributed in terms of very strong academic extension of activism.

Dr. Ritu spoke of the nature of women's issues – while some are specific to the region, there are other problems that are common to all regions. She re-iterated the need to evaluate what has been done by women's movements and women's studies as a discipline in the last 20-30 years. Noting the changes that has been taking place, especially with regard to women's studies centres, such as the efforts by some to make it into 'family studies' center, she explained that it is time to re-do our work and strategies both in terms of the movement and as associations and centres within the academia. In order to do that, it is necessary that we take stock of the kind of issues and the strength of issues that we are faced with. What are such centres and departments doing? What is their potential? She insists that women's studies departments have a specific role to play; they are not just counselling centres but academic institutions and

therefore should be permanent centres. This is something, she argues, that we need to debate on and put forward strongly.

She cut short her closing remarks by expressing her wish to have the next IAWS national conference in Tamil Nadu.

Dr. Indhu Agnihotri

Dr. Indhu Agnihotri began her lecture fondly remembering her experience of being together with Dr. Ritu Dewan in the first IAWS Conference in Mumbai. She spoke of how they had started out at loggerheads, having different viewpoints and many fierce debates. But over the years, you learn to laugh over such differences, for it had been a very good learning experience for this student of history. She notes that one learns history in many ways - through socio-cultural practices, live debates of remnants of traditional practices and contestations of practices.

She noted that in a book on women's movement in India, there was not much on South India, not a single reference to Periyar. She acknowledges that writing of Indian history continues to be a contested terrain, which makes regional workshops like this all the more important, for it can capture the local voices from many different regions. Otherwise history would continue to be based on select experiences reduced to select regions. She argues that it is important that we question the very language that we speak in, for having workshops in English language alone limits the participation. She noted that the purpose of the workshop, which is the need for documentation, triggers us to think about our own experiences as individuals and organizations. It is important to get back to the project of documentation, organizations need to understand how important it is to write our own history. She sought to drive home the point that if we don't write our own histories, there are people waiting to re-write all histories, manufacture evidences and histories. She re-asserted the importance of documenting everything including the leaflet. In the case of leaflets written in regional languages (which is often the case), it is essential that at least the name and date is noted down in English. Much of this history will otherwise be lost and others will not be able to learn from our experiences. She suggests that students can help with the processes of documentation and noted that such workshops help to motivate younger scholars.

She noted that the current situation looks very depressing for feminist politics, since the power of the opposition seems to be greater and growing. However, the significance of this workshop is that it makes us realize that the movement is vital, vibrant and it is still there. She acknowledged that there is a very vibrant movement in South as witnessed by the very many accounts expressed here. But such gains often becomes scattered especially when NGOisation happens. Therefore this vibrancy needs to be continuously captured and made available to the younger generation. She urged the importance of analyzing both past histories and contemporary debates. Speaking of the first session by Dr. Indhumati Rao, Dr. Agnihotri asked the participants to assert themselves and warned the audience to be careful of who sets the tone of women's studies and how and urged them to not let the gains of the past be mired in polarities of India vs West and us vs others. Let us not allow the platform the movement creates to be appropriated by the very people who we want to overthrow.

She spoke of the necessity of grounding both women's studies as a discipline and women's movements and activism in the experiences of individuals, organizations, including NGOs and movements; feeding into each other. Media does not talk about women's organizations or about the experiences of women's movements. Dominant discourses argue that the structures are fine, everything is fine and anyone can achieve anything if only he/she works hard enough. But structural changes are very much required, argued Dr. Agnihotri. This workshop tries to bring to visibility multiple forms of resistance, making heard silenced and suppressed narratives of organized resistance, of organizing resistance. Speaking about the testimonies provided by victims of caste and gender discriminations, she noted that it required organizational support even for these individuals to stand here and speak about their experiences. Therefore it is our task to not only be there amongst the people to bring out the issues but also make it an important agenda in public discourse; thus giving direction towards change. Women's Studies need to be perceived as an instrument for bridging the gap between institutes of higher education and the community.

Dr. Agnihotri emphasized the need to be aware of interlinkages and intersectionality rather than merely drawing upon descriptions and attempting to capture different dimensions or layers of oppression. If inter-sectionality is going to be rooted in identity and identity politics, then it can be dangerous, she warns. We have to look at the structures in which religious and caste identities are embedded; and also be aware of the inter-linkages between the many structures. Or else we will only be able to capture a limited or a frozen perspective. Although she acknowledges that postmodernist postcolonial and postnationalist debate has served some purpose, she expresses her doubts over whether they are still relevant - maybe they have out served their purpose. This is because analytical frameworks drawn on such thinking maybe insufficient to fully capture the social realities.

She spoke about the notion of feminist practice and feminist resistance and argued that there has been no good critique of capitalism and neo-liberalism and globalization from within feminism in India. It is not enough to understand the nature of oppression. We need to delve deeper and attempt to understand the inter-linkages between the structures we are dealing with. She noted that women's movements can and should hold space for multiple strands of thinking, multiple forms of practices and resistances. She argued that women's movements have a longer history of coalition politics than the State. Therefore it is important at this juncture to think afresh in terms of not only centres and departments within the academia but also about creating new alliances in women's movements. It is crucial that we accommodate the different perspectives that have emerged out of contemporary situations. Various State policies, state schemes etc for example, MNREGA, opens up new challenges. But that doesn't mean we can write off such schemes as faulty. She emphasised that not all conflicts can be tackled through administrative reforms; we cannot seek solutions to social problems in administration or management strategies. Although policies and schemes are important, they cannot do away with the caste system. Such rooted structures of power and hierarchy cannot be eradicated through policies such as reservation alone.

Remembering the significance of the periyar movement in Tamil Nadu, she suggests that maybe the key to the struggle may lie in confronting the 'thali'. She urged the participants to not forget what periyar and the self-respect movement stood for and emphasized the need to critique the social institutions of family, marriage etc. Given

that traditions will be highlighted more in the situation we find ourselves in currently, we need to be aware of the political agenda behind such glorification of tradition and also make sure that they are not the sole spokesperson in determining what tradition is. Expressing her shock over the intensity of opposition to choice based marriages where there is a transgression of caste, she noted that State agencies often side with the families and larger society and often does not support the victims.

She concluded her remarks by noting that intermeshing of organization based experiences and individual experiences are required. In order to create a critical perspective, attempts should be made to draw conceptual frameworks that take cognizance of such intermeshing.