



# IAWS

Indian Association for Women's Studies

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## **IAWS Tribute to Sonal Shukla (1941-2021)**

Veteran feminist activist and life member of IAWS Sonal Shukla passed away on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2021. She and members of her organization VACHA actively took part in IAWS conferences. Sonal Shukla played pivotal role in strengthening women's studies through her writings in Gujarati.

Sonal Shukla's journey in the progressive movements, from sympathiser to full-time activist was marked by her generosity of heart and material resources she shared with social activists. She encouraged the new comers in the movement to take leadership roles, mentored them to give up stage-fear and be public speakers, sing progressive and feminist songs, start creative writings of poems, prose and research based writings, cook one-pot-meals and collectively read serious articles and discuss them. Bombay Riots in 1992-93 were watershed in our lives. Communal harmony became Sonal's central focus. Along with her comrade, Kumud Shanbag, she came up with creative programmes for unlearning casteism and unlearning communalism.

VACHA started focusing solely on community work as changing young minds with secular humanist and egalitarian perspective. Sonal built individual feminists and VACHA Trust with a mission to visibilise girlhood issues, socioeconomic and educational empowerment of girls and to facilitate their participation in the public life. Camps, educational fairs-games, quiz, songs, stories of girls at the margins and enormous audio-visual resources for training programmes reached out to the thousands of not only in Mumbai and Maharashtra, but all over the country. VACHA's publications- books and training modules are also in the public domain and can be accessed free-of-charge. VACHA became institutional member of IAWS.

Sonal Shukla has left behind a rich legacy of feminist solidarity by building lives of 1000s of girls with intersectional feminist vision of social justice, gender justice, environmental justice, economic justice and social solidarity. During the pandemic, transcending chronophobia adolescent school and college girls from VACHA have provided ration kits, sanitary items, counselling and support for online education among the most marginalised communities in Mumbai suburbs. Till the last moment, Sonalben was speaking to get multiple tasks done. Now, we will have to satisfy ourselves with her 'VACHA' through the recorded in videos and audios.

IAWS offers it tribute to Sonal Shukla for commitment for empowerment of girls with perspective of intersectional feminism and expresses solidarity for the members of VACHA.

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