

Urdhva Mula



ਭਰਵ ਮੂਲ:

(Roots Upwards)



An inter-disciplinary journal focusing on women and related issues

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Sophia Centre for Women's Studies and Development,
Sophia College, Bhulabhai Desai Road, Mumbai - 400 026.

Telephone: – 022 - 23513280

E-mail: sophiawomencentre@gmail.com

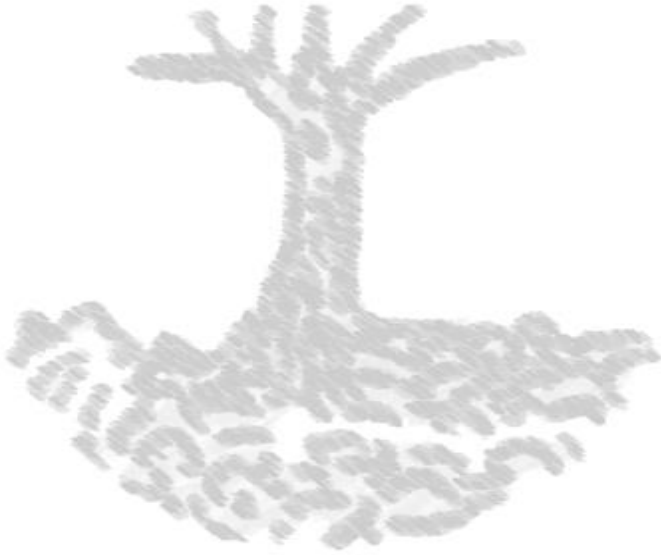
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Urdhva Mula

(Roots Upwards)

An Interdisciplinary Women's Studies Journal



The motto “*Urdhva Mula*” i.e. roots upwards. Two simple words, which can instil hope and courage when one is faced with various challenges of life.
(from *The Bhagavad Gita*)

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EDITORIAL

The current year is marked by an unprecedented health emergency caused by the coronavirus pandemic that has engulfed the whole planet and has taken a great toll on human lives. As frontline workers in the care services, both in their personal lives and in the health care system, women have made an enormous contribution as 70% of care workers in the world are women. *Urdhva Mula* salutes these unsung heroines for their most valuable work to save humankind from the novel COVID-19.

At the same time, the tentacles of this pandemic have reached out to impact every aspect of human life and activity – the economy, the educational system, the political arena, domestic life, all have been profoundly impacted, and the cracks and interstices in our social systems and structures have emerged starkly in all their harsh reality. Those on the margins, the most vulnerable sections of our society, have been the first and the hardest hit. We need, in these days of social distancing, to find ways to remain connected and committed to each other, so that we may be able to create a more just and equitable ‘new normal’.

Urdhva Mula, 2020 has covered a wide range of concerns faced by the women and gender studies discipline as well as by the women’s rights movement.

While the article by Nalanda Tambe & Dr Nidhi Shendurikar titled, “Feminism and Family in Nineteenth Century India: A Study of the Ranade Family” brings out the nuances of personal and public dimensions of social reformers of the late 19th and early 20th century, Chanda Asani’s article brings out the struggles of the contemporary women’s rights movement against sexual violence and the response of the women’s studies as an academic discipline.

“Dalit Women Waste Pickers in Urban India: Gendering Caste, Labour and Exploitation” by Surachita Lal profiles the three-pronged intersectional marginality of caste, class, and gender of Dalit women at the bottom of the urban economy. Anita Banerjee and Kripa Mondal discuss the empowerment of one of the most invisible tribal groups – the tribal women of Andaman and Nicobar Islands – through self-help groups. Vibhuti Patel, as a member of the Working

Group of United Nations Human Rights Council writes on “Women’s Collective Action in the Asia-Pacific Region with regard to Women’s Human Rights in the Changing World of Work”.

The very insightful article by Mary Vanlalthanpui on “The Influence of the Mizoram Accord on the Issue of Women’s Rights and Political Participation” adds great value to this volume.

The BOOK REVIEW section examines recent publications, *Thinking Gender: Socio-cultural Perspectives- Festschrift in Honour of Professor R. Indira* by Nikita Pathak; *Kasturba Gandhi: An Embodiment of Empowerment* by Sandhya Mehta and *Taken at the Flood: A Memoir of a Political Life* by Khevana Desai. The reviews will definitely motivate the readers to not only read these three books but include them in the curriculum on women’s studies.

Statements on current developments in local, regional, and global gender concerns by the women’s movement have been included, due to their great significance in shaping a gendered human rights discourse.

Reports titled “Creating Stories, Shaping Lives: A Reflective Paper” by Shazneen Limjerwala and “Gender and Expression: Viewing varied art forms through a gender lens” by Deepti Anil are educative and useful in suggesting methods of fostering gender sensitization.

The obituary of a legendary feminist of Maharashtra, Vidya Bal (1937-2020), will convince you that she was and is really a role model for all of us.

We invite authors to send their original research-based articles, book reviews, statements, poems, obituaries of women studies scholars and women activists for publication in this peer-reviewed and globally circulated journal.

Stay safe.

Vibhuti Patel and Ananda Amritmahal



ARTICLES

Feminism and Family in Nineteenth Century India: A Study of the Ranade Family

- Nalanda Tambe
- Dr Nidhi Shendurikar

Abstract

The family occupies a prominent place among India's socio-cultural ethos. Learning about gender roles also takes place primarily in the family. The chapter attempts to understand the dynamics between feminist aspirations and family structures, norms and authority through an inquiry into the life and works of the well-known 19th century women's rights activist from Maharashtra, Ramabai Ranade. Born in a conservative, upper caste family set up where she was deprived of an education, Ramabai's life, seemingly, changed for the better after her marriage to Justice M.G. Ranade, a nationalist thinker and freedom fighter. The paper examines the undercurrents of feminism in the Ranade household through the husband-wife and other extended family relationships. Ramabai's seminal piece of writing in Marathi, titled *Amchya Tayushyatil Kahi Athavani* (Some Reminiscences of our Life together, 1910) serves as the primary source for drawing inferences about the practice of feminism in an upper caste Hindu, elite, patriarchal, traditional family in colonial India.

Feminism in nineteenth century India

Even before India enjoyed independence, feminism was an integral part of its social, political and cultural ethos. It would not be an exaggeration to claim that India enjoyed a feminist heritage. Because women were part of oppressive structures, women's issues were a major point of debate in public life. Ideas relating to feminism in India are not a result of debates that have been held post-independence; but can be traced back to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Geraldine Forbes in her essay 'Caged Tigers: First Wave' Feminists in India' (2005) writes about the first wave of feminism (1880-1940) where concerns expressed were very similar to those in the west, namely, structural inequalities that affected women. Unlike feminist movements in the West, Indian feminism was championed by reformist men (Raja Rammohun Roy, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar to name a few) and later joined by women. Their efforts included abolishing *Sati Pratha* (a custom in which a widow was

supposed to give up her life by burning herself on her husband's funeral pyre)¹, child marriage, discrimination against widows, taboo against widow remarriage. They also made efforts to promote women's education and women's rights in different life spheres (Chaudhuri, 2005). Among prominent feminist thinkers and activists were women like Anandibai Joshee, Pandita Ramabai, Laxmibai Tilak, Anandibai Karve, Parvatibai Athavale, Leelabai Patwardhan, Sarojini Naidu, Annie Besant, Hirabai Tata, Ramabai Ranade and others. Even as Indian women were key stakeholders in the nationalist movement, they realized that women's issues like educational, social emancipation were intricately linked to politics and nationalism in the country. Therefore, first wave feminists were nationalists who actively participated in the freedom struggle. Yet, these feminists were different from their western counterparts in the sense that they were not looking to an exchange of roles or a breakdown of the traditional family structure. They in fact admired a 'past golden age' heralded by the Vedic period where women could capitalize on their talents, had opportunities to develop and were not curtailed by unnecessary restrictions (Forbes, 2005).

The Role of Family

In the Indian context, the family was and still continues to play a very crucial role in the transmission of culture, values and beliefs over generations. Colonial India while experiencing a transitional phase from slavery to the fight for freedom, wrestled between western and traditional values. The 'family' was a site for this struggle. Women in Indian families had to face religious, cultural taboos and restrictions that marginalized their role in public life. For instance, reverence accorded to Brahmanical patriarchal values ensured punishment to families that educated their daughters or kept them unmarried until the age of nine. Nationalists like Lokmanya Tilak stood opposed to women's education

¹ On the question of Sati, also see Mani, L. (1987). *Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India*. *Cultural Critique*, (7), 119-156. doi:10.2307/1354153 where Mani engages in the discursive aspects of the debate on Sati and examines how ideological positions related to the practice could be viewed. Her work doesn't look at the practice in a binary manner where women were presented as either heroines or victims but rather, she examines the discursive aspects of the debate on Sati through the prism of three positions – colonial (official), progressive (reformers) and conservative (religion, community). In her work, Mani refers to the reconstitution of tradition under colonial rule and how in the light of Sati, Women become emblematic of tradition and this sparked a debate on their rights and status in society.

based on the argument that education to women would weaken the pillars on which the Hindu household and Hindu community stood. According to him and others who echoed his views, women's education was detrimental to moral, religious structures and would distract women from the tasks they were born to perform naturally, namely reproduction and nurturing the family (Rao, 2007). Modernization as a by-product of colonization resulted into the western ideals gaining widespread acceptance. Though nationalism was not disconnected from feminist ideas, it glorified India's past and tended to defend everything traditional. Any attempt at altering customs and lifestyles was suspected to be an effort to ape western culture. Though westernization had its feet printed in India during the late eighteenth century, nationalism fostered a distinctively conservative attitude towards social beliefs and practices. Nationalist ideas worked to provide an answer to new social and cultural problems concerning the position of women in 'modern' society, and this answer was posited not on any identity but on a difference with the perceived forms of cultural modernity in the west (Chatterjee, 1993). For women thinkers and activists in these times, 'family' remained a sacred institution and for them women's emancipation meant working along with men to challenge oppressive customs. Women like Ramabai understood the significance of family in the larger social fold and wanted to work to make the family space more inclusive and democratic for women.

Ramabai Ranade

Ramabai Ranade was born on January 25, 1862 to a middleclass Brahmin family in Satara district of Maharashtra. Hers was a family where women's education was frowned upon and girls were married at a very tender age. During those times, traditional beliefs about educating women were associated with widowhood and this was a major reason why parents were reluctant to get their girl child educated (Thomas, Bhaskar & Rao, 2009). In Ramabai's natal family, her father's widowed sister (*Atya* in Marathi) had learnt to read and write, which was believed to be the cause of her husband's death.

Ramabai's father, Mahadeo Manikrao Kurlekar, a famous Ayurvedic doctor then, married her off to the very well-known nationalist, freedom fighter, intellectual and reformist Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade (M.G.Ranade) in 1875. Justice Ranade was known for his progressive ideas and social reforms related to women's education and widow remarriage in Maharashtra. Ramabai was his second wife. At the time of their marriage, Ramabai was eleven while Ranade was thirty-two. Despite this huge age gap and his initial opposition to

the marriage, Ranade remained Ramabai's friend, guide and philosopher till his death in 1901 (Singh, 2001).

Ranade insisted on Ramabai's education post-marriage despite stiff opposition from elderly women (widows) in the Ranade family. It was he who trained and encouraged her to participate in public discussions and meetings. As per Nagendra.K.Singh's Encyclopaedia of Women Biography, under the mentorship of Ranade, Ramabai picked up the rudiments of social service and was coached in Marathi, Bengali, Sanskrit and English. For a woman to be learning English during those days was considered no less than a sin. It meant disregarding family honour and traditions. Despite opposition and taunts from within the family, Ranade lent full support to Ramabai's learning endeavours. In her narrations about life with Ranade, Ramabai recalls how during their first day together post-marriage, Ranade inquired about whether she knew how to read or write. On learning that she did not, he brought her a slate and pencil and started to teach her from that day itself (लिहिण्यावाचण्याची चौकशी केली, पण मला काही येत न्हव्हे. म्हणून त्याच रात्री एक पाटी व पेन्सिल आणवून श्रीगणेशाचा पहिला सात अक्षरी धडा घालून दिला – He inquired whether I was able to read and write but, I did not know anything. So, on the same night he taught me my first seven-letter lesson of Shri Ganesha: pg 30). It was through Ranade that Ramabai was introduced to public work and several social platforms that she later became a part of.

Her Accomplishments

Ramabai donned various feathers in her hat as she was inquisitive and well-informed about several social and political issues of the time. She studied and commented on international issues such as problems faced by Indian labourers in the Fiji Islands and held public meetings about the same. In 1904, she headed a meeting of the *Bharat Mahila Parishad* (Indian Women's Conference), affiliated to the *Rashtriya Samajik Parishad* (Nationalist Social Conference). She then, in 1908, became the president of the Parishad Sessions held at Surat, Bombay and Sholapur. In her early years in 1881, she participated in Prarthana Samaj prayer meetings. By 1885, she was on the committee for the selection of women candidates for training. The Sevasadan founded in 1908 with the help of Dr. Dhondo Keshao Karve and others, remains her major contribution to society. It was an organization that worked for women's healthcare, education and development. She was the president of the Bombay Sevasadan from 1908 till her death in 1924, and of the Pune Sevasadan from 1909. Ramabai imparted training to women in the Sevasadan, provided financial help and also established hostels where women could stay. To meet the need for medical aid

to women, the Sevasadan in 1911 arranged for the training of nurses in the David Sassoon hospital and started a boarding house for lady students of medicine. Later, the Sadan started teachers' training classes, public health schools, departments of medical service and of industry, special English classes and courses in home science and first aid for women. She was one of the founders of the Arya Mahila Mandal (A Women's Group) and went on to establish the Hindu Ladies Social Club (1884) where women were trained in sewing, first aid and languages like Marathi and English. She worked in the Central Famine Relief Committee in 1912 and visited female inmates of the Yerawada jail (Pune) every fortnight and children in reformatory school in the same jail whenever time permitted. She spoke about people, especially women being granted their legitimate rights from several public platforms that she made use of extensively throughout her career. She was also one among the many prominent Marathi women writers¹ and is remembered for writing about her experiences of marriage, family and public service with M.G.Ranade in her work titled *Amchya Ayushyatil Kahi Athavani* in 1910 (Singh, 2001).

The Ranade household and Ramabai's Feminism

The nineteenth century Indian Hindu family was a primary site for issues concerning women. It was where oppressive practices were perpetuated but alongside there were enough examples of female power with powerful matriarchs running households. Nowhere else is this better demonstrated than in the case of the Ranade household which helps us to contextualize Ramabai's struggles. The times in which Ramabai lived were set apart from the ones we experience today as concepts like rights, freedom, choices, equality and justice were alien to women who challenged deep-rooted patriarchal norms that denied women an identity and agency of their own. Our reading of Ramabai Ranade and her life in the Ranade household is incapacitated by the limited literature available on the subject. Therefore, we used Ramabai's writings on her life and times with M.G.Ranade as a primary material to understand how feminism was understood and practiced in an Indian Hindu family, one of whose important members was a reformist. The sections that follow after this focus on Ramabai's life in the Ranade household as depicted and described by her in notable instances.

Values in the post-marriage phase

Early age marriages of young girls to older men were quite common in those times. However, for Ranade, this was not a marriage he had wished for since he

was an ardent advocate of widow remarriage. It was only due to family pressure that he succumbed into marrying a young Ramabai. For this decision of his, Ranade invited much criticism from reformist circles. In Ramabai's own family, educating women was strictly prohibited since women's roles as nurturers, caregivers and upholders of the joint family system were much valued. A very significant influence on Ramabai's post-marital life was the promise given to her father prior to her marriage to Ranade. The father had categorically instructed Ramabai to behave appropriately post-marriage since she was to now be the 'honour' of the family. He told her to embrace tolerance as a virtue. This meant she would never misbehave with any member of the family even if that meant gulping down humiliation and insult. She also promised to him to never ever complain to her husband about anything that she suffers in the family (तू माझी मुलगी आहेस. आपल्या कुलीन घराण्याला शोभेल असे वाग. तुला कितीही त्रास झाला तरी सोस, पण नोकरांना सुद्धा उलटून बोलू नको. हे एक, व दुसरे तुझ्या मनाला असह्य झाले तरी तू होऊन कोणाचीच चहाडी नवरयाजवळ सांगत जाऊ नकोस – You are my daughter. You should behave in a manner that keeps family honour intact. Endure miseries, but do not ever answer back even to servants. Second, even if it becomes intolerable, never complain about anything to your husband: pg 43). As a result, learning to tolerate and suffer became guiding values for the rest of Ramabai's married life. She refers to these as *Kathin Vrate* (difficult promises to keep) but accepts that she was bound by them due to her father's instructions.

Education in the post-marriage phase

Receiving education after marriage was an important turnaround in Ramabai's life. One may question whether this education was her own choice or not. At eleven, she was probably too young to decide for herself. Ranade's desire to educate Ramabai was not well-received by the family, especially by its elderly women members. They were extremely critical of Ranade's decision and decided to taunt Ramabai for it. Her learning English was catastrophic and received no support from female family members. It is interesting to note that even in traditional, patriarchal structures like the Maharashtrian nineteenth century family, there were abundant examples of females controlling the house and lives of younger members. They held immense power in the decision-making process and wielded great authority over younger females in the house. In her narrations about the status of women in the family, Ramabai recounts, 'आमच्या घराण्यात बायकामाणसांना मानाने व मर्यादेने वागविण्याची पहिल्यापासून चाल आहे. त्यात वडील बायकांना सर्वांनी मान दिलाच पाहिजे. त्या काही बोलल्या तरी सोसले पाहिजे, उत्तर देऊन अमर्यादा करावयाची नाही, अशी मामंजीची व स्वतः ची ताकीद असे.' (Women in our

household were expected to stay within prescribed limits and behave respectfully. But elderly women were to be given utmost respect. If they said anything that one did not appreciate or disliked, one was not supposed to argue with them. Even male family members were to respect the position that elderly women occupied in the family. This is the reason why elderly women in our family were never used to disrespect and insult: pg 100).

Thus, the challenges that Ramabai confronted in her pursuit of education majorly came from within the family, specifically through an opposition and displeasure expressed by women family members (Londhe, 2010). Certainly, things were not easy for Ramabai even as she belonged to an upper-caste, socially privileged family where men were engaged in social reform advocacy. These men were an important part of the social, political and intellectual circles who led the baton in times when women were socialized into looking at education as an evil that brings disrepute to family. Ramabai writes about her struggle to find time for studying in the midst of household chores that she was expected to take care of (माझा अभ्यास घरात चालू असेच; पण रात्री व पहाटेस होईल तितकाच. पुस्तक वाचीत बसली आहे अशी नुसती बातमी या वडील बायकांच्या कानावर गेली पुरे, कि झालीच चर्चा सुरु. - Whatever my learning at night and early morning used to be, was all for the day. Because during daytime, it was impossible to go downstairs with my study-book. Even if the elderly women came to know about my reading, they used to start unwanted discussions: pg. 72).

Education for 'wives of reformers' (सुधारकांच्या बायको), posed a challenge for them to deal with their involvement in the public vis-à-vis the private space. Supposed to keep themselves confined in the realm of the house, women like Ramabai and her contemporaries (Savitribai Phule², Pandita Ramabai, Lakshmibai Tilak, Anandibai Karve, Parvatibai Athavale, Leelabai Patwardhan) advocated operating in the public space. This adversely impacted

² Amongst many such women who stood for women's rights and advocacy in society, it is noteworthy to mention the one woman who stood for women's education throughout her life and was committed to its cause till her last breath. Savitribai Phule, known as the mother of Indian feminism, was a trailblazer in providing education for girls and for ostracized sections of society. She became the first female teacher in India (1848) and opened a school for girls with her husband, Jyotirao Phule. She went on to establish a shelter for destitute women (1864) and played a crucial role in grooming Jyotirao Phule's pioneering institution, Satyashodhak Samaj (1873) that fought for equality of all classes. Her life is heralded as a beacon of women's rights in India (Asher, 2016).

family relationships and led to tensions in the family. It also impacted men in the house who desired and were supportive of women in seeking education and being seen and heard in public meetings.

Joint family and Reformist ideas

In her work on women's accounts of the social reform campaign in Maharashtra in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Jyotsana Kapur writes about how these autobiographical accounts by women have been written with a central focus on the time spent in marital relationships, tensions within family and their experiences and hopes of the same. Marital and family life is the central focus of these narrations since women's identity was intricately linked to marriage and the set of relationships that came with it. These included changing relationships with family, in-laws and the trials and tribulations of managing a home (Kapur). The joint family set up was quite resistant to the ideas of reform and it is women who eventually bore the brunt of it. In the case of Ramabai, Mr. Ranade's desire of introducing her to English education led to taunts and humiliation that Ramabai had to face from elderly women in the family. She was even instructed to defy her husband's desires and advised to not listen to everything that the husband demanded of her. There was, as a matter of fact, a different kind of feminism brewing in the Ranade household as elderly women in the family urged Ramabai to defy Ranade's wishesⁱⁱ (सभेला जाण्याचा नाचरेपणा हिलाच पाहिजे आहे ! दादा (स्वतः) चा तितका आग्रह नाही; पुरुषांची सांगावयाची रीत असते, पण बायकांनी कितपत ऐकावे याचे काही तरी तारतम्य हवेना ? पुरुषांनी शंभर गोष्टी सांगितल्या, तरी बायकांनी त्यातल्या फार तर दहा ऐकाव्यात. – It is she only who wants to attend meetings. My brother doesn't really insist; there are many ways in which men instruct their wives, but women should decide how much to listen to. Even if men tell a hundred things, women should abide by only a ten). It was an everyday struggle for women like Ramabai to try and strike a balance between pleasing their husbands who wanted them to study and work for public causes and elders who disliked the very idea of women being seen in the public space. As a result, Ramabai was expected to manage household chores as well as be available for assistance to Ranade. She talks about how difficult it was for her to take out peaceful time for study. She could study during afternoon hours (after accomplishing morning chores) and late nights (after dinner had been served and other family members were off to rest).

The family was thus the focal point of tensions that emerged from husbands adopting a progressive attitude, expecting their wives to follow it. This led to an eventual struggle that women faced in trying to be both modern and traditional, forward thinking and tradition honouring. The joint family system also did not allow for close proximity between the husband and the wife. There were many restrictions that a traditional family set up imposed on the young couple. Hence, when Ramabai had the opportunity to accompany Mr. Ranade on work related tours or when she joined him in Nashik where he was transferred, she was very happy and cherished the time they spent together. In addition to this, she could also spend more time for her study (“... व आता माझ्या अभ्यासा कडे जास्त वेळ मिळू लागला. आता स्वतः स रोज दोन दोन अडीच तास माझे वाचन घेण्यास, शब्द व स्पेलिंग विचारण्यास व नवीन धडा देण्यास वेळ मिळत असे.”: pg. 52). She enjoyed the taste of independent life. Even though she had a hard time adjusting and working all by herself, she writes that she had more time to devote to study.

Negotiating Family and Feminism

The Ranade household was inhabited by women and most of them were widows. The centre of power however was Durga, Mr. Ranade’s sister whom Ramabai refers to as ‘Vansa’ (sister-in-law in Marathi). Durga was widowed at twenty-one and on her return to her father’s house, she began commanding power and authority amidst the elderly women in the family. It was she who handled kitchen affairs as well as accounts in the family. *When Ranade was forced to marry the young Ramabai, he had questioned his father as to why despite Durga being widowed at such a young age, was not remarried and why was he being forced to remarry at thirty-two* (“कारण, दुर्गा माझ्याहून वयाने लहान असून, वयाच्या एकविसाव्या वर्षापासून अनाथ झाली आहे. आपले प्रेम मजपेक्षा तिच्यावर कोणत्याही रीतीने कमी नाही. असे असताना, तिजबद्दल काही विअहर होत नाही. मह मलाच लग्न करण्याचा आग्रह का असावा? pg. 26). Durga was believed to be more capable, efficient and intelligent in comparison to Ranade but was denied opportunities to excel only because she was a girl.

Major tensions that erupted in the family were over Ranade’s insistence that Ramabai learn to read and write. Women in the family compared Ramabai to Ranade’s first wife who according to them belonged to a very poor family but was decent and respected family traditions. They were all praise for Ranade’s first wife, who invited his anger because she declined to study, while Ramabai was criticized for dishonoring the family and going out of her way to please the husband, especially by learning English. Uma Chakravarti (1993) in *Social Pariahs and Domestic Drudges: Widowhood among Nineteenth Century Poona*

Brahmins, focuses on the plight of widows among upper-caste Brahmins. Describing Ramabai's encounters with female members of the Ranade family, she refers to tensions between traditional and obdurate ideas ('old' vs 'young' women). Durga once chided Ramabai's activities as outrageous and advised her to defy Ranade's will. She blamed Ramabai for being over-smart and over-ambitious in abiding by Ranade's will. She clearly wanted Ramabai to honour what the family expected of her rather than work to please the husband. She said: "Your husband will want you to do a hundred things, but you must not do everything. You should be smart enough to follow only some of his wishes and ignore the rest." The reasons for this power struggle in the family were insecurity on part of the elderly women over a younger wife exercising her control on the 'man of the house'. Proximity between the husband-wife was also looked down upon as also was the time and freedom she found to study while other women had to engage in menial, household activities. Interestingly, Ramabai's writings speak of her experiences in dealing with women of the family only until Ranade was around. There is no mention of her relationship with either Durga or other female members after Ranade's death when she lived life as a widow and assumed a responsible, powerful position in the family (Chakravarti, 1993).

For both Ramabai and Mr. Ranade, family was crucial to how their reformist ideas and work would be perceived in the larger social context. Feminism was constantly being negotiated in the Ranade family space by the husband-wife duo through opposition, confrontation, tensions, tolerance, patience and endurance. Characteristics of this negotiated space were tensions between 'old' and 'new' values, emphasis on adherence to and respect for traditions despite advocating modern values, the balancing act achieved by women in order to please the 'progressive' husband vis-à-vis the 'traditional' family, women bearing the burden of this balancing act and material insecurities that both young and elderly women in the family experienced. As a result of this negotiation of feminist ideas into the family space, one can observe unconventionalities in the Ranade-Ramabai relationship. When the marriage took place, neither of them had a choice. But with time, their relation matured into a mutually respectable bond. It was after Ranade's death that Ramabai emerged out of his shadow to take over his work on social reforms. We do not know if education was Ramabai's choice in the first place, but Ranade's support did make a lasting difference to her life.

Discussion & Conclusion

Ramabai's life and work can be understood from the prism of an intersection between family, education and women's emancipation. The family as an institution remained central to her endeavours. For her, neither was the family a site of patriarchal dominance, nor were men to be seen as enemies. She did not advocate an exchange of roles with men, nor did she believe in dismantling the traditional, joint family structure. In this, she differed from the ideas that some of her western counterparts advocated. Though her writings offer a subtle critique of certain family practices, she still wanted to use the traditional family to strengthen women's position.ⁱⁱⁱ She did not negate the qualities that women brought to the family fold, and she wanted to extend and consolidate these to the public space, making it more inclusive for women. One must be sensitive to the context in which Ramabai lived to fully appreciate her feminist ideas because the sacredness of family as an institution limited her advocacy and work for women's emancipation. Her activism stems from within the family and hers is a brand of feminism that accommodates the family.

A 'quiet' or 'moderate' feminist who did not support radical ideas, Ramabai has been however criticized for being someone who was schooled into modern, liberal thought by her husband, leaving one to question what her own desires were. Given a choice, she would have wanted to remain within the confines of the household. This remains a matter of debate though. Scholars like Uma Chakravarti have referred to this as education that did not empower women but only reinforced patriarchy in a different form, since these educated reformist wives continued to adhere to notions of obedience to the husband.^{iv} However, one must also take into account the context around the time in which Ramabai and other female reformers took charge of feminist functioning and advocacy. Feminism for these women signified women's rights, dignified stature for women in society, equal opportunities especially in terms of education and self-growth, societal respect towards women, freedom to make their own choices and rejection of all social practices that considered women as inferior beings. In this light; women like Ramabai Ranade and many others who set the tone and stage for women's emancipation in India can be called 'early feminists' and parallels can be drawn with the contributions of first wave feminists in America (Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucy Stone, Susan B. Anthony, Sojourner Truth etc.) who were struggling for the right to vote and equality, representation in the public sphere. Just as these American women are today hailed for championing the cause of feminism and spearheading the movement in the west; similarly, women such as Ramabai would have identified with the liberal, developmental

variety of feminism that encourages social and political change through legal-constitutional means. It is owing to the efforts of early reformist feminists (both men and women) that the women's movement in India took to the centerstage of the national movement for independence. Whether Ramabai can be called a feminist in the contemporary sense of the term, calls for further exploration and inquiry.

Another aspect worthy of further academic inquiry is intersectionality and local context in feminism practiced in nineteenth century India. While Ramabai Ranade and many other early feminists came from privileged backgrounds in terms of caste and socio-economic status; others like Savitribai Phule experienced and practiced feminism differently due to their so called 'lower caste' background. Jyotiba and Savitribai Phule have often been referred to as intersectional feminists of the nineteenth century; who alongside the cause of women empowerment also battled caste discrimination (Pandey, 2019). Intersectional feminism, a concept introduced and accepted during the third wave of feminism in the west was very much practiced during India's early feminist movement. In this paper, while the authors have focused on Ramabai's feminism in the context of family, it will be worthwhile to study feminist men and women and the influence of caste, religion, socio-economic background on their feminist ideals.

Unequal family structures had men like Ranade constantly wading through power and gender dynamics to support women's education, a cause that was despised by traditionalists and some nationalists. However, one must give credit to Ramabai, her contemporaries and men like Ranade who made attempts to bring women's issues to the forefront while juggling with contradictory demands from family, religion, society and politics, all as a part of the nationalist discourse.

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End Notes

¹ Along with Ramabai Ranade there were many Marathi writers and poetesses who contributed to the social milieu through their writings. Padma Gole (1913-1998) and Indira Sant (1914-2000) were Marathi poetesses, Chandrakala Hate (1903-1990) was a feminist writer and educator, Girijabai Kelkar (1886-1890) was a Marathi-language play-writer and a feminist writer. Sumati Kshetramade (1913-1997) was a Marathi writer, Savitribai Phule (1831-1987) was a well-known poet and social reformer.

² Dipesh Chakrabarty in 'Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who speaks for "Indian" Pasts', writes about how when women in the Ranade family were protesting against Ramabai's involvement in public life, they exhibited a kind of feminism that emerged from their own sense of self-respect and their struggles against men. They advised Ramabai to not listen to everything that Mr. Ranade said and demanded of her. They asked her to have some sense of proportion in what she should listen to and what she should not. In this, they were supporting a kind of feminist idea and action. According to Chakravarty, because of these contradictory and contested discourses on Indian identity it is difficult to clearly demarcate 'patriarchals' from the 'liberals'.

¹ On education Ramabai believed, "If the mother remains uneducated, the child remains uneducated, and the child's holistic development gets hampered. So, the mother is responsible for the well-being of the entire family for which she herself must be

educated.” (Gargi memorial lecture by Prof. Manali Londhe). In her views, education was important not only for women as individuals, but for their families as well.

³ In Ramabai's life there were instances when she disagreed with Ranade but chose not to speak out. She desisted from expressing her inner emotions during certain incidents and chose to remain silent and act according to Ranade's wishes (For instance, when once Ramabai left a meeting mid-way because the wives of reformers were made to sit with men, she thought she had done the right thing. Ranade however was very upset with her action and chose not to speak to her. Only after she asked for forgiveness that Ranade made her understand that she was wrong in leaving the meeting mid-way. At this point, Ramabai decided to never act against Ranade's wishes, pg. 106-110). Ranade also held very clear expectations of Ramabai and advised her to silently accept tantrums that elderly women members of the family threw at her. He did not want her to answer back, something very similar to what Ramabai's father had taught her. (कोणी काही बोलले तरी मी कोणाला उत्तर देत नसे. काय कोण बोलले ते खरे असो अथवा खोटे असो, ते फक्त ऐकून घ्यावयाचे व निमूटपणे सहन करावयाचे. – pg. 41)

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संघर्षाचे तात्पर्य

लहानपणी सांगितले मुलींसारखी वाग,
मोठी झाल्यावर सांगितले बायकांसारखी
वाग,
फार महत्वाकांक्षी बनू नकोस तु,
आपल्या संसारात सहनशीलतेने वाग.

वाद मी ही घालत गेले,
न आवडणारे प्रश्न विचारले,
ही वागणुक की शिक्षा आहे,
स्त्री म्हणुन जगण्याची?
की मग जगाला आवडेल तेच
बरोबर, हे मुकाट्याने मानण्याची?

कोणी म्हणाले खंबीर आहेस,
तर कोणी म्हणाले फारच हट्टी!
कोणी म्हणाले तडफदार आहेस,
तर कोणी म्हणाले उद्धट कुठली!

स्वतःला मी एकटीच मग घडवत गेले,
अवघड होतेच पण पर्यायही नव्हते,
रखरखाट त्या वाटेवरती,
पायांनाही चटके बसले,
भरभर चालणे त्यामुळेच मी बहुतेक
शिकले.

आता काहीसी शिखरे गाठली
कर्तृत्ववान आहेस बाई तु,
हे ऐकुनी गंमत वाटली...
मी तीच आहे का, अशी
मलाच माझी शंका आली!

तुच तुझं काय ते बघ असे सांगणारी,
परकी झालेली हक्काची माणसे माझी,
आज आपुलकीने मला बघायला आली,
फारच खंबीर आहेस तु,
फारच तडफदार आहेस तु,

असे ती आज ही मला परत म्हणाली...

- डॉ. रोशन डिसुझा,
प्राणीशास्त्र विभाग, सोफिया महाविद्यालय

Rape, Women's Movement and Women's Studies

- Dr. Chanda Asani

It is more than two decades since I have been trying to reduce the use of plastic. The simple act of segregating the trash in biodegradable and otherwise has become more and more complex since then. Thinking of the waste being created by mobiles makes me ancient.

Oh but when I think of rape I am young again!

I have no option but to remain that way as there is always scope for change – thanks to the tentacles of patriarchy. Women's movements in India started in the late 70s. Not that there was no movement earlier by women and/or about women's issues, but it was in 70s that women from all over India came together on the issue of rape - reopened Mathura's rape case in the North and Rameeza Bee's rape (Kumar 2018, p.128-9) in the South. There were other rapes in between that period also all-around India since and during that time. But it was in 2012 December the rape of a woman student in Delhi brought back the national fervor to address the issue again. The issue thus tiptoed its way in the Foundation Women's Studies class in the beginning of the session. Women's issues are part of the syllabus but since the scope of Women's Studies is inclusive and flexible the present and past overlap to bring in clarity.

Foundation Women's Studies was started at IIS (deemed to be) University, Jaipur for BA/BA(H) as a compulsory paper for Semester VI students in 2010. At that time few students were aware of Women's Studies. Even now outside of the perimeter of students of Women's Studies few know of the women's movement. In Delhi Saheli, an autonomous women's group, emerged in 1981 with the understanding that although women are a heterogeneous group, still there is some commonality in the lived experiences of women which are related to their being women (Saheli 1999). Appearing simultaneously Forum Against Rape (FAR) which later became Forum Against Oppression of Women (FAOW) (Kumar 2018 p.129) is till date active in Mumbai. Progressive Organisation of Women and Stri Shakti Sanghathan in Hyderabad, Vimochana

and Women's Lawyers Association in Bangalore continued to take up the issue of rape when others backed out. All these autonomous women's groups advocated against rape in the late 1970s as a result of women coming together to collectively raise the issue.

As a result of the Committee on Status of Women in India (CSWI) bringing out Towards Equality Report (1974) women campaigned to start Women's Studies. The report was sent to the United Nations meeting in Mexico with all its negative findings by one part of the same government which had declared the Emergency (ed. Mary John, 2008). Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) Secretary Prof J P Naik asked Dr. Vina Mazumdar to do women's research as that would not be considered important enough to be stopped during emergency (ed. Mary John, 2008). Dr. Neera Desai, one of the foremothers of Women's Studies in India sadly noted that Universities, the sanctuaries of higher education fostered 'a conservative upper caste vision women's domestic role' (ed. Mary John, 2008), a concept view that may have contributed to glass ceilings experienced by women in the formal labour market. Dr. A Mitra, a male social scientist introduced Sex ratio and its repercussions to Social Scientists (ed. Mary John, 2008) but a lesser known factor to students is that this is an indicator of overall discrimination including rape, faced by women. Women's Studies, perspective of the underprivileged, politically named by feminist activists, had come to roost. Foundation Women's Studies as a compulsory paper is exhilarating teaching to students of all Social Sciences and Arts disciplines.

Students of MA previous English Literature, most of them had done Foundation Women's Studies the previous year came to Women's Studies Lecturer and other faculty members for suggestions as to what they should do to protest about the rapes (the recent one including) and also sexual harassment that women face in their day to day lives. The students decided to have an open discussion about what they could do on the back lawns of the University campus so that all students who wanted to could become part of the discussion. In these informal sessions they revived the coming together of women's groups after the Mathura Rape case, the support of students all over India after the recent Delhi case, the lack of media coverage of other rape cases and the need to form a students' group that would make space for young girls to come and share openly their issues without peer pressure. One of the girls shared online about the experience

of making a women's group in the campus. The students initiated it as a need of the hour with a promise to keep it alive so others can continue it.

Interaction with students of Foundation Women's Studies in January 2013 was of a different level. They were stunned with the 2012 Delhi Rape. Media was all agog. Flavia et al (2014) have recently written how media makes a high-profile rape trial and how another is negated about two gang rapes in Shakti Mills, Mumbai, safest of metros as far as women are concerned. The authors have made quite clear how media's inclusions and exclusions made media a major player in the patriarchal system. The students were unaware of the women's movement at the time and had to come out of the stupor. There was complete silence in the class when students were asked about types of rapes. We discussed the different types of rapes and those addressed by the women's movement.

Rapes by those in authority –

Landlord rapes of women wage slaves and wives of male wage slaves

Police rapes (including the armed and security forces)

Excesses committed by ruling class

Government servants (mostly of tribal and Adivasi women)

Mass rapes - Individual/gang rapes

Women's movement in late 1970s addressed 'police rapes' as they considered them 'safe' but they found this to be limiting in the long run.

Did the students think of Draupadi as raped – legally no, so there is a legal aspect to rape. Women's movement (Feminists in India) since early twentieth century have been demanding that legal definition of crimes relating to sexual invasion of women's bodies be widened including family and rape and rape of prostitutes (Kumar 2018). I thought Draupadi as raped when she was got to the court but not Nirbhaya even though she was legally raped. In Draupadi's time someone even touching a woman's clothes would be sacrilege and equivalent to rape. The question of Draupadi being put at stake by one of her husbands and she continuing to live with him (them) due to stri-dharma taught to her by Kunti, her mother-in-law, was left unsaid. Kunti disposed of her first born unceremoniously being born before her marriage, a major sphere of patriarchy, to make illegitimacy inclusive in Indian social psyche! Coming back to discussion on rape with students – I did not consider Nirbhaya raped as she

fought till her last breath and she wanted to live. Can we think of compensation for such a horrific rape more so as she succumbed to her injuries? Flavia et al (2014) have written well that wanting to live is a clear defiance of the patriarchal notion that “rape is worse than death” and that women prefer to die rather than get raped.

Feminist movement internationally focused on rape for the following reasons –

Firstly, sexual assault is the ugliest and the most brutal expression of masculine violence.

Secondly, rape reveals a great deal about social relations of reproduction – reproduction is of a child but making a child get his/her cultural social identities is social reproduction.

Thirdly, a woman’s body represents the community. (Kumar 2018 p.128)

Clothes are not responsible for rapes but ‘other-ing’ is. In Manipur in 2003, women walked naked in front of Assam Rifles with a banner which said ‘come rape us’. It got the world to take notice of rapes happening in that space since Independence (Kannabiran & Menon 2007). Men in the Assam Rifles are mostly from Rajasthan and South India and do not think of women in North East as their own thus easy to rape. Army in West Pakistan was taught to rape women in East Pakistan when people of East Pakistan revolted in 1971 (<https://www.thedailystar.net/freedom-in-the-air/stories/57714>). Same religion same country! Identity making is relevant to rape. Women in Pakistan gave a public apology in 2001. (https://books.google.co.in/books?id=uepcBgAAQBAJ&pg=PA559&lpg=PA559&dq=Pakistan+Women+apologised+to+Bangladesh+women+publicly&source=bl&ots=-9vH7lzI5O&sig=ACfU3U3DALFscheJIfcphVGjE_2bWNDKqA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiQqJ6X_eToAhVjxIsBHdCxBegQ6AEwBXoECAwQKw#v=onepage&q=Pakistan%20Women%20apologised%20to%20Bangladesh%20women%20publicly&f=false) A public apology makes social change possible.

Policemen who raped were caught but acquitted in both cases – Rameeza Bee’s and Mathura’s. In Mathura’s case Supreme Court accepted the defence argument that Mathura had a boyfriend so was of a ‘loose’ (questionable) character so could not be raped (pp.267-272, Upendra Baxi et al, in Ed. Mary John, 2008). Women’s groups mainly students in seven cities Bombay, Delhi, Nagpur, Ahmedabad, Bangalore and Hyderabad demonstrated demanding a

retrial of Mathura case (Kumar 2018). 1980 saw protest against police rape all over the country.

Why is it that even 25 years later we are in the same state?

People in police and judiciary are also part of the same cultural background - not just male dominance but also of patriarchal structure. It is easier/safer for women's organization to campaign against police – much more difficult to take up anything against individual existence – Dowry Act was made in 1961 but Act Against Domestic Violence in 2005!

Reported rape cases in 1972 – 2562, in 1986 – 7317.

Feminist groups thought that the increase could be because the society was conducive to women getting courage to report (Kumar 2018).

Two classes of an hour each, to share an issue as complex as rape, for even, Semester VI students about to complete their graduation, is not enough! Even in high profile cases we hardly get to know certain facts unless groups like Majlis Legal Centre (majlislaw@gmail.com) are intervening. This is what Majlis authors have to say -

In the Shakti Mills Trail of August 2013 support to the survivor was conspicuously absent even where the medical expenses are taken care of by the State.

The survivor was keen to complete her case and move on and not wallow in guilt or shame but the three things that disturbed her most were:

- (1) The threat to her privacy. She was perturbed that her name, address, phone number and personal details were in the charge sheet. She was also disturbed at the way some reporters and state officials had projected her character.
- (2) Test identification parade. She had to give a graphic account of the sexual act of each accused in the presence of seven other dummies. She had to do this five times over. At the end of it, she felt sick.
- (3) She wanted her new phone instrument which was a gift from her mother and which was in police custody, returned. It had some valuable photographs. She was perturbed that these would be damaged while in police custody.

Another aspect of rape is how it affects those known to the survivor. Shakti Mill Rape survivor was a journalist. Her fellow colleague writes (<https://in.news.yahoo.com/that-hashtag-was-my-colleague-060844991.html>),

‘In print and television newsrooms, journalists are required not just to report personal tragedies, but to hunt for exclusives, and look for "human angles" by hounding relatives and friends of those affected. Crossing the line is not only encouraged, it is mandatory’. The article is a statement of the many faceted pain at a personal and professional level, she is living with, since the time she got to know about her colleague’s rape.

Kalpna Sharma in her regular column, ‘The Other Half’ in The Hindu writes, ‘Crimes against women have become a popular talking point in India. They figure in the Prime Minister’s Independence Day speech. They find a mention in a statement by the Finance Minister about how the growing incidence of crimes against women is affecting tourism in India. Should Indian women be afraid that this concern is ultimately only instrumental, to push a political agenda, or an economic one — such as making India a more attractive tourist destination?’ (http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/columns/Kalpna_Sharma/devil-in-the-detail/article6364830.ece)

After that I should not have anything to say! Oh but what if women do not feel raped how can they be raped? Would it be pathetic if women start to stop associating their character or the honour of the structure they live in with their sexual identities? Matters cannot become worse than what is happening now. We can only get better from now. If there is political will like in West Bengal all rapes getting reported and the police taking immediate action. Not just in the capital but each corner of the state women have started feeling that they can report a rape as they would get justice.

This is a brief treatise on rape barely scratching the iceberg in this diverse expanse we call India and for me this includes South Asia as cultures are similar, in the background of Foundation classes of Women’s Studies.

I cannot but mention what I received from women of Kashipur (Orissa) adivasi struggle against bauxite mining. Older women would send younger ones behind but all of them would say they are not scared of rape. Rape is not in their culture. They got to know about the concept from outsiders. They are not looked at as sex objects by the men in their society. I wanted to close on this optimistic note of having a society possible where there is no concept of rape.

This paper would be incomplete without including what was issued on 23.12.2012 immediately after the 2012 December Delhi Rape signed by concerned citizens and women's groups from all over India.

STATEMENT BY WOMEN'S AND PROGRESSIVE GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS CONDEMNING SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND OPPOSING DEATH PENALTY

Even though different groups all over the country were against death penalty the rapist of Nirbhaya were hanged (<https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/nirbhaya-gang-rape-murder-convicts-executed-hanged-delhi-tihar-jail-1657649-2020-03-20>) and another set of rapist of a Hyderabad girl were encountered (<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/all-4-accused-in-hyderabad-gang-rape-murder-shot-dead/articleshow/72393178.cms?from=mdr> and <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-50682262>). The two reportings of encounter are representative of two kinds of reporting. Recently in April 2020, I saw a Hindi film 'Kanoon', released way back in 1960 is an appeal against death penalty. One step forward and two steps backwards.

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Dalit Women Waste Pickers in Urban India: Gendering Caste, Labour and Exploitation

- Surachita Lal

Introduction:

Dalit women face more exploitation than upper caste and middle-class women. Even within the Dalit community there are hierarchies across class and caste. Dalit women also face patriarchy though it is different than upper caste women (Paik, 2009:40). This shows that we can't universalize the oppression or subordination of women. Dalit women in the Indian society are treated as a distinct social group and are hence subjected to more discrimination on account of being a Dalit as well as a woman. The study tries to locate the different position of Dalit women, who are involved in waste picking work with the use of feminist stand-point theory. To show this, the study tries to analyze the different perspectives of marginalised women. Universalisation tends to deny the different spaces from where these Dalit women are located.

The term "waste picker" was adopted at the First Word Conference of Waste Pickers in Bogota, Colombia in 2008 to facilitate global networking (Samson, 2008). Generally, the term "waste picker" is used for those who are involved in picking and collecting waste which can be recycled like plastic, paper and cloth, metal etc. Waste pickers generate their livelihoods and sustain themselves, their families by retrieving re-usable and recyclable materials from the waste-stream – typically from streets, open spaces, garbage bins and garbage dumps. It is one of the most obtainable, means of livelihood for the indigent people, as it requires minimal skills, perception or capital investment. According to *Solid Waste Management Rules*, 2016, the term "waste picker" has been defined as: "A person or groups of persons informally engaged in collection and recovery of reusable and recyclable solid waste from the source of waste generation for sale to recyclers directly or through intermediaries to earn their livelihood"³. Even ILO in their concept of decent work defines its strategies which is based on four objectives i.e. creating job, guaranteeing rights at work, extending social protection, promoting social dialogues. It conceptualises in understanding of work which give personal dignity, family stability, peace in the community,

³ <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/waste/a-law-for-waste-pickers-60103>

democratic rights, economic growth which can give an opportunity for productive jobs and equal treatment for all men and women.

Caste System and Waste Picker:

In India waste picking is not just associated with one's economic condition but largely due to a traditional caste system. Caste system is the system of social stratification. Waste-pickers are not merely occupational (as characteristics) matter but are also deeply rooted in the Varna-system and Hindu religious practices. The concept of purity and pollution is associated to the relegation of this occupation to Dalit women. Caste is the root cause of this kind of informal sector.

Caste is the rigid form of social status in which individuals can't change their social status and individual mobility is restricted. Caste system denies equal rights to an individual which leads to several kinds of discrimination and inhuman behaviour. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar played major role in abolishing the caste system (Ambedkar, 1917). According to him, to abolish the caste system first we must abolish the religious notions on which this caste system is laid down. Ambedkar says caste system is not merely a division of labour, but it is also a division of labourers (ibid). He believed that instead of a single community there should be cultural unity amongst all communities.

Similarly, Dalit feminist theorists and activists also say instead of global sisterhood we should come together with solidarity on the bases of our differences and issues (different positions). In a word of Tharu and Niranjana, 'such upper caste feminism has been unable to critically engage and confront inequalities of caste of community implicit in that subject or its worlds' (1994).

In this study, I try to focus on waste pickers particularly women, because a major portion of waste picking work is carried out by Dalit women and their girl children. As, this kind of work has no fixed timing and schedule. Therefore, children and women manage to work along with their household work or studies. Hence women waste pickers face triple discrimination on the bases of their caste, class, and gender. Hierarchy as characteristics of caste is deeply entrenched in this occupation, the lower the caste, the dirtier the work.

The condition of these women's challenges the notion of mainstream feminism and Dalit patriarchy which says, "Dalit women are somehow more liberated than upper caste women". (Paik, 2009) Although these women are not confined

to their home as upper caste women because survival of their family depends on them also. But it does not mean that they are more liberated than upper caste women. As Urmila Pawar also says “Dalit women in contrast to upper caste women were not bound by customs such as sati, child marriage. But still there was wide gap between Dalit and Brahmin women on economic, social and educational level. Along with caste-based atrocities where she was constantly under the threat of rape, in the family she also had to tolerate the physical violence and other atrocities of men” (Pawar, 1994).

Therefore, to study this picture I found that Sandra Harding’s standpoint theory has better understood the voice of these marginalised women. It shows the different positions and different voices of women, which eliminate the universalisation of women’s oppression. But the articulation of the standpoint theory is based on western women (black African or black American women and other marginalised sections), postulate by rich tradition such as Dorothy Smith, Patriarcha Collins, Kimberle Crenshaw, and so on. Their framework is based on class and race-based struggle which is not enough for our Indian society. In context of India Sharmila Rege in her article “Dalit women talk differently: A Critique of ‘Difference’ and Towards a Dalit feminist” argues that the assertion of Dalit women’s voices is not just an issue of naming their ‘difference’. ‘Naming of difference’ leads to narrow identarian politics- rather this assertion is read as centering of the discourse caste and gender and is viewed as suggesting a Dalit feminist standpoint. (Rege, 1998)

Homogenization of gender identity makes them worse. These women face manifold discriminations on the bases of caste, class and gender. Most Dalits still belong to the lower class also, they neither have a decent job nor a place to live. Indeed, they have nothing, apart from the right to vote, which is one vote per person. Their day starts early in the morning, around 5 AM and they collect garbage till evening. When they return home, they do not have enough water to bathe and clean themselves. All these together cause a lot of serious health problems among them. The environment of their occupational space is both unhygienic and has a risk of accident. They suffer from both physical and mental stress because they walk long distances with a heavy sack of waste and due to deprivation of sleep and proper food. Their problem is far more different than the middle class and upper caste problems. As we seen in Shailja Paik’s work, she refutes the claim that Dalit women are sexually liberated, instead she points out they face a different kind of patriarchy by mainstream society or by

men within their community. They are under a constant threat of sexual violence in many spheres of their life.

Dalit women not only face discrimination on the bases of their caste and gender from upper caste, but they also face various other discrimination within their own caste hierarchy. For an instance within the Dalit community there are several castes. Even the Dalit those who are now in middle or upper class, look at them and think they are better than them. The Dalit who are not involved in that work always see themselves upper than that caste and even they also some time use their caste name as a slur. Unlike upper castes they keep them for their household work, but they also treat them as inferior to their own self and as untouchables for example, they give them tea, and food in different utensils which they do not use for themselves. As Shailaja Paik in her essay show how Dalit middle class women condemn the lowly uneducated Dalit women from the slums. Further she also shows, once a famous Dalit woman writer left the stage when a less educated women activist ascended the podium (Paik, 2009). It shows that even Dalit can't be considered as a homogeneous category it also has caste and class difference.

Urmila Pawar in her work also shows how Dalit women face worse conditions than upper caste women. She talks about how as Dalit women don't have many rights in comparison to upper caste women, they are dominated in both public (i.e. domination by upper caste) and in private by Dalit patriarchy. (Pawar, 1994)

In context to the above statements, narrative of violence within the household of the women waste picker gives a clearer picture to understand the discrimination they face in their everyday life.

Interview

A woman who is a 40-year-old rag picker tell her story about her husband

“Whenever I go to my mother or brother’s house, I leave my child with my husband. He drinks throughout the day and roams around. My girl is grown enough but follows him wherever he goes. She asks him to come back home. She asks him why he is doing all this. Then he pushes her and asks her to go back and leave him alone. This is the reason for all the fights. I haven’t had anything since yesterday, it’s a lot of tension. He does nothing. The house is running on the

money I earn through a lot of hard work and struggle. He demands money from me. He will hit me if I don't give it to him. He enjoys himself every day and does nothing. Often, I feel it strongly inside me to leave this house. I don't do it for the sake of this girl. If she wasn't there, I would have gone by now. He even hits the girl. She is grown enough to get married. He comes drinking and hits her. He doesn't go for any work. It's me and my daughter who collects plastic/metal recyclables and earns through selling it. This is the story of almost all the houses here. Almost all the women and their daughters are engaged in waste collection. Men are almost unemployed. They drink liquor and play cards."

Violence Among waste picker:

They face violence in every space of their life, for instance violence at school, violence at home (domestic violence), violence at the workplace, and violence from middle class neighbourhood. But it does not end here, the most vulnerable violence is faced by them is infrastructural violence, which is divided in two types active and passive. Active infrastructural violence is those which are framed as violent, whether in their application or in their functioning, its focus is on development of infrastructure to manage normative social and territorial relations (Susan and Kalitika, pp.9). It can be easily seen in India when government agencies bulldoze slums or illegal settlements to develop other infrastructure such as road, rail, housing etc. (Susan and Kalitika, pp.9). Like a recent example of "Khatputli colony" (Delhi) are demolished by the government, without giving them another infrastructure for living. And second is 'passive' infrastructural violence which has socially harmful effects and derive from urban infrastructure's limitations and omissions. For instance, these waste pickers enter dangerous places in order to satisfy their biological needs, because of their physical exclusion from sanitation infrastructure(ibid).

It can be better understood by Aarti's narration who is a 14-year-old rag picker tell her incident while she was picking waste in front of a factory.

"Once I was picking some rejected things in front of a factory with the permission of the factory owner. but after some time when I was about to leave someone else came and started to hit me. They attacked me calling me a thief. I was repeatedly explaining to them, that I was collecting this by the permission of the owner, but they called the police. And the police were asking me to which group I belong. They were

doubting me as a thief who steals from houses. I told the police that I was not a thief. I work only at Shastri Nagar and Punjabi Bagh area as a waste picker. I told them to ask the owner of the factory who had asked me to take the waste. Then they called owner he confirmed that he had asked us to clear the waste. Then they released me but before that they had beaten me with their bare hands and one guy beat me with his belt. Police took no action against them. They left the culprits scot-free and asked us to go home. They also asked the crowd to catch if they see anyone like us. Police didn't question them for attacking us. Similar things have happened to a lot of women from our society."

Division of work and Privatization:

Division of work shows these women's work limit them only to pick rag from the roadside and segregate recyclable waste with children. After that, the interaction with the dealer is most of the time done by the husband or other male members of the family. Very few women are involved in dealing with the contractor. In this context Bikramaditya Kumar Choudhary in his work "Waste and Waste picker" says the interest of waste pickers is not decided locally but gets conditioned on a larger scale. For instance, export and import of goods as well as duties and subsidies on these items are decided by the political structure of the country but its repercussions are felt by those at the lowest levels of the work strata like waste- pickers. Their work chain is larger and not commonly seen. The work cycle of waste management is not limited to 'thekedar' only. The importance of waste has over time been gradually realized by entrepreneurs. It has been developed in the form of waste processing industry on a large scale.

Informal sector constitutes traditional waste picker and rag picker. It is in place to mention that the informal waste pickers and traders involved in the process of collection and disposal of waste have very complicated relationships and chain of exchange. The process started from waste picker to *kabaadiwaalas* (waste picker collected material and sell it to *kabaadiwalas*), then pass that material to retail traders, who further pass it to wholesale traders and then finally it will reach the recycling industries. At each stage of transaction some profit is made in which no government actor is involved. But the rate of profit is different in every stage. The waste picker who is at the bottom of this chain gets the least profit. However, many big businesses depend on this regular supply of waste materials from them.

The whole involvement of private sector excludes informal waste picker or rag picker. All private contractors are responsible for ensuring the separation of waste in the waste containers in its area. They further recruit workers to act as bin guides who would clean the bins, separate the waste and help them to load the compactors. But the worker who they recruit for segregation of waste, are usually paid one- third of the legal daily minimum wage and do not receive any benefits. It not only reduces the role of waste pickers but also decreases overall levels of recycling.

In this debate it shows that on the one hand garbage is a sign of disgust or a menial thing in India, but in contrast to it, Sarah Hodge's work shows how medical garbage in Chennai as the starting point in a cycle of production, circulation and revaluation. She shows how medical garbage is grasped not as discarded waste. The emergence and uptake of disposable medical goods from the middle of the 20th century – surgical gloves, plastic syringes, plastic blood and urine bags, plastic tubing – render earlier regimes of sterility more exact, but created massive detritus in its wake (Hodges, 2013). Through this analysis both medical waste regulation and its commodification comes into view. It shows how the private companies make profit through recycling these wastes on a global level. But it excludes the waste pickers from profit, who segregate and process it.

To understand the poverty or social backwardness of waste picker, it is important to understand the Indian caste system. Even within the caste, gender dynamics are more important to look at, which has been still ignorant in this sector. Hence the term intersectionality as a critique of homogeneous oppression is brought by black feminist in 1980 (Hooks, Crenshaw, Collins) and it further become a crucial analytical category to understand the varying dimensions of power relations and how they are intertwined. Like all these feminist perspectives, many other writers such as Aparna Eswaran, Hameeda C.K, Sonia Maria Dias and Ana Carolina Orgando, consider that gender inequalities in the waste sector also cut across race, caste and class.

Conclusion:

In contrast to the above, present day media and state both glorify this work. We can see it in the recent case where P.M Modi is seen with rag pickers, recycling the plastic. Even he tweets “As we begin ‘swachhata hi seva’ and pledge to

reduce single use plastic, I sat down with those who segregate plastic waste. I salute them for their hard work and contribution towards fulfilling Bapu's dream." Through this he is trying to portray cleanliness is something which is important for our environment and can be done by anyone. But in reality, the work of waste picking is done by lower castes, no upper caste men and women are involved in it. Even the picture clearly shows Modi seated on a red carpet, garbage already looking clean, and the rag pickers who are sitting with PM Modi, wearing hand gloves and mask but, they never get these safety gears. And conditions of the place where they work are full of dirt. Basically, the state is trying to glorify the image of the work of waste picking. But by seeing the above facts and debate one can say that, it should not be glorified instead it should replace by technology or safety equipment

Hence in conclusion I would like to say difficult circumstances of waste work are often caused by a multitude of factors and actors on different levels. In this context Marxists and social feminists are not capable to look at the major problem of waste pickers, because they only involve the matter of class and social allocation. Therefore, starting our research from these women's activities and their gender division of labour enables us to understand how and why social and cultural phenomena have taken these forms. As Sandra Harding also says that the distinct feature of women's situation, used as resources, gives us only partial knowledge.

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WOMAN

“People judge a woman merely to be a body!
 That she does possess a spirit too is lost on everybody.
 What the spirit is, they plainly fail to understand
 For them the body’s demand is their every command
 The spirit dies leaving the body to be a walking corpse
 That they neither understand nor recognise this reality is beyond remorse.
 For how many centuries this habit of fear has continued
 For how many centuries this custom of sins has endured
 People judged every scream of the woman as a song
 Whether it be the time of tribes or the practice of the city throng.
 The generations continue by force, bodies meet at the point of the sword
 This happens among us, but not among the un-knowing birds
 We the carriers of civilisation among the human brood
 Would that there be anyone more barbaric in this neck of the wood?
 An extinguished spirit lying within a body’s structure
 I think at which place should I let my fate rupture
 I am not alive in that I seek death to support my plight
 Neither am I dead in that the sorrows of life take flight.
 Who will tell me, who should I ask
 Till when life be set in the groove of wrath, it’s quite a task
 Till when the conscience of time not open its eye
 That an end to this rule of cruelty and tyranny be well-nigh?”

- Sahir Ludhianvi

Empowerment of Women Through SHGs in Andaman and Nicobar Islands

- Dr. Anita Banerjee

- Mr. Kripa Mondal

Introduction

Women in India perform different roles according to their social and economic hierarchies in the society to which they belong. There have been various studies undertaken to highlight as well as to improve the socio- economic standing of women (United Nations, 1999), besides studies by Amartya Sen have also pointed out that women do not only suffer because of inequality in income but several other factors such as cultural and social factors have a bearing on their income generating activities and discrimination (Sen, 2000). On the one hand, the status of women who hail from socio-economically better off households stands enhanced; they are engaged in decision making and are treated at par with the men to a certain extent. On the other hand of the societal spectrum are women belonging to economically weaker sections that are invariably deprived of their various rights, being forced to live under miserable condition. This economically weaker section constitutes the majority of the total population of India, living both in rural and urban areas. Now, it has become essential to take steps towards improvement of their overall status. Various interventions have been undertaken by the government to improve the status of women, towards empowering them.

Women Empowerment

Women's participation is a sine qua non in the nation's socio-economic and cultural growth; therefore, empowerment of women, who are weak and most neglected, constituting around 50% of the total population, is very significant. Empowerment as a concept was introduced at the International Women's Conference at Nairobi in 1985⁴. The conference defined empowerment as "*A redistribution of social power and control of resources in favor of women*". It is "the process of challenging existing power relations and of gaining greater control over the sources of power". Empowerment is a multi-faced procedure which embraces many features i.e. develop cognizance, developing their socio-economic, spiritual and political desires to place them at equivalent to their

⁴ http://www.5wwc.org/conference_background/1985_WCW.html

better halves. Women empowerment is found to be a significant concern among all the nations in the world.

Women Empowerment has been a central issue in the recent years because of which, the “National Commission for Women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990⁵” to protect the rights and legal privileges of women. In India, since independence, the gap between women and men has been severe as far as education level is concerned; as per the census 2011, 82.14% of adult men are educated whereas only 65.46% of adult women are known to be literate in India. The year 2001 had been declared as “Women’s Empowerment Year⁶” by the Government of India to focus on a vision where women are equal partners like men. The condition of women from the low-income group was glum in the society in the past; they were not able to take up jobs outside due to the fear, shyness and male dominating society but gradually, women both in rural and urban societies are coming forward from their homes to support their families. The men have also understood that their women folk are needed in the developing world to support the growing needs of the family.

The concept of Self-Help Groups for economic empowerment was initially tested by NABARD through an action research experiment in the late 1980s in collaboration with MYRADA in Karnataka. The two-year action research provided the basis and later the guidelines for the now popular SHG Bank Linkage Programme. The action research was followed up with a pilot project by NABARD with the banks to promote 500 SHGs across the country in the year 1992. The success of the pilot led NABARD and RBI to mainstream the SHG Bank Linkage Programme across the country as an initiative to reach out to those bypassed by the banking system which was essentially an effort to promote financial inclusion. Later the model of promoting SHGs for economic empowerment was adopted by the SGSY scheme of the Government of India and by many state governments. The concept of SHG is essentially mobilizing poor women into small groups and helping them save small amounts of money which is used for inter-lending between members and later with enough credit histories of members, the savings are leveraged to obtain collateral free loans from the banking system. The SHG members are trained in the art of credit

⁵ <https://www.gktoday.in/gk/national-commission-for-women/>

⁶ <https://wcd.nic.in/womendevelopment/national-policy-women-empowerment>

discipline, funds management and basic appraisal skills in the process of being a part of the SHGs. The SHGs in a way provides the members self-employment by improving their skills, entrepreneurial development and grouping them in a cluster, for their self-assistance. The Self-Help Group movement has triggered the rural and urban credit system, where credits are delivered without any collateral.

SHG Development

Women in the South-East Asian countries are poorer and weaker, when compared to their counterparts in the west. Muhammad Yunus of Bangladesh in the year 1975 developed the concept of SHG or Self-Help Group (both microcredit and microfinance). This was for the poorer of the poorest women folk who were ignored and shunned away by the banks for little credit needs. The concept soon spread to most of the South-East Asian countries and became a very popular approach for empowering women. In India, SHGs first emerged within the Mysore Resettlement and Development Agency (MYRADA) in 1985⁷. The inception of SHG in India is given below:

- **1987:** The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) provided MYRADA ₹1 million for the formation of Self-Help Groups and invest resources for an action research project.
- **1990:** The Action research project was evaluated for its learning and impacts.
- **1992:** NABARD launched a pilot project to link 500 SHGs with Banks.
- **NABARD** issued guidelines to provide the framework for a strategy that would allow banks to lend directly to SHGs.
- **1995:** RBI accepted the SHG strategy as an alternative credit model
- **1995:** The SHG Bank Linkage Programme was mainstreamed

SHG-Bank Linkage Programme was launched as a pilot project by NABARD in the year 1992 to link 500 SHG with the Banks. This has now transformed into a principal microfinance programme with over 10 million⁸ SHGs which approximately connects us to 100 million families. More than 29 lakh SHGs were credit-linked in the financial year 2018-19. At end of 31 March 2019,

⁷ NABARD, PLP, A&N Islands

⁸ NABARD, PLP, A&N Islands

about 50.77 SHGs were credit linked with the Banks, with an outstanding loan portfolio of INR 87,098.

Andaman and Nicobar Islands are well known for their scenic beauty and essentially a tourist destination. The population covers people who have migrated from different parts of India. These include people who were settled in these islands under various settlement schemes as well as people who ventured into these islands in search of livelihood, eventually made it their home. Those who could adapt well with the conditions prevalent in these islands are economically well placed but many among them could not realize their dreams. Such people who were unable to break the vicious circle of poverty are spread over the rural and urban areas. The women folk of such economically poor households used to depend on the income of the male members for their livelihood. The winds of change touched these islands quite late; it was post - Tsunami.

Due to the misconception of the masses (till a few years back, the islands were referred to as the *Kalapani*), including the media, these islands, hardly got noticed by the government as well as the people at large. The poor women with low levels of education were keenly participating in petty businesses, but the absence of liquid capital and the lack of availability of credit from banks were the main hindrances in their business endeavour. Though NABARD initiated SHGs formation from the early nineties in various states of India, the SHG programme picked up pace in the islands from 2005 onwards particularly after Tsunami. It is ironical that the islands of Andaman & Nicobar identified for its exotic beauty had to go through a natural disaster (Tsunami) in order to attract the attention of people worldwide. Post Tsunami a number of national and international NGO's descended on the soil of Andaman and Nicobar Islands under Tsunami restoration and rehabilitation programs. SHG's were formed in most of the Blocks of the Islands. These NGO's provided them training and supplied them several tools to earn their livelihood. As soon as the NGO's left these islands, the SHG's got fragmented due to the absence of monitoring agencies. Gradually, NABARD revived the SHG's through Andaman and Nicobar State Cooperative Banks along with other NGO's which had turned obsolete. Since the last two years, the Department of Rural Development through National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) has been taking initiatives and supported several SHG's for the empowerment of Women in these islands.

The need for SHGs in these Islands for Women empowerment

- The very concept of SHG is to make the weak and poor people of the islands self-reliant with hope for a better tomorrow.
- Poverty persists both in the rural and urban areas in the presence of unemployment and under-employment; therefore, even the meagre income earned by women folk has a direct impact on the family's economic status.
- A society irrespective of caste, creed and religion has always been unkind towards their women, mostly from the low-income group, but now women are asserting themselves through their limited resources by becoming members of SHG.

Objectives of the study

The broad objectives of the study is -

- 1) Understand the various organizations which are working for the formation of SHG's in these islands
- 2) Analyze the operating system of the SHGs through savings, disbursement of credits, repayment of loans
- 3) Analyze empowerment of women through SHG, in terms of their decision-making power
- 4) Find out the socio-economic gains and social capital formation by the members after joining the SHG
- 5) Find out the scope for further improvement in the functioning of the SHG

Methodology

For the present study, a mix of secondary and primary data was used. Secondary data was collected from the offices of NABARD (A & N islands Branch, Port Blair), Commercial Banks and the State Cooperative Bank as well as the Rural Development Department, Port Blair. A method of convenient sampling was adopted for collecting primary data to get utmost information from the SHG group members. The region falling under Port Blair Tehsil (South Andaman District) was purposively chosen as these localities had the maximum number of SHGs which were operational. Prior permission of Officials (both NABARD and Cooperative Bnaks) were sought before approaching the SHGs. Interviews with the stakeholders, mainly the SHG members, were recorded (with due permission) and then translated for authenticity.

However, due to time and monetary constraint the study is confined to Port Blair Tehsil and could not cover the North & Middle Andaman District.

Reasons of SHG formation in these islands

NABARD took the initiative in the formation of SHGs by collaborating with a local NGO, Yuva-Shakthi, in the year 1998. In the same year Andaman and Nicobar State Cooperative Bank, a pioneer bank, too evinced interest towards SHG formation, yet SHGs could not make much head way. SHGs in the islands got the real boost with focus on empowering women only post – tsunami. The advent of the National and International NGOs in these islands after Tsunami, popularized the SHGs. Under the supervision of the NGOs, the SHGs were learning to burgeon, though limited in numbers. Unfortunately, the departure of the NGOs, led to disintegration of these SHGs.

SHGs were rejuvenated by the efforts of NABARD. The total numbers of SHGs have risen from 2171 in 2009, to 5766⁹ as on 31st March 2019. SHG comprises of 10-15 members as such there are approximately 58 thousand families linked to the banks. This includes 797 SHGs formed by the NRLM and bank-linked to various Commercial and Cooperative Banks.

Table 1: Total Number of SHGs in different districts of A & N Islands

Sr. No	Name of the District	No. of SHGs (credit linked) as on 31.03.2019
1.	South Andaman	2841
2.	North and Middle Andaman	2325
3.	Nicobar	600
Total		5766

Source: NABARD, PLP, A&N Islands, 2019-2020

This SHG-Bank Linkage programme has financially empowered the poor and weak, who were otherwise some time back shunned away by the banks for the reason that small ticket size loans were perceived to be risky and involved huge transaction costs for the banks. Two government agencies involved in formation of SHG are:

⁹ NABARD, PLP, A&N Islands

- SHG's formed by commercial Banks and state cooperative banks under the guidance of NABARD.
- SHG's structured by NRLM programme under the Department of Rural Development

SHG's formed under the guidance of NABARD

From the total¹⁰ of the 22 Commercial Banks and 1 State Cooperative Bank operating in these islands, Andaman and Nicobar State Cooperative Bank (ANSCB) and only 7 Commercial Banks have actively participated in the SHG-Bank Linkage programme. SHGs are formed by different agencies including the Andaman and Nicobar State Cooperative Bank and NGOs such as Yuva Shakti, Surabi, NCUI, A&NSCU, ACANI, DSS etc. are linked to banks mainly through NABARD. The State Cooperative Bank of A & N Islands has a separate women cell to promote SHG formation in these islands. The cell is headed by a Women Development Officer and Managers representing different districts. Besides, they have women workers to work at different blocks for the SHG formation programme. NABARD supports the Women Development Cell of the ANSCB through grants, training and capacity building programs.

Savings by the Members of the SHGs, Bank-linked to State Cooperative Bank

Savings by the members is the key component to the SHG formation. Amount saved year-wise in A&N State cooperative bank is given below:

Table 2: Savings of the SHGs

Sr. No	Year	No. of SHG	Savings Amount in Crores
1.	2014-15	4703	1.517
2.	2015-16	4134	6.3473
3.	2016-17	4442	8.3854
4.	2017-18	4723	8.9796
5.	2018- 19	4836	9.1143
6.	Until Sept 2019	5092	9.9067

Source: A&N State Cooperative Bank (2019)

The SHG savings are paid 4 % interest. NABARD works in coordination with the ANSCB. Collection of savings is carried out once a month.

¹⁰ NABARD, PLP, A&N Islands-2019-2020

Credit disbursed by Andaman and Nicobar State Cooperative Bank

Credit disbursed to the SHGs during the last 6 years by ANSCB is given below:

Table 3: Credits disbursed to the SHGs

Sl. No.	Year	No. of SHG	Credit Amount in Crores
1.	2013-14	323	5.2840
2.	2014-15	244	3.4595
3.	2015-16	220	3.2837
4.	2016-17	305	6.1200
5.	2017-18	246	4.4095
6.	2018-19	286	5.9342

Source: A&N State Cooperative Bank (2019-2020)

Andaman and Nicobar State cooperative Bank had savings of 5092 SHGs, out of which credit was extended to 2414 SHGs to the extent of INR 4585.52 lakhs as on 31st March 2019 which includes repeat loans to them. Thus nearly 48% have availed credit

Terms of Credit:

Credit is advanced to the SHGs based on their performance during the first six months after their inception. Against an amount of Rs.6000 of minimum savings of the SHGs, they become eligible for an initial loan of Rs.50000. The SHGs are rated by the financing branch of the bank based on regular weekly/monthly meetings, regular weekly savings, internal lending, regular repayment and regular and up to date book-keeping.

Credit is disbursed in the following ratio

- a. 1:1 ratio: the SHG is eligible for INR 50,000 of credit.
- b. 1:2 ratio: the SHG is eligible for INR 1,00,000 of credit
- c. 1:3 ratio: the SHG is eligible for INR 1, 50,000 of credit.

The State Cooperative Bank is ready to provide up to 1:4 ratio as credit to the SHGs. Credit disbursements are based on social collateral. SHG members receive loan through social collateral, as a group, and it's the only mode through which loan can be availed from banks without a formal collateral. The state cooperative bank provides loan to the SHGs which in turn makes available the same to its members. The terms and conditions of the loan are given below:

- Credits are disbursed by the Cooperative Banks to the SHGs at the interest rate of 11.75%.
- The SHGs in turn disburses the same to their members at rates agreed upon by the members, which ranges from 12% to 36% per year.
- For credit of 3 lakhs, the repayment period is 3 years
- For loans amounting to more than Rs. 3 lakh, the repayment period may extend up to 5 years.
- It is also to be noted that the loan amount depends upon the savings and corpus fund mobilized by the SHG

SHG members repay loans on monthly basis. The study confirms that the recovery rate is more than 92%.

Self Help Group is the largest Community-Based Organization formed in the Union Territory.

SHGs Formed by NRLM

Block	SHG				Village Organization				CRP	Bank Loan
	17-18	18-19	19-20	Total	17-18	18-19	19-20	Total		
Port Blair	60	45	16	121	3	5	2	10	8	10
Ferrargunj	65	77	13	155	3	3	2	8	22	0
Lt. Andaman	23	46	15	84	0	5	0	5	8	0
Diglipur	55	93	40	188	4	9	1	14	26	4
Mayabunder	60	12	9	81	5	0	0	5	13	2
Rangat	48	44	9	101	5	0	0	5	24	0
Car Nicobar	8	5	3	16	0	0	0	0	2	0
Nancowrie	12	4	3	19	0	0	0	0	3	0
Campbell Bay	20	9	3	32	0	3	0	3	5	2
	351	335	111	797	20	25	5	50	111	18

National Rural Livelihood Mission under the Department of Rural Developments started forming Self Help Groups from the financial year 2017. The **Panchsutra** of NRLM which the SHGs have to comply with are regular

weekly meetings, regular weekly savings, regular internal lending, regular repayment and regular book-keeping. This is slightly different from the functioning of the SHGs formed under the guidance of NABARD. Details of the SHGs and other community institutions created are given below:

Table 5: SHG Report from NRLM

Source: NRLM, A&N Islands (2019-2020)

Self Help Groups are functional in all the 9 blocks of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. During 2017-18 and 2018-19 more than 300 SHGs were formed in the islands. Community Resource Persons¹¹ working in the villages help in forming the SHGs under the guidance of the block level officials. These Block level officials work under the directions of the National Rural Livelihood Mission program.

The NRLM assists in the formation of Village federations, better known as Village Organization¹². The main notion behind the formation of Village Organization is to provide the SHGs in the villages a larger platform where they can work together in a cohesive manner to earn their livelihood. Till now 50 VOs (village organizations) have been formed in the two districts of the Union Territory, leaving out the Nicobar district. The Nicobar district is mostly a tribal area, therefore SHGs formed are less and this is the reason why Village Organization has not yet been created there.

National Rural Livelihood Mission receives funds every year from the Ministry of Rural Development for the formation of Community-Level Organizations (SHG, VO, Block Organization, etc). Financial support is also provided to develop skills among the members of the Self-Help Groups.

SHGs under the NRLM are Bank-linked to various Commercial and State Cooperative Banks for depositing their savings and to avail credits. The credit demands of SHGs constituted under NRLM have been very less compared to the needs of those formed under the guidance of NABARD. The reason for demanding less credit from banks are that the SHG shaped by the NRLM

¹¹ **Community Resource Person:** These are village Level Workers working under the National Rural Livelihood Mission for the formation and functions of the community institutions like SHG, VO, etc.

¹² **Village Organization:** Village organization under the NRLM, A&N Islands is a village level organization formed with all the SHGs (Self Help Groups) in the village, they are also called as a village level SHG federation.

receives INR 15,000 as **Revolving Funds** and **Community Investment Funds** of INR 50,000 as a credit to be repaid to the Village Organization @ of 9 % interest rate. The hierarchical structure of SHG organization is such that it offers an opportunity to practice self-credit system.

Year-wise fund provided to NRLM for SHG formation is given below:

Table 6: Number of SHGs formed & Funds released

Financial Year	Target (No. of SHGs to be formed)	No. of SHGs formed	No. of SHGs provided Revolving Fund (RF)	No. of SHGs provided the Community Investment Fund (CIF)	Bank Loan to number of SHGs
2017-18	200	351	230	53	-
2018-19	500	335	244	108	18
2019-20	250	111	45	10	0
TOTAL	950	797	519	171	18

Source: NRLM, A&N Islands (2019-2020)

NRLM working under the Department of Rural Development in Andaman and Nicobar Islands were able to form 797 SHGs against the target of 950 till 2019-20. Out of the 797 SHG formed, 519 have been paid revolving fund of INR 15000 and 171 SHGs received INR 50000 as Community Investment Fund (CIF) for credit disbursement to its SHG members.

Following is the amount of Fund provided by the Ministry of Rural Development to the NRLM of Andaman and Nicobar Islands for the development of SHGs and its members.

Table 7: Fund Status under NRLM (in Lakhs)

Financial Year	Fund Received from MoRD	Unspent Balance of SGSY scheme transferred to NRLM	Total Available Fund (Including Bank Interest)	Expenditure	Balance
2016-17	12.50	-	15.58	9.88	2.80
2017-18	112.20	6.42	123.27	113.47	9.82
2018-19	150.00	-	160.80	153.85	6.95
2019-20	100.00	-	107.18	60.22	46.75

Source: NRLM, A&N Islands (2019-2020)

As can be seen from the table, Ministry of Rural Development has been increasing the fund disbursement to NRLM for promoting the SHGs in the Islands.

Information from the Primary sources

Meetings were organised with the officials of NABARD, State Cooperative Bank and NRLM (National Rural Livelihood Mission) as also with their respective SHGs.

Table 8: Data collected from the primary sources

Activities	State Cooperative Bank, S/B Ac (Supported by NABARD)	NRLM (supported by Department of Rural Development)
SHGs till Oct. 2019	5092	797
Profile of the SHG		
• Formation of SHG started	Since 1998	Since 2017
• The average size of the SHG	10-15	10-12
• Multi-lingual groups (%)	70	80
• Members having at least Secondary Education	65	50
• Below Poverty Line members (%)	05	10
• Primary Occupation (Petty Business & Labour) (%)	40	70
Savings		
• Savings per member per month (in Rs.)	100-500	100-250 i.e. 25-50 per week
• Average cumulative savings amount per SHG	94000	55000
• Average Savings per member	9000	5200
Functioning		
• SHG Meetings	Monthly once	Weekly once
• SHGs at least changed its leadership once (%)	20	00
• Average repayment rate (%)	More than 92%	More than 92%

Credit		
• SHG members who have taken credit from SHG's own savings (%)	70	80
• SHG members taken a loan from the Bank (%)	55	2.2
• Use of credits for business purposes (%)	40	80
• Expenditure of income on family use (%)	60	10
Impact- an opinion of Sample SHG members		
• Percentage of SHG formed from previous defunct groups	30	45
• Work burden of Women increased (%)	25	30
• Avg. Children per members of the SHG	2	2
• Husband share in Household work (%)	75	75
• Social Status increased (%)	100	100
• Women participating in community Activities (%)	100	100
• Women participated in local election (%)	05	05
• Percentage of women became literate	100	100
• Income contributed to the daily family expenditure (%)	20	30

Source: Sample Survey of SHG members

As is evident from the table, SHGs formed under the umbrella of NABARD are more in numbers when compared to those promoted by Rural Development Department, by virtue of having started earlier. NRLM is a new entrant which is gradually trying to lay its footprints in terms of creating additional numbers

of SHGs. NRLM is financed by Ministry of Rural Development (Mo RD)¹³ for providing revolving as well as Community Investment Funds to the SHGs to promote the self-credit system.

Organizations engaged in monitoring the SHGs do not change the office bearers. The Bank officials discourage the change of office bearers monitoring the SHGs in order to avoid the burden of official work. Therefore, most of the SHGs functions with the same bearers for long period of time, which is certainly not a healthy practice. The recovery rate, however is quite high for both the SHGs (92%)

Credit is a significant component in the SHG formations. SHGs are bank – linked and they are encouraged to create micro savings, thus inculcating the habit of thrift amongst them.

Socio-Economic Empowerment of Women through SHG in the Andaman Islands

Though some dissimilarity exists between the SHGs built by the two agencies (NABARD & NRLM) in terms of savings, credit and year of their inception, yet one similarity that is observed among the SHGs is that, their status in the society has enhanced. They are now recognised as the leaders in their community. The SHG members have been at the forefront in bringing about changes in the social sector, which encompasses increasing school enrolments, improving nutrition and the use of birth control measures. The SHG system uses existing marketing channels and banks to bring formal financial services to a new market segment, to the poor and particularly women.

Even, within the households, these members have been able to garner respect and cooperation from their spouses. As is evident from the table, 75% of women are being assisted by their husbands in performing the household chores. The significance of SHGs in the islands is further strengthened, by the participation of Panchayat Pradhan and members of Panchayat, in the group. Further the due to efforts of the members, few illiterate women in the group have learnt to write their names in place of thumb impressions. Women are now able to contribute not only towards the daily expenditure incurred in running the households but also in times of emergencies, like medical treatment, construction of a house, child education, etc. These are the transformations brought about by SHGs

¹³ Mo RD: Ministry of Rural Development

The SHG formation has contributed towards building social capital. The SHG members have become active within and outside their communities, in terms of shedding their shyness and mingling with not only members of their own community but outside the community as well with confidence. SHGs have added a new dimension to their lives, transformed them into confident individuals. The members of the SHGs are welcomed by the bank officials who were hitherto shunned away by them, they are looked upon with respect in the government offices, which has also helped in augmenting their social capital formation and develop leadership qualities. The socio-capital formation is helping their spouses in searching for better ways of livelihood. The families are now aware of various policies of the UT administration and can take up their choice of livelihood. Due to better exposure, by virtue of joining SHGs, the families can now make better decisions for their children's education and also can help their family members for medical treatment.

Conclusion

SHG is a social and sustainable community Institution, which by empowering its members and alleviating poverty, is providing a platform for a better living. Poor women who felt that they were weak are now striving hard to realize their identities due to the surge in confidence ignited through the SHG formation. The real empowerment is possible when the women members of the SHG have access to social and economic resources; they are self-motivated and well prepared.

Union Minister Mr Jairam Ramesh once told: *"If Panchayats are an institution of representations, women self-help groups are institutions of Participation."* The participation of the women in a group is strengthening the social and economic growth of the UT. The following are a few instances of their empowerment:

- 1) **SHG as Business Units** - The SHGs are perceived as microfinance units which mobilize savings and also take loans for their members. The social institutions are gradually becoming stronger and with their financial resources and social capital, these household business units, are graduating into micro-enterprise, essential for the development of the UT in the absence of large business units.
- 2) **Using SHG network for delivering government services** – Implementation of government programs in India lacks efficiency and transparency, various skill development programs which are the main core

policy of the present government is delivered through the SHGs in Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

- 3) **SHG as a tool for combating the social evils-** *“Man can never be a woman’s equal in the spirit of selfless service with which nature has endowed her” – Mahatma Gandhi.* Social capital is the asset through which women are solving the issues of discrimination and acts of violence against women. This growing social capital can be channelled to iron out existing social menaces. For example, there are many successful cases where women belonging to SHGs have come together to close liquor shops in their village.

Challenges

Promoting organizations of the poor involve many challenges as the capacities to run and manage the organizations such as Village level federations and Block level federations are very limited. The literacy levels among the SHG members is low as a result managing the organizations throws up a lot of challenges and there is a need for capacity building for running the federations efficiently and sustainably.

The study reveals that two major agencies are guiding SHG formation and their monitoring in A & N islands namely, NABARD and NRLM. Both the agencies follow different approaches in dealing with the formation of SHGs. These differences create hurdles in framing concrete policies for the development of SHGs in the islands. As a result, it has been observed often that these SHGs disintegrate and thereafter regroup to benefit from another agency. This leads to unnecessary bickering among the agencies (both old and new) accusing each other. At the grassroots level, there is an overlap of SHG members, and there is a likelihood of multiple memberships of poor women in more than one SHG. At the individual level this may not be an issue, but this could potentially lead to multiple financing, over financing and over indebtedness. The microfinance crisis of Andhra Pradesh a few years back was for precisely this reason. Therefore, the SHGs trail and their socio-economic development declines relatively compared to the huge prospect of progress that they could have achieved.

SHG is the smallest and important social institution; it is significance for the development and empowerment of the poor and weaker section of the society. To provide socio-economic empowerment of the women, the SHG should be

registered to a state-level portal; proper MIS¹⁴ of the SHG is needed for its development. The portal developed for the SHGs should be an open forum where everyone should be provided with an opportunity to know about the social institutions. This will provide scope for further development of the SHGs. The MIS should comprise the following information:

- Detailed address of the SHG formed and provide a brief note about the agency
- Detailed information regarding the profile of the SHGs
- Profile of the SHG members
- Grades of the SHGs
- Savings and Credits
- Meetings and Bookkeeping
- Leadership or the office bearers
- Financial Performances
- Loans accessed by the SHG.
- Type of training received and the agencies trained them
- Business taken up by the SHG

Proper policies may be formulated for the newly created SHGs as well as for the existing ones.

SHGs are the institutions; their formation can be done by any agency but they should have enough space for other organizations/institutions to work with them otherwise the real socio-economic empowerment of women which is the main object of their evolution will never come about. A concrete state-level model for the SHGs can be developed where all the agencies that are working for the SHG formation and monitoring should participate and function under a common minimum programme (CMP). Convention for SHG development under the CMP can be organized from time to time to discuss the SHG in the State and National Level, to upgrade their functioning in achieving the goal of women empowerment.

¹⁴ MIS: Management Information System broadly refers to a computer-based system in which data base information is stored for further use.

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Women's Collective Action in the Asia-Pacific Region with regard to Women's Human Rights in the Changing World of Work

- Dr. Vibhuti Patel

Presented at Expert Group Meeting on 'Women's Human Rights in the Changing World of Work' organised by the UN Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls and the Women, Work and Leadership Research Group of the University of Sydney to inform the 2020 report to the Human Rights Council on 12-13 September 2019 at University of Sydney, Business School,

Introduction

Globalisation has accentuated inequality and poverty and has had a massive influence on the urban, rural and Dalit /tribal poor women as paid, underpaid and unpaid workers of the economy.¹⁵ As homemakers, the poor women have shouldered the disproportionate (triple) burden of globalisation due to commercialisation of day-to-day survival needs such as drinking water, degradation of environment and erosion of public health services¹⁶ and cash controlled privatised education by corporate driven globalisation¹⁷. Expensive transport, dismantling of public distribution system that provided grains, cooking fuel, cloth material, soap, etc. have made the lives of millions of workers, especially working-class women and their children pauperized and malnourished. Neo-liberal stabilization policies that drastically reduces state contribution to the social sector and enhances only its regulatory and surveillance role have reduced chances of quality education, nutritious diet and healthy growth of poor people's children. *Laissez-faire* in the labour market promoted thro' new labour codes have wiped out historical gains of the working class in terms of living wages, collective bargaining and labour standards and occupational safety has threatened the employment opportunities of the employees. There has been a drastic increase in the trafficking of women and children to fuel the informal sector. Macroeconomic stabilisation policies, also

¹⁵ Patel, Vibhuti *Discourse on Women and Empowerment*, Delhi: The Women Press, 2009.

¹⁶ Ravi Kumar, T. "Downsizing Higher Education- An Emergent Crisis", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.XXXVIII, No.7, Feb.2003.

¹⁷ Ambani, Mukesh & Kumarmangalam Birla "A Policy Framework for Reforms in Education", report submitted to the prime minister's Council on Trade and Industry, 2000, Website: <http://www.nic.in/pmcouncil/reports/education>.

known as Structural Adjustment Programmes- devaluation, deregulation, deflation, denationalisation have accentuated human miseries and escalated economic inequalities that has rendered poor women to be “the last colony”¹⁸. Mass unemployment, food price volatility due to liberalisation of agriculture, galloping inflation, privatisation of education and health care affect the common masses-especially women, children and elderly the most. Agrarian distress had forced rural men to migrate to the urban centres and there is wide spread feminisation of subsistence agriculture in the Asian countries. Industry 4.0 marked by introduction of robots and artificial intelligence has accentuated the process of declining work participation of women in South Asia over the last 5 years.

The Emerging Issues in Women’s Collective Action and Organising in the Asian Region:

Markets are socially contracted and exacerbate already existing inequalities. Neoliberal logic of free play of market forces has resulted in tremendous human miseries. Hence the nation states need to ensure social security and social protection. Equal access to employment, better provision of childcare services, improved social security measures, workplace safety and re-examination of differential retirement age are the major concerns of the working women in all sectors of the economies in Asia.

Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Sectors:

Women farmers organisations such as Gabriella (in Philippines), Asian Peasant Coalition, All Nepalese Peasant Federation, The Mahila Kisan Adhikaar Manch (MAKAAM in India) have demanded that irrespective of land rights and whether women are cultivating or working as labourers, they must be recognised as farmers and must be guaranteed living wage. They have opposed new Labour Codes that rob women cultivators and agricultural workers of their entitlements of social protection and social security. Forest dwellers’ struggles focus on opposition to draconian land acquisitions laws that criminalise and brutalise forest dwellers and deny them traditional common property resources.

¹⁸ Mies, Maria (*Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour*, UK: Zed Books, 1988).

Women in fisheries are demanding credit facilities, Appropriate technical assistance, training and extension e.g. better preservation tools and storage facilities, mitigation of devastating effect of climate change and pollution of water bodies, improved modes of transporting catch that are vended by women.

Women Plantation Workers in tea, coffee, rubber plantations of Nepal, Sri Lanka and India are at the forefront of struggles for the state to implement minimum wages and also protested against the established male dominated Trade Unions for entering into negotiations with the estate owners without consulting women workers.

Women's participation has also increased in poultry and livestock, sericulture and floriculture and other rural non-farm activities mainly due to the spread of micro credit. Federations of self-employed women and Self Help Groups have demanded state support for women in the informal sectors in terms of credit facilities, forward and backward linkages as all three markets-labour, factor and product- are segmented on line of class, caste, ethnicity, race, religion and gender.

Urban Informal Work International networks such as Women Working Worldwide, Homenet, Committee of Asian Women, Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising (WIEGO), rural and urban working class women's united front such as Gabriela in the Philippines, Domestic Workers Unions in several Asian countries, women's cooperatives such as Annapurna Mahila Mandal and women's trade union such as Self Employed Women's Association are e-empowering informal Workers and finding collective methods to address livelihood concerns.

In most of the countries in East Asia, South East Asia and South Asia domestic workers are organised under Unions/ Associations.

The unprecedented opportunities created in China over last 3 decades, with its women's participation in economic activities being the highest in Asia is currently facing declining work participation. Women workers/ employees in China are fighting against gender wage gap, limited opportunities in top management and segregation in the type of employment.

Women's rights organisations are also challenging gender boundaries that are constructed in largely male-dominated occupations (namely, women apprentices working as carpenters, iron workers, painters, electricians and plumbers) and are fighting against discrimination, sexual harassment, stressful work environments or physical injuries and suffer from long/short terms economic costs.

Women nurses, midwives, care workers, teachers, workers in the flagship programmes of the state have periodically raised their voice against contractualisation of employment that deepen care extraction. Associations of nurses are raising their voices against corporate hospitals withholding their passports and making them work in a cage-like work environment.

Movement against Manual Scavenging and lifting of human excreta from dry toilets had gained momentum as trade unions of sanitary workers, NGOs and human rights organisations have built a strong campaign for abolition of this inhuman system and demand introduction of robots for cleaning the underground sewage system.

Women in On Demand Economy/ gig economy/ Supply Chain: Women's rights organisations in Asia have highlighted adverse impacts of digital restructuring that boasts of "Customer is King" and negligent of workers' safety and security. They have studied gendered patterns of employment, especially focusing on women workers in the informal economy, digital automation and its impacts on women workers in labour-intensive industries and their gendered consequences on the workplace. They have demanded 'digital justice' and compliance of platform companies with legislation on women workers' rights, platform models in agriculture, retail and services, and their gender based impacts in relation to livelihood security, social protection, occupational hazards, stress and access to redress, stock-taking of public policies, public financing and programmes concerning women informal workers' participation in the digital economy. They have to evolve new methods of protest such as "Mass Logging Out" to address their grievances as their employer is not reachable.

International Trafficking of women and children for Slave Labour:

Migration across the country, across the border 49% of all migrants are women who work as domestic workers without any protection. In India, Bangladesh,

Nepal, they must work for 16 hours, when they ask for salary, false charge of stealing is put on her and she is put into prison. Entering the country by legal means does not mean that they are able to live in peace, this status of legality does not ensure freedom from overwork, torture and sexual harassment. Some of them abscond due to bad treatment or very low wages and end up as 'illegal' migrants. Their position is further aggravated by the fact that employers often hold the passports of their domestic workers. In Sponsorship System of work-related cross-country migration, documentation is linked to employer that forces them to slog it out under conditions of overwork, horrible living conditions and underpayment. Women's rights groups have demanded that embassies of all Asian Countries should keep one set of identification papers of the migrant workers in the sending and receiving countries.

Anti-Slavery Human Trafficking Initiative has been fighting against customary practices governed by belief, "rice in the field, fish in the river, that daughters ought to be in brothels" among some communities in India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Philippines are condoned by the state.

Sexual Harassment at Workplace: Most widespread occupational hazard where women survivors have been fighting both individually at shop floor level and collectively in the streets and courts. All Asian countries got a massive response to the #MeToo Movement as well as One Billion Rising campaign on violence against women.

Conclusion

The major challenge faced by the women's movement, trade union and social movements, human rights, right based movements for food/ education/ health/ shelter and women's studies movement in Asia is to make the nation states accept the Workers' Rights Framework and Decent Work Framework of ILO, create structures/ mechanisms and judicious implementation of gender responsive budgeting to address the basic needs of the working class households, violence against women in private and public domains and sexual harassment at the workplace. Collective efforts of research, action and advocacy with a gender lens-three conspicuous tenets to deconstruct the issue of unpaid work of women is very relevant. Some of the constraints of unity of the emerging new social movement unions/ associations/ networks/ cooperatives/united fronts and traditional unions relate to *definitions of membership and decision-making processes*. In the former, retrenched,

unemployed, retired former employees find a place even as the form of engagement is direct action and campaigns. This creates possibilities of linking with the community at local levels- local councils, corporations, municipality governance structures and to plan joint actions to face casualization, outsourcing and varied forms of re-organization of work, unemployment, housing, etc. Varied forms of union structures may be a way to face the challenges posed by informality.

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परिमिती तु...

परिमिती तु, परिमिती तु
कधी मयदिच्या चौकोनाची
कधी संसाराच्या षटकोनाची
तर कधी कुंकवाच्या वर्तुळाची

कोणी आखली तुझी भूमिती
कोणी ठरवला तुझा भूगोल
पण इतिहास तुझा तुच घडवला
बदललीस तु आपली परिभाषा

गुलबकावली तु, गुलबक्षी तु
बागडणारे फुलपाखरू तु
बांध नसलेली एक नदी तु
कि उन्मत्त लाटांचा महासागर तु

कोणी सौंदर्यावर केली कविता
कोणी सहजच नजरेआड केली
किती तरी अवहेलना पत्करून तु
कित्येक कौशल्ये आत्मसात केली

ओळख तुझी जगाला पटली
स्त्री आहेस तू नव्या युगाची
क्षितीजापासून क्षितिजापर्यंतची
परिमिती तु, परिमिती तु...

- डॉ. रोशन डिसुझा,
प्राणीशास्त्र विभाग, सोफिया महाविद्यालय

The Influence of The Mizoram Accord on the Issue of Women's Rights and Political Participation

- Mary Vanlalthanpuii

Introduction

Since 2013, the date of the last election for the Mizoram State Legislative Assembly, the number of women voters has outnumbered the number of male voters. However, only four women have been elected to the state Assembly in the 42 years since Mizoram became a Union territory in 1972 and then a state in 1987. The only woman to become a minister was Mrs. Lalhlimpuii, elected in 1987 from the Mizo National Front Party because Mizo women have the second highest literacy rates in India and the highest work participation rate, it has been assumed that they would play a major role in politics as well.

There was an assumption based in the Mizoram Accord that the rights and privileges of the minorities in Mizoram as envisaged in the constitution shall continue to be preserved and protected and their social and economic advancement shall be ensured. The accord promised assumed that by ensuring the rights of all the people, women would be included and their social and economic advancement would follow. If we study the educational achievement in terms of the literacy rate in Mizoram before and after statehood, we find that the literacy rate of 59.8 % (male 64.4%: female 54.9%) in the 1981 census climbed to 82.2% (male 85.6%: female 78.6%) in 1991 census. Mizoram attracted national attention in 2001 for achieving the highest literacy rate in the country at 88.8% (female 86.7%: male 90.7%). Although the state ranked second in 2011 at the literacy rate of 91.5% (male 93.7%: female 89.2%) was still impressive. While many of the studies that focus on women's political rights claim the essentiality of education to give women awareness about their rights, (Lakshmi Bai & Bidyalakshmi, 2013), it is important to acknowledge that education does not in itself provide women with the freedom to exercise their political rights.

Women's economic and political rights

Liberal feminism asserts that women's political representation is essential to allow women to voice their concerns in the society. Women leaders of the first-wave suffrage movements in the United States and England argued that women should be able to vote and participate in politics because their experience as nurturers and homemakers would bring something special to politics. They

claimed women representatives would address social issues and policies benefiting women and children (Burn, 2011; Rai, 2000). It has been argued that if women are under-represented in politics, various issues related to women and children will be neglected. Because women are supposedly more concerned about the welfare of the society than men are, it is assumed that women voters and elected representatives will work to benefit women and children. (Subramanian, 2006; Doepke, et al, 2011).

In this account, there has been an assumption that women's economic participation is fundamental to strengthening women's rights and enhancing their influence in the society however, economic participation does not necessarily enhance their status in politics. First, it is necessary to analyse the nature of women's workforce participation. The census of 1991, the first census after statehood, noted the female workforce participation rate in Mizoram at 43.5% (male 56.8%) and ranked second in India for the highest female worker participation (Ministry of Labour & Employment, 2009-2011). In 2001, Mizoram had the highest female workforce participation rate in the country of 47.5% compared to the male workforce participation of 57.29% (Singhal, 2003). However, female workforce participation declined to 36.2 % (male 52.3%) in 2011 census and Mizoram dropped to the sixth position in the country (Ministry of Labour & Employment, 2012-2013) but still impressive.

According to the records of the census, one of the important aspects of female worker participation in Mizoram is a large concentration of women in the informal sectors of economy while very few women are employed in the formal sectors of the state government. According to the record, even before and after statehood, the female cultivator constitutes larger than the male cultivators as in 1981, the female cultivators constituted 86.3% against the male cultivators at 61.3%. In 1991, the female cultivators constituted 73.8% against the male cultivators at 52.5%. Again, in 2001, the female cultivators were 61.6 % against the male cultivators at 49. 6% although the gender gap shows a slight decline over the years. However, the increasing female worker participation as per the census does not include state government job in the formal sector while women dominate markets and different kinds of workplaces, there has been a very little improvement of female employment rate in the state government. The female employment rate in the state government recorded at 20.7 % in 1998 was increased to 22.7% in 2003. However, the rate was dropped to 21.1% against the male employment rate of 63.9 % in 2005 (Statistical Handbook, 2005). In

2008, while the state government has 30519 male employees, only 10084 were female, which constituted 24.8 % of female employment (male 75.1%) (Lianzela, 2012). Again in 2009, the female employment rate was 25% (male 74. 9%) and the record after three years in 2012 showed only a slight difference by adding point to the rate of percentage (female 25. 3%, male 74.6%)

We might say that substantial concentrations of female workers in the informal sectors of economy reinforce women's subordinate position from the public sphere of politics (Barbara & Frankie, 1985 & Doepe & Tertilt & Veona, 2011 & Khandai, 2006). This situation further enhanced the division between private and public sphere in the society, where women's work remains concentrated in the private spheres and men placed in public of which private is more devalued than public. It is evident that from the informal sector, women could not find a chance to show their capacity in the leadership role to influence the political decision-making process (Fraile, 2014). Beginning in 1971, the first election to the Village Council in the country till 2006, while there were 1264 males elected Village Council members, only 35 females were elected which accounted for 2.7% of female participation (Mizoram State Election Commission, 2013). Rather the post- statehood politics experienced a declining female participation compared to the pre statehood although women's participation in politics was at its highest when the Lushai Hill was a Union Territory during 1972- 1986, which is accounted for only 6.6% of the female participation. After attaining statehood, only two female participated in the state legislative assembly.

Women's rights and the Mizoram accord

The Constitution of India not only guarantees equality to women but also prohibits the states from discriminating against citizen on grounds of race, caste, gender, ethnicity, religion, place of birth and socio-economic background. There are several laws that affect women; some laws are religious based while others are applicable for everyone in the country. On April 11, 1947, The Hindu Code Bill was introduced in the Constituent Assembly with an objective to liberalise personal laws so as to enhance individual freedom and to promote gender equality among those defined as Hindus. The bill covered the areas such as right to property succession to property and maintenance, marriage, divorce, adoption, and minority and guardianship. While this law was limited to Hindus, with different laws governing Muslims, Christians, Jews, and Parsis, other laws, such as the Dowry Prohibition Act, first legislated in 1961 and amended in 1984, apply to all religious communities. Besides, the 73rd and 74th constitutional

Amendments in 1994 established quotas by reserving 33% of seats in local governments for women. We may note that although women have rights in three ways but these have also been over ridden by special consideration for tribal areas.

When the Indian Parliament introduced special administrative institutions for the tribal areas, some regions are protected under the Sixth Schedule while others are under constitutional safeguards. As such most of the areas live according to the customary law and hence few have been constitutionally recognised. In 1963, the 13th Amendment to the Constitution recognised the customary laws of Nagaland through Article 371A. Similarly, the 53rd amendment of 1986 recognised Mizoram through Article 371G. This recognition approved the authority of customary law and has become the most distinctive features, governing marriage, property rights and other social relations. Although there has been misconception in the study between tribal and non-tribal women India claiming tribal women to have better position but one needs to recognise the discriminatory nature of customary law governing the social organisation. Even the matrilineal tribes like the Khasi, Garo of Meghalaya are patriarchal, although the youngest daughter inherits the ancestral property, decision making power and control are in the hands of men. In practice, it is her brother or uncle who control the property and hence women are the only custodians of its property (Fernandes & Pereira & Khatso, 2006).

The implementation of the Lushai Hills Autonomous District Council 1952 based on the Sixth Schedule to the constitution of India provided the Mizos with a special administrative set up to safeguard Mizo customs, culture, and religion. The signing of the Mizoram Accord 1986 preserved this regulation and stated that Mizo customary law could not be amended or modified without the approval of the legislative assembly. This meant that the Mizoram Accord protected the patriarchal construction of the Mizo customary law that largely degraded women's status in the society, effectively working against the rights of Mizo women. For example, the law of inheritance privileges the male line and does not recognize women's right to inherit property. In the case of divorce, a wife cannot claim any property except the personal belongings she owned at the time of her marriage although the Mizo Marriage, Divorce and Inheritance of Property Act 2014 opened a limited range of opportunities for divorced women in claiming acquired property. However, it is difficult to say how many women would benefit from this right and agree to proceed to the court.

While these laws may be suited to another time in history wherein the economy is based on agricultural occupation, they are not appropriate in a modern society where women share the burden in a monetary economy. Historically, people lived in small huts in villages and women participated in maintaining the family through weaving, working in the fields, and securing fuel. They were valued for their work and especially for their skill as weavers, the number of animals they owned determined the status of men. Things have changed a great deal since then, one of the most noticeable changes in women's employment over two decades had been their entry into professional jobs. In the pre statehood, these occupations like that of doctors and engineers accounted for just a limited number had increased to hundred numbers after entering the 21st century. Thus, rapid increased in education facilitated changes in the value system, now a days, people valued things differently and the ability to use a computer, facility in English, good public relations are respected and valued. Changes in the value system determine for changes in the status of women, there is a great need to reform the status of women that have been created over centuries by the social customs and women are needed to consider as individuals as men in their own rights. Since many women, obtaining the qualities that is valued today, contributed equally with men in setting up of family. Therefore, the traditional law that rules no rights to property is discriminatory, especially when women contribute as much as men do.

In many countries, traditional laws and acts were modified in concern for women's welfare. For instance, law of inheritance, which has been considered as a source of inequality in all societies have been modified in India to promote equality. The Hindu Succession Act 1956 amended in 2005 revised rules on coparcenary's property, provides daughters of the deceased equal rights with sons, and subjecting them to the same liabilities and disabilities. The same year, the Indian laws introduced 'The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005', which is differed from the provision of Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code to provide a better definition of domestic violence. In the international context, since the birth of the United Nation on January 1, 1942, the United Nations attempted to address women's human rights and their efforts produced enormous progress in securing women's rights across the world in recent decades. The fundamental principle of the United Nations Charter adopted by world leaders in 1945 endorsed 'equal rights of men and women', and thereby, protecting and promoting women's human rights are the

responsibility of all States. Later the year 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted to proclaim the equal entitlements of women and men to the rights contained in it without distinction of any kind on ground of sex etc. Over the year in 1967, the member states of the United Nations adopted 'The Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women'. This implies that discrimination against women is an offense against human dignity and the United Nation requested all the member's states to abolish existing laws, customs, regulations and practices, which are discriminatory against women, and recommended for the establishment of adequate legal protection for equal rights of men and women (United Nation, 2014). Since then millions of women across the world continue to experience discrimination by their laws and policies that banned women equal access to land, property, gender based violence, sexual and reproductive health rights etc. The efforts of the United Nation largely promote elimination of laws that discriminate against women across the world. While reviewing the worldwide efforts to improve the status of women, basing women's position on Mizo traditional law seems out of synchronize with education, economy and values. Therefore, the employment of Mizo customary law to determine the status of women is incompatible with the status of women in Indian law and International standards.

Mizo women organisation on women's rights

The Mizo Hmeichhe Tangrual Pawl [MHTP] was founded in 1946 with the sole objective of getting gender justice in the society. When the MHTP nominated Mrs. Hmingliani as a member of the Mizo Hills District Council in 1956, they submitted a memorandum to the council to modify the customary law regarding inheritance rights for women. Mrs. Hmingliani in the council made it possible to pass 'The Mizo Hills District Inheritance of Property Act 1956' as such Mizo women have the right to property based on a will made by a Testator since the Mizo customary law of inheritance did not provide women the right to inherit property.

Over the years, the function of the MHTP was weakened by the occurrence of the insurgency and the political turmoil. In 1974, The Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl [MHIP], another women's organization, was founded. Like the MHTP, the MHIP continued to focus on improving the status of women in the society (Lalneihzovi, 2014). For years, they worked to improve the status of women ruled by the customary laws, especially focusing their attention on laws that denied the rights to property of married and divorced woman. However,

their effort did not produce results even after more than two decades because any change in the law required the approval of the legislative assembly. Regarding this, the former MHIP president, Pi Sangkhumi, argued that the major obstacle to change in the Mizo marriage system was the absence of female legislators (Sangkhumi, 2009). In 2014, the Mizoram Legislative Assembly finally granted the demand made by a combination of MHIP and All Mizoram Women Federation [AMWF] for a better status for married women and passed 'The Mizo Marriage, Divorce, and Inheritance of Property Act 2014' on November 2014. This was the same year Miss. Vanlalawmpuii Chawngthu was elected as a legislator- the first female legislator to be elected after 27 years. One could argue that having Miss. Vanlalawmpuii Chawngthu in the legislature helped the MHIP's for new legislation. According to the new law, a Mizo wife has the right to a share of family property, only the court could grant a divorce, and the divorced wife would have a share of the acquired property not exceeding 25% along with her personal property she owned at the wedding.

When reviewing the efforts of the women's organization demanding improvement in women's status ruled by the Mizo customary law, it becomes apparent that women's political representative is essential to change laws. The MHIP had worked to change the marriage system that disadvantaged women ruled by the customary law since 1981, repeatedly submitting a memorandum to the government to demand changes. However, there were other women in the Legislative Assembly from 1984-1987: Mrs. K Thansiami, Mrs. Rokungi, and Mrs. Hlimpuii but the representation of these women did not seem to advance the agenda of the Mizo Women organisation. This situation raised the need to acknowledge whether women political representation serve an important ambassador for expanding the role and status of women in the society.

Discussion

Although the Mizoram Accord promised to uplift the social and economic development for all the people, this did not apply to women's political rights. Only two women were represented in the Mizoram State Legislative Assembly after the 27 years of Mizoram statehood. Because Mizoram Accord 1986 recognized tribal autonomy, it reinforced the patriarchal culture and hampered women's ability to gain political power. Although improvement in the literacy rate brought about the growth of female participation in the work force, women's economic participation remained concentrated in the informal sector

of the economy, where they lacked the bargaining power to use economic power to gain political rights.

It is evident that the under-representation of women made it difficult for women to advance their demands for legal change. For, the MHIP demand for changes in the Mizo Customary Law was approved only after a female legislator was elected to the legislative assembly in 2014. In the Assembly session held on November 2014, Nl. Vanlalawmpuii, a qualified Master in Political Science, who has interested the need for empowering women, raised her support for the law minister Mr. Lalsawta, who introduced the bill in the assembly. She strongly recommended the need for change in the rights and privileges of women in the assembly session and praises the law minister and chief minister after the law was passed in the assembly. From the political history of Mizoram, although there were a few women represented in the political office, it may argue that not all women would support change to improve things for women and there is a great need of women in the legislature, who wants change for women.

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- Ms. Nikita Pathak

Introduction

The book is a “Festschrift” which means that it is a collection of academic writing put together in honor of accomplished sociologist, feminist thinker and activist- Professor R. Indira. As the title suggests, the book contains multi-disciplinary work from eminent scholars from across the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, political science, gender studies, economics, media and cultural studies etc. It is also an indicator of the fact that the facets of gender that escape enquiry often need the most investigation. The social construct of gender that pervades every aspect of society has been analysed from five major areas in this book namely- Gender and Cultural Space; Gender and Political Space; Gender and Domestic Space; Gender, Education and Work; and Gender and Development. There are nineteen papers that have explored one theme mentioned above, shedding light on multiple issues that affect women and their access to rights in various ways. The review will be divided as per the themes divided across the book, with an analysis of the papers that come under the purview of each.

Gender and Cultural Space

Women and culture have been linked inextricably throughout the history of feminist politics. The idea that women are “keepers” of culture pervades the mentality of almost all cultures across the world, albeit in different degrees and varied ways. The nature-culture debate occupies a central position in feminist politics and inevitably in policy making as well. We see this in multiple contexts across different geographies.

In the paper “How Indigenous Feminist Theory Can Decolonise Sociology: Ideas, Readings, and Bridges in the Global Context”, Laura Corradi expounds upon the need to reinvent methods of conducting sociological research based on the standpoint of ecofeminism and indigenous epistemology. During the last

decades, indigenous feminists and feminists from former colonies have criticized white supremacy in mainstream feminist and women's movements, and in academic knowledge and epistemic production. Globally, feminists of colour, aboriginals, dalit/advasi feminists, kurkish ideology in Rojava, maori and gypsy feminists made it very clear about how general theories reflect standpoints of the global north (Talpade Mohanty 1984; Moreton-Robinson 2006; Green 2007; Suzack, Huhndorf, Perreault and Barman 2010; Meyer 2015; Castillo, González 2008; Corradi 2014, 2017). White privilege and the power dynamics it carries with it have been challenged within many branches of feminism itself. Social scientists and activists were exposed to self-reflexive methodologies and invited to examine critically how, as researchers, they imagine and envisage the power structures in terms of gender, race/colour, class, status/caste, age, sexual orientation, religion. Maori Feminist Linda Tuhiwae Smith (1999) taught us how to decolonize research methodology; others highlighted how to decolonize feminism itself (Lugones, Lucena 2008; Bidasca, Laba 2011); Vietnamese feminist Trinh Minh-ha pointed out how the colonizers encouraged jealousy among women and how "decolonization of relations" is necessary too. As Romani feminist Alexandra Oprea (2004) argued: "It is only through recognizing our privilege, whether it be white privilege, male privilege, class privilege, light skinned privilege, or heterosexual privilege, that we can challenge hierarchical relationships."

"Indigenous feminist theories (IFTs) teach about the intersections of power structures and geopolitical differences in gender subalternity in the North-Atlantic context, in its margins and in the global south: in other spaces that are beyond the state/nation, often referred to as Fourth World (Castells 2000). IFTs do not easily offer 'complementary' sociological analyses, since they tend to subvert dominant discourses in social sciences, opting for epistemic change and transnational counter-hegemonic knowledge (Carroll 2015, Keim 2011). IFTs can be seen as a therapy for the detoxification of both social sciences and feminist theory, still deep-rooted in western colonial concepts and categories." (Corradi, 2018)

In the paper "Women's Studies and the Women's Movements in India: Research Trends in Sociology and Social Anthropology", Abha Chauhan talks about how Women's Movements and Women's Studies are inextricably linked with each other. She talks about instances in the history of feminist movements where the academic body of gender studies has played an imperative role in

formulating better strategies for movements. It not only draws from sociology and social anthropology, but also enriches these disciplines through its unique standpoint and critique. The importance of theorising by women of color led to critiquing of many practices within movements itself and breached the dichotomies of private-public, nature-culture etc. The concepts of sex, gender, identity, agency etc. was deeply and thoroughly questioned. The article talks about how feminist standpoint has contributed to social anthropology as well, and through various examples like the Shah Bano case or works by Urvashi Butalia on Partition- it has paved a new way to understand movements and henceforth mobilise more strategically.

“As Women’s Studies focuses on the relationship between theory and praxis, it is important to sustain this and bridge the divide between the two that seems to be growing in the recent years (Poonacha, 2003). Studies in feminist scholarship must strengthen the women’s movement and feminist action. The areas that time and again important for women's movement such as rape, dowry, domestic violence, development and empowerment, reservation, communalisation and criminalization of politics, personal law and the civil code, all have sociological significance and need to be dealt from a feminist perspective.” (Chauhan, 2020) The point of analysis, especially in the discourse of cultural space is not quite complete unless we understand the idea of culture itself. Culture is deeply embedded in society, and consequently in policy making as well. It becomes critical therefore at multiple junctions to question the idea of cultural space. A good idea would be to analyse current discourse as well in the wake of so many student movements across the country, how participation of women and queer community is helping in building more nuanced narratives. What was missing in the discourse of "cultural space" was also an invisibility of LGBTQ community, in the given segment.

Gender and Political Space

The divide between men and women in the political sphere, especially in terms of electoral politics is disturbing and all too evident. But apart from electoral space, the politics of everyday life is all the more divisive in its conception. The paper, "Revival of Cultural Nationalism: A Challenge to Feminist Politics in India" , Sudha Sitharaman expounds to the pivotal question that has been in the limelight for many feminist theorists in India specially in the last two decades that is how issues of historical and cultural specificity should be made central to the politics and analysis of any feminist project. An important outcome of

such an approach has led to understanding and integrating issues of caste, religion, region and even sexualities within feminist theory. While it used to be the case that the discourse in feminism often took place from the western feminist framework but due to advent of feminist standpoint theory, we see that how India and Indian feminist have come up with their own body of analyses which informs about the local and the national context. She locates the idea of 'nationalism' and problematizes the issue of women being the spiritual upholders in the family structure. She alludes to the dominant and widespread tendency to cast women as the repositories of tradition and culture; and how their bodies are marked symbols of a collective identity and as a scapegoat for 'Indian Culture' and 'Indian are Nationalism'.

Similarly, in the next paper 'Can Muslim Women Speak? A Narrative on Muslim Women's Movement in India', Muzaffar Assadi gives a nuanced understanding of the two separate categories- of Islam and of Muslim Society. Various interpretations of Islamic religious texts have led to different perceptions about gender equality vis-a-vis Islam. Many interpretations have come up with regard to gender issues; some schools of thought would argue that Islam does not permit gender discrimination, however many feminist Islamic scholars have argued that the ethical teachings of the Quran is based on gender equality. Assadi upholds the view that in Muslim majority societies, women are an important demographic force and therefore central to the political and social discourse. She also critiques mainstream feminist movements in India for being unable to accommodate the unique and specific interests of Muslim women. She lays out an exhaustive historical account of Muslim women's movement in India and how they have attained a center stage in the feminist discourse in India. Both Assadi and Sitharaman talk about women's bodies as marked political subjects as well as bearing the symbols of religious, social and cultural identities. These intersections are crucial to women's movements as well as policy frameworks, because these intersections strengthen the understanding of policymakers to incorporate more and more nuances to make a good, inclusive policy.

In the next paper within the same theme is that of "Gendered Rights, Politics of Inclusion and Negotiating Power Structures: Widow Farmers in Wardha District, Maharashtra" by Anurekha Chari Wagh. The paper provides a sharp critique of the neoliberal state in furthering the pathetic condition of various marginalized groups. Under the guise of inclusion and development, the

neoliberal discourse shifts the discussion from rights framework to "earn the privilege" discourse which excludes a majority of our population and various marginal groups with varying degrees of oppression that they face. In such a narrative, the idea of 'inclusion' is tokenistic and of no use to the groups it seeks to target. The paper talks about the widow farmers in Wardha district face multiple levels of inequality due to the fact that their husbands committed suicides as they were unable to pay back the loaned amount. The rights that are theoretically conferred upon them take them into another set of experiences of deprivation, vulnerability and insecurity.

Connecting to the theme, the last paper 'Cinema, Actress and the Gaze; Discursive Notes', Roopa K.N. Raina narrates the case of Ramya who a young woman is, film star and politician. She highlights the dilemmas faced and the compromises that a successful woman in public eyes needs to make in order to survive and get ahead in a patriarchal society. The paper is a fantastic exploration into the life of Ramya who an actress is otherwise known for her progressive and aggressive attitude but later becomes an antithesis to her own ideals when she sought political mandate in the 14th Parliamentary elections of the country. As highlighted in the papers before this, her body also becomes a marker of her class, caste and morals. To type cast herself into the role of the 'good woman', she had to change into a 'politically correct' image for which she tried to distance herself from her screen image embracing, the socially accepted ideals of an 'Indian Woman' and by refashioning her looks, mannerisms and clothing to convey a demure chastity that the author observes that women in Indian politics are supposed to project. She regretfully notes that despite constitutional provisions and state policies, women in the public domain in India continue to remain subject to the male gaze. Therefore, instead of empowerment one observes a perpetuation of the existing skewed gender structure where there is little space of female autonomy.

Gender and Domestic Space

This section has three papers that talk about gender differences and power mechanics within the domestic space which is the private sphere often relegated to women in society. This is an interesting section because it takes into account three different generations and therefore multiple levels and varieties of discriminatory practices and oppressive structures that operate in the society. In the first case, the paper titled 'Sex Selection and Missing Girls in India', Vibhuti Patel strongly condemns the practice of pre-natal sex selection in multiple parts

of the country to systematically cut off women from social rights and social space. The consumerist culture oriented economic development, the commercialization of medical profession and sexist biases in the society all have come together in the form of a deadly but equally sad scenario of 'Missing Girls'. Patel points out that the global comparisons of sex ratios show that in Europe, North America, Carribean, Central Asia and even in the poorest regions of Sub-Saharan Africa, sex ratios are favorable to women as these societies and countries neither kill or neglect girls nor do they use new reproductive technologies (NRT) for begetting sons. "From Womb to Tomb - female infanticide, ante-natal sex selection, neglect of girl child in terms of health and nutrition, child marriage and repeated pregnancy are taking a heavy toll on girls' life". In the following papers, Swati Shirwadkar and Jayashree S. take up the issues of domestic violence and problems of elderly women respectively. All the three papers talk about the private or domestic sphere as the site of most intense violence against women. The romanticized idea of home, family, family structures turn out to be the worst form of oppression and marginality that women face in the society and also provides a commentary on this being manifested in the Indian society. The systematic silencing of women through state machinery as well as social structures lead to skewed results and therefore leading to faulty policies and loopholes in law and order. A personal critique of this section would be that despite talking about gender it fails to acknowledge and mention the problems of LGBTQ community in India, their struggles and their access to rights in the society. This heteronormative understanding of society can also potentially hinder in building solidarity across communities as we are still struggling to visiblise the various marginal groups. The idea of the three papers in totality gives a sense that the society deeply inaccessible towards for women's rights and furthering the scope of gender rights.

Gender, Education and Work

This section comprises of six papers and following would be a brief comment about each paper and then a combined analysis for this section, as it is important to highlight the different aspects being highlighted by the papers but it is also important to see the collective idea that the papers push. In the paper 'Gender Inequality in education Research Evidence and Research Perspective', M.D. Usha Devi examines the issues of educational access and the gender inequality that comes in the way of it. The gendered nature of education manifests itself in lesser enrolment of girls in schools, larger drop-out rates etc. It talks about introducing subjects like Women's Studies in the curriculum to transform

school systems. Also, it talks about how quantitative analysis is not an indicator of the quality of education. Therefore, more qualitative analysis is also required to provide better policy frameworks. Shalini Suryanarayan in her paper talks about women managers in the IT sector in India and provides important insights into the core issues of work-life balance that women deal with. The study was done with 273 women managers in the state of Karnataka. The study focuses on why women choose to quit jobs with a highly androcentric work environment. Women in STEM already face multiple obstacles in again a very androcentric, sexist environment and the entire IT sector seems to emulate the same. Also, the incompatibility between women's social roles and work life leads to women quitting work and reinforcing the stereotype that women workers are less efficient than men. The article is very exhaustive in its analysis of various issues and gives a clear picture of the current situation. Similarly, Premula Raman talk about the women and their work life balance among women college teachers. The chapter explain well the "spillover effect" as well as "approach of compensation" showing that boundaries between work and life are increasingly becoming indistinct. The rest of the chapters also deal with social inaccessibility of women into the spheres of education and work. The stigmatization of Devadasis as well as Dalit women leads one to enquire about the idea of the "nature" of work. It is extremely disturbing but also important in feminist politics to take into account these various intersections. Even from a public policy view, it is important because the concept of public policy is to make changes on a macro scale, but if not done in tandem with feminist politics, it can result in tokenistic policies which does more harm than good.

Gender and Development

The last segment of the book sheds light on the WID/WAD approaches summed up in four papers. It takes into account the human development approach, economic parity, gender as an important component of development and the impact of social mobilisation on gender empowerment. Although the topics cover a wide range, the concept of gender does not move beyond the binaries. The papers are extremely exhaustive in their analysis. The idea of feminist scholarship like this is to improve policy frameworks and feminist movements in general. It is important to find connections between various issues that affect women's lives. It is also imperative to expand the scope of gender in itself and allow for more diversity in the analysis of feminist issues. All these papers provide very important insights into how to build strategic alliances and work together to bring about social change on multiple levels of policy, economy,

society and politics. In conclusion, women are a primary stakeholder in all the public policy formulations and implementation schemes. However, women are not a homogenous category. There are specialized needs of different marginal groups that need to be acknowledged in policy frameworks and acted upon sensitively and robustly. Feminist scholarship is something that can help with the expansive policy formation that is truly capable of empowering women.

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***Kasturba Gandhi: An Embodiment of Empowerment by
Siby K. Joseph, Gandhi Smarak Nidhi,
Mumbai, 2020, pp. 158+***

- Sandhya Mehta

While Mahatma Gandhi is regarded as one of the most outstanding persons in history, not much is known about his life-companion Kasturba. This book is a welcome addition to the scantily available material on her life and work. In the author's words, the primary attempt of the book is "to present Kasturba Gandhi in a nutshell as an embodiment of an empowered woman who had an identity of her own", and he has been successful in this effort. The author brings to light the journey of this brave and courageous woman who was with Gandhi for sixty-two years, as a helpmate and best friend, and throughout this period they had been "learning from each other and sharing each other's joy and sorrows."

The chapter-scheme of this well researched book is well-knit and the information provided is useful. The reader gets details about Kasturba's paternal family, her days before her marriage, her struggles in South Africa and India and her contribution as Gandhiji's companion in his struggle for freedom of India. The book provides moving glimpses of the last days of Kasturba with Gandhiji by her side in Aga Khan Palace in Pune.

Kasturba, named as Kastur and also called Kasturbai, was born in April 1869. (The suffix Ba, meaning mother in Gujarati, was added to her name later.) A few months older than her husband, Kasturba was a strong and independent woman. Young Mohandas was possessive of her and put restraints on her movements in daily life and expected her to obey his commands. The author points out that "This sowed the seeds of a bitter quarrel. "However, Kasturba retained her independent spirit.

It is well-known that after returning from England as a barrister, Gandhiji could not do well in his legal practice. In 1893, he accepted an offer from Dada Abdulla to go to South Africa. In 1896, Kasturba, along with their children, undertook their first voyage and accompanied him to South Africa. For Kasturba, it was a life of adjustments and hardships in South Africa, far removed from the life she was leading in Porbandar/Rajkot. Gandhiji dictated her and their children to wear western style of clothing. Kasturba started wearing sari in

a Parsi style, with socks and shoes and the boys wore coats and trousers, much to her dislike.

As Gandhiji started evolving, his ideas changed and so did his ways of living and working. Kasturba too accepted the challenges of the times. Her participation in the passive resistance movement in South Africa was commendable. Her courage and bravery were remarkable when she was arrested and was sentenced to three months of hard labour. Her health deteriorated in the prison. She suffered from hemorrhage after her release from prison and had to undergo a painful surgery without using chloroform because of her weak physical condition. Gandhiji took his vow of *Brahmacharya* in 1906. In his words, “The idea (*brahmacharya*) came to me and Ba took it up and made it her own. In the result the relationship between us was as one between true friends”.

When Kasturba and Gandhiji returned to India in 1915, they were lauded for their sacrifice during the non-violent struggle in South Africa and their love for their motherland. The author gives a description of the series of receptions and felicitations held in Bombay (now Mumbai) to welcome and honour Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi. However, there seems to be an omission of Mohammed Ali Jinnah’s praise for Kasturba. In January 1915, a reception was arranged by Gurjar Sabha in Bombay to honour Gandhiji and Kasturba. Jinnah presided over the meeting and applauded the work of Kasturba in South Africa by saying that “For a woman to stand by her husband, share his trials and sufferings and sacrifices and even go to jail was the model of womanhood of which any country could well be proud of.” (The Bombay Chronicle, 15 January 1915).

Kasturba played an active role in both the Champaran and Rajkot Satyagrahas. The author rightly observes that in 1917 in Champaran, “She helped Gandhi in understanding the harsh realities prevailing in the villages by surveying the conditions of village women. “She understood the sufferings of people. In 1939, Kasturba decided to join and support the people of the princely state of Rajkot in their Satyagraha against their ruler. Gandhiji could read her mind. He wrote: “Kasturba is a daughter of Rajkot. She felt a personal call. She could not sit whilst the other daughters of Rajkot were suffering for the freedom of the men and women of the State.”

Kasturba remained a caring and devoted wife throughout her life. She looked after everyone around her. Gandhiji’s health was her primary concern. In 1918,

Gandhiji had a severe attack of dysentery. His vow of not drinking milk was an impediment to his recovery. It was Kasturba's simple suggestion, based on common sense that helped: "Your vow was taken against cow milk, but not against goat milk."

Even though Kasturba was not literate, she kept on evolving. Gandhiji had noticed her devotion to him and commented: "Ba blossomed more and more and freely merged herself in me, that is, in my work – which was service."

The Appendices of the book are well-selected and engrossing. They consist of speeches of Kasturba at the Ajmer District Political Conference and at Punjab Achhut Udhar Conference; her emotional letter to the eldest son, Harilal, expressing her anguish about his improper behaviour; Gandhiji's articles in praise for Kasturba - *My teacher in Non-Violence* and *She Stood Above Me*; and Subhash Chandra Bose's tribute to Kasturba.

This interesting book, based on meticulous research, convincingly demolishes the usual image of Kasturba as being just a shadow of her husband. It brings out different facets of her life and work and effectively displays her as an empowered woman. It is published by Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, Mumbai to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Kasturba.

Kannabiran, Vasanth, (2020) *Taken at the Flood: A Memoir of a Political Life*, New Delhi: Women Unlimited (an associate of Kali for Women), pp. 174+ viii. Rs. 263

“I think history is collective memories, I am using my own memory, and I am using my collective memory” – **Haruki Murakami**

- **Dr. Khevana Desai**

Way back in 1948 Agatha Christy wrote a detective fiction with the title ‘Taken at the flood’ and seven decades later the fiction with the same title is replaced by a brutally honest and yet poignant memoir of personal struggles in a political life. Vasanth Kannabiran’s ‘Taken at the flood’, the political journey spread across almost five decades leaves the reader with an affirmative optimism. With high and low tides of personal and socio-political experiences, the memoir indeed floods the reader with newer insights of human rights and women’s rights struggle in Hyderabad in particular and India in general. It is astonishing to read a political memoir, neither having the politically correct proclamations nor wading through the lobbies of mainstream violent politics. It is honest yet humble, emotional and yet balanced voyage of struggles. The struggles she faced and underwent for human rights in general and women’s rights in particular. As she rightly concludes “I realised that it (her life) is interleaved with the history of the struggles for women’s and human rights, and that my personal struggle and growth has been immense and deserves to be recorded” (pg.174).

The book indeed reinforces the axiom ‘personal is political’, by unfolding different arenas of her career as a teacher, feminist-activist, institution builder, writer, public speaker, and importantly comrade and life partner of human right legend K.G. Kannabiran. Very often when both the partners have common goal of justice, even while walking on different paths, the line between personal life and public-political life gets blur, including the pain that seemed personal, becomes a part of a larger movement. The humongous amount of work she did ranging from teacher’s union to civil liberty movements, grass root development work to feminist networking, column writing to academic publishing, some sweet and bitter, but largely gratifying experiences are reflected in neatly divided chapters of the book. The memories are filled with self-reflections, a journey of fulfilment, of self-praise, self- admiration (justifiably so) but not boasting or bragging, but a looking back in hindsight

with a pride and accomplishment. For the readers, an activist or otherwise, this book can be life lessons about the challenges one might face while taking the difficult and lesser travelled path, the pains and failures one might encounter en-route and yet sail through.

Chapters are discretely lined up, self-explanatory with their titles and chronological, not a date to date account but the chronology of how she grew from being a teacher to an activist, a human right torch bearer, a pioneers in feminist movement and a nationwide acclaimed figure. The style of writing with lucid, short, simple, but powerful sentences, re-counting naked reality without covering it up or decorating it with jargons. There are intriguing impressions, profiles and sketches of her fellow travellers, close knit family, family like friends, beginning with her life partner to every small aide who held her hand, helped her, encouraged her and stood by, to whom she owes her journey. Occasional use of metaphors or poetic expressions enriches the text. She efficiently creates poetic paradoxes. Anecdotes at the right places, keeps the interest intact and make the narratives personal and poignant. Sometimes short sentences, gave the biggest shock, like the one where she talks about Arun Shouri not been able to meet Kanna, as he left the town and Kanna left the world. “We promised to call and tell him, but the next day Arun had left—and so had Kanna”. (Pg. 143)

The Early Milestones in the Voyage

The tree that stands tall today, had the right seed planted in the right soil. Vasanth Kannabiran’s tall stature had deep roots in her early years of training. And she vividly describes her childhood memories that somewhere moulded her to be what she later became. Born in pre independent era (1939) having memories of partition riots, influences of different people in the family and a secular neighbourhood shaping her right based approach and ideology in her formative years. Way back in 1954 she took a feminist stand at a high school election, without even realising that she was challenging patriarchy – a word that she hears and understands only thirty years later. Her honesty throughout the narrative is established by inclusion of conflict between her father and her husband in their initial years of companionship. She in her initial years of marriage, like millions of Indian working women, couldn’t escape guilt of a working mother. But her realisation of the only thing “children need is love and space” helped her raise her children with meagre resources but best of human values. She by and large had a stable childhood and a comfortable family life and thereby saying didn’t know what it meant to be unhappy, disheartened or

dissatisfied. She reiterates the strengths and weaknesses of having “family without margins,” house with open doors in several of the chapters. As an English teacher, teaching was a vocation and not just a career choice. This very profession sowed the seeds of being a good public speaker in her later years. Her political journey began with the birth of *Stree Mukti Sangathan* (SSS) in 1978 after Rameeza bee’s rape case and the trial. Having a lawyer husband, only acted as a catalyst to her spirit that yearned for justice. The initial chapters of the memoir trace the emergence of *Stree Mukti Sangathan* after the verdict of Muktheadhar commission, its strengths and limitations and her association as a founding mother to feeling marginalised and ultimately leaving *Stree Mukti Sangathan*. As she says “So much of that time is forgotten now. So much can never be forgotten,” (Pg. 8) SSS indeed became a landmark in early feminist movements of not just Hyderabad but of India too. Later her entry into public life and stint as a speaker –activist has been described quite captivantly. Beginning with a small speech in State bank of India’s employee gathering, she had only flourished from there. Time and again in the book, she owes a lot to her husband’s career, left leanings (though she never identified herself as a hard-core leftist) and nature of work for the civil liberties of the last person in the society, that shaped her character as an activist. She in a way articulates indebtedness and justifiably so, towards her husband for her own political journey.

Unlike other middle-class working women, she as a wife or a mother who loved cooking had different vision, different ways to perceive life events, leave alone celebrating them. There are fascinating narratives of being an English teacher on side and an activist on the other how she lived a double life separated by a ‘glass wall’.

On to the Path Less Travelled

In spite of having a politically active and human right crusader husband, her journey as an activist was never an easy one, but surely her accounts from those days are inspirational. She has a brief political stint as a President of Telangana Affiliated College Teachers’ Association (TACTA). It proved to be an educational time being in Union representing larger interest and facing men in authority. In a way she got a taste of ‘the real politics’ and there too she felt people lacked conviction and vision for larger picture.

As the book progresses, the memories become more vivid, personal and yet relatable at every juncture. Her romance with Kanna (as her husband K.G.

Kannabiran her husband was fondly addressed) and his crusade began with being a serving wife to a secretary, listener and to partner in crime for her husband's political legal activities. Growing up amidst communists, she had realised the importance of "So, instead of moving up, we moved diagonally. I am eternally grateful for that. The tenor of our life gradually swung from a steady upwardly mobile middle-class existence to one that was steeped in politics." (Pg. 35) And unlike many partners who would complaint of limiting their opportunities of material wellbeing, she was happy to be politically engaged and active than being rich. What the book suggests and she quite openly admits, that she wasn't just an activist's wife but through her ground breaking work developed an independent identity.

The book apart from teaching series of lessons in activism, recent Indian political history and the Maoists struggle down south it becomes a bible for a happy mature marriage. The intimate relation, emotional bond and understanding that the Kannabiran couple shared with both having different trails to walk on, is truly inspirational. In post emergency period, her getting involved in every detail of a case that came to Kanna, getting more and more involved in the activism and civil liberty movement were her formative years. End notes for every chapter helps to relate to friends, colleagues and aide associated with them at important events of their lives.

Vasanth Kannabiran's real tryst with the world was as a feminist activist and researcher. Her chapter on Women's movement reinforces her passion for the profession she then had taken up. That of an institutional builder, building capacities for women across the nation. The chapter is filled with familiar names in the women's liberation movement and her comraderies with them. She too like many in that journey had ideological clashes and at the same time newer understanding of taken for granted realities. But nowhere one finds bitterness of her experience inflowing in the memoir. There are heartfelt accounts of close-knit friendship at SSS about her experiences outside SSS and lessons learnt thereby, including establishment of Anveshi, women's writing project with S. Tharu and Lalita. She in hindsight now can objectively gauge the factors that led to divisions in women's movement (that she saw as 'inevitable'), and that also led to dissolving of SSS in 1989-90 and later setting up of Asmita Resource centre in 1991. These experiences she describes as largely satisfying and teaching her to have 'confidence in her ability to use her mind'. For every women's right's aspirant these lines like "The creativity in the women's movement energised most of us with a sense of purpose and meaning, and it

was an incredible experience that outlived much of the fatigue and burn-out that was also part of this journey”. (Pg. 79) mark the biggest learning.

The subsequent chapter or two goes on to prove she wasn’t just a feminist-activist but a campaigner for development of every human being. Working in different civil society organisations, NGOs enriched her with experiences of documenting lives, fighting for rights, community and capacity building etc. Her being bilingual helped to reach out to rural and local women. The anecdotes that helped breaking away of shackles of many biases, prejudices and rituals are intriguing. Simultaneously, the aggressive feminist in her was shaping, realising the structures through which patriarchy operated, at subtle level. This was the time when setting Asmita was being set while she also sails through the invigorating journey of writing Ballets giving her ultimate creative satisfaction.

Every chapter coherently picks up from where she leaves the earlier one. There is rarely any inconsistency or a disruption in the flow. The chapter on her writing was in a way an eye opening and yet reassuring read. Eye opening to the issues of censorship that she in her personal life and as a researcher witnessed when women hold a pen. At the same time, she without being modest describes her popularity as a column writer was reassuring of women enjoying unbounded success as columnist. As a writer she rightly confesses Whatever the reason, “I do believe I have a gift for capturing voices”. (Pg 74) Throughout the memoir, she never fails to acknowledge her friends, seniors, activists from the field as and when she received their help, appreciation or guidance in her journey. May it be writing assignments with Volga (P.Lalita Kumari), a close friend, co-travellers for a Telugu Column on women’s issue then being a part of her journey till date to every single women and men who appreciated her writing skills. Her realisation of importance of local language in reaching out as a feminist writer, marks an important lesson for many more generations of women writers. She in her initial years was cautioned against using jargons, and she has followed it in this book as well.

Expanding the Wings to wider horizons

The decades post-1990s seem to be a new high in her vocation as an activist. The memoir goes international with elongated list of summits, meets, conferences, programs and workshops. Her activities after the Beijing conference by UN and the birth of National alliance of women’s organisation. (NAWO). She witnessed the solidarity, sisterhood and camaraderie amongst different organisations working for women’s Cause. The journey of doing a

gender training report for Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE), her experiences and memories of visiting different south Asian countries (including a very warm and friendly one to Pakistan) for the same work all sums up to her expanding her scope of work and vision. The narratives reiterate the pertinent and recurrently affirmed experience “It’s always exciting to see how, when women collaborate, they find the most radical ways of overcoming barriers of language, class and race, to make political statements that are innovative and creative.” (Pg. 80).

Her memoir also brings out the personal apathy and pain that Kannabirans felt caused from breakdown of secular spirit and human rights. May it be as a part of peace reinstating work by Hyderabad *Ekta* or talking to riots victim in Gujarat Pogrom. There are heart wrenching accounts of the agony of losing activists, human right defenders and comrades by Naxalites or in fake police encounters. And the constant fear of Kanna being the target. Incident after incident talking about apathy of human right activist and the way they are treated brutally by police for supporting naxalism or being considered one. They lived in fear, but faced it boldly. Their home being shelter for student activists to even victims of Naxalites. Their home “veritable hub of political activity” with “doors never closed” literally and metaphorically, reinforces their image as real crusaders of human rights and not just professional doing their job.

Apart from the vibrant descriptions of varied experiences and struggles that she undergoes, what also amuses a reader is her memory. Recreating the minutest details of an event from 1908s or 1990s without burdening it with just information or a historical narration, she uses captivating style of writing that keeps the interest intact. May it be juxtaposing chaos and pompousness of a political election rally to a Maoist gathering in a small town with lakhs of attendees purely for a hope of a better life or the Godhra pogrom and tribunal hearing she witnessed, the intensity and brutality of it, she never ceases to accomplish her goal of telling an objective story. Even amidst a whole lot of political upheaval, assassination of leaders taking place around them, or during her “lessons in social democracy”. She is able weave stories of friends and their qualities, abilities and achievements. She is able to record small reactions, conversations, incidents with enchanting finesse.

The humane and affectionate side of her/them is enlightened very well in her chapter on friendship. Owing to their wide spread activities, it was natural to have many friends but what was important is they had some who stood by them

through every thick and thin. They were rich in friends with friendship of four decades, including with some major figures in recent history of India. She is also able to honestly share the feeling of betrayal by friends who had ideological difference with her or Kanna. There are painful accounts of losing family like friends, especially of Shankran, a civil servant of a high repute but a fellow traveller - the closest of all. There are accounts of heartfelt tributes to their friends. The struggles that she saw closely, the strength that she admires even at a distant after years. Praising their abilities and strengths openly.

For Kanna and Vasanth as a couple what is highlighted in the memoir is that they loved each other conventionally and bloomed unconventionally. At every stage they needed each other's presence and considered important. They were inseparable in their struggles to uphold humanity, rights and justice and yet had their own individual worlds to prosper and wander in. This chapter on their personal life is least about her political journey and mostly delves in her personal space. But it is equally pertinent and interesting to know how democratic personal spaces enable a democratic outlook in political arena or vice versa. The chapter on her travels also is an extension of their personal life experiences. Her times of feeling "inadequate, bored, guilty, unwanted, loved, tolerated and supported, all at the same time. But mostly, inadequate and guilty." (Pg. 158). Gives a slice of her life during her US stay, gives a closer look into how democratic and close-knit family was. Also, important learnings that she picked up about life during those trips in India and abroad while meeting people across the globe like "It just goes to prove that political differences need not damage personal relationships" (Pg.164).

Appropriately, the last chapter is on her life after Kanna's passing away. As her work although independent was so much intertwined with Kannabiran's work, that departure of Kanna also in a way was inching towards an end of an era of her political life, while she continued with her writings and public addresses. The fundamental and essential questions that she raised in a piece written after Kannabiran passed away, sums up their life motto. "I feel that I have been fortunate in the many opportunities— all unsolicited—that came my way" (Pg. 174). A political memoir ending on a note of optimism and gratification.

In her own words "Memories are relived moments of long forgotten, carefully buried joys and sorrows. demanding task that gnaws at your heart, but in the end you do it for yourself. You do not look for approval. You hang your life out on the line. Whether someone simply passes by without a glance or stops and

starts, is of no consequence. Not after a point” (Pg. 164-165). In India, we have few political memoirs and fewer from women. The handful of them that we have are generally from woman in mainstream politics, from women who participated in national freedom movement or witnessed the partition. We as a society, love to have slice of other’s life, more so if they are public figures. But this one is different, for the slice being not juicy but healthy too. Memoirs are not just biographies or autobiographies; they weave an entire era and world that existed around them. It is not just recollecting the past, but almost reliving it through words. Vasanth Kannabiran rightly, honestly and efficiently does so.

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STATEMENT

Statement by the Secretary-General's SDG Advocates and SDG Advocate Alumni

3 April 2020

We, the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Advocates and Alumni, are greatly concerned by the novel coronavirus outbreak (COVID-19) and the impacts it is having in every corner of the globe. We stand in solidarity with those affected.

Our thoughts are with those who have lost loved ones and those who are caring for the sick. We express our deep appreciation, gratitude, and admiration for those on the frontlines fighting this virus, saving lives, and keeping essential services running in countries under lockdown.

Fighting this pandemic, leaving no one behind, is the immediate priority for the SDG campaign.

Global, regional, national, and local level policy responses to the outbreak must be designed with a gender lens and pay special attention to those living in extreme poverty, with disabilities, indigenous communities, the homeless, refugees, and internally displaced persons. Responses must be equitable and reach the digitally isolated. Leaders must protect civic space in their countries to ensure policy responses are transparent and inclusive. Particular attention must be given to addressing rising levels of domestic violence.

We call for urgent global action to protect and support the most vulnerable countries and areas, particularly in Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, Latin America, and Small Island States. Leaders, policymakers, and the international community, in particular the G20 and G7, must act quickly and decisively to mobilise the resources needed to stop the spread of COVID-19 in these areas, while also scaling up healthcare support and strengthening social safety nets.

We stand in solidarity with out-of-school children, millions from vulnerable backgrounds, and call for provision of equitable and inclusive distance education for all, so that learning never stops.

Economic policies responding to the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic must meet the needs of affected countries and the most vulnerable. The approaches governments take will have long-lasting effects and must avoid deepening the root causes of climate change and conflict. We urge policymakers to be bold.

Confronting COVID-19 requires coordinated global humanitarian and socio-economic responses. The virus does not respect borders. Addressing this crisis requires worldwide collaboration and partnerships, across all aspects of the response. We ask member states to work together, guided by the UN and a recognition of our common humanity.

We applaud the Secretary-General for establishing his Response and Recovery Fund. This fund will support low- and middle-income countries, and crucially, help countries preserve the gains they have made towards achieving the 2030 Agenda.

We urge member states and all stakeholders, including business, civil society organisations and philanthropy, to accelerate their action and investments in response to COVID-19. Scaled-up and long-lasting support is fundamental to protect, help, and rebuild for those furthest behind.

The Secretary-General's call for an immediate global ceasefire is essential. We call on all warring parties to cease hostilities and "focus together on the true fight of our lives."

Looking beyond the urgency of the current moment, we endorse the Secretary-General's call for the world to recover better. The SDGs and the Paris Agreement are our roadmaps. Policies, actions and investments to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic must be guided by the 2030 Agenda as we step up action to build resilient societies and achieve the world we want.

World leaders agreed in 2015 to achieve the SDGs by 2030. We have only ten years to meet them. The Secretary-General earlier this year called for a Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs. The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown into sharp relief the need to respond with urgency and ambition, to recover better for both people and planet.

Secretary General's SDG Advocates

H.E. Erna Solberg, Prime Minister of Norway

H.E. Nana Akufo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of Ghana

H.H. Muhammadu Sanusi II, Former Emir of Kano

H.H. Sheikha Moza bint Nasser of Qatar, Founder of Education Above All Foundation

Mr Richard Curtis, Screenwriter, Campaigner, and Film Director

Ms Hindou Ibrahim, Founder and Coordinator of Association for Indigenous Women and Peoples of Chad (AFPAT)

Mr Jack Ma, Founder, Alibaba Group and Jack Ma Foundation

Ms Graça Machel, Founder of Graça Machel Trust and Founder of Foundation for Community Development

Ms Dia Mirza, Actress and Producer, UNEP Goodwill Ambassador for India

Ms Alaa Murabit, Founder of Voice of Libyan Women, Founder of Omnis Institute, and CEO of Impact 2030

Ms Nadia Murad, Founder of Nadia's Initiative and UNODC Goodwill Ambassador for the Dignity of Survivors of Human Trafficking

Mr Edward Ndopu, Activist, Humanitarian, and Special Advisor at RTW Investments

Mr Paul Polman, Chair of the International Chamber of Commerce and Vice-Chair of UN Global Compact

Professor Jeffrey Sachs, Director of the Center for Sustainable Development at Columbia University and Director of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network

Ms Marta Vieira da Silva, Footballer and UN Women Goodwill Ambassador

Mr Forest Whitaker, Founder and CEO of Whitaker Peace & Development Initiative and UNESCO Special Envoy for Peace and Reconciliation

Secretary General's SDG Advocates Alumni

H.R.H Crown Princess Victoria of Sweden

Ambassador Dho Young-shim, Chairperson of UN World Tourism Organization's Sustainable Tourism for Eliminating Poverty Foundation
Ms Leymah Gbowee, Founder of Gbowee Peace Foundation Africa
Ms Shakira Mebarak, Artist, Founder of Pies Descalzos Foundation, and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador
Mr Lionel Messi, Footballer, Founder of Lionel Messi Foundation, and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador
Mr Muhammad Yunus, Founder of Grameen Bank

Retract All Notifications and Orders that Criminalize or Use Coercion and Violence Against the Movement of Migrant Workers

Jan Swasthya Abhiyan (JSA) and All India People's Science Network (AIPSN) We, Jan Swasthya Abhiyan and All India People's Science Network are extremely concerned at the way Government has announced the lockdown in an utterly arbitrary, unprepared and hurried manner, which has implications for the vulnerable populations. The lockdown has been followed by curtailment of public and other transportation. It is now evident that the lockdown was imposed without forethought and planning for the obvious accompanying arrangements for a variety of needs of the people, especially of migrant workers, daily wage earners, unorganized sector workers including the self-employed. It is also clear that predilections of migrant workers of all categories in the lockdown-triggered context of loss of employment and incomes, loss of shelter, deprivation of food and high exposure to the Covid-19 epidemic in conditions of overcrowding and potential malnutrition, was not taken into account when announcing the lockdown. No preparatory actions were taken either. That this led to anxiety, increasing desperation and pronounced desire to return to native villages and towns where migrant workers and their families perceive that at least basic food, shelter and social support structures would be available to them, should have been anticipated. The mass exodus of migrant workers and their families from metros and other cities back to their villages, and their resort to attempting to walk all the way, often over many hundred kilometers, in the absence of any other mode of public transportation. This has come at significant social, economic and human costs, evidence of which is fast emerging through

media and civil society reports from different corners of the country.

Six days into the lockdown, tens of thousands of distressed, hungry and fatigued people, including women and children (pregnant women and infants) are waiting desperately under overcrowded conditions at various places for any available transport that would take them back to their towns and villages. Lakhs of migrant labour and their families are paying an enormous human price to undertake these journeys, traversing hundreds of kilometres on foot. Women, children and the elderly are particularly at risk. Till date 22 deaths have been recorded of migrants, including children, on the road and the actual number of deaths may be higher.

In the absence of anticipation and preparedness, there were initially different responses by State government, with some arranging for buses to take these migrants to different locations within their States or to state borders with neighbouring states. Even in such cases, no arrangements were made for safe transport maintaining physical distance, or preparedness for quarantine or other precautions even at the district level in the different destinations. Violence by police and authorities to impose the lockdown in the context of such “distress reverse migration” at an unprecedented scale is being widely reported. Media has reported the spraying of returning migrant workers in Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh with disinfectant which is unacceptable and abhorrent behaviour on the part of the administration. The Chief Minister of Telengana is reported as saying that he may have to pass shoot-at-sight orders for anyone violating the lockdown. The notification by Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), No. 40-3/2020-DM-I (A) of 29th March 2020 reiterates that 'movement of migrants is violation of the lock-down' and urges state action, including police action. While the MHA notification does detail some of the ways in which rights of these migrants must be protected by their employers and landlords and directs States to provide them with food and shelter, no uniform guidelines or support has been given. However, the MHA notification's assertion that this is a violation of lockdown measures has prompted states like Haryana to impose penal orders and criminalise the migrants. Following up on the MHA's orders, the Government of Haryana has notified that no arrangement of transport will be made for people to go back to their native homes. The letter further notes that all people on the road will be sent back to where they were working and in case they resist, then they will be booked for 'jaywalking' and incarcerated in stadiums that are to be turned into 'temporary jails'. We are dismayed at the use

of the word “jay walking” as it reflects a bias against the struggles of the poor migrant workers and blind-sides the enormous humanitarian crisis. In the unfolding scenario, we are outraged at the response of some states, reinforcing that the mass movement of migrants arising out of sheer desperation constitutes a violation of the lockdown, and imposing penal orders to criminalise the migrants. Further, the mass spraying of disinfectant on migrants returning home is not only a cruel act of violation of their dignity, it can have serious repercussions for their health. These actions and notifications are an absolute travesty of justice and violation of human rights of some of the poorest and most vulnerable people of this country on an unprecedented scale. The situation that the migrants are in today is a reflection of continued and long-term State apathy and failure of the State in anticipating the problems likely to confront migrant workers and other vulnerable unorganized sector workers, which many experts and civil society organizations had cautioned about even at the outset. Penalising them for undertaking these perilous journeys that have been necessitated by total absence of preparedness, and negligence is an extreme form of violation of basic human rights. JSA and AIPSN urge the central and state governments to immediately review the lockdown imposed across the country, retract the orders that criminalise and penalise the forced movement of migrant and take measures to alleviate problems faced by migrants. The Central and State governments must take the following action:

- Retract immediately any notifications, orders that criminalise, use coercion and violence to prevent the enforced movement of migrant workers. No coercion should be permitted either through government directive or through administrative decisions. The State instead needs to uphold the human rights of people and address this health and human crisis with compassion and care.
- Stop penalizing migrant workers and revoke notifications / orders on conversion of stadiums or other spaces into jails; instead, use such spaces for shelter and put in place measures for provision of food and health care.
- Stop police brutality on the migrants and take action against the officers of the police force and administration who have inflicted violence.
- Stop spraying chemicals/chlorine on migrants returning at the borders in the name of ‘disinfecting’. WHO Myth Busters notes “spraying alcohol or

chlorine all over your body will not kill viruses... in fact it is harmful". This kind of action is not acceptable.

- Allow migrant workers and their families to make an informed decision about remaining where they are or going to their villages.
- Facilitate free transportation of those who are stranded in various places to take them to their respective villages, towns, cities; the state must undertake all necessary measures to ensure utmost protection in the course of the journey as well at the destination to prevent COVID-19 infection. The central government may issue guidelines to the states to screen such workers and start transportation through road or railways. This transport should be completely free, without any conditionality of possession of Aadhaar or any other ID card.
- Urgently ensure provisioning of all necessary services (food, shelter, water, healthcare, information) for those who are still living at their place of work, so that they are not forced to leave. State's support should be given even in the absence of bank account or Aadhar card.
- Implement urgent measures to provide comprehensive information about COVID-19, reassure and mitigate concerns and panic. Initiate public messaging against discrimination and implement steps to address any violations by employers, landlords and governments (refer MHA notification dated 29/0320)
- Implement urgent measures for maternity care for the women migrants who are pregnant and provide food and milk supply to infants and children

Jan Swasthya Abhiyan and All India People's Science Network

Date: 31st March 2020

For more information please contact:

Deepa V. – 9871642320

D. Raghunandan – 9810098621

Sarojini N. – 9818664634

Sulakshana Nandi - 9406090595

Statement of Feminists and Women's Rights Organizations from the Global South and Marginalized Communities in the Global North

We, the undersigned organizations committed to feminist principles and women's human rights, call on governments to recall and act in accordance with human rights standards in their response to COVID-19 and uphold the principles of equality and non-discrimination, centering the most marginalized people -- women, children, elderly, people with disabilities, people with compromised health, rural people, unhoused people, institutionalized people, LGBT+ people, refugees, migrants, indigenous peoples, stateless people, human rights defenders, and people in conflict and war zones. Feminist policy recognizes and prioritizes the needs of the most vulnerable communities. Beyond the response to this pandemic, it is necessary for the development of peaceful, inclusive and prosperous communities within human rights-driven states.

It is critical that governments utilize a human rights and intersectional based approach to ensure that everyone has access to necessary information, support systems and resources during the current crisis. We have recognized nine key areas of focus to be considered in the context of the COVID-19 crisis. They are listed below with brief descriptions of potential challenges and recommendations that consider the lived experiences of people in vulnerable position -- especially women and girls that endure a disproportionate impact due to their sex, gender, and sexual orientation -- and steer policymakers toward solutions that do not exacerbate their vulnerabilities or magnify existing inequality and ensure their human rights.

These guidelines are not a replacement for the engagement of women and girls and other marginalized communities in decision-making, but a rationale for consultation and diversity in leadership.

Key Focus Areas for a Feminist Policy on COVID-19

Food security. In countries that depend on food imports, there are fears of closing borders and markets and the inability to access food. This concern is exacerbated for people experiencing poverty and in rural communities, especially women, who do not have easy access to city centers and major

grocery stores and markets. This leads to people with the means purchasing large quantities of goods which limits availability for those with lower incomes who are not able to do the same and are likely to face shortages when they attempt to replenish their food supplies. In response to this challenge, we call on governments to:

- Increase -- or introduce -- food stamps and subsidies, both in quantity for those already receiving them and in expansion of access to include those who become more vulnerable due to current circumstances
- Direct businesses to ration nonperishable food supply to control inventory and increase access for those who, due to their income levels, must purchase over a longer period of time
- Send food supply to rural communities to be stored and distributed as needed to eliminate the delay in accessing supply in city centers and safeguard against shortages due to delays in shipping
- Send food supply to people unable to leave their homes (e.g. disabled people living alone or in remote areas)

Healthcare. All countries expect a massive strain on their public health systems due to the spread of the virus, and this can lead to decreased maternal health and increased infant mortality rates. There is often lack of access to healthcare services and medical supplies in rural communities. The elderly, people with disabilities, and people with compromised or suppressed immune systems are at high risk, and may not have live-in support systems. The change in routine and spread of the virus can create or exacerbate mental health issues. This crisis has a disproportionate impact on women who form, according to the World Health Organization's March 2019 Gender equity in the health workforce working paper, 70% of workers in the health and social sector, according to the World Health Organisation. It also disproportionately affects those who provide care for others.

In response to this challenge, we call on governments to:

- Ensure the availability of sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis, including differentiated infection and mortality rates.
- Increase availability and delivery of healthcare services and responders, medical supplies, and medications
- Ensure women's timely access to necessary and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services during the crisis, such as emergency contraception and safe abortion

- Maintain an adequate stock of menstrual hygiene products at healthcare and community facilities
- Train medical staff and frontline social workers to recognize signs of domestic violence and provide appropriate resources and services
- Develop a database of high-risk people who live alone and establish a system and a network to maintain regular contact with and deliver supplies to them
- Provide for the continued provision of health care services based on non-biased medical research and tests -- unrelated to the virus -- for women and girls
- Implement systems to effectively meet mental health needs including accessible (e.g. sign language, captions) telephone/videocall hotlines, virtual support groups, emergency services, and delivery of medication
- Support rehabilitation centers to remain open for people with disabilities and chronic illness
- Direct all healthcare institutions to provide adequate health care services to people regardless of health insurance status, immigration status and affirm the rights of migrant people and stateless people -- with regular and irregular status -- and unhoused people to seek medical attention to be free from discrimination, detention, and deportation
- Ensure health service providers and all frontline staff receive adequate training and have access to equipment to protect their own health and offer mental health support
- Assess and meet the specific needs of women health service providers

Education. The closure of schools is necessary for the protection of children, families, and communities and will help to flatten the curve so that the peak infection rate stays manageable. It, however, presents a major disruption in education and the routine to which children are accustomed. In many cases, children who depend on the school lunch program will face food insecurity. They also become more vulnerable to violence in their homes and communities which can go undetected due to no contact. School closures also have a disproportionate burden on women who traditionally undertake a role as caregivers. In response to this challenge, we call on governments to:

- Direct educational institutions to prepare review and assignment packages for children to keep them academically engaged and prevent setbacks and provide guidance for parents on the use of the material
- Create educational radio programming appropriate for school-age children

- Subsidize childcare for families unable to make alternate arrangements for their children
- Expand free internet access to increase access to online educational platforms and material and enable children to participate in virtual and disability-accessible classroom sessions where available
- Provide laptops for children who need them in order to participate in on-line education
- Adopt measures to ensure they continue receiving food by making sure it can be delivered or collected
- Provide extra financial and mental health support for families caring for children with disabilities

Social inequality. These exist between men and women, citizens and migrants, people with regular and irregular status, people with and without disabilities, neurotypical and neuroatypical people, and other perceived dichotomies or non-binary differences as well as racial, ethnic, and religious groups. Existing vulnerabilities are further complicated by loss of income, increased stress, and unequal domestic responsibilities. Women and girls will likely have increased burdens of caregiving which will compete with (and possibly replace) their paid work or education. Vulnerable communities are put at further risk when laws are enacted, or other measures are introduced, that restrict their movement and assembly, particularly when they have less access to information or ability to process it. In response to this challenge, we call on governments to:

- Encourage the equitable sharing of domestic tasks in explicit terms and through allowances for time off and compensation for all workers
- Provide increased access to sanitation and emergency shelter spaces for unhoused people
- Implement protocol and train authorities on recognizing and engaging vulnerable populations, particularly where new laws are being enforced
- Consult with civil society organizations the process of implementing legislation and policy
- Ensure equal access to information, public health education and resources in multiple languages, including sign and indigenous peoples languages, accessible formats, and easy-to-read and plain languages

Water and sanitation. Everyone does not have access to clean running water. In response to this challenge, we call on governments to:

- Ensure infrastructure is in place for clean, potable water to be piped into homes and delivered to underserved areas
- Cease all disconnections and waive all reconnection fees to provide everyone with clean, potable water
- Bring immediate remedy to issues of unclean water
- Build public handwashing stations in communities

Economic inequality. People are experiencing unemployment, underemployment, and loss of income due to the temporary closure of businesses, reduced hours, and limited sick leave, vacation, personal time off and stigmatization. This negatively impacts their ability to meet financial obligations, generates bigger debts, and makes it difficult for them to acquire necessary supplies. Due to closures and the need for social distancing, there is also lack of care options and ability to pay for care for children, the elderly, and people with disabilities. This produces a labor shift from the paid or gig economy to unpaid economy as family care providers. In response to this challenge, we call on governments to:

- Implement moratoriums on evictions due to rental and mortgage arrears and deferrals of rental and mortgage payments for those affected, directly or indirectly, by the virus and for people belonging to vulnerable groups
- Provide Universal Basic Income for those with lost income
- Provide financial support to unhoused people, refugees, and women's shelters
- Provide additional financial aid to elderly people and people with disabilities
- Expedite the distribution of benefits
- Modify sick leave, parental and care leave, and personal time off policies
- Direct businesses to invite employees to work remotely on the same financial conditions as agreed prior to pandemic
- Distribute packages with necessities including soap, disinfectants, and hand sanitizer

Violence against women, domestic violence/Intimate partner violence (DV/IPV). Rates and severity of domestic violence/intimate partner violence against women, including sexual and reproductive violence, will likely surge as tension rises. Mobility restrictions (social distance, self-isolation, extreme lockdown, or quarantine) will also increase survivors' vulnerability to abuse and need for protection services. (See Economic inequality.) Escape will

be more difficult as the abusive partner will be at home all the time. Children face particular protection risks, including increased risks of abuse and/or being separated from their caregivers. Accessibility of protection services will decline if extreme lockdown is imposed as public resources are diverted. Women and girls fleeing violence and persecution will not be able to leave their countries of origin or enter asylum countries because of the closure of borders and travel restrictions.

In response to this challenge, we call on governments to:

- Establish separate units within police departments and telephone hotlines to report domestic violence
- Increase resourcing for nongovernmental organizations that respond to domestic violence and provide assistance -- including shelter, counselling, and legal aid -- to survivors, and promote those that remain open are available
- Disseminate information about gender-based violence and publicize resources and services available
- Direct designated public services, including shelters, to remain open and accessible
- Ensure protection services implement programs that have emergency plans that include protocols to ensure safety for residents and clients
- Develop a protocol for the care of women who may not be admitted due to exposure to the virus which includes safe quarantine and access to testing
- Extend the duration of judicial precautionary measures/protection orders to cover the whole mandatory period of lockdown and quarantine
- Make provisions for domestic violence survivors to attend court proceedings via accessible teleconference
- Direct police departments to respond to all domestic violence reports and connect survivors with appropriate resources
- Ensure women and girls and other people in vulnerable positions are not rejected at the border, have access to the territory and to asylum legal procedures. If needed, they will be given access to testing

Access to information. There is unequal access to reliable information, especially for those structurally discriminated against and belonging to marginalized communities. People will need to receive regular updates from national health authorities for the duration of this crisis. In response to this challenge, we call on governments to:

- Launch public campaigns to prevent and contain the spread of the virus
- Consult and work with civil society in all initiatives to provide information to the public
- Make information available to the public in plain language and accessible means, modes and formats, including internet, radio and text messages
- Ensure people with disabilities have access to information through sign language, closed captions, and other appropriate means
- Increase subsidies to nongovernmental organizations that will ensure messages translated and delivered through appropriate means to those who speak different languages or have specific needs
- Build and deploy a task force to share information and resources with vulnerable people with specific focus on unhoused, people with disabilities, migrant, refugees, and neuroatypical people

Abuse of power. People in prisons, administrative migration centers, refugee camps, and people with disabilities in institutions and psychiatric facilities are at higher risk of contagion due to the confinement conditions. They can also become more vulnerable to abuse or neglect as a result of limited external oversight and restriction of visits. It is not uncommon for authorities to become overzealous in their practices related to enforcement of the law and introduction of new laws. During this crisis, vulnerable people, especially dissidents, are at a higher risk of having negative, potentially dangerous interactions with authorities. In response to this challenge, we call on governments to:

- Provide and implement restrictions in relation to COVID-19 in accordance with the law. Any restriction should be strictly necessary, proportionate and in the interest of legitimate objectives of general interest
- Monitor restrictions taken in the public interest do not result in any gender-specific harm to women and girls who are already extremely vulnerable and at risk of being denied their basic human rights
- Consult any changes in existing laws with human rights organizations and Ombudsperson/Human Rights Defenders
- Encourage law enforcement officers to focus on increasing safety rather than arrests
- Train law enforcement officers, care workers, and social workers to recognize vulnerabilities and make necessary adjustments in their approach and engagement
- Adopt human rights-oriented protocols to reduce spreading of the virus in detention and confinement facilities

- Strengthen external oversight and facilitate safe contact with relatives i.e. free telephone calls
- Support civil society organizations and country Ombudsperson/Human Rights Defenders in monitoring the developments within those institutions on a regular basis
- Commit to discontinuing emergency laws and powers once pandemic subsides and restore the check and balances mechanism

Signed by:

Networks and organizations

1. 4M Mentor Mothers Network
2. A Long Walk Home
3. ABAAD-Resource Center for Gender Equality
4. ABOFEM ARGENTINA
5. Action pour l'Education et la Promotion de la Femme (AEPF-Tchad)
6. Activista Ghana
7. Adivasi Dalit Woman Civil Rights Forum
8. African Diaspora Women's Network
9. African Disability Forum- ADF
10. African Women 4 Empowerment
11. African Women Leaders Forum
12. AFROAMERICAS
13. AKAHATA
14. Akina Mama wa Afrika
15. Akshara Centre
16. Aliansi Remaja Independen Sulawesi Selatan
17. All India Progressive Women's Association AIPWA
18. Alliances for Africa
19. AMVFE
20. ANANDI
21. Annie North Women's Refugee and Domestic Violence Service
22. Arab Women Network for Parity and Solidarity
23. Arise Nigerian Woman Foundation
24. Arts for Women Indonesia
25. Artykuł 6 (Article 6 feminist disability collective)
26. Asamblea Feminista Plurinacional
27. Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW)
28. Asociación Ciudadana ACCEDER
29. Associação brasileira de antropologia- Brazilian Anthropology Association
30. Association for Advocacy and Legal Initiatives Trust (AALI)
31. Association Tunisienne des femmes démocrates

32. Associazione Dream Team Donne in Rete
33. Associazione Il Giardino dei Ciliegi
34. Associazione Maddalena
35. Associazione Orlando
36. Associazione Risorse Donna
37. Associazione Topnomastica femminile
38. Aswat Nissa
39. AtGender
40. ATHENA Network
41. Atria, institute on gender equality and women's history
42. AWID
43. Awmr Italia Donne della Regione Mediterranea
44. Balance AC
45. Bangladesh Centre for Human Rights and Development (BCHRD)
46. Bangladesh Model Youth Parliament (Protiki Jubo Sangsahd)
47. Baobab Women's Project CIC
48. BAPSA
49. Believe mental health care organisation
50. Berliński Kongres Kobiet
51. Beyond Beijing Committee (BBC)Nepal
52. Border Crit Institute
53. BraveHeart Initiative for Youth & Women
54. Breakthrough (India)
55. Breakthrough (USA)
56. Broadsheet, New Zealand's Feminist Magazine
57. Campaign for Lead Free Water
58. Canadian Feminist Network
59. CARAM Asia
60. Catholics for Reproductive Health
61. CEDAW Committee of Trinidad and Tobago
62. CEHAT
63. Center for Building Resilient Communities
64. Center for gender and sexual and reproductive health, JP Grant school of public health
65. Center for Hunger-Free Communities
66. Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL)
67. Center for Migrant Advocacy Philippines
68. Center for Women's Global Leadership
69. Center for Women's Health and Human Rights, Suffolk University
70. Center Women and Modern World
71. Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy
72. Centre for Gender Justice
73. Centre for Social Concern and Development (CESOCODE)

74. Centro de Derechos de Mujeres
75. Centro de Mujeres ACCION YA
76. Centro di Women's Studies Milly Villa - Università della Calabria
77. CENTRO MUJERES A.C.
78. Centro Mujeres Latinas
79. CETEC
80. Channel Foundation
81. CHIRAPAQ Centro de Culturas Indígenas del Perú
82. CHOUF
83. Closet de Sor Juana
84. Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies (CSBR)
85. COFEM
86. Colectiva Lésbica Feminista Irreversibles
87. Colectivo "Género y Teología para el Desarrollo"
88. Collettivo Anguane
89. Comisión de Antropología Feminista y de Género, Colegio de Etnólogos y Antropólogos Sociales A.C
90. Comité de América Latina y el Caribe para la Defensa de los Derechos de las Mujeres, CLADEM
91. Common Health
92. Community Care for Emergency Response and Rehabilitation
93. Community Healthcare Initiative
94. Comunicación, Intercambio y Desarrollo Humano en América Latina, Asociación Civil (CIDHAL, A. C.)
95. Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd
96. Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights
97. Cooperativa Sociale Centro Donne Mantova
98. Coordinadora de la Mujer
99. COSPE
100. Council of Indigenous Women of Lower Lands of Europe
101. Courageous people health and development Initiative
102. CREA
103. Creativería Social, AC
104. DAWN Canada
105. Design Studio for Social Intervention
106. DESSI International
107. Development in Practice, Gender and Entrepreneurial Initiative (DIPGEI)
108. DIVA for Equality
109. Dorothy Njemanze Foundation
110. Dziewuchy Berlin
111. Echoesofwomeninafrica11@gmail.com
112. Emma organization for human development

113. EMPOWER Malaysia
114. End Violence Against Women Coalition (UK)
115. Enhancing Access to Health for Poverty reduction in Tanzania (EAHP Tanzania)
116. Enlace Continental de Mujeres Indígenas de las Américas ECMIA
117. Enlightenment and empowerment of northern women initiative
118. Equality Bahamas
119. Equipo Jurídico por los Derechos Humanos
120. Equipop
121. Etihad Peace Minorities Welfare Foundation
122. EuroMed Rights
123. European Roma Rights Centre (Brussels, Belgium)
124. FACICP Disability Plus
125. Families Planning Association of Puerto Rico (PROFAMILIAS)
126. Family Planning Association of Nepal
127. FAMM Indonesia
128. Federation for Women and Family Planning
129. Federation of Sexual and Gender Minorities Nepal
130. Federazione Femminile Evangelica Valdese e Metodista
131. Female Safe Environments-Her Safe Place
132. FEMBUD
133. Femini Berlin Polska
134. Feminist Alliance for Rights
135. Feminist Humanitarian Network
136. Feminist Policy Collective
137. Feminoteka Foundation
138. Femmes leadership et développement durable
139. FEMNET - African Women's Development and Communication Network
140. Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM)
141. First Future Leadership
142. Flash Dynamic Concepts
143. Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres
144. Food Corporation of India Handling Workers Union
145. Food Sovereignty Alliance, India
146. For Violence-Free Family Coalition
147. Forum Against Oppression of Women
148. Forum against Sex Selection
149. Four Worlds Europe
150. Fund for Congolese Women
151. Fundación Arcoíris por el respeto a la diversidad sexual
152. Fundación Código Humano
153. Fundacion Estudio e Investigacion de mujer FEIM
154. FUNDACION MARIA AMOR

155. Fundación Puntos de Encuentro
156. Fundacja "Inicjatywa Kobiet Aktywnych"
157. Fundacja Dziewuchy Dziewuchom
158. Furia vzw
159. GAMAG
160. Gamana Mahila Samuha
161. Gantala Press, Inc.
162. GAYa NUSANTARA Foundation
163. Gender and Environmental Risk Reduction Initiative (GERI)
164. Gender and Sociology Department, Institute of Sociology, CAS
165. Gender at Work
166. Gender Awareness Trust
167. Gender Equality,,Peace and Development Centre
168. GenDev Centre for Research and Innovation, India
169. Gimtrap AC
170. GirlHQ Foundation
171. Girls Voices Initiative
172. Girlupac
173. Global Alliance for Tax Justice
174. Global Fund for Children
175. Global Fund for Women
176. Global Justice Center
177. Global Rights for Women
178. Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation
179. Global Women's Institute
180. Graduate Women International
181. Grandmothers Advocacy Network
182. Grupo de Estudos Feministas em Política e Educação (GIRA/UFBA)
183. Grupo Guatemalteco de Mujeres-GGM
184. Hawai'i Institute for Human Rights
185. Herstoire Collective
186. Hollaback! Czech
187. Hope for the Needy Association
188. Humanity in Action Poland
189. ICW - International Community of Women Living with HIV
190. Icw argentina
191. Identities Media
192. If/When/How: Lawyering for Reproductive Justice
193. IMMAHACO Ladies COOPERATIVE Society 87 set
194. Inclusive Bangladesh
195. iNitiatives for Nigeria
196. Institute for Economic Justice

197. Institute for Gender and Development Studies-University of the West Indies
198. Institute for Young Women Development
199. Institute of Gender Studies, University of Guyana
200. Instituto de Estudos de Gênero da UFSC e NIGS UFSC
201. CULTURADH
202. Instituto de Transformación social de pr
203. Instituto de la Mujer
204. Instituto RIA
205. Interamerican Network of Women Shelters
206. International Center for Advocates Against Discrimination (ICAAD)
207. International Commission on Global Feminisms and Queer Politics (IUAES)
208. International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific
209. International Women's Rights Project
210. Ipas CAM
211. Istituto Comprensivo Statale "Don G. Russolillo"
212. Jaringan Muda Setara
213. Jaringan Perempuan Yogyakarta - Yogyakarta Women's Network
214. Jordanian National Commission for Women
215. Journal of International Women's Studies
216. Justice Institute Guyana
217. Kenya Female Advisory Organization
218. Kotha
219. L'union de l'action féministe
220. LABIA - A Queer Feminist LBT Collective
221. Latin American and Caribbean Womens Health Network
222. Le kassandre
223. Le Maestre Ignoranti
224. Lesbianas Independientes Feministas Socialistas - LIFS
225. LGBTI+ Gozo
226. Libera...Mente Donna ets
227. Liberian women Humanitarian Network
228. Life in Leggings: Caribbean Alliance Against Gender-based Violence
229. Lon-art Creative
230. LOOM
231. MADRE
232. Mahila Sarvangeen Utkarsh Mandal (MASUM)
233. Malcolm X Center For Self Determination
234. Mama Na Mtoto Initiative(Mami)
235. Manifest Wolnej Polki
236. MAP Foundation
237. Marie Stopes International
238. McMaster University

239. Mesa Acción por el Aborto en Chile
240. MEXFAM AC
241. Movimiento de Mujeres de Chinandega
242. MOVULAC ONG
243. MOWA Band of Choctaw Indians
244. Mt Shasta Goddess Temple
245. Mujer Y Salud en Uruguay-MYSU
246. Mujeres+Mujeres
247. Mulier
248. MUSAS Peru
249. NAPM
250. NAPOLINMENTE a.p.s.
251. Narasi Perempuan
252. Naripokkho
253. National Alliance Of Women Human Right Defender/Tarangini Foundation
254. National Alliance of Women's Organisations
255. National Birth Equity Collaborative
256. National Forum Of Women With Disabilities
257. National Network For Immigrant And Refugee Rights
258. National Platform For The Rights Of The Disabled
259. NDH LLC
260. Nederlandse Vereniging Gender & Gezondheid
261. NEPEM - Center of feminist studies at Federal University of Minas Gerais
262. Network for Community Development
263. Nigerian Feminist Forum
264. Nigerian Professional Working Women Organization
265. Nobel Women's Initiative
266. NoMore234NG
267. Non una di meno
268. O.A.B.I.: Organization for Abused and Battered Individuals
269. Observatorio de Género y Equidad
270. Odri Intersectional rights
271. Omni Center for Peace, Justice & Ecology
272. ONG ESE:O
273. Organización Artemisas
274. Organization Name
275. Orikalankini
276. Our Generation For Inclusive Peace
277. OutRight International
278. Oxfam (various offices)
279. Oxford Human Rights Hub

**Why Saheli, A Women's Group,
Condemns the Hanging of the December 2012 Convicts
Asks the country to Stop the Celebrations and
Start Thinking!
20th March 2020**

As a women's group that has been fighting violence against women for decades, seeking justice, safety and social awareness against crimes on women, we unequivocally condemn the execution of the four convicts of the December 2012 case of gang rape and murder. For many this may seem to be a contradiction, but not to us in the feminist movement. So once again, on this tragic and inhuman day, we share our core arguments:

- **Capital punishment is not the answer because it has not deterred sexual or any other crimes anywhere in the world.** Quoting from a joint appeal for commutation made to the President with 400 other feminists and groups in January 2020, we reiterate that "In America, where the use of the death penalty varies between states, homicide rates of states with the death penalty are 48-100% higher compared to states without it. Studies in Canada have illustrated that homicide rates remained significantly lower after abolition of the death penalty. And a 2018 multi-country study across 11 nations which have abolished capital punishment also affirms the same."

- **Death Penalty Only Kills the Rapists, and not the Rape Culture.** A very high percentage of men unprivileged by caste, class and religion are sentenced to death, while those of upper castes and classes, assaulters within the family and acquaintances, godmen, teachers and leaders (rape by strangers is just about 1% of the total reported cases) often don't even face a trial! Not to mention marital rape which remains a contentious issue not just within families, but from the point of view of law as well. In addition, of course are the heinous sexual crimes committed on sex workers, as well as trans and gender non-conforming persons for whom even getting an FIR can be impossible.

- Today we are also reminded of the dalit, advasi and tribal women, women from nomadic and minority communities, in conflict zones such as Kashmir, the North-East and Chhattisgarh, etc, have been raped, mutilated and murdered by

the men in the uniform, men in power. Yet the State fails to holds its own officers accountable.

The State is creating a false narrative that death penalty is a form of ‘justice’. In fact, death penalty is just a distraction from the terrible truth that the State is unwilling and uninterested in dealing with the causes of sexual violence. If anything, it is often guilty of protecting those in power accused of such crimes.

WE WANT CERTAINTY NOT SEVERITY OF PUNISHMENT. For that is the only long-term legal way to put a stop to sexual violence. And the rest of the work, we as citizens and a society have to do to put an end to cultures that allow and valorise rape!

As Feminists, Our Struggle is for Life, Justice and Dignity not Revenge and Death

Saheli Women's Resource Centre, Above Unit 105-108
Defence Colony Flyover Market, New Delhi 110 024. www.saheliwomen.org

More than 1000 Women from Across India Write to State Chief Ministers, saying - “NPR presents a Clear Danger to Women, De-link NPR from Census house listing”
March 17, 2020

Given that the updation of the National Population Register (NPR) is scheduled to begin from April 1, 2020 along with house listing for the Census of India 2021, prominent women rights activists, including Annie Raja, Farah Naqvi, Anjali Bhardwaj, Vani Subramanian, Meera Sanghmitra, Mariam Dhawle and Poonam Kaushik released a letter at Delhi’s Press Club, that was sent this morning to every Chief Minister in the country by over one thousand signatories. The signatories include activists, writers, academics, lawyers, doctors, farmers, professionals, anganwadi workers and women from all walks of life from more than 20 states.

The letter said, “We write to you as Indian women who are opposed to the National Population Register (NPR). Women constitute nearly 50% of India’s population, and this opposition is based on clear evidence from our own lives.”

Speaking at the Press Conference, Annie Raja said that, “Women often do not have land or property in their names, have lower literacy rates, and leave their natal homes upon marriage with no documents in tow. In Assam, a vast majority of the 19 lakhs, left out of the NRC, are women. That is the reality.”

“All women, irrespective of caste and religious community, will be affected by this new NPR-NRIC citizenship regime that puts our citizenship to test in a totally arbitrary and frightening manner” said Farah Naqvi. And women and children from adivasi communities, dalit women, muslim women, migrant labourers, small farmers, the landless, domestic workers, sex workers and transgender persons, asked to ‘prove’ citizenship, will all be at grave risk of being disenfranchised.”

Anjali Bhardwaj spoke of Section 14 A of the Citizenship Act, and the accompanying 2003 Rules, which clearly provide for using NPR data to compile the National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC), and give local registrars the power to mark people as ‘doubtful citizens.’ She said the Home Minister’s March 12 statement in Parliament that no will be marked “doubtful”, carries no legal sanctity, until the relevant statutes and rules are formally amended.

Speakers at the Press Conference said that to protect the sanctity of the Census operations, women from across India have asked Chief Ministers of every state to de-link the NPR and the Census, sending enumerators out *only* with the census schedule. While many states have passed resolutions in the Legislative Assembly opposing CAA, NRC, NPR, unless specific executive orders are issued to de-link the NPR and census which is set to be rolled out from April 1, the resolutions will only remain a statement of expression. Each state government must issue executive orders to de-link NPR and census immediately, they said.

Two states- Kerala and West Bengal have issued executive orders, staying the roll out of the NPR, while Rajasthan and Jharkhand have given orders only for the roll out of the census from April 1, 2020. The speakers welcomed the action taken by these states.

The text of the letter sent to all the Chief Ministers and the afore-mentioned orders/notification by states can be accessed

at- <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/17jnovR4wTYBw9p7nTLiFJIMYO-6Agh6w?usp=sharing>

Signed/-

Annie Raja, Farah Naqvi, Anjali Bhardwaj, Vani Subramanian, Meera Sanghmitra, Mariam Dhawle and Poonam Kaushik

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Saheli Women's Resource Centre, Above Unit 105-108, Defence Colony Flyover Market, New Delhi 110 024, www.saheliwomen.org

The Colombo Declaration (March 6th 2020)

We, South Asian feminists¹⁹ across generations, who gathered together in Colombo, in solidarity with each other, and who remain deeply concerned about developments in our region that defy the basis on which we waged anti-colonial struggles; and with a desire to build independent, modern States that respect the freedom, equality and dignity of all our peoples, do hereby declare that:

Whereas we are cognizant of the developments in the field of gender studies and feminist research on sex and gender in the past two decades and the evolving nature of such debates, we therefore state that when we say ‘women’ we understand the term to mean all those affected by violence and discrimination on the basis of their gender, gender identity, and gender expression;

Whereas, feminism is a struggle for equality as well as a critical approach that challenges individuals, patriarchal structures and systems of power that entrench colonialism, discrimination, exploitation and violence. Feminism also recognizes the diversity among women, and that we experience life at multiple

¹⁹ This declaration is a result of a brainstorming and an inter-generational dialogue among participants from Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal, who had indicated a prior interest in drafting a common Declaration. We wish to also acknowledge past conferences and movements of the 1980s and the 1990s that brought together South Asian women from all countries to fight for equality and justice.

intersections including nationality, race, religion, ethnicity, disability and ability, sexual orientation, class and caste;

Struggle Against Authoritarianism, Extremism and Majoritarianism

Whereas we are deeply disturbed by the tendency of many of our governments towards religious and ethnic intolerance and extremism, heavy-handed majoritarianism and authoritarian styles of leadership and governance, supported by the threat of thuggery and violence where dissent, pluralism and difference are not tolerated;

Whereas we are also concerned about increasing extremism among some religious and ethnic groups, with major repercussions for women, whereby women's rights and freedoms are denied in a fundamental sense and their bodies, rituals and attire become compulsory and contested symbols of identity;

Whereas militarization and securitization have become an integral part of governance in our region, severely affecting every aspect of our lives and where old and newer forms of surveillance threaten the basic freedoms enshrined in our Constitutions and international instruments;

Whereas violence is sometimes seen as the preferred option in dealing with conflict and crime; where habitual and brutal violence at the personal, community, and sectarian level, including violence against women, online and on-ground, rarely draw censure, as this violence often results in impunity and has the tacit support of the authorities concerned;

Women, the Law and Judicial Process

Whereas women, who have a complicated relationship with the law as we call on it to protect our rights, but is, at the same time, used to contain and punish us, we are, nevertheless, concerned that the rule of law in our countries is heavily compromised by lack of access and unequal structures, and within those structures, by rampant impunity, and political interference. A climate of fear is created whereby the police, prosecutors and the courts are unable to function with full independence, resulting in a lack of judicial accountability;

Whereas women's claims for justice at national, regional and international levels are sometimes articulated from a pure law and order perspective, without

respect for human rights principles, which we believe must be the framework that always guides our actions;

Women's Economic and Social Rights

Whereas women, especially Dalits and women of indigenous communities, remain the most marginalized when it comes to economic and social power, where women's fight for land and economic rights is a constant struggle making them targets of violence by the State, corporations, and dominant castes and communities;

Whereas the "corporatization" of the State and society has led to an unhealthy nexus between governments, the private sector and the military, resulting in public services and programmes that enhance equality being routinely sidelined, in the interests of large development and infrastructure projects that are motivated by huge profits for corporate groups, often aided by the corruption of public officials;

Whereas neoliberal policies have led to corporate capture of the State and its institutions and where such capture has harmed women in multiple ways, from the loss of public services to multiple forms of exploitation, such as of women's labour, and of natural resources that are commonly held by people or communities;

Whereas we are concerned about the practice by our states of accumulation by dispossession of land, including the land of indigenous peoples, local farmers, and urban low-income communities, recognizing the creation of a 'precarious' class, often due to migration from rural to urban areas with little or no access to public services and social protection;

Whereas we are deeply disturbed by the proactive engagement of the large, powerful segments of the private sector in supporting authoritarianism in our societies, and where increasing dependence on private-public partnerships enable the State's abdication of its responsibilities towards the provision of services and the safeguarding of rights;

Whereas the international discourses on 'gender equality' and 'women's empowerment' are increasingly co-opted and used by our governments and

corporations to strategically digress from serious issues of rights violations for which they should be held responsible;

Whereas programmes for micro finance have been relatively successful in some countries, in others they have resulted in crippling debt, increasing poverty and violence, and, in extreme situations, driving women to suicide;

Climate Change and Environmental Protection

Whereas climate change and environmental degradation remain a central concern of feminists, requiring immediate action by the State, including effective legislation, policies and programmes informed by research and analysis, and State responsibility in holding itself, corporations and other non-state actors accountable for violations;

Whereas introducing environmental laws and development programmes should be undertaken through consultations with local communities and indigenous peoples to ensure that women's lives and livelihoods are not negatively impacted;

Digital Age, Internet and the Social Media

Whereas the digital age has produced new technologies of communication that have given us opportunities for connecting and mobilizing, they also allow for the collection of data that infringe on our privacy and expose us to increased surveillance and harassment by the State, corporations and non-state actors;

Whereas we are disturbed by the fact that our region has the highest rate and longest duration of internet shutdowns, used as a tool of control by the securitized State, resulting in the loss of information, and isolating and crippling whole communities;

Whereas hate-speech is rampant across the media, including social media, in South Asia, becoming a major instrument for violence and the destruction of the social fabric. Large platform-providers must be held accountable for their platforms becoming sites of hate, while ensuring that the principle of freedom of expression is protected;

Whereas internet regulation in the name of protecting women has been weaponised to target journalists, human rights defenders, women survivors of

violence, and has resulted in the curtailing of freedom of expression, dissent, the right to privacy and pleasure, and the freedom of movement and assembly;

Global and Regional Developments

Whereas global and regional developments have placed South Asia at the epicentre of the struggles for dominance and hegemony, and where the fight against “violent extremism” has led to international security practices that seriously violate human rights and where these practices are shared and copied by nation-states;

Whereas the porous borders that have defined South Asian history have now become sites of imprisonment due to brutal violence and/or immigration policies; where exclusionary practices sanctioned at the highest levels aim at denying people citizenship, and where statelessness that denies individuals basic rights and services provided by the modern nation-state has become an important concern;

Whereas a rules-based system of international law and relations is no longer a goal or an ambition of the more powerful states, therefore international networks of solidarity among progressive individuals and groups are essential to counterbalance the deal-making and real politicking of our governments;

Freedom of Expression and of Artists

Whereas freedom of expression is being severely curtailed by persecution or self-censorship, but journalists and artists in all spheres are struggling bravely against many odds to express themselves in extraordinarily creative ways, to represent and transcend the reality that we are all faced with;

Sexual and Reproductive Rights

Whereas some nation-states in South Asia have attempted to recognize sexual and gender diversity, and plurality, others continue to criminalize, ostracize and discriminate against those of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity, often resulting in violence, stigma and discrimination;

Whereas our sexual and reproductive rights are constantly challenged, and where bodily integrity and autonomy continue to be denied and are under attack at the global, national and community levels;

Misogyny and Resurgent Patriarchy

Whereas cultures of misogyny and a resurgent patriarchy, spurred on by extreme right-wing politics, entrench the inequality of women and welcome and valorize that inequality, threatening to push back the gains achieved by successive generations of women's activism and movements;

Whereas women are affected by all these developments in a specific and distinct way and where their struggles for political representation, violence against women, equity in personal laws and equality in all spheres, must be understood in the context of national, regional and global realities challenge the basic values on which feminist movements were founded;

Whereas on the occasion of our coming together, recognizing the realities that face us, we, feminists of South Asia, gathered in Colombo on March 5 and 6, 2020, hereby pledge to:

1. Unite across all religions, genders, ethnicities, classes, castes and all forms of identity, while recognizing our differences, to fight for the equality and freedom of all people in South Asia to live a life of dignity and respect, free from discrimination;
2. Respect and celebrate the diversity of our peoples, recognizing that many intra-community struggles need to be waged to ensure the equality of women, but where political, legal and administrative systems must enable and strengthen a recognition and acceptance of this diversity;
3. Create regional and international networks of women in solidarity to contest and challenge the growing tide of majoritarianism, religious extremism, authoritarianism and a climate of fear in our region;
4. Condemn in the strongest terms wanton and brutal communal, caste and sectarian violence against women, minorities, indigenous peoples, and vulnerable communities as well as the weaponization of the "riot" as a means of control.
5. Hold states accountable for the torture, disappearance and extrajudicial killing of individuals and prisoners, and for the impunity that is granted and sometimes attaches to all those who commit such acts.
6. Resist the militarization and securitization of our states, and expose the disproportionate use of force (in accordance with international humanitarian law) by the military, as well as the military take-over of civilian administration and economic enterprises;

7. Support local and regional struggles to strengthen legal and judicial processes by protecting and amending Constitutions as necessary, pushing for progressive legislation and ensuring that the judiciary and independent commissions are given full protection. We also urge that all the countries of South Asia have functional independent commissions on women as a step towards securing women's rights;
8. Work with women lawyers, human rights defenders and their networks to fight impunity, to ensure that rule of law processes truly result in justice, to highlight the need for judicial accountability, to especially support victims of injustice and discrimination and to supplement such legal action with political and social campaigns. Protecting human rights defenders, insisting on gender-just laws and, where necessary, gender-neutral laws must also be an essential part of this work;
9. Recognize the importance of waging feminist struggles not purely from a law and order perspective but from a human rights framework and to recognize intersectionality, including intersections of nationality, race, religion, ethnicity, disability and ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, class and caste;
10. Strengthen communities affected by global and national policies resulting in gross inequalities by insisting on a more egalitarian economic and social order, the provision of basic services, and by challenging systems and practices of discrimination and exploitation;
11. Recognize the damage that has already been done to the natural environment and to work with national and global climate justice activists, indigenous peoples and all affected communities to adopt laws, policies, programmes and systems of accountability to ensure the survival of the planet and the promise owed to succeeding generations;
12. Encourage women activists and technology communities to use their digital platforms for progressive causes, and to support their work on digital rights, fight for the protection of our data and against hate-speech and hate communities;
13. Prioritize community concerns and support women – with their informed consent – to be a part of decision-making that affects their lives;
14. Reclaim the “international community” as global networks fighting for the rights of individuals and peoples, leading to the transformation of existing international institutions and practices to make them more inclusive and participatory;

15. Work towards recreating value for a rules-based international system, with the expectation that feminist movements everywhere will take a lead in making this happen;
16. Ensure that the fight against “violent extremism” does not result in draconian measures, arbitrary security-force activities, and mass incarceration. Platforms on counter-terrorism and bilateral and multilateral support for military establishments must be founded on the principles of human rights.
17. Ensure that the concerns of the women of the Global South, our call for justice, the need for forward-looking plans for economic independence and recovery, as well as women’s participation in the decision-making processes in prevention, protection, peacemaking and peace-building, are represented in international relations and global security agendas;
18. Enable and support women artists and writers in their creative work to reclaim memory, represent women’s histories, and transcend boundaries, and ensure that education in structural spaces such as schools, museums and galleries, be expanded to include informal extracurricular activities in the form of plays, storytelling, video-making, and varied art activities;
19. Celebrate the many past and continuing achievements of women’s movements, and invest in the multi-generational harnessing of collective power on platforms where activists across levels of experience can connect, organize and transform, building upon existing knowledge and momentum;
20. Reiterate and struggle at all levels for the foundational values of feminist movements, movements which have for over two centuries challenged systems of hierarchy and fought for freedom, equality, respect for all, and the dignity of persons.

Demand Inclusion of data on Violence against Women with Disabilities in NCRB by Shruti Disability Rights Centre

3rd December was celebrated in India as in other parts of the world as International Day for the Persons with Disabilities. From National Government to all State Governments, there were specific programmes and Role Model awards were given to persons with disabilities. Most of the DPOs and NGOs organised their own programmes as well on 3rd December like every year. Media also tried to highlight the issue of disability either in celebratory form or criticising Government's apathy towards disabled people.

We would mention here a news item that came out on 4th December in Anandabazar Patrika (page 3). The report says that a woman with hearing & speech impairment was abducted by a truck driver who tried to rape her. While we congratulate the concerned police officer for rescuing the women, one feels strange that no one was talking about sexual assault of a disabled woman on 3rd December itself! Society treats gender-based violence a separate issue from disability and the inter sectional connection is often overlooked. Also silence of everyone including civil society over sexual abuse cases of women with disabilities, particularly when the whole country is so much agitated over Hyderabad rape case of the veterinary doctor, appals us. Women with disabilities do remain most vulnerable and most of the Apps or Smartphones which are touted as popular measures of Safety, will remain inaccessible to them in most cases. As neither media nor civil society shows specific concern about sexual violence faced by women with disabilities (though we have specific laws on same), Government of India also do not feel the need of keeping separate data on this – despite demands made by National Platform for Rights of Disabled, National Crime Records Bureau do not have a statistics of how many disabled women register case of violence.

From Sruti Disability Rights Centre, an advocacy group working on intersections of gender & disability, we have started a project called “Pathway to Justice” to map this violence. We try to monitor media news and found that only in English news, we get about 7-8 such cases reported every month. Obviously, the numbers are much more. We will not be able to combat this violence unless we have some kind of statistics and every other case will remain a mere “anecdote” evidence. Therefore, from Sruti, we have decided to write a

letter and mail, it to Minister, Women & Children, as well as Minister, Home and Chairperson, National Commission for Women with just one single demand

—
“We demand inclusion of data on violence against women with disabilities in National Crime records Bureau”

If you support our demand, please write to us at sruti.darc@gmail.com and we will include your name as signatory. We will be accepting signatures till 15h of this month and after that, we will send our letter to concerned persons.

Endorsement of Gujarat Mahila Manch’s Statement against Shri Sahajanand Girls Institute, Bhuj, for the outrageous act of forcing young women hostelers to undress

Gujarat Mahila Manch’s Statement against Shri Sahajanand Girls Institute, Bhuj, for the outrageous act of forcing young women hostelers to undress to check if they were menstruating and thereby violating the “religious norms” of the institute.

We, the undersigned, as part of Gujarat Mahila Manch, are a group of women who have been part of the women’s movement and have been working on issues of violence against women for several years. We would like to bring to your notice the outrageous act of dehumanizing young women students at the Sri Sahajanand Girls Institute in Bhuj. The institute proclaims its mission to be “self-development and empowerment of girls through scientific and value-based education. However, it has been reported by media organisations that 68 young hostelers were forced to remove their undergarments to prove whether they were menstruating or not. As reported, on Thursday, 13th February 2020, action was taken against students by the rector Ms. Anjali after she complained to the principal Ms. Rita Raninga about young women violating the “religious norms” of the institute. According to media report, action was taken against the students as they were entering the kitchen and the temple while they were menstruating.

Shri Sahajanand Girls Institute affiliated to the Krantiguru Shyamji Krishna Verma Kutch University was established in 2012 offering B.A., B.Com.

courses. Since this is a charitable hostel run by the Swaminarayan Sect, the trust charges a nominal fee and most students living in remote villages come to the institute to study as there are hostel facilities available. young women at the hostel are expected to strictly follow the norms of the sect. The norms of the sect adhered to by the hostel include strictly prohibiting women from entering the temple and the kitchen area and touching other students while they are menstruating. According to the Ahmedabad Mirror Report dated 14th February 2020, young women have complained about continuous harassment especially with regard to menstruation. This act was the last straw and the young women protested. In response to their protest the trustee Pravin Pindoria said “take whatever legal action you wish to take, this will continue, and if you have any objection you can leave the hostel”.

The incident clearly violates the basic rights of these women and as per the law outraging the modesty of the young women, causing them mental trauma and amounts to sexual harassment. While multiple activist groups are fighting against the taboo attached to menstruation, such incidents again reinforce the redundant and unscientific idea of women being dirty while they menstruate. At an educational institute where the young women are under the custody of such a warden, their safety clearly is compromised. The warden is the one in charge of students’ safety and she herself has orchestrated this inhuman act as reported. The trustees have also reportedly supported the act and are more concerned about upholding the norms of the sect. The act violates the fundamental duties under article 51 A of the Indian Constitution which states it is the fundamental duty of every citizen “to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women”. If the incident is nipped in the bud, more young girls will be curbed from pursuing further education. No FIR has been registered in the incident yet however, the Vice-Chancellor Ms. Darshana Dholakia of Krantiguru Shyamji Krishna Verma Kutch University has set up a fact-finding committee to investigate the matter.

We as Gujarat Mahila Manch condemn this act and demand strict action against the incident and demand the following:

1. Registration of FIR under section 354, 509 and 355 of the Indian Penal Code against all those involved in the incident

2. Removal of the warden with immediate effect
3. Counseling sessions for the young women who have been traumatized by the incident
4. Urge all educational institutes to take steps to create a secular and safe environment for students.
5. Parents and young girls should be given an open environment to speak about the incident without any intimidation.

If you wish to endorse this statement in support of the young women please sign up on this link:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeIOMwn3samK5qrYSehPYAkoUcp2JxtUH0mMOLhQEaqM0vOQ/viewform>

You can get intouch with Gujarat Mahila Manch via email at gujaratmahilamanch@gmail.com or via Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/gujaratmahilamanch/>

On behalf of Gujarat Mahila Manch
14th February 2020

Protect Children's Rights in Kashmir

by Forum Against Oppression of Women, Mumbai

It is shocking that the chief of Defense staff, General Bipin Rawat, has made an absolutely insensitive and irresponsible statement about children in Kashmir. He said 'girls and boys as young as 10 and 12 are now being radicalised' in Kashmir, and went on to add that those who are 'completely radicalised' need to be 'taken out separately' and put in deradicalisation camps. (Indian Express, 17th January 2020) Further, the Jammu and Kashmir Director General of Police Dilbagh Singh has backed the idea of setting up deradicalisation camps in the Union Territory (Scroll, 20th Jan 2020).

It would have been more appropriate if the General or the DGP had spoken of areas within their purview, where rampant extortion, torture and corruption exist in high levels. It would have been good if they led by example, instituting transparent mechanisms to address these violations when they occur within the armed or police forces. Accountability is important – why, for

instance, would an officer be immune to questions like the ones raised around the arrest of DSP Devender Singh. “Is it that as long as personnel involved in wrongdoings are believed to be crucial to counterinsurgency operations, they are seen as “assets”? Is it also that the moment they begin to hob-nob with terror operatives they turn “rogue”? Or, do they become “rogue” only when caught?” (Newslandry, 23rd Jan 2020, Anuradha Bhasin)

Ironically, these statements also bring into focus the role of Indian civil society, witness to the decades of violence engulfing children, students and common citizens of Kashmir. We have stayed silent even while worrying about the long-term effect of conflict, violence and militarisation on children in Kashmir and various parts of the country. The situation of children in Kashmir is dire, but not entirely unique. In the North-east, prolonged conflict and the presence of the armed forces has created a general culture of anomie and fear, and children suffer the most as a result. Not only is their physical safety compromised, but instances of sexual and psychological abuse often go unreported, and children who are subject to them literally cannot find 'safe spaces' that they can access. (Open Democracy, Dolly Kikon, 10 May 2016) This was also evident in the violence inflicted on Muslim communities in Gujarat in 2002, children were witness to horrific events that no child should ever have to witness, and the scars are yet to heal in a number of instances. Now the conflict is catching up with us, where Indian police and masked goons enter Indian Universities, libraries and campuses and unleash violence on student communities.

All the instruments set up within the ambit of the Constitution are not living up to their duties of protecting the human rights of the marginalised Indian citizens. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), for example has never taken cognisance of the physical violence and mental trauma that the children in Kashmir have suffered. Instead recently it has issued an order to the District Magistrate of South East Delhi to identify the children present in pro-democracy protests in Shaheen Bagh and send them for counselling! These children are safe and probably getting their best education in the basic tenets of the Indian constitution and democracy from their parents, guardians and the brave protestors at Shaheen Bagh.

In addition to Constitutional protections and specific laws, India is a secular republic which has also ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in November 1992. According to the Convention children have a right to be provided with certain services ranging from health care and education. They have a right to be protected from torture, exploitation, abuse, arbitrary

detention and unwarranted removal from parental care, and have the right to participate in the decisions affecting their lives.

It is time that the international mechanisms step in and check for themselves if India has lived up to its own Constitution and the ratified Convention in Kashmir.

Growing parentless in Kashmir

A 2012 study by the United Kingdom-based charity 'Save the Children' found that Kashmir valley has **215,000 orphans** 'out of which 37% have lost one or both parents to the prevailing conflict'. This, and not "radicalisation", is the reality and crises in the lives of children in Kashmir today.

Killing and maiming of children:

Between 2003 and 2017 the total number of children killed was 318; the Indian armed forces and JK police are reported to have killed 144 children, Ikhwan (Ikhwan, the private counter-insurgency militia, created by the government of India in 1993 as a major dirty war-operation against Kashmiri insurgency) have killed 147, cross-LOC shelling has killed 15 children. 121 of the children who were killed were below the age of 12 and 72 of them were girls. Twenty-seven children died due to drowning either caused due to the negligence of armed forces in Wular lake tragedy or being chased by government forces during a protest, where victims find no way of escape from the armed forces and forced to jump into water bodies, resulting in their death. (*Terrorized: Impact of Violence on the Children of Jammu and Kashmir (2018) JKCCS*). According to the report '*Dead but Not Forgotten*' published in 2006, in the two districts of Baramulla and Bandipora in North Kashmir, among the total 5106 number of people killed and forcibly disappeared since the armed conflict from 1989 to 2005, 392 were children.

Between 2014 and 2017 Amnesty International India has documented the cases of 88 people whose eyesight was damaged temporarily or permanently by metal pellets fired by the armed forces. These actions have continued relentlessly since then. In these actions, school-going boys and girls have lost vision in one or both eyes, altering their life completely. College students have had to give up their dreams of pursuing higher education.

The widespread use of pellet guns against protesters in recent years has led to an estimated 3,000 people in the region sustaining eye injuries - locals call it a

"dead eye epidemic". These include even children as young as 19-month-old child (BBC news 28th November 2018)

Mental trauma and long-term impact

A study of 100 children from Kashmir between the ages of three and 16 who had symptoms of PTSD was conducted. Their reported trauma mirrored abuses in Kashmir's turmoil: nearly half had seen a close relative killed; 15 percent said they witnessed torture; four percent said they were beaten or tortured themselves. Trauma "gets transmitted from one generation to another, and this cycle continues if this doesn't get addressed," (The new Humanitarian 23rd December 2019)

Sexual violence:

There have been a number of cases where children have been subjected to sexual violence by Ikhwan and armed forces. In February 2018, a group of women from Support Group for Justice for Kunan Poshpora Survivors and JKCCS, filed a complaint before Jammu and Kashmir State Human Rights Commission and sought attention to the issue of sexual violence in Jammu and Kashmir. Out of the total of 143 cases of sexual violence submitted alongside the complaint, at least 17 are of minors who have majorly faced violence at the hands of armed forces. There are reports of young boys have also been targeted and have faced sexual violence.

Schools and Colleges:

One of the direct impacts of large-scale militarization in Jammu and Kashmir has been on the education of children, as hundreds of schools and educational institutions were converted into military camps and outposts since the early nineties. In November 2019 Rajyasabha was informed that as many as 35 *school buildings* were set ablaze and 11 others damaged in *Kashmir Valley*.

The increased militarization of schools also leads to an alarming dropout rate of students. Owing to public condemnation, the Indian armed forces have vacated many school buildings and the number of schools and educational institutions occupied by armed forces is fewer in number now, but the entrenched nature of the landscape of militarization ensures that military outposts and camps are located in close proximity of educational institutions or on the way.

Detention and incarceration post 5th August 2019:

According to the report filed by the four-judge Juvenile Justice Committee of the Jammu and Kashmir High court, (following the Supreme Court writ petition filed by Enakshi Ganguly and anr) 144 children below the age of 18 had been picked up by the police between August 5 and September 23 of year 2019. There also have been reports of children being used as human shields by the armed forces in the past. (*The Wire*, 25th May 2017, Var Javid) Classrooms of students are now serving as a shelter for hundreds of the paramilitary troopers, who were stationed in Kashmir. Complete blockade of internet has impacted admissions, examinations and studies of school and college students. The internet blockade, the blocking of road and continuous vigilance has even impacted access to health care and hospitals. (Firstpost 30th Nov 2019)

As civil society, child rights and human rights groups nationally as well as internationally we take cognizance of this brutal, inhuman, anti-children mindset of the State and its reflection in the statement made by General Bipin Rawat. We demand:

- An apology by General Bipin Rawat for the statement referred to above made in his speech.
- Information on where, under which authority and for what purpose are the deradicalisation camps set up in the country as per General Bipin Rawat being run.
- Removal of army camps from and nearby areas of school and college in Kashmir.
- Complete lifting of the internet and communication blockade in Kashmir.
- Access to health care and trauma counseling for all, especially for children in hospitals.
- Facilitation of free access to children and students in Kashmir to UN special rapporteur on Child Rights to assess the current situation.

Forum Against Oppression of Women, Bombay
29, Bhatia Bhuvan, Babrekar Marg, Gokhale Road,
Dadar (West) Bombay -4000 28

REPORT

Creating Stories, Shaping Lives: A Reflective Paper

- Shazneen Limjerwala (nee Commissariat)

This paper is based on a training I conducted on creating stories at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in 2019. It is a reflective piece: I ‘look back’ upon the training with a view to gain insights about the process. I document it in detail and share the insights gained through observations and reflections. I begin with an Introduction to stories: their meaning and functions in different contexts. I then move on to the aim and methodology of the training, as situated within the paradigm of action learning. Next, the process of facilitation, right from the time I make initial contact with participants over email to the facilitation during the training, and finally the email following it is described. This is to provide an ‘insider’s perspective’ to the reader. I have consciously included the stories created by some participants, so readers can match the process and outcome of the training. I then provide insights about the training, again from three viewpoints: mine, Prof. Nasreen’s and the participants. I finally move on to conclusions, and provide readers with a list of references for deeper insights.

I’ll begin with the background to the training. It answers the question: ‘why I conducted a training on creating stories?’

Background

1.1 Stories: meaning and functions:

The word story has different meanings in different contexts. For example, for narrative therapists, the word story means events, linked in sequence, across time, according to a plot (Morgan, 2000). Parry and Doan (1994) borrow Jameson’s (1981) view of narrative as the central function of the human mind, a master code by which a person interprets the text of her life to give it meaning.

Storytelling is an innate skill. Humans are wired to tell stories. The nature and structure of stories might vary. They are influenced by culture (Sluzki, 1992). According to Lax, context and relationship lend meaning to human experience: understanding is shifted from within individuals to between them (Lax, 1992). The relationship and interaction with other persons, through the role and response of the listener or audience, contributes to stories (Gergen, 1989; Shotter, 1989).

Not so long ago, storytelling, as in the sense of telling stories about one's experiences, was overshadowed by more visual and written modes of communication such as writing texts and sending visual messages, with emoticons replacing facial expressions.

However, recently there has been an upsurge of interest in storytelling. This is reflected by articles in newspapers, storytelling gigs, start-ups catering to training parents as storytellers, amongst others (storydustindia; accessed 20/12/19).

1.2 Why I love stories?

This section details my relationship with creating stories.

I have a blooming, thriving, growing relationship with story writing, storytelling and story making. I construe and differentiate the three as thus: story making is when we create the story ourselves, either by telling it (i.e. orally) or writing. Storytelling involves telling a story, usually to another: it may be a story that we have ready, heard, learnt or one that we have created, or an experience that we dramatize into a story. Story writing is when a person creates a story through the act of writing. As is evident, there is considerable overlap between these three. The rationale behind making this distinction is to understand the processes involved in telling, writing, creating stories. For example, some of the activities involved group work, i.e. working in pairs and groups of three.

I am versatile in/with these activities: storytelling, story making, story writing, as I have engaged in these for over two decades now. I have written some stories (fictional) and life based; created stories to tell children and enacted stories too, by way of drama. I'd also add listening to stories as reading and listening to others' stories, as also one's own life experiences, provides the broth for creating stories.

Additionally, I had also written a proposal to explore storytelling as a healing tool for survivors of violence. Around this time, I did considerable reading around storytelling. I wrote a paper for my management course credit, for which I did reading around storytelling in business organizations. My PhD supervisor Tim Atkin, is a narrative therapist: guided by him, I have done considerable reading around narrative therapy. My personal training in Psychodynamic Psychotherapy, with its moorings in Psychoanalysis, has influenced my understanding of life-based storytelling. I also did pilot research in the UK around therapists' stories of working with survivors of violence. This involved

visits to Manchester, Preston, including to participation in seminars on Narrative Therapy.

1. The Aim and Methodology of the training

In this section, I briefly cover the aim of this training. Then I move on to how it was conducted. I detail my actions and interventions before, during and after the training.

I begin with a brief recapitulation of my past experience with training. I have been conducting trainings for several years now. These have been on varied subjects including communication skills for nurse managers, emotional intelligence, self-care for parents of children with special needs, amongst others²⁰. I have also created and contributed to training manuals²¹.

The purpose of this training was to teach participants how to write/ tell a story. It was consciously kept broad in its scope to accommodate varied needs, world views, and perceptions. This has been strongly advocated by Bray, who suggests being inclusive in the conduct of one's training (2009).

This training design resonated with the principles of action learning (Revans, 1983). The 'logistics' of action learning: participants on an action learning work on a real problem, yet unresolved and important to them. The actions of participants are intended to bring about changes and provide insights that can have practical and theoretical value.

It began as an idea in my mind, which I shared with Prof. Nasreen, the HOD of Centre for Lifelong Learning (CLL), Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) as a concept note.

Following this, we wrote out a flyer detailing what the training had to offer. This is what it read like:

Storytelling is indeed an art. It's also an innately human skill. Think back to the last time you connected with someone deeply. It's likely it involved a certain amount of storytelling. Perhaps narrating an incident, or an experience (includes

¹ These have been for varied groups: Kokilaben Ambani hospital; Ahura support group, Holiday Programme for Youth.

² I have created a training manual for Sadhana school for special children (Sophia college), and edited a collection of papers for SNDT University. See references for more details.

the emotions and interiority). Or reflecting aloud on an issue that you felt deeply about. Storytelling helps you connect deeply with yourself. And others. And that is the value of this art.

Unfortunately, people are losing this skill to new ones like using emojis and smsing.

Storytelling has a certain shine to it. It helps build a human connection between the teller and the listener/s. It grasps the attention of your audience. In telling your story, and having people listen to it, you create your own persona through the act of telling.’

Objective of the workshop: -

This training answers the questions: How do I create my story? How do I tell it?

Methodology:

This training/ exercise will introduce you to various activities that will engage you in creating your story and telling it. You will learn how to:

Create the setting: where is the story set?

Create characters: who is involved in the story?

Weave your narrative: create a plot. What is happening in the story?

Who should attend?

This training is flexible. It can accommodate the learning styles and background education of anyone. You may be a teacher, researcher, home maker, educator, lawyer, medical professional: just about anyone at all. We’ll help you discover your story, just waiting to be told!

All you need is a desire to learn storytelling and a readiness to participate in activities that engage you in learning the basics of this art.

This flyer represented my beliefs about storytelling; it attempted to persuade participants to enrol for this, giving them reasons for the same.

28 participants registered for the training (it was originally decided to cap it at 20), after which the registration was closed.

2.1 Facilitation prior to the training

I emailed participants prior to the training with a few questions. I have reproduced these with participant responses below to give an idea about the participants, their understanding/s and expectations from the training.

1. What is your understanding of storytelling?

The purpose behind this was to clarify what their understanding of storytelling was. This is important because the word story can be interpreted in many different ways. The responses varied widely; some participants thought of it as ‘putting across your ideas and opinions so that the audience can easily relate to it’; others as ‘narrating your ideas, thoughts through verbal and non-verbal communication’. Another participant understood it as an ‘effective medium to get through to a concept/idea/or just a good thought. It is bereft of the unwanted experience of a sermon, But is free spirited.’ Another participant shared, ‘story reflects your thoughts, emotions, perceptions and experiences as well as is able to evoke thoughts and emotions in the listener.’

Here, the variedness of understanding with regards to what a story is influences the process of creating one. For example, the previous understanding is limited to expression of one’s thoughts and ideas, whereas the latter one includes the responses of the listener too. So, the latter storyteller will factor in the potential audience’s imagined response, when creating the story.

My next question was,

2. Can you describe the audience you are telling your story to? (Age, gender, education, geographical background, other traits).

Here again, there was a wide variance in the range of responses. One participant shared that, ‘children as they are the ones who construct their understanding of the world through stories and also one can dwell deeper in their mind through the same. Though story is an indirect medium to express unspoken experiences for everyone, I feel children are the most creative story tellers and listeners and since usually they are not able to express themselves clearly, it’s the best modality to understand them’. Another anticipated that ‘the audience will be children in the age group of 6 yrs to about 15 yrs, children in cities but from both under privileged and privileged schools. Also their parents will be part of the audience group.’ A third described her potential audience as ‘Students (Male and Female) pursuing MBA, between 19-22 years of age from all demographic regions’. One participant revealed that her ‘Audience is in the future so cannot describe now.’

Here, the 1st response shows that the storyteller uses stories as a tool to understand children, whereas the second one has children and parents from a wide socio-economic strata as potential audience, the third is very specific and particular, whereas the 4th is unclear / vague about the potential audience and therefore, has an open agenda.

My next question sought to understand their personal past histories of story-telling, writing, making.

3. *Have you tried telling/ writing stories in the past? If yes, what challenges have you faced? Please list and give possible reasons. If no, what was a possible resistance to trying?*
- 4.

The responses to this question varied widely. The first admitted, ‘Yes I have tried. Getting across the central idea and being coherent about the topic were the main challenges. Another participant shared, ‘Yes, many times, but the main problem which I have faced is related to some management concepts, where i was unable to use storytelling skills. Sometimes because of my dilemma that what students would think, if I teach in this way?’. Still another revealed, ‘Yes, I have tried telling stories to kids, to convey a message. Challenges faced is to use words relevant to them, their kind of lingo’. Other participants found incorporating humour in their stories challenging. One participant aspired for ‘something that they can instantly identify, also to identify with the characters, the theme.’ On the other end, there was one participant who admitted, ‘No, I have never tried because my creativity doesn’t direct me in that area. So, want to know the technical aspects of storytelling.’

Here, the first response tells us that the participant knows what she wants to communicate, but does not know how to do it. The second response reflects a certain resistance to using storytelling to elucidate management concepts, and a concern about students’ reactions to its use as a medium of instruction. The third response shows the storyteller being very clear about her challenges when trying to create stories for kids: it’s about getting to their level and speaking their language. The fourth shows that there is a block with regards to her belief about her capability to create stories. She perceives it as a specialized skill.

In my next question, I zero in on what they would like to focus on in the training.

5. *What would you like your story to be themed around? What is the central idea of your story?*

Some participants were not clear about the theme; whereas another wanted to highlight prevalent issues; still another wanted to advocate ‘using the right path, being happy and send across a message of Hope’. The purpose of this question was to narrow down their focus to one particular idea that they’d like to weave their story around. My next question focused on language.

6. In which language/s would you like to create your story?

Some participants wanted to create their story in Hindi; some in both English and Hindi and some in English. Here again the variance in language shows how with language, idioms will vary.

The responses to my questions reflect the variety of audience, their understanding of what a story is, and what it needs to be used for, as also how to create one. Note that I have included the responses of 4-5 participants here.

The rationale behind emailing and asking questions is to build rapport with participants. This is very essential because typically my workshops involve a degree of self-revelation (if the participant chooses and feels comfortable about it). This is possible if there is a mutual ‘getting to know’ process. So I introduced myself as a story listener and teller at the outset of the training. I shared that listening to and telling stories is an iterative process. My introduction to participants in the advertisement, email and workshop set the light, frothy, and engaging tone of the workshop.

Excerpts from my 2nd email:

‘Please come prepared with the following (preferred, not mandatory):

1. A brief 30 second introduction of yourself: Your name, profession/ interest, one learning you want to take away from the workshop.
2. A story you have written (preferably short/ one to two pages). If you haven't already, try.
3. If none of the above, and you want to write about a particular theme, experience, character, create a picture of it in your mind. Write a couple of sentences on it.

Most importantly, come with an open heart and mind. Learning takes place in some of the most unexpected places!’

I also set the tone for our interaction as friendly, yet, engaging, i.e. I was committed to achieving the goals of the workshop and expected the same of my participants. It was also to prepare them mentally, as in be prepared with stories. This way we could save time during the workshop to learn from the material already prepared and available with the participants. It also draws from my learning that it is better to work with participants' material than 'thrust' my own onto them.

This draws on my psychoanalytic leanings: I believe in working with people's individual leanings, being led by their interiorities (Freud, 1901). I've also moved considerably towards an 'atheoretical' style of teaching, whereby theory is woven from experience, rather than the other way round. This draws on my fieldwork experience (Froggett, 2002).

2.2 Facilitation during the training

The participants were seated in a circle in the corridor of the hall. I moved around to facilitate eye contact between the active participant and me as also the rest of the group.

I set out the guidelines for our conduct during the training. These were, 'equal time and participation for all, participants are free to choose to respond or not; there are no right or wrong answers; keep responses concise; if the matter is discussed elsewhere (i.e. beyond the boundaries of the workshop), it is to be 'unnamed', i.e. anonymized'.

During the initial introduction, I asked each of the participants to introduce themselves, their work and what they sought to learn during the workshop. They also elaborated their understanding of a story. This reflected the variance in their understanding of a story, as also their personal and professional backgrounds, and their expectations from this workshop. In a way, it set the scene for the rest of the workshop.

This is the importance of the beginning phase of trainings: it sets the scene/backdrop for what is to follow during the training. It is also crucial to 'hold' and enthuse participants during this phase. If this phase goes wrong/ awry, that is, if some participants feel lost or floundered during this phase, then they are lost to the group/ facilitator/ workshop. This can be manifest as a physical absence, i.e. they actually leave the workshop (I think in retrospect that one participant left the workshop: he was a senior head of an NGO, I noticed his absence, somehow midway through the workshop).

Sometimes, the participant may be physically present, but mentally absent, i.e. may not participate completely in the activities, or may not share completely. In such cases, I need to ‘draw him/ her in’ to the process. How do I do it? Well, I focus attention on the person, i.e. ask him questions, or use his subject matter as an example during the facilitation. This way the person is drawn back into the group. There’s a fine line between invitation and compulsion to participate: its easy to cross it, and needs considerable perceptiveness, skill and expertise to respect the boundaries of each participant.

I asked participants what their challenges to creating stories were. When they shared these challenges, during the email and introduction, I suggested individualised tasks and strategies for resolution. The purpose behind asking each participant to articulate what she wanted to learn from the workshop was also to clearly entrust each of them with a goal, and suggest strategies to achieve it. This is how I give individualized inputs in group settings, a forte I have developed through considerable training and practice. For example, one participant, a communication specialist working on eye donations and operations, with an NGO wanted to learn about how to communicate the importance of their work in an appealing manner using stories. So, that itself, was set as his goal for the workshop. In each of the activities and exercises, I guided him by giving particular activities centring around that goal, to take him one step closer towards it²².

I had planned the workshop meticulously: the content, flow and timing. I had also, as is my usual practice, passed it through two experts in training and development, one from a corporate background, another from an education and development sector training background²³. Both gave their inputs, which were incorporated. This time, in keeping with my learning from previous trainings, I maintained a stringent time check: this was to ensure that all the matter was covered and that participants got adequate time to engage in all the activities and learn from the workshop.

2.2.1 Setting:

I started out explaining the meaning and functions of the setting of a story. Each participant was asked to draw out the setting of their story. As cues, I asked

³ His stories have been reproduced in this article.

⁴ I am grateful to Nazneen Mistry for her mentoring during the preparation and Dilmeher Bhola for reading and commenting on drafts of this article.

them to name the geographical location of the story: the place, country; decide on whether it was urban- rural; describe the flora and fauna, elaborate on the tactile sense (of touch), the sounds, smells of the place. My overarching guidance was ‘let the place come alive in your mind’.

Later, they shared what they had written. One participant described the setting of her story as a forest, with butterflies, animals and birds. Another imagined her story to be set in outer space.

Later, the participants were asked to reflect on this exercise with questions, ‘how was this exercise for you?’; ‘what did you learn?’, why is setting important in a story?’

The first is a question about process, the second connects the process with the content, and the third highlights the role of setting in a story. The latter is most important to answer because the setting outlines the context of the story: it sets the boundaries for what one can and cannot do in the plot.

2.2.2 Character:

Thereafter, there was an exercise in creating the character/s of the story. I suggested some questions as cues to creating their characters. These were: describe your characters; give a physical description of the character; what is his/ her gender ? ; what are her psychological traits, characteristics; her interactive styles? what does your character lend to the story?’, i.e. what is the importance of the character to the story?

I opened up the domain to include animals as characters too, since a number of participants had children as their intended audience. One participant was more versatile with movement; I encouraged her to use movement/ gestures as language for her storytelling²⁴.

In the ensuing discussion, participants shared about their characters, as also their source of inspiration. Some had animals as characters, personified to have

⁵ I have experience as a participant and a facilitator in using movement as a means of expression and articulation of feelings and emotions. See my paper, *Urdhva Mula*. It is commonly acknowledged that body gestures and movement have a language of their own: a bit cryptic to the untrained eye.

human traits. Some talked about women as the leading character, still others had children as playing the main role in their story.

2.2.3 Theme:

There was also a discussion on the message they wished to communicate through the story. Early on during the training, I asked the participants,

‘is there a theme/ central argument to your story?’ if yes, what is it?

This question was important to narrow down their focus to the one message they wanted to communicate through their story. It was like an anchor to which the story was hinged.

They were clear about the message they wished to communicate through the story:

In fact, looking back, it appears the story was often, at least in their minds, a vehicle to communicate a message: tell children about morals and values; convince government agencies to part with money for NGO on education; talk about the organization’s work on restoring eyesight; talk about one’s life experiences; talk about water conservation in a simple, accessible manner; teach management principles: each participant seemed to have a pre-decided agenda in creating their story.

I clarified that each story need not have an overt message, or a clearly defined happy or sad ending. There were alternative ‘slice of life’ stories, akin to some movies, where despite there being a storyline, there is a greater emphasis on revealing the characters’ lives. The focus of the story is in the revelation of characters and their lives; it is not in the movement from one life event to another.

2.2.4 Plot:

Here, the focus is on ‘what happens’ in the story? I ‘broke it up’ for the participants’ understanding as the beginning, the middle and the end of the story. Often, it includes the climax, or ‘peak of action’ and may have a resolution or denouement. Alternately, there are some open-ended plots, where the author leaves much to the imagination of the reader.

I asked the participants to create their story individually. I encouraged them to break away from the group, go out and take inspiration from their surroundings. They could write, record it into their phone, draw pictures telling their story.

Following sharing of their stories, I enquired gently,

What was it like, creating the story?’

what did you learn through this exercise?’

Due to time constraints, the plots in the stories were kept minimal, i.e. not too many events happenings, with a lot of twists and turns. I have included below some stories shared by two participants to give an idea of the outcomes of this exercise.

GANU DEV STAY WITH US PLEASE. By Meghana Surlikar²⁵

Its about 4 in the evening. The dining room floor in flat no. 8 was brown and sticky and so was the little 6-year-old creator. Aniket was in deep concentration, making his Ganu Dev with Natural clay (chikat matii) as August was fast approaching and Ganu Dev would be living with him for 10 days, bringing him laddus, modaks and lots of sweetmeats. The whole house would be abuzz with cousins, friends, uncles’ aunts and lots of decoration of flowers and paper decorations of patakas. Laughter and smiles and the ringing of bells and fragrance of the lilies and Chandan incensesce sticks would fill the rooms.

Aniket couldn’t wait for that day. He loved mud and clay. He slowly rolled the clay into carrot shaped legs and the round ball for the tummy. He slowly attached all the parts and the big trunk. Then he used broken toothpicks for his tusks and then two small holes made with the toothpicks for eyes.

And there our Ganu Dev was ready.

“I am pleased with you Aniket”, a calm murmuring sound boomed in the house. Mom was sleeping in the other room and there was no one else at home. Who could be speaking to me? Thought Aniket.

As he looked around him, a soft blob of, natural carrot shaped clay touched his thighs. Aniket’s eyes were wide open with mouth shaped like a huge tunnel. Ganu Dev! Is it really you? He exclaimed.

²⁵²⁵ I have included the story verbatim to retain originality

Ganu Dev replied, “Yes Aniket, it’s me. I feel so complete and loved. You had your full attention on your task and did it with so much love. I loved your attitude. I am very happy with you.”

Aniket was filled with so much joy. He could see a yellow mellow light around Ganu Dev. Aniket said “thankyou Ganu Dev. But I just can’t believe, that YOU are speaking to me.

“Oh, I talk to anyone who is sincerely interested in me”, Said Ganu Dev with a smile.

Ganu Dev sometimes I feel so lonely no one to play and talk to. I am so glad you are here. I will tell Jason, Atif and Freni about you speaking to me. Will you speak to them too?

Ganu Bappa could sense Anikets excitement and just blessed him.

He sat and told Ganu Bappa his stories of all the masti he did and how studies were boring. He told him he loved playing specially in the garden and it was so much fun being outdoors.

He didn’t realise it was almost late evening and the sun was about to set.

Suddenly Aniket’s eyes lowered and his eyes became a little moist.

Ganu Dev asked “ Whats wrong Aniket, just a while ago you were so full of excitement , whats the matter now? Aniket said, “Bappa, I do not want to let you go. Please stay with me forever.”

Ganu Dev gave him a kind and understanding pat. “Oops, I smeared you with a little more mud”, as some more mud touched his thigh.

Aniket smiled a bit. Ganu Dev said “I too, feel the same way, Aniket. I don’t like leaving you. What do you think we can do? Let us both think.”

After a while Ganu Dev came up with an idea.

He said “Why don’t you put fruit seed inside my belly. And then dig a deep pit on the 10th day and put some soil and manure in the pit with a showel. Then you put me inside that pit and close it with soil. Put some rocks around this place to know where you have put me.

Aniket interrupted, “Oh No again somewhere deep.”

Ganu Dev said, “listen my child, when you put the seed in my tummy, I will slowly enter that seed and it will become a magical seed.”

Aniket was listening awestruck.

“Will you give me water to drink every morning.”

“Ofcourse I will Ganu Dev” said Aniket emphatically.

And then once in 15 days you feed me manure made from the veggies you ate. So, I shall eat them too. The sun will provide me with the magical energy and I will slowly grow into a huge tree. Then you can sit on my trunk. And I will tickle you with my leaves and give you sweet fruits. You can then climb on me and play with me. I shall call my other birdy friends too. They are amazing.

How does this idea sound to you?

Aniket was imagining all this and he felt so relieved and happy. He loved the idea. “Wow Ganu Dev you are so intelligent. I am so happy you will remain with me forever in my favourite garden.”

It was almost time for dinner and mom would call. Aniket with a big broad smile, placed Ganu Dev on the table and bowed before him with deep reverence and decided to apply Ganu Dev’s plan that year.

This story reflects the experience of loneliness amongst children. It also highlights the importance of touch as a soothing mechanism for humans. It reveals the imagination of the author through the act of personifying the deity.

Story 1 by Shri

65-year-old Meera was overjoyed with the news of her first grandchild's arrival. In her small yet quaint village house, she hurriedly reached out to vessels to make a sweetdish for the little boy's arrival home. Along with the excitement, there was struggle and frustration seeped within. She could not see clearly due to her cataracts and this was posing as a huge deterrent for her cooking. Her sons and husband often used to grumble at Meera's inconsistent cutting at the sugarcane fields, but she forgot all the complaints and grumbling by her family. As soon as the little bundle of joy arrived, Meera held him delicately in her arms. She kept touching the little boy's face and fingers with her nimble fingers. Though there was immense joy, at the same time she was extremely frustrated as now she could not even see her grandchild's face clearly. Grief and sorrow

struck her really hard and she wished that she had enough money to get her cataract surgery done. Luckily the same week, a community health worker came knocking on her door and informed her about free eye check-up and cataract surgeries at a nearby hospital in partnership with a NGO. Meera sprung in action and visited the hospital for a check-up, followed by a successful surgery. Within a matter of days her eyes healed and she was able to see the round bubbly face of her grandson. That's when she exclaimed "I no longer crave for moksha or need to go for a temple pilgrimage. The sight of this little boy is all I asked for and now I can experience moksha by living every day.

This story shares the plight of those who are bereft of sight, partially or completely. It has a clear beginning, middle and an end. It has an emotional component too.

Story # 2 by Shri

With the recent monsoons, the landscape was carpeted in different shades of green. Right from dark green to even bright and fluorescent shades of green. The village houses that had jasmine plants added a sweet flavor to the muddy wet lanes. Mayur joyfully walked around this ambient environment. Though he wished to be carefree, he had to be careful. He kept peering at the mud lanes and one step and slipped into a pile of cow dung in the backyard. Mayur faced similar issues at school and playing his favorite sport - cricket. Luckily, there was a school eye-screening camp at his school and the optometrists found a refractive error. The NGO that worked in partnership with the eye hospital offered him free glasses and he gleeful opted for the yellow frames as it is his favorite color. He now lives carefree and enjoys playing cricket in the scenic landscapes that would even make professional players burn in envy.

This story was written by a communication specialist: it has a setting, a clear plot, a message. It's appears to play the role of an advertisement of the NGO.

I also invited the participants to conceive of an alternate approach to storymaking to the above 'brick by brick' one. This is the 'let it flow/ gush out of you'. Here, you may be your own audience; in addition, there may be an imagined audience too.

The above detailed description of my interventions prior, during and after the training, as also the responses of the participants, showcases how I used a variety of training methods to achieve the goals of training (Abhishek, Senthilkumar, 2016)

2. Discussion:

In this section, I detail what we learnt during the training: about how to conduct it. I share a multi-perspectival understanding, i.e. of Prof. Nasreen, myself and the participants.

3.1 My insights through the workshop: about the process, content, facilitation²⁶
I learnt that the process was beautiful, yet tiring. It was beautiful because of the diversity of persons who participated and the variety of material that emerged during the workshop. There were so many different understandings and expectations of a story: some saw these as vignettes to include in a report, some as a vehicle to present a moral to children, still others as a way of telling others what was happening in their lives. The variety was enthusing, and yet, as a facilitator, it was also challenging to ‘meet these varied needs’, (read as ‘please the participants’). Somewhere, I needed to draw the line between what my mandate during the workshop was, as delineated in initial communications, and what each participant was expecting out of me (by way of ‘special’ requests). Such boundaries are very crucial in achieving and retaining clarity.

I also felt that the twofold objectives of the workshop: creating a story and telling it were differently fulfilled. The first was achieved in its entirety, given the time and space. i.e. participants learnt the brick and mortar of creating a story: how to go about it in a step by step process. However, training them in how to tell a story was partially addressed in the sense that they learnt this through groupwork experience. However, if I were to address how to dramatize and narrate a story, so as to interest and perhaps even entertain a listener, then that needed a separate session altogether.

3.2 Prof. Nasreen’s insights and feedback as observer, and intermittent intervenor Prof. Nasreen kindly shared this feedback over email, summarized here: the positives were that

- I was bilingual;
- used the space well (moved in and out of the group)
- managed time well too
- added a sprinkling of humour.

²⁶ My insights about the process of the workshop have been woven in throughout the article. This section contains my insights on the workshop as a whole.

She suggested some ways to conduct it better: avoid holding a paper in hand; try making slides more ‘cheerful’, include techniques for making small groups (as opposed to individuals and pairs).

3.3 Participant feedback

Participants shared their feedback in the feedback form: this included the following questions and responses (selected):

1. How would you rate this workshop?

There was a rating scale of 5, with 0 being ‘not at all good’ and 5 being ‘excellent’.

The workshop was rated as below:

- 1 participant rated 2
- 9 participants rated 3
- 4 participants rated 4
- 4 participants rated 5.

2. What were the new learnings from this workshop?

The participants’s responses articulating their learning from this training varied widely. Some of these were:

- How to include emotions in stories
- the structure of the story
- how to convert situations into stories
- what points are important whilst writing a story
- creative thinking of the new idea
- creating themes and knowing one’s argument

3. 3 things you liked about this workshop. Reasons.

Here is a collation of participants’ responses to this question.

- Process: activity-interaction-discussion; group activities, theoretical knowledge;
- facilitator Shazneen’s clarity of speech, ideas and participant interaction;
- interactive, equal participation, practical approach;
- ‘loved the way it was conducted’; provided knowledge;
- I liked it because of the meticulous planning and opportunity for each person to speak (translated from Hindi);
- resource person, simplicity;

- personal touch of the facilitator;
- respect for participants,
- all encompassing (tried to address maximum needs), prior request for story (so better preparation on our part); participants' creativity flowed.

4. Would you recommend this workshop to others?

18 participants responded yes; with a couple asking for more time, and adding 'definitely'. Two left it blank.

Over and above this, I also got some individual responses as feedback. Some shared that they wanted more time, and some reading material. Some felt positive and confident about writing stories themselves following this workshop. Also, the preparation in terms of asking them to come prepared with some stories also helped as that way they had material to work on.

The setting for the training was the corridor of the hall in the campus. This could have been better: with more space and privacy. The audibility was low, since the fan was noisy and there was no AC. This feedback was given by most participants.

3. Conclusion

Here, I summarize my learnings, and project how these could be applied for trainings in the future.

In retrospect, this workshop was a great learning experience: I wish it had been recorded for the learnings it could afford for posterity. Also, the sheer variety of inputs from participants was mindboggling. Yet, having honed the craft of managing participants and their contributions with dexterity through years of experience, it was managed such that each participant contributed to the full. I felt satisfied about this.

I'm also aware that some participants wanted specialized inputs which were beyond the scope of this training. This was communicated via email after the workshop, leaving a door open for individualized specialized input as per their need.

If I were to do this workshop again, I'd limit the number of participants, ensure the setting and infrastructure were conducive to the content and process, and include those who could at least understand English. Constantly having to translate, added to the multilinguality, but also added to my anxiety as a 'teacher'

(I like to ensure my students understand what I'm teaching), thereby taking away from some of the discussion. I'd continue to aspire to have maximum participation and sharing from all participants, an area where this training succeeded.

4. Acknowledgements

My gratitude is due to Prof. Nasreen for entertaining the idea of this training, being flexible about content and giving feedback about process. Her presence added to the facilitation. I thank the Centre for Lifelong learning staff for administrative support before, during and after the training. I thank each of the participants for giving of their time and learning, especially those who contributed their stories and insights about process. I thank Dilmeher for reading drafts of this paper and Dr. Zubin for guidance on theory.

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Gender and Expression: Viewing varied art forms through a gender lens

- Deepti Anil

Men and women are socially conditioned to occupy different roles. They face different expectations and challenges. These biases are often subtle or invisible. Often, they're not intentional or malicious. Regardless, treating all people equally does not necessarily result in equal outcomes. To be fair, the new generation must be prepared to treat men and women differently; to remove barriers and to encourage inclusion. At Sophia, we believe that you can start this process by applying a “gender lens” to your activities. Looking at the world without a gender lens can be a bit like swimming without goggles or reading without glasses. The default gender-related assumptions that underlie our thinking are likely to remain invisible or blurry, and therefore they can mislead us, even without our realizing it, unless we bring them to attention, question them specifically, and look objectively at precisely what lies before us. It's not just men who have blurry vision when it comes to gender but both men and women are conditioned to see things a certain way. Using a gender lens when analyzing, planning, and making decisions means carefully and deliberately examining all the implications of our work in terms of gender.

At the Sophia Genderlogue we are looking to use this precise instrument to view art (poetry, photography, humour, satire) as a medium for bringing about this social change, for increasing gender sensitivity and inclusion. A gender-wise program like this is one that considers the different needs and circumstances of people of all genders within the target beneficiary group of students. This was the concept behind the theme of the Genderlogue at Sophia College on 31 July, 2019. It was an activity for the youth to engage in constructive dialogue on Gender for social change using the medium of art in its many forms, it was an

regional activity done in the city of Mumbai. The participants were students from all South Mumbai colleges only.

The Genderlogue at Sophia also included original work in the form of research papers, photographs and poetry from students of all South Mumbai colleges. By doing so we wanted young people to engage in a dialogue which we hope will lead to effective gender equality for all people from across the gender spectrum, in diverse circumstances and with a wide range of other social characteristics. The Sophia Genderlogue was a programme planned with the students, by the students and for the students.

The programme was inaugurated by the principal of Sophia College Dr. (Sr.) Ananda Amritmahal who highlighted the need for programmes like these in engaging the youth in constructive and open dialogue to build a newer society which can lead to gender equality. The key note address was delivered by film director, actor and activist Ms Nandita Das. Ms Das in her address spoke eloquently with examples on the purported concept of the female and male gaze. She shared her experiences as a film maker and actor on the topic of gender equality. Ms Das lamented on the relative lack of women in the different spheres of film making, the lacuna in the area she said was high probably due to the gendered vision that most people had on the filmmaking process. The programme also included original poetry and research paper presentations of students from various colleges of South Mumbai like Jai Hind college, St. Xavier's College and Wilson college to name a few. The day programme was well planned and received very enthusiastically by the students.



Vidya Bal (1937-2020)

- Vibhuti Patel



Our dear Vidya Bal passed away on 30-1-2020.

Vidyatai was a highly respected feminist for her warm, affectate and welcoming nature. She had a fan-following among 4 generations as she was ready to listen to them with genuine interest and enter into a dialogue. She was a noted feminist, intellectually versatile journalist and committed activists of the women's liberation movement in Maharashtra. She was pioneer of women's rights movement in Pune during early 1970s. At that time, she was extremely popular editor of widely circulated weekly in Marathi, STREE. When her increasing involvement in the women's movement

made it difficult to survive in STREE, she quit. Maharashtra Women's writers Forum made a public appeal to make contribution to start an independent feminist journal in Marathi that would provide democratic platform to all progressive ideas for women's rights. Thus, Milun Saarya Jani (i.e. All of Us Coming Together). Her respect for plural perspective in the women's movement endeared her to all across ideological spectrum from Gandhian-liberal-socialists and feminists.

In 1985, we traveled to gather for End of the Decade (1975-1985) Nairobi Conference. It was a long journey with a halt in Adisababa while going and returning. I never felt a generation gap in those 10 days of personal and political interactions with her. In Nairobi Conference, there were feminists of 185 countries. Vidyatai interacted all them with a spirit of a learner. Vidyatai was always open to new ideas. When I submitted the Report on "Socioeconomic Status of Muslims in Maharashtra", she asked me to write an exhaustive report on Muslim Women's Status in Maharashtra.

When movement of young women for entry into sanctum sanctorum of Shani Shingnur was initiated by young women in Maharashtra, Vidyatai along with Pushpatai Bhawe went on a hunger strike not because they wanted to enter the temple, but to express their solidarity with the young women spearheading the campaign for temple entry.

She has passed on her legacy of feminism not only to get scientist daughter, Dr. Vinita Bal who is a member of Saheli, Delhi, but to thousands of girls and women, all over Maharashtra who found in Vidyatai their Role Model.

Vidyatai received lifetime achievement Laadali Media Award by Population First, Mumbai and many more for your dedicated efforts for women's rights.

30-1-2020

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr. Anita Banerjee, Assistant Professor, Andaman Law College, Port Blair

Dr. Nidhi Shendurnikar has a PhD in Political Science from The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Gujarat. She has worked as a program coordinator for Initiatives of Change (IofC), a Research Officer for The Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai and an Academic Associate for IIM, Ahmedabad. Dr. Anita Banerjee

Dr. Chanda Asani is women's studies scholar who has been teaching in several universities in Rajasthan and also active in the women's movement.

Dr. Khevana Desai is Assistant Professor in Mithibai College of Arts and Sciences. She has done extensive research on declining child sex ratio in India.

Ms Mary Vanlalthanpuii, a Research Fellow, North East India Studies Asiatic Society, Kolkata

Mr Kripa Mondal, Livelihood & Agriculture Consultant.

Ms Nikita Pathak has done Masters in Women's Studies and has successfully completed her dissertation on Misogyny in Fest Culture of University Campuses.

Ms Nalanda Tambe is a Branding and Communication Specialist at Alembic Real Estate, Vadodara Gujarat. She has a Master's degree in Communication from The Faculty of Journalism and Communication, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda.

Ms Sandhya Mehta a researcher and a social media co-ordinator at Mani Bhavan Gandhi Sangrahalaya, Mumbai. She is co-author of *Gandhi in Bombay: Towards Swaraj* with Usha Thakkar.

Ms Sucharita Lal, M. Phil. Research Scholar Advance Centre for Women's Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai- 400088

GUIDELINES TO THE CONTRIBUTORS

Urdhva Mula is an interdisciplinary journal (ISSN No. 2277-7954) that publishes articles based on multidisciplinary research, as well as essays about diverse aspects of gender and women's issues. Gender functions as a central category of analysis. The journal concentrates on gendered representation of topics from the fields of literature and language, history, political science, sociology, anthropology, cinema and media studies, human development, law, and medicine. It also analyses the intersection of gender with race, ethnicity, location, nationality and disability.

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- Format and referencing should follow the APA guidelines.
- The title with the author's name, with brief intro, must be on a separate page, and the author's name should not feature anywhere else in the article, so that the peer-review process may be impartial.
- Articles should be 5000-7000 words in length. Papers that greatly exceed this will be critically reviewed with respect to length.
- Articles may express the personal voice of creative writing, or a reflection on a transforming text or event in the field of gender, or an impersonal presentation of data useful to researchers in that field.
- A short biographical note about the author must be supplied on a separate page.
- Authors whose work has been accepted for publication will receive a complimentary copy of the issue containing their article.



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Notes

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