



# Newsletter

**IAWS**  
Indian Association  
of Women's Studies

April 2003

**Orissa  
Conference  
Special**

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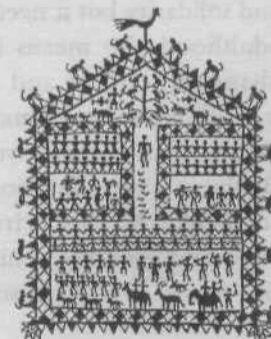
## Editor's Desk

Warm greetings from all of us, the newly elected EC of the IAWS and the members of the new Editorial Board of the Newsletter. This issue introduces the members of the new EC and brings to you reflections from the desk of the President, IAWS.

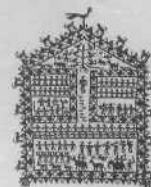
The first issue focuses on the proceedings of the Xth National Conference of the IAWS held at Utkal University, Bhubaneswar in October 2002. The theme of the conference 'Sustaining Democracy : Challenges in the New Millennium' seemed so relevant as we went to the conference deeply disturbed about the Gujarat Carnage. It seems ever so relevant in the context of the war on Iraq and its occupation by the Anglo-American axis. Yet the anti-war upsurge across the world gives hope that indeed another world is possible. With this in view the editorial committee, has decided to bring out the next issue as a special number on the Asian Social Forum. We invite you to send in your contributions/reports/photographs for this issue by the first week of June to the editorial office by post or by email to [wsc@unipune.ernet.in](mailto:wsc@unipune.ernet.in).

With the next issue we will be introducing three regular features - 'Open forum for Researchers', 'Women Voices : Pioneering Contributions on Gender in the 19th and early 20th Centuries' and 'Alternative Networks'. More details about these features in the announcements inside. Please do send in your articles, research in progress, poems, artworks, suggestions and criticisms. The Editorial Board hopes that voices from all regions will be represented and that we can provoke debates, discussions and build alternative networks.

**Sharmila Rege**



## From the President's Desk



Warm greetings from the newly elected EC of IAWS!

Twenty one years of IAWS have symbolized a creative and collective venture to bring together women activists, academics, researchers, students and policy makers. The first NCWS which gave birth to the Association was an expression of the resolve to provide a unique platform for articulation of women's concerns in a democratic and participatory manner. The close links between Women's Studies and Women's movement have enriched IAWS agenda and have continuously kept expanding its horizons and aspirations despite undercurrents of tensions between the two. The themes of the last ten national conferences reflect the concerns of the movement. The deliberations during the conference bring in the richness and diversity of the growing body of knowledge produced by academics and activists. The South Asian panel has helped in building solidarity across borders. At this critical juncture when the old debates facing women's studies i.e. institutional, pedagogical and political are far from being settled, we are faced by fresh challenges from growing communalization of politics, culture of violence and victimization of women. 2002 was deeply disturbing to all of us as the Gujarat violence threw a new challenge to the women's movement and women's studies. The organisation of Gujarat panel and the peach march during the Xth Conference in Bhubaneswar was an expression of IAWS' support and solidarity but it needs to be sustained. Reaching adulthood also means lots of responsibilities. The changed political and economic context should strengthen our resolve and belief in collective struggles. Alliances built over the years need to be strengthened. Battles within educational institutions have to be sustained. At this critical juncture we need to introspect over intervening years and deliberate over the future. While consolidation of earlier work is

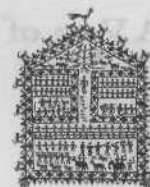
needed, we do need to reflect on IAWS' mandate to develop stronger ties between academics and activists. What this network has meant to all of us? How would we like to see it grow in its adulthood and continue to provide an active platform to different voices and perspectives? Do we need to encourage more regional initiatives? In what ways the Association can support them or respond to various pressing issues? What are the strengths and the constraints? Holding national conferences should not be its only *raison d'être*. Should it be structured differently to provide enough space for discussions and debates and other forms of expressions? How does it retain its vibrancy and creativity? The present EC is seized of all these issues. While we draw upon the resources made available to us by our predecessors, one has to perhaps look at new constituencies in order to realize the mandate that gave birth to IAWS. IAWS always had a fluid structure which gave it flexibility to adapt itself to various demands made by members. Do we need a permanent secretariat? The journey during the last two decades has been bumpy but invigorating and exciting. IAWS newsletter which is now coming out regularly plays a very important role in networking and raising issues which need a consistent campaign and support, but it has not become an interactive medium. Members need to use it more for articulating their views and concerns.

The Association can only grow with the active participation of its members. Any movement has not only to respond to major challenges but has to remain vigilant. The strength lies in a broad-based active participation and creating synergies between different actors. We invite all the members to extend their full cooperation to the new EC.

**Kumud Sharma**  
President, IAWS

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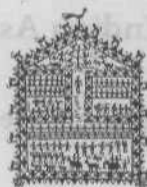
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## A Vote of Thanks from the Local Secretary, Xth IAWS Conference



I want to acknowledge my thanks and more so my gratitude to not only the following people and institutions but also to many more who during the past few months have guided and given us their continued support for the Xth National Conference of Women's Studies and made it a success.

From IAWS special thanks are due to the President, IAWS and Co-Chairperson of the local committee Dr. Zarina Bhatti who had provided the support and confidence without which no Conference can be held. Prof. Pushpa Bhawe, Vice President, Dr. Lakshmi Lingam, General Secretary and Prof. Rameshwari Verma the Treasurer provided support right from the beginning to the end of the Conference. The smooth running of the Conference can only be attributed to their hard work. I also thank whole-heartedly, the other members of the Executive Committee for placing confidence in me as Local Organizing Secretary. Thanks are also due to Ms. Susheela Nagraj and the Accountants from Mysore.

I am deeply indebted to the officers of the University especially the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Pandav Nayak, the Controller of Examinations, Prof. B.C. Guru, Sri Achuta Samanta of KIIT, and Prof. Babesh Sen and Members of the Peace Committee and Faculty members and students (Lists attached as Appendix 1). I am thankful to the Advisory Committee and the Steering Committee of the School. My sincere thanks are due the Advisory Committee members especially Prof. Jashodara Bagchi who was confident that we at Utkal could conduct the conference. Also to other Advisory Committee members, Mr. Tom Olsen of UNICEF, Sri Aurobindo Behera, Ms. Shaheen Niloufer of OXFAM and Ms. Pramilla Swain of NAWO. The Conference as it was visible to all participants could not have been successful without the hard work of the Steering Committee members

especially Prof. Kalyani Bohidar and Dr. Madhumita Das who worked for months altogether. I wish to thank Prof. S.N. Mishra, Soumyashri Ratha, Urmimala Acharya and Smita Nayak also for their commitment to make the Conference a success. They all participated in each decision and carried out duties above the roles assigned to them.

The difficult task of transportation fell to two. I also thank Prof. A.K. Mohanty, Prof. B. Satpathy, Prof. Pratap Rath, Prof. Santosh Tripathy, Prof. K.C. Ratha and Pushpa Jena for their support towards the management of the various duties assigned to them. To Aliva and Dhiren Mohanty for their services which made the Conference so much more easier to organize. My thanks to Smt. Kasturi Mohapatra, Namrata Chadda, Members of the Mahila Dakshita Samiti and other NGOs for their continued support. Above all it was a rare privilege for all of us at Women's Studies to have Prof. G.Das, ex-Vice Chancellor, and Smt. Bulbul Das amidst us for all the days of the Conference.

The Conference will be remembered for its high profile media coverage. This could not have been possible without the hard work put in by Prof. B.B. Mohanty and Pushparaj. My sincere thanks to the OTV, Business Standard and The Sambad for the sponsorship and Dharitri, Doordarshan, Zee TV, NDTV and ETV for wide media coverage of the conference.

I am indebted for the financial support extended by the following organizations to the Xth National Conference and related activities. The Ford Foundation, New Delhi, OXFAM, Delhi and Bhubaneswar, DFID, New Delhi, Dept. of Women and Child, Govt. of India, Indian Council for Social Sciences Research, New Delhi, UNICEF,



Bhubaneswar, Urmila Foundation, USA and IMFA, Bhubaneswar.

I would like to thank my staff and students and associated members of the SWS center for all the support that they have rendered.

My sincere thanks to Hotel Garden Inn, Panthanivas, Gopabandhu Academy, Madhusudan Institute and Rama Devi Women's College for providing accommodation facilities to the participants. I cannot but commend the role played by the student volunteers whose cooperation and active involvement has made the program a success.

I thank the members of the SMRC (Shanta Memorial Rehabilitation Center) for their help and support. I owe my gratitude to the staff of Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology for allowing us to hold the conference in their campus and for all the support that they had provided at the time of the conference.

Thank you all for everything.

**Asha Hans**

*Local Secretary, LAWS Conference  
and Director, School of Women's Studies*

## Announcement

### Open Forum

Doing Research in the ever-growing field of Women's studies is no doubt a politically and intellectually engaging experience. Nevertheless, it raises a number of questions beginning with what we actually mean by the term 'Women's Studies'. Most of us seeking to do research in Women's Studies have been overwhelmed with the vastness of the work, the proliferation of publications as also a little concerned with the unevenness of the impact. Many of us who come with training from a single discipline with just one optional course in Sociology/History/Politics of Gender feel lost – as we seek to develop inter-trans-disciplinary modes of inquiry. At the national conferences of the IAWS, many of us have expressed the need for a sustained dialogue with/between young researchers. Open forum is a space for this dialogue, a space to share work in progress/pose queries/seek/give guidelines from/to co-researchers. We invite all members to send in their reflections/questions/articles to the open forum.

## Call for Contributions:

### Women's Voices: Pioneering Contributions

Several Indian women who wrote/composed in regional languages have made pioneering social and literary contributions during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Many of these writings/compositions have slipped from public memory. We invite you to send us excerpts (translated into English/Hindi) from women's letters, diaries, magazines, autobiographies, short stories, speeches.

## Sustaining Democracy: Challenges in the New Millenium

**Report of Xth National Conference of the Indian Association for Women's Studies held at Utkal University, Bhubaneswar, 17-20 October, 2002**

**Dr. Lakshmi Lingam and Ms. Siddhi Mankad**  
January 2003

The Preamble of the Indian Constitution affirms that India is a secular, socialist, democratic republic. These values are crucial to achieve equity, equality and global peace. Within the democratic framework the prospect of protecting and promoting human rights in general and the rights of women, children, minorities, dalits, adivasis and other vulnerable groups in particular is possible, provided that people's entitlements are respected and power is effectively decentralised. This requires spaces for free discussion, right to information and redistributive justice and spaces for women to articulate their concerns and assert their rights. The Xth National Conference sought to identify different forces that erode democratic structures and processes in India and dilute their capacity to secure the well being to all citizens in general, and to women, in particular.

The conference saw a turnout of 800 people including feminist scholars, representatives of feminist activist organisations, NGOs and young students. The presence of people from the arts world, artists, people from theatre and the documentary film world, crafts people, publishers and booksellers reflected the multidisciplinary character of Women's Studies and the interest the Conference creates. About 30 international participants from SAARC countries - Sri Lanka, Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh - and from Yugoslavia, Finland, the United States and the United Kingdom, provided the opportunity for 'regional' and 'global' insights into gender, development and peace issues.

### Inaugural

The inauguration of the Conference on 17th October at the hands of a group of women belonging to the Jhoria tribe was a statement to women's strength and



sustainability in the face of mighty odds that supercedes issues of race, caste, education, economic and political status. The voice of the group, Ms. Sumani Jhoria narrated their tale of strife and struggle following the arrival of large national and multinational corporate mining interests which threatened their indigenous livelihoods and control over their lands and natural resources. Their struggle gave a new identity to the women's movement in Orissa that was outside the organised, educated, mainstream movement. A soul stirring dramatic performance by the group revealed the complicity and brutality of state agencies such as the police who adopted repressive measures and violence in an attempt to suppress the movement.

A Solidarity Message by Vice Chancellor, Utkal University, Prof. Pandav Nayak traced the record of human rights and its gendered context. He observed that in the last century far greater death and destruction was created in non-war situations as compared to war situations. Stressing on the increasing feminisation of poverty, particularly in the South Asian region, he noted how globalisation from outside and communalism from inside have created a crisis of meaning for the vast majority in their daily culture and social experience, affecting among the vulnerable

groups, women and children the greatest. He hoped for the emergence of a futuristic agenda during the course of discussions and deliberations of the Conference.

The President's Address, delivered by the President, IAWS, Dr. Zarina Bhatti, retraced the history of the establishment and functioning of the IAWS. Touching upon the debate on whether Women's Studies should be a separate discipline in a University or a gender perspective be incorporated into courses and syllabi of other disciplines, she expressed the futility of the debate since both processes could be simultaneously pursued. On the issue of fundamentalism she noted its emergence, both in the majority and minority community, and denounced its promotion of religion-based identities and separatisms that destroy the accepted notion of nationhood in India. She also covered issues of saffronisation of education, of activism and struggle for political and legal rights for women, of the mixed government response to feminist pressures and of the dilemma regarding the assimilation of minority women's issues into the agenda of broader feminist issues without disturbing religious and cultural identity.

The main activity on the inaugural day was the deliverance of the Madhuri Shah Memorial Lecture by Prof. Mushirul Hasan on the topic 'India at the Crossroads'. Prof. Hasan expressed concern on the eroding secular fabric of India and the rise of 'Hindutva' forces, exemplified by the violence in Gujarat. Denouncing communal violence in all its forms and its gendered framework, he analysed this in the context of the violence against women in Gujarat. He noted that the Indian edifice rests on the three pillars of nationalism, secularism and pluralism and the removal of any one of this will cause the edifice to crumble like a pack of cards. He urged religious minorities to occupy the secular ground along with other democratic and secular forces and attempt to halt the expansion of non-secular forces. He shared his vision of an India where all people and all cultures are connected in a vibrant, rich and diverse web of life and united in circles of compassion, justice and humanity.

## Conference Activities

The activities of the Conference included deliberations on the main theme through plenary sessions, sub-theme sessions, a pre-conference workshop and a special session on the Gujarat violence, film screening, street plays, cultural programmes, a peace march and handicraft and book displays and sale. A programme schedule of the Conference is attached as Appendix 2.

## Plenaries:

**The Theme Plenary titled "Challenges to Democracy"** was coordinated by Prof. Pushpa Bhawe. The speakers to this plenary were Prof. Prabhat Patnaik, Ms. Indira Jaisingh and Dr. Uma Chakravarti, who spoke respectively on economic issues, legal issues and historical issues related to the Indian democracy.

Prof. Prabhat Patnaik dwelt upon the challenges to democracy presented by the dependence of the government on international financial capital. The government becomes obsessed with appeasing international speculators at the cost of domestic development. Financial capitalist's disapproval of an activist state compels the government to reduce the fiscal deficit, thereby reducing government expenditure. Citing an illustration of the starvation issue currently making news, Prof. Patnaik noted the Bretton Woods Institutions' insistence on curtailing fiscal deficit in midst of hunger, huge foodgrain stocks and foreign exchange reserves. He illustrated his point by proposing an easy solution to the hunger issue, currently making news. The solution, while economically sound, would result in a rise in fiscal deficit on account of budgeting procedures, compelling the government to give in to the caprices of international investors and not take appropriate measures to move the surplus foodgrains stocks to starvation areas. The consequences of appeasing international investment has resulted in attempts to delink economic policy from the political process, like making the Reserve Bank of India independent of government control, so that government can not be held accountable for economic failures by the citizens. There is also a constitutional ceiling imposed on fiscal deficit, but no constitutional flow required



for development expenditure. This ensures that empowerment of people does not impinge on the policies that are to the linking of international financial capitalist. Irrespective of ideology the dependence on international capital makes it necessary for any government to profess reforms, the failure of which would certainly result in flight of capital and subsequent breakdown of the economy. A falling government expenditure increases poverty and unemployment and snowballs into communal and racial facism. This can also lead to geographical divisions with the more prosperous states that are able to attract international capital wanting to secede as they have to bear part of the responsibility of the center's fiscal problems and view less prosperous states as barriers to their development. Prof. Patnaik ended by saying that the only way out for India was to have leaders that could guide the country out of the trap of international finance, build an independently strong economy and convince the citizens to undergo the short term hardships that such an effort would entail.

Ms. Indira Jaising spoke on legal challenges to democracy that covered a range of issues from domestic violence to international violence. She stressed on how Fundamental Rights are not available against non-state actors such as multinationals, political parties, etc. and this erodes the democratic nature of the state. Citing numerous illustrations on inadequate implementation of laws, loopholes therein and misinterpretation by courts of the spirit of the law, she explained how powerful forces were able to subvert democracy and inflict violence on women and minorities. Globalisation has led to advances in redefinition of human rights and the linking of social, cultural and economic rights with civil and political rights at the international level. However, since international law is non-enforceable and international treaties to which the country is a signatory, are not domesticated into legislation there is a disjunct between rights and liability and accountability. The greatest challenge in this context has surfaced in the Gujarat violence, namely, how are non-state actors to be made accountable for the abuse of Fundamental Rights? Ms. Indira Jaising proposed that this could be done through going back to the past and applying theories of liability that existed during war to peacetime legislation. She ended by cautioning that the latest trend was the violation of the rights of groups rather than individuals and it was necessary to redraw

legislation to reflect the changing environment and ensure accountability in its implementation.

Dr. Uma Chakravarty deliberated on historical issues with a focus on Gujarat. The Emergency resulted in the flowering of various movements, including the women's movement which criticised the nature of secular fascism and authoritarianism and proved the capacity of the Indian democracy to stand up to these challenges. However, the violence of Gujarat made one wonder what could be salvaged and what kind of movement needed to be created to tackle this new brand of fundamentalism. The horror in Gujarat was accentuated by the response of the parliament. While the ruling party engaged in apologetic rhetoric, the NDA partners, that had come together on a secular platform bailed the government from responsibility. Dr. Chakravarti explained this as a bargain formulated to channel government foodstocks away from starvation areas to states ruled by coalition partners for them to distribute to their constituents as subsidised foods. The parliament debates also showed that violence against women was not a sufficient agenda for the government. Even the support of the National Commission for Women was a reaction to criticism by activists and was at best lukewarm in its efforts. By focusing the post-riot attention on "asmita" or identity issues the Gujarat government deftly deflected attention away from its non-governance. Symbolically including minority groups like Adivasis into the Hindutva agenda shifted their attention away from hunger and drought and the failure of the government machinery towards these minority groups. Dr. Chakravarti also touched upon the need for Hindutva to have a monopoly on truth by controlling not only historical textual material but also popular perception of current events. Women are central to all these issues and the challenge of the day is reinvent the basis of democracy and restore credibility of institutions, enshrined rights and rights not yet enshrined.

**The SAARC Panel on Women and Peace** coordinated by Kamla Bhasin and Ritu Menon had speakers from Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and India.

Ms. Khawar Mumtaz from Pakistan traced the peace development process over two decades. There were various movements that emerged in the '80s in the



backdrop of religious fundamentalism, including the peace and women's movement. Religious fundamentalism got a foothold as Pakistan became a conduit of the US war against the Russians in Afghanistan. Genesis of the peace movement accompanied the rise of the jihadi movement in Afghanistan and its links in Pakistan. Pakistan was at the time in a state of internal strife with the state being militarised, criminalised, the proliferation of drugs and the growth of the extremist right. The '80s saw the growth of the women's movement and the '90s saw the peace movement gaining strength with formal peace activism. The formation of the Pakistan Peace Coalition focused on a variety of issues including the arms race, military takeover, the bombing of Afghanistan, violence against women, etc. As such, it was an anti-war movement as well as a social movement. The major challenge to the peace movement in Pakistan is the perception of activists as agents of the West or of India. In the areas controlled by the extreme right the women's movement and peace movement are suppressed through violence. The post-September 11 situation and the bombing of Afghanistan led to an upsurge of violence with NGOs being razed to the ground. Many women's programmes were jeopardised in the process. Despite these challenges peace activists in Pakistan have continued to voice their concern over sectarian violence, terrorism, the thwarting of democracy and the interlinkages between religion and politics.

Ms. Meghna Guha dwelt on Fundamentalism and Communalism in Bangladesh. She noted that Nation building has never taken cognisance of ethnicity and has left the issues of ethnic minorities unresolved. This has cast conflicts all across South Asian nations. In Bangladesh the threat of fundamentalism has increased with democracy since the fundamentalists are now linked to the political process. Religion perpetuates divisions between private and public, separates the personal from the political, suppresses minorities and women and is a tool in the hands of the establishment to show order and control in the midst of unrest. Kinship provides a buffer zone where extreme views are negotiated. Kinship links are formed through marriage or business to buy power or subvert political positions. Kinship is used to play gender politics through which power of the patriarchy is perpetuated through abduction, rape, violence or forced marriages. In Bangladesh the situation has improved through

international and internal mobilisation of the peace process, as exemplified by a relative peaceful reaction to the Gujarat violence in comparison to violence against Hindus in the wake of the Babri Masjid demolition. Ms. Guha ended by expressing a hope that a feminist way of finding secular spaces could be evolved to ensure peace and development.

Ms. Sonia Jabbar gave a journalistic account of her experiences of militarism, Kashmir and LTTE militancy. Creatively weaving her story around the AK-47 she explored the rise of militancy in Kashmir and Sri Lanka. State violence led to retaliatory actions and the collapse of the economy resulted in the collapse of the future of the youth. The powerlessness and sense of failure of the youth was exploited by militant organisations by conferring to them a sense of purpose, of power, of identity. Linked to religion this sense took on divine proportions. Ms. Jabbar traced the effects of violence on women and also explored the attitudes of the military towards the separationists. Moving to Sri Lanka, she found women deeply entrenched to the LTTE cause as a reaction to violence perpetuated on them, their families and their communities. This led women to learn to kill and to live by killing. Ms. Jabbar noted that for these people killing is amoral and not immoral.

Ms. Meena Poudel shared her experiences and views on the linkages between social conflict created by religion in the name of Hindutva and political conflict created by democracy in Nepal. She contested the impression that Nepal was a peaceful nation by noting the numerous caste, religion, identity and gender conflicts taking place there. Illustrating the linkages between social and political conflict she looked at the case of a Dalit woman raped by a Brahmin army man, the woman being subsequently accused by the judge of attempting to cause social tensions by complaining against the rapist. Peace, in this case was perceived as "not fighting", even for legitimate rights. Ms. Poudel expressed concern at the movement of conflicts from one country to another in the region, caused on account of similarity of issues like communalism and casteism and the complacency of governments in dealing with these. There needs to be a regional solidarity to address these issues. The results of these conflicts on women is the restriction on their mobility, economic hardships and sexual violence by the perpetrators and actors of the

conflicts. Though women are not currently involved in seeking solutions to these conflicts, a heightened self-awareness has resulted in their mobilisation and they have an opportunity to charter peace. Women need to show social responsibility and take up this challenge since political fraternity brokers peace only by waging war and channelising precious economic resources away from social expenditure to military expenditure. The major challenge for Nepal is to find a process to formalise and officialise the peace movement and to make the Nepal peace process a part of the South Asia peace process.

Malati De Alwaris discussed issues related to peace in Sri Lanka. Peace means different things to different people and Ms. De Alwaris views the current cessation of hostilities and peace talks in Sri Lanka with concern as she questions the processes involved in getting peace. Peace is about contract, compromise and negotiation and there is a fear that it may come at a cost of justice and equality. It is difficult for the feminist movements to retain an independent voice while demanding peace. At this stage it is necessary to be self-critical about the easier methods adopted for peace. Ms. De Alwaris expressed concern on the shift by activists and feminists from strategies of protest like civil disobedience to those request in the form of petitions and charters. One of the reasons for the shift is professionalisation of movements which transfer the decision making of the agenda to the hands of funders. Ms. De Alwaris ended by urging the gathering to seek ways to coordinate the feminist and peace movements in south Asia and expressed her support for a suggestion on the establishment of a Women's Tribunal for South Asia.

**The Orissa Panel** was organised in keeping with the IAWS National Conference tradition of holding a plenary on the gender development challenges of the host state. It was coordinated by Dr. Satish B. Agnihotri who spoke on the changes in sex-ratio patterns in Orissa. Before 2001 there was a need to convince people that a problem of declining sex-ratio existed. Following the 2001 Census report, and the Registrar General's stress on the alarming decline in the 0-6 age group rather than a congratulatory note on the increase in the general sex-ratio, it became clear that the declining sex-ratio was a very serious problem. Dr. Agnihotri's presentation focused on exploring how urban areas had become epicenters of

female deficit. There were the areas that bred the "Fetecide Service Providers" who provided what they claimed was "social service" by giving easy access to sex-determination and sex-selective termination services. As the urban areas became well served and profits rose they became "mobile" and expanded their services to rural areas. The connection between prosperity and high female deficit is borne out by NSSO data that shows an adverse girl child survival in the top 3 income brackets, even in Orissa. Dr. Agnihotri urged that rationalisation of adverse sex-ratio should not be done by arguments of migration, undercounting or immutable cultural practices. The attack to reverse this worrying trend should be two pronged, through the proper implementation of the PNDDT and, more importantly, by striking at the root of the problem and creating objective conditions that eliminates the unwantedness of the girl child.

The second speaker of the Plenary, Ms. Vidya Das, looked at the impact of globalisation on the women of Orissa, in particular the underprivileged and tribal women. She noted that globalisation has globalised indifference to the human condition wherein deprivation of others is easily brushed aside by the undeprived. She cited statistics to show how, as a result of globalisation the state has been transformed from a revenue surplus to a revenue deficit state, with a high loan burden and interest liability. The reforms that the top development agency in Orissa, the DFID, was supporting were also not improving economic conditions. Globalisation has not only reduced women's employment in the organised sector but has worsened the situation of women in the unorganised sector, especially the agricultural labourers in the tribal areas who are faced with conditions of hard labour and insecure wages. Government programmes like the DWCRA have reached only a small fraction of women and they too have not been able to raise themselves above the poverty line. Health facilities are unavailable in tribal areas. With the coming of new industries in the state new Resettlement and Rehabilitation policies make resettlement mandatory, however people already displaced who have not been resettled have been ignored. Ms. Das ended by stating that while globalisation is seen as modern, scientific and rational, but in reality it is about moving back to traditional thinking as it forces individuals to sacrifice and suffer in the process.

Ms. Sandhya Naik spoke of her personal experiences of communal and ethnic violence in the Kandamal district of south Orissa. Giving an account of the different ethnic groups that reside in the area she explained how the groups used to live in harmony till the arrival of outside settlers. In tribal spirituality and culture people do not fight in the name of caste and religion since they are external to the Hindu hierarchy and caste system. The conflicts were born out of the control that was slowly imposed on the indigenous people by the alien Hindu settlers who wielded economic and political power. The outside settlers, the RSS and BJP subjected the tribals to sanskritisation and introduced the hierarchical caste system that led to the introduction of the practice of untouchability resulting in ethnic conflicts. They controlled the economy and the tribals could not handle the new economic situation such as the credit system. There was large-scale land alienation and land grabbing. Women, who were illiterate, poverty stricken and worked hard to earn their livelihood were faced with additional problems of threatened livelihood and communal conflict. The free sexuality of the women was considered exotic and the alien settlers took advantage of this. Ms. Naik suggested that the only way forward be through liberating activism and an understanding and acceptance of the past, indigenous tribal culture.

The final presentation by Ms. Tapasi Praharaj concentrated on women's work in Orissa. Citing statistics she noted the huge problem of poverty in Orissa. Of the 80% people dependent on agriculture 55% are women. With globalisation, and increase in water tax and electric charges, removal of subsidies and closure of the Food for Work Programme, there is a fall in foodgrain production and the consequent fall in food consumption affect these women the most. Even in the non-agricultural sector, the sectors where women are predominantly employed are the ones that are facing closure or a decline or stagnation of employment opportunities, such as small scale factories, cottage industries and education departments. The displaced women generally move to the construction sector in urban areas or to the bidi sector in rural areas, where wages are low. New opportunities are opening up in the food processing industry but 80% of jobs therein go to women from other states. Ms. Praharaj mentioned the positive outcome of resistance by movements such as the

fishermen's movement, anti-liquor movement and anti-NALCO privatisation movement. However, to create a dent in conditions of the people these movements need to be united.

#### **Sub theme sessions:**

- The sub theme sessions, which were conducted concurrently over three days focused on themes related to handling of the Indian democracy and the challenges for the future. The sessions looked at the female body as a site of control, a terrain of struggle and an arena of resistance; the undemocratic nature of relationships in the family and its implications on women; the neglect of the girl child; the resistance to and the need for involving women in governance; the issues of food security and nutrition and its linkages to women's health and well-being; the growing threat of fundamentalism and communalism in India; livelihood concerns and requirements for women in the changing economic climate; the challenges for education; and the dilemmas and possibilities of doing Women's Studies within the framework of current and future political and social structures. The detailed reports of the deliberations of the sub theme session appears later in this report. A table on the contact information of sub-theme coordinators appears as Appendix 3.
- The discussions from the sub theme sessions gave rise to Resolutions adopted by the Xth IAWS National Conference that reflect its stance on these issues and provide pointers to future programmatic and advocacy avenues. (see Appendix 4)

#### **Pre-conference Workshop:**

- The pre-conference workshop, coordinated by Dr. Veena Poonacha, Dr. Divya Pandey, Dr. Maithreyi Krishnaraj and Dr. Neera Desai sought to examine the implication of the changing socio-political and economic context on the women's movement. A report on the pre-conference workshop appears later in this report.



### Special Session on women and violence in Gujarat:

- The Xth IAWS had a special session to discuss the violence in Gujarat with a specific focus on what this violence has done to/meant for women. The coordinators of the session, Ms. Renu Khanna and Ms. Tripti Shah, while providing an overview of the situation in Gujarat, also emphasised that express need to visibilise the issue by using every available fora. The speakers at this session included Ms. Jhanvi Andharia, Ms. Sheeba George, Ms. Bina Srinivasan and Ms. Ranjana Whit Ms. Tanika Sarkar as discussant.

Apart from providing an idea of the magnitude of the violence (in numbers) and the forms of violence (rape, assault, looting, etc.), the speakers laid out the challenges that Gujarat posed for all of us, including the political vacuum that it created because of the complete failure of the opposition political parties to get their act together.

Gujarat exposed the extreme limitation of seeking redressal through constitutional means particularly since elected bodies such as the state government and its arms, such as the police, led the carnage against the minorities. Women, and minority women at that, were central to this planned pogrom of the Sangh Parivar. The targetting of women by rape and burning, was meant clearly not just to humiliate, but to send clear signals to the minority communities that their existence depends on acceptance of the Hindu Rashtra. An important dimension of the planned pogrom that was highlighted was the manner in which the city of Ahmedabad has been systematically divided into Hindu and Muslim areas. In particular, West Ahmedabad symbolises in scale and depth the Sangh Parivar's conceptualisation of geographical space sans Muslims, Dalits, Christians, etc.

The discussant's presentation highlighted an important but not so visible dimension of the problem, namely, a systematic attempt by the Sangh Parivar to 'educate' young and old through schools, shakhas, temple networks, satsanghs, etc. Through such education which encompasses a whole range of institutions, the Sangh Parivar has

managed to draw into its fold large number of women, who in turn seem to transmit this hatred to their children. What is clear is the relative absence of countervailing forces to grapple with the situation, since the enormity of the problem defies existing strategies used by women's movements. The panel concluded by cautioning the audience that for the Sangh Parivar, Gujarat was a laboratory waiting to be tested in the rest of the country.

### Other Activities:

- **Peace March:** A Peace March through the city of Bhubaneswar, with more than a thousand women including participants from the IAWS Conference and from scores of local and state NGOs and students was organised to demonstrate the participants' opposition to violence and war and their resolve to strive for peace. The silent march by women holding candles lit the streets of Bhubaneswar. The march concluded with a lively rendition of songs from various countries and regions.



- **Cultural Activities:** The Conference provided an opportunity for artistes to showcase their talent, provide entertainment to the participants and project perspective on gender issues. The cultural evening had a 'Gotipua Dance' and an 'Odissi Dance' performed by the Orissa Dance Academy and a 'Sambalpuri Folk Dance' performed by the Song and Drama Division, Govt. of India. There was also a street play on consumerism and the girl child titled 'Sita Asita' presented by Natya Chetana, Orissa.



- **Media Workshop:** There were film screenings aimed to show how women's activists are using many different media formats and creating spaces within popular culture to mainstream women's rights in the public domain. Ms. Bisakha Dutta of Point of View, an NGO in Mumbai was the Co-ordinator for this workshop. The screenings – over two days – consisted of the following:

- **Bol:** a series of eight 60-second public service advertisements on domestic violence. Directed by Shabnam Virmani of Drishti.
- **Unlimited Girls:** a 90-minute film exploring how feminism is played out in multiple realms in India. Directed by Paromita Vohra and produced by Sakshi.
- **Mann ke Manjeere:** a music video based on the life of a woman who is a truck driver in Gujarat. Produced by Breakthrough, a non-profit organisation that aims to develop a culture of human rights using popular culture.
- **Colours Black:** a 30-minute video exploring child sexual abuse in India. Directed by Mamta Murthy and produced by Majlis.
- A slide presentation by Malavika Karlekar on women's images before independence – from the ongoing project at the Centre for Women's Development Studies.
- **Exhibition:** Nearly 20 stalls were erected exhibiting books and handicrafts. Organisations involved in the exhibition were TRIFED, Meher's Handloom Private Ltd., Centre for Development



Studies, Asmita, Silk Federation Ltd., KALI for Women, National Association for Women's Organisation, Bikash Adhyaya Kunda, Shree Publishers, Rawat Publishers, NABARD, Streelekha, The Book Shop and Devika's Applique.

#### Sub theme Sessions Report

The first sub theme titled the "**The Female Body: An Arena of Contestation**" coordinated by Jayashree Velankar had presentations that sought to discuss the control of women's bodies in its different forms and manifestations, and of women's resistances thereof. Presentations to this sub theme explored a myriad of issues ranging from reimagining the city through a look at gender and public space, construction and portrayal of women's bodies in Hindi cinema, issues of women with disabilities to feminist concerns with sexuality and its linkages with reproductive and mental health.

One form of control over women's bodies was traced through the examination of gender in the context of public spaces. Being historically defined as the preserve of men, women's subordinate status in public spaces is imposed in ways that reinforce male control and authority.

Feminist concerns of sexuality and its treatment in feminist interrogation were discussed in the sub theme session. Perceptions of both men and women about each other's bodies and sexuality revolve around the archetypical vamp-virgin divide and form both, the male-centric expressions of sexuality as well as women's efforts to be 'desirable' to men. Right wing politics reinforces such gender stereotyping that often begins to set with children as young as ten years of age. The entertainment industry has been influenced by (and in turn influences) cultural norms in the portrayal of women such that even in the few sympathetic representations of women's sexuality, the pattern of dominance-submission continues to remain intact and unchallenged. The information media jumps on the bandwagon as illustrated by the depiction of Phoolan Devi's life-story through "voyeuristic coverage" that emphasised the tantalizing image that the word "Bandit Queen" invokes without giving her credit either as a human being or a liberated woman much ahead of her times. Issues of sexuality and violence also take the form of die-hard ritualistic practices such as the offering of a young girl to goddess as observed of the Mathamma cult of Chittor district in Andhra Pradesh.

As a site of resistance the sub theme discussions explored everyday resistance of the non-wife through the life-style, resistance of the living body, resistance through women's oral traditions as their alternative discourse and resistance located in the peasant economy and its limitations. Discussing lesbianism, the need for feminist engagement with sexual minorities was felt.

Linked to the concept of the female body as a site of contestation are issues that explore the gender aspects of health. Indian women lack control over their bodies, their sexual lives and reproductive decisions, all of which may have negative implication on their physical and mental wellbeing. There is a need to move from a focus of maternal health to a more holistic understanding of women's health, including mental health, which takes into account the gender issues that make women susceptible to diseases and prevent them from seeking timely treatment. Women with disabilities need special attention as they are further disadvantaged in a society that treats disabilities with disdain rather than compassion.

The second sub theme on "**Promoting Democracy Within the Family**" coordinated by Joy Deshmukh-Ranadive saw issues that revolved around four areas. The first, '*Within the four walls and outside*' discussed the private and public spheres and how these spaces changed according to types of family and household arrangements. In the urban educated family set-up, equality between the husband and wife does not seem to automatically develop on the basis of economic independence and education of the wife. This has an impact on the socialisation of children as sex roles are passively accepted, perpetuating inequality through generations. Globalisation has further augmented the problems as the subsequent altered family systems have rendered women more vulnerable than ever. An interesting illustration of a nomadic Adivasi family that had taken the initiative to settle other families into a non-nomadic existence showed how the ensuing process had accorded public political space to the wife but had impaired a relatively egalitarian relationship with her spouse.

The changing context of the family merits discussion of relationships between women and lesbianism. Female friendships are generally not talked about and receive no support. Alternate forms of relationships based on non-heterosexual sexuality are real across classes and should gain due attention.

Examination of male support systems which exist between fathers and sons, among male domestic servants and in boy clubs is also necessary since they exist both within and outside the family and also impact women.

The second area around which the papers were clustered was '*The availing of justice*' which focused on both formal and informal legal systems as well as informal conflict resolution mechanisms. Community level responses to domestic violence have emerged to deal with issues such as domestic violence that have had a positive impact on women's self-confidence, their ability to change their condition and help others in need. A presentation on the inadequacies related to the Domestic Violence Bill 2002 was also held in this session.

The third area of focus was '*The impact of development at the micro and macro levels*'. Here the presentations focused on a range of issues from micro data with



macro reality, to the distress of women in a water scarce village in Gujarat, to an investigation into whether micro credit was an adequate tool for altering unjust family situations and empowering women.

The fourth and final area looked at *'Expressions through words, songs, theatre and television of portrayals, interpretations and interventions into the family'*. The portrayal of family through artistic and creative media allows for an introspection of the social system. An illustration of two novels presented during this session showed how the family was oppressively depicted and argued for emotional neglect to be added within the ambit of domestic violence. The TV, with its packaging of the contemporary woman through television soaps is a serious ideological tool which uses the mechanism of the market to promote gender bias, by reinventing tradition within a contemporary, modern milieu.

The power of the contemporary and folk media can be harnessed to affect positive changes such as the case of the use of theatre to effectively portray feminist ideas, or that of songs, both folk and feminist in portraying the family, and reflecting changing attitudes in women. An experimental action research project is also currently underway, and uses *kala faltha* to alter household perceptions. This is a non-confrontist approach that portrays on stage social norms and human values as two characters through which gender bias in the household is questioned.

The third sub theme on **"Girl Child: A Neglected Agenda"**, coordinated by Kumud Sharma, dwelt on the challenges of recognising the girl child, the inequality in the survival of the girl child and building an equal citizenship for the girl child.

Women's empowerment is meaningful only with investment in the survival, growth, and development of the girl child. Unfortunately, despite the Decade of the Girl Child, National Plan of Action, ratification of the Child's Rights Convention and CEDAW, the situation of the girl child has only worsened. Chronic discrimination, female foeticide, violence against girl children, trafficking, etc., are matters of serious concern.

A discussion on adolescent girls observed how they are largely viewed as women in the making with the focus on their future roles as mothers and not on

their present needs. A study of 2500 girls in municipal school in Mumbai noted the problems of overwork, homelessness, physical abuse, low self-esteem. A study on the health problems of adolescent girls in rural Maharashtra showed violence to be a major health problem. Another is the absence of health support systems for this group.

The second session on inequality and survival focused on Gujarat as an emerging epicenter of female deficit. This session examined the issues of survival and challenges of overcoming social mindsets, policy lacunae, and legislative frameworks which have failed to address the progressively adverse sex ratio in India's population, particularly the decline in sex-ratio in the 0-6 age group. North West India, Gujarat, Maharashtra have recorded an alarming decline in sex ratios despite the legal ban on sex determination tests. This problem persists as a total lack of ethics in medical profession continues to gain strength. Population policies like two-child norm continue to be a part of several panchayati policies, despite the states' acceptance of non-coercive and target-free family welfare programmes.

The last session on building equal citizenship addressed the need to establish the rights of the girl child as a citizen. This problem stems from the invisibility of women in the economic arena and their subsequent lack of economic worth. There is a high demand for girl child labour on account of its ease of availability and its sustenance on low working conditions. This has a bearing on all the problems facing the girl child including the adverse sex-ratio, health and literacy.

The solution requires ensuring integral and vital links between programmes policies and strategic actions in all national policies on women and children. It is necessary to explore possible avenues of interventions, alliances which need to be built – with the medical profession, media groups, community organisations, families and women's groups. Government mechanisms responsible for improving the conditions of women and children need proper implementation instead of simply remaining on paper. Lastly, the women's movement has to accept the challenge of addressing this very critical issue in a much more sustained and effective manner.

The papers in the sub theme "**Gender and Governance for Sustaining Democracy**", coordinated by Anita Gurumurthy and Mani Mekhalai, focused on issues such as the nature of community based institutions like the Nyay Panchayats, people's movements, civil society organisations and the Panchayats in formal governance.

Discussions on governance in Panchayati Raj understood the challenges for women and for women's studies in claiming their stakes for revamping the larger political system. This calls for locating gender within democratic governance, a shift away from gender and governance.

Women's studies, as also women in governance have to construct a feminist politics and resist being submerged by divisive party based politics. Regardless of the agents who have introduced them into the panchayat system, women must recognise the benefits of alliances at all levels – with their male counterparts in panchayats, and with movements – and utilise these in formulating a critique of public policy and democratising governance.

The research on alternative models of organisation building is still nascent and holds promise for future learning in democratic practice. The work of women's collectives in providing community level redressal is a case in point, serving as an excellent example of gender sensitive democratic structures. There is also the question of engendering existing informal justice systems in the community.

The larger context of Hindu fundamentalism has made the risk of cooperation of women in governance by right wing political structures a very real threat. The women's movement and the Women's Studies movement as also NGOs working with women in governance have a vital responsibility here. We need to examine how feminist positions and interventions vis-à-vis elected representatives can unequivocally safeguard the interest of marginalised castes and communities.

The "**Confronting Hunger: Issues of Food Security**" sub theme, coordinated by Rinchin and Padmini Swaminathan, discussed the effects of globalisation and repressive laws that limit the access of people over land and resources, leading to food

scarcity and starvation. The presentations included micro-studies on nutrition of women and children and their health effects, effects of globalisation and displacement as well as grassroots interventions on food security, and the demand on right to food.

The deliberations of this sub theme took place against the backdrop of acute starvation conditions and starvation deaths in many parts of the country. The Public Interest Litigations, in this context aim to affect proper and swift implementation of government programmes and ensure release of grain stocks to vulnerable areas. This strategy is crucial from a short-term point of view. In the long term prevention of starvation and starvation deaths will require a major system overhaul that takes into consideration diverse issues such as people's rights over land, employment and displacement and their control over natural resources. These elements are missing from the current nutritional policies. The long term goals should not be restricted merely to food security but should encompass food sovereignty, with people's control over resources which will not only provide them food from a government godown but will also give the cultivator right over the food they cultivate.

There is also a need to look more critically at nutritional studies that focus on women and child nutrition. Such studies should be made more political in nature. The data has to reflect not only acute starvation but also the severe under-nutrition. Consolidation of efforts in this field will enable women's groups to pursue the issue in a more systematic way.

The sub theme on "**Fundamentalism and Communalism**", coordinated by Roop Rekha Verma commenced with a discussion on the terms fundamentalism and communalism. Fundamentalism prepares the ground for communalism, which also involves monopolising of religion and culture and tilting them against women as evidenced in controlling of their roles and sexuality by the communal forces. Religion, culture and nationalism are instruments of communalism and are used to construct the "us versus them" distinction. Not only does this ignore the plurality of the country, thereby ignoring the myriad of communities and cultures that enrich the diversity of this land, it also sharpens the sense of identity on political lines. Such identity

politics leads to the militarisation, nuclearisation and communalisation of the very idea of nationalism. In the recent decades communal forces have used this mechanism to foster the division of the rights issues concerning women on community lines as evidenced in the Gujarat case.

Communal forces have also strengthened their hold on different spheres including subversion of constitution and judiciary, the appropriation of culture, religion and lifestyle. One presentation showed how the lifestyle and spirituality of a particular tribe was being appropriated by Hindutva as it was being refashioned and redesigned into Hindu iconology, Hindu rituals with its tribal culture is being replaced by Hindutva forces.

The feminist movement needs to recognise these challenges and confront communal forces, which would involve active involvement in the political sphere. Apolitically the battle cannot be won.

Deliberation on the Gujarat violence focused largely on the phenomenology of violence, that is to say, descriptive references to what happened in Gujarat. It is necessary that at this critical juncture instead of indulging in the phenomenology of rape and violence, more time and wisdom be spent on the analysis of the situation and on evolving strategies to confront communalism and fundamentalism.

The failure of the state to satisfy basic needs of the people gives communal forces the opportunity to gain support. It is necessary to use a secular ideology to counter such forces. There is also an urgent and vital need to have a much closer and intimate alliance with all people oriented democratic struggles and movements because fundamentalism and communalism cannot be fought from a singular feminist perspective. The more united that people are in the struggle for their basic rights of food security, health, education, peace, etc. the more it will be difficult for the communal forces to influence people.

This sub theme gave rise to voices of concern regarding the selective criticism of Hindutva forces to the exclusion of other communal forces. It is necessary to confront the apologetic stances by explaining that the prime concern is to identify the largeness of the adversaries and that the criticisms

thereof, boldly and non-apologetically, will be proportionate to the danger ahead, the size of the adversary and the machinations of the adversary.

Lastly, there was a proposal to gather at least 1 lakh women in Gujarat with the aim to build a commitment for peace through Gujarat and all over India.

The papers presented for the sub theme on "**Gender and Livelihoods**", coordinated by Sarojini Thakur explored issues and challenges in the creation of sustainable livelihood options for women.

The first session of this three-session sub theme was meant to explain the context of the issue, the framework, institutions and processes involved therein. The DFID's sustainable livelihoods framework involves a shift in approach from looking at needs to strengths, from an income-based approach to a multi-dimensional one, from a project focus to a process focus and from the short-term to the long-term. Such a framework may provide solutions to the planning and implementation problems that plague many government schemes – IRDP, IMY, DWCRA, SJSR. An illustration of tribals of Maharashtra points to the differential access to resources available to them. This may be corrected through tribe based schemes rather than schemes targeted at individuals.

Urbanisation is no solution to the livelihood problem and in this context migration becomes an important focus for deliberation. Migration is an area which the state does not consciously address. There is a need to acknowledge that migration may not always be distress migration but also a livelihood strategy. It is also crucial to recognise 'feminisation of migration' and the need to understand that women's vulnerabilities are enhanced because of their position in society.

The second session was on Natural Resources Management (NRM). Since 80% of rural Indian women depend on land and water for their livelihood NRM is critical to the issue of 'gender and livelihoods'.

Despite land being an important factor in NRM, most papers in this session dwelt on commercialisation of agriculture and its negative impact on nutrition and income for women. A personal experience showing



the struggle for land with the arrival of a corporate entity gave an insight into the politics of rehabilitation and land acquisition. It also provided an understanding of the worldview of landowners for whom land is of greater importance and necessity than money. There is need to look at contradictions in between laws governing land rights and contradictions in the states own attitudes regarding these issues.

Forestry is an important livelihood source for women, however, even here there is a lack of concern of female farming systems of shifting cultivation and contradictory laws. In this context there was a debate on whether land rights, which is a sensitive issue should be the focus of change or whether non-land based livelihoods be promoted to ensure women's empowerment.

The final session on the informal economy and the non-farm sector focussed principally on micro-credit and micro-enterprise. Micro-credit is beneficial to women and their livelihoods, however, its provision needs to be enhanced through assistance in access to markets, technology and skills. Micro-credit often finds its way to non-target individuals and improvement in income through the provision of credit need not necessarily translate to changes in gender relations. An examination of Self-Help Groups (SHGs), illustrated by the Swa-shakti project of six states points to the need for extensive documentation and gathering of empirical data about impacts on rural indebtedness. There is also a need to reassess the nature of data used to measure work, and to look at methodological issues in measuring work.

The session ended with a presentation on how environmental education is sought to be introduced in schools.

The deliberations on the education sub theme "**Challenges to Education**", coordinated by Usha Nayar and Kiran Bhatti, centred around the issues of privatisation and the role of non-government interventions in the educational sector, the empowering role of education in the face of increasing fragmentation along communal and other lines, and poverty eradication linkages.

In the wake of several initiatives, governmental and otherwise, the saliency of opening up the education

sector to private initiatives is of some concern. The higher costs involved in private education have serious implications for the education of poorer sections of the society, and women in particular, on whom the additional expenses is not justified within the patriarchal framework of the family. The call for greater participation of the non-governmental initiatives is also questioned in light of it representing an abdication of government responsibility to universalisation of education.

Discussions on the public-private divide in education pointed to how students of regional language schools face hurdles in integrating with the main stream, English-medium higher education, affecting their competitiveness in the employment sector. Similar experiences were shared by participants of South Asian countries, especially Bangladesh, where too educationists are grappling with issues of divisions created by the differences between English language schools, Bengali medium schools and Madrasas.

Education participation and poverty linkages show a high demand for education even among the poorer sections of society that is often unmet, proving that poverty per se should not be cited as a sort of blanket explanation for low participation.

The issue of the empowering role of education figured prominently especially in the face of rising fragmentations along religious lines. What role, if any, has education played in fostering values of secularism and democracy? The complicity of supposedly educated middle-class citizens in the Gujarat carnage was proof of the limitations of education in this regard.

The final session was merged with the women's studies sub theme. The discussions focused on the intersecting and interlocking of the dimensions of race, caste, class and nation in the understanding of knowledge production, which represents a paradigm shift as it recognises the fact that women are not a homogenous group. It was also felt that literacy be separated from the larger issue of education, since the former greatly affects self-perception of women.

Finally the session dwelt on the urgent issue of changes in curriculum that is being pushed through the National Curriculum Framework and the new

NCERT text books. The changes are prejudiced to the Hindu belief systems. They attempt to portray women only in highly regressive patriarchal terms within the framework of the family. The women's movement has especially been targeted in some of these books as being responsible for the break-up of the family.

The final sub theme on **"Doing Women's Studies: Dilemmas and Possibilities"**, coordinated by the Savitribai Phule Collective, was planned as a space to debate the 'old' and new questions in doing women's studies. While the old questions refer to finding spaces within disciplines and academic structures – new challenges refer to those posed by the marketisation and fundamental resurgence of the educational agenda.

The present moment is one in which there is greater visibility for women's studies programmes – yet this has not been accompanied by greater institutional support or recognition. The 'visibility' has meant more vulnerability to the challenges within and outside the academy. It is in this context of scarce budgets and periodic performativity assessments that the dilemmas and possibilities of doing women's studies were debated. The sessions in this sub theme were organised around three thematic concerns.

The first session discussed different issues related to the engendering curriculum and pedagogic practices of mainstream disciplines. Drawing from the experience of revising the curriculum focused on economic analysis, it was pointed out how gender could be contained within the discipline. The possibilities and uneasiness with inter-disciplinary and post-disciplinary approaches to teaching and research in economics were explored through a gender perspective. Similarly, interdisciplinarity as fundamental to academic and political practice was focused by addressing the possibilities and tensions arising in the teaching of law from the common ground created by intersection of law, social sciences and women's studies. The need and modalities for inclusion of gender as a perspective and a tool of analysis in the humanities curriculum was also emphasized, exploring the Literature syllabi.

In this session, the issue of masculinities as a crucial part of teaching gender studies was interrogated, especially in a situation when 'gender' is taught in predominantly male institutes of technology and thereby, the socio-cultural constructions of male identity were suggested. Similarly, the need and modalities of making feminist peace studies an integral part of women's studies courses was also underlined, while examining the links between war and the oppression of women.

The second session addressed issues relating to the nuts and bolts of institutionalising women's studies in India. Taking stock of and reflecting on the voluminous material produced in women's studies, the need to examine the impact of this research on women's lives, and to learn to ask new questions in the context of globalisation and marketisation was underlined. By exploring the displacement of the questions of women's education in the women's movement of 1970s and 80s, the domains of research and shifts in agendas were mapped, as institution building came to be focused in 1990s.

Drawing from the experiences of teaching in a premier university, where there were no women's studies courses, it was suggested that it could be a site from which the strategic successes and failures of women's studies in the academia can be examined. The nature and modalities of developing sustained programmes of exchanges between women's studies centers was highlighted, to contest national hegemonising imperatives and local ideological agendas.

On the basis of the experience of teaching Political Science, the resistance to women's studies courses in the classrooms was emphasized and also its linkages with the outside context of undermining welfare state, religious fundamentalist forces and media backlash. At the same time, the institutional and administrative barriers to developing women's studies programmes within the university structures were also discussed, especially in the face of discourses seeking to neutralize the political thrust of women's studies.

The last session was a combined session of sub theme 8 and 9. The first part, dealt with the challenges posed to women's studies, and in this part, the challenge of epistemic privileges and standpoint epistemologies in

doing women's studies were discussed, specifically in the context of problems of Dalit feminism. The paradigm shift in women's studies, specifically the issue of gender and race was also underlined.

In this part, looking at the recent controversy about school textbooks, the lessons for women's studies from this experience of 'hijacking of history' were pointed out, in order to initiate an interrogation and dialogue towards more pluralistic and equitable reconstructions of past.

The second part of the session discussed the significance of bringing female literacy to the centre of the agenda of doing women's studies in India. In this part the failure in the emergence of education as an enabling tool for women's empowerment was pointed out, not only through the National Curriculum Framework having regressive views on women, but also in the progressive rhetoric of the New Education Policy.

### **Pre-Conference Workshop Report**

Examining the implication of the changing socio-political and economic context on the women's movement, the pre-conference workshop, coordinated by Veena Poonacha, Divya Pandey, Maithreyi Krishnaraj and Neera Desai sought to introspect on current strategies and examine future needs.

Maithreyi Krishnaraj in her inaugural address made a plea for understanding the nature of the state in India and noted the limited success of the 'planned economy' in advancing 'socialism' in terms of removing inequality, promoting social justice and economic development. The fallacy of equating socialism with 'state control' and 'state planning' resulted in the stifling of peoples' initiative and corruption, rather than enhancing their productivity and participation. This has further led to populous policies and support to influential sectors that do not really 'subsidise' the poor, but help the well to do. An aggregate analysis of data shows that poverty has declined, but overall increase in rural employment is in the unorganised and casual labour sector. There is an inordinate coddling of the corporate sector, consisting a mere 100 companies ignoring the majority of wealth creators – small farmers, small scale

producers vast masses of women in various occupations.

To draw inferences on what is happening to women it is necessary to begin by approaching the issue of liberalisation not as just state vs. market, but rather the activities of the state in terms of the regulations and institutions it builds for the private economy. The retreat of the state can be taken as a new opportunity to build people's organisations, peoples' initiatives to improve the economy and society.

Padmini Swaminathan spoke on faulty state policies and how these can be redirected. For example, agriculture is declining – resources have been directed only to irrigated areas and not rainfed areas where women work. Investment in these areas will help to improve food security, protect livelihoods. Similarly, in industry technology imitation has largely superceded development of R&D, an area where the role of the state can be critical. Expansion of ancillirisation in terms of informal labour attached to organised sector has been taking place. The organised and unorganised sectors are treated as "separate". There is a need flexible labour as also flexible capital. Labour will have to seek income security rather than 'job' security. Continuous retraining will be needed. Some of these interventions will have profound implications for women. Padmini Swaminathan also emphasised the need for concrete research and concrete specific interventions in the economy.

Gabriel Dietrich spoke about socialisation in terms of international trends, how globalisation, capitalism was environmentally destructive and the promising scope of international movements of solidarity. Past experiments in socialism were failures because they were not democratic and had an insufficient vision of socialism in its essentials.

Chhaya Datar mentioned the problems of rural poverty and women's poverty. She placed the present situation in industrialism, techo-orientation and urbanisation. There is an urgent need to balance with nature, develop rural areas through watershed interventions, soil development, use of biomass fertilizers and energy, decentralise production which will eliminate the evils of centralisation and absence of peoples' participation. It is because the older



"community" has disintegrated that new identity politics has emerged.

Illina Sen, spoke of problems of adivasi women and the transitional issues of tribal societies. Much of political thinking in relation to socialism has been formulated entirely in terms of "production", probably since it was a patriarchal construct. The reproductive role of women and how it should be interlinked with production in ways that will be liberatory is needed for building a truly socialistic society. Several other presentations and deliberations in the workshop highlighted the contradictions and challenges being faced by the women's movement in India.

## Publications

The list of IAWS publications, circulated to all participants of the conference are as follows:

- Das Vidya, Praharaj Tapasi, Nayak Sandhya, Agnihotri S.B. (2002). *Sustaining Democracy: Challenges in the New Millennium*, Orissa Plenary Session, Indian Association for Women's Studies.
- Lingam Lakshmi, Phadke Shilpa (Eds.) (2002). *Globalisation, Women's Identity and Violence*, Indian Association for Women's Studies.
- Renu Khanna and Trupti Shah (Eds.) (2002). *Women and Violence in Gujarat*, Indian Association for Women's Studies.
- Bhatti Zarina (2002). *President's Address*, Indian Association for Women's Studies.
- Vidut Bhagwat and Sharmila Rege (Eds.) (2002). *Our Story: Twenty Years of the IAWS*, Indian Association for Women's Studies.
- IAWS (2002) *Book of Abstracts*, Indian Association for Women's Studies.
- *Constitution*, Indian Association for Women's Studies.

## Appendix 1

### Advisory Committee

Chairpersons: Pandava Nayak and Zareena Bhatti

### Members Advisory Committee

Jashodhara Bagchi, Chairperson, W.B S.C.W  
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Tom Olsen, UNICEF  
Madhur Sarangi IAS, Secy. WCD, Govt. of Orissa  
A. Samanta, KIIT  
Pramila Swain, NAWO

### Conference Local Secretary

Asha Hans, SWS, Utkal Univ.

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S.N. Mishra  
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Soumyashri Ratha

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 Kadambini Mohapatra  
 Sukanti Pattnaik  
 Tandra Pattnaik

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**Convener:** A.N. Parida

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**Members:** Pushparaj Mohanty  
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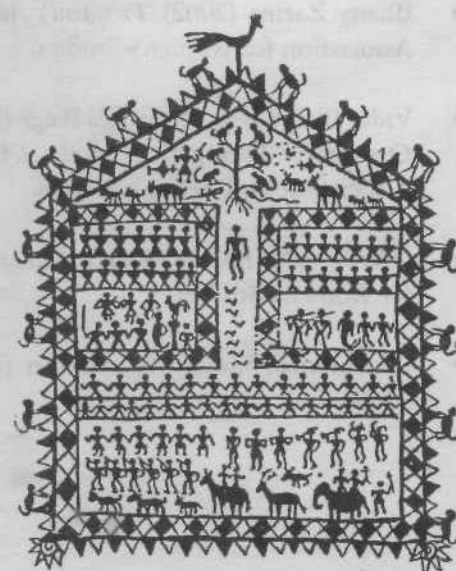
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**Information Centre**

**Convener:** Kasturi Mahapatra  
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 Lalita Missal  
 Sneha Mishra  
 Nirakar Beura  
 Govind



## Appendix 2

### Programme Schedule

Day	Time	Programme	Speakers
17.10.2002	10am-11.00am	Inaugural Session Lighting the Lamp	Chair Person: Dr. Zarina Bhatti Prof. Asha Hans: Welcome Prof. Pandav Nayak: Solidarity Message
		Ms. Sumani Jhoria & Group: Portrayal of women's Struggle	Dr. Bijoy Bohidar: Introduces Ms. Jhoria and group Dr. Lakshmi Lingam: Vote of Thanks
	11.30am-1.00pm	IAWS President's address <b>Madhuri Shah Memorial Lecture</b>	Dr. Zarina Bhatti Speaker: Prof. Mushirul Hasan Topic: <b>India at the Crossroads</b>
	2.00-4.30pm	Sub theme Sessions - I (1-9)	
	4.30pm- 5.30pm	Documentaries	
18.10.2002	9.00am-11am	<b>Theme Plenary:</b> <b>Challenges to Democracy</b> Chairperson: Prof. Pushpa Bhawe	Prof. Prabhat Patnaik, JNU, New Delhi Ms. Indira Jaisingh, Lawyer's College, New Delhi Dr. Uma Chakravarti, Delhi University, New Delhi
	11.30am-1.00pm	General Body Meeting	
	1.00pm-2.00pm	Lunch	
	2.00-4.30pm	Sub theme Sessions - II (1-9)	
	4.30pm- 5.30pm	Documentaries/ Street theatre – Natya Chetna	
19.10.2002	9.00am-11am	<b>South Asian Panel: Women &amp; Peace</b> Coordinators: Ms. Kamla Bhasin and Ms. Ritu Menon	Ms. Meena Poudel, Nepal Ms. Khawar Mumtaz, Pakistan Ms. Malati De Alwaris, Sri Lanka Ms. Sonia Jabbar, New Delhi Ms. Meghna Guha Thakurta, Bangladesh
	11.30am -1.00pm	Sub theme Sessions - III (1-9)	
	2.00-4.00pm	<b>Women &amp; Violence in Gujarat</b> Coordinators: Ms. Renu Khanna and Ms. Trupti Shah	Bina Srinivasan, Jhanvi Andharia, Sheba George, Ranjana, and Tanika Sarkar as Discussant
	4.30pm	<b>Peace March</b> Coordinators: Ms. Kamala Bhasin and Seema Sakhare	



20.10.2002	9.00am-11am	<b>Orissa State Panel</b> Coordinator: Dr. S.B. Agnihotri	Ms. Vidya Das Ms. Tapasi Praharaj Ms. Sandhya Naik Pratibha Ray
	11.30am-1.00pm	Sub theme reports	Sub theme Coordinators
	1.00pm	Vote of Thanks	Dr. Lakshmi Lingam & Prof. Asha Hans

### Appendix 3

#### Sub-Theme Session Coordinator's Contact Details

Sub Theme	Coordinator – Contact Information
1. The Female Body: An Arena of Contestation	Jayashree Velankar A-201 Govind Gopal Society, Ashok Nagar, Cross Rd. No. 1, Kandivali (E), Mumbai - 400 101 Ph: +91-22-28843776, 28871559 Email: jaya_velankar@tatanova.com
2. Promoting Democracy Within the Family	Joy Deshmukh-Ranadive Senior Fellow, Centre for Women's Development Studies, 25, Bhai Vir Singh Marg, Gole Market, New Delhi - 110 001 Ph: +91-11-23345530, 23365541 Email: joyrahul@ndf.vsnl.net.in
3. Girl Child: A Neglected Agenda	Kumud Sharma, Centre for Women's Development 25, Bhai Vir Singh Marg, New Delhi 110 001 Tel. (Off) 011-3366936/3366930, (Fax) 011-3346044 Email: cwds@ndb.vsnl.net.in
4. Gender and Governance for Sustaining Democracy	Anita Gurumurthy and Mani Mekhalai Indian Institute of Management Bannerghatta Road, Bangalore - 560 076 Email: anitaguru@vsnl.com; manadc@bgl.vsnl.net.in
5. Confronting Hunger: Issues of Food Security and Nutrition	Rinchin and Padmini Swaminathan Women and Health Cell (MFC), MASUM, B-2 Garnet Residency, Shivarkar rd., Wanorie, Pune - 411 040 Ph: +91-20-26875871, 26814889 Email: Masumfp@vsnl.com
6. Fundamentalism and Communalism	Roop Rekha Verma Director, Institute of Women's Studies, c/o Philosophy Department, University of Lucknow, Lucknow - 226 007 Ph: +91-522-289620 (R), 2374202 (O) Email: rooprekha@id.eth.net

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| 7. Gender and Livelihoods                            | Sarojini Gunjan Thakur<br>Rural Livelihoods Advisor, DFID - India,<br>B-28 Tara Crescent, Qutub International Area,<br>New Delhi - 110 016<br>Ph: +91-11-26529123, Fax: +91-11-26529296<br>Email: SG-Thakur@dfid.gov.uk |
| 8. Sustaining Democracy Challenges for Education     | Usha Nayar and Kiran Bhatti<br>1147, Sector A, Pocket B, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi - 110 030<br>Email: ushan@tatanova.com  |
| 9. Doing Women's Studies: Dilemmas and Possibilities | Savitribai Phule Collective<br>Vidyut Bhagwat and Sharmila Rege, Women's Studies Centre,<br>University of Pune, Ganeshkind, Pune - 411 007<br>Ph: +91-20-25601298<br>Email: wsc@unipune.ernet.in                        |
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## Appendix 4

### Resolutions

The debates and deliberations in the sub theme sessions gave rise to Resolutions, which were read out and accepted by the participants at the Xth National Conference of IAWS on 20th October, 2002.

### Promoting Democracy within the Family

In India girls are married very young. The average mean age at marriage of a girl is 15.6 years. This forms the root of a chain of injustices - she is deprived of education; she suffers a severe shrinkage of choices; she is voiceless entrant into a patrilineal, verilocal family; she experiences motherhood at so early an age that is detrimental to her health and that of her child; she loses out on opportunities to enter the labour market; when she does enter at a later age it is without skill or adequate education.

Hence in an attempt to bring some democracy into families the following issues have to be addressed:

1. Enforcement of the age at marriage for girls (which is now 18 years).
2. A compulsory registration of marriages.

3. Work towards increase age at marriage to 20-21 years.
4. Push for a parity in age of marriage for both boys and girls.

### Girl Child: a Neglected Agenda

1. IAWS condemns all methods of sex-selection and pre-natal sex determination, as they create an imbalance in the already skewed sex ratio and constitute an extreme form of violence against women.
2. We appeal to the medical professionals, medical association and medical councils to stop indulging and protecting such crimes.
3. We appeal to the parliamentarians to pass the PNMT amendment bill in the winter session, in order to curb the increasing practice of eliminating girl children even before birth.
4. At the same time we reaffirm women's right to safe abortion.

## **The Female Body: an Arena of Contestation**

IAWS recognises that:

1. The issues of people with different abilities, especially women, have not been addressed by the state, women's movement and Women's Studies.
2. Bodily integrity and self-determination are essential to every woman's ability to lead a life of dignity. Traditional and modern institutions constrain women's sexual preferences and orientations. The IAWS recognises the diversity of every woman's sexual life and resolves to work towards the sexual life of all women including lesbians, bi-sexual and transgendered women and other women who love women.
3. Religious fundamentalism stifles any representation or behaviour that is perceived as violating its dehumanising ideal of womanhood. In recognition of sexuality as an important site for the construction and control of women, IAWS commits to create the space to engage with the issue of how women's sexuality intersects with religious fundamentalism and other areas of discrimination and oppression towards ensuring that women's sexuality is perceived as consistent with the autonomy of personhood.

## **Gender and Governance for Sustaining Democracy**

Believing firmly that the time for vesting the women of India with equal political power and authority is long overdue, and taking cognisance of the clear disinclination demonstrated by the Center in tabling the Women's Reservation Bill in Parliament, it is resolved by the IAWS that the Constitution of India be amended to bring in a 50% reservation for special groups, including women in the State and National Legislatures. We see this as a logical and necessary extension of the process of engendering local governance that the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution.

The demand for reservation at the national level has to be seen within the framework of social and gender justice guaranteed by the Constitution. We strongly perceive this demand as the only valid response to the failure of the current political system and structures, including political parties to provide women equal opportunities in governance. Any claim to a mature policy demands that women be equally represented in formal political platforms.

## **Confronting Hunger: Issues of Food Security and Nutrition**

IAWS expresses its deep concern for the hunger deaths occurring in different parts of the nation. The government has been exposed on its inability to guarantee food security to all citizens. We demand that the government guarantee education, health, food security and environmental needs to communities in backward areas. We demand that the Directive Principles of State Policy as outlined in the Constitution be implemented in the form of programmes to ensure justice and equity.

## **Gender and Livelihoods**

IAWS recognises that ensuring sustainable livelihoods is central to addressing women's issues in India, and takes note of the threats from certain existing and emerging policies to the well being and livelihoods of local communities, and women in particular.

1. We affirm to struggle on a continuous basis, for women's land, water and various natural resource based rights and other entitlements.
2. We resolve to support efforts, create an enabling climate for poor and marginalised women to meet the challenges of the changing economic environment.
3. Recognising the prevalent policy contradictions we further resolve to support all policies, programmes and interventions that are empowering for women.



## **Sustaining Democracy: Challenges for Education**

The privatisation of education, evidenced in attempts to open up the education sector to non-government initiatives must be opposed. The call for greater participation of non-governmental initiatives must also be carefully reviewed as they too represent an abdication of government responsibility to universal education, besides leaving the field open for dangerous initiatives including communal element-run schools, which have already begun to make a huge presence in the countryside. All these attempts have serious implications of absolving the government of its basic social responsibility in clear violation of the constitutional imperatives.

It also resolves that the saffronisation of education at all levels, especially at the level of schools must be opposed. The implications of the attempt at saffronisation that have recently been given a new life by the Supreme Court's rejection of the PIL is highly ominous for secular forces and has serious implications for the production of knowledge.

### **Gujarat Resolution**

IAWS notes with serious concern the violent events in Gujarat since February 2002 in which more than 2000 people have been killed. Tension and violence continues even today and conditions are far from

normal. Independent civil society initiatives have investigated have reported the brutal violence, including sexual assaults, mutilation and murder of women and children. These independent investigations have also forcefully established the complicity of the state government, both at the time of the pogrom and afterwards. Thereafter the state government has failed to provide security, adequate relief and rehabilitation to the victims of the violence. The state has abdicated its responsibility by prematurely closing camps, leaving victims homeless and without livelihood options. The impact of this is being felt more by women.

IAWS notes with grave concern the severe challenge to democracy posed by the violence, the complicity of the state in violence, the collapse of state institutions as well as its saffronisation. The constitution itself is on trial today in Gujarat.

IAWS condemns the violence and the refusal of the political leadership both in the State of Gujarat and the Centre to uphold the right to life and dignity of its women citizens. It demands that the victims of violence be provided adequate and fair compensation, speedy and safe rehabilitation including counseling and psychological help to heal their wounds, and justice for crimes committed against them. IAWS urges speedy implementation of the NHRC recommendations.

### **Documenting Alternative Media**

The thirteen member editorial board of the IAWS newsletter seeks to make the editorial office a space for interaction between women's studies and the women's movement and other progressive social movements. In the last three decades several organisations have been publishing booklets/scripts of street plays/songs on crucial issues of our times. We seek to undertake a documentation of these booklets published in different languages and to disseminate their message through the IAWS Newsletter. We appeal to members of the IAWS, women's studies centre and documentation centres to send us copies of such booklets with a small note in English/or Hindi about the content of the booklet. Please do send in the booklets to the editorial office.

## Pre-Conference Workshop Report

Examining the implication of the changing socio-political and economic context on the women's movement, the pre-conference workshop, coordinated by Neera Desai, Maithreyi Krishnaraj, Divya Pandey and Veena Poonacha of the Research Centre for Women's Studies sought to introspect on current strategies and examine future needs.

Maithreyi Krishnaraj in her inaugural address made a plea for understanding the nature of the state in India and noted the limited success of the 'planned economy' in advancing 'socialism' in terms of removing inequality, promoting social justice and economic development. The fallacy of equating socialism with 'state control' and 'state planning' resulted in the stifling of peoples' initiative and encouraging corruption, rather than enhancing their productivity and participation. This has further led to populist policies and support to influential sectors that do not really 'subsidise' the poor, but help the well-to-do. An aggregate analysis of data shows that poverty has declined, but overall increase in rural employment is in the unorganised and casual labour sector. There is an inordinate coddling of the corporate sector which consist of a mere 100 companies ignoring the majority of wealth creators – small farmers, small scale producers vast masses of women in various occupations. The opening of markets could be an opportunity for women but only if assistance is given to strengthen their competitive ability.

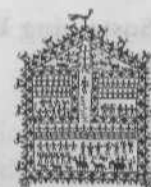
To draw inferences on what is happening to women, it is necessary to begin by approaching the issue of liberalisation not as just state vs. market, but rather the activities of the state in terms of the regulations and institutions it builds for the private economy. The state has to do what it alone can do (namely provide basic public services like education, health service, infrastructure that is essential for the development of

the economy and society) to minimise disparities in capabilities among different sections. The state has an important role in laying down norms, in providing right incentives, in implementing laws, in establishing proper regulatory mechanisms. The retreat of the state can be taken as a new opportunity to build people's organisations, peoples' initiatives to improve the economy and society.

Padmini Swaminathan spoke about faulty state policies and how these can be redirected. For example, there is decline in agriculture – resources have been directed only to irrigated areas and not rainfed areas where women work. Investment in these areas will help to improve food security, protect livelihoods, etc. Similarly, in industry technology imitation has largely superceded development of R&D, an area where the role of the state can be critical. Expansion of ancillarisation in terms of informal labour attached to the organised sector has been taking place even though the organised and unorganised sectors are treated as "separate". There is need for flexible labour as also flexible capital. Labour will have to seek income security rather than 'job' security. Continuous re-training will be needed. Some of these interventions will have profound implications for women. Padmini Swaminathan also emphasised the need for concrete research and specific interventions in the economy.

Gabriel Dietrich spoke about the downslide of socialism in terms of international trends, how globalisation and capitalism were environmentally destructive and the promising scope of international movements of solidarity. Past experiments in socialism were failures because they were not democratic and had an insufficient vision of socialism in its essentials.

Chhaya Datar mentioned the problems of rural poverty, particularly that of women. She placed the



present situation in the context of industrialism, techno-orientation and urbanisation. There is an urgent need to attain a balance with nature, develop rural areas through watershed interventions, soil development, use of biomass fertilizers and energy, decentralise production which will eliminate the evils of centralisation and absence of peoples' participation. It is because the older "community" has disintegrated that new identity politics has emerged.

Irina Sen, spoke of the problems of adivasi women and the transitional issues of tribal societies. Much of political thinking in relation to socialism has been formulated entirely in terms of "production", probably since it was a patriarchal construct. The reproductive role of women and how it should be interlinked with production in ways that will be liberatory is needed for building a truly socialistic society.

Several other presentations and deliberations in the workshop highlighted the contradictions and challenges being faced by the women's movement in India. Kumud Sharma spoke first of all of the various approaches that was part of the feminist agenda, and secondly emphasized its collective nature. She posed the question whether institutionalization was good as a political strategy or that it took away chances of political mobilization through co-option or was being diluted due to the thrust of the feminist agenda by the bottlenecks and rigidities of institutions? Issues that were taken up for resolution by public authorities - government, legal institutions, media, elected representatives at different levels, and in policies programmes were those that were raised by the women's movement. While there is scepticism about institutionalising, we cannot reject the opportunity it offers. What is important is that we continue to be engaged in our struggle and not take it that we have achieved what we want.

Govind Kelkar noted how gender has become part of mainstream discourse. While this is good, the danger is the way it is becoming instrumental in approach - as empowering women, helped to improve child health, child education, family welfare etc. What about empowering women in terms of their rights? Citing examples from projects in Laos, Cambodia and Indonesia where she has worked on women's development projects, she stressed that mainstreaming must mean improving capabilities of women as well

as improving their rights, their agency, not merely enabling them in order to improve others.

Mary John focussed on the need for a critical understanding of institutions in order to understand movements, especially the women's movement. In the 70s, the state was in crisis, and the movements which were left-oriented and idealistic in nature, were clamouring for autonomy. In the 90s, the state is again in crisis but there is a decline of the left, and the need to resist cooption. Taking higher education as the institutional context, in the 70s the combination of radical politics and institutional security provided by the state gave rise to women's studies as exemplified by the setting up of women studies centres by Neera Desai and others. Now women were to be researched rather than receive education as espoused in the pre-independence era. Growth of research centres for women studies forged institutional links without however addressing the structural pathologies of the institutions in which they were housed, thus defeating the transformative objective of women studies. The nineties pose more severe challenges. A pertinent question is: why was women studies introduced at the apex? The present situation is a challenge to women studies in so far as the right wing is making efforts to 'catch them young'. We need to keep women studies institutions, expand them at all levels to retain our political edge.

Pushpa Bhawe read out Neera Desai's presentation on 'Meeting Present Challenges.' In the post-80s period the women's movement has been hijacked by the state. The role of the state is today dangerous to democratic forces with the support being given to NRIs in the context of Hindutva, the holocaust in Gujarat, the curtailment of funds for women's schemes. Despite this there is a hopefulness in the movement with young people working as in the post-earthquake and post-genocide period in Gujarat. In terms of agency there is a stress on personhood, individual achievement and resistance, but collective struggle is still the answer to patriarchal and class struggle.

Lakshmi Lingam spoke of the need to reaffirm women's struggles and queried whether the movement has gathered any new ground? And whether we can speak on behalf of all those who are part of the women's movement(s)? There is the process



of NGOisation which says that is better to struggle through these UN conferences by being part of an NGO than through grassroots struggles, especially when women also have to attend to the economics of daily living. Then there is the "mainstreaming" discourse where gender is added to obtain a loan from the World Bank or through proposals for funds, but it actually ends up subverting gender. A lot of our analysis in the movement is sharp. We have critiqued the family but not done much in terms of action, an example is the condition of the girl child. Also in question is the capacity to mobilise a valid parameter to judge the women's movement? The backlash is not only from patriarchy but from the young women of today who no longer have icons from the movement. Also how does the movement deal with groups that do not condemn the carnage in Gujarat?

Jasodhara Bagchi said there was need to revitalise education, and that education has not been much of a concern with the women's movement. The ambiguity with respect to girls' education still persists. She touched upon the Hindutva agenda being forcefully pursued through the text books project. The state sees condemning what happened in Gujarat as a political activity which one is debarred from. In order to side-step this, one has to take casual leave to do relief work.

Nandini Manjrekar specified what happened in Gujarat as a failure of education and the creation of a brutalised masculinity. The women's movement has relegated addressing children's issues to the level of just policy. We should be worried about the UGC's drive towards standardisation and efficiency. The NCERT initiative should prove to be our wake-up call. In the post-independence era, education had taken a very instrumentalist role and there was an absence of criticality. The recent National Curriculum Framework, 2000, stresses on the spiritual and moral regeneration of India, with the promotion of value-based education. Education is aimed at a cohesive society, with the message to girls that, it is "to nurture each gender in its best traditions," as equals not adversaries. Observations in Gujarat show that teachers are doing 'satsang.' The initiative to reformulate

education has the Ambani-Birla Report which sets the agenda, with users paying at the secondary level and foreign direct investment in higher education. Industry thus dictates as there is a huge market in education. Privatisation of this sort will further increase gender inequality.

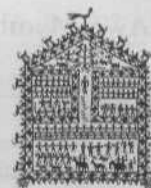
Indu Agnihotri spoke about reaffirming women's struggles. She felt the workshop tenor was negative with respect to the women's movement; a feeling that activism has died and so on. This shows a failure to acknowledge the continuing activism of groups like AIDWA which has been active on many fronts. It is important for the women's movement to recognise the majoritarian violence. When movements are organized with an ideology of being non political, they do not promote social change, do not confront violence engineered by reactionary, sectarian perspectives. SEWA despite its reputation as a front runner women's organization, failed to make any protest or intervene in the Gujarat carnage.

Urmimala Das spoke about displaced women and the notion of development in Orissa. In the movement against BALCO, the women from Baliapal were active yet there were no gains for them. In the movement to protect the Chilika Lake and against the Gopalpur Tata plant, the women gained some victories. Poor women have tremendous mobilising capacity. Women's studies centres, for instance at the Utkal University uses them rather than ally with them. They are promoting their own visibility while the grassroots women are left behind to be continue as an oppressed lot.

Lalitha Dhara spoke of the campaign for literacy in the Pudukottai district in Tamil Nadu among the women in the quarries and in the gem cutting units. She narrated the tremendous impact the campaign had on women, how they spontaneously responded to it as an empowering measure for themselves.

*(Report compiled with inputs from Maithreyi Krishnaraj, Divya Pandey and Meena Gopal).*

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