



**Indian Association for Women's Studies**  
*Northern Regional Conference on Women's Studies*

**Constitutional Rights, Women from the Margins  
and Livelihood Issues**

**Students and Young Activists Presentations**  
**14th-15th December, 2020**

**BOOK OF ABSTRACTS**

## *Introduction*

The IAWS Northern Regional Committee held the **Students and Young Activists Presentations of the Northern Regional Conference on Women's Studies** virtually on 14th-15th December 2020. The theme for the Conference was "Constitutional Rights, Women from the Margins and Livelihood Issues".

The publication of "Towards Equality" report almost three decades after Independence in 1974 made it evident that the Constitutional promises for women had not been kept, and had failed women on all major socio-economic, political and educational fronts. This was the context for the birth of the women's movement that also led to the emergence of Women's Studies as a critical discipline, which has developed over the years to expand our understanding of the gender question. It has tried to foreground the lived realities of women, offering perspectives on the multiple patriarchies and oppressions at work and provided strategies for empowerment and resistance. Through challenging patriarchal structures and epistemological processes, the discipline has been opening up spaces and enabled processes for making claims to constitutional rights. The IAWS conferences have played an important role in bringing together scholars, students and experts in the field to further the discussion and sharpen our tools of understanding. The regional conferences have provided an added platform accessible to activists and scholars to take up important issues and clarify our understanding on issues impacting women's lives in the region. Northern India is facing special challenges and forms of violence that are unique to the region based on caste and communalism which has impacted women deeply.

New challenges are confronting women today: These include a growing range of inequalities, dispossession, impoverishment, and new forms of violence against women from the margins- Dalits, Adivasis and Muslims. From the nineties, neo-

liberal policies and globalization have sharpened the disparities, complicating the issues of livelihood for the labouring lot and the marginalized sections of our society, women being one of the worst hit in the process. Women's labour is largely in the unorganized sector, providing no protection to women who are threatened further by the recent economic slowdown and shrinking opportunities of work. The state has backed out from its Constitutional promise of guaranteeing a decent means of livelihood which has led to women becoming increasingly dependent on their men who are often vulnerable themselves, subjecting them to increasing levels of violence. The COVID-19 lockdown has shown us how vulnerable all labouring people are: they have no savings and access to the public distribution system is tenuous at the best of times but following the economic slowdown and the dramatic breakdown of work, millions have been pushed to the edges of starvation and an enormous health crisis is looming on the horizon exacerbated by the lack of clean water, sanitation and an effective public health system. In many parts of Northern India, Muslims have become special targets, as rumours fly large as do fake news. This comes on the back of violence and ranges from lynchings against Muslims and Dalits and targeted violence of which there are many examples from western Uttar Pradesh and even Delhi.

But we also see a major churning among people from the margins, especially women who have understood that the Constitution is under threat, as citizenship as understood historically in India is sought to be re-defined based on evidence, which many sections of our poor and marginalized do not often have. Women have shown through their protests that the only book, or the only paper they can unequivocally claim as their own, is the Constitution. The conference therefore sought to cover the new challenges and the new upsurges we have witnessed in recent months.

The challenge facing Women's Studies by the general assault on public universities which are critical for the margins needs discussion, as these sections

cannot go into the newly burgeoning, privately funded system. Consequently, Women's Studies Centres may fast lose their original character of interrogating received knowledge systems, and by failing to raise critical issues fearing a backlash by sections who dominate the state. There needs to be renewed effort from the scholars, students and activists to deal with the multiple challenges facing Women's Studies today. Across North India, we have witnessed issues of women on campus being raised by women students, to assert their right to learning without discrimination and disparities. The theme of the conference intended to foreground women's struggles and to reclaim the Constitutional rights of all women, but particularly those who have remained marginalized in the 73 years since we became independent. We believe it is time to return to claiming women's rights as enshrined in the Constitution in all its richness and fullness.

The feminist political moment we are witnessing has brought to the fore the leadership of young Dalit, Adivasi and Muslim women, in the Northern region of India. With this in mind, the IAWS Northern Regional Committee invited proposals from students and young activists to conduct short studies supported by a research grant provided by Women's Fund Asia, with preference given to candidates belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Minorities. The selected studies were presented at this virtual Conference. The generous support of Women's Fund Asia to this project was critical as thirty-nine of the total studies were funded through its financial support. The young scholars and activists who received the grant conducted in-depth studies and submitted their research papers with incisive analysis of the data they were able to gather with the research grant from Women's Fund Asia. One of the grant awardees made and submitted a short film under this project. Given the overwhelming response and high number of abstracts received, we also invited some studies to be part of the Conference which could not be funded but showed significant promise. The two-day Conference saw the enthusiastic and committed participation of young scholars presenting a total of fifty-seven studies. Further, we invited eminent

scholars to read and comment on the papers which were divided into theme-wise panels. These eminent discussants provided critical feedback on the papers and enabled a nuanced discussion of the many complex issues raised within this range of scholarship produced by our young participants.

In attempting to provide an exclusive stage to students from social locations that have been under attack and have persevered and posed strong resistance to such attacks, the aim and hope of the Conference was that the discussion would enable the production of sharper articulations of the meanings of the Constitution and citizenship within Women's Studies scholarship from these marginalised locations; and therefore enrich and widen theoretical contours of the discipline.

This collection of abstracts of the papers presented at the Conference seeks to reflect some of the richness of the two-day event. This format of engaging with young scholars' work is somewhat novel to the IAWS Regional Conference model and therefore we are extremely grateful to the Women's Fund Asia for making this possible and opening up for the IAWS new and more engaging ways to draw in students, young scholars and activists. Our hope in documenting the Conference is also that the IAWS can adapt such a model to future events and thereby build deeper and more sustained relationships with these budding feminist academics.

We are grateful to the IAWS Executive Committee (2017-2020) for their support. A special thanks to IAWS General Secretary (2017-2020), Anagha Tambe, for the warm encouragement and support and all the hard work in facilitating the financial support from Women's Fund Asia for this Conference. We express our thanks to the entire team of the IAWS Northern Regional Committee for their sustained work to execute this venture. We are also immensely grateful to Anagha Tambe, Sayali Shankar and everyone at the IAWS Secretariat in Pune for

the very efficient logistical, technical and moral support that was extended with much warmth and cheer.

This conference would not have been possible without the tireless work and enthusiastic inputs by Arpita Anand, the student member of the conference organizing committee. She took up anything and everything in the coordination and overall organization and we can not thank her enough for that. Finally, the deepest gratitude to the young scholars and activists who researched, wrote and presented work under significant constraints with commitment, conviction, and self-discipline that was inspiring and heartwarming (we did not have to chase them to meet deadlines at all!). A token of gratitude and admiration must be expressed for our young poets who brought the Conference to a meaningful, touching end with their invigorating, brave, beautiful poetry!

More than anything, the Conference through the richness of the scholarship and criticality of the thought of these young participants brought for us a rainbow of hope. Women's Studies will thrive despite the storms coming our way with such critical and committed young minds at work.

**Uma Chakravarti and Shadab Bano**

**IAWS Northern Regional Committee (2017-2020)**

## Day 1: 14<sup>th</sup> December 2020

### **Inaugural Session**

*Chair:* Anagha Tambe, General Secretary, IAWS

*Inauguration:* Syeda Hameed, Former Member of the Planning Commission and  
the National Commission for Women

*Opening Remarks:* Shadab Bano, IAWS Northern Regional Committee

***Session 1: Pandemic Dislocations and Women Workers' Struggles***

**Chair:** Tarushikha Sarvesh, Advanced Centre for Women's Studies, Aligarh Muslim University

***Work Challenges of Women Domestic Workers During Covid-19 Pandemic: An Overview***

**Sunita Rani, Ph.D Scholar, Gender Studies, Sarojini Naidu Centre for Women's Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia**

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The month of March 2020 has implemented the strict lockdown across nations in view of the outbreak of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic that shook the entire globe with its contagious effects on health, society and economy. The eruption of Covid-19 crisis has reinforced the prevailing inequality and widened the economic gap between labour and the capitalist class. The resulting decline in economic activities caused by the imposition of lockdown measures has, though, raised numerous challenges for global capital but the effects on the labouring world appear to be more strenuous. Among the labouring class, the frontline workers in the informal economy have found themselves as most vulnerable to the virus effects be it on health, livelihood and family life. Domestic workers, who work on the frontline despite the invisibility of their services, are the hardest hit section of informal workers who are expected to bear the outcomes of the virus for a prolonged time in the post lockdown period. Domestic work that has been positioned at the bottom of the occupational structure with low status and institutional ignorance will impact the sector most in post-Covid-19 times. The emergence of the health crisis in view of Covid-19 pandemic has raised numerous concerns to deal within the sectors other than economic insecurity. As a large proportion of the sector is dominated by migrant domestic workers belonging to low caste and class, it increased the need to study the effects of the pandemic on the women domestic workers in the sectors. The present study will also highlight the effects of social institutions of caste, class, religion and gender and their role in increasing the vulnerability of the marginalized women workers in the context of the pandemic. The study will be descriptive and use an analytical approach to understanding the changes in the work lives of women domestic workers in the current context of Covid-19 pandemic.



*Women Migrant Workers' Struggles during the COVID-19 Lockdown***Preeti, PhD Gender Studies, Center for Women Studies, University of Hyderabad****Email: [rbypriti27@gmail.com](mailto:rbypriti27@gmail.com)**

The global COVID-19 pandemic and the associated stringent lockdown imposed by government has subjected millions of Indian populations to one of the worst disasters known to human kind. The Stringent lockdown measures imposed to curb COVID-19 left Indians devastated and affected all sections of the societies and both formal and informal economies. It is seen that the the vulnerabilities are different for different strata of the society; the marginalized and the migrant population have been the worst hit leaving millions jobless, homeless and hungry. Among the migrant population sexworkers is one such group worst hit by sudden lockdown in March. With the relief in lockdown measures many occupations or professions are coming back to normal functioning but sex work is one such profession that is at standstill as the profession involves close physical contact with another person. Physical distancing is at the core to curb COVID-19 infection and is against the very nature of sexwork profession.

This paper aims to discuss the issues faced by women sexworkers and their struggles during the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis of the study sheds light on the effects of pandemic on the lives of migrant sex workers, their struggle and the relief or support that is accessible to them to help recover from the Covid-19 pandemic. The present study on migrant sex workers assesses the impacts of COVID-19 through the lens of intersectionality, differentiated vulnerability and capacities of women sexworkers as individuals also keeping in mind the unique nature of their profession. Given the pandemic situation that still exists the study is based on Delhi sex workers and limited to secondary data available online.

**बुन्देलखण्ड की प्रवासी महिलाओं में कोविड-9 के प्रभाव से रोजगार की समस्या का****अध्ययन (*Bundelkhand ki Pravaasi Mahilayon mein COVID-19 ke Prabhaav se Rozgaar ki Samasya ka Addhyan*)****दीपक सोनी, सामाजिक कार्यकर्ता, विज्ञान लोक प्रियकरण एवं सामाजिक शोध संस्था (Deepak Soni, Social activist) Email: [dsoni381@gmail.com](mailto:dsoni381@gmail.com)**

बुन्देलखण्ड भारत का अत्याधिक गरीब क्षेत्र है। बुन्देल खण्ड में प्राकृतिक संसाधनों का प्रचुरता होने के बावजूद यहाँ के लोग दो जून की रोटी कमाने के लिए दर दर भटकने को मजबूर है। अंतर्राष्ट्रीय श्रम संगठन(आईएलओ) के अनुसार, \*प्रवासी श्रमिक" को एक ऐसे व्यक्ति के रूप में परिभाषित किया जाता है जो रोजगार के लिए एक देश से दूसरे देश प्रवासित होता है। लेकिन देश में भी एक बड़ी आबादी है जो जीविकोपार्जन की तलाश में देश के अंदर ही अंदर पलायित होती है।

भारत में गांव से शहर की ओर पलायित होने की एक प्रवृत्ति पाई जाती है, जो समय के साथ बढ़ती जा रही है।

प्रस्तावित अध्ययन मध्यप्रदेश के सागर जिले के राहतगढ़ ब्लॉक के अत्याधिक दूरस्थ एवं दलित आदिवासी बाहुल्य ग्राम हिनोतिया कला, ग्राम परासरी एवं जैसीनगर विकासखंड के ग्राम बखरा एवं ग्राम जमुनियां का चयन प्रतिचयन के आधार पर किया जावेगा है। प्रवासन गाँवों से शहर की ओर अल्पकालिक अंतर्राज्यिक स्तर का होता है। इसमें चारों ग्राम से 00 प्रतिशत सर्वेक्षण किया जावेगा।

प्रवासन के कारण एवं प्रकार - यहां पर अधिकतर लोग दिल्ली की ओर पलायन करते हैं। मौसमी रोजगार प्राप्ति के कारण प्रवतलन की गतिशीलता अधिक देखी जाती है। चयनित ग्राम के लोग पूर्णतः कृषि पर निर्भर रहते हैं। यहाँ प्रति व्यक्ति भूमि उपलब्धता औषतन 0.5 से 4.0 एकड़ मध्य पायी जाती हैं तथा सूखी खेती होने के कारण प्रति एकड़ का उत्पादन अत्याधिक कम है। कृषि की मूल सुविधाओं का अभाव होने के कारण खेती घाटे का धन्धा बन गई है। यहाँ भोजन, आवास, स्वास्थ्य आदि की कमी है। इसे मौसमी बेरोजगारी या छुपी हुई बेरोजगारी कहते हैं। कृषि के दुष्परिणाम के कारण इस ग्राम के लोग प्रवासी होने को मजबूर हैं। लगभग 4 से 6 माह प्रवासी नागरिक के रूप में रहते हैं।

प्रवासी समस्या के कारण इस गाँव की महिलाओं को आर्थिक तंगी का सामना करना पड़ता है। चयनित ग्रामों की विशेषता यह है कि यहाँ पर पुरुष पलायन करते हैं। परन्तु वही कहीं कहीं पूरा महिलाओं सहित परिवार पलायन करता है। यदि महिलाएँ एवं बच्चों को इस अवधि में मानसिक एवं आर्थिक समस्याओं से जुझना पड़ता है।

अप्रैल 2020 में, कोरोना महामारी के वजह से देशभर में लगे लाकडाउन के बीच कई भयावह और मार्मिक तस्वीरें सामने आई थीं। लाकडाउन में काम बंद होने के बाद पैदल ही गांव की ओर निकल गईं। इस प्रकार लाकडाउन के कारण अपनी आजीविका खो चुके मजदूरों को अपने गांव-घर लौटने के लिए असंख्य कठिनाइयों से गुजरना पड़ा।

लॉकडाउन के कारण मजदूर शहरों में फंसे रहने के कारण मजदूरों और उनके परिवारों को पैसे की कमी के कारण भोजन नहीं मिल पाया और भूख का सामना करना पड़ा। यह मजदूर महीने के 5,000 रुपये से कम कमाते हैं, उन्हें अक्सर भूखे, रहवास, स्वच्छता आदि समस्याओं ग्रस्त रहना पड़ता है।

प्रस्तुत अध्ययन में चयनित ग्राम में ग्रामीण उत्तरदाओं से साक्षात्कार एवं प्रश्नावली के आधार पर निम्न जानकारी एकत्र की जावेगी।

1. कितने प्रतिशत दलित आदिवासी मजदूर अपने ग्राम किस प्रकार लौटे जैसे पैदल, बस या ट्रेन या अन्य साधन लौटे।
2. घर लौटते हुए दलित आदिवासी गर्भवती महिलाएं और बच्चों को का क्या क्या समस्याओं का

सामना करना पड़ा।

3. प्रवासी मजदूरों का लॉकडाउन के दौरान रोजगार पर क्या प्रभाव पड़ा।
4. प्रवासी मजदूरों को लॉकडाउन के दौरान घर लौटते वक्त रास्ते में कथित तौर पर पुलिस के लाठी-डंडे खाने पड़े या नहीं।
5. प्रवासी मजदूरों को लॉकडाउन के दौरान घर लौटते वक्त रास्ते में कितने को भोजन की कमी का सामना करना पड़ा।
6. प्रवासी मजदूरों को लॉकडाउन के दौरान कोरोना वायरस के डर कारण शहर छोड़ दिया था।
7. मजदूरों को लॉकडाउन के दौरान रुपयों की कमी का सामना करना किस प्रकार करना पड़ा।
8. प्रवासी मजदूरों को लॉकडाउन के दौरान महिलाओं और बच्चों का किन बीमारियों से सामना करना पड़ा या मृत्यु हो गई।
9. प्रवासी मजदूर एक माह में कितने रुपये कमा लेते थे।
10. महामारी के उपरान्त गांव पहुँच कर रोजगार की क्या स्थिति है।
11. प्रवासी की समस्या को रोकने हेतु क्या क्या प्रयास करने की आवश्यकता है।
12. ग्राम में वापिस लौटने के उपरान्त ग्रामीणों के व्यवहार में क्या परिवर्तन हुआ है।
13. ग्राम में वापिस लौटने के उपरान्त प्रवासी महिलाओं के साथ किस प्रकार का भेदभाव है।
14. वर्तमान में महिलाओं और बच्चों को ग्राम में रहते हुए क्या क्या समस्याएँ एवं संभावित निदान क्या है।
15. ग्राम वापिस के उपरान्त शासन से क्या क्या मदद प्राप्त हुई क्या वह पर्याप्त थी।
16. क्या आपको अंतर्राज्यिक प्रवासी श्रमिक अधिनियम, 1979 की जानकारी है।
17. क्या कोविड -19 की महामारी के उपरान्त वापिस रोजगार के लिए पलायन करेंगे।
18. प्रवासी के दौरान बालिका शिक्षा पर क्या प्रभाव पड़ता है।
19. प्रवासी जीवन में आवास, बच्चों की देखभाल में आने वाली समस्याएँ
20. महिलाएँ प्रवास के दौरान तीज त्योहार, परिवार में आपात संकट के समय क्या क्या समस्याएँ रहती हैं।

21. प्रवास के दौरान प्रतिमाह कितने रुपयों की बचत हो जाती है , उसके किस प्रकार सुरक्षित रखती है।

प्राप्त सूचनाओं का विश्लेषण कर यह जानने का प्रयास किया जावेगा कि अंतर्राज्यिक प्रवासी श्रमिक अधिनियम, 1979 की क्या स्थिति है, जो इन श्रमिकों को मूल यात्रा भत्ता, आवास, न्यूनतम मजदूरी और पात्रता के बारे में क्या जानकारी है।

इन प्रवासी श्रमिकों में से अधिकांश आदिवासी और दलित लोग हैं, जो समाज के हाशिए पर हैं और उन्हें ट्रेड यूनियनों के रूप में संगठित नहीं किया गया है। राज्य कल्याण सामाजिक सुरक्षा योजना के तहत उन्हें पंजीकृत करने और अन्य स्थानीय श्रमिकों की तरह उन्हें शक्तियां किस प्रकार दी जा सकती हैं ।

### *Single Women's Lives in Lockdown*

**Amrita Howlader, Activist, Sappho For Equality and Lopchu Peshok Ekal Mahila Sangathan, West Bengal**

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Single women are increasingly becoming a section that has to be reckoned with. The inclusion of this category in the National Census of India in the year 2001 is a proof of the fact that they can no longer be sidelined. According to the last census of 2011, there are 71.4 million single women in India which is roughly 12% of the then current overall population of Females in India, and the number is rising.

In the worldwide pandemic crisis of this year, India has been under severe and sporadic lockdowns, as and how the disease has spread and progressed in the country. We know how an unplanned and completely people-hostile lockdown has cost hundreds of lives, millions of poor to lose their jobs and livelihoods and millions more into a future with no hope. Single women have been affected uniquely from the Prime Minister calling out to everyone to maintain the 'laxmanrekha' to forcing everyone into their families, completely rendering invisible the unsafe conditions that exist within families. As single women, 'laxmanrekhas' have had to be crossed day in and day out simply to survive and the lockdown made its crossing even more necessary, inspite of many dangers, simply because livelihoods came to a standstill. Domestic violence has been on the surge, proving that families are not the best places to be, moreover the idea of a family is not unilateral, the promotion of heteronormative families by the state is extremely

problematic. Single queer women have had to face the worst during the lockdown, locked down inside families that are violent and invasive.

We know of single women, how they walked home from far away cities, we know of the single mother who died on the railway platform, her little child trying to wake her up, not realizing that she has died, we know of pregnant mothers forced to give birth on the road after miles of endless walking with no food and little water. Elderly single women who have been living and running families on their pensions have been thrown out of their houses because they refused to give their pension for their returned-migrant-labourer-son's drinking. HIV positive single women not only lost their livelihoods but also their chances at receiving free treatments since transport systems were shut down and being single and without any support system, reaching out for medications has not been possible. If they had children then the children would also be shunned by the father's family and dumped on the mother, who is already unable to fend for herself. Sex workers have lost almost all of their livelihoods while rumor mongering was at large, especially in West Bengal, where it was being spread that touching a transwoman would lead to contracting COVID-19. Lives of single women were already precarious but the lockdown induced by the pandemic amplified the severity of this precariousness, the long cherished independence or even the ability to live by one's self is becoming more and more difficult.

Urban single women struggled with their single lives while social media, family and friends constantly projected a deluge of happily ever after or the need to live in families. There is yet no study on whether urban single women had to work more than their coupled counterparts.

I would like to make a study and report broadly on the way the pandemic has affected various categories of single women's lives with focus on how singleness has manifested in increasing marginalisation and how single women's situations have been different from other women during the pandemic and lockdown that ensued.

### *Studying Condition of Working Women in Rural and Urban Settings*

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This research paper aims to discuss the experiences of working women from different strata of patriarchal society. In the era of globalisation, women are struggling for equal spaces in public sphere. In this whole process of struggle for equality, women suffer mental as well as physical challenges. It is a qualitative research based on the available

literature and telephonic conversations. This research includes comparative study of women from different sections of Indian society. It also focuses on few advertisements and films which depict the position of working women. Do working women hold any place in a patriarchal society? Mostly working women lie under the category of a privileged class in comparison to the non working women. Therefore, this paper highlights the struggles of women from both the sections. In the society, there is division of labor for men and women where the struggles are different for every section of the society. Therefore, it is important to examine the position of working women in public as well as private sphere. This research is based on telephonic conversations as it is not possible to locate working easily as women are not available on the time they assigned. Further, women are not comfortable to discuss about issues related to their traumatic experiences. This paper holds value not only in the present context but also in the upcoming scenario. As women's participation in the public sphere has increased to meet the demands of their families needs and in some other cases to fulfill their own career goals, we believe that working women struggles will always exist in patriarchal society till the utilitarian society replaces the patriarchal society. Keywords: Women's struggle, equality, inequality, marginalization, caste, Dalit women, Private and public sphere.

## *Session 2: Violence, Vulnerabilities and the Marginalized*

**Chair:** Mary E. John, Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi

### *Communal Riots and its Impact on the Livelihood Conditions of Women: A Case Study of Delhi Riots of 2020*

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Historically communal violence in India has been a festering wound on the body politic of Indian society. Riots became a recurring phenomenon in India after 1947 when the partition of India took place. The religious minorities are especially vulnerable to the threat of communal violence. Muslims in particular, who constitute less than 15 per cent of the population, have typically made up the large majority of victims. However, the progressive communalization of post-colonial India has had definite implications for women in general and minority women in particular. Women of minority communities have been diversely affected in post-independence India. They emerged as soft targets in incidents of communal violence that is mostly against religious minorities including 1984 anti Sikh riots, 1992 Babri Masjid demolition riots, and in Gujarat in 2002. Violence against women is always used as a means of attack whereby women's bodies become a battlefield for cultural nationalism. However, women also suffer disproportionately and differently from the social, economic, and cultural aspects of communal violence. The impact on women's right to food, water, housing, employment and education can pose as much of a threat to women's lives as physical forms of violence. Thus, the present paper has made an attempt to trace the impact of Delhi riots 2020, on the livelihood conditions of women victims. The study of the paper is based on the primary data, collected from the riot hit areas of north east Delhi during the 20<sup>th</sup> November 2020 to 28<sup>th</sup> November 2020. The finding of the study revealed that communal violence that took place in February 2020 in the north east Delhi disproportionately affected the Muslim community. The violence mostly affected the daily wage worker, small business, and self employed workers and home based workers have rendered economic rehabilitation a taunting task. This has been further aggravated by the lack of support from the state and central government and nationwide lockdown in the country. The economic damage, the psychological and mental trauma, fear and anxiety surfacing from the memories of communal violence experienced by women has now been aggravated by the constant day to day scoff (they are subjected to). In the course of this

study of the women victims of communal violence, the researcher has observed that women are not the only victim of violence, but they suffered in the aftermath as well. Their oppression begins with the eruption of violence, and then their sufferings have no end.

***Influence of Public Crisis in the Private Domain: Relocating Domestic Violence of Women in India and its Economic, Social and Emotional Crisis under the shadow of Covid-19 Pandemic***

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The stay-at-home orders due to the pandemic lockdown proved inimical to women's safety where the women are forced to undergo physical, sexual and emotional abuse while they have to share their domestic space with their abusers. The paper, therefore, attempts to study the factors affecting heightened domestic violence in the North India along with the possible crisis it is leading to. For this purpose, several existing literature are reviewed as well as a survey is conducted online in an attempt to understand the concerned questions. The public crisis of the Covid-19 pandemic has now been observed to further extend towards social, economic, psychological and constitutional crisis of women.

***Problems of Women Prisoner's Rights in India with Special Reference to Uttar Pradesh***  
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The paper seeks to find out the status of women prisoners in Indian context on the basis of secondary data. How women prisoners are treated in the jail what are the services which have been created for them? What are the welfare programs that are existing at the present? How the gender issues is being taken into consideration while developing the program package of the programs for the Welfare of the prison inmates. Thrust of this paper is the national initiative that have been taken so far what are the policies what are the reform committee has, how many reform committee have been created what are the specific recommendations of those committee and how have the recommendations been included in the manual in the guideline of the jails. The Other focus of the article also is on the initiatives taken by the Supreme Court of India. Recommendations which if followed could be address the issues related to the gender



and release issues related to the women prisoners particularly those coming from the lower strata.

*Gendered Pandemic: How the Transfeminine Community is Balancing Lives and Livelihood*

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The transgender community is one of the most socially excluded and economically deprived communities in India, that are now being pushed further into uncertainty due to the pandemic that grasped the world. The work shed s light on the struggles of transgender women community due to the pandemic and the consequent lockdown. Even though the trans gender community includes a diverse gender and/or sexual variations, th e transfeminine spectrum of this community will be studied because of their greater visibility in hijra/kinnar profession and the nature of discrimination faced by them due to their association with the female identity which, is often seen as moving down t he gender status ladder. They are further distanced within the category of the ‘second sex’ and hence form a ‘third sex’. No relief measures have ever been targeted successfully for the gender minority community, even though the vulnerabilities of such population are disproportionate, compared to other genders. This lockdown probably gave them the hardest blow as all their sources of earning are directly from public space interactions. The study interviews 11 transwomen respondents from Delhi NCR region and found that the main challenges that popped up, are the issues of livelihood, access to healthcare and to public welfare schemes food crises, homelessness, deteriorated mental health condition and intensifi ed harassment. This paper is likely to interest students, researchers, and activists working in gender issues and public health, to obtain an idea on how this pandemic is gendered and why we need long term progress plans promoting gender parity in all the policies.

*Vulnerabilities of Women Labourers in Weaving Industry: A Brief Study Of Women Weavers In Uttar Pradesh*

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Weaving industry is second largest employee/economy generator in India providing one of the largest employment opportunity to women. There are 25,46,285 women workers (women weavers and allied workers) active in handloom sector in India. Out of the total allied worker in India 77.9% are women, despite being the dominant work force, their condition is pathetic either because of absence of wages, low wages or unrecognised work. This paper aims to study the participation of women in weaving industry, their issues and problems. The study was conducted in four prominent textile centers of Uttar Pradesh (Mau, Tanda, Varanasi and Meerut). The sample size of population was 350 each from Mau and Tanda, 250 from Varanasi and 80 from Meerut. An interview schedule was prepared and questions were conducted through personal interview methods and telephonic interview methods. In few cases, group discussion method was used, where women discussed the cultural setup of the area, restriction in their mobility and how COVID-19 pandemic affected them. The study revealed that women largely participated in allied work. The women workers of weaving industry have to face different forms of vulnerability, low wages, unrecognition and improper acknowledgment of work. It was also found that cultural restriction and patriarchal society enhance their vulnerability making their position more complex. Women worker's problem can be eliminated by intervention of gender neutral government policies and awareness campaigns for women weavers. Apart from this there is a need to break the cultural and traditional norms which hamper women.

**उत्तराखण्ड की घाटियों में विवाह के नाम पर बढ़ती महिला तस्करी की प्रवृत्ति (उत्तरकाशी जिले के कुछ हिस्सों का विशेष अध्ययन) (Uttarakhand ki Ghaatiyon mein Vivaah ke Naam par Badhti Mahila Taskari)**

**आरूशी, शोध छात्रा, राजनीति विज्ञान विभाग, राधे हरि राजकीय स्नातकोत्तर महाविद्यालय काशीपुर, उत्तराखण्ड (Arushi, Research scholar, Department of Political Science, Radhey Hari Govt. Post Graduate College, Kashipur, Uttarakhand)**

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महिला तस्करी वैश्विक स्तर पर एक गंभीर समस्या का रूप धारण कर चुकी है परन्तु अलग अलग देशों में इसके स्वरूपों में काफी भिन्नताएं हैं। उसी तर्ज पर भारत में भी महिला तस्करी अलग अलग राज्यों में अलग-अलग स्वरूपों में फल फूल रही है। उपर्युक्त शीर्षक के अन्तर्गत शोधार्थिनी उत्तराखण्ड में उत्तरकाशी जिले के कुछ हिस्सों में इस समस्या के निरन्तर विकसित होने की प्रवृत्ति पर अध्ययन को केन्द्रित करने का प्रयास किया है। विवाह की आड़ में होने वाली महिला तस्करी का विषय एक समस्या के रूप जटिल और गंभीर होने के साथ ही साथ बेहद संवेदनशील है। यही वजह है कि इस विषय पर शोध की विशेष चुनौतियां हैं। इस अध्ययन में यह जानने का प्रयास किया जाएगा कि वह कौन से कारण हैं जिससे उत्तरकाशी जिले के कुछ हिस्से महिला तस्करी के उपरिकेन्द्र बनते जा रहे हैं।

उपर्युक्त चयनित शीर्षक के अन्तर्गत उन क्षेत्रों पर सांस्कृतिक, सामाजिक स्तर पर पड़ने वाले प्रभावों की पड़ताल की जायेगी एवं साथ ही साथ उन क्षेत्रों के सामाजिक एवं आर्थिक कारणों की पहचान की जायेगी, जिनका सीधा सम्बन्ध विवाह की आड़ में होने वाली महिला तस्करी से है। पीड़ितों के चिहनांकन में आने वाली चुनौतियां इस समस्या का सबसे बड़ी बाधा है। जिन क्षेत्रों में विवाह के नाम पर महिलाओं की तस्करी के लिए अनुकूल परिवेश बन रहा है वहां जातीय प्रभुत्व, बेरोजगारी, गरीबी, पड़ोसी राज्यों के घटते लिंगानुपात, सामाजिक जागरूकता एवं प्रशासनिक अक्षमता के सवाल आपस में उलसड़े हुए हैं। प्राकृतिक आपदाओं की मार झेल रही दुर्गम पहाड़ियों से निकलने की बेचैनी ने भी कई किशोरियों एवं युवतियों को इस कुचक में फंसने को विवश किया है।

इस समस्या की गंभीरता का अन्दाजा इससे लगाया जा सकता है कि कुछ मामलों में महिला तस्करी की पीड़ित महिलाएं ही एक तरह से व्यापार का रूप धारण कर चुकी इस समस्या के फलने फूलने में एक कैरियर /अभिकर्ता के रूप में कार्य करती पायी गयीं। इसमें पीड़ितों का चिहनीकरण एक बड़ी बाधा है। सामान्य विवाह और महिला तस्करी की आड़ में किये जाने वाले विवाहों का वर्गीकरण इस समस्या को सुलझाने का पहला चरण है लेकिन यह बेहद दुष्कर कार्य है। पीड़ित महिलाओं की महिला अधिकारों, मानवाधिकारों एवं कोर्ट कचहरी से सम्बन्धित जानकारी का ना होना भी इस समस्या बढ़ोत्तरी की विशेष वजह है।

*Vulnerability of women in unorganized sector with special reference to domestic women workers in Lucknow*

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Indian economy is strongly supported by the workers in the unorganized informal sector. The unorganized sector accounts for 93% of the total workforce of the country that contributes to almost 50 percent of the economic production in India.<sup>1</sup> As per The National Commission for Women mentioned in the Uma Ramaswamy, "Women and Development" Social Structure and Change, Sage, New Delhi (1996) that 94 percent of working women in India are in the unorganized sector including in manual scavenging, where they are often paid with a meal rather than daily wages.<sup>2</sup> Though their contribution is considerably high in supporting the Indian economy, their condition in the social and economic field is very poor. A large majority of the workers in the unorganized sector are women. They are distributed in various areas of work from agriculture to manufacturing to the services sector. Women workers are the most vulnerable group in the unorganized sector in India as their position is suppressed in

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.sncwgs.ac.in/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/2.2-Art-4-Vulnerability-of-Women-Engaged-in-Unorganized-Sector-A-Study-in-a-Suburban-Area-of-North-24-Parganas-District-West-Bengal.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Uma Ramaswamy, "Women and Development" in A.H. Shaha et.al. (Eds.) Social Structure and Change, Sage, New Delhi (1996),

the patriarchal society. Their earnings are the sole support of the family in most cases, yet they do not enjoy any freedom or security as well as decision-making power in and outside the family.

As per the report of SHRAM SHAKTI, National Commission on Self Employed Women, it was found that 60 percent of the women interviewed were their families' sole bread-earners. According to an [ILO report](#) of April (2020), estimates show that the economic crisis arising from COVID-19 and the government's response to it is likely to further push almost 40 crore informal workers into absolute poverty. This estimate includes more than 200 million women employed as domestic workers. Among them, many find employment in the cities. They are formally named domestic maidservants and this is why this study will focus on their problems and solutions especially in the fallout of the pandemic COVID-19 since many lost their jobs during this time as well as faced domestic violence and harassment.

*Violent Activism of Hindutva Women: Interrogating Motivations and Methods*

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The paper seeks to capture the experiences and self-narratives of women of the currently hegemonic Hindu Right (Hindutva) politico-ideological formation. It provides an important window to gauge a sense of their lifeworlds and fields of work. It goes ontoexamine different facets of their militancy and their, often, violent activism. Tapping into existing scholarly writings and a rich blend of in-person interviews, it proposes to unwind their role as motivated agents of Hindutva, geared towards sharpening intercommunity conflict and confrontation.

***Session 3: Minorities and Citizenship Rights: Women in the Frontline  
Safeguarding the Constitution***

**Chair:** Anupama Roy, Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

***The Arrival of Muslim Women in Politics: A Reading of Protest and the Participation of Muslim Women at the Frontline***

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As India is spiraling towards majoritarian nationalism the direct brunt is faced by the marginalized including Muslims and Muslim Women. Fascism is antagonistic to feminism. Hyper nationalism promotes anger, racial purification and (fake) idealism which ultimately leads to the subjugation of women. As we navigate through crises the hate crimes towards Muslim and minority is just increasing in number. In December 2019 a parliamentary bill was passed regarding the citizenship rights. This bill was met with huge criticism from all the progressive section of the society which led to protests all over the country. The striking feature of the protest was that it was completely peaceful and nonviolent in nature. Another feature was the participation of Muslim women in such a huge number. The coming out of Muslim women on streets in such large number was unexpected and magical. The paper traces and examines the circumstances that led to the participation of women at the frontline. It is also about the emancipation and politicization of Muslim women, who by breaking the shackles of patriarchy, not only asserted their identity, but have also challenged the state. Being a student and an ally some of accounts the and views are solely of the researcher as I saw the protest unfolding closely.

***The Invisible Citizen: Muslim Women's Engagement with the Constitution***

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December, 2019 witnessed the rise of a women-led movement at Shaheen Bagh emerging as an epicentre of a mass agitation against the unconstitutional and discriminatory Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019. The heart and soul of the Shaheen Bagh protest site were Muslim women who rightfully registered themselves as the torchbearers of the protest to save the Indian constitution from neo-fascist forces. The

non-violent, day and night, sit-in protest movement saw mass participation and solidarities from across communities and faiths. With huge participation from the Muslim households, these women shattered the myth of the oppressed Muslim woman who needed saving. These women not only led the movement but also carved out their own space and identity for themselves. The paper seeks to understand the Muslim women's engagement with the Constitution not only for enforcing their right as a minority but also as rightful citizens of the country. It aims to document Muslim women's voices and perspectives that were symbolic of a new imagination of popular protests and devising a unique language for conversation; both with the State and the community.

*Countering the Narrative of Apolitical Muslim Women: Reviewing their Struggle for Citizenship*

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This study aims to deconstruct the image of apolitical Muslim women in India and bring to the forefront, the political spaces and positions they occupy. To attain this aim, the paper has studied the protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) primarily led by Muslim women. This paper is based on interviews conducted with Muslim women who had managed protest sites in Indian states of Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh against CAA brought by the Indian government in December 2019 to locate and understand how they remained political while countering misogyny, patriarchy and state oppression inside their households and in public spaces.

*Reading the Indian Constitution from the Perspective of Dalit and Muslim women*

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The present generation of Dalit and Muslim women is going through a renewed battle against the oppressive regime of Hindutva nationalism. Being the representatives of the most persecuted communities living in the country the fight they are going through face common challenges. In this context, this paper analyses the perspectives of Dalit and Muslim women with respect to the constitution. This study has employed a qualitative

research approach and was conducted among the student and activist groups of Dalit and Muslim women in the country who are actively part of recent struggles. Our analysis is based on the findings from interviews and secondary data acquired from various articles, studies and newspapers. Through this study, we have indicated how much relevance the constitution holds in Dalit-Muslim women struggles as of now and their perspectives of holding it in future. This paper has done an analysis with respect to the ordinary acts of violence experienced by Dalit-Muslim communities, particularly centring women criticizing the continuing attempts of the mainstream for edging them to the margins. Drawing the conclusions this study has found that, the current generation of Dalit Muslim women has the will and soul to beat all the challenges like their ancestral mothers and they both can be an excellent ally for leading their struggles for liberating their communities from victimisations and mistreatments of all sort.

*Anti CAA Protests: Reclaiming rights and the Making of Organic Resistance*

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The rise of fascist tendencies by curbing the rights of individuals, targeting the minorities and marginalised from formal and informal means by introducing new laws and policies is the core argument of this paper in context of anti-CAA protest in India. The paper seeks to examine the theoretical underpinnings of fascism and coverage and reporting of the Hindi newspaper of North India of Anti- CAA protests.

*Beyond the Boundaries of Religion and the State: Solidarity of Kashmiri Women with India against CAA/NRC*

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India's experience with the CAA/NRC experience has been interesting to say the least. Even though the resistance to these laws did not end as it was expected to, the kind of solidarity that was shown between different and diverse groups of people has been commendable. Student groups had come forward to spearhead the moment and invented a new grammar of protest during the movement. Shaheen Bagh was flooded with Muslims, but above all it was flooded with people who believed in an inclusive India resounding to the chants of "hum desh bachane nikle hai, aou hamare saath chalo".

However what was interesting to see was to see Kashmiri's, especially students standing in solidarity with the movement. It is interesting not only because the Kashmiri's have rejected the legitimacy of the Indian state since decades, but because the passing of CAA/NRC had the potential to expose the Governments blatant anti-Muslim approach in South Asia. If the Government is ready to put disenfranchised Muslim refugees in camps, then the ground reality in Kashmir can perhaps be vaguely conceived of by the Indian mainstream.

Despite this, the students from Kashmir have shown their support not to only Indian Muslims in the name of Muslim brotherhood, but also to the the general idea of a multi cultural India--an India which the right wing government is out to demolish. It was a tightrope to walk through as to incorporate the wish of Kashmiri's who question India's authority in the larger ideals of progressive and inclusive politics, that is for the Muslims to have equal status within India.

Women have asserted their agency in the resistance moment in Kashmir, as they should have. They have written about the atrocities by the armed forces in Kashmir, vocalized the collective anger against the Indian media, and formed associations protesting the disappearance of their relatives. It was no different for the protests against CAA/NRC laws

For this research, it will be interesting to question what has been the motivation for these students to be a part of these protests. It can only be hypothesized that these women came out in protests to further their agenda of Kashmir's struggle, especially post abrogation of Article 370, but it will be worth (re)searching that what has been the motivation of these young women who were apart of these protests.

Research Methodology—

The research will be qualitative in nature and feminist methodology will be used. The tool of data collection will be interviews apart from using existing literature on trans-national moments, women's solidarity moments etc. The interviews will be taken in an unstructured manner in a conversational style. The interviews taken will be of Kashmiri women students who were active participants in the CAA/NRC protests in any part of India between the age of 18-35 and about 20 interviews can be collected for the research to culminate into having strong claims and outcomes. For the purpose of this research, women include any person who identifies as a woman, regardless of the sex assigned at birth.



*Reconstructing Citizenship to Form a Gender Neutral Perspective***Haiqa Nowsheen, Student, Central University of Kashmir****Email: [haiqanowsheen@gmail.com](mailto:haiqanowsheen@gmail.com)**

Citizenship has always been gendered, with men and women sharing different relationships to it, mostly to women's disadvantage. Women are made powerless and experience exclusion from resources. The patriarchal nature of society and the laws have been the greatest driving force for the marginalization of women. It is a web of conspiracy, surfacing women's domination and submission in social, economic, and political spheres. While prominent literature is quintessentially male dominant, there are works that expose these biases and highlight the endangering of Citizenship. The research paper uses some of these literary texts as a tool to highlight the gender bias and support it with laws that are patriarchal in nature. The paper tries to find out solutions that would help women to get across the boundaries of the private sphere and established a firm footing in the domain of Citizenship. It highlights the need to establish women as a minority group based on their non-dominance in society. Therefore, the aim is to deconstruct the idea of Citizenship, for it fails to engage women and change it from its relatively patriarchal origin to its much-needed gender-neutral avatar.

*In Search for Solidarity: Anti-CAA-NRC-NPR-TG Act Protest as a site of Feminist unity(?)***Dipanwita Paul, Student, Department of English, Jadavpur University, Kolkata****Email: [alokbortika0101@gmail.com](mailto:alokbortika0101@gmail.com)**

The Anti-CAA-NRC-NPR-Transgender Act movements in Greater Kolkata has stood as a witness to a persistent women(cis and trans)-led resistance and mobilization, which not only has acted as a mean of claiming the public space and vocalization of the gendered silence, but also served as a zeal to achieve feminist coalition across various political conglomerates of varied age-groups, professions, backgrounds like members of leftist political parties, students and academicians, Dalit-Bahujan-Adivasi, Queer, Muslim or Disabled rights activism groups, Climate activists etc. with abundant overlaps. People identifying as "Women" of various marginalized identities have realized the stratified vulnerability of their identities with the crisis of "Citizenship", and have since attempted to reconcile their identity based movements with Feminism. Protests and solidarity groups have been founded in Greater Kolkata as a continuation

of global feminist protests, for eg.- Dhorshok Tumi-i ('The Rapist is You' inspired by the Chilean Protests), or local groups like "Feminists against Fascism", "Feminists in Resistance", "If we do not rise-Kolkata". These solidarity groups have engaged in regular meetings, leafletting, demonstrations, posterings, performances etc. in order to educate and spread awareness about the violation of Constitutional rights in the CAA-NRC-NPR-Transgender acts and also the simultaneous violation of Constitutional rights of the protestor. They have also continuously maintained a dedicated and strategized presence on social media providing an opportunity to continue the protests even after the Covid-19 pandemic. Such aspirations of Feminist unity across marginalities are not only hyperbolic but can be self-antagonistic because of obvious clash of privileges, interests, ideologies and differing value system and can create further oppression or insecurity of the marginalized in the vicinity of Savarna, upper-class, non-Queer, able-bodied Feminists. This paper aims to study these Feminist solidarity groups of greater Kolkata and attempt to understand their achievement of solidarity despite of their disparate experiences, identities, ideologies, and interests and whether this diversity has become an educational experience or has created a space for further oppression. Ethnographic research, individual accounts, autoethnography and personal experience as a protestor have been used for the study. The durability of such groups and the struggle they have faced due to the pandemic where the disparity of privileges have become more apparent, have also been studied. This paper also has Social Media posts, hashtags, leaflets, posters, videos etc. at its disposal to establish the patterns and plausibility of accommodation of various leftist and identity based movements of marginalized individuals of various backgrounds, identifying as "Women" within Feminist solidarity groups in Greater Kolkata.

*Shaheen Bagh: Locating the 21st Century Tale of Joyful Militancy in Friendship and Food*

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India has been marked by resistance and protests across the country, mostly led by Muslim women - emanating what one now knows as 'Shaheen Bagh', a 24x7 sit in protest against the Citizenship Amendment Act and National Register, against state sponsored violence. Abrogation of Article 370 in Kashmir and subsequent abolition of civil and political rights, fee hike in public universities, violence at Aligarh Muslim

University, Jamia Milia Islamia University, Citizenship Amendment Act - all systematically targeting the social, public fabric of the country - enforcing discrimination against a religious minority, along with social minorities, led to the protest site of Shaheen Bagh, where all these issues culminated and manifested into the movement we came to know and understand. A site of dissent, fuelled by art, poetry, politics, with a multiplicity of identities, was led forth by Muslim women. The 'shock' that enthralled people were that muslim women (irrespective of their spatial setting), broke away from the normative expectation to be "oppressed", "meek" depicted to be controlled by men, clad in the hijab and burkha (viewed as oppressive clothing) in contrast to the progressive Hindu urban woman, were the ones who had taken to the streets to voice their discomfort and acquired, demanded for a political discourse, and challenged the monopolistic, unilateral decision making of the state that essentially required people to provide 'proof' of their citizenship. The solidarity expressed was beyond speech acts, but also a depiction of their desperation. The nuance of it lay in its non-violent, peaceful nature - based at its very inception on the idea of reclaiming the night, and the new wave of feminism based on recognition of intersectionality, that goes beyond heteronormativity. From the moments of Covid-19 being announced as a 'pandemic', all forms of collective association, protests were testament to being subjected to state power. The response of the state to the pandemic was not that of to curb its spread or facilitate healthcare services, ensuring its access to all, or planning ahead, but to uproot the protests across the country and shut down the educational institutions with evacuation diktats. The onus of dealing with covid-19 really was built on 'atma-nirbharta' from the beginning, but not before conducting a show of showering gratitude to the essential workers with banging thalis and lighting of diyas. In *Joyful Militancy* (2017), carla bergmen and Nick Montgomery emphasise on love, trust, responsibility and its need to thrive amidst the violence of daily life. As they continue on this search, they reflect on how despite the existence of massive urgent problems, the need to discuss the potential of trust and care is much higher, especially as a means of undoing the Empire. In times of dissent and death, the two notion that conclusively stuck were a. friendship and freedom; and b. joyful militancy, with intermittent references to the performativity of Shaheen Bagh, 2019-20. "With joyful militancy we want to get at what it means to enliven struggle and care, combativeness and tenderness, hand in hand". As the face of Bilkis (Daadi) makes it to the Times 100 Most

Influential people and the social media erupts in a frenzy of celebration of a time gone by, one cannot but ask why? Who were these women?

### ***Session 4: Caste, Violence and Social Institutions***

**Chair:** Sowjanya Tamalapakula, School of Gender Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Hyderabad

#### ***Caste Atrocities on Scheduled Castes during COVID-19***

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The recent gang-rape case of a 19 year old Dalit girl from Hathras, Uttar Pradesh had made it to the headlines of the popular newspapers and has also occupied the space on all mainstream TV news channels. International media and the agitated upper caste people in India called it "Nirbhaya of Hathras". The non-Dalit protestors were drawing such comparisons to the present Hathras case because the brutality is equivalent or of higher degree in comparison to the rape of Jyoti Singh Pandey. Such reactions from the upper castes are not new and have set an unfortunate pattern. Now, the media and the upper castes only react to a rape of a woman when it takes a gruesome form. As a result, they overlook the wide-ranging atrocities committed on Dalit women everyday. Besides, such a view also downplays the role of caste and its implications for Dalit women. The atrocities on Dalit women and the Dalit community, at large, is part of the wider problem where the society refuses to acknowledge it as a special caste related problem. The Hathras case that happened during the pandemic made it to the limelight however, across India, a number of caste atrocities were being reported everyday. During the Covid\_19 pandemic Dalit women, men and children have been rendered more vulnerable to caste based hate crimes with no support of any kind. In this paper I have attempted to bring forth the cases of atrocities that have been committed across different states during the pandemic. This paper has three broad sections. In the first section, I will provide a brief background of caste atrocities in India in general vis-a-vis the pandemic. In the second section, I will be explaining the nature of such atrocities along with providing an analysis of these cases. In the third section I will be talking about the challenges that Dalit women in accessing justice and the State's response to these atrocities and conclude. Based on the analysis, I am arguing that the nature of atrocities on the Scheduled Castes remained the same before and during the pandemic and they had been equally prone to atrocities in both pandemic and non-pandemic situations. However, the survivors had to experience much more struggle in reporting

the cases during the pandemic due to the resistance of the police officials and absence of external support. The analysis of caste based atrocity on Scheduled Castes that I have done here is based on 494 cases which I have been documenting from May 2020 till present. These cases have been recorded through various new paper reports- both national and regional, Social media platforms like twitter and facebook, activists, parallel media channels owned and run by people belonging to the Scheduled Castes. These 494 cases are from 20 states namely, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Delhi, Gujrat, Haryana, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and West Bengal. The time frame of these cases range from the month of March 2020 to October 2020.

***The Resistance of Caste-based Violence: Unbroken Women among 'Broken Men'***  
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This study is about the embedded nature of caste-based violence on Dalit women. It clears out the debris of academic understanding of violence on women in India that is based only on gender. Caste is the main source of violence that forces Dalits and Dalit women to be generally discriminated, exploited, and humiliated.

Dalit women experience the worst kind of daily violence, discrimination, and social exclusion. Their voices and narratives of caste violence have not only been ignored by the mainstream feminist movement but are also sidelined by the Dalit movement. Despite the ban on untouchability four decades ago, caste discrimination and the oppression of 'untouchable women (or Dalits women) remains a part of social exclusion. Dalit women are being used as an instrument to preserve the caste system through violence. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the unique dynamics of caste, spaces, and patterns of violence in the context of caste from a selection of Dalit women's case studies in a rural village of Uttar Pradesh and Haryana

***Untouched but Uncovered: Stories of Dalit Women in Madhubani paintings during Covid 19***

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Dalit Women due to their identity as female coming from marginal group and mostly

unaware about their issues and rights facing three-fold inequality first, as Dalits, second as women who are considered as inferior, and lastly, uneducated and poor who are unaware about their rights. These stories reflect and give examples of this three fold inequality. They also highlighted that to solve one problem we need to understand a whole web of problems within society, even a non direct relating thing like transportation can also affect women's involvement and sustainment in the art field. How institutionalized domination of male is not just in marriage, household or governmental public sphere but has roots even in art and cultural aspects of life.

In this Pandemic Covid-19 there is no area that untouched from the consequences of Corona, artisan class is one of them, the case particularly focuses on how this Covid-19 has impacted upon, Dalit Women engage in Madhubani Mithila painting and how their livelihoods were affected during Corona. What was even sadder was how the government looked upon it and how they failed as a welfare public purposive government.

*A Hindsight and Foresight of Inter-caste Marriage in India*

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Caste is a process of stratification of the Hindu society which initiated due to the ease of societal labour division. The focus, later, shifted from division of labour to social hierarchy and privileges. Historically, one's caste was determined by the work he indulged in, but later it depended on the caste of the parents one was born to. This made the institution of marriage, a sacred one- a tie that would ensure the caste of the generations to come. Casteism became a stringent practice in India which was later reformed by the Indian Constitution. However, these practices are pre-historic and cannot be improved easily with Bills, Acts and policies. (Narzary & Ladusingh, 2019)

With globalisation, people gradually realised that the stringent practices and hierarchy of caste was regressive. Individuals began to indulge in inter-caste marriages. Inter-caste marriages come with productive as well as consequential outcomes. This paper aims to study both the outcomes and draw an inference. The research will be based on primary methods of sampling and data collection from 100 people chosen as a cross-section of the modern Indian society. It will include 50 male and 50 female participants from all castes. It will also have views of previous researchers in the same field.

Contemporary marriages are mostly based on the value systems of the two individuals in the potential union. It is also dependent on the willingness of the two parties into consideration. Marriage has become a legal affair more than a ritualistic or spiritual affair in the current scenario. It has been observed that inter-caste marriages reduce the scope of genetic discrepancies and diseases. On the other hand, the puritans see it as a loss of genetic potential and purity. The orthodox Hindu ideology and philosophy have prevented inter-caste marriages for a very long time. Still, over time, it has almost been eradicated in urban and semi-urban areas. However, due to the prevalence of traditional oral dogmas and lesser reach of globalisation, the rural areas continue to practice caste hierarchy in daily life. Marriages are very strictly monitored based on caste. There have been rising cases of 'honour killings' due to the same that have been reported in contemporary times. (Ahuja & Ostermann, 2016)

The concept of 'honour-killing' is about inflicting violence or murdering a family member to protect the honour of the family or community. This had been a frequent crime in rural India against individuals who indulged in inter-caste marriages or denied the societal norms of caste prejudices and hierarchy. It has led to the loss and injury of several lives. The government of India had taken initiatives to prevent such crimes by announcing prize amounts and declaring policies in favour of individuals who indulged in inter-caste marriage. These policies also aim to ensure the harmonious spirit of India. The caste system, despite many reforms, remains like a dagger in the heart of the country. This study will aim to include these in the scope.



***Session 5: Dalit Women's Struggles: Labour and Cultural Practices***

**Chair:** Smita M. Patil, School of Gender and Development Studies, Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi

***Women Sanitation Workers' Struggles during the COVID-19 lockdown in Delhi***

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COVID-19 is an infectious disease which is caused by the virus named Corona virus. It got spread all over world since starting of year 2020. In India, government announced the lockdown to control this situation. Every Pandemic in history had bad consequences on society. Pandemic hits the livelihood, economy and vulnerable groups the most. In India, Covid-19 effected mostly labour class, poor people, whose living and earning are based on daily wages. Lockdown process limited the labour class's earning, for example Rikshaw pullers and auto drivers and street vendors hardly got any income during the complete lockdown phase in India. In this situation, a class of labourers were continuing to perform their jobs without any delay: the sanitation workers. Sanitation workers were doing their jobs during the lockdown phase without any health measures and were putting their life in more risk. Government came with the rules and regulation of Covid-19 safety precaution but how many measures for sanitation workers has been taken. They are those labour classes, who clean the toilet, corridors and roads everywhere. During the complete lockdown, in formal sector, sanitation workers used to work for every day in a week. Women sanitation worker faced many problems during the COVID - 19 phase in Delhi. Labour class loses more during crisis. They lose because of their poor economic and social conditions in society. Women Sanitation workers are one among them. Women sanitation workers have double oppression, one because of their gender and other because of their caste. They have only a single sound in their life, which is a sound of making broom every morning for their entire day. Sanitation worker life was already full of stress because of the caste system and caste pollution in society. This covid-19 has also impacted their life in many ways. They have faced problems for example migrant women have faced house rent issues, livelihood and food and health risk issues. The health safety of sanitation workers were always necessary before COVID- 19, but never realized by the government, for example the need of gloves and masks during work. I will try to focus on some issues of women

sanitation workers in Delhi, which are: What are challenges and problems, women sanitation workers have faced during the peak time of lockdown in India? How sanitation worker lost their job in informal sector because of COVID-19? How caste and gender played an important role in their life? How they are managing their livelihood in this period, for example: Are they getting their salary every month or not? What are the precautions and safety measures, government have given to them. I will compare the life of women sanitation worker in formal and informal sector in Delhi.

*Women in the Workplace: Experiences and Narratives of Dalit women in Jammu*

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Life of a working Dalit woman striving to live with dignity is symbolised by resistance. Discussing the predicament of Dalit women, two issues arise – violence and harassment. While the question of violence (rape, murder) grabs some attention, there is exceedingly less information and awareness around the harassment and discrimination that many Dalit women face at work. The workplace harassment deters many Dalit women from exercising their Fundamental Right to work as enshrined under Article(s) 14, 15, 19, 21, 42 and 46 of the Indian constitution. Kimberle Crenshaw propounded the phenomenon of ‘intersectionality’ in 1989 elucidating double discrimination faced by black women (race and gender disprivilege). These intersectionalities manifest in their worst forms when they collide – violence against women (sexism) and violence against Dalits (casteism) – rendering Dalit women the worst victims. However, the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 and the Gender Sensitisation Committees mention no specific clauses for Dalit women. Psychological Capital aka. PsyCap, a concept pioneered by Fred Luthans and his colleagues explains both work and life satisfaction. High PsyCap has a positive correlation with desired employee performance. The purpose of the study is to analyse the impact a Dalit woman’s caste and gender has on her Psychological capital and subsequently on her work performance. The paper proposes that there is an urgent need to build a ‘frame’ to empower Dalit women and to safeguard their constitutional right to work and well-being.

*A Cry for Survival: Drawing Parallels Between Professional Weeping Practices of Oppari and Rudali*

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Funeral occupations performed at Hindu households reveal and define the social status and the conception of caste and gender roles and helps in understanding caste-based occupation. Though the funeral practices vary across the subcontinent, some parallels exist. One such instance would be the occupation of wailing that is performed by women at funerals. The wailing of women in the northern region of India is through the mourning practice of Rudali, while in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu and northeastern parts of Sri Lanka, it is through the mourning practice called the Oppari. This paper is a study of the variance in the genesis between Rudaali and Oppari, through the aspects of its operationalisation households as a private sphere and cinema as a public sphere.

*Gender Quota and Caste: An Argument for Caste-based Sub-quotas within Gender Quota*

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Based on several surveys and literatures on impact of gender quota on women at PRI, this paper examines the impact of such system on women of lower caste. In this paper, I argue that a quota based on gender considers women as a monolithic category and ignores the important identities such as caste identity women of India carry. In response to such homogenisation, I make several arguments, based on already done empirical studies, in favour of caste-based sub-quotas within gender quota

**Day 2: 15 December 2020**

### ***Session 1: Tribal and Adivasi Women's Struggles***

**Chair:** Papori Bora, Centre for Women's Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

***Them that Stayed Back: Case Study of Women Migrants from North East region of India who Stayed Back in Delhi NCR region during the Lockdown***

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Delhi NCR region is one of the metropolitan cities where migrant workers land up in search of better job opportunities. The age group of the migrant workers from the NER are relatively young and majorly employed in BPOs, restaurants, malls, spas and as nurses in both private and public hospitals. The origin of the pandemic being China, people from E Asia and South East Asia faced racial attacks all over the world. India is no exception. More than half of the migrant women from the NER are employed in hospitality and service sector owing to their apparent "exotic" features. These women with "exotic" features have lived with subtle racism in their everyday life; The pandemic raised the degree of racism and violence to an alarming degree. There are reports of tenants being thrown out of their rents, women being spat on, entire neighbourhood ganging up on women students because they might be carriers of the "Chinese virus", nurses not allowed to return to their rented places by their colony committees, etc. The lockdown compelled mass exodus of migrants due to loss of jobs and fear of life due to increasing racial attacks. What happened to those women who remained in Delhi? Did they stay because they retained their jobs or what compelled them to extend their stay?

My paper aims to study the experience of women who stayed back during the entire lockdown. To understand everyday struggles especially as NE migrants, I will attempt to interview nurses employed in hospitals across NCR region, women in corporate and service sectors, proprietor of boutiques and ethnic cuisine restaurants. It is important to find out what runs parallel in the experience and struggles of women engaged in seemingly "stable jobs" (hospitals staffs, corporates) and "unstable" jobs of running small ethnic restaurants and clothing stores that bank on student community.

*O how life has changed?! : Our lives as Women, with and without COVID-19*

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The COVID-19 pandemic slowly engulfed the entire world into its grip and at once a million lives were halted. One country to another, from two cases-to-twenty-to-fifty the exponential rise in the spread of this disease took a toll on lives and made people re-think that health is after all wealth. Everything was different, or was it? At the outset of the dramatic pattern of the pandemic escalation, it seemed the world was on a standstill, if not over, but, during the past couple of months, it seems that things are certainly on the move. In the midst of this chaos, VR, Teshang, ES and Nanuma, are living in their 'new normal', adjusting to many facets of their new lifeworlds. But, what is seemingly different and not-different at the same time, are their experiences as women, with or without the COVID-19.

*Adivasi Women's Struggles: An Ongoing Dialogue in the Eastern Part of India*

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In a country where more than half of the population worships Goddesses, the status of women and the way they are restricted, treated unequally and neglected from public, social and political spaces is questionable in the 21st century. Women at large are the most vulnerable section of the society; now imagine the multitude of marginalization faced by tribal women which is not only gender-based but cultural and socio-economic. The central concern of this paper is to address the atrocities faced by the tribal Adivasi women which empirically focuses on four different states such as Orissa, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Assam, yet their constant effort to fit into the idea of "nationalists" despite being marginalised and being alienated from the rest of the Indian society, not only during the colonial but postcolonial period that resulted in contemporary challenges that Adivasi women face leading to victimization and invisibility. Taking geographical location into consideration is important to examine the position of tribal women in the continuum of development and modernization.

*Women's Struggles: Claiming Equality?- Adivasi Women's Struggles*

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It is manifested from the struggles of our foremothers that patriarchy in our community has always been questioned and demurred. In this variegated society of different castes and tribes, men have always had an upper hand over the leadership. Hence, for Adivasi women the meaning of leadership becomes empty as for them there would be hardly any positive changes that will come. And the community will continue to witness these continuous male – male conflicts for community leadership. Between this hustle of leadership and control, women are being immensely oppressed, exploited, excluded and discriminated.

So, the question arises in this context, how can we document these traditions of the Adivasi community that were aimed to reallocate the patriarchy on Adivasi women and male domination within the community?

This paper limns the levels of discrimination in the society to Adivasi women. It depicts that how Adivasi women continue to be a victim of gender and social prejudice. With the incidence of poverty, socio-economic instabilities and exploitation is worsening their situations. There is a description of how the so-called development projects and various other schemes which were supposed to be in favour of the empowerment of these marginalised women is deteriorating their lives with the loop hole of improper implementation.

Hence, this paper gives a comprehensive picture of their situation in the community and their struggle trail.

***Session 2: Complicating the Muslim Women's Question: Identity, Work and Livelihood***

**Chair:** Farida Khan, Professor (Retired), Department of Education, Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi; Former Member, National Minorities Commission

***Political Compulsions of "Muslim Women" in a Majoritarian State***

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The rise of majoritarian politics has translated into explicit forms of violence and discrimination against minority groups in India. It is also clear that while collective identities are threatened due to majoritarianism, the impact within minority groups may differ given the intersectionality within the groups as well. Muslim women are at junctures of oppressions of patriarchy and Islamophobia which operate at several levels. Brahmanical Patriarchy continues to dominate cultural politics in the country as a whole. Simultaneously, minority groups are not free of similar forms of patriarchal subjugation. We can see two forms of regression with the rise of majoritarianism in the country: firstly, the solidification of communalism and the rejection of secularism in a very direct manner. With the focus on religious identity and profiling of the "other", homogeneity becomes an indicator of safety. This means that minority groups become vulnerable to adapting to more regressive ideas about their own cultures as a form of safeguarding the values that symbolize them, since those values are at risk of being invisibilized.

However, complications arise when we start analysing how the push towards such conservatism burdens women with an added responsibility, as they are seen to be the bearers of honour. The paper looks at this intersectionality through a feminist lens within the Muslim community. It begins with an understanding of the majoritarian politics that dominates India. The next part analyses the ways in which Muslim identity is threatened and asserted within the socio-political landscape. The third part of the paper goes on to look at the assertion of religious identity through a feminist lens. Lastly, the paper problematizes the understanding of current forms of identity-based movements to highlight the levels at which Muslim womxn continue to be marginalised, and the way they continue to claim their agency.



*Meme-ing the 'Muslim Woman': Perception, Identity Formation and Discourse*

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The advent of New Media has fundamentally altered the way politics is conceptualized and practiced. This study is an attempt to locate this shift by looking at a specific form of online interaction- Internet Memes- and understand their effect on the way the image of a Muslim Woman is framed and perceived. The paper argues that the identity of a Muslim Woman is framed in orientalist lens and is constructed to serve a political purpose. They are seen as oppressed by the dual chains of patriarchy and religion. Since identity formation is largely rooted in discourses, memes serve as a vehicle for the dissemination of the 'Oppressed Muslim Woman' idea. This paper relies on memes available on the internet and analyses the responses/reaction of individuals to it. The memes, both positive and negative in its portrayal of the Muslim Women garnered varied responses but, on the whole, elicited a reaction. The study found that internet memes play a notable role in propelling the image of a 'Muslim Woman' in political discourses.

*Conflicts and Compromises: Gender, Stratification and Resentment in the 'Muslim habitats' in India*

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'Muslim women in India need to stand up for their rights and start dialogue with the community, state and society they live in to equip themselves economically to fight the social, economic, political and legal battle. Muslim women follow personal laws and civilian laws in different legal matters and for them to follow these two sets of laws simultaneously adjudicated in different courts and setting, Muslim women need to educate themselves to make these sets of laws work for them and learn to fight for themselves at each level of discrimination. Given the economic status of Muslim women in India, Polygamy and Triple Talaq is only a part of the problem. Lower courts, quasi-judicial settings and mosque committees in religious community sphere in India can help muslim women in dispute resolution, well-being and economic development beginning from localities.'

*Identity, Insecurity and Work: Exploring the Narratives of Muslim Women Entrepreneurs in Delhi*

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The mushrooming of anti-Muslim rhetoric and perpetual targeting of Muslim minority in the country has pushed the community to margins of socio-economic life. The labor market discrimination and marginalization of Muslims is well articulated. While statistical figures present high concentration of Muslims in self-employment, informal sector and low skilled jobs, the literature has failed to explore anxieties that mark Muslim women's engagement with livelihood opportunities across different sectors. Increasing number of Muslim women are actively engaging in entrepreneurship and gaining visibility in the public sphere. This paper narrates experiences of 10 Muslim women in negotiating entrepreneurial work and identity in a society and polity that is unveiling its Islamophobic tilt and thinks of them as those needing to be saved from their religion. In exploring the everyday realities of Muslim women's lives as entrepreneurs in the capital city, the paper brings forth voices of Muslim women embracing religious and entrepreneurial identity. They are conscious of their decisions, moderate their choices and challenge stereotypes surrounding Muslim women. The memories of anti-Muslim violence and protests against discriminatory citizenship laws have remained with Muslim women who are access and create better opportunities. The paper argues that Islamophobia and the environment of hate and violence has profound impact on the lives of Muslim women entrepreneurs who articulate their fear, anxiety and hope.

*Reimagining Resistance: An Academic Reading of Lila Abu Lughod's 'Do Muslim Women Need Saving?' in the Indian Socio-Political Context*

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The rise of Hindutva politics in India, both posits Muslim women as victim and a threat (where the victimized sister who needs saving through urgent Triple Talaq interventions becomes the religious subject who threatens the state in the anti CAA protests), which highlights the binaries in which Muslim women are framed. In an attempt to destabilize these categorizations and the binaries in which Muslim women

are bracketed, this paper turns to feminist anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod's, 'Do Muslim Women Need Saving?' exploring similar constructions of imperialist and colonial states of Muslim women to understand the ways in which these constructions have been used by right wing groups, feminist interventions in the country.

*Ambedkar and Muslim Women: A Study of Congruence Building of Issues relating to Muslim and Non-Muslim Women*

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In the light of the freedom struggle in 1930's and 1940's, Dr. Ambedkar analyzed the social evils present in Muslim community in general which had consequential impact on Muslim women in particular. He highlighted the plight of Muslim women through insecurity and segregation caused by congruence of personal laws, identity and conceptualization of women as markers of community. As Ambedkar has mentioned in his writings that Muslim women's identity have always been determined by the men in their lives or the immediate community they belong to, which in turn leaves them devoid of any agency and that too particularly in their in marital life. As per Ambedkar, a Muslim woman cannot escape the marriage ties while a man can easily do it. This along with the right of Muslim men to polygamy has left Muslim women exposed to insecurity and distress. Ambedkar's statement that ' the Muslim woman is the most helpless person in the world conveys his ideas and concerns about Muslim women. But Ambedkar being from western school of thought so his ideas and concepts regarding Muslim women were clearly influenced by the orientalist discourse that was professed by the western thinkers who saw 'purdah' in Muslim women as a sign of their oppression and backwardness of communities they belonged to. Ambedkar saw Muslim Women as the bearers of identity of Muslim community as whole and not as subgroup within this minority who have their own issues and different identities. In this regard, this paper attempts to study and understand the Ambedkar's discourse on inheritance and marital rights of women and the inheritance and marital rights of women as given in Islamic scriptures. Further, this paper attempts to build congruence between Muslim and non-Muslim women regarding their inheritance and marital rights in contemporary times.



### *Session 3: Education, Access and Women Students' Struggles*

**Chair:** Nandini Manjrekar, School of Education, Tata Institute of Social Sciences,  
Mumbai

#### *Navigating the Gendered Pandemic: Female Student and the Inaccessibility to Public Space*

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This research aims to gesture towards the contradictions and ambiguities of access and inaccessibility to public spaces during the pandemic and even before it. It is also set to record how female students perceive their further restricted physical mobility during the pandemic as the access to public spaces like colleges or universities also means time away from housework or care work that they otherwise have to engage in within the family space. In the pandemic once people are put-in the private space for studying or working from within the household space it affects the work and concentration and hence productivity of women and men differently.

#### *Pandemic, Digital Divide and Young Muslim Women (A Short Film and Supplementary Paper)*

**Sidra Fariah, MA Mass Communication, AJK Mass Communication Research Centre, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi**

**Film:** [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1jEMaKo0FFUTd\\_gxcYWGDwo\\_j9enYvaD?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1jEMaKo0FFUTd_gxcYWGDwo_j9enYvaD?usp=sharing)

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To curb the spread of Coronavirus countries, governments of countries all over the world clamped lockdown. Because all gatherings were prohibited, one of the first measures was to close down all the academic institutions. Although the history of the Spanish flu global pandemic was revisited in the public sphere the modern educational administrators had no memory of dealing with a similar situation in their lifetimes. Given the unprecedented nature and scale of the problem, initially, school, college and university administrations appeared clueless. However, after a few weeks into the lockdown, education and office came home, and work/study became online. People

needed digital device and technologies to attend classes and work from home. In the developed world the infrastructure for connecting everyone online existed.

In a country like India, the pandemic brought to light more keenly the existing and vast digital divide. The term digital divide refers to the gap between those who have access to the internet and other technologies and those who do not. It is shaped both by the availability of internet services in different regions and the ability of individuals to tap these resources. A person's location, income, gender, education, language, and age are some of the factors that define their access. These multiple and complex reasons work in complex ways leading to drastic inequalities in accessing office work and education online.

The pandemic has affected women across the world in various degrees. In this presentation, through a background paper and a short film, I have attempted to explore how the pandemic has impacted the young Muslim Women (school and college students) living in the area of Jamia Nagar, New Delhi. Although, my entry point to the research was to explore the way young women and girl students were coping with the digital divide, I soon realized through my interactions with my respondents that the problems of online education was not just about inability to access internet. The closure of school made these young women realize the full significance of educational institutions as social spaces in which not only friendships thrived but it was a gateway to many other facilities and facets of their gendered life-world which they could easily avail in the pre-pandemic world.

*Marginalised Women and Challenges in Education: A Study on Digital Divide amid Covid-19 Pandemic and Visual Impairment*

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At the time when I wrote the proposal for this conference, I was greatly disturbed by the Dalit student suicide in Kerala: the reason being her inability to afford a smartphone for her online classes. As a fellow enrolled in higher academics, i could feel the loss as a personal one. This primarily became the reason I chose to conduct a study concerning marginalised women's struggles on campus and hindrances in fair access to higher education amongst the wide range of subthemes enlisted.

Within a fortnight duration from the Kerala incident, when the Indian prime time was celebrating the US presidential elections and rooting for Kamala Harris with

maddening zeal, the tragic news of the Lady Shri Ram College student suicide broke! Now Kamala was an empowered woman who traces her roots to India, it had all the self – congratulatory elements for the masses to dominate the headlines for weeks. That is exactly the kind of women empowerment people like to quote examples of. While the latter would form part of some vague numerical stat.

Social media mourned the tragic death and problematised the incident to some extent, but not the prime time. The media, just like the government is equally apathetic to real issues. She was a proficient scholarship -winning student, with a family who mortgaged their house for a student loan. She was asked to vacate the hostel by College authorities and the travel expense back home was difficult to arrange. The college paid no heed for her inability to afford the digital devices and she paid the cost of inequality by her life. Incidents such as these mirror the punctured condition of the education system and how it has failed the students. They call for a reckoning and decisive policy-making powered through funding and implementation in the education system.

The present study is centred around students facing the Digital Divide, a dark reality which looms over the future of tens and thousands of students. The shift to Online education in a country like India was a drastic step with numerous consequences. As revealed by the global estimate of UNICEF- ITU, in South Asia 768 million children and youth have no access to the internet during the Covid-19 Pandemic. This suggests a clear Digital Divide of which India is a major contributor. Now the question is if there's a clear Digital Divide between the rich-poor, the Urban-Rural, where is the documentation? This divide shall simply mean the exclusion of the poor from the education system, to begin with. The LSR student was enrolled in one of the most prestigious colleges of in India, yet Covid-19 poverty hit the student so hard. Her death made it to the news even if the causes were not. Now if we locate this scenario in terms of students from the marginalised communities, does it even make it to the news? There is also a Rural-Urban divide within the academic communities, do we have any stats as to how students from smaller towns and institutes are battling this crisis in the education system further hardened by the pandemic. Asking these questions is the first step in the direction of documenting the student issues, addressing them and seeking redressal have to follow.

Any study in this direction would necessitate first-person experiences for it to be beyond just a theoretical conjecture. The spurious incidents of student suicide are all

linked to an insensitive and apathetic system. Only surveying and case studies can identify and highlight a more serious deficiency in the same.

The present study is conducted with the undergraduate students of a College, part of a prestigious central university, of which I am an alumnus myself. The college is home to some thousands of young women, the majority of whom are Muslim and from smaller towns and villages nearby the city. The college fee and the cost of living is comparatively less than the big cities and the 'Muslim' element of the University makes the parents feel it as a safer option for their daughters. The students are from diverse backgrounds, and many are from the financially weaker sections. A huge chunk among them is from the Differently-abled category. The issue is that no mainstream source discusses the problems of the women students here because of the university being stationed in a considerably small town.

I have picked up the challenges faced by different categories of women students i.e. the challenges they faced owing to their Identity/ Disability/ Gender. Within the Disability Category, I have chosen students with Visual Impairment, for feedback on their struggles in academics. I feel that women with disabilities should form a base for taking into account the struggles of marginalised women in higher education. The feedback I received compelled me to question the authorities concerned with Disability Cell of the university. I have also attached the responses I received from the Coordinator of the University Disability cell and their views and policy for Women with disabilities. I have paraphrased the interviews for the sake of presentability. I have changed the names of the students on request for safety purposes. A special focus has been put on how the students are responding to the pandemic anxieties and the transition to online education and accessibility issues.

Most of the women student's interviews revealed upsetting realities. They face acute financial instability by the virtue of their identity and deficient access to resources because of their gender. At a time when students are physically out of their universities and battling career anxieties, such students are uncertain of their return to the campus ever again. Some women were even pessimistic of my study and the questions I posed to them as fatal, others simply looked up to me with expectant eyes for any help I could offer them.

I hope this conference proves to be a platform for bringing to notice and discussion a genuine concern for these students. This may prove as a step in problematising the issues faced in the realm of gender equality and minority upliftment.



*Experiences of Verbal and Non-verbal Violence among Secondary & Higher Secondary School Going Women: An Empirical View from Intersectional Perspective*

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The present research examines the experiences of verbal and non-verbal violence by adoles-cent school-going women of secondary and higher secondary classes of chosen government and non-government institutions in the district of Hazaribag in the Indian state of Jharkhand. It is also intended to map the nature and extent of such incidents, the impact of these events on the physical, psychological and emotional well-being of adolescent girls and their re-sponses to such violence in and outside school campuses during school hours. A mixed method approach to this descriptive and explanatory research has been adopted and both quantitative and qualitative data have been collected. Questionnaire, interview schedule and informal focus group discussions by personal interaction, and online and telephone commu-nication were the key methods of data collection. Quantitative data were analysed and pre-sented with the help of the SPSS (Statistical Packages for Social Sciences) software, and qualitative data was analysed using the narrative approach. The research finds that violence against such young women students cannot be seen independently of gender-based violence. While all school violence has repercussions for nearly all students, women students are particularly vulnerable in this context because of the gender factor linked to it. Qualitative awareness and subjective understanding of the experiences of violence and abuse against school-going young women attempts to develop a gender-sensitive and violence-free educa-tion sphere. This would be the situation in which social justice education is better found where everyone is able to access quality education without fear of violence, intimidation and abuse.

*Education and Beyond: Analysing the Struggles of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Women in a Central University*

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Culture plays a critical role in determining gender roles in said space, and Aligarh Muslim University happens to be an educational institution with a history dating back

to the colonial period. Drawing its cultural roots from India's pre-independence Islamic traditions, the University upholds certain beliefs regarding women, which happen to exist in the present times with slight modifications. This paper studies the various social, political, religious, and cultural forces existing in the University that impact the space of female students residing in the campus premises in the twenty-first century. The research is also supported by a qualitative and quantitative survey of AMU students and interviews of political leaders. Struggles faced by women of AMU as a consequence of the division of space is exemplified by unequal distribution of power and access, problems of representation in political leadership, and geographic isolation in the paper, thereby taking the lived experiences of these women beyond education.

*Learning in Times of Pandemic: Online Classes and Challenges of Muslim Girls during the COVID-19 Lockdown*

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This is a proposed study of the challenges faced by the students of Shibpur Muslim Girls' High School, Howrah (West Bengal) in accessing modes of learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study is based on the premise that the demography of Muslim girl students of this school reveals economic deprivation and backwardness in Muslim households. For example, Muslim girl students have to contend with poverty and unemployment of family members, which prevents their enrolment in school; they also have to devote time for household labour which impedes their classroom attendance and quality of learning. In ordinary circumstances, such conditions are ameliorated to a certain extent by the provisions of the SarvaSiksha Mission<sup>3</sup> (SSM) undertaken by the Government of West Bengal. For example, the scheme of giving mid-day meals to girl students incentivises their attendance in school and the no-detention policy curtails rates of student drop-outs. But the existing policies of the education department are ill-equipped to cater to modes of learning for students in a time of pandemic. SSM has been designed to lift girl students from their conditions of economic backwardness and bring them to schools. This physical relocation—from the home to the school—is the prerequisite for the education of the Muslim girl from an

<sup>3</sup> SarvaSiksha Mission, Official Website of Howrah District, <http://howrah.gov.in/collectorate/SSM/index.html>

economically backward family. Hence, in a radically new situation, in which school attendance is no longer possible, the possibility of continuing education reduces drastically. For example, the pandemic-lockdown has witnessed a stoppage of the mid-day meal scheme. In its stead, students are provided, once a month, with two kilograms of rice and potatoes. In times of growing economic uncertainty, is education under-prioritised? How has the pandemic-lockdown affected poor Muslim families which have to negotiate several hurdles in the way of girls' education even in 'normal' circumstances? What are the challenges faced by those girl students who are trying to access online modes of learning? This paper will investigate these questions through a case study of one school, and thereby attempt to address broader questions of Muslim backwardness and inequities in education.

*Assessing Inclusivity in Curriculum and Pedagogy: Locating Caste in Gender Studies at University of Delhi*

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Curriculum and pedagogy carry the potential to make ground breaking departure through a sensitized education. But the university system in India has come out as spaces of exclusion for marginalized students. Caste has been rendered as a 'non-issue'. The current study aims at assessing inclusivity in academic curriculum and pedagogy with regards to the question of caste in papers related to Gender/Women's rights/Feminism at University of Delhi. The curriculum of gender related papers provided by six departments at University of Delhi for under -graduate students is assessed in terms of core claims, learning objectives and their implementation with regards to the question of caste. Along with a textual analysis, an indepth, semi-structured and phenomenological interview was conducted with 20 respondents coming from diverse caste backgrounds. Professors and students who either taught or studied any paper related to Gender/Women's Rights at undergraduate level of University of Delhi were interviewed. The results of the study highlight multiple factors that limit the inclusion of caste in gender studies and the larger academic framework

**Session 4: Health and Work Insecurities**

**Chair:** Meena Gopal, Advanced Centre for Women's Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai

***The Emerging Challenges for Access to Maternal and Child Health Services: Lesson Learned and Future Strategy***

**Shatrughan Prasad (Doctoral Student Indian institute of Dalit Studies (IIDS) Delhi) and Geeta Sahu (Doctoral Fellow Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC) Bengaluru)**

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Emerging Challenges for Access to Maternal and Child Health Services: Lesson learned and Future Strategy Shatrughan Prasad, Doctoral Student, IIDS, Delhi, India Geeta Sahu, Doctoral Fellow, ISEC, Bengaluru, India Abstract Indian government decision on nationwide lockdown was right and important to check the spread of COVID-19 infections and fatality. The concern is about the possible emerging demographic and health scenario in the country due to lockdown. The availability and access of maternal healthcare services ranging from antenatal care to delivery, post delivery care to access to family planning services and child healthcare at both the facility and the community level got interrupted. The rapidly evolved epidemic stressed the entire health-care system, especially the frontline community health workers such as ASHA, AWW, ANM, including other health workers. Since the frontline health workers are engaged with COVID-19 management, general public health services and facilities for Maternal & child healthcare (MCH) including other health and nutrition services had been disrupted. As the global debate and discussion on possibility of unwanted pregnancy and baby boom will be effect of the lockdown and will have great impact on future demographic outcome and additional burden on the available healthcare system in the country. Due to lockdown, poor availability and accessibility of contraception and use of male spacing method pushed the phenomena of unintended pregnancy. The emerged challenges both at the demand and supply side as well. As the many women would have been remained deprived to access the services and at the supply side community health worker remained engaged in catering the services for the pandemic keep them away from their maternal and child healthcare services and responsibilities. The study provided evidences and possible strategies to combat the gap other than

documenting the gap and challenges faced by the women in availing services including access to family planning services and services delivery by community health workers due to emerged pandemic situation. Keywords: ASHA, COVID, Contraceptives, MCH Care, HMIS.

*Are We Ready to Have the Period Talk with our Daughters? : A Study on How Adolescent Indian Women Tackle the Taboo Surrounding Menstrual Hygiene*

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The paper serves to address the stigma around menstrual hygiene which victimizes adolescent girls of North India, putting their health at peril. In majority of the menstrual hygiene studies conducted in this region, the highest percentage of the respondents evinced lack of knowledge about reproductive hygiene and physical developments related to puberty. The onset of menstruation impacted most of them like a burden or a curse, hampering their self-development. The association of this biological process with female sexuality has largely barred the girls from leading a healthy lifestyle without gender-related restrictions. The paper examines this tradition and asserts that menstrual hygiene is not only a clinical issue, but a social issue as well, deeply interlinked with patriarchy. It will also address the indifference or ignorance regarding sanitary absorbents and will shift focus from equating menstruation with the mythical concept of virginity to the issue of safeguarding women's health and hygiene, which includes making adolescent women aware of this biological process and destroying the taboos surrounding it.

*Exploring Employment Insecurities among the Scholars of Women's Studies and Gender Studies*

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This paper explores the expectations, aspirations and employment insecurities among the scholars of Women's studies and Gender Studies. It also draws upon the marginal status of Women's Studies and Gender Studies within academia and attempts to find out various factors contributing to its marginal status. This paper brings out the relevance, contribution and importance of the centers and also struggles with the complexities involved in identifying and advancing with the vision and expectations of WS /GS and the women's movement in relation to the employment insecurities of

scholars, particularly women scholars, as most of them face many challenges to access higher education and therefore aspire to get a socially gratified job such as teaching or research in academia

*Religious Nationalism and Women's Livelihood*

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This paper studies the communal riots that happened in February 2019 in Delhi, based on visits to the areas of Shiv Vihar Phase-7, Shiv Vihar Phase-3, Karawal Nagar, Khajuri Khas gali no. 4, Ghonda Chowk, Gamri Village, Pusta-V, Subhash Village. The sample for the study consists of 50 families and 30 case studies. In the research, it surfaced that violence mostly happened where Muslim households were in less numbers. Before riots Muslims women were engaged with their livelihood like Stitching, Rakhi Making, Toys Making, bag making, street vending, teaching children as tuition, transportation of goods etc. But, in riots, livelihood related equipment and concerned raw materials and prepared products, all were looted and / or burnt when rioters set homes on fire. Now earning of women have been stopped at all because they do not have means of earning as well as combine effect of riots and COVID-19. People are still living in fear because every Tuesday aggressive slogans are sought from nearby temples and chowks. So, mostly female mobility has restricted and most of the women have closed inside doors. It is also surface that the areas where relief programs are conducted have not come under debt but the areas where relief program had not been conducted, most of the violence victim family have gone under debt. Some areas are quite in better condition where families received relief material and other help but situation is worst where people did not receive any help. According to the victims who did not receive any help said that state is completely failed to protect or rehabilitate them. Where relief goods have not reached, people were forced to take loans for food. Nine months since the violence wreaked havoc on their lives and destroyed their means of subsistence, people are spending their life in fear, living in the situation of helplessness and a life that is marked by a constant state of fear and communal tension. Many people still don't understand what happened or triggered the violence. Many people were saying "we have been living here for more than 30-35 years and we have never seen anything like this before. There was never any animosity between the neighbors, irrespective of their

caste or religion". But, now, a tension has been created between Hindu and Muslim in riot affected areas and riot affected families are living in fear of further violence.

### *Session 5: Conflict, Resistance and Livelihood Issues*

**Chair:** Nitasha Kaul, Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Westminster, London

#### *Precarity and Militarisation: Young Kashmiri Women's Struggles for Livelihood and Survival*

**Mariyeh Mushtaq**, Co-founder and editor of [ZanaanWanaan](#) (Kashmir's first independent feminist multimedia platform)

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This paper attempts to introduce Kashmiri social class in intersection with gender and livelihood. In doing so it raises addresses four questions: How have the structural conditions of precarity been exaggerated by the militarisation of the region? How do Kashmiri women first- formulate and second- assert their socio-political and economic aspirations? How do they view the 'prospects' of their welfare given the uncertainty of life and livelihood? Finally, how do the negotiations of their clashing realities and visions take place? In the process, it aims to develop a more expansive theorisation of precarity and militarisation vis-à-vis Kashmiri women's economic strategies and struggles.

#### *The Politics of Fixity and Incarceration: Effects of Recurrent Prolonged Lockdowns on the Lives and Prospects of Women in Kashmir*

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The paper attempts to understand the effect that the prolonged lockdown, that in Kashmir morphed from the siege imposed post the abrogation of Article 370 into the COVID-19 lockdown, on the lives of women of the region, especially their education, career prospects, mental health and familial lives. The siege-pandemic elicits a renewed attention to the way in which curtailment of mobility and relegation to the household opens the opportunity to make the 'zenana' impervious again. The confluence of repression due to a patriarchal set up with the inherently restrictive nature of the current medical emergency has exacerbated the already prevalent issues and challenges that the women of conflict zones face. Women who live within dysfunctional families are forced to spend together an abnormal amount of time, away from any form of fleeting 'freedoms' that they could otherwise devise for themselves. Dependence on



families that the pandemic and the lockdown has given rise to has further enslaved the aspirations of women and young adults to their 'guardians' and 'providers'. Due to recurrent lockdowns, the education system and the economy of the valley have suffered greatly and the on-going siege-pandemic has compounded problems giving rise to situations that severely hamper the prospects of women in a competitive world of survival.

***Women of APDP (Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons) Kashmir***  
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This paper is the outcome of the discussions held with the women, associated with APDP (Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons), living in Kashmir valley who are mostly Half-widows and some are Half- mothers. Half-widow is a woman whose husband has disappeared and has neither returned home nor has been declared dead. Similarly Half-mother is a woman whose son has disappeared and has neither been declared dead nor returned back.

This paper aims to bring forth the livelihood issues of these half-widows and half-mothers with special emphasis on the socio-economic aspect and gender bias. The case study method has been used to cover these socio-economic and gender aspects of the lives of these women.

***Democracy, Gender and Political Conflict: Exploring Women's Narratives of Resistance in Contemporary Kashmir***

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Though democracy today shares an important relation with protest, it is however difficult to have a universal definition to a concept as nuanced as 'protest'. Taking it a bit further to a conflict zone, the idea of protest gets more complex as the relation between democracy and protest doesn't limit itself to the public space only. It rather punctures the domestic realms and penetrates the private. This is the space, which is today offering new narratives for defining the very idea of 'protest'. Set against this background, the paper engages with stories of Kashmiri women in conflict torn Valley of Kashmir. The paper aims to understand and analyze the various ways in which the convergence of religion, gender and conflict plays a crucial role in determining how women experience conflict. This would be interrogated through stories of women in

Kashmir by engaging and analyzing the nature of gendered violence in the militarized state, the loss of socio-economic opportunities for women, their subsequent stories of struggle for a livelihood for themselves and for their families along with the alienation suffered by them from the society. These experiences leave behind few possibilities of survival for women. However it is while challenging and negotiating with these moments of power and powerlessness that women in Kashmir carve a space, which defines their idea of protest. The paper therefore aims to understand and analyze these ways of resistance from their day-today lives. Categories of silence and victimization; resistance and agency will be engaged with while presenting the narratives.

The paper has borrowed two theoretical frameworks to interrogate and understand the narratives of struggle and resistance of Kashmiri women. The theoretical framework primarily employed borrowed from Nadera Shalhoub- Kevorkian's work Militarization and Violence against Women in Conflict Zones in the Middle East. Analyzing the multilayered structure in the form of state, patriarchy and religion in Kashmir Valley will help in understanding how structure penetrates in women's lives in Kashmir. It will also crucially help in understanding how women are building agency and giving their meaning to it amidst the political conflict in Kashmir.

*'In Lens and Poetry: An Expression of Kashmiri Muslim Women's Resistance': Using protest poetry*

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Oppression in Kashmir has met with resistance from Kashmiris. The narrative of Kashmir's resistance in response to Indian occupation has taken voice through various forms of art like poetry, painting, graffiti, music, photography and emergence of resistance literature which has evolved over the years of its conflict. The stories encapsulated in the lenses here aims to bring forth the resistance shown by Kashmiri women in the war torn 'heaven on earth' with the help of photographs and poetry. Most of these photographs are captured by the authors personally while few are borrowed from other photographers. Each of these photographs is highlighted with poetry which attempts at giving words to the images. For the same, poetry from Urdu, Hindi and English languages is used (contextual verbatim translation of language other than English is provided). Narrative has been built keeping the photographs as the

focus of attention. Thus, we have used photographs, poetry and narrative as a means to highlight the different but intricately woven realities of Kashmiri life resulting out of conflict. The presentation holds implications for conflict studies, gender studies and socio-political disciplines. Key words-Kashmir, women, oppression, resistance.

*Militarization, Hyper-masculinity of Indian State and Violence: Understanding the Reproduction of "Social-patriarchal Violence" and "Narrative of Development" in Kashmir.*

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Kashmir has emerged as a feminized landscape in the formation of a masculine post-colonial Indian state. The masculinity of Indian state draws from its hyper-masculine military apparatus and the coercive legal apparatus which is highly gendered in nature. Drawing on existing academic literature, legal documents, newspaper articles and personal experiences, the study aims to unpack "how militarization serves to reproduce and reinforce the power gap between men and women and how the Indian State is creating a narrative of development to justify the brutal violence by its coercive apparatus in Kashmir." Kashmiri men and women have become the direct victims of sexual violence/abuse by the powerful hyper-masculine state, which also is used as a means to humiliate the political opponents of the state. The paper attempts to illustrate how the militarization re-legitimizes patriarchal domination through institutionalization of traditional gender roles and how the trope of development has always been used by the Indian state to legitimize and absolve the accusations of heinous war crimes. The paper is a review article study which follows integrative review method.

***Session 6: Feminist Poetry and Films***

**Chair:** Uma Chakarvarti, Feminist Historian and Filmmaker

***Poetry:***

Oroosa Anwar

Zainab Fatma

Mehwish Asim

Hayaat Fatemah

(Students, Aligarh Muslim University)

***Film:***

*Stitch* – A film by Asiya Zahoor

***Closing Remarks:*** Uma Chakravarti, IAWS Northern Regional Committee