

Report on the XIth National Conference of the Indian Association of Women's Studies, Goa 3-6 May 2005

Conference Theme: Sovereignty, Citizenship and Gender

The XIth National Conference of the IAWS was held in Goa from the 3rd to the 6th of May, 2005. In view of the global and national, political and economic, developments in recent times the theme for the conference this year was Sovereignty, Citizenship and Gender. The conference theme elicited a wide response from women's studies scholars located across the country: there were four plenaries including one on South Asia, nine sub-themes organised around a variety of issues, two workshops, a parallel series of sessions of documentary films on the main theme of the conference, a photo exhibition, and a march to focus on women's rights in the main streets of Panjim with women in wheelchairs being part of the march. The conference concluded with the adoption of 13 resolutions on a variety of concerns of the women's movement in India. Facilities for book stalls, a feature of previous conferences too provided possibilities for browsing, ordering and buying of books. Over five hundred women and men registered for the conference (apart from local participants) which was marked by at least three new features: a sub-theme on Impaired Citizenship with a focus on aging and disability and another on Education and Citizenship, and a third on the politics of sexuality, all of which have been relatively neglected fields in women's studies conferences. In taking the decision to hold the conference on Sovereignty, Citizenship and Gender it was recognised that while there was, as yet, no solid body of work in the field from a women's studies perspective the conference would help to outline issues, and thus generate interest in an important area of research; this expectation was more than fulfilled as the plenaries and the sub-them sessions witnessed a rich set of presentations from established scholars as well as younger women's studies researchers. A packed schedule using literally every moment of the four days gave little opportunity to make for a leisurely soaking in of the famed beaches of Goa but one night's dinner was organised on the beach by a thoughtful host committee in Goa and there was a marvellous music recital to soothe the over-activated brain cells on our last night together.

This report is arranged in three parts: the plenaries; the sub themes and workshops, and finally the text of the resolutions passed in the General Body meeting on the concluding day of the conference.

There were four plenaries: Main Theme Plenary, South Asia Plenary, the Plenary on Women's Studies and the Plenary on Goa.

Part I: Reports on Plenaries

The Main Theme Plenary

The main theme plenary was introduced by Uma Chakravarti, the convenor of the plenary who provided a context for the focus of the IAWS conference around the critical issues of sovereignty, and citizenship as seen through a feminist lens. While studies on the subject were still at an exploratory stage changes in the last five years at the global political level have made it imperative for feminists to

engage with issues of sovereignty and citizenship from a location on the margins. This will ensure that statist discourses and definitions can be challenged from the point of view of all those groups that have either been excluded, or marginalised, by nation-state ideologies and 'cartographic nationalisms', in India and elsewhere in South Asia. Erosions of rights, and the increasing levels of militarisation of the state require the serious engagement of feminists and it was suggested that, as a movement, it was necessary for us to take a position against the increasing levels of state repression, the arming of state power through black laws, and to both see, and show to others, the links between different forms of violence against women—and other marginalised groups—from 'home' to the community to the 'borders' which impact women in specific ways.

Ms. Nandita Haksar, the human rights lawyer linked up issues of citizenship across India with the specific history of Goa. She highlighted the emancipatory *potential* of citizenship which admittedly liberated us as women from community and traditional ties and united us into a political community. A substantial part of feminist scholarship was thus devoted to also promoting the idea of citizenship across communities and nations—a kind of globalised citizenship to liberate us from the prisonhouse of community. But if one looked at the way this potential has actually been worked out in practice there are questions that confront us. In Goa, the concept of citizenship was a powerful basis of joining the Indian Union. Interestingly it was the only place where the speaker was addressed as 'citizen'; a concept that linked Goans and non-Goans together as members of the Indian Union, whatever their distinctive earlier histories may have been. But, over the years, Goans stopped addressing non-Goans as citizens, and came to feel alienated from the rest of the country. Their voluntary joining of the Indian Union is now sometimes perceived as 'occupation' rather than liberation. The tragedy for us is that an increasing number of Indian 'citizens' are feeling alienated from the 'Indian' community, believe that there is no one to represent 'them' even in a representative democracy, in the Parliament, in the media and the Courts. It is clear therefore that individual citizenship is no guarantee against legal and political equality, more so against economic, social and cultural inequality.

The unequal manner in which the phenomenon of global citizenship has emerged has also meant that it is the elites in each country who have accessed its advantages. Further she argued that sections of the women's movement, particularly its NGOised foreign-funded component, have been co-opted into the idea of the global citizen without looking critically enough at parallel processes where the state is reneging on its commitment to its basic protection of women. And while it is true that women's rights are often violated by the state itself, because the state is under attack from multinational companies and is under pressure to withdraw from its welfarist functions it could be dangerous for the women's movement to support the concept of individual citizenship, instead of the rights of communities within the boundaries of the sovereign state. Ms Haksar argued forcefully for a community-based citizenship rather than a concept pegged on the individual within the paradigm of a global citizen. The women's movement, as a movement, also needed to address two types of calls that have been made for change of borders in recent years: one is from groups such as Nagas and Kashmiris who see themselves as marginalised elements within the second phase of decolonisation in India; and the second from what may be called post-nationalists who advocate world citizenship as a panacea for all oppressions including gender oppression. These issues in Ms. Haksar's view

provide the context for the debate on citizenship, sovereignty and gender which the women's movement should seriously think about, while refusing to be co-opted into global agendas.

The second plenary speaker, Prof. Jayati Ghosh dwelt on questions of economic sovereignty and citizenship which often appear misplaced in the era of globalisation, but in fact are more important than ever because economic disenfranchisement, which has always existed, is intensified and accelerated by some processes unleashed by globalisation. The nation state remains significant as the basic arena for the demands and contestation of rights of citizens, especially women and other marginalised groups. But the current strength of imperialism makes it the most significant issue in the world today, as increasingly international processes impede upon the relationship between citizen and state. Not only do issues of national sovereignty become absolutely crucial, but the manner in which imperialism works within societies means that its effects are felt on every aspect of our material and social existence.

There are some dimensions of the current imperialist globalisation that make it qualitatively different from global integration in the past. These include:

- The domination of finance, which exposes economies to destabilising flows of capital, and restricts government policies and actions for fear of capital flight.
- The increasing use of multilateral institutions (such as the WTO and the UN) to promote the interests of imperialism whenever possible, along with unilateralism and ignoring these institutions when they run counter to these interests.
- The US – which is the clear leader of the world economy – not fulfilling some of the basic economic functions of the leader, in terms of providing discounting finance to countries in crisis, countercyclical lending to smoothen cycles in the world economy, and sustained market access in order to be economic engine.
- The consequence that the world economy is now in an unemployment equilibrium, with output well below potential in almost all economies and faced with substantial open and disguised unemployment everywhere.

As a result of these features, capital everywhere is now desperately searching for new markets. These new markets have to be captured from other, or created (by commercialising hitherto non-market goods and services), developed and intensified. China and India are currently seen as the last great hinterlands for international capital, where huge potential markets (especially through privatising services) substantial public assets, people's savings, etc., are still available for capitalist penetration.

These international forces have their counterpart in national processes, which in India are similar but not identical to other developing countries. There has been reduction in public provision of basic goods and services within a society that is already highly stratified and unequal. Employment conditions have become more precarious and unstable – for most Indians, the sheer collapse of productive employment generation is the defining feature of the economy. Yet one crucial contradiction emerges from the global integration of the elites and some middle classes, who have benefited greatly from the policies and processes of the past two decades, and whose own material

interests are now closely aligned with those of imperialism. Increasingly, the main instrument of imperialist penetration is financial liberalisation, which in India currently is taking the form of more liberal rules for capital export, more capital account deregulation, pension reform, allowing foreign purchase of banks, etc. Not only can these moves eventually force other forms of economic integration, but they have also been associated with crises in emerging markets. Ironically, these crises have then been used to force further liberalisation measures upon the people.

However, in India, recent political changes have forced some official acceptance of the adverse impact of these policies, especially upon agriculture and employment, and some promises of reversal of economic course by the government. These promises are mostly not being kept, but the pressure has to be maintained. It is now more apparent that there are real possibilities for the reintroduction of a progressive national agenda, so it is important to seize the moment. This is especially important here at the IAWS conference, because women's studies has never been a purely academic exercise, but has been closely bound up with activism.

The processes described above have clear implications for the majority of women in India. There has been a collapse of livelihoods in large parts of rural India and in many areas of urban India as well. The agrarian crisis has meant that farmers' incomes have fallen and rural employment generation has stagnated or fallen, and there is growing insecurity of work even in urban areas. There are also growing pressures on food security, as attested to by the decline in per capita calorie consumption even among the bottom 40 per cent of the population.

One consequence of this has been the dramatic (and inadequately documented) increase in migration in search of work, from rural to urban and other rural areas. Recent evidence suggests that women are moving on their own more than ever before, both within and across borders. This remains an area that public policy still does not address, which adds to the difficulties and insecurities of migrants and their families.

A range of new forms of work have emerged in urban areas, especially for women, but these are typically not characterised by stability or job security. There is much discussion of the impact of IT-enabled services, which have indeed been growing rapidly, but these still affect only a minuscule proportion of educated urban women. The phenomenon of export-oriented manufacturing providing employment for women was relatively short-lived in India. There is evidence of a shift to more home-based work even in such sectors. The most significant growth of employment for urban women is to be found in retail trade, which suggests that women are being pushed into petty informal trade such as hawking because of the absence of other productive and stable income opportunities.

At the same time, across urban and rural India, there is increased integration of women's activities into the financial and product markets especially through Self-Help Groups, which not only involve greater involvement with the financial sector but also become cheap means of distribution through "social marketing". While micro-credit can indeed be a source of women's empowerment, typically the amounts disbursed are too small to make any significant impact in terms of asset creation and income generation, and since the rise of micro-credit has been accompanied by a decline in the disbursement

of institutional credit, the effects are mixed. Micro-credit shifts the focus of attention to the access of members and away from the rights of women as citizens, yet that is the more significant battle.

The social and political implications of these economic processes have been complex. There are old forms of violence against women which have been exacerbated by the insecurities and tensions of greater material volatility, and new forms of violence that have arisen from the combination of new social forces and new technologies. At the same time, there is also definite evidence that women increasingly have more social and political voice, through participation in panchayats, the empowering effect of involvement in SHGs, the increase in literacy and girls' enrolment (which is still very low but has increased) and so on.

In this context, what is the role of the women's movement? Prof. Ghosh argued that we are fortunate that the women's movement in India, unlike in some other countries, has been very grounded in material reality and has recognised the critical role of economic processes. But it is increasingly obvious that for women's studies in general, it is critical to address macro economic policy issues head on, through clear headed assessments of impacts and feasible alternatives. These should not be in the form of general critiques, but rather relate to very specific policies and provide detailed recommendations and points of struggle and action, for example, around the employment guarantee or particular financial liberalisation policies or access to basic services that may be sought to be privatised. Women's studies can become not only an important academic exercise but also a useful catalyst for change, if we clearly articulate such concerns, analyse policies and provide real alternatives.

The third speaker, Prof. Gopal Guru focused on the cultural dimensions of citizenship through an in depth examination of caste as it is manifested in contemporary Indian society. His presentation sought to raise three core questions that had a bearing on the relationship between caste and Feminist understanding in Indian context: first, what had been the mainstream Feminist response to the caste question? Where did it stand in terms of its epistemological location within the feminist framework? Second, did it seek a conceptual distancing from the caste question? If yes, why did the feminists not try to empower the category of caste in their arguments? How could one understand this distancing in terms of the politics of feminism? Finally, was the feminist question related to caste or was it related only to certain issues that are privileged over the caste question? These were some of the questions that required serious attention according to Prof. Guru.

Within the feminist discourse, it was argued that there appeared to be a lopsided or uneven treatment given to certain categories. For example, as compared to caste, certain liberal concepts like citizenship, rights, patriarchy, labor and violence have received more theoretical as well as political attention; for feminist scholarship, caste has become an 'experience-distant' concept. Thus feminists have both theoretical and political distancing from the category of caste. Perhaps going closer to caste is regarded as politically disastrous since the caste question is treated as having the impact of fragmenting women's solidarity.

A central issue in Gopal Guru's presentation was the divide between women: between upper caste and lower caste women which had not been adequately addressed within the women's movement or

in women's studies scholarship. For example if one examined feminist thinking on some conceptualisations of the commonality between untouchability in the caste system and the temporary pollution encountered by upper caste women during menstruation one found that instead of seeing the links between the two conditions some women scholars had offered a very interesting liberal justification to defend the practice of temporary pollution on the ground that this gave women a break from back-breaking housework. That is to suggest that women had full control on their body. Thus, the liberal focus on individualism is deployed in defence of establishing a distancing from caste and thus keeps the caste question outside the feminist framework. Such a Brahmanical approach to Feminism becomes so inhospitable, or even hostile to the caste question that it does not offer even rhetorical accommodation of gender with the caste question. However what is a welcome move is that some 'organic' feminist intellectuals have begun to recognise the centrality of caste question within the feminist discourse. For others however, caste still remains an illicit, illegitimate, and even inimical to the larger question of feminist solidarity as it divides women amongst themselves and disrupts the universal category of citizen which feminists would like to hold on to.

Citizenship also provides a common conceptual ground with which feminist assertions can stamp the public sphere. But such a notion of citizenship is quite inadequate in terms of 'detoxifying' certain pre-modern categories like caste that sits deeply within a large section of women who are otherwise the citizens of this country. There is thus a tension between the universal and the particular in the working out of citizenship wherein the particular overwhelms the universal. Thus, caste consciousness gets enacted in various fora from the domestic to the public. Ironically women who are the victims of this consciousness provide the medium for this spillage from the domestic to the public sphere. This was evident in the anti-mandal stance that was taken by the urban educated middle class mother protesting on behalf of her son. Thus, even in the public sphere, the caste element overshadows the universality of citizenship.

Another feature of caste that feminists required to address is that caste practices find a very stark expression both in the public and the domestic spheres. But it is the domestic space that provides the major and continuous context for the practice and the reproduction of untouchability since, technically, the Constitution has banned the practice of untouchability from the public sphere, although even in the public sphere caste discrimination is still widely prevalent. The domestic sphere, on the other hand, continues to harbor and promote the ideology of purity-pollution without any limitations. And further, in the domestic sphere it is an upper caste woman who is seen as taking the major responsibility in terms of protecting the domestic domain from getting polluted by the untouchables. Women protect the domestic by tightening the boundaries around it. They practice untouchability in terms of protecting the most pure section of the household i.e. kitchen which is the 'heart' of the household. In many families dalits cannot enter the kitchen. For example according to reports from Bangalore, dalit plumbers, are not allowed to enter the kitchen. In the rural area the situation is still worse where upper caste women practice untouchability in terms of water and cooked food and since the handling of water and cooked food are linked to the labor of women, they feel more intensely about its 'contamination' by 'untouchables', making purity-pollution much starker than in urban areas. It is ironic that while patriarchy, at the domestic level, crushes women under the burden of over work and

violence and while mainstream feminism is very rightly sensitive about domestic violence it appears to be blind to the role of women in perpetuating casteism in the domestic sphere. This results in the fragmenting of the identity of women whereas what is required is that in the struggle against patriarchy we must open up new avenues of solidarity among different sections of women in the country—citizenship is not only gendered it is also imbricated by caste.

To sum up the Main Plenary all three speakers and the convenor outlined the need for self-reflexivity within the women's movement and the women's studies movement on questions of citizenship, sovereignty and gender.

South Asia Plenary

The rights of citizens in sovereign nations are assumed to flow from the principles of equality, dignity, justice and non-discrimination, which in turn determine their entitlements. In South Asia these principles have often been subordinated to competing claims or privileges based on religion, ethnicity, caste, community, language and gender, and have seriously compromised individual sovereignty.

Citizenship thus proves to be differential, and has been differently—often negatively—experienced by people in all the countries of South Asia. Whether individual national constitutions are secular or not, the notion of fundamental rights and entitlements being subject to other considerations of caste, community, religion and gender is pervasive across the subcontinent. This erosion of sovereignty at the national and individual levels is exacerbated by the whittling away of national sovereignty as a consequence of globalisation and neo-liberalism, increasing militarisation in the interests of “national or international security”, state repression and violence, and economic fundamentalism.

The four speakers at this plenary were Neloufer de Mel (Sri Lanka), Sara Hossain (Bangladesh), Nafisa Shah (Pakistan) and Purna Shreshtha (Nepal). Asha Hans from India introduced the panel, referring to the critical issues around sovereignty, citizenship and gender raised by Kashmir and the North East of India.

Neloufer de Mel's presentation spoke eloquently and powerfully about gender and citizenship in post-tsunami Sri Lanka, offering pertinent insights on: the status of women's citizenship; the structures of the state; transnational capital and exchange; feminist activism, nationalism and sovereignty. A natural disaster was politicized in very short order, and corruption, vandalism and abuse surfaced in no time. de Mel pointed out that, even as a natural disaster was politicized, a political disaster of their own making—the 20 year movement for Tamil Eelam—was naturalized. If the tsunami claimed 40,000 lives in two hours, the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka saw the *wilful killing* of approximately 65,000 people on the island. The tsunami enabled both the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE to marginalize the political disaster; in a cruel twist of fate, the war-ravaged areas were also the ones worst affected by the tsunami. Consequently, the abject citizenship of ordinary people who live in the war zone can continue to be ignored by both the government and the LTTE. This is not about immediate subsistence needs – both the government and the LTTE have put in place measures to distribute food coupons, kerosene for cooking etc. to the victims of the tsunami. But it is being done at the expense

of honouring the contract of citizenship with all its political, civil, economic and sexual rights to the people who live under their control. This is one of the reasons why Sri Lanka has continued to live in prolonged and protracted states of crises, as they provide the conditions suitable for ignoring the more long term and sustainable citizenship rights for members of all ethnic communities.

Of course, women's unequal citizenship continues to be perpetuated, at the same time as reports of rape and sexual harassment in refugee camps began streaming in: compensation to them was highly unsatisfactory despite enormous amounts of aid money pouring in, and land allotments were made in men's names only; and because women, many of them, lost original title deeds that may have been made in their names, they lost out on their legal claims in compensation as well. de Mel noted how certain villages in Batticaloa were almost entirely owned by women; as she said, "The waves have now gifted the State a unique opportunity to subordinate women within a *sexual* contract (because of an assertion of Wahabism) that denies them the land rights they have held for generations."

Sara Hossain from Bangladesh posed the question, "Who is a Citizen?" at the very outset, giving the example of the two communities in the country that continue to be excluded: the Ahmadiyahs, and the indigenous people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. In both cases, the issues before us are the contest between secularism and religious extremism; and between a unitary state and a multi-religious, multi-ethnic nation. The implications for women's rights in both cases are enormous; she asked: by focussing on inequalities based on religion or race do we further occlude and reinforce inequalities of gender?

Nafisa Shah from Pakistan carried this point much further when she said that the problem confronting the country now was two-fold: one, that post-9/11 Pakistan had become the international frontier against terrorism, with the result that its national sovereignty was now seriously compromised; two, much more serious than Islamisation, in her view, was what she calls the "tribalisation" of Pakistani society, the willing abdication by the State of its responsibilities in favour of tribal panchayats for the resolution of conflicts. The consequences of this tribalisation, combined with the reinforcement of a frontier or siege mentality, are extremely grave for women. Even more alarming, she said, is the emergence of what she calls the "anti-citizen", a person bound neither by the rights nor responsibilities of citizenship, on the one hand; and on the other, an abandonment of both rights and responsibilities by the State vis-à-vis its citizenry.

The situation in Nepal has of course been exacerbated by the imposition of an emergency and the suspension of all civil and democratic rights in the country, since February 1, 2005. Purna Shrestha, however, emphasised the point that regardless of the prevailing political situation, women are second-class citizens in Nepal in any case. Children are granted Nepali citizenship only if their fathers are Nepalis, i.e., mothers cannot confer citizenship; and all births are registered only in the name of the father. These laws of exclusion have been justified using the argument of national and territorial sovereignty, the fear of being invaded by Indians south of the border.

The questions raised by this plenary regarding sovereignty and citizenship and gender, while specific to their national contexts, nevertheless indicate some features at a regional level, a shared South Asian reality. These are:

- the fragility of the nation-state
- the simultaneous porosity and fixity of national borders
- the almost continuous presence of refugees in all the countries

This is at the level of the region. With regard to national sovereignty and citizenship, the Sri Lanka and Pakistan presentations in particular illustrated dramatically how a protracted *national* conflict can suddenly and unexpectedly be catapulted onto another plane altogether by events outside its control—9/11, tsunami—and how sovereignty and citizenship are then reconfigured. To a lesser extent this can be seen in the Indian case, vis-à-vis Kashmir; in Nepal, contrary to the rest of the region, how both are brought to crisis purely internally; in Bangladesh, as a consequence of a gridlock on the question of plural identities, and on the realisation of a multiethnic, multi-lingual nation.

Plenary Session on Goa

The objective of the plenary session was to present an authentic and interesting picture of the experiences of women in Goa in obtaining their citizenship and sovereignty rights. The experiences of women in three spheres of life – workplace, home and in the society were explored in the session. Activists who had been working with women and writers and playwrights who were keenly observing Goan society were drawn upon to present their views about the experience of women in Goa.

Maria Aurora Couto, a well-known writer, set the context for the session by tracing Goa's history and women's place in it. Pre-Portuguese Goa was a peaceful agrarian society. However, the peace was interrupted off and on by Muslim and Hindu rulers. The community made its peace with invaders by paying the required taxes. However, these rulers brought with them different religions. So an amalgam of Jainism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and other influences became a feature of Goa's culture. There is some evidence that women took part in disputations during these times, perhaps a fall-out of such influences.

With the advent of Portuguese in 1510, the culture of Goa went through more modifications. A new code of conduct, food habits, dress, and life cycle rituals emerged. There were some benefits for women in the new dispensation. Religious practices like Sati, sesh vidhi (a religious ritual to initiate immediately after their puberty to serve in the temple) were strongly discouraged by the Portuguese. Laws of ritual pollution, a practice among Hindus, were banned. While the caste system was allowed to continue, the gradations between the lower castes and the rigor of untouchability were reduced.

Women in some senses experienced liberation. They were allowed to handle public functions like the sale of produce, running of taverns, etc. There were instances where women sought education and became professionals. People were encouraged to explore foreign shores... a facility that required women to single-handedly manage the family. Such exposure seems to have built in them a

quiet confidence. This was further displayed in the freedom movement when women took active part in organizing camps for underground workers.

This quiet confidence is still evident among women in Goa. What perhaps is lacking is knowledge about their rights and adequate employment opportunity to display their talent.

Women at work:

Women in Goa have traditionally been employed in agriculture and fishing. Sabina Martins, an activist with the NGO Bailancho Saad, shared her observations about the employment opportunities for women in the fishing industry. The natural beauty of Goa has ensured a perennial interest in visiting its shores. Globalization and cheaper modes of transport have ensured that more tourists can access Goa. This has led to a spurt in tourism and the consequent emergence of the tourism industry. This has created a huge demand for seafood, thus improving employment opportunities in the fishing industry. Traditional fishing boats could not deal with the surge in demand. This paved the way for the introduction of trawlers. Over time, many migrants started running trawlers, bringing with them cheaper migrant labor for all fishing related activities.

Trawler fishing also created a surplus of fish. Lacking proper storage facilities, the fish got dumped at various points, creating pollution and inconveniencing the village community. But surplus also brought prices down, affecting the income of the womenfolk who sold the fish in the markets. Moreover, the migrants brought in by the trawler owners, soon found their way into the fish markets. They have gradually observed and learnt to ply the trade. In some markets they now constitute about 50 % of the fish sellers. Many traditional fisher-folk of Goa have moved away from the occupation for other reasons such as improved education and thus the opening up of employment avenues elsewhere. Thus, migrants are gradually substituting the women of Goa in the fishing industry. As this extends to other occupations, there is increasing resentment experienced towards "outsiders".

Many migrant women in Goa are working in less socially acceptable professions like prostitution. A play by Positive People described the experiences of sex workers especially during and after their recent eviction from the Baina area, previously known to be the red-light area of Goa. It appeared that law enforcers treated them roughly, and paid little attention to their concerns of livelihood. Many had a family to support, and lacking alternatives, were forced to return to prostitution albeit clandestinely. After eviction from Baina, they spread out and remained invisible while continuing to work. This made them vulnerable to further exploitation by pimps and customers and enhanced their risk of getting infected by communicable diseases. For NGOs, the challenge is to reach them and continue the AIDS awareness drive and the promotion of condom-use among those visiting these sex-workers.

Women at home:

The notion of identity is critical in discussions about women in Goa. Two stories of women in rural Goa explored women's struggles as they sought to establish their independent identities at home.

Hema Nayak's story "The resurrection" described the experiences of a woman with an alcoholic and abusive husband. His death seemed to be the only way she could resurrect herself, live a life of dignity and make her own choices. So she kills him. Jayanthi Nayak's story "Aakhri Jang" (in Hindi) revolved around a woman with an alcoholic and neglectful husband. The husband chose to live with another woman after marriage until she threw him out of her house. When he returned as a spent force, his wife alternates between teaching him a lesson and conforming to society's image of a good wife. Her liberation truly comes after his death, when she goes against the wishes of the community and insists on wearing her sindhoor. In doing this, she seeks to assert her identity and break with the past.

Speaking of women's rights, Goa has a unique legacy from its Portuguese past: The Family Laws. Do these laws provide women with opportunities to protect themselves economically? Do they give women equal status in their implementation? Albertina Almeida, a practising lawyer and an activist in Bailancho Saad, shared her observations about the provisions of Family Laws and their practice.

Goa inherited and continued with some provisions of the Portuguese Civil Code, especially the Family Laws. The law is more liberal than in other parts of India in that (a) it allows for sons and daughters to have equal rights to the property of their parents, in the event that the parents die without leaving a will; (b) parents cannot will away more than half their share to anyone they want: the rest would have to be distributed equally between the children; (c) spouses can choose whether to jointly or separately own property they have inherited before marriage or acquired after marriage. In case they don't want to jointly own such property, they have to draw up an ante-nuptial contract.

While the law is applicable to a reasonable prudent man, it fails to define a separate identity for a woman. In the absence of a separate definition, it is assumed that the law equally applies to women.

In practice, the notion of a reasonable prudent woman gets defined differently. She is one who deserves equality provided (a) she acknowledges that the onus is on her to preserve the family at any cost (b) she is docile and submissive (assertiveness in the witness box for instance is unacceptable) (c) she puts the family's interests before hers (d) she can acquire certain rights only in the absence of male spouse or sibling (e) she acknowledges that she does not have the ability to make decisions and is easily fooled (f) she has duly registered her marriage (g) she understands that she can be treated differently if she is a Catholic (h) she recognizes that she must survive on the goodwill of her in-laws.

Even in areas where the law clearly acknowledges her equal status, ignorance and social conditioning ensure that women do not insist on being treated equally. Again, the rights of women in transfer of property from individuals to partnership, in matters of land held under mundkarship or agricultural tenancy is not clearly specified. There are cases where women don't get equal status in such transactions.

Women in Society:

What came through is that women in Goa have potential but social conditioning, unsupportive spouses, some lapses in the laws and their treatment of women, and the gradual influx of migrants have made the realization of this potential patchy at best.

The session ended with a peek at a woman-headed household, mirroring the aspirations of women in Goa, their humorous take on migrants (and vice versa) and their search for an identity in a global community. The play “Bhaji Puri” hosted by the Mustard Seed Art Company provided a fitting finale to the session.

Plenary on Women’s Studies (5th May, 2005)

Introducing the Plenary, Kumud Sharma in her opening remarks observed that, women’s studies covers a vast and heterogeneous field and has remained a fluid area of concern with plurality of objectives, agendas and political positions. The Plenary was designed to critically reflect on the mandate drawn up by the early pioneers of women’s studies; expansion of women’s studies scholarship; institutional spaces; its contribution to content, methods and epistemologies in social sciences; its links and engagement with serious feminist politics and the new challenges posed by the processes of globalization and restructuring of spaces within academic institutions. The Plenary is expected to address the issues such as what has been the experience with the institutionalization of women’s studies? Who are the practitioners? What are the structures within which women’s studies is located? The teaching programmes in women’s studies raise questions of pedagogy, inter-disciplinarity, funding, linking teaching with degrees. There are concerns whether women’s studies is a separate discipline or part of other mainstream discipline?

Three papers were presented in the session by Malini Bhattacharya, former Director, School of Women’s Studies, Jadavpur University, Kolkata; Mary John, Associate Professor, Women’s Studies Programme at Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi; and Anagha on the Faculty of Krantijyoti Savitribhai Phule Women’s Studies Centre at the University of Pune.

Malini Bhattacharya exploring the empirical, experimental and disruptive nature of women’s studies argued that women’s studies cannot be confined within academia. Her paper on ‘Depoliticising Women’s Studies’ expressed concern over threats of co-option and women’s studies losing its autonomy and its critical edge. She pointed out that the Report of the CSWI ‘Towards Equality’ marked a watershed and was an early model for women’s studies. Its links with activism made it different from earlier studies in social sciences on women. According to her, Women’s Studies deconstructs the ideological components in existing structures of knowledge and problematises areas of silences and unquestioning consent. ‘Its criticality and its interdisciplinarity constitute the modernity of women’s studies’. The latter became possible because Women’s Studies did not originate within the boundaries of academia.

Another development in the 80s was the emergence of new women’s movement which consciously fore-grounded its autonomy from organized political movement and yet according to her, this autonomy was always contested. Women’s Studies which supported the autonomous women’s movement also required a space for engaging with other discourses so that these discourses of power can be challenged and changed. She claims that it was the caste and communal identity politics in the 80s and 90s which challenged the autonomy of women’s movement.

The initial support from the ICSSR, UGC's support for women's studies centres and National Policy on Education (1986) responded to the emerging interest in the Women's Studies. Even when Women's Studies was engaging social sciences, the higher education sector was undergoing changes under neo-liberal policies. The emphasis had shifted from generation of critical thought to development of skills which means decontextualisation and depoliticisation of skill development. It is now argued that Women's Studies should have greater practical value to 'empower women'. This narrow emphasis has links with neo-liberal perspective on higher education. She argued that instead of developing its own 'closures and orthodoxies', Women's Studies should maintain its criticality.

Mary John in her presentation on 'The Politics of Institutions: Re-examining the Women's Movement, Women's Studies and the State', explored the shifting contexts in which women's studies has grown. She pointed out that 1990s have clearly impacted spaces within higher education and women's studies. She felt that there is a sense of loss in the present in comparison to the buoyant mood of the 1970s. However, we should go beyond uncertainties of the present and future and examine the role of institutions or the 'politics of institutions' and the process of deinstitutionalization which has not received adequate attention. The hyper-visibility of gender-in-media and development-funding-agencies has gone parallel to feminization of poverty, sexualisation of labour and intensification of violence. The shifts in 1990s in higher education and political decline means that we need to examine the role of institutions in relation to changes in women's movement and other social movements. The radicalism of the 1970s and 80s, rise of student politics, rebirth of women's movement had a supportive institutional environment that encouraged the over-arching vision of Women's Studies.

The beginning of Women's Studies and women's movement in the 1970s, the years of political crisis in mid 1970s, imposition of state of Emergency and suspension of democratic rights saw women's groups organizing beyond local struggles. The crisis in 1990s has however, marked a shift towards a right wing politics which has been disorienting to Women's Studies. She argues that the contradictory structures of state being both supportive and repressive at the same time, have forced women's movement to reinvent itself and with crises in older social movements, the main concern seems to be to resist co-option by the state. But there are no pure spaces outside the institutional structures.

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed an explosion of writing and research on women. However, Women's Studies was nowhere close to achieving the transformative effect on higher education. Rich work has emerged from a range of institutions outside the university system. For transformational impact on social sciences and humanities, it is crucial to ask whether we gave a serious thought to mechanisms and interventions necessary for such a task.

Exploring the present crisis in Women's Studies and women's movement in a transformed political and institutional climate, she argues that it is beset with questions of reproduction of knowledge and future. The state which was supportive at the time of the birth of Women's Studies has undergone profound transformation particularly the future of state funding for social sciences and humanities. The idealism of the 1970s has been replaced by the new realism of the job market. It is not coincidental

that students today are concerned about getting a job through women's studies. The development of NGO sector, and international funding agencies have influenced agendas in the women's sector.

Right wing ideology intervening within educational institutions has reopened old questions of pedagogy, classroom politics, curriculum development and degrees in Women's Studies (M.As, M.Phils, Ph.Ds, Diploma and Certificate Courses). It has also reopened the debates on the initial mandate of women's studies – the convergence between 'action' and 'research', between theory and politics. A major challenge according to her is to look at our educational system today. Since women's studies got institutionalised at the very apex of the educational system, we should closely look at the processes of inclusion and exclusion. It appears that the call for autonomy in the 1970s was a bit naïve and hence we need to explore different questions i.e. constraints and norms that govern the life of marginalized groups within these institutions, exclusionary structures of institutionalized power, and institutions which should become central to feminist agendas (educational institutions, work place, family or political institutions). A question that can be posed is: should Women's Studies alter its priorities and its location at the very apex of the educational system?

Anagha presented a joint paper prepared by Vidyut Bhagwat, Sharmila Rege, Swati Dyahadroy and herself. The paper on 'Teaching of Women's Studies in the Universities of India' presents a collective experience of working in a UGC sponsored Women's Studies Centre and poses questions to a new generation of Women's Studies practitioners. The paper draws on data collected through questionnaires on the teaching of Women's Studies (from 6 centres) in different centres in 2004 and an analytical case study of Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule Women's Studies Centre at the University of Pune.

Almost all the centres were engaged in engendering mainstream disciplines through offering credit courses to students from other social science departments, conducting refresher courses as well as establishing Women's Studies as a discipline. Women's Studies was initially conceived primarily as a research and not as a parallel discipline in its formative period but was meant to transform the production of knowledge. In the 1990, teaching and curriculum development occupy more space and problems of inter-disciplinarity, course design, autonomy and integration are being explored in a much more concrete manner. Most Women's Studies courses have remained optional and the students experience a gap between the claims of Women's Studies and the actual course content. The diversity within Women's Studies makes it difficult to assert its distinctiveness and many faculty members raise question the 'relevance of women's studies' for their respective disciplines.

There are several institutional patterns which co-exist and range from departments of Women's Studies, to Centres of Women's Studies and Women's Studies Cells. Even where Women's Studies is offered as a paper within a particular discipline, there is no critique of the discipline but a simple add on of women to an already existing syllabus. Those teaching Women's Studies as a full-fledged degree feel ghettoized and face problems in balancing inter-disciplinarity and feminist perspectives within disciplines and increasing full-time teaching posts in Women's Studies. Those teaching gender or women in mainstream disciplines face problems of having a critical and rigorous approach to

gender as a subject of research or impacting lives beyond the classrooms. The lack of teaching material in regional languages is another problem.

The Women's Studies Centre at Pune University was teaching a course on 'sociology of women' at M.A. and M.Phil level. While maintaining disciplinary boundaries in the classroom, the spaces outside were used for discussion on linkage with Women's Studies movement. '*Samvaad*' was a platform for teachers and students for engaging in discussions on alternate non-Brahmin histories of feminism. In 1997 when reframing of the sociology curriculum began, an attempt was made to mainstream gender courses. In 1999-2000, the Centre became autonomous and so the faculty of Women's Studies Centres is no longer allowed to teach these courses. Even their applications to be appointed as Ph.D. supervisors are rejected. A part-time inter-disciplinary, post-graduate certificate in women's studies is still part of the Department of Sociology. The academic credibility of those who blur the divides between academics and activists is challenged. As a self funded course, it is being offered to a mixed group of students, activists, housewives and social workers, however, the problem of mainstreaming gender and at the same time promoting serious reading in women's studies continues.

Several issues such as – the crisis of institutional reproduction of women's studies, the need to introduce women's studies at the undergraduate level, the pressure to vocationalise undergraduate education, the question of academic credibility, integrating women's studies in the mainstream discipline, inter-disciplinarity of women's studies and institutional mechanism needed for it; budgetary issues and so on remain as challenges to be taken up. In sum there is a need to critically reflect on issues of generation of knowledge, perceived crisis in social sciences and the need to reinvent Women's Studies.

Part II Sub-theme Reports

Sub-theme I: Nationalism, Pluralism and Differential Citizenship

Co-ordinator: Anupama Roy

The sub-theme panel on 'Nationalism, Pluralism and Differential Citizenship' with a 'sub' sub-theme 'Rethinking Citizenship, Communities and Rights' was framed with the purpose of outlining the contests and debates that inform the theory and practice of citizenship in contemporary contexts. While identifying the contours of the debate, the panel identified the historically emergent strands that constituted the debate, and the manner in which contending practices of citizenship – the hegemonic state practices of rule and the countervailing struggles – continually articulate and evolve 'people's practices of citizenship' – rupturing hegemonies, and in the practice, rethinking and rearticulating citizenship, communities and rights. In the process, the discussions moved beyond legal-formal frameworks to see how citizenship unfolds substantively in specific contexts, identifying the forces and forms of domination and power, the axes on which they make themselves manifest and the notion of rights articulated at these sites of contest.

Two lines of arguments that emerged persuasively in the course of the presentations and discussions were that citizenship is at the same time both liberatory and confining and that each of these two contending impulses within citizenship could be identified in specific historical contexts. Moreover, it was effectively the presence of these contending and dialectical impulses within citizenship that make for a radical transformation in some cases, and in others expansion of citizenship as a condition of equality and freedom. What was also brought out was the fact that the historical origins of modern citizenship as an aspect of modernity and its relationship in specific contexts of its origins and synchronous development with other meta-narratives of the time – the nation-state, capitalism and liberalism – continue to shape its content and trajectory.

The first speaker, Nivedita Menon, opened up the issues that were to be discussed and debated in the course of the four sessions. She talked about how the emergence of the modern citizen was emancipatory insofar as it signified a process of transition from subject-hood to a citizenship unmarked by status. Yet, citizenship at heart was also constitutive of inequalities, which is why any radical rethinking of the nation could not be limited to mere inclusion. Moreover, in practice citizenship has always unfolded in a way that makes it inherently and implicitly marked. Feminists and other radical movements have shown how the abstract citizen has always created exclusions and hierarchies and have also struggled to weave difference into the notion of equality that informs the abstract notion of citizenship. Yet, the equality-difference framework is not unproblematic since differential citizenship in certain contexts works towards the exclusion and marginalization of women. The latter has posed a dilemma for the women's movement and shifts may be identified in the contemporary women's movement when the radical 'people' are in different contexts women, *dalits* etc. Through a discussion of the Supreme Court judgement on the paternity of the 'illegitimate' daughter of a scheduled tribe woman, and the Jammu and Kashmir Permanent Residents (Disqualification from) Citizenship Bill 2004, Nivedita Menon, gave a critique of the notion of family and patriarchy. Outlining the agenda of the women's movement in contemporary times she emphasized that feminism must be post-nationalist, distinguishing post nationalism from both 'global civil society' and 'corporate globalisation'.

The presentations and discussions in the panel focusing on specific contexts of citizenship revealed that contemporary practices of citizenship reinforce exclusionary boundaries of nation-states, and of ascriptive communities, reaffirming sanctions for internal restrictions. Political conservatism in most countries has seen the intensification of exclusionary nationalism, where 'immigrants' are seen as disruptive of the national political community. Closer at home, the humiliating tirade against non-Hindus, violence perpetrated against Muslims, Christians and *dalits*, have sought to reinforce a hegemonic national political community, so that while male citizenship is articulated as political and forward looking, women's citizenship springs from cultural attributes. The different articulations of citizenship have far reaching implications, manifested not only in women's differential access to resources, but also in violent ways in which it is asserted and reinforced.

National-identity pointing to a shared heritage and common destiny of a people held a liberatory promise in specific historical contexts, by becoming the basis of sovereignty and political identity of

citizenship. Yet, a fusion between nation and state, which was to culturalise the idea of citizenship and thus confuse the boundaries between citizenship and nationality, led to great terrors historically and in our times. Lessons from Gujarat, and a session in the panel was devoted entirely to this, show how this fusion manifests itself in the violence of state power, and can easily be mutated into the denial, destruction and elimination of difference through violent means. Again, the debate over Sonia Gandhi's citizenship, on which Sanjeev Chandan's paper focused, shows how the legal resolution of the issue of her 'foreign origins' did not disturb the association between national identity and citizenship, reinscribing the hegemonic notions of family, womanhood and nation. Sanjeev Chandan, a student in the Master's programme in Women's Studies in Mahatma Gandhi Hindi University in Wardha, spoke on Sonia Gandhi's citizenship and Indian-ness debate. He pointed out that the debates surrounding Sonia Gandhi's eligibility to become Prime Minister were rooted in the patriarchal structures of society and the manner in which it unfolded in middle class discourses of family, motherhood, nation and patriotism. The colonial experience, he pointed out, had set up the 'White Woman' as the epitome of ideal womanhood, to be emulated by the Middle Class Indian woman. This aspiration to emulate has continued and the fact that Sonia Gandhi was 'White' was significant since it effected an inversion of the colonial and racialised power relations. The process of her Indianisation was on display through the media for everyone to see. Sonia Gandhi's own efforts to consolidate the political legacy of the Congress party through a reassertion of the Gandhi-Nehru lineage has taken the form of affirming her Indian-ness and her role as a 'bahu' and then a 'widow', in the 'First family' of Indian politics, both images it must be remembered are potent cultural symbols in Indian (read Hindu) society.

Drawing attention to the uneasy symbiosis within citizenship of the ethnic and civic elements, the papers also sought to show how the universalism that the notion of citizenship espouses, is a hierarchised universal, incorporating citizens differentially and unequally. The idea of citizenship, both as a momentum concept, and as expanding circles of inclusion does not take into account the manner in which citizenship creates its own hierarchies by dictating differential terms of inclusion, not does it take into account the potential of citizenship to radically change the frameworks within which and the tools through which citizenship articulates itself.

Arvind Narrain, lawyer/activist from the Alternative Law Forum, Bangalore, opened up one such paradigm of inclusion for examination by pointing out the contradictory relationship between citizenship as rooted in universalist frameworks of general laws which work with precise categories that are hegemonically constituted, and a notion of rights that constantly strives to unsettle these fixed categories. While examining the terms of inclusion of queer people as citizens, Narrain finds that the terms of inclusion are such that they do not question the existing hegemonies of public institutions and the family. It is important, therefore, he asserted, that one radically modifies one's way of looking at inclusion as protection through law, which creates legal citizens, whose difference is made benign and unthreatening by including her as autonomous in her difference. Narrain reclaims 'illegality' since it has the radical potential to question the framework of inclusion, by questioning normality. A rights approach, rather than a protection approach is required, therefore, since it enables a continual creation of spaces of contests and each of these spaces opens up possibilities of enduring change.

Emphasising the necessity of questioning heterosexism in public institutions and law, Narrain identified 'three moments' of rethinking citizenship: (1) critique of heterosexism in law (a differential and hierarchical citizenship) (2) The lesbian standpoint on marriage and family (urging thereby that one looks beyond at society and unequal membership) and (3) the emergence of the hijra and kothi community (emphasizing the precariousness of rights and the channels and ways through which negotiations take place). He emphasised that the notion of citizenship stops when it comes to the notion of homosexuality and the 'queer citizen' is the 'invisible subject' of civil law which puts in place the legal-normative frameworks of family and marriage. Significantly, however, s/he is the 'hypervisible' subject of criminal law and finds mention specifically in section 377 of the CrPC.

A similar examination of a potential public space that opened up with the inclusion of women performers in theatre came up in Lata Singh's paper. She examined a play, *Azizunnisa – 1857 ki kahani*, by Tripurari Sharma, to show how the questions around gender were taking shape within the emerging nationalist middle class discourses of nationalism, patriotism and womanhood. Focussing on theatre which was losing royal patronage and receiving a more middle class clientele including women, she showed how tensions around women's roles wove around the presence of women performers, of 'non-respectable' background, their presence in the 'public' further making them, 'immoral' and 'illegitimate'. Ironically, however, it was through them, that hegemonic notions of family and nation were being transmitted and reinforced. The presentation drew attention to the manner in which Azizunnisa's character is problematised by Tripurari Sharma, through her marginalisation as woman/courtesan and through her uncritical acceptance and participation in a hyper-masculinised nationalism. A fictional character of Zubeida, however, marks a rupture in the nationalist framework, bringing in a 'feminist' perspective, critical of masculinist nationalism.

The implications for women of the 'different yet equal' argument that some strands arguing for multicultural citizenship make, accepting uncritically a community's right to self-preservation by claiming legal 'protection' and autonomy to impose 'internal-restraints', was examined in the context of Jammu and Kashmir. Jasbir Singh from Jammu University, presented a paper on 'Citizenship Rights of Women in Jammu and Kashmir' co-authored with Anupama Vohra. Jasbir Singh discussed the layers of citizenship experienced by Kashmiris in general and Kashmiri women in particular in the context of the Permanent Resident's (Disqualification) Bill 2004, popularly known as the Daughter's Bill which was passed by the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly by voice vote in March 2004. The Bill deprives daughters of their permanent resident status and the rights that come with it, especially that of owning property, in case they marry non-Kashmiri men. While historically the Bill can be traced to a notification in 1927 by Maharaja Hari Singh, the Jammu and Kashmir High Court had in a 2002 judgement on the notification, decided that the notification does not deprive women of their status as permanent residents on marrying outside the state. Through a discussion of several cases and judgements, and the political contexts within which the Bill came, the paper pointed out that the Bill affects women across all sections of society in Jammu and Kashmir across all its regions, opening up yet again, issues of rights and gender and the association of women's rights with their status through marriage.

The contest over differential inclusion was brought out also by Ranjana Padhi, in the specific context of factory closures and slum evictions, which since the ninety-nineties has created a category of citizen-outsiders, who do not belong anywhere and are caught in a perpetual cycle of relocations, and search for a stable livelihood - a share in other words in the resources of society that they have contributed in creating and replenishing. Ranjana Padhi focused especially on slum demolitions and evictions in Delhi's Yamuna Pushta area to look at issues of rights and livelihood of workers in general and women workers in particular. There has been, she emphasized, a persistent ambiguity on slums in public policy in general and the judiciary in particular. The latter, she pointed out had shifted from a position it took in a 1980s judgement that linked the plight to pavement of dwellers with issues of livelihood to a position epitomized in a judgement delivered in 2000, where it criminalized slum dwellers stating that relocating them would mean rewarding pick-pockets. Commensurate with this was the brutality and torture that the police handed out to the slum dwellers, assaulting them, and labeling them Pakistanis, since a substantial number among them were Muslims. Public reporting of evictions, however, always said that the evictions were peaceful and relocations smooth. Raising questions such as, whether at all citizenship is possible without rights, what these rights are and who is it that articulates it, she criticized the role of NGOs which were absent when needed by the slum dwellers at the time of evictions. She was also critical of the progressive movements which while criticizing the state and its agencies, overlooked inequalities and burgeoning Muslim fundamentalism in the slums. Apart from the class bias of the judiciary and the relatively ineffective role civil society groups have played, she also brought out issues of disruption, dislocation, and loss of livelihood and self-esteem among workers, especially women who are pushed out as wage-earners in a context where fatherless families due to suicide etc., may be on the rise. What was significant, however, was the fact that slum dwellers and worker's eviction did not compel them into political passivity and they exercised their franchise in the 2004 General elections to vote Jagmohan, the Minister responsible for demolitions, out of power.

The questions that one confronted, therefore, throughout the sessions was how one redefines and rethinks the 'universalism' of citizenship without getting mired into the compartments of difference that breed their own universals, and associated relations of power that unfold in violent ways. Arguments that are often made in favour of 'citizenship as activity' or participation, as channels for capacity building, or safeguards against exclusion, and as embodying the transformative potential of democracy, have emphasized the importance of revitalizing/democratizing the public sphere through communication, speech and action, which are seen as empowering and conducive to building alliances for a shared common perspective. The challenge, however, lies in the ways in which justice and equality could be woven into a notion of citizenship as democratically negotiated. These challenges were examined in almost all papers. In the specific context of resource rights, Sudha Vasani, examined the gendering of resource rights and made a case for an economic basis for citizenship, criticizing the perspective that looks at citizenship as primarily political and that the exercise of citizenship itself would change the notion of 'citizen'. Sudha Vasani proposed that the existence of civil society is crucial to citizenship and state. Looking in particular at timber rights in Himachal Pradesh, the state laws that exclude women, and the Joint Forest Management

Programmes that include women as individual citizens, she raised the question whether at all, in a hierarchised society women can present themselves as equal citizens.

Seema Salgaonkar, spoke on 'Violence Against Self-Employed Women in Unorganised Sector' focussing on the fact that the ambiguous nature of their workplace made it difficult to locate accountability in cases of violence. She pointed out in particular that despite the pervasive influence of Portuguese rule which by and large showed a positive attitude towards women and introduced the Uniform Civil Code, women's differential citizenship emanates not so much from differentiated cultural rights, as from the power relation and structures of patriarchy that inform public institutions, family and communities, manifesting themselves in violence against women. Development strategies, particularly the structural adjustment programmes, have given rise to women who are 'self-employed' and by definition, 'masters' of their own time and labour. Yet, it is in these sectors that violence is experienced most and is less likely to be punished since the definition of workplace remains nebulous and procedures for redemption are not in place. Through interviews of fruit and vegetable vendors, conducted in three major towns of Goa, viz., Margaon, Mapusa and Panaji, Seema Salgaonkar attempted to identify the specificity of violence faced by these women. The sources of violence are the state (constituting the police as well as the municipality), the customers and their male counterparts. The state agencies take advantage of the fact that women have no permanent rights over the space where they display their goods, and have to pay, therefore, bribes, or else suffer 'manhandling' themselves, or of their goods. Women vendors in these cases, adopt a policy of giving in passively since it is more beneficial in the long run. Yet, there are also instances where they have got together and collectively pressed for their demands (e.g., a public toilet for their use). In contrast to women vendors, the fisherwomen of Goa are more aggressive in their negotiations and demands and are generally feared by the police and the municipal officials.

Vinalini Mathrani, looked at the processes through which the Mahila Samkhyas constituted their own spaces – a physical/institutional space that they call 'mane' or 'home' in the public space. This space where they met and discussed a range of issues, became not only a public manifestation of their collective association, it was also a 'home', where they took refuge, whenever threatened by violence in their homes. Built on their own through their own resources and labour, the 'sangha mane' – a collectively constituted home, helped them transcend restrictive gender roles, and at the same time create a space which was at the same time, both public and private, and a property that they had built for themselves.

Sreelekha Nair, spoke about migrant Malyali nurses in Delhi, looking in particular at the processes and contexts within which Malyali women choose nursing as a 'life-strategy' as distinguished from livelihood strategy, the networks through which migration takes place, and work is found, their own self-perception as nurses and workers and strategies for professional enhancement, Sreelekha Nair pointed out how both gender and ethnicity play an important role in these processes. Given the fact that Kerala has well developed education and health sectors, combined with unemployment, a large number of women move to places like Delhi where they get absorbed in a hierarchically structured health system in the city. A lot of them, however, see their jobs in Delhi as a stepping stone to

migrating abroad either to the West or to countries in the Gulf region. In the course of the discussions the complex issue of gendered dimensions of their work and their ethnicity, both of which contradicted with and had ramifications for the public nature of their work, was brought out. At the same time, the conflicting elements that informed their lives as Malayali diaspora, making them dependent on community networks reinforcing gendered relationships within the community, and as nurses for whom networking for professional enhancement demanded transcending the ethnic and gendered dimensions of their work was pointed out.

Special Session on Gujarat in Sub-theme 1

Co-ordinator: Nandini Manjrekar

The fourth session of the sub-theme on Pluralism, Nationalism and Differential Citizenship was directed towards an examination of the experiences of the Muslim community in Gujarat, living under the shadow of violence that was unleashed with state collusion in 2002. The session, co-ordinated by Nandini Manjrekar, focused on the manner in which the political project of subjugating the community through violent means has impacted the rights of Muslim women. Post Gujarat 2002, contestations around Muslim women's rights, set in the context of new forms of patriarchal control within the Muslim community, and the uncertainties shrouding judicial redressal for victims of the violence, in particular victims of sexual violence, have thrown up new challenges before the women's movement in India. Bina Srinivasan presented a paper titled Gujarat 2002: Implications for Women's Citizenship. The presentation focused on the implications of the events of Gujarat on Muslim women's citizenship within the context of democracy in the modern Indian nation-state. How does the community locate itself vis-à-vis the nation state and how do women fare in this context? She pointed out how the events in Gujarat represent an ideological completion of the process of 'othering'. Muslim women were constructed as symbols of the hated community as well as reproducers of that community, and this legitimized the sexual violence against them in 2002. Arguing for a re-fashioning of democracy to account for difference, she pointed out how the current notion of democracy is inherently unequal, because of its dependence on the electoral system and a situation where right-wing forces can come to power through 'democratic' processes.

Hasina Khan, in her presentation Reconsideration of issues pertaining to Minoritization of Muslim Women, spoke about how the events of Gujarat had impacted women's organizations like Aawaz e Niswaan, where the majority of women are Muslim. Based on her experience of working with Muslim women, in Gujarat and elsewhere, she argued for recognizing the multiple identities Muslim women carry, and critiqued the position of secular groups which tend to look upon the entire Muslim community in Gujarat as victims but make no effort to acknowledge or campaign against the violence directed against women by members of their own community. While mobilizing on other issues such as the war in Iraq or globalization, these groups often tend to ignore the realities of violence directed against women. 'Minoritisation' of Muslim women also acts as an instrument of control by Muslim fundamentalist organizations. These organizations, which had worked in relief and rehabilitation of victims of the 2002 carnage have not actually investigated the problems that Muslim women

encounter or the impact of the violence on them. Since 2002, these organizations have been organizing conferences on women's rights and trying to establish contacts with progressive organizations, but have not attempted to engage with the perspectives of progressive Muslim women's organisations. Indeed, post-Gujarat, these organizations are increasingly acting as mediators between progressive organisations and Muslim women, while simultaneously promoting religious platforms like Darool Kaza that seek to exercise controls on Muslim women within the community. Hasina stressed the point that although majority fundamentalism has been a focus of feminist research, we need to seriously study minority fundamentalism to understand how it works to subordinate Muslim women within the community.

Farah Naqvi's presentation was on Legal Justice in Gujarat: Implications for the Women's Movement. With interventions by the courts in re-opening and transferring cases outside Gujarat, and two trials involving women receiving wide media coverage, judicial redressal has come to occupy a central place in imagining possibilities for justice for the victims of the carnage. The State is appearing to move towards justice and this has led to a sense of complacency, which, Farah argued, is seriously misplaced, given the inherent flaws in the criminal justice system. The State has a monopoly on prosecution and survivors of sexual violence can, at best, only have a watching lawyer who cannot argue in court. In the case of Gujarat, public prosecutors appointed to cases are members of key Hindutva organizations responsible for the violence. In such a situation, trials cannot be complainant- or victim- centred. While the women's movement needs to intervene to change this system by demanding an additional lawyer, women prosecutors in rape trials and women's representation in legal spaces, we must also recognize that the legal process is slow and given its inherent flaws, cannot be seen as the only means of redressal. Within this context, Farah stressed the urgency of the need to work in spaces offered other than the legal such as rehabilitation, livelihoods, education, food security etc.

Sub theme 2: Citizenship, Livelihoods, Work and Natural Resource Rights
Co-ordinator: Sumi Krishna

The sub theme received more than 60 Abstracts from all over India and one from Bangladesh. These reflected a range of research, interventions and activism on livelihoods, work and natural resource rights. There were relatively fewer contributions that touched upon Dalit (caste-related) and urban/ peri-urban issues. The majority of Abstracts communicated valuable information about studies and interventions on the ground, but not many contributors went further to ask questions about this or attempted to theorise it. About one in two of the Abstracts received were selected for publication in the Conference Book of Abstracts. Five sessions were held including an introductory session, three presentation sessions, and a panel discussion session. These were attended by nearly 70 participants in all, including the 16 contributors who made presentations. The rapporteurs for the sub theme were M. Indira and Sandeep Joshi, with Seema Kulkarni providing additional inputs.

The group began by considering the historical and geographical processes involved in the marginalisation of communities such as the pastoralists, swidden (slash-and-burn/ shifting) cultivators, fishers, adivasis and other forest-dwellers, and cross-border migrants whose livelihoods and work were closely related to natural resources. It considered the various ways in which coastal, inland and mountain communities in South Asia have been defined and excluded from citizenship and resource-access in colonial and post-colonial times. Despite different locations in space and time, commonalities were apparent in the modes of exclusion that impacted upon women and their strategies for dealing with such exclusion. (Nitya S.Ghotge and Sagari R.Ramdas, Ratna Kumari, Mandakini Pant, Sharon D'Cruz, Gopa Samanta and Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt, Nazmunessa Mahtab)

Participants showed how women have drawn upon social networks, developed innovative livelihood strategies and have struggled against exclusion to create political and economic spaces. Some questioned whether such spaces were only illusory as the achieved access to resources and asset creation did not necessarily hold over the long-term because the interventions were divorced from the political process. For women who have historically been marginal to decision-making, both in the household and in the community, the creation and consolidation of spaces was seen as being particularly important. The group discussed the potential and challenges of development interventions, activism and research. It was pointed out that the strength that poor women derived from collective spaces was often of greater significance than immediate gains of employment, entrepreneurship and increased incomes. Yet, these real gains had also to be set within a larger framework of national natural resource policy in a changed global context that was undermining both the resources and livelihoods of the poor, intensifying processes of exploitation. Such complex trends were very apparent, for example, in the water sector where the creation of water-user groups and the privatisation of a common fluid resource posed difficult questions of resource rights and entitlements. (Shobita Rajagopal, Jayshree Soni, Neera M. Singh, Pratibha Joshi, Seema Kulkarni)

Keeping the larger policy frameworks in mind, the sub theme then focused on specific problems on the ground, questioning certain prevalent assumptions, such as those related to employment generation and land ownership for women. It became clear that no single intervention, whether it was land or employment, could by itself be empowering for women. The concept of empowerment itself could be defined in such a manner as to mask women's lack of freedom to exercise their full choices as citizens. This brought the group around once again to the issues with which the sub theme had begun, questions of legal and political recognition of marginalised workers and occupational groups, their own assertions of identity, how this was interlinked to livelihood resources and why all of this was more keenly felt by women. (Sandeep Joshi, Chhaya Datar, Sunita Bagal, M. Indira, P. Thamizoli and I. Prabhakar)

The final session on the impact of development and natural resource policy on women's livelihoods took up the issues raised in the presentations and the brief interchanges around them. Two themes had run through the earlier sessions: one, the linkage between macro policies and the lives of poor women at the micro-level; and two, the fundamental question of the entitlements of poor and marginalised women. The discussants on the panel, Malavika Mazumdar, Meghna Kelkar and

Sagari R. Ramdas, shared their varying perspectives: they spoke of the need to wrest space for women as economic actors in development and not just as social beings, of the need to move from welfare and efficiency approaches in research and interventions to recognising women's resource rights, and the need for struggles that were aware of the larger political framework of the crises created by the global and national economic policies of the 1990s.

In the animated discussion that followed, the sub theme participants generally agreed that women's entitlements had to be seen in terms of enhanced political and economic spaces and not in the social and welfare mode adopted by the state and its agencies. The state was not a monolith and it was necessary to discriminate between when to fight it and when to join hands with it. Participants also pointed out that decentralisation and participatory approaches were meaningless without democratisation that gave the community and the individuals within the community the power to exercise their rights. Without genuine democratisation, both political decentralisation and well-intentioned participatory interventions only resulted in an illusion of rights. Patriarchy operated at many different levels and conflicts over access to resources also contributed to violence against women.

There was broad concern about specific macro policies. Several participants were presently involved in the larger struggles that related to livelihoods, work, and natural resource rights, for instance the rural Employment Guarantee Bill and the Scheduled Tribes (Recognition of Forest Rights) Bill. The group recognised that the issues are complex and multi-layered and that in the limited time available to the sub-theme, it was not possible to arrive at a consensus on the specifics of a resolution on the proposed legislation and other macro-policies. However, as a group we agreed to an 'agenda' for ourselves as action-researchers concerned with transforming the ground so that poor women could create alternatives and gain the spaces to assert their citizenship. In our work as individuals, and within our various organisations/ institutions, and also as a group we resolved that we would strive to:

1. Explore alternative avenues of communication, so that marginalised women can make their voices and vision heard in the local community and at other levels.
2. Understand the intermediate (meso-level) linkages, such as through markets and employment, between the micro-contexts of poor women's livelihoods and macro-level resource policies.
3. Uncover the hidden agenda of institutions at all levels from the community to the state so as to prevent the demolition of rights.
4. Develop an informed critique of the larger macro framework that is increasingly determining how women's lives are lived at the micro level.

Further, recognising that action-research at present is rather patchy, we resolved to continue to share our work with one another, quilt the little patches upon which each of us is working. We hoped to do so in different ways, through various forums and existing groups, through regional and state-level meetings perhaps under the aegis of IAWS, and through the existing e-group 'jivika' which has its roots in an earlier IAWS conference.

Sub Theme 3: Citizenship and Politics of Sexuality

Coordinator: Nandita Gandhi

This sub theme, perhaps the first one as a specific sub theme, in the IAWS, attracted a range of diverse papers. This report presents the proceedings of the workshop according to the issues raised rather than the chronology of presentation.

Three papers focussed on sexual minorities i.e. lesbians, gays and bisexuals and Hijras in the context of laws, discrimination and organisational support.

The paper called 'Lesbian/Bisexual Women's Rights are also Women's Rights' by Shruti presented the problems of lesbians and the need for support. Humjinsi provides a safe space and help line to support and organise lesbians. It receives about 2 to 5 phone calls per day for information and support. Why is it necessary to have such a help line? Lesbians or women who love women fall outside the paradigm of normative heterosexual behaviour and have been invisibilised by society as deviants. In talking to young college going women, activists of Humjinsi found that many spoke about homosexuality and others would rather remain silent. The divide of class and caste was quite distinct. Those who did not fit into the stereotyped fit of male and female in dressing or behaviour were often derisively asked "ladka ki ladki?" Heterosexuality is essential for patriarchy and gender hierarchies. Lesbianism is a challenge to both.

Amita Jaiswal and Shefali Roy presented a paper and video on 'Decriminalisation of Same Sex Relationships'. The paper presentation was preceded by a documentary film entitled "Behind the Curtain", which went into societal prejudices against lesbianism and homosexuality. It was shot as part of a micro-study conducted in the district of Patna, Bihar. Though homosexual practices are among the most ancient manifestations of human sexuality, society especially in Bihar looks down on it and would like homosexuals to be put to death. The authors speak with social activists, advocates, doctors and laymen on their views. Some were sympathetic and others dismissive or saw it as deviant. What was amazing is that the authors could hold discussions with young women in college campuses in spite of the general hostile environment.

LABIA's presentation started with its history as Stree Sangam in 1995. It evolved into its present form as it expanded its concerns to bisexuals and transgendered people. It is an autonomous, non funded group which would like to visibilise different sexual preferences, lend support to those wanting to 'come out' to their families and introduce sexuality rights within the women's movement. Given their agenda, they have taken up programs like Larzish, a film and cultural festival; lecture in the Violence against Women Campaign; published a newsletter called Scrips; residential workshops for supporting lesbians, involvement in the helpline, etc. The group would like to grapple with issues like

transgendered surgeries, marriage and family, challenging patriarchy and the problems of identity as lesbians with families and in society.

The Census does not give any information on the number of Hijras in the country. It is estimated that there are half a lakh to a million people in the Hijra community consisting of transsexual, transvestites, eunuchs, cross-dressers and hermaphrodites. Their lives are shrouded in stigma and myths. They are considered low caste, with the power to curse, perceived as kidnappers of children, feared, ignored and generally discriminated against by law and society. The paper 'Exclusion and Decriminalisation of the Transgender: a case of hijras in India' by R K Maya puts forward the view that Hijras form a sub set in society with its own culture and society and should have their own space, human rights and dignity. Hijras are forming their own organisations to challenge deep rooted prejudice and gender stereotyping which deprives them of their basic citizenship rights to livelihood and dignity.

On the conceptual side, there was an interesting paper by Sreerekha called 'Feminist Queers and Queer Feminists', which went into the definition of queer in the context of feminism. Presently, there is space in the women's movement for queer politics but there is also an uneasy tension between the two movements. The paper stated that one reason was that the women's movement has focussed on the issues of gender, capitalist patriarchy and violence and not so much on the newer issues of sexuality rights, identities, hetero-normativity and a critique of marriage and monogamy. It explores the dilemma of being a feminist in a queer group and a queer in a feminist group. Far from being in opposition to each other, the two identities contribute towards a politics, which is both feminist and queer in character.

II

Two presentations were made on aspects of sex work and sex workers. Sonali in her paper 'Eviction Order and Sex Workers' reports that in June, 2004, the Goa Govt., bulldozed hundreds of homes and evicted thousands of people, including a community of sex workers. In a gross violation of human rights, they were intimidated, abused, beaten and arrested by the police. Most of them had been living there for years and had valid ration cards, house tax bills, electricity bills and voter identity cards. They had voted in the Assembly and Parliamentary elections in Goa. They have been dutifully paying their taxes. As compensation, the people were asked to accept train or bus tickets and return to their native places, although some of them had been living in Goa for more than 40 years! The paper documented the eviction of sex workers in Baina, which dovetailed prejudice against 'outsiders' and social morality for popular support from society. This had a tremendous impact on the health and livelihood of a large number of sex workers.

Through an interactive visual presentation based on video clips, the paper entitled 'Not A Sob Story: Representing the Realities of Sex Work in India' by Bishakha Datta explored the complexities of visually representing sex workers, a group that has traditionally been marginalized and stigmatized in the Indian context. It drew on two strands of theory and practice: one related to representation; the

other related to sex work and prostitution. Bollywood films routinely portray sex workers as aggressive, non conventional i.e. smoking and defiant women. The underlying assumption behind this projection is 'the good women' or the respectable women in families; and the 'bad women' or vamps and now item girls in music videos and films. The author put forward a third category, which she called 'non woman'. This generated a lot of discussion in the session.

III

In their paper Examining Sexuality in South and Southeast Asia: a critique of abortion, sex work and anti sodomy laws and policies" Arpita Das and Neha Patel looked at laws and policies regarding abortion, sex work, and anti-sodomy using concrete examples from appropriate countries in an effort to look at how these policies translated to different ground realities. Abortion is illegal in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and the Philippines, it is legal in India. But the right to abortion has different implications in different countries. In The Philippines, the debate is largely influenced by the Catholic Church, which in turn, influences state policies controlling women's reproductive health. Whereas in India, it is seen as a means of population control. In terms of sex work, there are varied laws in these different countries. Indonesia's law does not talk of prostitution as illegal per se, but the act of soliciting or the involvement of underage persons in the act is illegal and therefore punishable, which is also the case in India and Sri Lanka. This has generated controversial debates on sex work as a form of labour, the need for state regulation and whether the state should have control over sexuality. In most countries, the police routinely use anti-sodomy laws against individuals. The very existence of these laws is in direct contrast to the State's obligation to respect, protect and fulfil human rights.

Neha Sood in 'Too Young to Talk Sex?' also touched on policies and young people's sexuality and sexual rights in India. There are some attempts by different state and non-state actors to address the concerns of young people, but these remain limited in their reach, accuracy and efficacy. Various policies define youth differently e.g. some refer to them as 13 to 35 years and others from 15 to 25 years. This range dilutes the specificities of their needs and issues. Information on sexuality is disseminated according to the current development or health model of government programs, thus leaving out large numbers of youth. There is little understanding on the nature of information to be given to young people about their bodies and about sexuality. When it is provided, no links are made to oppressive systems like patriarchy, religion, class, caste, gender etc. The paper appeals for a recognition of young people's agency over their bodies, their thoughts, their opinions, their decisions and their actions.

IV

There were two papers on the methods of communication of issues related to sexuality. One described an inter-active workshop method with men on their own notions of masculinity. Men are not

aware that they have imbibed a notion of masculinity, which informs their notion of femininity. Both are socially constructed and perpetuated as sexual stereotypes. Both create immense problems for men and women as they have to, regardless of their own ideas or feelings, have to conform to them. We know very little about the mechanics of men's behaviour and their ideas apart from the obvious displays of masculinities like demonstrations of virility through dressing, appearances and gestures. For example are men aware of their own aggressiveness? How do they view women? The training module presented here went into the method of showing young men their own notions of masculinity through a variety of interactive ways. The module gave them exercises, which questioned the gender socialisation process during childhood and the male preference in society. One exercise asked them to look at language and the use of 'swear words'. Why is it that all abusive language using women and female bodily parts to degrade them and their men? Pawar who regularly conducts these workshops found that there are changes in men's perceptions.

The other used the story of a film 'The Contender' to show societal prejudice against women in politics and a feminist response to it. Women and politics have had a strange relationship. We have amazingly strong women like Indira Gandhi and Kumarika Bandaranekke, catapulted by their famous families into politics and prime ministership. Others have risen the hard way from bottom up. They are the ones who have faced male chauvinism and prejudice. Side by side we have 33% electoral reservation for women. The experiences of women in the panchayat polls have shown how they have been given hard seats, manipulated etc. showing that there is little political will on part of men and the state to implement the reservations. The film has been used by Dr Narain for young management graduates to understand gender bias which operates in the corporate world as much as the political world or for that matter wherever power resides.

V

A paper from Bangladesh highlighted sexual harassment faced by women workers on the streets. As women are increasingly coming out of home and joining in the paid labour force (In 1998, the female labour force accounted for 42% of the total labour force), harassment in different forms in the workplace are assumed to be taking at a higher rate. Unfortunately, in Bangladesh, it is considered to be a sexual harassment when there is physical assault. Women have little recourse but to handle sexual harassment problems by quitting or changing jobs, thus leading to a high job turnover, slower career advancement for women and increasing the wage gap. A law has been passed against sexual harassment but it is important to monitor the effectiveness of the law as well as to the commitment of the government to ensure violence and harassment free work place in light of the ratification in the CEDAW and other international charter by Bangladesh Government.

Another paper from Bangladesh showed the terrible plight of Bihari women who are not recognised as citizens by either Pakistan or Bangladesh for a variety of reasons. They continue to live in refugee camps for over 40 years in abject poverty and often take to prostitution as a form of livelihood. This

non-Bengali group became political criminals for their inclined support for Urdu speaking west Pakistan during the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971. The majority of the next generation are willing to be citizens of Bangladesh but no negotiation has been made for the fate of these displaced people. Women experience discriminations within refugee communities for sexual exploitation, polygamy and child marriage. Many women are forced to prostitution in 'Tanbazar' the biggest prostitution quarter in Bangladesh. Many were bound to be the second or third wife of local muscleman. As women's identity is related to male relatives their citizenship and rehabilitation become problems. Their reproductive health is jeopardized by high birth rates, a high incidence of teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. However, these women have shown greater resilience and adaptability than their men because they have the responsibility for maintaining their households.

VI

This paper found that women with HIV-AIDS are becoming a fairly big group living on the outskirts of society. They face a triple discrimination as they are usually thrown out of their matrimonial homes, with little medical or psychological support and have no avenues for a normal life for their children. Some of their findings were that more than 90% of the women got transmitted the infection from their husbands. Most men had become infected from commercial sex workers. Usually infected husbands are looked after their families, whereas wives were not cared for by their natal and matrimonial homes. The recommendations were that these marginalized women must be given care and relieved from the stigma and discrimination. The Tamilnadu Government should include this group in its schemes for balwadis, food rationing, insurance, medical and old age pension schemes.

VII

There was a paper based on ethnographic data and interviews in shopping malls and coffee shops examining women's use of these spaces, their body language in them and their efforts to stylise themselves in particular ways. It analysed the shopping mall as a private/public space for middle class women which projects a sexuality for women – one that invites their agency, is seductive in its appeal but stays carefully within the framework of respectability. It used the example of lingerie, the contrast in its display a decade ago and the sea change, which has occurred at present. Its promotion, sale, salespersons and the environment of the mall were elaborated. There is a blurring of boundaries between 'respectable' and 'non-respectable' women. The paper showed the connections between consumption and desire and argued that a liberatory politics of desire can only come by not denying the market but by engaging with it.

Subtheme 4: Women in Conflict and Militarization

Co-ordinator: Ilina Sen

This subtheme explored the many interrelated issues about the effects on women's physical, emotional and cultural lives of living in conflict situations. It also tried to understand the nature of the many kinds of conflict we live in today- across borders, and within borders, over issues of citizenship, sovereign rights, as well as rights over natural resources. Women have been brutalized in many of these conflicts, and have held forth as proponents of peace. In some situations there has also been the agency of women in conflict, and these situations also needed to be understood in the overall struggle against patriarchy and for a just society.

The subtheme began with an introductory presentation by the co-ordinator, Dr Ilina Sen. She suggested that apart from the physical and emotional scars caused by the tools used in modern wars, women in war were affected in many other ways. From ancient times, rape, physical assault and enslavement of women had been used as a tool of war and all conquering armies and their agents had resorted to these ways of demeaning women, and through them, an entire vanquished population. We have seen this happening today in wars between nations, as well as in conflict situations within countries in which an oppressed people are fighting for their basic human rights

While today, women's voices had acquired both a particular sensitivity, as well as authority in the peace movement internationally, we also need to address the question of women's agency in conflict situations, and seek an understanding of women's specific positions in conflict situations in the overall context of the struggle against patriarchy and imperialism.

The first session focused on the situation in the north east of India. Dolly Kikon's paper focused on Naga women's perceptions of the democratic aspirations of their people as revealed through the narratives and songs of the community. The paper looked at narratives of three generations of Naga women who had been witness to the Naga national struggle over five decades. While one attempts to explore the course of militarisation and the marginalization of Naga women in the field of social, political, economic and legal (customary) interaction between the Naga people and the state apparatus in general, this paper particularly sought to analyze the impact of the Indo-Naga armed conflict on the every day lives of Naga women. The issue of militarisation of the region and the experiences of women had remained marginalised in academic discourse and consequently, many questions had been left un-answered about the position of Naga women in the Indo-Naga conflict. For instance, what were the pressures mounted on women when household members joined the armed opposition? How did militarisation redefine women and men's relationships within the domestic and public spheres? The paper emphasised the importance of studying violent conflict from a gender perspective.

Rozy Veronica articulated the experience of Anal Naga women in the context of Naga-Kuki ethnic clashes in Manipur. It attempted to look at the life of Anal women from two perspectives:

- (a) The position and identity of Anal women in a strong dominant patriarchal society
- (b) The role of Anal women on the turbulent ethnic clashes in North Eastern India

From the first perspective, it was not hard to see how these women have been pushed to play a very insignificant role in the male dominant society. For example, no political office post was given to them even at the village level. From the second perspective, women automatically became easy victims of ethnic clashes. In the time of the violent ethnic clashes, there was a role reversal of the women. However, such a role reversal had no apparent or real advantage for the Anal women. In such turbulent times, women were made to go out of their houses and carry out all important tasks. The diverse ethnic demographic character of North Eastern India had historically been witness to violent ethnic clashes. On the one hand, women had been made scapegoats for men in violent times, on the other, these very women are realizing their own potential and had played a significant role as peacemakers.

The video presentation on Manipur captured dimensions of the Meitei Manipuri struggle for sovereignty and its repression by the Indian state. Together, these presentations brought out the complex and multi layered nature of the conflict in the north east, and the special positioning of women therein.

There were three other presentations on the first day explored other dimensions of women's experiences in conflict situations. Tania Haque's presentation spoke of the trafficking of women from Bangladesh in the situation of low intensity conflict and porous borders between India and Bangladesh. The presentation looked at the nature, volume, modes and trends involved in the trafficking of women and children in south Asia, particularly from poverty ridden Bangladesh. Characterizing this trafficking as the world's third largest form of organized crime against women, the presentation called for development with social justice and for changes in governance and legal systems which today often penalized the victim. Susheela Mendes looked at the role and agency of women in the freedom struggle. It has been much debated whether Goa got its freedom on a golden platter or as a direct result of the military action as the Portuguese hardly offered any resistance, or whether the people of Goa and outside Goa played a significant role. The presentation convincingly made the case that men and women had fought together but History had always recorded His story and ignored Her story. Extending the discussion on women's agency, Shoma Sen made the final presentation on the first day. Her paper looked at the situation of tribal women in areas of armed conflict in central India and Bihar and also examined women's agency in armed conflict. Though the women's movement had generally held that violent forms of struggle were patriarchal, the paper argued that the participation of tribal and rural women in movements advocating armed struggle, was in fact, an anti-patriarchal act. On the one hand, the very process of their participation defies the patriarchal notions of the construct of "woman". On the other, it was through these movements that patriarchal structures, institutions, and elements in our culture, social norms, religious practices as well as in land relations, production processes and patterns of wealth appropriation stood challenged. This presentation generated an animated discussion on the contentious issues of agency, the specificities of anti patriarchal struggles in a given caste-class-ethnic context, and the a priori categorization of violence as co-terminous with patriarchy in the women's movement.

On the second day, the presentations in the first session centered around the struggles of indigenous people over rights to natural resources. The extreme vulnerability and insecurity of indigenous women in the situation of rapid and rabid exploitation of these resources in the context of imperialist globalization today was brought out in example after example. The specific presentations came from the Chittagong Hill Tracts and Jharkhand, India. Dr Sadeka Halim from Bangladesh examined the human rights violation of indigenous women of the CHT (Chittagong Hill Tracts), a region in south eastern Bangladesh that has only recently emerged from two decades of militarization and insurgency through the signing of a peace accord in 1997, between the Government of Bangladesh and the JSS (a party of the indigenous people). The major demands of the indigenous people were for autonomous legislative bodies, control over the use of resources and ownership, the maintenance of socio-cultural integrity, and for the identification of the CHT as a demilitarized zone. While the Peace Accord addressed some of these issues, many of the provisions remained unfulfilled. The accord has been termed as a gendered agreement, because despite women's contribution in the struggle for autonomy, they were largely bypassed in the peace process. In terms of addressing the violence committed against these indigenous women, the local indigenous leaders along with the government seemed to have done nothing meaningful to provide justice to these indigenous women. The local leaders had thus isolated women's subjugation from the greater struggle for autonomy, thus marginalizing indigenous women more. This was partly due to the insignificant number of indigenous women leaders in high political positions and male-led and male-dominated political leadership through decades of conditioning under patriarchy. Similar concerns were expressed in Seela Aladuwaka's presentation (in absentia) which asked questions of the Sri Lankan peace process. As a group that was directly affected by the war, women in Sri Lanka have had a significant role to play in peace related activities. Yet, their participation in politics and decision-making remained extremely low and it was in this context that there was a need to understand women's participation in the peace process. The critical question to be raised here were about the extent to which women's voices were heard and represented in the peace process, and the extent to which women themselves were critical actors in the events of the times.

The group discussion on the situation in Jammu and Kashmir was led by Dr Ritu Dewan with inputs from Jasveer Singh and others from the Jammu region. The discussions underscored the vulnerability of women from the Kashmir valley and of refugee women from the Jammu region and concluded that the two were in many ways mirror images of each other. However, the situation in the region could only be understood in the larger socio-political, historical, and economic context and it was important to untangle these various strands and resolve the contradictions at various levels if the situation was to change for better.

The subtheme was coordinated by Dr Ilina Sen and the deliberations were chaired by Prof Pushpa Bhawe. The overall conclusion at the end of the deliberations was that it was no longer possible for the women's movement, or for women's studies to take an essentialist position about the peace loving nature of women. Similarly violence was not a monolithic category to which there could be a monolithic response. We had only just begun to unravel the complexities of women's lives

overshadowed by conflict and militarization. The analysis needed to be carried forward much further in depth and scope in order to arrive at an understanding of the issues involved.

Subtheme-5 Development Induced Displacement: Impact on Women

Co-ordinator: Urmimala Das

The two-day deliberations in the thematic session on Development induced displacement: impact on women, attracted twenty paper presenters from all over India. The participants were a mixed category of academicians, activists and ngo persons. The discussion was wide ranging. It started with conceptualizing the term 'development,' loss of women's citizenship right due to displacement. National treaties and International conventions, rehabilitation and relief policies were debated keeping in view the sufferings and protest movements of women along with repressive role of the state.

From the outset, the very concept of 'development' was debated. Development for whom and at whose cost? The discussion reiterated the brutal gender injustices that women are bearing for the post independence approaches of the state to the very concept of 'development' and the new policies of liberalisation. Global economics and the new economic policies of the country which are overpowering the government have led to the imposition of structural adjustment, privatisation, deregulation and free trade, have given importance to 'market centred' development rather than 'people centred development and these developments have led to a struggle between subsistence v/s market economy, profit v/s life, consumption v/s regeneration, global resources v/s local resources, local perspective v/s global perspective and 'mainstreaming' v/s ethnicity. The impact of these policies on women's life and livelihood have been extremely ruthless. Whether in the context of dams, forestry, agriculture, power, mining or any other project the experiences of displacement carries the same pattern of gender and community exploitation with varying degrees of intensity.

The enormity of the problem in terms of number of women directly and indirectly displaced, and the gravity of their present situation has either been deliberately ignored or underplayed or even blatantly considered to be a dispensable issue in the name of national development. Participants urged upon recognizing the voices of displaced women, especially of backward communities. Women are losing their natural and social support systems alongwith the identity they derived out of it, and being turned into nameless and faceless people with nowhere to turn to. In a wider sense they lose their citizenship rights over land and common property resource and also within families. The state aggression against its constituents, particularly rural and 'adivasi' women, is being manifested in a blatant denial of rights over natural resources, services, decision making spaces and even basic human rights. This is further unscrupulously evident in the denial of rights to compensation and rehabilitation or choices of livelihood for women.

The state has thus become a violator of its own constitutional framework thereby pushing women in to marginalised, contractualised and migrant daily wage earners having no access to private or common property resources and deprived of all legal protections. Sources of a sustaining livelihood

and a right to cultural identity have emerged as non negotiable issues between state and displaced women. In the absence of a life sustaining and cultural rehabilitation package the tribal women have become the worst sufferers of development, being located at a powerless situation within the web of triple social nexus of class, caste and gender. As a consequence of this situation girls and women are trafficked in large numbers. Violence against women has also increased including the sense of insecurity and psychological trauma in the new alien scenerio. The environment has been polluted to the extent of non germination and non flowering of plants and animals due to open cast mining etc. Health hazards have increased and women and children have become vulnerable to serious infections like HIV/AIDS.

Therefore the group collectively condemned this process of development and felt that the above-mentioned gender justice concerns must be addressed by the women's movement in India. Our campaigns and struggles need to utilize the mechanisms and instruments at the local, regional, national and international levels, to re-strategise and strengthen across sectors our assertion of gender justice, citizenship and gender perspectives. In women's studies centres, research in the related issues should be taken up.

SUB-THEME 6: BORDERS, MIGRATION AND GENDER

Co-ordinator Urvashi Butalia

A reasonable number of abstracts were received for this sub-theme although not all those whose papers were selected were able to come. Selected papers covered a wide range of themes, from the general understanding of migration and borders to a deeper, more nuanced and often more ambivalent understanding, sometimes, as in Kashmir or Goa, within a very local setting. The theme of migration was understood in a broad way, with papers looking at how the rights of migrants and refugees are defined in law, and more empirical studies that were based on particular experiences. Among the questions that were posed was how exactly can migration be defined: if tribals in Jharkhand are displaced and therefore move their homes, can they be said to be migrating? How is the experience of tribals, and particularly of tribal women, different from that of, say, trafficked women who are also migrants in a manner of speaking. A further problematization related to the question of borders: ought we to go on accepting the traditional definition of borders as being merely political, or administratively defined, or can we say that for women the borders lie elsewhere. Here, the example of Tsunami affected women came up: for them the notion of borders has changed substantially if not completely after the disaster, particularly with the erosion of the borders of home and hearth.

Once borders start to shift – as happened also in the case of abducted women during Partition and as is happening with Kashmiri Pandit women who live in refugee accommodation even today – the notion of security also begins to change. Women are often thrown on their own resources and they are forced to negotiate the public world. Here, the border no longer provides safety.

Papers that were presented included case studies of the Tsunami, of Goa, of Kashmir, of Jharkhand, of Raigarh and of north east India, to name only a few. The Kashmir session drew a much

larger crowd than the others so that the group had to move to a bigger place and the discussion was lively. Similarly the session on trafficked women and the north east also had a number of interested people. In the feedback session there was a general feeling that several, though not all, of the papers had been good and that the discussion should be taken further as it is useful for unpacking the key terms, migration, displacement and borders.

A summary of the individual papers is provided below:

Three papers dealt with relief and rehabilitation for people who had become refugees for one reason or another. Vishwa Raksha and Hema Gandotra's paper was titled 'At the margins, within the margins' and dealt with the dislocation of the Kashmiri Pandits forced to leave the valley in the course of the conflict between the Indian state and the militants since 1990. They drew a graphic picture of the experiences of women in the refugee camps in Jammu and pointed out that issues for women's development and empowerment in other parts of the country have taken a back seat in the case of Kashmiri Pandit women who are trapped in a situation where more 'real' issues like survival, livelihood and shelter are more pressing. Himika Bhattacharya's paper titled 'gender, dislocation, and women's experience of state intervention after the tsunami,' dealt with the post tsunami situation in south India. She argued that the major problem in the policies of rehabilitation is the invisibilisation of women in the more 'stable' singular category of woman with the presumption that 'she' is part of a household with either a husband, father or son. This identity determines relief in gendered terms and she argued that it was necessary to break down this fixed view in order to address the needs of women's specific locations to respond to their trauma, and to provide compensation and strategies for livelihood.

Oishik Sarkar's paper was titled 'fleeing violence, finding violence,' and dealt with the inadequacy of international law in alleviating the violence experienced by women refugees in South Asia since many countries here have not acceded to the refugee convention; further there was no regional policy in place. He also argued that since there was gender asylum law there was no surrogate protection provided by the state or any other agency for internally displaced persons.

Three papers explored the process of migration: Pravina Kerkar examined the relations between migrants and locals following the focus on development plans for Goa and the manifestation of tensions between the two; Renu Dewan analysed the direct impact of industrialisation and modernisation on the socio cultural life of both the migrant and the host communities and Navtej Purewal examined the experiences of the urban poor in Amritsar as partition refugees who have another kind of migrant status in the city. This paper focused upon the ways in which gender and caste framed the experiences of partition migration and resettlement for women in lower caste communities who settled in Amritsar. Their memories, recollections, aspirations and perceptions of the upheaval of partition resonate with their individual structural constraints while also providing a certain degree of collective reasoning and understanding about how the events of the partition altered their lives.

Preeti Gill's paper was focused on the North East which has been one of the most continuously militarized regions of India since independence. Most states of the region have been besieged by 3 to 5 decades of armed conflicts and unrest. The history of the recent past in Nagaland, Tripura, Assam

and Manipur provide ample evidence of migration and displacement as a result of conflicts related to identity, land, resources, religion, desire for autonomy etc. She showed how women experience conflict and its devastation in ways that are different to men. They find themselves more vulnerable with greater restrictions placed on mobility, access to health and education, employment and even leisure.

SUB-THEME 7: GENDER, EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Co-ordinator Dipta Bhog

Issues of Curriculum and Pedagogy

This session moved through various different sites of education, yet each presentation drew upon the ideas offered by others. Presentations on curriculum included assessments of what the State prescribes at the school level as well as attempts to innovate at the university level. Pedagogy was analyzed in both formal spaces for training teachers and in non-formal spaces using unconventional media as tools for gender-sensitization. Important concerns during discussion were the way gender issues are de-politicized to be made acceptable within curriculum, and the extent to which the teacher is empowered to intervene in the educational process.

SUNEETHA A. and DEEPA SRINIVAS of Anveshi Research Centre (Osmania University, Hyderabad) provided a **critique of the Social Science textbooks** produced by the Andhra Pradesh Government (Civics and Geography). Far from enabling prospective citizens to challenge unequal power-relations, books collude in perpetuating these. The reader encounters images of tribals as “superstitious” and women’s primary responsibility being motherhood. Democracy is a given, which forecloses the possibility of discussing how caste determines the everyday experience of citizenship by lower castes when trying to access services. Hostile geography rather than government negligence is blamed for the drought in the Telengana region. The assumption underlying such textbooks is that the reader is incapable of actively constructing meanings from her surroundings, and recognizing the contradictions between their presentation of the benign state and its actual working.

PROF. POONAM BATRA (Central Institute of Education, Delhi University) referred back to this last point in her observation that discussions of **gender in teacher training** never encourage trainees to refer back to their own lived experience. Gender is not even adequately grounded in concerns of equality and the politics of rights, but tends instead to be treated as an “add-on” issue. Such fragmented and de-contextualized learning needs to be located in the structural character of the teaching profession today. Schoolteachers are isolated from institutes of higher learning and the transformation of understanding achieved by feminist scholarship. There is no recognition of the need for forums that could provide opportunities for professional interaction and reflection on the content they teach. The increasing de-professionalization of teaching in areas like MP and UP has most affected women, who form the majority of para-teachers.

For feminist pedagogies to become an effective presence in the classroom, it is imperative that teachers be equipped to critique patriarchal constructions of knowledge and to reflect on their own socialization in school, family and community. The new B. Ed course is a positive step in the direction of an education bound up with active citizenship, as it contains papers on issues in contemporary India and fieldwork is made integral to theory courses.

ANITA MEHTA and SUDIPTA DHARVA from Akshara, a Woman's Resource Centre in Mumbai presented a model for the vision behind their projects for stimulating thinking on gender among young people, which use both virtual and physical learning spaces. This captured issues raised by previous presentations, in seeking a balance between "External Reality", composed of space, relationships and environment, and the "Process of Learning", which should draw upon the agency of teacher and student, work through dialogue and relate to lived experience. While providing an **alternative space for learning**, Akshara also intervenes in the formal sector, through refresher workshops conducted with teachers.

SHUBHRA NAGALIA shared her experiences of **teaching Women's Studies** in the Mahatma Gandhi Antarrashtriya Hindi Vishwavidyalaya, Wardha. Referring to the Department of Women's Studies not being allowed to have a permanent faculty, she argued that institutions often replicate the authoritarian structures of patriarchy. To keep the department going has exacted great commitment on the part of teachers and students, and sustained efforts to invite good resource people from outside. However, students also encounter a more positive aspect of the relation between the discipline and its social context. The Department's inter-disciplinary approach allows them to relate their reading of literature and theory to political struggles of labour and social contexts like advertising.

This final presentation concluded with the caveat that Women's Studies cannot be thought of as a substitute for the women's movement. The moderator, DR. NANDINI MANJREKAR, noted while summing up that the women's movement has also been lacking in its attention to education. The same speaker did remark on the fact that neither Women's Studies nor the women's movement have mobilized their politics into a network like that of RSS schools – which might have offered a site for intervention. The discussion brought out the inherently **political character of education**. In Karnataka textbooks, the mechanical enumeration of "illiteracy, alcoholism and poverty" as social evils appear way of foreclosing questions on the nature of the linkages between these. And this presentation of potential political struggles as *social* issues prevails as a means of containing the subversive power of education. At a workshop with teachers in Gujarat, an official had requested that the agenda be "Naari Jagriti" (women's awakening) as opposed to "Naari Vaad" (feminism).

DR. UMA CHAKRAVARTI linked this opposition between awareness and feminist mobilization to the stereotype of teaching being suitable for women because it can be accommodated within patriarchal power structures. A related concern was the **power of the teacher to intervene** in the transmission of ideology. A participant from Karnataka argued that teachers often do not question textbooks with whose ideology they disagree, only because of their fear of being transferred.

Exclusions: The Politics of Difference in Citizenship

This session shared the experiences of groups who have historically experienced non-recognition of their claims, active oppression, or marginalization by the hegemonic collective – same sex desiring people, Muslim girls and women and dalit women. It addressed the extent to which educational institutions of the modern state have been able, in every sense of the term, to *represent* its citizens – to acknowledge them in its discourse and include them in its programmes, and to ensure that these work to empower them.

JAYA SHARMA of “Voices against 377” (a coalition against Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which criminalizes “unnatural” sexual activity) argued that apart from prescriptive interventions in family planning and sexual health, sexuality only enters school textbooks in relation to opaque ideas of national identity (pre-marital sex being conflict with “Indian values”). **Same-sex desire is relegated to chapters on abnormal psychology.** It is the inability to link sexuality to pleasure or to the mind that helps perpetuate rigid ideas of gender. She pointed out the patriarchal values and binary conceptions of gender identity underlying the normative construction of sexuality in publications from the state to educate young people on reproductive health, HIV-AIDS and the desirability of small families. The personal narrative of those locating themselves in a zone between the polarities of male and female conveyed the intense sensation of invisibility and alienation they experienced in school. In colluding with the norms of family and religion, school, meant to be a space assuring children security, became an experience loaded with anxiety and fear.

RITU MENON of Women Unlimited and Rehana Sultana of Urdu University, Hyderabad gave a presentation of “**Educating Muslim Girls**” that combined a situational analysis with personal reflections. States in which the figures for Muslim girls education are high are those whose intervention has been more substantial (in Kerala it is easy to locate school within 1 km of the home and free public transport is provided) or whose vision has been more progressive (Andhra Pradesh makes Urdu the medium of instruction). Yet, even in Andhra, the government has not invested enough in professional colleges, which require funds in crores.

Government investment in infrastructure cannot, however, redeem the alienation brought about by the more general political environment. The figures for Muslim and Hindu education first diverge in middle school, where the dropout rate of the former is twice that of Hindus. The last two decades provide the context for the dilemma with which education confronts Muslims. There is felt both a need to protect a cultural identity besieged by Hindu fascism and a more immediate fear that Muslim women are unsafe in public spaces. The desire to turn to the community’s own resources may also be related to the representations of themselves they encounter in textbooks produced by the State, which refer to Muslims as backward citizens in permitting polygamy and following purdah.

Considerable debate followed the speaker’s suggestion that the use of the burqa in Hyderabad had allowed women to demand greater mobility, including access to institutes of higher learning. There was also concern expressed about the ideological character of the education provided in institutions funded by Gulf States.

SHALINI JOSHI (Nirantar, Delhi) and KAVITA (*Khabar Lahariya*, Chitrakoot) shared what running a **rural newspaper meant to Dalit women in UP**. Their exclusion from the public arena had led them to perceive politics as very remote, and, to the extent that it touched their lives, an affair confined to the males who would meet visiting politicians. "Nagarikta" was not understood as something in which they participated, as the powers and entitlements of citizenship were perceived only as procedures to be gone through (ration cards required as identity proofs, voting performed according to dictates of family and caste). Active intervention in politics has become possible by reporting on concerns, some of which, like local dowry deaths, escape the national level media. Others, like the Lok Sabha elections, became an occasion to hold the local party accountable for failing to deliver electricity. This could lead to argument with family members unprepared to accept individual political choice, an index of how citizenship impinges on both personal life and collective experience. Theoretical issues and professional contingencies are worked through simultaneously, the journalists' reluctance to write about the corruption of a woman sarpanch leading to a discussion on the significance of gender.

SUCHITRA SHETH (Setu: Centre for Social Knowledge and Action, Ahmedabad) showed how women are particularly affected by the shrinking space for entitlement and recognition for **Muslims under a Hindu right-wing regime**. The State allocates only a fraction of what Dalits receive to educational institutions for Muslims, leaving at an impasse the Muslim youth for whom the memory of the 2002 carnage and the prospect of anything but low-skilled employment under the present regime are as immediate as the pressures on their educational spaces. Ways out of their situation — emigrating to the Gulf, having Urdu medium schools within the locality to avoid passing through Hindu areas — are foreclosed by the actions of the State. Sanskrit rather than Persian or Arabic is imposed universally as the third language, and in Rajpur only one Urdu medium school is recognized at the secondary level, forcing students to drop out as they cannot shift to Gujarati at that stage.

Muslim and Hindu schools are rigidly separated, even on occasions when classes are conducted in the same building. While men do get to interact with one another at the workplace, the fear of attack has led to girls being confined to domestic enterprises like garment making.

Creating Possibilities or Determining Limits? The Role of the State

This final session assessed initiatives by the State to expand women's access to education, the limitations to its vision and thus to the possibility of forming productive partnerships with it. Presentations ranged from the level of policy to grassroots experience and from university teaching to the need for continuing education in rural areas.

Referring to the statistics for female literacy as a more sensitive index of development than those for overall literacy, NABANITA SEN (Savitri Girls' College, Kolkata), sketched a **history of State initiatives** to extend education to women. These included the West Bengal policy of mother tongue education till Class Ten, attempts to legislate for greater power for parent-teacher associations and make them truly representative of families from different backgrounds and the recent Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programme.

SHASHI KHURANA (Women's Development Centre, Delhi University) discussed the **Non Collegiate Women's Education Board in Delhi University**, an experiment that seeks, like segregated education, to make education accessible to women. The assumption that the domestic space is proper to women has to be confronted by any initiative to include women in education. In the case of the N.C.W.E.B, the confrontation has led to compromise. Instituted as a special provision for women, it has ended up providing them low quality education, as no study-aids are provided despite teaching days being one-third that of the time allotted to colleges covering the same course. There are no professional courses or science courses, and the faculty consists entirely of guest lecturers, so that departments like Economics experience a dearth when no willing teachers are available. The pass rate of 80% in the first two years drops to 45% in the final year when girls get married.

SALEHA BEGUM (Women's Studies Research Centre, Calcutta University) outlined stages of **Muslim women's education in Bengal**. In the late nineteenth century, when the identity of women was subsumed under their Muslim identity, zenana girls were made to follow a restricted syllabus. Today, even though their mothers may have been less educated, one notices more females than males in secondary schools (an interesting footnote to the general trend observed in the previous day's presentation, that it is from secondary school that there is a decline in enrolment by Muslims). With a more widespread recognition of the violence girls often encounter in their marital homes, there is an increased investment in education as a means towards economic independence.

The presentations by DR. SANGEETHA PURUSHOTHAMAN (Mahila Samakhya, Karnataka) and KOMAL SRIVASTAVA (Samata, Jaipur) provided studies in contrast. The Mahila Samakhya locates itself in the context of the increased decentralization of the State, which has made for **greater citizenship participation**. MS works through federations and with state support to carry out activities of capacity building and mobilization against injustice, e.g., a property dispute provided the occasion for MS to intervene and to nullify the marriage of a child widow to secure her freedom. On a day-to-day basis it performs the role of monitoring development and welfare programmes like teacher training and the midday meal scheme.

Samata, on the other hand, struggles to **ensure that the State fulfils its commitment to women's education**, instead of sidelining it for primary education. Rural female literacy has not shown the improvement that marks overall female literacy figures in the last two decades. This is notwithstanding the fact that women have been active as learners, volunteers and mobilizers in the National Literacy Mission. Even if the rhetoric of the UPA government acknowledges women, it is necessary for bodies like Samata to ensure the State delivers. The State's indifference to women's continuing education may be linked to the fear of disturbing established structures. In Haryana, women's first entry into the public space through the Literacy Mission helped to break caste barriers, and the literacy movement was also to become linked to the anti-arrack campaign.

One manifestation of education having enabled active citizenship is the fact that over 550 of the women who participated in the National Literacy Mission have now entered legislative bodies. One cannot view the morphing of literacy projects into SHGs as empowering in the same way. SHGs provide a stay against indebtedness, but there are not enough examples of stable entrepreneurships.

ZARINA BHATTY mentioned how villages with successful SHGs had been known to raise their dowry demands.

Questions were raised as to the **long-term viability of autonomous bodies working in tandem with the State**. MS differentiates itself from the National Literacy Campaign, whose all-India scope was too massive to sustain. Instead, MS sees itself primarily as a resource center, which aims to make its sanghas self-sufficient and able to help others. As against this it was pointed out that centers had sometimes closed down after the withdrawal of MS. One cannot in the end forget that investment in women's education is vulnerable to whoever is in power, and we must work with an awareness of the political interests to which initiatives for women's education are subject.

Sub-Theme 8: Impaired Citizenship and Forms of Exclusion (Ageing and disability)

Coordinator Prof. Asha Hans

History was made at IAWS with the introduction of this theme. For the first time in an effort at mainstreaming, women with disabilities joined an IAWS Conference in large numbers. The contribution of the other sector of the subtheme covering ageing however was minimal.

The question that confronted the sub-theme was whether it fulfilled the designated aim of locating women's voices and experiences, especially those of the disabled and ageing who are excluded from citizenship and the feminist as well as the disabled agendas and movements. As far as their presence was concerned the aim was fulfilled, did they contribute to that effort of discussing their exclusion? The high quality of paper presentation fulfilled this goal. What was left unfulfilled perhaps was the physical mainstreaming. The sub-theme drew both disabled and non disabled speakers but few non-disabled attended the subtheme, confirming the long road to be traveled.

The subtheme participants included the top most women leaders of the disability movement including the Disability Commissioner of India (a woman). There were both academics and activists. Though only 22 papers were received the quality of the majority of presentation and interaction was very high.

The sub-theme presentations were divided into disability and old age issues. There were 3 papers on old age of which one was presented. The major focus shifted to disability which was divided into four parts concepts, the movement and issues voiced by the disabled themselves. It covered all types of disabled and disabilities. It is important to note this angle as the success of future conferences rests on this.

The theme attempted to underscore the concerns of disabled women in India. Rendered invisible by the structural and attitudinal amnesia, it was felt they have been denied both the traditional choices as well as participation in the labour force. While caste and class are considered significant by Indian feminists, impairment has not been considered as a difference that has analytical importance.

Another set of issues highlighted was of achievers and at least 3 papers concentrated on how women with disabilities despite their exclusion have become achievers at the global to grass root level.

As a participant said:

I, personally as a Woman with Disability, and as a member of Disabled women's community, urge upon the leaders/stakeholders of women's movement to recognize the atrocious INJUSTICE done for decades with women and girls with disabilities world over and take effective MEASURES to bring solidarity among all women without any further delay."

The major issues discussed were

- **Hierarchy where women's movement is controlled by non-disabled women and disabled women lack the confidence and ability to raise their voice.**
- **That disabled women have been missing both from the feminist theory and practice as well as the male centric disability movement and a major reason has been that the feminist discourse attempted to connect disability and feminism by arguing that disabled women must deal with the twofold but separate oppressions of being a woman in a sexist society and being disabled in an ableist society. An implicit assumption of the additive framework is that gender, disability, impairment, and sex are binaries.**
- **Some specific issues discussed included women and mental illness an excluded terrain and women during disasters**
- **Vulnerability to sexual abuse both within and outside the home is also increased in the case of women with disabilities.**
- **While some parents may invest much time and resources in the care of their disabled daughter, the position of the latter may grow more marginal even within her own household as she grows older and is not able to chart a passage along the normal pathways of matrimony and maternity.**
- **Cinema and the female disabled body were reinforcing masculinity**
- **Invisibility of disability within feminism occurs because of mechanisms similar to those that have made women in general invisible in the larger society.**
- **The feminist discourse as well as the disability theory must take account of significance of including disabled women's experiences into theoretical discourse.**
- **A preliminary examination of the recording of data on disability over the last few decades and the problems thereof was explored on how the results and categories revealed by both the Census as well as the NSS reflect an evolution in understanding the nature of disability brought about through a process of struggle to be included and recognized as people of this country.**

A summary of the discussions led to the following consensus among the participants of Sub-theme 8 which were to be taken up for consideration at the General Body Meeting

As disability cuts across all categories of class and caste, we the participants of sub-theme eight resolve:

1. *We appreciate the contribution made by the Indian Association of women's Studies in creating a historic event by including its disabled members.*
2. *Disability should be a part of the general theme of Women's Studies and movements in India in the future and in the IAWS conferences*
3. *We acknowledge that the disabled citizens are deprived of their basic social political, economic and cultural rights, we appeal to IAWS and other agencies to make endeavors to include disability perspective in women's studies programs and its movement.*

Fulfil the Millenium Goals and goals set by the Beijing Platform for Action and CEDAW in the context of women with disabilities

1. *Recognizing that there has been a shift from the medical to social understanding of disability, we the participants appeal to the IAWS to arrange for a main plenary so that the issues are discussed before all participants and is not confined to disabled participants and the converted do not carry out a discourse with the converted only.*
2. *Recognizing the mobility and communication issues that disabled women face in participations of such meetings we appeal that future conferences are fully accessible and disable friendly.*
3. *We also appeal that volunteers be assigned to those who need them since we believe in a truly inter-dependent society*
4. *Let us make a beginning*

The subtheme owes gratitude to IAWS for creating space for the issue and Abilis Foundation (Finland) for making it possible for women and men with disability and students to attend the Conference.

Sub Theme 9: Engendering Legal Education: Citizenship and Entitlements

Co-ordinator: Kamala Shankaran

The broad focus of the sub theme 9 at the IAWS Goa conference was on Engendering Legal Education: Citizenship and Entitlements. The importance of legal education (both within law colleges

and disciplines engaged in teaching papers with a law component) in contributing to constructing values of rights and citizenship has been recognized. A growing number of academics, practitioners and activists have been concerned with the manner in which the law has been constructed and interpreted to the disadvantage of women and other section of the people. There is an urgent need for reviewing the content and teaching methodology of legal education in India in order to incorporate gender concerns adequately in the curriculum. This was the rationale behind the present sub theme.

The sub theme was divided into three workshops. The first workshop on the morning session of the 4th May was on Citizenship and Entitlements. This session was co-ordinated by V.S. Elizabeth National Law School of India University, Bangalore and chaired by Jaya Sagade, ILS Law College, Pune. The session began with a paper by Usha Ramanathan, independent researcher, on 'Case law, Sighting Women'. Analyzing the term sovereignty, she noted that this is an avowedly patriarchal state which terms the people as 'subjects', not citizens. This is the context within which decided judgments were examined. Using vivid examples she showed how the judgments of the different courts have marginalized women's concerns and often displayed a patriarchal outlook. For instance in Ajaib Singh's case, dealing with the 'recovering and restoration' of women abducted during partition, the manner in which the court legitimized the paternalistic attitude of the State towards women and denied them any agency during such 'recovery' proceedings was illustrative. Further examples were used to reinforce these points.

The paper that followed by Ruchira Goswami, National University of Juridical Sciences on Mainstreaming Feminist Legal Education: Problems and Prospects. (Since she was unable to attend her paper was read out.) The paper traced her experience of teaching a course a human rights course with a gender perspective, and incorporated her suggestions of dealing with such issues in her class. It also dwelt on the gaps in international human rights law in dealing with gender concerns. Sumitra Acharya of National Law School University of India, on her paper of Citizenship Rights used her work among the sex workers to highlight certain uses. Persons whom the state feels are engaged in illegal or immoral activities are then deprived of basic citizenship rights. She then went on to explore the manner in which issues of citizenship, of who can be one and what the rights of a citizen are, could be incorporate in a paper on constitutional law and how the examples of sex workers could be used to highlight the lack of these rights. The discussion that followed focused on the current disputes relating to bar girls in Maharashtra and the dilemma posed by the policies of the government.

The second session of the subtheme was on Violence and Access to Justice. This session was co-ordinated by Shalu Nigam, CWDS and chaired by V.S. Elizabeth, NLS, Bangalore. Sanober Keshwaar, law teacher in Mumbai and member of the Lawyers' Collective, talked extensively of the experience of Gujarat and the manner in women had been targeted. She highlighted the need for a law on genocide and how one can deal with killings of such a scale where the state is itself implicated. How could international forums be used by activists for this purpose was her question. The principle of 'command responsibility' was the basis on which international tribunals had adjudged the masterminds of such genocide guilty, and such a provision needed to be made in Indian law too she noted. Sanober also explained the manner in which the Alien Tort Claims Act of the USA could be

used to track such persons guilty of genocide and pointed to the fact that it would have been possible to file a suit against Modi had he visited the USA this year. The presentation also highlighted the need for a witness protection programme in India and on this there was extensive discussion.

The next presentation made on behalf of Indira Jaising, senior advocate Supreme Court, who was unable to attend and it dwelt on the need for teaching of law in a historical manner in law schools in order that future lawyers and judges are acquainted with the women's movement and why the law was shaped in the manner it is and the struggles of the movement for changes in the law. Such a focus would go along way in producing more sensitized law practitioners. Shalu Nigam of CWDS in her paper dealt with a case study she had made of women victims of violence and their pending cases before the Mahila Court to argue that there is a need to re-think the manner in which violence against women is treated in the curriculum. She made certain suggestions of how the placement and internship programmes for students could be used to sensitize students to these issues. This was followed by short presentations by Reyna Sequeira of Goa on her experience with the police and one by Sreerekha on the legal difficulties faced by the Suryanelli Defence Committee dealing with rape case involving several accused.

The second day of the session was on Engendering Legal education: Creating a New Paradigm. This session was co-ordinated and chaired by Kamala Sankaran, University of Delhi. Archana Parashar of Macquarie University in her presentation on Women and the Law: Seclusion or Integration in the Curriculum, stressed the need to develop critical thinking among students. She noted that a feminist legal theory paper need not be the only site where such critical thinking is developed and she indicated the manner in which theoretical issues could be raised in other course also. Jaya Sagade of ILS Law College Pune and Christine Forster of University of New South Wales, Sydney gave their experience of conducting a Feminist Legal Theory course at ILS Law College. This was followed by a presentation by four students of the course – Kanksha Mahadevia, Pallavi Gupta, Maitreyi Krishnan and Kranti. While noting that the paper opened their minds to several important issues of rights and discrimination, they also were critical of the present legal education that did not allow such thinking or pedagogy to take place in other courses.

Kalpana Kannabiran of NALSAR Hyderabad, in her paper on Towards an Inclusive Praxis n Law: Questions on Pedagogy Diversity and Rights, focused on the model curriculum proposed by the UGC to flag certain concerns. Noting that some of the papers reveal some elements of gender concerns raised by the women's movement in papers such as family law and labour law, she also spoke of the long haul ahead for developing such a gender perspective in the law curriculum. She also spoke of the difference in different law school in terms of funding and student profile. Vasanti of NALSAR presented her paper on Mainstreaming Gender Courses, and gave the example of the revised labour law course in her university which used the question of invisibility of women's work as the starting point to expose the students to the biases of the law and the invisibility of the unorganized sector.

The discussions that followed focused on the varieties of ways in which gender concerns could be incorporated: a separate paper and/or creating critical think across the curriculum, institutional barriers in effecting changes, use of placement and internships programmes, how we could use networks and

the need to carry forward the energy and initiative created in this sub theme forward so that linkages across institutions and courses could be sustained.

IAWS WORKSHOPS AT GOA

Workshop on Women SHGs (Self Help Groups) & Micro Credit – Issues for the Women’s Movement

Co-ordinated by Jaya Sharma and Soma Kishore Parthasarathy (Nirantar)

The Indian Women’s Movement has been caught unaware by the overwhelming magnitude of the micro credit juggernaut its sheer scale given that there are reportedly more than 10 million SHG groups in the country and the range of impacts that are evident. The few responses that have been articulated have either rejected micro credit in its entirety as a diversionary toll of globalization or are uncritical of the model it represents, so long as women’s capacity building needs are incorporated. Nirantar organized a workshop on women, SHGs and micro credit – issues for the women’s movement to examine the phenomena from a feminist perspective; to analyze its conceptual moorings and the implication for the women’s movement, and assess its implications for women’s empowerment and poverty reduction.

Based on Nirantar’s own engagement and research on the phenomena, and its implications for women’s lives on the one hand and the entire discourse of development on the other; the workshop was organized to enable the women’s movement to engage with micro credit more rigorously in order to evolve a nuanced perspective. The framework of citizenship is useful in that it allows an assessment of the agency of women as the subjects of these processes and their ability to negotiate their interests & entitlements viz-a-viz other institutional players including the family, community, banks, markets and the state. The workshop was

The format of the workshop enabled speakers and participants to share their perspectives and experiences on SHGs & micro credit from a feminist perspective, and to debate the issue and voice their concerns in an open forum. Soma Kishore Parthasarathy, who facilitated the workshop on behalf of Nirantar, highlighted the key questions that need to be addressed to analyze the implications of SHGs and micro credit for women’s citizenship and development particularly:

- ❑ Are the quick solutions on offer through micro credit diversionary from the challenges of structured inequalities?
- ❑ Is the state withdrawing from its own accountability and passing the onus to poor women for poverty reduction.
- ❑ Are the new constructions of the good woman detrimental to women in the new economic paradigm?
- ❑ What are the gains to be had from micro credit based SHGs for other institutional players: the banks, the state and for donors?
- ❑ Finally are there inherent limitations to how empowering SHGs can be? Or is it merely a question of their efficiency then invited the speakers to share their views.

Kumud Sharma of CWDS spoke of the emergence of micro credit as a major development initiative for poverty alleviation. Micro credit, it was believed would lead to enhanced incomes through self-employment, serving to overcome the lack of employment generation opportunity. While micro credit was a demand from the women's movement, based on the experiences of SEWA and WWF; for the Govt. MC offered a least cost alternative to addressing poverty. Field experiences have shown that credit does help the poor but micro credit is too little and needs to be accompanied with other initiatives for real change to occur. The current MC model focus on loan repayment creates pressure on women to cut their expenditures on food and education often to their own detriment. Productive assets are sometimes sold to repay loans. Emphasizing the need to look beyond the numbers and targets to examine perspectives, Kumud reflected on the benefits the collective approach as enabling women to gain identity participate in governance and represent their interests. The question arises whether SHGs are to be viewed as collective in that sense, or are they mere catalysts for linking women to micro credit without intervening in other areas for substantive empowerment. Much of this would depend on the perspective of the promoting organization and the role it plays as a mobilizer of beneficiaries or for social change.

Apart from the fact that SHGs have become the conduit for savings of the poor being transferred to the better off in the absence of a strong ideological perspective. SHGs run in a minimalist way remain mechanisms for credit flow rather than enabling groups to move through a process of graduation to address problems of rights of women and the poor. This is why regions where the Balika Samridhi Yojna and other SHG schemes are implemented in Haryana and Punjab, are also the areas where female feticide, violence against women remain rampant. Unless SHGs are located in an ideological perspective they will continue to be limited conduits of credit and have minimal impacts on poverty and the status of women.

Sara Ahmed focused her comments on her experience of the Kudumbashree programme in Kerala. Formulated as poverty eradication programme and seeking to bring about the convergence of services through SHGs, Kudumbashree sought to address the development paradox in Kerala of high literacy but low status of women and disguised poverty. Kudumbashree approach of reformulating neighborhood groups formed under the decentralized planning process to focus on BPL families has led to breaking up of groups, with little concern for equity.

Meetings of Kudumbashree groups were focused on instilling discipline of savings to facilitate linkages with NABARD. Activities promoted for income generation are based on state captive markets such as catering, IT data processing etc. Production activities are undertaken without considerations of minimum working conditions. Women's groups thus became the means to bring women into mainstream production by subverting the contractual labour laws of the state. Women in Kudumbashree groups did not need to be paid as per labour laws or provided support services and nor did they address issues of women's status or rights, in contrast to the groups

formed through the efforts of the people's science movement in the state. Highlighting the potential of women's groups even as a strategy to initiate dialogue between communities fractured by communal tensions as has been attempted in Gujarat, Sara emphasized the need for a clear ideological perspective focused on the interests of the poor women, with credit viewed in conjunction with other elements for empowerment

Jaya Sharma shared insights from Nirantar's recent research study of SHGs. Groups in Andhra Pradesh have not met for almost 3 years as tensions and infighting abound. While women attend the Janmabhoomi meetings, they do so individually and repeatedly approach the state with problems to which response is seldom forthcoming. These trends are indicative of the nature of discourse in SHGs where the focus on loans & repayment create distrust between women and the lack of information prevents women from negotiating their interests effectively and in solidarity.

Emerging power dynamics within SHGs indicate that power tends to be concentrated in the hands of leaders, who also have opportunities for interaction with state officials etc. Such women are mostly educated & better off and seldom held accountable by their groups as they control the groups and maintain discipline around credit. A feminist analysis of the dynamics of SHGs also reveals that while a credit focus was viewed as necessary to address poverty, women analyze their poverty in various other dimensions. While the demands from women may vary across numerous issue such as wage rates, access to resources, need for capacity building etc.; the institutional response to these demands has been invariably limited in the form of credit. The ideology of the state and the instrumental use of SHGs as "good repayers, won't run away, disciplined" and for promotion of its own agenda of family planning and enhancement of productivity indicate a patriarchal approach to SHGs.

As feminists a deeper analysis is called for when women in SHGs say "we are happy with Micro Credit. There is a change in our status in the family; we are able to help our husbands, take more responsibility and make to husbands feel relaxed". These statements indicate a reinforcement of the identity of the "good woman" as issues of power and gender dimension of labour remain unanswered and women themselves negate the value of their unpaid work. Hence in our articulations, we need to be more analytical and reflective not only about the role of the state and the definition of citizenship being limited to fulfillment of state driven goals, but also about informing the discourse with feminist interpretations of what women are saying about Micro Credit.

Participants agreed that a deeper analysis of SHGs and micro credit was called for to understand implications and to formulate a feminist viewpoint. The Kerala experience revealed that the Kudumbashree programme had in fact appropriated the decentralization programme, and the 10% allocation for the women's component plan was disbursed to SHGs instead becoming the

basis for a process of gender based planning. There is little consideration given to larger issues of privatization of natural resources and increase in gender based violence as SHGs remain the only forum for women and are focused on a limited credit agenda. Men also form SHGs as they view them as a means of accessing resources.

Experiences from Andhra Pradesh and Kerala pointed to the increasing politicization of SHGs. Others highlighted the increasing indebtedness and increasing burden of debt repayment on women. The West Bengal experience of SGSY groups reveals a lack of cohesion in SHG as individuals who come together only for individual gains. Poultry, animals etc disbursed under the programme are not covered by insurance, creating a cycle of further indebtedness and increased poverty. SHGs are also seen as easy access to rural markets by MNC companies such as HLL & Amway to retail their product. Participants felt that SHGs were limited in their purview and not appropriate for livelihood based initiatives, and nor were they conducive to linkages with the markets, and hence should perhaps remain limited to the function of credit with other forms of organizations to address larger issues. Money from SHGs is often used for social ceremonies and marriages and poor members are burdened to repay in the absence of production assets or enhanced incomes.

The experiences of the BGVS presents an alternative, where SHGs are viewed as educational spaces, while serving the need for credit. In the absence of availability of rural credit, SHGs seen the only recourse. Our demands should therefore be for enhanced rural credit for all instead of limited perceptions of SHGs for credit. Alternatives being explored for organizational self reliance include such that do not link MC based groups to banks, but enhance capacities to run & manage their own institutions.

Others pointed to the commercialization of SHGs as NGOs charge high interest rates to cover their own costs. They are encouraged to do so by donors who in turn view this as a means building institutional sustainability at the cost of women while allowing donors to withdraw. Bangladesh participants drew comparisons with experiences in their own country, where organizations like Asha and Grameen Bank promoted MC as the only anti-poverty approach, without incorporating social issues. These women continue to be members to access credit, while their men may have 3 wives all in different credit groups! While there may be some loose linkages with social development inputs, political issues of women's empowerment remain un-addressed and women are used as instruments to appease family needs and institutional requirements.

In conclusion the group was of the view that SHGs and micro credit cannot be negated entirely, since they serve as access to urgently required credit for poor woman. Credit cannot however be seen as an end in itself but as a means to address production & consumption needs in the absence of adequate responses in families and communities. On the one hand it is important to

examine what impact SHGs have on local production and traditional economics and the restoration of livelihoods. On the other is the need to analyse SHGs & the economic paradigm that they represent. This is critical for feminists as women struggle for lives with dignity, security and justice.

The workshop ended with a resolve to examine the SHG phenomena critically from a feminist perspective, and to seek alternatives that are empowering for rural poor women. We also called upon the state for to desist from using women's bodies and forums as a means of promoting its own agenda, while absolution itself of responsibility of ensuring wellbeing of its citizens. A resolution was adopted at the conference, reflecting these concerns.

Theme Workshop on Issues before Women's Studies (6th May, 2005)

The first National Conference on Women's Studies, held in Bombay in 1981, undertook a review of the university syllabi for various disciplines in order to concretely suggest measures for the engendering of disciplines and of institutes of higher education in India. It was subsequent to this planned critique that the IAWS was set up as a national network to provide impetus to the development of women's studies in India. The setting up of Women's Studies Centres in universities and Women's Development Centres at the college level (in 1980s) was thus the result of a planned intervention by women activists who decided that there was a need for gender sensitization of the academia and of academic institutions alongside a critique of disciplines, particularly the social sciences, from women's perspectives. The critique of patriarchal structures and ideologies as a basic premise of analytical approach as well as the bulwark of unequal and discriminatory approaches provided a challenge to assumed objectivity and neutrality in conceptual approaches even as these actively buttressed entrenched, inegalitarian perspectives which aimed at using education for maintaining the status quo. Thus women's studies emerged as a conceptual critique as part of and on behalf of an alternate vision of academia. Women emerged as one major category of analysis when looking at processes of marginalization of vulnerable social groups and communities as well as the most marginalized amongst all these groups. It was no co-incidence that the first conference of the IAWS was held in the early 80s and that many of the activists of this phase attended the conference. The early 1980s, as we know, was also a period when many new women's organisations came to be formed as well as new perspectives emerged amongst older existing organizations. Women's Studies gained from the energy generated by the movement on the ground level even as both together endeavoured to advance the empirical and conceptual basis for pushing women's concerns to the fore.

The IAWS executive, in the meantime, responding to more recent developments in higher education in general and women's studies specifically, decided to focus on Women's Studies in India, its concerns, priorities and perspectives within the larger matrix of education today. The Plenary on Women's Studies in the XIth National Conference was to facilitate a reality check on the state of

women's studies and of WSCs within universities. The Plenary was followed by a more interactive session to which representatives of all University based Women's Studies Centres were invited and many made it. The occasion provided an opportunity to take stock of the changes initiated since the early 80s, the achievements as well the severe constraints within which these centres function within the changed context of higher education in the new millennium.

This session was held in the format of an interactive workshop. While there were nearly 300 participants in this, more than 22 participants spoke to focus on issues at both an individual plane as well as to focus on common concerns and experiences.

Participants in the discussion included faculty/staff from Calcutta, Burdwan, Jadavpur (all WB), SNTD, Pune University, TISS, Wardha (all Maharashtra), Delhi University colleges and Departments, AP university (AP), Tiruchirapalli, MIDS, Tirupati (TN), Mysore (Karnataka) Bhubaneswar, Berhampur, (Orissa), Kerala, Goa. Thus even though all Centres were not represented, participants reflected the experience of Centres from at least 10 states. Amongst those attached to Universities who spoke were - Ishita Mukhopadhyay, Veena Poonacha, Anita Ghai, Swati, Chhaya Datar, Gopa Shefali Moitra, Ratna, Arinkalti, Padmini Swaminathan, S. Anandhi, Rameshwari Verma, Asha Hans, Divya Pande, Avantika, Rajni Palriwala, Urmimala Das, Iliana Sen, K. Parvathy, Maya, and Deepika, Others who spoke, included Pushpa Bhave, Zarina Bhatt. Dr. Kumud Sharma, President IAWS conducted the session.

The problems identified in the session could be broadly categorized as follows:

1. Issues concerning research, research methodology – knowledge generation and its potential;
2. Women's Studies as a teaching programme. Its legitimacy as a discipline;
3. Recruitment of Faculty and funding;
4. Extension activities – priority, nature of activities;
5. Ideological orientation – teaching women's studies with a perspective;
6. Attempts at re-defining agenda and content of women's studies;
7. Rationale/basis for setting up new centres, procedures for screening and reviews;
8. Institutional patterns of women's studies centres – space and autonomy of Women's studies centres.

A number of speakers raised questions about the divergence of perspectives between the initial tasks when WSCs were set up and the shifts coming about since the Ninth Plan and after. Participants repeatedly drew attention to the recent push towards a focus on extension activities, as different from and as opposed to research. The latter was clearly sought to be undermined in the course of the revised X Plan guidelines as issued by the UGC over 2002-04. Screening and review formalities were used to push such an agenda. The methods adopted for holding screening/review were also found lacking in both intellectual rigour as well from a perspective of ethical practices.

What was the basis of allocating funds for the setting up of such Centres? One speaker felt the need for more Centres in the south which seems to be neglected on this count. Kerala has only one UGC –funded Centre. It may be recalled that the UGC sponsored

Centres are entitled to government funding under the Plans, and are also subject to bureaucratic delays due to the same. Speakers in the workshop emphasized that these issues were not to be seen in isolation of the changed context in which institutions of higher education were functioning today. In the globalization era, funding has emerged as a clear instrument of determining priorities and agendas. Further, the neo-liberal environment with its emphasis on markets and practical skills was not favourable to the pursuit of intellectual perspectives which aimed at evolving critiques and advancing diverse perspectives/methods of social enquiry. An opinion was also expressed for the need to break out of dominant western paradigms especially in regard to feminist theory. These needed to be informed and interrogated from South Asian perspectives. This could also be done through a re-emphasis on the links with the women's movement which was also imperative if Centres were to break out of the impasse some of them seem to be faced with. It was also pointed out that Centres should try to reach out to women from the marginalized communities, particularly dalits and the youth. This should also be seen to be necessary in order to break out of the 'identity boxes' that we seem to be circumscribed in, particularly by prevailing ideologies in the political domain.

What constitutes Women's Studies, the question was raised in many different ways and with different contexts in mind. It brought into its ambit both the academic curricula as well as the institutional structures within which women's studies was being practiced today. What was the mandate given by the UGC to the centres and is there a change in the context and content of that mandate? What did earlier review committees or screening panels take into consideration when sanctioning grants or the setting up of a centre? Which posts and how many were sanctioned and what part of the decisions taken actually got implemented? Clearly there can be no fixed answers. Have the Centres got caught in the local hierarchies which set the tone for the 'convenience' framework within which all such agendas are finally adapted and implemented or are Women's Studies Centres still able to, willing and equipped and committed to doing things differently? Is there space for pursuing different agendas in the present context or are there pressures discouraging autonomy of such centres?

Some of these issues had surfaced in the functioning of WSCs over the last few years in an attempt to fathom the range of issues being addressed by such Centres. Thus SNDT, Bombay organized a workshop in February 2004 to discuss the experience of teaching women's studies in collaboration with IAWS and centres in the western region. In March 2004, a national level seminar was organized to review and share experiences in the teaching of women's Studies at the JNU; meanwhile in Tamil Nadu a survey of the teaching of Women's Studies was undertaken.

WSCs members were not opposed to extension activities or undertaking work among the community. But concern was expressed at the official emphasis on such activities and on advocacy; the attempt being to prioritise one over academic activities. This was seen as an attempt to undermine the Women's Studies agenda, its academic potential as well as dilution of academic rigour which the centres had tried to emphasise over the years. Further, the manner of implementation of the 'extension activity' could very well be turned around to suit neo-liberal perspectives and to advance pro-market agendas as can be seen in the zeal with which self-financed and application-oriented

courses are being touted as an ideal thrust in favour of vocationalisation. If we do not engage in critical interaction with these forces WSCs can fall into a trap where stereotypes will be perpetuated by market driven forces. In other words, the orientation of 'extension' activities can also differ depending on the perspective with which such actions are undertaken. Many pointed to the attempt to push them into holding *Krishi melas*, running *Krishi Kendras*. In one case rural women who had been actively associated with agricultural production were sought to be pushed into sewing lessons; in one case in the name of extension activities, classes were held for application of *mehndi*.

To give another example, the Centres could also be seen to be part of this new emphasis by the funding agencies on SHGs and micro-credit. The point is that local needs and opportunities may push any of these into the forefront as activities undertaken but the outcome may differ depending on the overall framework within which these get implemented. The context in which decisions are taken and such developments take place also determine whether they will make more visible the 'gap' between concerns being expressed by women's studies at the level of conceptual analysis and the reality on the ground within which these centres have to function. However, the opinion was expressed that extension work could and needed to be done with a feminist perspective.

The question was also raised by a speaker that it may not be correct to see those advocating extension activities, including SHGs, as 'pushing' government policy as they approach these issues from a different perspective. The IAWS could play a role in monitoring/developing such a programme.

How is it that Women's Studies Centres and their Directors respond when the British council and the UGC approach them but not when IAWS invites them to participate in a discussion on the issues in women's Studies? Why is it posed as an 'elite' agenda? Further, there is a need to reflect over our own politics; maybe to evolve a 'new' politics. Responding to apprehensions expressed over NGOisation it was observed that students of women's studies, especially those from a social work background would necessarily explore employment opportunities in the NGO sector.

Given the resource crunch visible in the higher education sector, speakers referred to the uncertainty of funding which in turn affected the feasibility of tenure and the posts involved. Recruitment was delayed if at all it took place. From the Ninth Plan onwards documents refer to the possibility of appointing full-time Directors but funds have not been forthcoming for the same, as is also the case with other faculty positions. Most Centres were thus far allowed only research positions for long-term appointments. Given the shift towards teaching courses, more marked since the late 90s, the work pressure has increased with no corresponding increase in faculty positions. More recently there is shift towards offering 'contract' work, a recent cost-cutting method being pushed by the UGC all over the country in the era of liberalization. Thus the Centres have uneven capacities developed and accumulated over the previous decade with shifts in the context and content of women's Studies making the unevenness even sharper. The same goes for funds with many being denied funds for purchase of books. The 'under-paid over-worked' stereotype was invoked by some. In a situation of financial squeeze while WSCs located in universities with more funds are able to balance these out; in universities where funds are low, this offers one more opportunity to tighten the hold on Centres in many different ways. The 'monitoring' as well as 'autonomy' of Centres too need to

be understood in this changing context. These are then used to make appointments which may not necessarily stand the scrutiny of fair and objective recruitment policies. The issue of tenure of Directors also figures in these debates. If and when centres become susceptible to such pressures, they invite adverse reactions from other departments thus giving rise to a vicious circle where 'Women's Studies' gets trapped within the very entrenched interests it set out to challenge and critique. These vested interest groups can be centred around individuals, or around caste and class based hierarchies; the institutional spaces provided by Centres may be utilized for pushing regional or state level agendas. Thus the possibility of using this newly created institutional space to establish links and tap the energy of social movements of local groups and communities gets seriously curtailed.

Is standardization then the answer? The long-standing debate on whether Women's Studies is to be continued as a Programme with a distinct perspective or to take on the shape of a separate department has surfaced with more seriousness since over the last decade many more Centres have taken to teaching programmes. The issues of inter-disciplinarity and the criticality of women's studies to intervene and engage with other disciplines as well as the faculty in other disciplines, were repeatedly emphasized.

This was also necessary at a time when the academic potential of women's studies was sought to be diluted (as part of the revised guidelines from the UGC the autonomy of Centres and the universities within which these were located was sought to be eroded).

Certain technical aspects were also addressed. These include the position of Women's Studies courses and the eligibility criterion for NET, which is today a qualifying examination for teaching positions and UGC Fellowships. The courses also need to be vetted in terms of the potential vis-à-vis employment avenues.

While the renaming of WSCs as Women and Family Studies was staved off, we could not take that discussion forward to interrogate perspectives. WSCs have to align with forces pressing for democratization of university structures. It may be useful to look beyond binaries of research/teaching and extension activities and explore a third alternative wherein a new working model could be developed within the university structure. Women's Studies was never visualized to function in isolation from those working for changes within these structures.

Speakers also emphasized the need for conceptual and methodological rigour in teaching and research. The earlier focus on participatory research and on interactive methods between researcher and researched were also getting diluted. Research on women could be done from a perspective which may disempower them.

The need to develop reading material from a range of perspectives was also emphasised. Even as Women's Studies is now emerging as a separate discipline, the need to critique other disciplines with a view to engendering them continues to be felt strongly. While some social science disciplines have

been impacted over the past decades, the sciences are yet to respond to interrogative social perspectives.

In recent years the disability movement has successfully drawn attention to the fact that in addition to the physical aspects of disability, social discrimination and prejudices act as a major impediment in the lives of those with special abilities. The women's movement and Women's Studies need to include perspectives emanating from those who are not seen as part of the mainstream society. In this the women's movement and the disability movement are natural allies since both recognize that the disabilities imposed are more social than mental. Also, in recent years it is being recognized that the problems need to be addressed from a perspective of empowering the subjects, rather than from outlooks based on charity and pity.

Attention was also drawn to the fact that the WSCs were subjected to 'monitoring' which was not the case with other established departments.

A suggestion was made that IAWS should have a special category of membership for those attached to WSCs. IAWS may support collaborative activities involving WSCs. Members expressed a greater desire to be part of the regional/zonal activities organized under the aegis of the IAWS between the National Conferences.

A positive experience of being initiated into Women's Studies Course was recounted by M.A. students from the Mahatma Gandhi International Hindi University, Wardha, even as they drew attention to the numerous ways in which their course itself faced instability at different levels, including the threat of non-recognition of the course. The course was consciously designed to move away from a 'lecture only/classroom format' to explore more interactive, inter-disciplinary method of teaching-learning. Thus the students in their first encounter found themselves participating in a workshop, from the preparatory stage itself. The absence of a permanent faculty was more than compensated by the presence of committed guest faculty. The syllabus opened up creative areas for engagement through films, literature, group projects and developing writing skills which did not lay undue stress on filling up pages. The extensive use of literary works and also flexibility of teaching methods which provided scope for performances aimed at critical application and reflection on the issue of representation, role models, stereotypes, socialization; and the building in of student responses for taking the course forward provided tremendous scope for students to develop their own thoughts and perspectives. The presence of boys and their involvement in these activities sparked off another trajectory of self reflection on issues of masculinity, and forms of patriarchy. Since the students came from the Hindi medium, they also critically examined their social roots and the structures, social polity and cultural background. The Hindi region, often seen to be synonymous with the BIMARU region, is also a stronghold of Brahmanical patriarchy. Confronting this reconfigured patriarchy through the medium of education poses a challenge to vested interests and could be attributed for the instability the course faced. The students would like an M.Phil course to be developed to take this process of critical engagement further, and for this they sought the support of the IAWS.

Resolutions passed in the general body meeting of the XIth National Conference

1. Resolution on the Current Situation in Gujarat

The XI National Conference of the IAWS registers grave concern over the continuing situation in Gujarat. We cannot forget that the events of 2002 represent of the most serious violations of Muslim women's rights in independent India. The State's complicity in these violations represents a complete breakdown of the notions of sovereignty, citizenship and equal rights for all.

In addition to its complicity in the genocide, the State has abdicated its responsibilities towards ensuring justice or trying to rehabilitate survivors of the large scale sexual violence. IAWS reminds its members, women's groups and NGOs that there are still tens of thousands of internally displaced people in Gujarat living without any citizenship rights. The fact that there are significant legal battles being waged should not lull us into complacency that all is well in Gujarat or will be in future. The threat posed by the Hindu right has not ended with their electoral defeat in the Lok Sabha elections in 2004 and the struggle against them must continue.

We call upon the Indian government to urgently provide comprehensive rehabilitation for the survivors of the violence including food security, housing, access to education, healthcare, livelihoods, civic amenities, etc.

The UPA government's current draft law on communalism ask that consultations with women's groups and human rights groups form part of this review. This new law must include a comprehensive rehabilitation package as part of State obligation towards survivors of communal violence.

Also, Gujarat has thrown up a crisis of understanding wherein our notions of sovereignty, citizenship and the construction of plural identities stand severely challenged. IAWS and the women's studies movement commits itself to critically and urgently engage with these challenges both intellectually and politically.

2. Resolution on Support to Democratic Movements

The XI National Conference of the IAWS expresses its deep concern at the increasing State repression on democratic movements and articulation of democratic aspirations in many parts of the country including that of Dalits, tribals and indigenous people of the North East, Orissa, Uttaranchal and the resource rich states of Central India, like Jharkhand and Chattisgarh. Very often, this repression is carried out in the name of an undifferentiated "national interest", and in collaboration with industrial and financial institutions engaged in a plunder of natural resources with a total disregard for community rights of the indigenous people of the areas concerned. The conference resolves to explore the many dimensions of sovereignty, citizenship and gender in the context of democratic movements and the rights of communities to natural resources, and extends its support and solidarity to ongoing people's struggles in Kashipur and other places.

3. Resolution on Development Induced Displacement: Impact on Women

The participants and concerned delegates in the XI National IAWS conference unanimously resolved that the development-induced displacement is a very serious concern. In view of this, we urge upon the IAWS to undertake research, analysis and activism on the complexities of displacement and its impact on women and other marginalized groups. The participants also urge the IAWS to facilitate civil society engagement with this issue through dialogue and discussions at all possible levels. We as feel this gesture of solidarity as well as intellectual inputs from IAWS will be a great source of strength to the activists engaged in this issue in various parts of the country.

4. Resolution on SHGs and Micro Credit

The women's movement has since long recognized access to credit as a right for women. The promotion of micro-credit based SHGs by the State and financial institutions has partially met this need and led to marginal improvements. However, the projection of credit as the single solution for women's empowerment and poverty reduction is instrumentalist. He state is using SHGs to absolve itself of its responsibility to address the needs of women as citizens. The state has targeted women through SHGs for the implementation of development interventions that often contrary to the interests of women. SHGs are also being used as an instrumentality by the banks and corporations to promote their financial interest. Poverty remains unaddressed by the micro-credit approach since the links with livelihoods are seldom made. Micro-enterprises render poor women all the more vulnerable in a pro-capital market economy.

IAWS calls upon the state to invest resources for the assurance of basic rights of women, including health care, education and work and to desist from projecting SHGs as a panacea for women's empowerment and poverty reduction.

We also call for a review of rural credit policies to ensure that credit needs of the poorest are addressed.

IAWS urges its members, women's organizations and NGOs to facilitate processes that enable challenging structural inequalities related to gender, class and caste. There are no quick fix band-aid solutions, as proponents of micro-credit would have us to believe. IAWS commits itself to promoting research and dialogue forwards evolving feminist perspectives on micro-credit, SHGs and implications for marginalized women.

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IAWS commits itself to promoting research and dialogue towards evolving feminist perspectives on micro credit, SHGs and implications for marginalized women.

5. Resolution on Employment Guarantee Act

The XI National Conference of the IAWS welcomes the introduction of an EGA for the first time. It is a recognition of the aggravated need of a means of survival for the growing number of unemployed, poor and malnourished in the country. However, in its existing form, the Act does not provide the required employment guarantee and contains harmful, discriminatory and divisive provisions in its conditions of entitlement. The XI National Conference of the IAWS demands an amendment, which includes the following. The Act:

1. Must have a guarantee of extension to the whole of the country, both rural and urban within a prescribed time-frame of not more than 5 years.
2. Must have a universal entitlement to all who are prepared to work within its ambit. It has to be recognized that only those in need will access it and that if it is not universal, discriminatory practices may exclude Dalits, minorities, women and tribals.
3. In place of a household entitlement, all adults must be entitled. Otherwise, intra-household dependencies, discrimination and control which work against women will be reinforced. Failing this, 40 per cent of the employment must be for women.
4. There must be no restriction in the forms of work offered. If women's access to the guarantee is to be enabled, the conditions of work and the health and capacity to work must be taken into account in the allocation of work.

The lack of resources cannot be an excuse to keep the Act in its existing restricted form.

6. Resolution on The Armed Forces Special Powers Act

The Armed Forces Special Powers Act promulgated in the North-east since 1958, has led to brutal forms of repression and state violence against the people of that region. Women from the afflicted states from different tribal communities have been continuously raped, sexually assaulted or even shot dead, merely on suspicion. Rape is being used as a political weapon in this area to silence the people's struggle. The IAWS strongly condemns the use of torture, rape, sexual assault and all other instances of state violence in the North-east and urges the Central Government to withdraw the Armed Forces Special Power Act in toto, and extends its support to the women suffering the consequences of the armed conflict in the area.

7. Resolution on Sex Selection

The XI National Conference of the Indian Association for Women's Studies (IAWS) condemns the sex selection practices that are being widely used in India leading to a drastic reduction in child sex ratio. The 2001 Census has revealed that the child sex ratio has further declined to 927 girls to 1000 boys. In some of the comparatively more prosperous states such as Haryana, Punjab, Maharashtra, Gujarat, the child sex ratio has gone down even below 800, including, regrettably, the capital city of Delhi. The major cause for this proliferation is the utter failure of the government and the medical profession to implement and monitor the legal safeguards enshrined in the Preconception Pre Natal diagnostic techniques (regulations and prevention of misuse) Act – PCPNDT Act 2002. The greed and unethical attitude of a significant section of the medical fraternity has aggravated the sex selective discriminatory practices.

There is an urgent need to develop effective mechanisms for accountability of those who willingly concede for commercial reasons to the ruthless and retrograde demand for a male child, which is closely related to the devaluation of women's lives through the practice of dowry, which is now common to all sections of Indian, as well as the growing commodification of women's bodies. Women's organizations must take up the practice of the pre-birth elimination of daughters, before women reach extinction in the Indian society. The participants of the conference strongly feel that the IAWS should take a lead in this matter.

8. Resolution on Impaired Citizenship and Forms of Exclusion (Aging and Disability)

As disability cuts across all categories of class and caste, we the participants of sub-theme 8 propose to the general body to resolve:

1. We appreciate the contributions made by IAWS in creating a historic event by including its disabled members
2. Disability should be a part of the general theme of the conferences in the future.
3. There has been a shift from medical to social understanding of disability. We the participants appeal to the IAWS to arrange for a plenary so that the converted do not carry out a discourse with the converted alone.

4. We acknowledge that the disabled citizens are deprived of their basic social, political, economic, sexual and cultural rights. We appeal to the IAWS to make endeavors to include the disability perspective in women's studies programs and its movements.
5. Recognizing that mobility and communication (sign language, interpreter, Braille and large print copies) issues that the disabled face, we appeal to the IAWS to make future conferences fully accessible and disabled friendly.
6. We also appeal that some volunteers should be assigned to those who need them. Since we believe in a truly inter-dependent society, let us make a beginning.
7. The ICG, where the conference is being held should be requested to make the venue fully accessible.

9. Resolution Proposed by the Suryanelli Support Group

The IAWS expresses grave concern at the recent High Court judgement acquitting all but one of the accused in the Suryanelli rape case. The judgement has in effect undone decades of struggle by the women's movement to make sexual violence recognizable as a crime against women. Rather, the judgement once again turns the victim into the culprit holding that she consented to her continuous rape by several men for over 40 days. This has serious implications in the future for cases regarding sexual violence.

The IAWS expresses solidarity with activists in Kerala who are fighting for redressal in this case and for the dignity of women in the state.

(* This resolution has to do with the recent High Court judgement on a case of abduction and rape involving a young girl from Suryanelli, Kerala, in 1996)

A recent verdict of the Kerala High Court acquitted all but one of the 36 accused in the Suryanelli case. The Suryanelli incident involved a young girl, who was abducted, held captive and continuously raped by a series of men for over 40 days from January to February 1996. The girl was taken to different places and "sold" to various persons. Her abductors set her free on 26 February 1996. By then she was suffering from serious pelvic infections and other health problems. The girl and her family took it to the public, amidst tremendous pressure of all kinds. An FIR was registered at the Munnar Police Station and in the following days, the girl identified almost 43 persons. The accused included many prominent businessmen, political leaders and government officials, including a then Member of Parliament and Central cabinet minister.

It was due to tremendous pressure put by various women's organizations as well as the general public that the Left Democratic Front Government entrusted the investigation to a Special Investigation Team. Three years after the issue came to light, the Government set up the State's first ever Special Court to deal with the case. On 6th September 2000, the Special Court upheld the charges and handed down stiff punishment to 32 of the accused men and 3 women. Nine of them, including one woman, were sentenced to 13 years rigorous imprisonment – for rape, mass rape,

abduction, illegal detention and sale of a minor girl for sexual abuse. The others got varying years of jail terms. All of the accused then appealed in the High Court against the judgement of the Special Court and went out on bail.

Disposing of this appeal, on 20th January, 2005, a two-member Division Bench of the High Court consisting of Justice K.A. Abdul Gafoor and Justice R. Basanth gave the verdict and exonerated all but one of the 36 accused. The Division Bench convicted the first accused, S.S. Dharmarajan for offences punishable under Sec. 372 (selling a minor for purposes of prostitution, etc.) and Sec. 366(a) IPC (procurement of minor girl). The court said that the prosecution had failed to substantiate the charges of conspiracy and rape against the others. Regarding the allegation of rape, the court felt that the victim's lack of consent could not be proved. The High Court found it significant that the young girl traveled more than 4000 km. and yet did not try to escape. This, they deduce, incriminates the girl as it signifies (to them) that she was *willing* to go with the accused. And from there, the High Court takes a short route to arguing that consensual acts cannot be qualified as rape. Twenty-five years after the Mathura judgement, the judiciary is continuing to define consent in extremely mechanical and narrow terms without recognizing the realities of power that both 'consent' and rape must be located in. As a High Court verdict, this judgement has tremendous significance for other cases which are at various stages of trial at several courts. This verdict which once against has penalized the victim has sent shock waves among the public. A section of the media also rose to the occasion to give moral support to the girl and her family.

After tremendous pressure from women's groups in Kerala as well as from the general public, the Kerala Government agreed to appeal to the Supreme Court. However, this does not take away the urgent need for sustained efforts by women's groups to take the legal struggle to the Supreme Court and to continue the struggle until justice is delivered. At a meeting in Ernakulam, on the 5th February 2005, a "Defense Committee" has been set up with the purpose of facilitating the legal procedures, generating resources, networking with other groups at the national level and seeking more positive media attention.

The High Court verdict in the Suryanelli case is unsettling because of the obvious injustice done to the young woman and to her family who have been waging an everyday battle not only for legal redress but also to salvage the dignity and humanity of their lives. It also sends out a message (a deliberate message, we believe) to women waging various legal battles against organized sexual violence in the state.)

10. Resolution on Research and Monitoring of Changes in Education

Education is a critical site for the construction and reproduction of gender and notions of citizenship. IAWS needs to research and monitor the education through curricular reform, teacher education and the privatization of education.

11. Resolution on the Linkage between Women's Studies and School Education

Knowledge generated through Women's Studies needs to inform both curricular content in school education and teacher's training. IAWS should facilitate and set up mechanisms in Women's Studies departments in order to make this possible.

12. Resolution on Migration, Displacement and Borders

The IAWS condemns the policies and actions of the Maharashtra and Delhi governments which have evicted and displaced several thousands of people living in slums and bastis. Its policies on urban governance and development in restructuring the ecology and infrastructure is leading to the deprivation of the housing and livelihood rights of the urban poor. Both governments have resorted to severe police attacks and repression on the peaceful and democratic protests.

13. Resolution on the Politics of Sexuality

We in the women's movement have long recognized that constructions of what is "natural" and "normal" have been used to define and control us as women. We also recognize that rigid binaries of "man" and "woman", notions of what constitutes a "normal" body and notions of what constitutes "acceptable" sexual behaviour limit possibilities for all of us. They also stigmatize and deny citizenship rights to individuals and communities perceived to deviate from the "normal". These include, for example, people with disabilities, those who are same-sex desiring, lesbian and bisexual women, transgendered people, hijras and sex workers.

In this context, Section 377 of the IPC clearly violates every principle of equity, justice and citizenship. Section 377 criminalizes a wide range of non-procreative sexual acts considered to be "against the order of nature". This provision is justified on the grounds that it provides legal redress against child sexual abuse. However, not only is it entirely inadequate in this regard, in practice it is used to harass, control and criminalize those who threaten patriarchal structures upheld by compulsory heterosexuality. We call upon the government to repeal Section 377 and to ensure that a separate law be enacted at the earliest to effectively deal with child sexual abuse. Legal provisions such as Section 377 violate the letter and spirit of the Fundamental Rights enshrined in the Constitution which guarantee equality and freedom to all citizens.

IAWS commits to engaging with the experiences and emerging perspectives that communities perceived to deviate from the "normal" offer to the women's movement. Such an engagement would enable us to subvert and strike at prescriptive norms. It would also help evolve a framework of citizenship which is not merely a liberal framework of inclusion but one which is transformatory and liberatory.

Appendix: List of Films Screened at the Conference

(Films Curated by Uma Chakravarti and Rahul Roy)

Screening and discussion co-ordinator: Rahul Roy

1. *My Mother India: Director -- Safina Uberoi*
2. *Manjuben Truckdriver: Director-- Sherna Dastur*
3. *Soldiers in Sarong: Director—Lokendra Arambam*
4. *Kitte Milve Mahi: Director—Ajay Bharadwaj*
5. *City Beautiful: Director—Rahul Roy*
6. *Girl Song: Director—Vasudha Joshi*
7. *Night of Prophecy: Director—Amar Talwar*
8. *Shadows of Freedom: Director-- Sabina Kidwai*
9. *Until When: Director-- Dahna Abourahme*
10. *Sita's Family: Director—Saba Dewan*
11. *Tales of the Night Fairies: Director-- Shohini Ghosh*

My Mother India: dir. Safina Uberoi

Synopsis

This film spans two continents and explores, identity and citizenship against a backdrop of unexpected violence. It is a poignant account of the contradictions within the emerging concept of a global citizen.

Until When dir. Dahne Abourahme

Synopsis

This Palestinian film explores the multiple layers of experiences in a relief camp. It uses interviews, archival photographs and other material to sensitively capture the interior lives of young people in Palestine today.

Shadows of Freedom, dir. Sabina Kidwai.2004

Synopsis

The film traces the history of three women in a Muslim family in India and how the issues of identity and gender conflicts with their lives and that of their family.

Night of Prophecy, dir. Amar Kanwar, 77 mins, 2002

Synopsis:

A Night of Prophecy is a simple film about poetry and witnessing the passage of time. Through poetry emerges the possibility of understanding the past, the severity of conflict and the cycles of change. The film travels in the conflict ridden states of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Nagaland and Kashmir in the Indian subcontinent.

Sita's Family, dir. Saba Dewan, 60 mins, 2002

Synopsis:

Sita's Family, explores memory and the mysterious ways in which it is transmitted from mothers to daughters. It is about the family, the primary site of struggle for women and it is about the outside, forbidden territory to be negotiated at considerable peril.

The film is a personal journey about three generations of women, spanning between their lives the turbulent decades of India in the making. Manorma, a journalist, a mother and now a grandmother, takes time off from her many duties and responsibilities to revisit her maternal home in Punjab. She sifts through fragmented memories of her deceased mother, Sita Devi who was a prominent freedom fighter, a trade unionist and an early women's rights activist in Punjab. Sita is what Manorma wanted to be what she hopes her daughters will be.

In Delhi the time has come for Manorma's daughters to chart out their own future. To do that however they have to confront the past. They need to revisit the site of childhood and excavate their ambivalent memories around the figure of the mother.

Manjuben Truck Driver, dir. Sherna Dastur, 52 mins, 2002

Synopsis:

Manjuben has broken the gender stereo-types which are part of the social landscape she inhabits. She has created an identity for herself that is deliberately male, that of a macho trucker, commanding respect from her peers. Yet, Manjuben is no crusader. She is just as patriarchal as the next person.

The City Beautiful, dir. Rahul Roy, 78 mins, 2003

Synopsis:

Sunder Nagri (Beautiful City) is a small working class colony on the margins of India's capital city, Delhi. Most families residing here come from a community of weavers. The last ten years have seen a gradual disintegration of the handloom tradition of this community under the globalisation regime. The families have to cope with change as well as reinvent themselves to eke out a living.

The City Beautiful is the story of two families struggling to make sense of a world, which keeps pushing them to the margins.

Radha and Bal Krishan are at a critical point in their relationship. Bal Krishan is underemployed and constantly cheated. They are in disagreement about Radha going out to work. However, through all their ups and downs they retain the ability to laugh.

Shakuntla and Hira Lal hardly communicate. They live under one roof with their children but are locked in their own sense of personal tragedies.

Kitte Mil ve Vahi, dir. Ajay Bharadwaj, 72 mins, 2005

Synopsis:

This film is a people's narrative of the cultural traditions of Dalits in Punjab. These traditions are sites of preservation and regeneration of a syncretic culture; entering the world of Sufi shrines worshipped and looked after by Dalits. The film looks at the affirmation of new consciousness among Dalits in Punjab and India.

Girl Song, Dir. Vasudha Joshi, 28 mins, 2003

Synopsis:

The film enters the world of Anjum Katyal, blues singer, poet and mother. In her interactions with her mother and daughter, we see how a cultural identity proudly woven from many strands is under assault.

Tales of the Night Fairies, dir. Shohini Ghosh, 74 mins, 2003

Synopsis:

Five sexworkers - four women and one man - along with the filmmaker/narrator embark on a journey of storytelling. Tales of the Night Fairies explores the power of collective organizing and resistance while reflecting upon contemporary debates around sexwork. The simultaneously expansive and labyrinthine city of Calcutta forms the backdrop for the personal and musical journeys of storytelling

Soldiers in a Sarong, dir. Lokendra Arambam

Synopsis

This is a film about contemporary Manipur living under the shadow of the Armed forces Special Powers Act. It documents the struggles of the Manipuri women against the repression inflicted upon Manipur under the workings of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act.

