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NEWSLETTER

INDIAN ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES (IAWS) • NOVEMBER 2015 • VOLUME III, NO. 4

Editor's Desk

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This is the first issue of the newsletter in a new term (2014- 2017). In this issue, our aim is to address the challenges and possibilities of this new critical juncture in the journey of Women's Studies. The last decade has witnessed a massive institutional expansion of Women's Studies, and of its teaching programmes, leading to disciplinization of women's studies. A new generation of women's studies practitioners- students, teachers and activists have brought along with them the debate over profession v/s passion, discipline v/s interdisciplinary field. A neat description of WS is being sought, however, when the subject of WS is being debated. The category of women is being stabilized, even as it is simultaneously being challenged and interrogated. The changing political climate has not just complicated this struggle to define the subject of women's studies; it has rather made the need to frame our approach to women's studies more urgent.

We are seeking to address these concerns, building upon the journey of the newsletter across the last three decades or so. We are bringing out the new issues of the newsletter with following features: Reports; Research Briefs - abstracts of upcoming research in women's studies; From the Grassroots - campaign reports as well as movement resources; Digital Resources - introduction to blogs, online gateways and other digital materials on WS; Women's Studies in Regional Languages - introduction to new knowledge worlds of WS in the regional languages; From the Classroom - voices from teaching and learning of WS; and Book News/ Book/ Film Review/ Women's Studies books or writings that influenced me. We have included in this issue an outline of these features and we invite you to contribute to these features.

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REPORTS

A Report on the Regional Seminar on 'Gender and Displacement in the Northeast'

Deepshikha Carpenter, Ph. D. Scholar, Department of Women's Studies, Gauhati University

A Regional Seminar on Gender and Displacement in the Northeast was organized on the 17 and 18 March, 2015 by Department of Women's Studies, Gauhati University in collaboration with Indian Association for Women's Studies (IAWS) in the Gauhati University commemorating the 25th year of the existence of Women's Studies Research Centre (WSRC).

In the Inaugural Session Prof. H.P. Sharma, Rector, G.U. spoke about the various reasons of displacement, which is experienced differently by both the genders. The Keynote speaker was Prof. Ritu Dewan, President, IAWS who talked about how the issues of conflict influence the kind of displacement. The issues of conflict are location, gender differential and sustainable development. There is gendered impact of displacement such as reduction in women's life expectancy, sexual, domestic violence and trafficking, which requires urgent interventions through changes in environmental and technological laws.

The first session on Displacement and Gender: Theoretical Exploration was chaired by Prof. Nandana Dutta, Department of English, G.U. Prof. D.K. Nayak, NEHU addressed development induced displacement, types of development projects which cause displacement, and theoretical inputs on migration and displacement. Dr. Nirmali Goswami, Tezpur spoke on displacement being a part of development paradigm and of the need to reinvent time and space in order to design and arrange them between communities. She also mentioned that scientific knowledge is patriarchal as it marks conquest over nature and people. There was discussion on the assumption of what comprises the modern state and on ethnicised space as an attribute of the modern state.

The second session on Conflict and Displacement was chaired by Prof. Shiela Bora (Retd.), Former Head, Department of History, Dibrugarh University. Prof. Monirul Hussain, GU spoke about how displacement due to partition and communalism has affected the issues of livelihood especially of women and children. He cited the instances of Nellie massacre of 1983, the Delhi riots of 1984 and the recurrent violence in the Bodo Territorial Area District (BTAD) of the present times, which have marginalised women based on caste, ethnicity and religion. Dr. Aparna Bhattacharyya spoke on her study on women in conflict zone of BTAD in Kokrajhar and Chirang districts and emphasised that displacement reinforces gender roles. Dr. Akhahitora Saikia, Actor and Activist mentioned the vulnerability and homelessness that internally displaced people face, having seen it closely. She emphasized the need to de-glorify violence especially in the media. There was some discussion on post trauma and disability as well as on the rise of religious and ethnic conflicts.

The third session on Tribal Displacement and Gender was chaired by Prof. Saraswati Raju, JNU. Dr. Monisha Behal of North East Network (NEN) spoke on the issue of gender gap, governance, violence and conflict where women are sidelined. She also mentioned that twenty years of BTAD conflict have not been able to address the issue of rehabilitation and stressed the need for women survivors to be skilled for all kinds of work in a disaster situation. Prof. Amena Passah, NEHU spoke elaborately on the militancy of Garo Hills, how fear, dislocation and trafficking of women have resulted in the breakdown of support system and security. Dr. Farzana Begum, from Tribal Research Institute, Gauhati highlighted two case studies from Assam – of BCPL in Dibrugarh and GEP in North Lakhimpur inhabited by the Kachari, Ahom and Mishing communities. She talked about the socio-economic problems due to development induced displacement. Questions were raised on the various economic and political issues of displacement.

The fourth session on Development Induced Displacement was chaired by Prof. Ritu Dewan. Dr. Vijayalaxmi Brara, Manipur University spoke extensively on how development is masculine and patriarchal in nature marginalising the indigenous population and women are worst sufferers. She cited instances from Sikkim, Garo Hills, Nagaland as regions consisting of large numbers of displaced population and stressed that it was important that gender equality and sustainable development go hand in hand. Dr. Dolly Kikon, Post Doctoral Research Scholar, University of Stockholm highlighted the hegemonic concept of development, reframing it in local context through economic context. She spoke about how the concept of development is most often detached from the ground reality. Bitopi Dutta, Programme Coordinator, NESRC, Guwahati addressed the issue of 10 billion globally displaced people and among them the indigenous population being most affected and women are the worst sufferers due to landlessness and violence. Therefore, there was a need to raise women's voices through redistribution, participation, employment and respect to women's rights. Questions were raised on the role of civil society in gender sensitive and sustainable development, and how gender inequality could be addressed.

The final session on Environment and Displacement was chaired by D.C. Goswami, Department of Environmental Studies, Gauhati

University. Prof. Saraswati Raju, J.N.U. spoke on the theoretical proposition in which gender and disaster have been placed. She felt that social systems were not gender neutral. Gender stereotypes affect disaster services like security and health care. Training and awareness were needed to mitigate disaster and post disaster situation. Prof. B. S. Mipun, NEHU pointed out North East India's vulnerability to disaster situations and also spoke on the socio-economic vulnerability that causes displacement, with special reference to Morigaon flood situation. The discussion was on skill development of women, mass migration due to disaster, the problem of religious minority that affects the status of women. Stress was laid on the need for women's perspectives in disciplines such as Geography and Environmental Science.

The two days of discussion ended on a successful note highlighting the pertinence of the issue of Gender and Displacement in the Northeast. The key issues that were discussed hinged on the theoretical exploration of displacement and gender; various forms of displacement like conflict induced and development induced displacement as well as tribal problems. It was highlighted that asymmetrical gender power relations need to be addressed in all form of data representation. It was felt that women's employment is a critical factor for women's empowerment and their overall status in the society which can also act as a safety net. Dialogues were exchanged on looking at equitable National Policy for displacement and the need for gender sensitivity to be brought while implementing these policies.

REPORTS

'A Report on the National Seminar on 'Different Worlds of Women's Studies in India: Focus on Western and Southern Regions'

KSPWSC team, Pune

IAWS along with Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule Women's Studies Centre, Pune University organized a two-day seminar on 'Different Worlds of Women's Studies in India: Focus on Western and Southern Regions' on 20th and 21st February 2015. The seminar brought together researchers, activists, teachers, students practicing Women's Studies in different ways and having entered Women's Studies at different historical points. Focusing on the critical juncture when Women's Studies is being institutionalized, simultaneously with the contestation of the category of gender, the seminar sought to illuminate and interrogate many contradictions - engendering disciplines v/s disciplining gender, theory v/s politics, profession v/s passion, institutionalization v/s ghettoisation that have informed the field of women's studies.

In her inaugural address on 'Women's Studies Today: Critical Vocabularies for Feminism in India' Mary John discussed how we think about subject of women in India, at this new juncture of institutionalization of Women's Studies. She mapped the shifting frames of thinking about women, namely colonial, national and post-national. She argued that within the colonial frame, the 'social' is defined in terms of women; it is sought to be reformed and seen in tension with the political, while the nationalist frame underlines modernity and development as the matrix for women. This comes to be critiqued by Women's Studies by marking the equation of women to social as depoliticizing. The post-national frame crystallizes differences amongst women. Ritu Dewan in her comments as the chairperson of the session highlighted both disquiet and hope associated with this moment of institutionalization of Women's Studies specifically when the integration of women's studies and movement or integration of women's studies within the disciplines are being challenged.

History of Women's Studies in the Region

This session which was chaired by Chhaya Datar took a review of the history of Women's Studies in the region, drawing from experiences of doing Women's Studies in Kerala, Maharashtra and Rajasthan. Mini Sukumar mapped the history of debates around woman question in Kerala and the history and institutionalisation of Women's Studies in the context of the debate on visibility of women and questioning of the development narrative. She argued that the question of criticality v/s employability and engaging young researchers are major challenges for Women's Studies programmes today. Asha Achutan framed the contemporary project of women's studies in institutionalized spaces, locating it in her journey and the changing shape of the 'political' and the relationship with western feminist texts. For her the project of women's studies cannot be merely about deconstruction, but about re-describing and reclaiming terminologies and concepts as well as the challenge of how to make the gender-caste and nature-caste intersections work and who is the subject of feminism. Pradnya Joshi pointed out that Rajasthan was a space where silence around gender questions had to be broken down and decoded. At present there are UGC sponsored centres in Rajasthan but to maintain feminist visions and methodologies, she felt that there is a dire need to have a model curriculum that centres need to follow.

Debating Women's Question in the Region

This session, chaired by Indrani Mazumdar, brought out other aspects in the regional histories of women's studies. Kiran Moghe started her presentation with reviewing the contemporary challenges such as consolidation of Hindutwa, neoliberal economic policies, increasing caste violence and its gendered nature, and the challenges they have posed before women's movement, describing the way it has shaped woman question and ways to address it. Kanchan Mathur mapped the regional and institutional specificities of doing gender in a development institute in Rajasthan state. She argued that it was important to intervene at the policy level and work closely with government. This gave them an opportunity to intervene in state policies and bring the Mahila Samakhya programme. Suneetha Rani described the state of women's studies in Hyderabad by using a metaphor of Bathukamma festival which was earlier a secular public space for women but had slowly got dominated by upper castes. She compared it with state of women's studies in her region and the challenges being posed to the very validity of women's studies as a discipline, and autonomy in building curriculum and control over resources given to women's studies centre.

Doing Women's Studies in the Regional Language

In this third session which was chaired by Vidyut Bhagwat there was a discussion on issue of language and importance of bilingualism in women's studies. S.P.Srimathy reviewed administrative difficulties, in establishing courses taught at her centre and aspirations of students. She also raised the crucial question of who needs to be appointed in women's studies. Then she reviewed the process of formation of curriculum and non availability of resources in regional languages. Sangita Thosar mapped her journey as student, activist and then her experience of teaching women's studies. Her engagement with Dalit feminists' writings and different movements helped her to foreground caste and gender which sharpened her understanding of women's studies from a dalit feminist perspective. For her it is important to rework curricular and teaching practices as dalit and adivasi students are coming into our classrooms and she highlighted the need to be bilingual while doing women's studies.

Different Voices in Feminist Politics

This first session of the second day, chaired by Meera Velayudhan, brought out the resistances of women of different categories. Manjula Pradeep, drawing from the life-changing experiences of working with dalit and adivasi women at the grassroots level at Navsarjan in Gujarat, sought to break the myths and stereotypes about dalit women. She pointed out the challenges and pain that these women experience while overcoming the masculinization in their community. She tried to demystify perceptions of dalit women as weak, easily manipulated and urged for engaging with intersectionality in Women's Studies and in the women's movement. A. Suneetha through her study of different women's madrassas in Hyderabad underlined the possibilities of freedom for Muslim women, specifically from lower classes and castes through Islamic education. While entry of women in Islamic education is seen as marking the imbibing of piety in women, Suneetha argued that Islamic education for women is mixed with not just religious education, and aspirations to find gainful work, but more significantly to live in the world through a lens shaped by Quranic notions of egalitarianism for the community.

Travel of Women's Studies Knowledge between Academia and Activism

This session looked at the travel of women's studies knowledges between academia and activism. Kavita Srivastava argued that Women's Studies which was a radical and subversive space has been co-opted and the link between women's studies and movement has been slowly eroded. She therefore called upon the need for women's studies movement to engage with issues like right to information and right to food. She concluded by saying that at present democracy is under threat, and at a moment like this, the women's movement and women's studies need to play a revolutionary role. Jayashree Mangubhai argued for a need to bridge gaps between researchers and activists, with concrete testimonies and theorization. She argued for taking Dalit women's experiences, their struggle for rights and their negotiations with multiple relations of power within and outside their communities, as a good starting point. She argued that we need to recognize that gender is intertwined with structures of caste.

Teaching Gender on Multiple Sites

The third session of the day began by the chairperson Nandini Manjarekar emphasizing the need for democratization of higher educational institutions where Women's Studies is housed. Sharmila Shreekumar began by arguing that the origin stories of Women's Studies are quite similar across regions, highlighting the 'duplicitous' origin of Women's Studies as a state initiated programme and also as located in a critical revolutionary movement for change. She argued that a sense of schizophrenia does not allow to see the complicity with power within the women's movement/ studies. She pointed out how the category of gender in Women's Studies is seen as referring to reality outside it, and hence we need to be disloyal to our 'civilization', questioning the adequacy of our knowledge making practices. She argued for a rethink on the conceptualization of gender in terms of our wounded attachment to the identity based on injury and exclusion. Sheeba K. M. discussed the challenges and potentials in conducting the programme in Gender, Ecology and Development Studies at Kalady, Kerala which is pitched around development bringing together engagement

with state, culture and development. She underlined the contradiction in 'teaching' the political knowledges of feminism or dalit activism.

Challenges of Institutionalization of Women's Studies

The fourth session began by chairperson Mani Mekalai reviewing problem of institutionalisation of WSCs in Tamil Nadu. Sudeshna Mukherjee argued that this is the reflexive phase of women's studies as a discipline and reviewed institutionalization of women's studies in Bangalore University. She analyzed the student constituency in context of complex socio-economic realities, arguing for a rethink of the content of our classrooms to 'talk to' our students, to address question of employability of students who do full-time courses in women's studies and becoming trans-disciplinary. Syeda Sakira Shahin argued that women's visibility today is unprecedented which could subvert feminist politics, women's rights and feminist consciousness, thus there is an urgent need to strengthen WS. She reviewed the development of WSC in Guwahati where challenges are many such as balancing between disciplining gender, and being a critical perspective in other disciplines, the idea that WS is a 'soft' option, pushing for departmental status to facilitate passing of teaching programmes etc. Chanda Asani drew from her experience of designing and teaching of courses in women's studies. She discussed in detail her curriculum, pedagogy and assignments.

Indu Agnihotri in her valedictory address started with reviewing practical and academic concerns related to institutionalization of Women's Studies in India. She spoke at length on teaching and research practices in women's studies - its present state and challenges ahead. She insisted on developing an archive of the texts/resources used in designing curriculum in women's studies through which we can create new vocabularies and language resources and consolidate it as a discipline. There is a need to concentrate on aspirations and perceptions of students about women's studies without imposing ideas. There is a need to revise the content considering challenges posed to it by dalit feminism for example. Thus she argued that without the use of prefixes defining ideological orientations, feminism as a generic term, conveys little, and there is a need for greater ideological debate to clarify perspectives and make them relevant and able to address the intersecting realities of caste, class and gender.

RESEARCH BRIEFS

Inequalities, Discriminations and Negotiations: Experiences of First Generation Dalit Women Students in Higher Education, Mumbai

Minal Sangole, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai

In India, education is perceived as a mechanism for the upliftment or upward mobility and a guarantee of equality to every one of the deprived sections of the society. According to Velaskar (1998) education is considered as a means of 'liberation', from the shackles of caste. But for the marginalised sections, it has become 'an instrument for reproducing social stratification and for maintaining the hegemony of the dominant sections' (Chanana 2000).

With the constitutional provisions, dalits are gradually entering into the mainstream of higher education. But still, inequalities and discrimination based on caste, gender, class and region persist in the educational spaces, and over the years it has also changed its forms. As compared to their male counterparts, women students are pushed back educationally due to cultural practices, behavior patterns, gender role expectations, and the association of women with the private domain of household. But, when it comes to dalit women student, they get 'triplely jeopardized' because of their social identity as women, as dalit women and then from the discreet patriarchy of their own caste men.

My study focuses on the first generation dalit women students, pursuing higher education. The institution which I have chosen for my study is ACE College of Arts, Science and Commerce (final year students). It is the first college founded by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar under People's Education Society (PES). The main objective of this college was to bring higher education especially to the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. This college has been known to have a lineage of having first generation college students since 1946. The dearth of dalit women's literature, especially in English, made me use 'dalit feminist standpoint' as the theoretical framework. It helped me to focus on the subjective realities of dalit women students. These subjective realities are captured through interpretivist paradigm. The research tries to study Siddhartha College as an educational space for the upliftment of the dalit women students. Also, it explores, analyses and understands the nuances of caste and gender based discriminations faced by the first generation dalit women students.

Through this study, it has been found that Siddharth college is perceived as a 'Dalit ghetto' in the elite and up-market urban zone of South Mumbai. It has been identified as a "dalit" college because of its history associated with Dr. Ambedkar and because the majority of the students are dalits. The familiarity with Dr. Ambedkar (for dalits), security, provision to earn and learn, choice of streams irrespective of grades, flexibility in attendance and moderate fees brings in first generation dalit and non-dalit students as well. It has been found to be a microcosm of the hinduised society wherein caste, class, region and gender inequalities and discriminations are seen at multiple levels. The experiences of dalit women students raises questions about the basic premise of the modern education system as liberatory, rational, and scientific.

The everyday experiences of dalit women students show that they are ill-treated by the management, upper caste teachers and fellow male students. They are also being labelled, especially by friends and relatives from other colleges, as kakubai, behenjhis (traditional old aunties), scholars (sarcasm), and loose women, characterless or very forward. Since they are barred from wearing trendy cloths, most of them try to alter according to their family norms and moralities. Some of them bring alternate sets of clothes and then change in the college.

They find covert ways to manage the existing hegemonic system to come out of their historical siege. These negotiations include means such as pacts, excuses, networks, lies, and tricks, in both their public and private domains. These negotiations help them to make the insufferable endurable and get support from their male friends in getting access to public spheres, sharing notes, accessing computer, etc. Similarly, their friends' circle is defined on the basis of castes, sub-castes, food habits, physical appearances and language.

Despite facing the above mentioned difficulties, dalit women students envisage education as a 'magical wand', as Shailaja Paik calls it, which will take them to the other end of marginalization. Siddhartha College as a space played a major role in negotiating and breaking the rigidity of caste system and patriarchy both in public and private spheres of these students. But at the same time, it has failed to provide a neutral space for quality education. They are still caught in the shadow of caste and patriarchy.

RESEARCH BRIEFS

The Kathak Tradition, 'Gharanas' and the Woman Question

Avantika Shukla, Women's Studies Centre, Mahatma Gandhi International Hindi University

The present study centres on the life struggles and resistance of women involved in the art form of Kathak, locating it in the changes brought about in the tradition due to the changing structures of patronage, gatekeeping and changing political economy. Kathak is said to be male-centered, having originated in the context of temples. The major Gurus of Kathak trace their lineage to Brahmins in temples, in a bid to strengthen their claim to the tradition. However for common people Kathak is identified more as the dance of the courtesan. Compared to Bharatnatyam in the south, people in Northern India show less interest in teaching their daughters Kathak. In spite of this, post-independence, we see many upper-caste, middle class women trying to intervene in the field and many of them are venerated and celebrated as Gurus. In the past, women from these castes/classes were not entering the field of dance, but courtesans were present in large numbers. There has been an even longer history of dance, in which women from 'lower' castes have been participants. In this research I have tried to bring together women's contribution, role and struggles in the history and development of Kathak. In the course of moving from 'nautch' to 'Kathak' the tradition has undergone many shifts. Rajas-Nawabs, the British regime, social reformers, the post-independence State and globalized neo-liberal capitalism have each exploited the performing arts for entertainment and also for fulfilling their own economic, political and cultural gains. Artists have been part of these systems, but have also challenged them in different ways. We can find references to the art form right from the Arthashastra, the Manusmriti, Natyashastra. The present research has attempted to look at the relationship of Kathak's history and present with power, state and economy and how gender questions have been central to the transformations within it in the first three chapters. These linkages have been examined in the context of Kathak in the pre-colonial, Kathak and the colonial encounter and Kathak in the post-colonial space. Along with Kathak as dance, these chapters also probes the caste question. Along with the Gurus of Kathak, these chapters look at the courtesan tradition the contribution of Wajid Ali Shah, the anti-nautch campaign, the cultural aspirations of independent India, exploitation of Kathak as a classical tradition by globalized capital for economic gains and the presentation of Kathak in Hindi films in the context of these changes.

The next chapters centre on the life struggles of women who have made a mark for themselves in the field. Their journey of achieving excellence in the art form and establishing themselves on the Kathak stage has been full of struggles, especially since Kathak is commonly seen as the courtesan's dance. These life stories have been covered in two chapters. The first chapter titled,

“Women in Kathak: Struggle and Challenges for Survival- women from ‘non-performing’/‘non-gharana’ families, centres the experiences of women from upper caste, middle class/ highly educated families which have no history and tradition of performance. In a world where the ‘gharana’ Gurus are held in high esteem, these women have managed to establish themselves, in the face of much oppositions and contradictions. The second chapter looks at the experiences and struggles of women from ‘gharana’ families, women who are daughters of established male ‘gharana’ Gurus. In these families, the ‘capital’ of art was passed on to the sons, not the daughters. Daughters of Kathak Gurus who have taught and shaped some of the most famous Kathak dancers, longed to learn this knowledge. This chapter looks at their aspirations and their inability to establish themselves in the field and the reasons for the same. The last chapter ‘Women’s voices and resistances in Kathak’ examines the resistance of women and the limits to that resistance. A glimpse of their resistance can be seen in strong beginnings to include social and political issues in their choreographies and performances, in challenging the politics of ‘gharanas’ and in trying to create new, more egalitarian guru-shishya traditions. An attempt has been made to evaluate people’s perspective on these women and on the new practices they have introduced in Kathak. Many female artists sense and see the iniquitous relationships that abound in the world of dance, but are unwilling to see their subordinate status as linked to power structures or are unable to mount an open protest. However through their small efforts in their own location they are active in weakening the patriarchal structure of Kathak.

This research is primarily based on interviews with well-known Kathak dancers – both male and female, as well as daughters of ‘gharana’ gurus. This research has tried to make sense of the life struggles and contributions of women Kathak dancers in the context of power structures and patriarchy, cultural dominance, influence of right-wing politics, concomitant structures of patriarchy, caste and class, classical v/s popular, political economy and the influence of neo-liberalism and sexual labour within dance.

RESEARCH BRIEFS

Tribal Women and Displacement: A Case Study of Dantewada and Bastar District in Chhattisgarh

Mamata Ramcharan Karade, Centre for Women’s Studies, JNU, Delhi

The topic of my research work is the Displacement of women due to operation ‘Salwa Judum’ conducted in 2005 by the state government of Chhattisgarh. Through my research, I will try to find out what kind of changes have come about in the lives of the tribal women due to displacement. How do women perceive these changes? Do they take it positively or negatively? I will also try to understand the rehabilitation and resettlement policy of the state government of Chhattisgarh in addition to finding the answers to the questions posed above.

Mahendra Karma is considered to be the main leader of operation ‘Salwa Judum’. He started this operation for the first time in 1991 in the form of ‘Jan Jagaran Abhiyan’ (People Awareness Campaign). At that time, Abhiyan (Campaign) did not have a big impact. Thereafter it was again started in June 2005 with the aim of ending naxalism and for this, an army of tribal youth, both of men and women was formed. This army was called special police officer (SPO). The goal was to end naxalism through the medium of this army or SPO. This operation went on for two years continuously and around 3lakhs 50 thousand people from tribal communities were displaced from their native / original place. This operation was conducted in the Dantewada, Bastar and Kankare districts of Chhattisgarh. According to Government statistics over 700 homes were burnt and the tribals were sent to temporary relief camps¹. The relief camps lacked basic facilities for survival. For example, there was lack of nutrition and food insecurity; women and children became anaemic and malnourished. Also there was no provision for meeting people’s livelihood needs, social security and health related needs in the temporary relief camps. In addition to all these problems, violence against women in the relief camps was a major problem faced by them. The impact of displacement was such that women had to migrate away from the relief camps in order to survive.

My area of study is the Salwa Judum operation that started in June 2005 and lasted for 2 years leading to an extensive displacement. Under this operation, there were in total 23 rehabilitation camps established where the tribals were made to stay after their displacement. My research is on the tribal women staying in these rehabilitation camps. I will be looking at what kind of problems faced by women after displacement, and what kind of rehabilitation policy is implemented there, through observation, interviews and questionnaires.

1 PUCL, PUDR, APDR and IAPL. “Facts about Salwa Judum.” Economic and Political weekly, Dec 17-23, 2005: 5350-5436.

FROM THE GRASSROOTS

Report of Public Hearing on 8th March on 'Caste, Patriarchy and Violence'

Archana More, Pune

The Dalit Adivasi Adhikar Manch in Maharashtra organized a public hearing on the violence experienced by dalit and tribal women on 8th March 2015 at Pune. Dalit feminism formulates the three way oppression of Dalit women: as subject to caste oppression at the hands of the upper castes, as laborers subject to the class-based oppression, also mainly at the hands of the upper and middle castes who form the bulk of landowners, and finally as women who experience patriarchal oppression at the hands of all men, including men of their own caste. The experiences shared by women in the public hearing depict more complex factors than the above, that have violated their right to life with dignity. Despite the Constitution of India providing freedom, equality, social justice, democracy, socialism and secularism, caste and religion based violence is prevalent all over India. Women are victimized in more than one ways in such incidences. The violations and violence is many times more than what is reflected in NCRB statistics, as large number of incidences of violence go unreported.

Caste Panchayat – One incident shared in this hearing was about the extreme physical violence faced by a family by caste panchayat members because they went against wishes of the panchayat in fixing their son's marriage. Men and women were hit using axe, rod; chilli powder was inserted in the daughter-in-law's vagina after stripping her half naked. The family was ostracized and asked to pay Rs 50,000 for reentering the caste group.

Public beating – A girl was raped by an upper caste man in the village and beaten up along with her mother by a mob of 100 villagers as a lesson taught to her for involving police machinery in the matter.

Sexual harassment of a widow - A widow was being sexually harassed by a man of her village. She had to face abusive language in the middle of the night from this man. The villagers wanted to get rid of this nuisance, hence opted for the easy way of accusing her of being involved in prostitution and throwing her out of the village. Neither her parents nor her in-laws supported her. The in-laws were in fact happy to see her in trouble because she was demanding a share in the property of her husband. Another woman was beaten up by a man, as punishment for opposing the exploitation of one of her woman relatives. The man demanded several times to have sex with her adolescent daughter.

Depriving of residence and land – An elected head of the village tried to throw a single woman and her father out of her home and tried to take possession of her piece of land in the name of development activity.

In all these life experiences, the survivors are vulnerable due to their caste-class background and their marital status. The perpetrator was powerful in one or other ways, linked to politicians, police machinery and was influential in the village. In all the cases women tried to reach the police machinery but the perpetrator managed the machinery to ensure that she will not get justice easily. All sorts of violence was inflicted against these women because every one of them stood for their own right to life with dignity, for which they challenged the unjust caste system. These experiences are representative of a large number of women who are falling prey to an inhuman system controlled by cold-hearted, power hungry people with patriarchal mindsets.

Kiran Moghe, (All India Democratic Women's Association) one of the jurists explained the cumulative effect of patriarchal, caste and sexual dominance. She reminded the audience of the Khairlanji episode, highlighting the fact of sexual and physical exploitation of women. She recommended that these women must be supported in their individual legal battle and struggle at societal level. If they get justice in this manner there are fair chances for a lay person to retain trust on the state machinery. Media representatives Ravindra Ambekar and Dipti Raut emphasized that these incidences are linked with personalities in party politics and hence require to be dealt with through public pressure, holding the State responsible for protecting the survivors. Legal scholars Niraja Bhatnagar and Jaya Sagade also guided the gathering.

A month after this meeting, many friends in Pune came together to strategize for the support to survivors who shared their experiences in the Public Hearing. AIDWA has taken initiative in filing Habeas Corpus in the High Court against the missing girls who are possibly sold for sex work by the local goons.

Niteesh Nawsagarey, member of Dalit Rights Forum, shared positive experience about how these women are being supported by various groups. The rape survivor's case is being pleaded by an experienced lawyer working for a women's organization from Pune.

Many students, activists personally encouraged these women after the Public Hearing and women have gathered courage from it. Such interactions proved to be instrumental in reducing their loneliness. One organization has decided to initiate skill training and establishing market linkages for the women from Nomadic Tribes, who have fallen prey to violence.

The public hearing connected the survivors to many people and groups. But long term change requires systemic changes. It calls for changes in the mindset of everybody to reduce biases pertaining to caste, class, religion, sexuality etc. As it is systemic violence, not just discrimination in the caste system but the caste system itself should be ended, so that no person henceforth is victimized.

WOMEN'S STUDIES IN REGIONAL LANGUAGES

Kulasthreeyum Chanthapennungalum Undaayathengine?

Aswathy Senan, Dept. of English, University of Delhi

The study titled *Kulasthreeyum Chanthapennungalum Undaayathengine?* or *A Preface to the History of Modern Malayali Women* by J. Devika contextualizes and problematizes the specificity of Malayali femininity in relation to the everyday life practices, social reformations, educational advancement and political developments of Kerala. Theorizing the manner in which matrilineal system practically functioned in the Kerala society, Devika states there was no “singular femininity that was applicable to the entire female population of Kerala” (26) and that the concept of “the ideal women” changed from one community to another based on caste affiliations. An example is the practice of Muslim women being expected to cover their bodies, while women of the Ezhava community were ridiculed for attempting to do the same!

Describing the lifestyles, rituals and festivals of different communities, the study highlights the inherent misogyny and patriarchy that the women of Kerala were subjected to. In a place where ‘untouchability’ was practiced, the upper caste men regularly exploited the lower caste women sexually and believed that ‘a bath’ would cleanse them of the ‘pollution’ they were exposed to in the process of intercourse! Though industrialization freed women from the clutches of their landlords, they were exploited by the factory-owners in the same fashion. It gives an in-depth understanding of how lower caste women experienced more freedom than their upper caste counterparts in family relations: they practiced widow remarriage and divorce; they participated in making family decisions and enjoyed freedom to move from their birth place and settle elsewhere. By listing the contributions of iconic female figures of Kerala like Queen Uma, Anna Chandy, Gauriamma, the study also explores the relations between women and power and the constant resistance by society or dominant male figures to deny women positions of power. It points to the social tendency to confine them to the role of mothers and wives, which is explained in detail in the chapter on the concept of motherhood.

The study identifies the end of nineteenth century when major social reformation movements were happening in Kerala as the historical moment for the tendency to grade women as ‘good’ and ‘bad’ based on moralist values. The ‘good women’ were referred to as ‘those who were born in tharavadu’ (traditional upper caste household) and the ‘bad women’ as ‘market women’. Market was a place where men and women mingled with each other, irrespective of caste biases; though they would mostly be of lower caste. So, the women in the household would be ‘purer’ or ‘better’ than the ones in the market, as they would not be ‘polluted’. This depicts how the reformist movements, which attempted to relieve the society from the caste hierarchies, transferred the notion of ‘purity’ to women. Neo-brahminical values thus degraded women as second class citizens.

The proliferation of education, the possibilities of new professions, and availability of reading materials, discussion spaces and libraries, gave way to the emergence of a new public sphere in Kerala. Economic and political changes in the beginning of the twentieth century contributed to the birth of neo-elite values. Both the missionaries and humanitarians, influenced by western ideas, asserted the difference between man and woman based on bodily functions and stated how the primary space of activity of women should be the household, where her natural virtues of love, care, patience could be diverted into two main activities: childbirth and childcare. The reformist movements emphasized that men should take initiative in developing feminine qualities in women and enhancing masculinity in men.

“The Malayali man who boarded the powerful position of the social reformist, did not see his female counterparts as equal partners in the building process of a modern society. Instead, they declared that the women are helpless beings immersed in traditional lifestyle. Projecting themselves as the saviours of these ‘incompetent’ women, they depicted women as inactive participants and men as proactive participants in this reformation process. These ‘social reformists’ merely reiterated the age-old notion that women should be submissive to men.” (83)

The study depicts how men took on the self-assumed role of saviours/protectors and systematically took dominance in politics, literature, art, government, professional spaces and even family. This also throws light into the practice of marriage as a cultural phenomenon and a legal category; the concept of “good and bad maternity”; ‘perfect professions for women’; how much of freedom they can have within family, etc.

This book provides a historical understanding of the various struggles of the Malayali women with the centres of power: society, religion, government, political forces; and the manner in which these historic moments have contributed into the evolution, formulation and modification of different notions of femininity.

WOMEN’S STUDIES IN REGIONAL LANGUAGES

In Our Own Voices: Bengali Language Publications from the School of Women’s Studies, Jadavpur University

Hardik Brata Biswas, School of Women’s Studies, Jadavpur University

It is a widely known fact and a shared point of anxiety that women’s studies resource materials of various types such as monographs, edited volumes, reports, reprints or such pedagogic materials are scanty in Indian vernacular languages. The steady increase of interest about the perspectives of women’s studies and the coeval rise of the interdisciplinary spaces inside higher academic institutions have not even been evenly met with producing pedagogic resources in vernacular Indian languages. Given this backdrop, I would like to signpost a few works in Bengali which have been produced by the School of Women’s Studies, Jadavpur University.

Since its inception in 1988, the School has been associated with publishing in Bengali. One of its flagship projects is the Women’s Writers’ Reprint Series which is an attempt to pull out women writers’ works from socially induced amnesia. The first title was published in 1991 with Professor Subir Roychowdhury (1934–1993) as the series editor. The list has had thirty-five titles till 2014 and is still growing. The series has been critically curated with introductions by experts, notes, references and annotations. It was partly inspired by the Anveshi Project on women’s writing.

Simultaneous to the Reprint Series, the School has published (mostly in collaboration with publishing houses in Kolkata) an array of resource materials in Bengali. One of its earliest publication was Swasther Adhikar: Nijer Hathe Nebar Pathe (1996) [Right to Health: Towards Taking It in Our Own Hands] being the outcome of a community-based project on women’s health issues in Kolkata slums. The School hosts several annual memorial lectures of which the Preetilata Waddedar Memorial Lecture and the Sukhalata Rao Memorial Lecture are widely known in the region. Select lectures have been published in Bengali which have reflected the wider concerns of women’s history, struggle and issues feeding into the much necessary Bangla or Bengali language resources while not dissolving any criticality which might have been otherwise ‘naturally’ associated with English language research and publications. The range of publications from such lectures covered studies of armed women revolutionaries in Bengal (2003), the life and works of Kalyani Dutta, literary figure and cultural historian par excellence (2007), critical assessment of Phulrenu Guha’s transformation from a revolutionary worker to a humanist leader (2010), Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hussain’s (1880–1932) literary worlds (2008) and Bengali women’s exposition in the periodical Sougaat from 1927–1947 (2007). This is only a representative list of the themes of the memorial lecture publications. The School has published a collection of short stories of Assamese women writers in Bengali titled Asomer Mahila Kathakar (2003). Sethu Ramaswami’s autobiography was translated into Bengali and was published in 2011. Kamla Bhasin’s well known introductory book ‘What is Patriarchy?’ [Pitriantira kake Bole] was translated to Bengali and was published in 1995.

Short monographs such as Prachin Bharate Nari [Women in Ancient India] by Ratnabali Chattopadhyay and Prita Bhattacharya (2003, 2nd reprint in 2009), Panchayat Prangane [An analysis of the socio-economic situations and struggles of elected women representatives in West Bengal] by Ashim Mukhopadhyay (2005) or resource books such as Meyeder Chokhe Ain O Ainer Chokhe Meyera [Law in the Eyes of Women and Women in the Eyes of Law] (2001, in collaboration with the West Bengal State Commission for Women) and Meyeder Adhikar: Ekti Aini Shahayika [Know Your Rights: A Legal Handbook for Women] (2011, published from a project supported by the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, Berlin) dealing with the various civil and criminal laws and legal provisions for women have been published and disseminated.

There have been a few more important publications in Bengali from projects supported by the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung. The School has published a report with images from the project Women and Media in the Context of Globalisation titled Biswayoner

Poriprekhhite Nari ebong Gonomadhyom (2008). In May 2015 an assistive manual titled Grihasramikder Sammanjanak Kaaj: Ekti Shahayok Pustika (2015) for domestic helps was published highlighting their nature of work, safety and security issues, rights and scopes of collectivization. Another working paper for trade union activists Mahila Ghrihasramik: Swikriti, Swadhikar, Sangathan (2015) [Women Domestic Help: Identity, Rights and Collectivization] has also been published as part of the project 'Domesticity and Domestic Labour: Fostering Women's Agency and Collectivities in Contemporary West Bengal'. As part of another project on 'Increased Understanding of Gendering of Workers and Culture and Politics of Organization of Workers with Special Reference to Auto Rickshaw Drivers and Beauty Workers in West Bengal' two booklets for auto-rickshaw drivers and passengers have been published. While Autorickshaw Chalak: Peshagoto Oshusthota (2015) [Health Hazards of Auto-rickshaw Drivers] have been published in Bengali with graphics for dissemination, another graphic based easy-to-read booklet Autorickshaw Ain: Chalok O Jatrir Adhikar (2014) has been published not only in Bengali but also in Hindi, Urdu and English eyeing a maximum dissemination in Kolkata.

The project 'Resource Building in Women's Studies' funded by Sir Ratan Tata Trust from 2008 to 2011 helped the School in a rather substantial way under the supervision of Professor Samita Sen to look for new and yet unexplored vistas of developing higher academic pedagogic and academic resource materials for women's studies in the region. Four readers were planned and published (the last one is shortly forthcoming) keeping in mind the long gap in the availability of quality study materials for the post-graduate student in women's studies. Cutting across disciplines and themes, the readers included works of senior scholars and researches in the field of women's studies. With the growing professionalization of women's studies as an interdisciplinary field of study/research and increasing number of students from non-English speaking background coming to the forefront of post-graduate studies in women's studies, the School has been working for some time now towards a substantive edited volume of essays translated in Bengali. The essays have been selected from the two volumes of 'Mapping the Field: Gender Relations in Contemporary India' (Nirmala Banerjee, Samita Sen and Nandita Dhawan eds., 2011). The present volume in Bengali apart from being a selection of translations of English language essays also contains new essays in Bengali from the perspectives of women's work and the burgeoning field of dance studies. It covers areas of women's health, education, sexuality, work, development, caste, education, violence, religion, politics and history of women's movement in India. The forthcoming volume in Bengali will cater to students and research scholars eager to work in Bengali. This can also be thought of as a push towards developing the intellectual infrastructure of students/scholars in the region who find it important and often more accessible to work in a vernacular language. The SRTT project has also published one occasional paper Rabindra-Upanyase Prem O Premika (2011) [Love and the Female Lover in Rabindranath's Novels]. Such publications, although comparatively few in number but steadily growing, are being envisaged and produced from various women's studies centres in India in the new light of regional contexts of language and pedagogy. While fostering a deeper understanding of the unities and ruptures in the issues and philosophies of women's studies it will help women's studies students/scholars/activists contextualize academic debates and lived lives in more nuanced ways.

FROM THE CLASSROOM

From The Women's Studies Classroom

Deepa Srinivas, Women's Studies Centre, University of Hyderabad

I draw upon my experience to speak of a difficult conundrum that a teacher of women's studies might be faced with. On one hand is the pedagogic challenge to communicate the inherently political nature of the subject and its historical connections with the women's movement. On the other, in the classroom, one must often address an essentialized and pre-known notion of 'woman', the presumed subject of politics/women's studies. If a teacher brings up questions that do not continuously revolve around this 'woman', she may encounter a feeling of puzzlement and disappointment on part of the students.

While there is a proliferation of histories and scholarship that question the singularity of the feminist subject, I feel that this has not always effectively translated into the pedagogic practice of the women's studies classroom. How might one bring in these contestations into the classroom as valid and in fact, critical dimensions of women's studies? How might one bridge the gap between new feminist knowledges and the classroom?

Let me start with the research class. In most universities, the research scholars pursuing M. Phil or Ph.D. need to do mandatory coursework for a semester or more before they switch to focused work on their own topics. At the Centre for Women's Studies where I teach, we believe that this coursework should deal with feminist and political rethinking on a range of interrelated issues—nation, citizenship, development, representation, sexualities, caste, community, race and so on. The effort is to create an understanding of gender as relational and contingent, embedded in particular social and cultural configurations. However, I increasingly get the sense that a significant percentage of students think of coursework as a phase before they move on to 'real' research. They are perhaps a little bewildered as to why the course does not provide clear cut definitions and descriptions of the 'recognizable' concepts of

gender studies—patriarchy, socialization, changing roles of women and so on. This begs a question: what are the underlying assumptions of gender in their previous disciplinary locations within the social sciences and other domains? Do students sometimes opt for research in gender studies as a ‘soft’ option and are then frustrated when the course instructor/supervisor demands rigour that extends beyond the frames of exclusion/discrimination/prejudice against women? Given these pre-conditions, one needs to struggle against years of ingrained training even as one attempts to bring out the tensions between the women’s question as it appears in mainstream disciplines and in women’s studies at every step.

As several scholars have pointed out, the institutionalization of women’s studies has led to a definite tilt towards themes and issues that are prominent in governmental and NGO initiatives and the focus of international donor agencies. One visible effect is the programmatic listing of topics under women’s studies—women and empowerment, women and development, women and globalization etc. This, combined with ‘already-known’ character of the subject, has two notable consequences: the woman-as-universal-victim theory and action-oriented resolutions that fit in seamlessly with governmental initiatives but remain disengaged from political activism and the complexity of gender today.

Working with these disciplinary constraints, one has to still find ways of bringing energy and new contexts into the classroom. Over the years, I have learned the importance of embedding the gender question in everyday, normalized settings—what may be called *habitus* after Pierre Bourdieu. Especially in the undergraduate context, it helps to pick up texts, advertisements, biographies and news reports that open up discussions around what one eats and what one does not, how one wears one’s hair or clothes or who one chooses as friends. It requires the teacher to explore the popular cultures and plural identities that young people inhabit and the idioms they speak. I remember being genuinely curious about what it means to amass ‘likes’ on Face book. Is it a vacuous thing or are there dimensions of identity and desire? Students came up with rather interesting responses. On the other hand, when one deals with a text on sexual violence (for example), one must reckon with the risk that this may be read into readymade frames and notions of feminism--the sexual vulnerability of women, the uncontrollable, predatory desires of men and so on. The challenge is to find ways of discussing relationships of power and contestation rather than getting locked into opposing tropes of victimhood and empowerment.

DIGITAL RESOURCES

Creating Intellectual Resources for Women’s Studies in Indian Languages

Sohne Harshe, CILHE, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai

The Centre for Indian Languages in Higher Education (CILHE) at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, aims to incubate interventions around Indian language resources to transform curriculum, pedagogy, and research in higher education. Important among the Centre’s activities are production of new resource materials; curriculum development based on these new resources; teacher training for bilingual pedagogy; and the generation of new digital content in the Indian languages. At the core of the Centre’s agenda is the recognition of a knowledge and resource gap in the higher education system and a resultant need to create intellectual resources in the Indian languages. This need is most pressing for the social sciences and the humanities where relevance of curricular material to the context of the students is of utmost importance.

The digital domain is becoming increasingly significant as a knowledge repository today. Especially relevant in this context is the online encyclopaedia Wikipedia, which contains information on almost every topic under the sun and is used extensively by students. The fact that information from the Wikipedia is even used as a starting point of academic writing necessitates thinking about how this information is organized, or in other words, how we conceptualize Wikipedia as a knowledge resource. In the multilingual Indian context, generation of content in the Indian languages is a logical next step. It is with the intention of strengthening this knowledge network in the social sciences, that the CILHE conducts content generation workshops with university students across the country. As of 2015, five such workshops have been conducted in Jadavpur University, Tumkur University, English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, Savitribai Phule Pune University and Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai.

The broad mandate of the digital resource generation workshop is to introduce university students to tools of collaborative knowledge production on the internet and methods for generating new online content in Indian languages. In preparation for the workshop, all participants are expected to register as Wikipedia users. The first part of the workshop comprises of three exercises designed to facilitate thinking about concepts in an encyclopaedic manner. In the first exercise, participants are given a list of concepts to choose from and are expected to explain these concepts without using the concept itself. This is done to facilitate understanding of the concept and the ability to explain it to another person lucidly. This involves discussing the concept through its effects and

associations. The second exercise takes on from the previous one to use the material generated and to explain denotative and connotative meanings of the chosen concept. In the third exercise, participants are expected to come up with a cluster of concepts in which their chosen concept is embedded.

Following this, participants are introduced to the basics of Wikipedia editing in Indian languages. Through a hands-on editing exercise, participants are made to think about the use of concepts as discussed earlier. Participants choose an entry about a concept, person, or book relevant to their curriculum on the English Wikipedia and are asked to identify and list possible problems that they may encounter while translating this page into an Indian language. They are also made aware of the difference in process between translating from English to Indian languages and the other way round. Translation at the level of sentences and their meaning is encouraged. Participants then go on to work on their individually chosen entries, seeking clarification or assistance wherever necessary. They are asked to select one topic (a book, a person, a concept) from the previous exercise and develop an article based on that in any Indian language that they prefer. This forms the quantitative output of the workshop. As an example, in the workshop conducted in Pune, around 13 participants completed fully developed entries in Indian languages. These entries contained a table of contents and references, inter-wiki references, and external links, and in some cases included images too. Many participants wrote about personalities such as the writer Mukta Salve, the feminist theorist Mary John, and the contemporary Marathi writer Narayan Bhosle. Some wrote about concepts such as feminism, nationalism, and domestic violence.

The Centre for Indian Languages in Higher Education at TISS is also working with TISS faculty to create new resources in a variety of languages, including Hindi, Marathi, Telugu, and languages from the North East.

BOOK/ FILM REVIEW

Our world after The World Before Her...

Nadi Palshikar, KSP Women's Studies Centre, Pune

Unlike most documentary films, Nisha Pahuja's film has received exposure throughout the world including proper feature-like shows in theatres. It has been well received at film festivals. As a result it has been extensively reviewed in various papers from the New York Times to the Mirror.

The film was released two years back on the 6th of June 2014. So the filming was probably done the year before. Around the time of release, India was in its first month of the new BJP Government. The film itself, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad had already said in 2014 that they would use it. They would cut out the Femina parts and show the rest of it as promotional videos for their camps. The Hindutva right-wing as usual, appropriates everything for its project.

As to what we hear in the 'advice' given to the camp trainees- Before watching the film, those of us who had never been part of such camps had never heard these ideas. In the past two years however, we are hearing this vocalized often. The stuff of Durga Vahini lectures is no longer confined to training camp. Increasingly, one sees these women invited to mainstream colleges to 'speak to the girls'.

Since this film came out, of course, we are witnessing subtle changes to policies affecting women, strangely worded court judgements. And yet, it seems that women as a group are not noticing anything amiss, anything worth protesting against.

Impressed and pleased as everyone is by the Beti Bachao campaign. As if we are grateful.. In the film, we hear Prachi's father tell us how he branded her leg with a red hot iron spoon. This, he justifies as being 'necessary' to teach her 'good values. This she forgives, because in spite of being a girl she has been 'allowed' to live. Benevolent father/dictator has actually made a campaign, and made moving TV programs to bachao us. Are we expected then, like Prachi, to conform, obey? And smile with Father for his selfies?

Coming to the other part- The Femina Miss India Contests, in their 51st year, also have only become bigger. Larger amounts of money – both spent and 'won', are being spoken of. Femina Miss India is a national beauty pageant in India that annually selects three winners to compete globally. "The winner of Femina Miss India World vies in Miss World, Femina Miss India Earth winner competes in Miss Earth, and the third winner, Femina Miss India International goes to compete in Miss International." The winners are seen to be, as seems to be the demand of today, 'going places. But what are the places that the 'losers' go to?

Those who described themselves as "fun loving", what do they do when the fun is over? Those who do not win? Do they go back to the small town? Have their 'marriage prospects' 'improved' by participation (and video

proof thereof) in this 'greatest pageant'? Do they, sensibly acquire training for some other job that will sustain them throughout their life albeit in an 'ordinary', non-'grand' way? Or have they believed what we heard their instructor telling them – "It hurts? It looks fab." That this 'looking fab' and more so, being seen as fab, is worth a lot of (self-inflicted) pain. Will some of them, who at the beginning of the film smiled brightly "I am adventurous", in unreasonable hope, 'hang on' – try for shadier and shadier 'modelling assignments' till one day, at least some of them, ridden with starvation and drugs, literally hang themselves?

Towards the end of this well-constructed script, the two narratives dovetail into each other but at one sharp point. Prachi is watching the Miss India pageant with her parents. Watch the faces of the three family members. The father, himself half-dressed is disdainfully talking of young women and their 'exposing' etc. The mother's response is more positive. She thinks it is a good space for the girls to express themselves, it will expose them to the larger modern world.

It is now that we look at the reproachful look on Prachi's face. Her mother believes in modernity? Then why does she not say anything about Prachi being trained to uphold tradition? Prachi, who after attending multiple camps which are supposed to, as we have learned in the film, "transform you into a tiger" looks like a frightened, confused animal, anything but a tiger! There are tears in her eyes. Is it on seeing the exhilaration of the winner? Will she, Prachi, who is to dedicate her life for a so-called cause, ever have such a moment?

Is it realizing that she envies the 'pretty' things they have, the efforts that have gone into their 'prettifying'? Is this envy in sharp contrast to what she has told us in the beginning of the film- "I do not like these girly-type girls."? Confused about her sexuality, confused about the work that has been assigned to her by her father, confused as to what her father thinks is her 'duty' ("to marry and have children). Confused. Lost. Almost the same as the vacant expression of the Miss India contestants. Different women.

It is this vulnerable face that stays with us. The World Before Her makes us see how it is not enough to make women's bodies the battlefield of so-called ideological wars, but that they are constantly used to further those 'ideologies'. We leave the film thinking of the cruelty that selfish fanatics will inflict on those dependent on them, on those who trust them.

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THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES (IAWS)

The Indian Association for Women's Studies was established in 1982 by a resolution adopted by the first national conference of women's studies held in Mumbai in April 1981. iaws is registered under the Registrar of Societies (No.s/12936 New Delhi) and under FCRA. The Association provides a forum for interaction among institutions and individuals engaged in teaching, research or action. The membership includes educational and social welfare organisations, and individual academics, researchers, students, activists, social workers, media persons and others concerned with women's issues, and with women's development and empowerment. One of the major activities of IAWS is organising a National Conference of Women's Studies once every two / three years focusing on a particular theme and several sub-themes. Hundreds of members from all-over india and some from other countries in South Asia attend the National Conference. Fourteen conferences have been held at: Mumbai, Thiruvanthapuram, Chandigarh, Waltair (Vishakapatnam), Jadavpur (Kolkata), Mysore, Jaipur, Pune, Hyderabad, Bhubaneswar, Dona Paula (Goa), Lucknow, Wardha and Guwahati. Themes have included: Women's Struggles and Movements, Women's Perspectives on Public Policies, Sustaining Democracy, Challenges in the New Millenium etc.

IAWS members can

- initiate activities along with the association in an effort to augment iaws interaction, networking, research, documentation and dissemination objectives;
- participate in various activities and conferences organised by the association;
- participate in running the association by voting on the membership of the executive committee and standing for the elected offices;
- contribute to and receive a periodic newsletter that disseminates information about association activities in different parts of the country, explores gender issues, and may include book reviews, announcements, seminar/ workshop reports and lots more.

Notice

All members are requested to send their e.mail address, mobile phone number and the current address (if changed) to iaws.secretariat@gmail.com for update our mailing list. See the list of members, logon to <http://www.iaws.org>.

If undelivered please return to:
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