

# INDIAN ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES

## XV National Conference on Women's Studies

Sub-theme:4

### **Caste: A Site of Inequalities, Discrimination, Violence and Resistance**

Caste plays a central role in structuring the socio-economic and cultural order of society in India with its emphasis on concepts of purity-pollution, inferior-superior etc. Socio-culturally constructed ideas are systemized by the stratification process via defining identities, demarcating boundaries, codifying norms and values to human beings in general, and most onerous in relation to women and dalits. The whole process of structuring the society as a caste centric system from the historic period to present has supported multifaceted inequalities in social institutions such as class, religion, family, state and market. Moreover, even in democracy, the combination of political power and caste hegemonic control over the private and public spheres of society has restricted the social space for women and dalits to enjoy constitutionally guaranteed rights. Social practices of caste distinction create the ground for humiliation and discrimination to the people who are marginalized and socially excluded. Due to various forms of marginalization and exclusion based on caste on the one hand their natural rights are denied, on the other hand, when the oppressed assert their rights they encounter heinous violence such as public humiliation, lynching/killing, ostracism in the name of 'caste honour' and purity.

The women's movements and women's studies in India have been engaged for more than four decades on issues related to caste based discrimination and violence against women. Besides, women's movements have significantly contributed to exploring and addressing the existence of neo-forms of caste inequalities, violence in the neo-liberal and globalization context, in alliance with anti-caste and democratic organisations. However, the increasing nature of caste intensified identity politics consolidates the force of caste oppression and discrimination in socio-cultural and economic spaces and urges us to rethink about the horizontal growth of caste. Further we need to focus our attention on the multiple sites of discrimination and inequalities.

Within this wider context, this particular sub-theme invites inter-disciplinary papers focussing on the changing forms of caste inequalities, representative and affirmative actions,

socio-political, economic, and cultural interventions, as well as protests against social and public policy discriminations.

Papers on how and why men and women decide to forego caste norms, the role of individual leaders and movements that have been inspirational towards building humanitarian, anti-casteist movements, and democratic trends that have strengthened equality perspectives are also welcome.

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