



Women's Perspectives on Public Policy

IXth National Conference on
Women's Studies

8-11 January, 2000,

NISIET, Hyderabad.

Organised by :The Indian Association for Women's Studies



**Indian Association for
Women's Studies**

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Yousufguda [beside Police Lines], Hyderabad

Conference Coordination

Asmita Resource Centre for Women

IAWS and IX Conference Secretariat

Asmita Resource Centre for Women

10-3-96, Plot 283, 4th Floor, Street 6, Teachers' Colony, East Marredpalli

Secunderabad-500 026, A. P., India

Tel: 91 40 7733251, 7733229 • Telefax: 91 40 7733745

Email: asmita@hd1.vsnl.net.in

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Women's Studies

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**Women's Perspectives on
Public Policy**

*Evolving an Agenda for Action into
the Next Millennium*

**IXth National Conference on
Women's Studies**

As we step into the next millennium, a much-needed exercise is an assessment of trends in public policies, past and present (continued or changed) and their impact on women across the country.

During the last few decades we have been preoccupied with development and economic policies in view of the deteriorating economic conditions for a major section of women. In the field of laws, personal laws and rape laws have dominated our attention to the exclusion of other aspects of our legal discourse. Public policies on health care and health services have been another area of critical concern. All these have a history behind them. Historically, public policies in India have paid scant attention to regional diversities or regional histories. Be they programmes of poverty alleviation, developmental thrusts, tackling dowry, age at marriage, or violence or scores of other such issues – there are built in biases that demand exposition to uncover their ideological underpinnings.

The primary objective of the IX National Conference is a critical assessment of public policy, historical and contemporary, in shaping women's lives and setting an agenda for the next millennium. The conference will attempt to identify the sectoral priorities that have emerged in each region, their dynamics and their linkages with mainstream priorities viz., employment, health, violence, environment, communalism, family, political representation and right to resources including property. The plenaries and sub themes will explore major shifts in priorities, perspectives and will attempt to understand, and foreground unexplored areas and successful or unsuccessful strategies.

In more recent times, policy initiatives have induced some concrete structural changes. To cite a few: reforms in law and legal processes, institutional reform in policing, constitution of women's commissions at the state and national level and gender sensitizing programmes for policy makers and the bureaucracy. Simultaneously, women's collective action through literacy, self help or anti liquor movements have induced changes in public policy.

The IAWS hopes that the IX National Conference will provide the space for women from different parts of the country to come together and discuss ongoing areas of concern as well as of those that have hitherto been underrepresented or unexplored.

**Programme of
Plenaries**

Invited Speakers

- .. Nirmala Buch ..
- .. Imrana Qadeer ..
- .. Sunila Abeysekera ..
- .. Murli Desai ..
- .. Nirmala Banerjee ..
- .. Jarjum Ete ..
- .. Hameeda Hossain ..
- .. Mahmood Mamdani ..
- .. Kameshwari Jandhyala ..
- .. Arundhati Roy ..
- .. Anveshi Law Committee ..
- .. Manisha Gupte ..
- .. Uma Chakravarti ..
- .. Sathyamala ..
- .. Saheli ..
- .. Forum for Women's Health ..
- .. Pradnya Lokhande ..
- .. Volga ..
- .. Mridula Garg ..
- .. Veena Shatrughna ..
- .. Ritu Menon ..
- .. Pushpa Bhave ..
- .. Meenakshi Mukherjee ..
- .. Maithreyi Krishna Raj ..

**Women's Perspectives on
Public Policy:**

Incomplete or Lost Agenda?

Fifty two years is not a small period for initiating progress. The promises enshrined in the Constitution and the vision of women's full emancipation will not be realised unless once again we gear ourselves to intervene more forcefully in the polity and public policy. By public policy we do not mean only policy documents actually released from time to time by the government in power but by all public agencies in all sectors of life - in institutions and their functioning, in the prioritisation in the allocation of resources, in the modus of implementation in addition to policy directives, explicit or implicit.

Women's concern with the economy has been consistent. Before Independence, the Sub-Committee of the National Committee for Planning had published an exhaustive blue print, radical in thrust for bringing about equality for women in free India entitled 'Women's Role in Planned Economy'. Yet, many indicators including that of the UNDP Gender Development Index demonstrate on many fronts, the jettisoning of these views and the cost to women of this neglect. It took twenty-five years before the shift away from women as 'weaker section' in need of welfare took place. This recognition has been partial with women still seen as merely a segment of the family-household.

In education, instead of strengthening the mainstream system and making it deliver to fulfil its mandate for ensuring full, free, primary education to all, alternate agencies have been mooted. While these are commendable they also raise certain basic questions. Why do girls and women deserve only 'non formal' education with a ragbag of micro programmes? The 1986 New Education Policy raised a lot of hopes for the first time but as yet there is no evidence that this too will not remain on paper. Populist measures like free education till college level for girls in some states make no sense because this kind of across-the-board measure ignores the deep class, caste, regional disparities and the specific hurdles that beset girls' education. The women's movement has not paid enough attention to mainstream education for freeing the curriculum, educational establishments and men students from patriarchal overload.

On the economic front, the first alarm bell was sounded by the NCWS report in 1974, *Towards Equality* that showed women's employment going down in several sectors especially in the manufacturing and mining sectors. There have been several interventions since then by women's movement: the incorporation of a special chapter on women for the first time in the Sixth Plan; identification of intra household inequalities and discriminations through

solid research; exposing the biases in data that make women workers invisible; research documenting the negative or non-effects of many programmes in agriculture and small/cottage industry; and finally 'Development Alternatives for Women in the 80s' that was produced after national and regional level consultations across the country. The *Shram Shakti: National Report on Self Employed Women* and the report of two labour commissions are confined to the archives. Riding on the back of this severe backlog of neglect, has come 'liberalisation' and the cutting down of public supports for women and opening the gates to competition and international trade. Women's foothold in the organised industry is now even more precarious under flexibilisation and casualisation while their fate in the unorganised sector is worse than before.

The family as a sacrosanct and benign refuge, a basic foundation that glues society, has come under assault with exposure of the less than idyllic picture of the family. Much legal reform has been attempted in this sphere but communalisation of issues has precluded thoroughgoing reform that will grant women true citizen rights and release them from the thrall of personal laws.

This plenary will address all important policy initiatives in the last few decades – population, health, legal reform, labour policy, and others while giving a more detailed treatment to economy, education and family as fundamental structures that need drastic reform. It will evaluate policies as well as women's responses.

Coordinator: Maithreyi Krishna Raj, Flat 53-58, Jeevan Bima Nagar, A6/3, Borivili (W),
Mumbai-400 103, Phone: 022 8930131, email: kraj@bom5.vsnl.net.in

Class, caste and community are now acknowledged as significant markers for women. However, the issue of tribal identity has not yet impacted on the theorisation undertaken by the women's movement. The category of the tribal is located at a node that is, in ways defined by the state, simultaneously both legitimate and illegitimate. This location in fact throws up a number of questions for the theorisation of gender. We therefore hope that the plenary focus on the tribal issue would reopen for critical evaluation the manner in which the women's movement has thus far conceptualised gender.

While anthropologists, scholars and activist groups have been debating the definition of the "tribe", the "tribal," or the "adivasi" the state has drafted several policies that would impact on them. The seeming clarity of the state's vision in relation to the tribals is in contrast with the analytical confusion faced by theorists as well as activists. We therefore feel that an important outcome of engaging with the tribal policy as formulated by the state would be the recognition of the rationale that the state employs – its ways of identifying, naming and addressing subject populations.

An understanding of the state's rationality is of immense importance to the women's movement, especially since it would enable it to review its position vis-a-vis issues of modernity and development. The face of modernity and development that the tribals have seen has invariably been detrimental to them. The large-scale displacement of the tribals from the site of the Sardar Sarovar Project in Gujarat, the exposure to nuclear radiation due to Uranium mining in Jaduguda in Bihar or the recurrent epidemics of malaria and gastro-enteritis in tribal areas of Andhra Pradesh are some examples that come to mind when one seeks to trace the trajectory of what developmental projects have done for tribals. The question of statist modernisation therefore acquires obviously disturbing dimensions when the issue of tribals is thus centred.

In bringing up these issues, the point being emphasised here is also that tribals have so far been absent from the feminist imaginary. An attention to their situation would necessarily put entirely different light on various issues that are being discussed today within the women's movement. Issues regarded as *ipso facto* progressive or regressive would then need to be re-evaluated. Some of the impasses faced by the women's movement, for instance, in relation to the question of personal laws or in relation to gender representation at different fora, would assume different kinds of significance in the context of how the

notion of gender relations, rights, agency and empowerment is conceived of within these systems. The anthropological discourse around the tribal "customary law" for instance has ranged from representing it on the one hand as most egalitarian to characterising it as immensely oppressive on the other. It therefore becomes important for women's studies to engage with these issues in order to get a more nuanced sense of these concepts which can then be used to influence policy decisions.

Another point of significance in relation to the tribal issues lies in the manner in which they are written into historical narratives. Recent scholarship has shown how the "tribal uprisings" are always treated as adjuncts to the main narrative of Indian nationalism. This in turn has had implications for the manner in which notions of Indian identity and citizenship are predominantly conceived. In its attempt to interrogate hegemonic notions of "national identity" and "Indian identity", the women's movement needs to engage with the situation of the tribals as well.

The plenary will focus on

- anthropological writings on tribal societies and their impact on state initiatives
- customary laws of tribal communities
- tribal identities/national identities: the case of the North-East
- modernisation, the market economy and tribal life
- tribals in India: pre-modern or modern?

Through these broad areas, the plenary will therefore seek to address through the tribal situation issues that are of significance to the women's movement.

Coordinator: Rekha Pappu, Anveshi Research Centre for Women's Studies, OUB 1, Osmania University Campus, Hyderabad-500 007, Phone: 040 7018490, email: anveshi@hd1.vsnl.net.in



**Moving Beyond
Wombs:**

*Foregrounding Women's
Health Agenda*

IXth National Conference on
Women's Studies

The crucial role of public policies in ensuring survival and welfare of people is well recognised. As we await the new millennium, a thorough critique of health and population policies along with many other policies is most appropriate as women face their consequences in a peculiar and gender-specific way. An urgent need for such an exercise emerges in the light of two developments of this decade. Firstly, onslaught of globalisation, best manifested in privatisation, cuts in resources to the social sector, shrinking employment and dwindling food security. Secondly, the much touted 'paradigm shift' in family planning policies wherein 'reproductive health' is fast replacing 'women's health'. Both these developments are hitting women the hardest.

While accepting Bhore Committee's recommendations that health care services be the responsibility of State and comprehensive health care be available to people irrespective of their ability to pay for the same, in reality State health services for poor are dismal. Statistics clearly indicate the urban, anti-poor bias of health care services. The emphasis is on the private health sector that operates without any legal or State control. Women are the worst sufferers due to the prevalent anti-women bias present in private as well as public health sectors. Both these sectors view women only as mothers and therefore consider their health only in terms of their wombs. While the private sector profits on their motherhood, the public health sector's major concern is to prevent women from becoming mothers! Thus, historically, all health programmes designed specifically for women have been related to MCH (maternal and child health), contraception, child survival, safe motherhood etc. Even this narrow approach has failed in providing services related to safe pregnancy, maternity, and contraception to majority women. Little else is available to women to address their general and gender-specific health care needs. This neglect has accentuated the disastrous impact of capitalist patriarchal development process. Various indices underline the poor health status of Indian women. Women suffer in dual ways as they are primary producers of life as well. The basic issue in the present period is one of survival which is under threat. Survival today cannot mean mere biological existence but must also include human dignity and cultural freedoms and accomplishments.

The last few decades have also seen women being targeted for population control. It is important to note that the budgetary financial allocation for family planning programmes is steadily increasing in the last few years even when the government is asked to cut down

expenditure on health by the IMF and the World Bank. The thrust is on the long-acting, provider-controlled, hazardous contraceptives for women. The disturbing trends are trials of contraceptive methods like anti-fertility vaccines and Norplant, a hormonal implant, the permission to market Depo Provera, a hormonal injectible. More and more NGOs are involved in these programmes. This plenary will

- Present a spectrum of macro and micro issues in areas of health and population control
- Provide critique of Health and Population control
- Initiate debate on alternative approaches
- Identify critical issues to set an agenda for action
- Share insights and dilemmas of feminist health initiatives and campaigns.

Coordinator: Forum for Women's Health, c/o Jaya Velankar, A201, Govind Gopal Society, Ashok Nagar Cross Road # 1, Kandivli (East), Mumbai-400 101, Phone: 022 8843776, Fax: 022 8871559, email: greenppk@bom4.vsnl.net.in



**Reservations Policies
and the Women's
Movement**

**IXth National Conference on
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The policy of reservations in institutions of the state has invariably and repeatedly been a contentious subject in the political history of twentieth century India. The very recent debates around the demand for the reservation of one-third seats in Parliament and State Assemblies for women is but the most recent illustration of the range of issues that are thrown up at different levels, whenever the need for a policy of reservations has been raised. In spite of this long and conflicted history, however, documentation of earlier controversies (such as the correspondence and debates over reserved seats for women during British colonial rule in the 1920s and 30s) is extremely sparse. The relationships between the demand for women's education as a principal tool of social reform, on the one hand, and the subsequent history of reservations in education (such as the Constitutional guarantee of proportional reservations for Scheduled Castes and Tribes, and reservations for Backward Classes in different regions of the country) has also not received any sustained attention. Even the current debate over the 81st Amendment Bill has been stifled because of the perceived urgency to try and get the Bill passed as quickly as possible.

We therefore view this panel as a valuable opportunity for discussion and awareness-raising for all of us in the field of women's studies. We hope to address some of the major issues involved in this particular policy measure such as:

- The nature of the discrimination and oppression that this policy seeks to redress
- The different spheres of public life where reservation policies have been adopted
- Critical distinctions between colonial and post-independence policies, as well as the distinctiveness of the last decade of the 1990s
- The ambiguous relationship between the women's movement and other social movements over this issue

Coordinator: Mary E. John, Centre for Women's Development Studies, 25, Bhai Vir Singh Marg, New Delhi 110 001, Phone: 011 3345530. Fax: 011 3346044, email: cwdslib@sansad.nic.in

Censorship and Silence:

Perspectives on the Freedom of Expression

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For the last half century freedom of expression has been a right enshrined in the Indian Constitution, but observed more in the breach. Human rights movements have focussed on the infringements of this right by the state; but civil society institutions have also been sites of censorship and silencing. While people's movements have been vehicles of resistance, they have also tended to subvert women's rights through the patriarchal bias of their politics. In the new millennium women have a pressing need to counter this trend to define and abridge rights and interests according to the political needs of the moment. Issues of censorship in relation to the family, community, violence and peace need to be explored and addressed.

Freedom of expression today is under far more threat than ever before. On the one hand there is the state and its reluctance to provide information, which itself makes for a censorship of thought and discussion. On the other, how does the state intervene and protect the right to freedom of expression when it is curtailed by right-wing or militant groups? What forms of expression does the State protect, and what forms does it deny or worse, allow to be destroyed? To look at the freedoms that different groups of citizens have sought in specific historic contexts and to trace the forces that come into play to promote or prohibit that right, would be useful at this juncture. How do formal and informal, but nonetheless, powerful, censorships come into play with converging or conflicting interests? What is the nature and agenda of gender-based, caste-based and identity-based censorship? How does language itself censor? What are the issues that have been raised through various periods through different movements? How has the state responded in terms of protecting or suppressing human rights in the context of rape, violence, homosexuality, minority and dalit issues? Given the range of concerns that emerge, how do we understand the context, mobilization and responses in terms of policy.

How does freedom of expression operate in relation to the film media? To the electronic media? How does one view the glamorisation of violence and sadomasochistic sex through highly advanced and sophisticated technology that operates at subliminal levels? What does "free choice" imply for a passive audience?

This plenary will attempt to raise these questions and open up these contentious areas for discussion.

Coordinator : Vasanth Kannabiran, Asmita Resource Centre for Women 10-3-96,
Plot 283, East Marredpalli, Secunderabad 500 026, Telefax: 040 7733745,
email: asmita@hd1.vsnl.net.in

Closing Plenary

IXth National Conference on
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**MADHURI SHAH
MEMORIAL LECTURE**

BY

ARUNDHATI ROY

SOUTH ASIAN PANEL

HAMEEDA HOSSAIN, *Bangladesh*

SUNILA ABEYSEKERA, *Sri Lanka*

**Mobilizing for Change:
Possibilities and
Challenges**

This sub-theme focuses on the mobilization of marginalised women in urban and rural contexts. Our main aim is to look at innovative strategies for empowerment, development and change through the eyes of the women who are involved in such initiatives. Through this process we try to critically assess the potential of women's collectives to address issues and agenda involved in development and social change.

Of central importance to us are the enabling structure and processes of mobilization, the emerging agendas of women and marginalised groups, and the ability of women's collectives to create an identity and space for themselves which can help sustain action and change.

Among the main concerns addressed by women presenters are: the demand for rights to sustainable livelihood and a healthy and educated life, an end to violence against women and children, the ways and means to influence local self-governance and ensure accountability of governmental systems and services.

As a beginning orientation for our learnings, we will use the experiences of grassroots peoples and the Henry Martyn Institute (HMI), which works with urban woman in the bastis of Hyderabad; Mahila Samakhya, which runs a government-funded initiative to mobilize women for education and empowerment in over seven thousand villages; and Astha, which helps to catalyze and support people's movements in both urban and rural contexts in Rajasthan. Brief presentations on people's initiatives associated with these three organizations will help to highlight both encouraging stories of positive change, as well as challenges inherent in mobilization activities at grassroots levels. We are particularly concerned with organizational and justice issues which arise when working for women's empowerment.

A critical study of women's work as mobilizers and mobilized gives us insights into the invitations, dilemmas and contradictions of practical initiatives for social change. Our collective reflections also provide an occasion to better understand the possibilities and problems of integrating and mainstreaming gender concerns, as well as forming more effective short and long-term public policies.

Coordinators: Diane D' Souza and Kameshwari Jandhyala, Henry Martyn Institute, P. O. Box 153, Chirag Ali Lane, Hyderabad 500 001, Telefax: 040 3203954, email: hmiis@hd1.vsnl.net.in

Women's Experience in Panchayats

Role of State and Civil Society to Strengthen Women's Emerging Leadership

Rural women have come a long way in their representation in the institutions of local governance since the beginning of this century when even the request for constituting a village panchayat could be made by 20 *adult male* residents. For decades thereafter, they could only have a token presence of one or two coopted/nominated members. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment in 1993 became a watershed when it mandated their one-third minimum representation in these bodies. The elections after this amendment have brought women across caste, tribe, class and regions in critical numbers and, most importantly, not only as members but also as chairpersons. What is the experience of these women? What are their supports and constraints? How has the state supported them in their new public role? What is their impact on these institutions and how has their role impacted on their own aspirations, confidence and attitudes.

Women's entry in panchayats has been preceded and accompanied by various myths about their passivity and disinterest in politics, only well to do and upper strata women coming through reservations, their political connectivity – only kinswomen of earlier pradhans and powerful political leaders entering panchayats and, lastly, that all these women are only *proxy, namesake* members.

Data from ongoing studies in different parts of the country question these myths and document women's awareness levels, participation in panchayats, their confidence levels and new political aspirations. Noting the beginnings of the empowering process, it also notes the resistance of patriarchal structures and the back lash and counter forces trying to discredit the experiment.

The sub theme seeks to share women's experiences especially in states which are generally dismissed for exhibiting backwardness on most of the indicators of social development. It also seeks to explore the role of the state and various actors in the civil society in strengthening women's emerging leadership at the grassroots level. It hopes to contribute to the current debate on the need, nature and justification of mandated reservation of women in the political sphere and how best they can use their new political space.

The sub theme will focus on successful and innovative coping strategies and the role played by various social institutions and women's collectives, with special emphasis on

- alternative models of women's coalitions, networks, information systems, which include women in panchayats as well as other women, appropriate for different times and places;
- emerging success cases of the supporting role of the state and other actors in strengthening women's capacities to cope with and build on their new roles.

Coordinators: Nirmala Buch and C. P. Sujaya Centre for Women's Development Studies, 25, Bhai Vir Singh Marg, New Delhi 110 001, Ph.: 011 3345530, Fax: 011 3346044, email: cwdslib@sansad.nic.in

**Engendering New and Emerging
Community Rights and
Responsibilities in Natural
Resource Management**

The interlinkages between gendered power relations and natural resource management have been recognised by activists, researchers and policy-makers, but are as yet insufficiently concretised. This task has become urgent as people's local livelihood strategies and development choices are being swiftly transformed by their own changing perceptions, national policy interventions and global trends. Access to, control and use of natural resources are determined by gender, class, caste, and ethnicity – a dynamic process which is constantly being negotiated and contested. As producers, consumers, conservers and distributors of natural resources, women's rights to resource use and responsibilities for resource management are shrinking in some respects, expanding in others – affected by multifarious factors such as the seasonality, marginality or productivity of the resource; new spaces emerging from social movements for the assertion of community/group rights; the positive/ negative impact of state policies; and the creation of new rights as in wasteland and watershed development programmes. This sub theme, therefore, seeks to focus on key aspects of the new spaces, and emerging community rights and responsibilities, in natural resource management. Location-specific presentations, which document the process of gendered interventions, would be welcome, particularly from the north-eastern, arid and coastal regions of the country, with special emphasis on any or some of the following aspects:

- Establishing the linkages between gender and natural resource management – through empirical case studies of changing livelihood strategies of specific nomadic, hill, forest, wetland, grassland, coastal and island-dwelling groups or communities.
- Integrating gender analysis into community-level natural resource management projects – through documenting recent or on-going field experiences of the problems, conflicts and solutions at the planning, data-gathering, technological intervention, and impact evaluation stages.
- Assessing the impact of changes in resource management policies and practices on gender relations – through analyses related to the procurement, use, conservation and development of natural resources (such as non-timber forest produce, aquatic-marine resources), at both the household and the community levels.
- Identifying customary and new institutional and legal mechanisms for gendered benefit-sharing – through examples relating to the use of natural resources, both within households, and between communities and local and outside institutions/agencies.
- It is expected that the exchange of experiences through the presentations and discussions would help to refine field-level methodologies and to suggest critical action points for policy interventions, at the local, State or central levels.

Coordinators: Sumi Krishna and **Narayan Banerjee** Centre for Women's Development Studies, 25, Bhai Vir Singh Marg, New Delhi 110 001, Ph.: 011 3345530, Fax: 011 3346044, email: cwdslib@sansad.nic.in

**Meeting the Evolutionary,
Cultural and Ethical Needs of
Communities**

*A Feminist Critique of the Gap
between Food and Nutrition*

This sub theme will seek to critique the current food policies arising out of economic liberalization from the standpoint of women. It is premised on the belief that women in traditional societies had a close relationship with food and were involved in its various stages of growth (from sowing food crops to its harvesting, threshing, storing and preservation), and its preparation for consumption. The growing commercialization of food, promoted by the government food policies, are not only usurping women's traditional areas of control, but are also alienating communities from their cultural moorings.

The roots of this alienation can be traced to the reductionist world-view, which since the 16th century, has coloured the growth of scientific and technological knowledge. The corollary of such a world-view is the prevailing conceptual dualism of mind/body, nature/culture and man/woman in scientific knowledge. Feminist scholarship has increasingly questioned this mechanistic construction of the human body (seen as comprising, like the automobile, various body parts) and the separation of the human physical self from his/her mental, emotional, cultural and spiritual potential and needs. They contend that this model of the human body has generated a fractured image of food and nutrition, which has led to short-sighted food policies. The much celebrated Green Revolution, has failed to wipe out hunger and has threatened the future food security of the world. An equally dangerous fall-out of the use of hybrid seeds, pesticides and artificial fertilizers/feeds as well as irradiation of fruits and vegetables (supposedly to increase shelf life of foods) is their impact on the nutrition. The recent outbreak of the Mad Cow disease in Great Britain is only one manifestation of the reductionist view of food and nutrition.

In the current climate of global economics motivated by the profits that would accrue to them, supranational corporations are promoting foods that, on the one hand, have no nutritional content, and on the other are alien to indigenous cultures. The process, not only fails to meet the evolutionary and cultural needs of the people, but is also robbing women of their access to and control over foods. Deprived of their productive roles, women are increasingly undervalued and objectified. The trend is also exacerbated through the promotion of crop mono-culture and controls over food resources through the patenting of seeds and other natural resources.

From a holistic understanding of the human identity (i.e., an understanding of the human being as being closely connected with his/her environment) this sub theme questions the very premise on which the current food policies are built. It also highlights the politics of knowledge generation and the process which suppresses research findings that contradict the generally accepted paradigms of scientific knowledge.

Coordinators: Prabha Krishnan and **Veena Poonacha**, Research Centre for Women's Studies, SNDT Women's University, Sir Vithaldas Vidyavihar, Juhu Campus, Juhu Road, Mumbai – 400 049. Phone: 022 6128462/Ext. 227, 297, Fax: 022 6161001, email: rcwssndt@bom3.vsnl.net.in

Public Policy and People in Prostitution and Sex Work

The concept of the debauched, debased and deviant woman has always governed public opinion on women in prostitution. Women have therefore been policed, coerced and raided, to be rescued, reformed and rehabilitated by a society that would "like to order and control their life styles", regulate or abolish prostitution. In recent years, the discourse around prostitution has changed and is now couched in the language of human rights. Feminists, theorists and prostitutes' rights activists are involved in unraveling the complex and complicated world of sexual autonomy, free choice, sexual exploitation and the agency versus victim debates. This discourse has helped in that it has shifted the focus from blaming the woman and her sexual preference to a continuum ranging from the 'beneficial exploitation of the institution of prostitution' to the 'inherent victimisation of the woman in prostitution'.

It is apparent that while the "prostitution question" will continue to be debated and arguments for and against, whether voluntary/forced, 'agency'/victim, trafficked/socialised, legal/criminal, sexual slavery/sexual autonomy, exploited/liberated, will continue to occupy theorists, activists, and governments, prostitution as experienced by the women themselves is not given the kind of recognition it deserves in these debates.

The discourse unfortunately does not recognise the day-to-day struggles much less the strength of a minority community comprising mainly of women who face the brutal and criminalised world they inhabit. It is a struggle that is fortified by a socialisation that encourages and strengthens their ability to deal with a hostile and violent environment. A community that has repeatedly scorned the attempts of mainstream patriarchal society to control, regulate and abolish the institution of prostitution. It is a community that is fighting for a voice in all the debates. In India, as in most countries of South Asia, legislation on prostitution connects prostitution with trafficking. The Immoral Trafficking Prevention Act, 1986 believes that women in prostitution and sex work, are victims of pimps, brothel owners and madams and therefore need to be rescued and prostitution regulated. Prostitution is believed to be 'commercialised vice' and is viewed as synonymous to 'immoral trafficking'. In fact that prostitution is but one site for trafficking is not acknowledged. All women trafficked are not only for 'the purpose of prostitution', and not all women in prostitution and sex work are in the trade due to being trafficked into it. There is a need to define trafficking as separate from prostitution and sex work. Women in prostitution and sex work constitute a community that bears and will continue to bear the greatest impact of the HIV epidemic in India. Communities of women in prostitution and sex work continue to suffer high levels of infection and re-infection. HIV may infect the children they bear. Apart from the stigma already attached to their work, society has further marginalised them as core transmitters of HIV infection. It fails to recognise that they are but links in the broad networks of heterosexual transmission of HIV.

The sub- theme will cover various issues concerning prostitution and sex work and will address the problem from the standpoint of • Laws that affect people in prostitution and sex work. • Trafficking as separate from prostitution and sex work. • HIV/ AIDS and women in prostitution and sex work.

Coordinator: Meena Saraswathi Seshu, B-11 Akshay Apartments, Chintamaninagar, Sangli-416 416, Telefax: 0233 311644, email: meenaseshu@yahoo.com

**Gender, Conflict and
Political Violence**

The point of departure for this discussion is the increasing conflict and violence that women have had to face in India - and indeed in South Asia - in recent years. This has important implications both for public policy and development because its impact can be felt in economic, political and social structures and on questions of governance. India is not a region of conflict in the same way as countries like Guatemala, Liberia, Kosovo might be said to be. However, the increasing instances of conflict that have taken place in the country in the past several years are disturbing enough to warrant serious attention. They draw our attention to several important aspects: we can no longer be complacent about the general "non-violence" and "peaceableness" of India; we must face up to the very real possibility of the increase and escalation of the kinds of conflict we have been seeing; we need to carefully examine the increasing militarization of our society, and how this both creates and results in further conflict. The question of gender is central to all these discussions.

The kinds of conflicts we plan to focus on in these discussions include: political and military conflict such as we see in Kashmir and the North East and most recently in Kargil; ethnic/religious/communal conflict such as has been visible in different parts of India in recent years; ongoing caste conflict and persistent attacks on dalits and minority groups. Our attempt in the discussions will be to examine the complexity of violence that marks our society today and to examine also the continuum of violence whereby political violence can escalate into armed conflict and vice versa. Further, to ask how these affect the daily lives of ordinary people, and particularly the most vulnerable sections of society such as women and children. The vast amount of work on political violence has mainly focused on violence and conflict as primarily male domains, and has seen it as being carried out by men on male armed forces, guerrillas and other perpetrators of violence.

These discussions will therefore examine the following questions: How do women in particular experience different kinds of conflict? How do women participate in and internalise the ideologies of conflict? What are the State's responses to women's needs in times of conflict - e.g. what is the law on compensation, on loss of life and limb, on damage to women's health etc in times of conflict? What are the implications of increasing militarization for women? What are the implications of increasing militancy for women - how do women get drawn into the ideologies of militants, of the right wing, or the private armies and of "military" like groups such as the Bajrang Dal and others. How do they come to serve as couriers/ messengers etc for the army and security forces in times of conflict. What are the circumstances that push women to these steps, and what is it that draws them to such ideologies; what, in addition, are the implications of such involvement for their lives.

The sub theme will focus not only on women as victims of conflict but also as its agents, and to look at the role women have played as peace makers, as well as examine the quality of that peace, its sustainability, its fragility and its importance for women.

Coordinator: Urvashi Butalia, Kali for Women, B 1/8, Hauz Khas, New Delhi-110 016
Telefax: 011 6864497, email: kaliw@del2.vsnl.net.in

The slow but steady increase in the position of women in Small Scale Sector in the Indian economy would be attributed to policy initiatives taken by the Government. It is increasingly being realised by decision-makers that wide spread poverty and stunted development cannot be tackled without providing adequate opportunities for productive employment of women. The Government conferring statutory status to the National Commission on Women, the reservation of a certain percentage of seats for women in local self government bodies and institutions of higher learning create avenues for bringing women into the mainstream.

During the Seventh Five Year plan an integrated multidisciplinary approach was adopted covering employment, education, health and other related aspects on areas of interest to women.

The Government as part of its planning policy from the Fifth Plan period onwards has been giving preferential treatment to women in finding them employment in the organised sector as also in encouraging, equipping and facilitating them to become entrepreneurs. The measures taken include announcing special schemes for women entrepreneurs, preference in allocation of sheds in industrial estates, financial assistance, exclusive industrial estates for women and encouraging them through the institution of awards for entrepreneurs. Financial institutions and other development agencies have taken a cue from the Government and are supplementing their efforts.

Despite the encouragement given by Government and other developmental agencies the progress of entrepreneurship development among women in India has not been satisfactory. There is no dearth of programmes favouring women but unfortunately the policies could not integrate women into the mainstream of society mainly because of lacunae in the implementation process. In recent years it has become increasingly evident that women still lag behind a great deal both in availing of the benefits of developmental programmes due to several socio-cultural political blocks and the impassivity of the implementing system.

This sub theme will examine policy initiatives, entrepreneurship modules and the organisational support available in fostering women empowerment through enterprise development, while focussing on the role of governmental and non governmental agencies in strengthening women.

Coordinator: C. Rani, National Institute of Small Industry Extension Training, Yousufguda Hyderabad-500 045, Phone: 040 3608577, Fax: 3608547, email: nisiet@hd1.vsnl.net.in

**Violence Against
Women**

Violence against women is today, as a direct result of the Beijing Conference, assuming centre-stage as a serious development and human rights issue within the national and international arenas. The need to develop new and innovative strategies to ensure the elimination of violence in the new millennium, is being recognised increasingly. In India, the women's movement has been able to consistently push the issue of violence on the national agenda. The activism of women's organizations has been instrumental in both enhancing the understanding of violence against women and in generating innovative responses to the issue. This in turn has not only resulted in amendments in law, setting up of shelter homes and counseling services, but also community responses such as neighborhood watches, women's courts and social boycotts. Although much ground has been covered, we need to take a reflective look at existing data sets on violence, what has been accomplished and what more needs to be done to achieve the elimination of violence against women.

This sub-theme aims to address some critical concerns, like the cultural and regional variations in violence against women, if any, norms of acceptable behaviour in public and private spheres, the relationship between domestic and state violence to state a few.

The documentation of violence by institutional systems like police, courts, hospitals and NGOs is very important. This sub theme proposes to pinpoint the specific problems faced in this area. These responses of the state and NGOs to the issue of violence have to be evaluated in terms of their strength and lacunae. Our focus has to be on strengthening the legal responses alongwith seeking community participation. Since violence is a critical development issue, the sub theme plans to highlight the interconnections between violence and development and the impact of economic restructuring on violence against women.

Finally the sub theme will also raise the question of how violence against women is being re-viewed as a human rights violation within India, the issues around sexual exploitation of girl children with respect to trafficking and trends pertinent to South Asia.

Coordinators: **Nata Duvvury, Anuradha Rajan** and **Seema Sakhare**, International Centre for Research on Women, F 81 East of Kailash, New Delhi 110 065, Telefax: 011 6283933, email: icrw@ndf.vsnl.net.in

**Information Dimensions for
Women's Studies**

*An Agenda For The Future
7th January, 2000, Hyderabad*

The Centre for Women's Development Studies in collaboration with the Indian Association for Women's Studies is organizing a one day workshop on "Information Dimensions for Women's Studies: An agenda for the future" to be held on 7th January 2000 at Hyderabad. The workshop will be a pre-conference feature to the IX National Conference of Women's Studies organised by IAWS from 8-11th January 2000.

There is growing recognition at the international, regional and national levels of the critical role of information for women's studies research, action, advocacy and policy planning. Such information is being generated continuously from a variety of sources. There is constant flow of information coming out from various levels of intra-governmental and governmental agencies, research and academic institutions, women's organizations and also a number of commercial publishing houses.

The task of collecting, preserving, processing and disseminating this plethora of information in its myriad forms is undertaken by Libraries, Information and Documentation Centres, Archives and Museums. The inter disciplinary and cross sectoral nature of women's studies, the varying needs of user groups in different environment, the diffused nature of information available, the multiplicity of format in which it is found makes the task of these agencies a difficult and complex one.

The one day workshop aims to highlight the role of Libraries/ Information/ Documentation Centres/ Archives and Museums in providing information inputs for women's studies. The workshop will also focus on the role of information networks and the use of traditional and new information technologies for collecting, processing and disseminating the information. It would also try to assess what has been achieved in the last few decades, analyzing the gaps and planning future strategies to ensure equity of access to information.

The workshop provides an ideal opportunity to bring together on one platform the diverse perspectives from women's libraries, archives, museums and information and documentation centres to strengthen our understanding of this highly evolving area of women's studies information.

The workshop will consist of panel discussion invited talks and paper presentations. It would be limited to 30-35 participants. Papers are invited on the above mentioned issues. Only selected papers will be presented at the workshop due to time constraint. However, the Centre plans to bring out the proceedings of this workshop where the other papers would be incorporated.

Last date for receiving the abstract (250 words) is 7th October 1999. Final papers are to be sent by 30th November 1999.

Travel grants will be made available to the paper presenters.

Coordinator: Anju Vyas, Centre for Women's Development Studies, 25, Bhai Vir Singh Marg, Gole Market, New Delhi 110 001, Phone 011 3366930, Fax: 91-11-3346044 email: cwdslib@alpha.nic.in

Countless groups across the country are working to enhance the lives of women. Some of these efforts are experimental, some quite fully viable and now working their way into mainstream. Some of these activities concern themselves with education and communication, others seek means of livelihood for women; but all work within a framework of participative, sustainable and equitable ways of living.

At the 9th National Conference of Women's Studies to be held in Hyderabad in January 2000 we will have a development resource fair called Stri Vividha celebrating the vitality of such alternative efforts centred around women. While the conference would concentrate on academic discourses and debates around the theme of women's perspectives on public policy, Stri Vividha could bring these issues into the public arena by making a popular event of it. In other words, the fair hopes to be a bridge between the city of Hyderabad and the Conference, a unique cultural event attracting a section of people who would not otherwise attend the conference.

Proposed features of the event

- a **mela**, an open platform exhibiting and selling women's literature and products made by them. (As important as the display of the exhibits would be the interaction between visitors and participants which would forge new partnerships, encourage alternatives to prevalent forms of marketing, give craft producers an insight into buyers' demands and stimulate creative exchanges);
- a photo-documentary exhibition on women workers;
- a festival of documentary films on women's issues;
- a **platform cafTheta** - an interactive refreshment corner which would encourage interaction between the conference delegates, fair participants and the people of the city. It could provide informal space for book launches, debates and impromptu cultural shows by fair participants;
- a publication/a handbook on laws concerning women workers. This could include programmes and policies on women workers as well as a directory of agencies and government schemes applicable to women workers.

Those of you who had been to Pune in 1998 would remember our previous Stri Vividha. We would like to have your suggestions on organisations which could be invited to participate in the fair. Both producers of literature and other resource materials and producers of craft and food items are welcome.

We would also invite your suggestions for the festival of documentary films on women's issues. A selection committee for these films is being formed, and after inviting entries, they will review the films and put the programme together. If you are planning book launches, public debates, press statements or would like to put on informal cultural shows during the conference, do remember you have a stage at the Platform CafTheta. Please book with us in advance, for we would seek press coverage of your event. The cafTheta would expect heavy traffic between 6 and 8 p.m. daily. January 8-11 comes within Ramzan, so a daily iftar spread of fruit chaats, halim, kebabs and so on would be an added attraction.

As with all such events, regrettably, space is limited, and we will have to select a representative list out of your suggestions. The final list of invitees should represent both a regional balance as well as a range of activities and products. Please write with your suggestions to **Devasmita Menon** at **Comet Media Foundation**, Topiwala Lane School, Lamington Road, Mumbai 400 007, Phone: 022 3869052, Fax: 022 3870901, email: admin@comet.ilbom.ernet.in giving names and addresses of likely organisations, and the names of key persons there.

- Day I : 8 January, 2000**
- 9.30 – 10.15 : Welcome Address
: Vasanth Kannabiran, Asmita Resource Centre for Women
: Vina Mazumdar, President Indian Association for Women's Studies
- 10.30 – 1.30 : Panel I: Women's Perspectives on Public Policy
- 2.30 – 5.30 : Sub Themes I
-
- Day II : 9 January, 2000**
- 9.30 – 12.30 : Panel II: Tribal Issues and the Women's Movement
- 2.00 – 5.00 : Panel III: Moving Beyond Wombs
-
- Day III : 10 January, 2000**
- 9.30 - 12.30 : Panel IV: Reservations Policies and the Women's Movement
- 2.00 - 5.00 : Sub Themes II
- 5.40 - 7.30 : Annual General Body Meeting of the Indian Association for Women's Studies
-
- Day IV : 11 January, 2000**
- 9.30 - 12.30 : Panel V: Censorship and Silence
- 1.30 – 2.30 : Madhuri Shah Memorial Lecture
- 2.30 – 4.00 : South Asian Panel
- 4.30 – 5.30 : Sub Theme Reports
: Vote of Thanks

Conference Registration Form

Please fill both sides

Please type or use capitals

Name _____ :

Department/Institution _____ :

Mailing Address _____ :

Phone/Fax/email _____ :

Category of IAWS Membership _____ :

If you have sent the accompanying Membership Form to Mumbai

DD No. _____ Date: _____ Bank/Branch _____

Check Appropriate Box

Paper Presenter Participant Sub theme Coordinator Panel Coordinator Panel Speaker



IAWS Membership Form

Please fill both sides

I would like to be a member of IAWS in the following category (please tick appropriate category):

- Ordinary Member - - Rs. 100 for 2 years
- Student Member - - Rs. 50 for 2 years
- Institutional Member - - Rs. 700 for 2 years
- Life Member - - Rs. 500
- Corporate Member - - Rs. 5000

I enclose herewith a Demand Draft of Rs. _____ made out to
the Indian Association for Women's Studies, payable at Mumbai.

(DD No. _____ Date: _____ Drawee Bank/Branch: _____)

Conference Registration Form

IXth National Conference on
Women's Studies

Contd.

Details of Payment of Registration Fees : Rs.

Demand Draft Number :

Date :

Drawee Bank & Branch :

Please note: Demand Drafts to be made out in favour of Indian Association for Women's Studies, payable at Hyderabad. No other mode of payment will be accepted.

Do you require Creche Facilities Yes _____ No _____

If yes, state no. of children and their ages

Date of Arrival :

Date of Departure :

Please return completed form with payment to:

Kalpana Kannabiran

Indian Association for Women's Studies,

10-3-96, Plot 283, East Marredpalli, Secunderabad-500 026. A. P.

IAWS Membership Form

Contd.

Please note: No other mode of payment will be accepted.

Signature and Date : _____

Name : _____

(Please Print) _____

Address : _____

(Please give PIN code) _____

Email : _____

Education : _____

Occupation : _____

If you have registered for the IXth National Conference, please give following details:

DD No. _____ Date: _____ Drawee Bank/Branch _____

Please return completed form with payment to:

Divya Pandey, 21, Gautam Darshan, Off. J. P. Road,

Seven Bungalows, Andheri (West), Mumbai 400 053.



IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO PRESENT A PAPER at the conference, please send a half page abstract [250 words] of your paper to:

- a) The relevant sub-theme coordinator (addresses can be found below each sub-theme abstract)
- b) SONIA BATHLA, Centre for Women's Development Studies, 25, Bhai Vir Singh Marg, New Delhi 110 001, Fax: 011 3346044, email: cwdslib@sansad.nic.in

To participate in the Conference you must become a member of IAWS if you are not already one. IAWS Membership Forms can be found in this brochure. These must be duly filled and mailed along with a Demand Draft drawn in favour of "Indian Association for Women's Studies" payable at Mumbai, to Divya Pandey (address on form).

DEADLINE FOR PAPER ABSTRACTS: 15 NOVEMBER, 1999

Completed Conference Registration Forms along with Demand Draft drawn in favour of Indian Association for Women's Studies, payable at Hyderabad to be sent to: KALPANA KANNABIRAN, Organising Secretary, IX NCWS (address on form).

DEADLINE FOR REGISTRATION: 5 DECEMBER, 1999

Registration fee for outstation participants is Rs. 500/-

Registration fee for local participants is Rs. 200/-

Registration fee after Deadline is Rs. 600/-.

Please Note:

- Please ensure that all payments are made through Demand Drafts and accompanied by completed forms.
- Accommodation cannot be guaranteed for participants registering on the spot. Limited accommodation will be made available on first-come first-served basis.
- IAWS Membership to be sent to Mumbai.
- Conference Registration to be sent to Hyderabad.

THE VENUE:

NISIET is located beside Yousufguda Police Lines about 5-6 kms from the Airport and Begumpet Railway Station. It is easily accessible from Hyderabad and Secunderabad Railway Stations. Participants will be accommodated in Guest Houses within a 5 km radius from NISIET.

Registration Counter at the Conference site will open at 10 A. M. on 7 January, 2000.

IXth National Conference of
Women's Studies

