Kishinchand Chellaram College
(Dinshaw Wacha Road, Churchgate, Mumbai – 400020)
in collaboration with
Akshara (A Women’s Resource Centre)
Organizes
NATIONAL CONFERENCE
On
Re-visiting the Discourse on Women’s Rights:
New Forms of Violations and Contestations
1st – 2nd, September, 2016.

Call For Papers

This interdisciplinary National level Conference focuses on the contemporary discourses on women’s rights and how they engage with new forms and expressions of gender violations and contestations.

The discourse on women’s rights has traversed a complex journey. Where do we stand three and a half decades after the ‘second wave’ women’s movement started gathering momentum? The movement began in the mid 1970s, with the cry for freedom, autonomy and empowerment. Since then, there have been some positive changes in law and policy, in perceptions in some segments of society. It is well established that feminism and the women’s movement have contributed to this change. But issues of severe discrimination and disempowerment have not disappeared.

It is this paradox of contemporary changes in women’s rights and reassertion of patriarchal values in new forms, of violations and contestations generated by the intersections of caste, class and community with gender, that this conference addresses. Post 2012, following the Delhi gang rape and the public protests that erupted, one has seen the emergence at the popular level, of a strong and powerful discourse on women’s rights and greater awareness of women’s issues in different fora; with increasing reporting of crimes, greater assertion of rights and entitlement, increasing feminist conversations. At the same time we see a different kind of interpretation of these events that has resulted in greater surveillance, increasing policing, securitisation, rising suspicion and a positioning/framing of the empowerment discourse within rigid, patriarchal boundaries.
The normalisation of this discourse in the name of upholding Indian cultural values and the invoking of past traditions has several problematic implications. There is a naturalization about the link between women and culture. Often in debates on rape, domestic violence, sex work, caste, community identity and the marginalised genders, issues of culture in relation to normative femininity are being foregrounded.

Digital space has no doubt revolutionized communications and this is especially significant for women whose physical mobility is always hemmed with restrictions and threats. Online space has, on the one hand emerged as a democratic space for feminist activism, interrogating the gendered understanding of Indian culture as well bringing to the fore many marginalised voices. But it also has a darker side. At many levels, it reproduces and reinforces the sexist and misogynist environment. Posts on marital rape do not elicit favourable responses. Intersectional sensitivities are rarely displayed. An aggressive religious nationalism is often on display. So while there is criticism of sexual violence on the streets, such assaults at the hands of security forces in the disturbed areas and calls for withdrawal of overbearing military presence is met with extreme cynicism.

The emergence of the Indian Men's Rights Movements from a solitary existence to a well entrenched movement, crying victimisation and castigating women centred laws as anti male have successfully mobilised public opinion in their favour. But there are also other men’s organizations who ally themselves with feminist issues.

What implications do all these changes have for contemporary feminist politics? The strains of jingoism are already being felt in the Criminal Justice System where it has made access to justice difficult. Anxiety and apprehensions about marriages being annulled, families being torn apart and misuse of women friendly laws are getting reflected in court judgements. Litigation has been taken over by commercial lawyers rarely schooled in women’s rights.

Interestingly the resistances to this form of patriarchal control have been contestations over the meaning of culture. So the ‘pink chaddi’ campaign, ‘slut walk’, ‘kiss of love’ and the recent ‘happy to bleed’ campaign as well as the temple entry campaign seek to subvert and transgress these cultural diktats and disrupt the easy association between women and culture.

This conference is an attempt to map the feminist landscape in India in contemporary times. The scale and pace of changes in the few decades have reconfigured notions of feminism among today’s youth. As feminists and academics, the challenge for us is how do we engage with a popular discourse that is essentially right wing, constructed within
the narrow confines of Indian culture? Are there ways in which we can reconceptualise
feminist activism?

The conference will be structured around the following key themes:

**Mapping the changing feminist landscape**

(Tracking and contextualizing the evolution of feminist discourses in India from the mid
1970s until the current time).

**Negotiating political identities of women**

( Discussing Intersectionality & marginalization based on religious, ethnic, caste
identities, disability and alternate sexuality)

**Women in conflict zones**

(Uncovering the ways in which women are implicated in situations of armed conflict –
especially insurgency related and communal and caste conflict - as peacemakers,
resistors and victims)

**Digital space and Feminist activism**

(Exploring whether the digital space provides a space for liberatory feminist politics)

**Sexual violence and the New Indian macho-ism**

(Examining, in the context of a post globalised era, the emergence of a new Indian
macho-ism centred on extreme aggression and sexual violence. Interrogating its
legitimization as a response to transgressions of traditional gender norms.)

**Contestations in the Domestic space**

( Analyzing the sphere of intimate and familial relations. Rising aspirations fueled by
globalization and increasing awareness of rights & entitlements among women have led
to fierce contestations and violence in the domestic sphere. How do women negotiate
multiple patriarchies in their everyday lives?)

We invite papers from academicians, researcher scholars, activists, policy makers on
any of the sub-themes of the conference. You are requested to send a brief abstract
(500 words) of your paper to conference.gic@gmail.com not later than 20th July,2016.
The abstract must also contain authors’ names, institutional affiliations, email and postal
address. The full length papers of accepted abstracts should be between 4000 to 5000
words and typed with double line spacing in Times New Roman 12pt. in MS-Word.
Papers presented in the conference shall be published in an edited volume.
Registration Fee

Academicians, research scholars and activists – Rs 1200/-

Outstation paper presenters may send a demand draft in favour of K C College, payable at Mumbai.

Hospitality and Travel

Participants are requested to bear their own travel expenses. We shall be happy to offer suggestions on accommodation to outstation paper presenters if approached latest by 10th August, 2016

Key Deadlines

Title of the paper and brief abstract of 500 words – 20th July, 2016

Confirmation of acceptance of the Abstract - 30th July, 2016

Submission of complete paper - 25th August, 2016

Contact Details

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