

THE VOICE

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THE WORKING WOMAN

Vol VI No. 1

January 1986

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A participant in a New York demonstration against US aggressive preparations in Nicaragua and the US economic boycott of that country



Yet Another Year of Struggle

THE publication of January issue shows that we have crossed 1985. While reviewing the happenings of the last year, one has to come to the conclusion that the year was bad for women, particularly for our Muslim sisters.

There has been an intense and serious discussion in Parliament and outside, on the issue of right to maintenance for Muslim women. Through the discussion, protest rallies and meetings and the media publicity the issue received, it was very clear who stood where as far as the question of maintenance for a Muslim women divorcee is concerned. It was also seen that various political parties, claiming for themselves a secular outlook, became opportunists when the necessity of action arose. Even the Prime Minister showed vacillations in order to please the communalists giving the just right of exploited woman a go-bye. It also has to be noted that no difference can be made between Hindus, Muslim or Christian communalists while dealing with the question of equality of women with men. At the time of Hindu code Bill in Parliament, the Hindu communalists raised their voice against, and progressive sections of all parties including the congress had to fight to pass the Bill. History repeated once again with the Shah Bano case. The fight is still on.

One feels proud of our democratic and secular people of West Bengal and Kerala who did not pay heed to the call of the Muslim fundamentalists. Rather, Muslim women and men came out in protest in a good number, thus defeating the communal designs.

However, one thing which women's movement has to take note of, is the weakness in their organisation. The deliberations at the Nairobi Conference also confirms that except for highlighting the issues of women, which was, of course, important, the conference could not elevate the struggle of women.

The deepening crises, the war threats by imperialists, will bring women together to

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fight for equality and equal status side by side with the democratic people to resist the attacks. There is no other way but to unite and fight to get our demands.

Central Govt. Shirks its Responsibility to Working Women

THE AICCWW met at Trivandrum in the month of June 1985 and decided to submit a Charter of Demands to the Chief Ministers and Union Labour Minister on 6th August 1985. As per the decision a delegation met the Union Labour Minister and submitted a memorandum to him. At his suggestion the delegation met the Union Labour Secretary separately for a fuller discussion. After the discussion in details with the Labour Secretary on the points raised, AICCWW expected a reply on the steps taken by the Government. In the absence of this Com. O.J. Joseph raised the demands of working women in the meeting of the Consultative Committee for the Ministry of Labour held on the 19th December 1985.

The following note was submitted in the meeting by the Labour Ministry on the demands raised in the memorandum.

The delegation of the All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women raised a number of demands in their memorandum presented to the Labour Minister. The demands and the action taken are given below:

Demand No 1 No further retrenchment of women workers due to Mechanisation, or any other reasons

Government has commissioned a status paper on the displacement of women workers from different industries due to the introduction of automation. On the basis of this paper, the question of taking up a general policy decision relating to mechanisation as it affects women workers, will be examined. The question of displacement of women workers because of modernisation and mechanisation in the tobacco processing industry was taken up with the State Governments like Karnataka and Gujarat and they were requested to exercise caution in the introduction of automation in the tobacco processing industry, so that women workers are not adversely affected.

Demand No 2 Strict implementation of the present legislations concerning women and punishment for the defaulters

The appropriate Government for implementation of the legislations concerning women in most employments is the State Government. The Central Government is the appropriate authority only in respect of employments carried on by or under the authority of the Central Government, a Railway Administration, Banking Companies, Mines, Oilfields, major ports or any corporation established by or under the Central Act.

In view of the need to enforce labour laws relating to women and children more effectively, it is proposed to create separate enforcement machinery for labour laws relating to women and children in the 7th Five-Year Plan. The scheme will initially be taken up on a pilot basis and depending upon the results it will be extended to all States.

Demand No 3 Provision of creches for all working women at the place of work

There is a provision for setting up creches under the Factories Act, the Mines Act and the Plantations Labour Act. Creches in other areas are set up on a voluntary basis with assistance from the Department of Women's Welfare.

Demand No 4 Extension of maternity benefits to the sectors not at present covered and increase of maternity leave to 4 months

The question of widening the scope of maternity benefits including the question of extending maternity leave from three months to four months is under examination.

Demand No 5 Training facilities and promotion

The Directorate General of Employment and Training is taking steps for modernisation of the Industrial Training Institutes and the

Regional Vocational Training Institutes for women. The courses are being revised and new courses are being introduced in accordance with the requirements of the industry.

2. As regards the apprenticeship training, though under the Apprentices Act, 1961, there is no bar against women joining as apprentices, the number of women apprentices has so far been low. Out of the trades designated under the Apprentices Act there are several trades suitable for women. Despite this, it has been observed that sufficient women are not forthcoming to avail of the apprenticeship training facilities under the Act. With a view to provide greater training opportunities for women steps are being taken to designate additional trades which have greater employment potential for women. The Regional Central Apprenticeship Advisers and the State Apprenticeship Advisers have already been requested to take steps for ensuring substantial number of Women.

Demand No 6 Government and management should provide transport facilities for working women as a part of their service condition especially women working in night shifts

In the employments falling in the State Sector, the State Governments are the appropriate authorities for extending this facility to women workers. As far as the Telephone Operators and other women workers in the Telephone Department are concerned, the matter is being taken up with that Department.

Demand No. 7 Hostels should be provided for Working Women

This concerns the Department of Women's Welfare and that Department is taking appropriate action in this connection.

Demand No. 8 Minimum wages must be implemented as per the Act

The State Governments are addressed from time to time to enforce labour laws effectively. As far as women workers in particular are concerned, the separate enforcement machinery proposed to be created will also look into this.

Serial No. 8: The number of displacement of jobs of women or child workers due to mechanisation in Tobacco, Match, Garment and other industries may be given. What alternative steps have been taken to rehabilitate the displaced women and children workers?

Figures relating to the number of women or child workers displaced in the different industries are not available. However, the number of women who will be affected if mechanisation is introduced on a large scale in the beedi tobacco processing industry is approximately 30,000. The specific case of mechanisation in the beedi tobacco processing industry has been taken up with the State Governments of Karnataka and Gujarat and they have been asked not to encourage automation in this area.

As regards the question of mechanisation in general and the resultant displacement of women workers, this Ministry has commissioned a status paper on the subject, so that a policy decision can be taken.

Serial No. 10: Review of the Equal Remuneration Act: There are reports of violation of this Act even by the Public Sector Undertakings. The workers be given the right to prosecute in case of violations.

The appropriate Government under the Equal Remuneration Act is:

(i) The Central Government in relation to any employment carried on by or under the authority of the Central Government or a Railway Administration, or in relation to a Banking Company, a mine, oil-field or major port or any corporation established by or under a Central Act.

(ii) State Governments in relation to any other employment.

Most of the employments, thus, fall within the jurisdiction of the State Governments. Some violations of the Act in the Central Sector have been reported by the Chief Labour Commissioner (Central). Most of them are minor violations like non-maintenance of registers and forms, etc. Prosecutions have also been launched. In the Central Sector, the

Contd. on page 17)

The Socio-Economic Conditions of Women Workers in Textiles, Khandsari and Sugar Products Industries

(We produce below some portions of the article published in Indian Labour Journal, in March, 1985 issue. The conditions of women workers have become worse since then. The following survey made by Indian Labour Journal in the Working Conditions of Women in Jute, Textile, Sugar etc. confirms what CITU has stated with regard to working women—Editor)

WOMEN workers in the organised segment of the industrial sector are covered by certain labour laws which give protection to them regarding their wages, welfare and working conditions, etc. The present report pertains to the first phase of the factory-sector study conducted in 'Textiles' and 'Sugar and allied Industries', the field work for which was conducted during the period January 1982 to May 1982. The report provides a broad picture of the characteristic of women's employment, their working conditions, wages and earnings, the welfare amenities available to them vis-a-vis the legislative provisions besides throwing some light on their socio-demographic characteristic and their living conditions.

Scope, Object and Coverage

Two types of questionnaires, viz. factory-level and worker level were utilised for the collection of the data. The study was confined to factories registered under the Factories Act, 1948 employing 10 or more women workers. For presentation and analysis of data, these 26 minor group industries have been grouped into six broad categories, viz., 'Khandsari and Sugar Products', 'Cotton Ginning', 'Cotton Textiles', 'Wool Silk and Synthetic Fibres', 'Jute Textiles', and 'Textile Products.'

Characteristic of Women's Employment

There has been steep rise in women employment in 'Textile Products' which is mainly

due to the fact that women workers are generally preferred in industries like wool knitting, ready made garments, etc. because of their being more suitable to the jobs. In factories covered under 'Khandsari and Sugar Products' women accounted for nearly one third of the total employment and they were employed predominantly in only three unskilled occupations, viz, 'General Mazdoor', 'Bagasse worker' and 'Packer/wrapper' which together accounted for 97.4 per cent of women employment. In cotton ginning factories where women's share of employment was as high as 46 per cent they were found concentrated in four occupations, viz, 'Gin Feeder', 'Cotton Picker', 'Seed/Cotton Carrier' and 'Palawali Cotton Cleaner' which together accounted for nearly 74 per cent of the total women employment in the sampled factories. In the sampled factories in cotton Textiles, about 6.7 per cent of the total employment consisted of women and they were predominantly engaged as 'Reelers' and 'Winders' which together accounted for nearly 80 per cent of the total women employment. In the factories covered in 'Silk, Wool and synthetic Fibres', women constituted nearly 11 per cent of the total employment and they were mainly employed as Winder, Reeler, Sorter, Doubler, twister and Packer which together accounted for nearly 79 per cent of the total women employed. Among all the textile industries 'Jute' had the lowest women's share of employment, i.e., only 2.4 per cent of the total employment in the sampled jute factories. They were found to be mainly employed in three occupations viz., 'Hand Sewer', 'Breaker Feeder' and 'Warp Winder' which together accounted for nearly 96.9 per cent of the total women employment in the sampled jute factories.

In 'Textile Products' where women constituted nearly 33 per cent of the total employment in the sampled factories, they were found

to be mainly concentrated in occupation like, Tailor, Thread Cutter, Checker, Button Holder/Stitcher Helper, Stitcher/Cutter/Trimmer and General Worker which together accounted for 78.5 per cent of the total women employment. The percentage of women employed at higher levels of production was much less than the corresponding percentage for men workers. The proportion of permanent workers was much higher among men than among women in three industries, viz., 'Cotton Ginning', 'Wool, Silk and synthetic Fibres' and 'Textile Products'. The study revealed that there were no hard and fast rules for making temporary women workers permanent. In a few cases women workers were being re-employed again and again and thus they were being denied the benefit of their past service.

Wages and Earnings

Almost all the women workers in the factories covered under 'Khandsari and Sugar Products' and 'Cotton Ginning' were employed on time basis. However, in the remaining industries under 'Textiles' group, the proportion of women employed under piece-rate system of wage payment was much higher than the similar proportion for men workers. As high as 69 percent of the women in the sampled cotton textile factories and 74 percent in the jute factories were reported to be piece-rated, whereas the similar percentages for men were only 29 and 42 respectively. The higher proportion of piece-rated women workers in these industries due to the fact that women were mostly engaged in jobs like reeling, winding etc. In cotton textile factories and warp winding in hand sewing in jute textile factories which were essentially piece-rated jobs. *In a few sampled factories the Equal Remuneration Act had not been enforced and women workers found being paid less than their male counterparts.*

Working conditions and welfare amenities available to women workers vis-a-vis the labour laws

Although in most of the sampled factories, women were working in the day shift, in some cases they were found to be employed during night shifts also. In most of the sampled factories, the daily normal hours of work varied between 7 to 8 hours. In seven of the

total nine jute mills and in one sampled cotton textile factory, the spreadover of work, including the rest interval, in the case of both men and women workers was found to be 11 hours as against the statutory maximum of 10½ hours. Women workers in some sampled Khandsari and cotton ginning factories were providing creche facility to their women workers. *Creches were actually found functioning in only some factories covered under 'Cotton' and 'Jute' textile whereas in the remaining industries studies, this facility was virtually non-existent.* Although all the creche buildings were found having pucca structure, yet some of them were not properly furnished or maintained in a clean and sanitary conditions. Out of a total of 126 factories studied as many as 39 factories had no separate washing arrangements for women workers. In some factories, the existing facility for washing was either not properly screened or had inadequate arrangements of water supply. Almost all the sampled factories had provided separate toilet facilities for women workers yet the facility provided in some cases was either inadequate or its maintenance was highly unsatisfactory. Barring seasonal factories studied under 'Khandsari and Sugar Products' and 'Cotton Ginning' industries and some perennial factories pertaining to handloom, powerloom and coir fibre industries, most of the other sampled factories were found to have been covered under the Employees' State Insurance Scheme and the payment of wages for the maternity leave period was being made there by the Corporation.

Socio-Demographic Characteristics

The low proportion of women workers in the younger age group in 'Cotton' and 'Jute' textiles is indicative of the fact that there has been very little fresh recruitment of women in these industries and as a result of this, the total women employment has either remained stationary or has gone down during the past years.

About 67 to 84 per cent of the children of school going age-group of 6-14 years belonging to the women workers were actually attending schools. That rate of enrolment was relatively less for girls in some sampled factories. The extent of trade unionism among women workers was satisfactory only in 'Cotton' and
(Contd. on page 15)

Do Not Neglect Working Women: AISGEF

THE 6th National Conference of All India State Government Employees' Federation held in Bombay on 3-6 November, 1985, gave special emphasis on the problems and elevation of working women on the higher committees, in the General secretary's report. We are giving below the portion on working women for our readers.

The Working Women

Another aspect of our society with which the Federation is very much concerned need also be referred to in this connection. More and more women are entering into jobs, particularly government jobs. In some States the women employees are in very great number. Half of the population of the world are women and as a legacy of the feudal past they are also socially oppressed in a male-dominated society. It is thus seen that the women not only of our country but of the Western capitalist countries also suffer from so many social discriminations, even in workplaces. They do not enjoy equal social rights with men. This is a general problem of the womenfolk of the capitalist world. And as working women also they have many peculiar problems which the men employees do not have. Thus it is incumbent upon any progressive trade union to give special attention to the problems of the womenfolk and particularly the problems of the working women so that they enjoy equal social rights with the men and in the workplaces their special problems are properly tackled. Alongside it has also to be seen that while more and more women employees are taking part in trade union struggles and day-to-day trade union work despite their tremendous difficulties and family obligations, they are given sufficient opportunity to develop themselves as good trade union activists and special attempts should be made to elevate them to the position of leadership. Without paying special attention to the women and their problems no trade union can boast of being progressive and forward-looking. AISGEF and its affiliates will have to specially consider this aspect of our social problem.

West Bengal Labour Minister on Working Women's Problems

Com. Santi Ranjan Ghatak, Minister of State-in-charge Labour Department, West Bengal while speaking in the Indian Labour Conference on Nov. 25-26, 1985 also pointed out the importance of participation of 50 per cent women in the struggle. He said:

"The agenda items fixed for this Conference unfortunately omit one important issue—the peculiar problems of women workers in different industries. This Conference cannot shut its eyes to the problems of women who constitute about 50 per cent of our population. It is seen that strict implementation of provisions regarding women workers in different labour legislations have generally resulted in shrinkage of employment of women. This is particularly noticeable in jute and textile industries as well as in coal mines. There is also discrimination between man and woman with regard to the wages paid for the same type of work. We should bring about suitable amendments to the existing legislations for removing discrimination and for improvement of working conditions of women, while at the same time ensuring through suitable vocational training that women are not denied job opportunities."

Women Demonstrate Against Computer in the Bank

A demonstration organised by Janavadi Mahila Samiti (JMS) was held in front of United Bank of India at Aminabad, against the attempt to install the mini-computer in the Bank, on 30th December 1985.

Later on, a delegation of J.M.S. met the branch manager and handed over a memorandum against computerisation and mechanisation in banking industry. Mrs. Shanti Borker, Secretary of Janvadi Mahila Samiti in a statement warned the government to deter from its policies for increasing unemployment and thereby create serious law and order problem in the country. She boosted the morale of the struggling employees and appealed all section of the working class and public in general to oppose the installation of the machines.

Findings of Working Group on Employment of Women

A Working Group on Employment of Women was set up by the Planning Commission in September, 1978. The findings of the Working Group have been published by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Government of India in September 1985, Indian Labour Journal. The group made the following recommendation:

I. Industrial training institutes, polytechnics and apprenticeship training scheme: (a) Reserve a certain number of seats for women in training institutes and apprenticeship trades; (b) Encourage women to join these institutes/trades by giving incentives and facilities like hostels, stipends, etc. (c) Hold special crash classes in ITIs & Polytechnics for women whose qualification may fall slightly short of basic required qualifications in order to enable them to join the regular training courses; and (d) Encourage employers/institutes to train a large number of women, by awarding prizes, special citations to employers/institutes who produce the best results, train women in excess of the reserved number.

II. Employers: (e) Reserve a certain percentage of seats for women in-service training given by employers; (f) Give special recognition in the shape of national awards, etc., to employers who (i) give in service training to a large number of women, (ii) appreciably increase the employment of women, and (iii) impart literacy or non-formal education, etc; (g) Encourage Employers to take in more women by giving a rebate to industries which employ a large number of women. This should be linked to the proposal of the Ministry of Industry to give rebates to labour intensive industries.

III. Rural Training: (h) Hold short term training courses for rural women through mobile units attached to nearby Training Institutes after identifying suitable trades on the basis of local skills, viability, availability of market, plan investment, etc. A technical institute nearby should be associated as a supervisory body; (i) To ensure continuity in

training, rural women should be trained both as organisers and instructors in locally viable trades. These women can work in liaison with and be directly supervised by the team of technical officers at the district level proposed by the Working Group on Rural Associations, for promotion of employment amongst women; (j) The Rural Industries Project should have a definite slant towards women. It should have either some women as managers and technical officers or offer training in occupations which a large number of rural women can and are willing to take up; (k) Give an orientation to the personnel of existing training institutes to make them responsive to local employment needs, so that new trades can be started to meet these needs, and (l) Give wide publicity to all these measures in schools, through employment exchanges, panchayats, Women's Association, etc.

The AICCW requests the readers to send their comments on the above findings of the working group — Editor

Approach Paper to the Seventh Five Year Plan

More specifically, the Approach Paper to the Seventh Five Year Plan, 1985-90 also provides, inter alia, the need for reviewing the existing training programmes, training facilities in identified critical areas of shortage, provision of vocational and technical courses, formulation of a national wage policy, comprehensive legislation in respect of labour relations, possibility of organising labour, welfare funds, especially for the unorganised sector, streamlining the administrative machinery for implementing the minimum wages for agricultural workers and measures to be taken to strengthen the organisation and bargaining power of agricultural labour, efforts for rehabilitation of physically handicapped and need to identify the constraints affecting implementation of the legal provisions to protect the weaker sections like bonded labour, landless agricultural labour, migrant labour, construction labour and women labour.

AICCWW Demands Revision of Rostering Women Staff in Night Shift

VIMAL RANADIVE, Secretary — AICCWW has written following letter to the Regional-Director, Indian Airlines on 4th December, 1985.

"It has come to our notice that the management of Indian Airlines has started "Rostering of Lady Staff in the night shift" since October 1985, without any mutual understanding between the union and the Indian Airlines. It is shocking to note that the management failed to realise that any change in the rules and regulations in respect of the employees working conditions should be discussed before any major decisions are taken, particularly in view of the fact that no lady staff in the Indian Airlines has been given night shift during last three decades and rightly so.

Considering the daily attacks and molestations of women in most of the cities, including Bombay, the airports in general being far from the cities without proper facilities for conveyance etc., there is every likelihood of the women working in the night shifts facing the attacks by anti-socials and their lives might be in danger.

Winnie Mandela Forcibly taken from Soweto

The police dragged Mrs. Winnie Mandela, wife of the jailed African National Congress leader Mr. Nelson Mandela from her house in Soweto and drove her to a hotel outside Johannesburg. She resisted her removal. Two policemen asked her if she would accompany them. When she refused, the police handed his weapon to another officer and dragged her by her hands from the house and whisked away in an unmarked car to Jan Smuts airport which is out of the administrative area of Johannesburg. Botha Government is so much afraid of Winnie Mandela even though she was under house arrest that he felt it necessary to remove her to far off place.

We Demand Release of Winnie Mandela!

The sudden decision of the management to roster the Lady staff in the night shift, manoeuvring the lady staff to volunteer for the same, smells of bad taste. Moreover there was no study or consultation about the effects on the private and home lives of the lady staff before taking such a decision. This goes against the principles of good Industrial relations.

The All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women strongly objects to the rostering women staff in the night shift and demand revision of the same considering their safety in the night shift. We demand the unions should be consulted before taking any such important decision

We hope that the management of Indian Airlines will consider the issue which is vital for the services of the lady staff working in the night shifts."

Decisions of the Labour Ministers Conference

THE 35th Session of the Labour Minister's Conference held on 11-5-85 took the following decisions with regard to working women:

1. The existing ceiling of Rs. 1,600 per month for coverage under the Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972 may be done away with and appropriate Governments may be empowered to extend the provisions of the Act to establishments employing less than 10 persons.

2. The Act should be extended to cover establishments employing substantial number of women workers and tripartite consultations should be undertaken for exploring further scope of extension.

3. The housing scheme for beedi workers should be dovetailed into the existing housing scheme of the State Governments for weaker sections of the society.

4. There is an urgent need for setting up new ITIs exclusively for women and to diversify courses at the existing ITIs to improve employment prospects for women.

5. Review of Labour Laws pertaining to women workers.

A. Nazimun/isa, Kerala

Convention of Women Employees in the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation

A State-level convention of women workers in the KSRTC was held in Com. Raja Gopal Memorial Hall at Trivandrum on 13.11.1985. The convention was arranged by the CITU Union in the industry, in order to chalkout programmes for curbing the managements' discriminatory attitudes against the women employees. The Corporation, under the rule of a Police officer who is notoriously, known for his acts during the 'Emergency Rule', is not bothered even to provide preliminary facilities for women workers. On the other hand he is indulging in transferring the women employees particularly those who actively participated in the recently concluded successful strike.

The Convention was attended by a large number of women, which included members from other unions. Com. Girijabai, Trivandrum Dt. President of Working Women's Co-ordination Committee inaugurated the convention and Com. Nizimuniza spoke about the need to become more active in trade union activities, Com. V. Viswanatha Menon and Com. K.K. Divakaran, President and Gen. Secretary respectively of the K.S.R.T. Employees Association (CITU) also addressed the convention.

The convention passed resolution demanding provision of Creche, rest-rooms etc and against unlawful transfers. The convention elected a committee with Com. C. Vasanthakumari as convener.

Student Agitation in Kerala

The participation of girls, in the one month long student agitation in the state started from 30th September against privatisation of Educational Institutions, was unprecedented.

Hundreds of girl students actively participated in all the agitational programmes.

A United Action Committee of Students launched a hunger strike in front of the Govt. Secretariat demanding withdrawal of decision for allotting 15 polytechniques in private sector, withdrawal of recognition of the private Ayurvedic College at Shornur, rejection of Adi Sheshaiya Report etc. Showing sympathy to the hunger strike of the leaders, the entire student community declared indefinite strike and boycotted classes.

The girl students in schools and colleges also boycotted their classes, participated in picketing, road blocking and rallies. Hundreds of them courted arrest challenging the police brutalities. This continued in all days during the agitation. Many students were injured when police resorted to lathicharge entering into the Kasargode Women's College. A lady Lecturer, who took the injured girls to the hospital was also beaten up by the police. Not a single day was passed without lathicharge in some part of the state. It was a usual sight that tiffin boxes, books, etc are scattered on the roads.

When the Women's hostel attached to the Govt. Ayurvedic College at Trivandrum was closed by the authorities, the students, with the help of parents and well-wishers, managed to continue the working of the hostel and actively participated in the strike.

The agitation evoked tremendous support from all democratic minded people when Govt. and police tried to suppress it by brutal measures. Trade Unions and other social organisations conducted rallies and dharnas in support of the demands of the students and in protest against the Govt's attitude. Women employees under the banner of the Trivandrum District Committee of Working Women held a day long dharna in front of the Govt. Secretariat where the students were on hunger strike. In other districts also working women co-operated with the student agitation.

The strike came to a close on October 26th when Government convened a conference of students leaders and assured them that the privatisation of polytechniques etc will be deferred and that any move in this regard will be taken only after consulting the student's organisations.

Review of the Book "Stree Chalvalichi Vatchal"

(a Marathi Book)

Vimal Ranadive

THE book "the path of women's movement" is a collective work of six women writers in Maharashtra published by the Progressive Book Publishers. It has come out during the Women's Decade. It contains a fund of information on women's movement in different periods, how did it develop and what should be the direction of the women's movement, etc. so that women can be emancipated. It is true, that very few books on the women's movement are published and therefore the present book should be welcomed, especially because this is written in a Marxist Leninist point of view. The writers have based themselves on Marx, Engels, Lenin and Babel, the sure authority on women's questions.

The writers have given ample instances to prove that the present inferior status of women was not always like this, and that as the classes came into existence, with the development of productive forces, the position of a woman slowly changed into their subjugation.

The book has given the account of well-known women leaders in the past who have contributed to promote the interest of women in the field of education, social uplift etc. Pandita Ramabai, Maharshi Karve, Shri Agarkar and Jyotiba Phule have done a great service for the cause of women. Another interesting part of the book is the role played by women in Tebhaga movement and in the Chitagong Armoury raid in the fight against the landlord and British rule.

The massive participation of women during the Independence movement since 1929 has been correctly highlighted. Not only that but the heroic women in Telangana struggle, Adivasi women in Maharashtra have been specifically given due place.

Another important point, which the writers have made, was about the women workers in the various struggles, economic and political under the trade unions. The heroic struggle of women workers in Bitiya Mill for 6 months,

the role they played in the general strike of Textile workers in 1940 for dearness allowances are some of the examples. It is to be noted by those who want to build the women's movement that without the conscious participation of women workers in the economic and political struggle the total movement for emancipation will remain weak.

The 4th Chapter has described in detail the women's movement in USA, England, France, Japan, etc. The issues remaining common for all, the women's movement has acquired an International outlook.

The book rightly criticised the activities, particularly the wrong politics of Feminists who try to disrupt the mass movement. The women's organisations have to take a serious note of this trend and fight it ideologically.

In the last chapter, the writers have given the basic principles on which the women's movement should be built. It is said correctly that the women's movement should be a part of the movement of the toiling people then only women will be emancipated. Therefore women of these classes should come together for these objectives.

While giving the basic principles, and common issues on which, women can unite, the writers have not mentioned anywhere clearly against whom women have to fight unitedly. There are hundreds of Dowry deaths in our country, the issue of price rise is very acute, equal wage for women has to be fought.

It is strange that while they accept that struggle for women's movement is an integral part of the struggle of the exploited people, they fail to link it with the struggle against the Congress rule and its policies. There is no criticism whatsoever of the policies pursued by the congress party, its refusal to enact radical laws in favour of women and failure to implement laws that are only on the statute book.

On the Right to Maintenance

We give below the text of the speech made by Com. Saifuddin Chowdhary the CPI (M) MP in parliament on the right to maintenance to Muslim women.

I want to start with a personal explanation that I am not an authority on the Holy Quran or any other religious scripture. But following the judgement and the kind of debate that has arisen, I went through the Holy Quran again and I tried to understand what is the spirit behind it. Thereafter, I tried to judge the Supreme Court's judgement. I have to say that I cannot join with the sentiments expressed by Janab Ansari, hopefully, not wrongly.

The day before yesterday night on the TV we saw these two persons. Shah Bano and M.A. Khan talked on the TV. Listening to that and realising the misery of Shah Bano, I was thinking that if I had the power, I would have ordered flogging that person, that male, in public, and I think that is not prohibited by Shariat!

I don't want to take much time as Ansari Sahib took. I want to say certain things. There are so many translations of the Holy Quran.

The Holy Quran in Ayat 241 says—After giving divorce to the woman, maintenance should be provided at a reasonable scale. This is the duty of the righteous. That is quite clear.

Shri Ebrahim Sulaiman Sait: For how long?

Shri Saifuddin Chowdhary: I will Come to that.

Prof. N.G. Ranga: Mr. Ansari was telling that.

Prof. Madhu Dandavate. He is not quoting Ansari. He is quoting the authority.

Ayat 242 says: "Thus doth God make clear

his signs in order that you may understand." But it seems, that even the God has failed to make certain people understand his signs.

Shri Ebrahim Sulaiman Sait: How long?

Shri Saifuddin Chowdhary: I am coming to that. Now, it is said that maintenance is upto Iddat. What is Iddat. Surat Altalaq says:

"When you have to divorce women, pronounce divorce only when they are in a free state (free from menses or pregnancy). Do not turn them out of their houses, God may perhaps bring about a reconciliation between you."

You have to ascertain that the particular woman is in a free state. Now, the question comes and I quote further:

"And when they reached their prescribed term, either retain them with kindness or part from them in a just and gentle manner.

The prescribed term of waiting is three months except for pregnant women for whom time is extended till they have laid down their burden.

This is for what? Is it for maintenance? No. It is for re-conciliation.

Shri Ebrahim Sulaiman Sait: It is completely wrong.

(Interruptions)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Please do not interrupt him. Let him have his say.

Shri Saifuddin Chowdhary: Allah says:

"Lodge them (women in Iddat) where you yourselves lodge and let them live in a style that ye yourselves live."

So, Iddat is the period of reconciliation and maintenance comes after that.

(Interruptions)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Please do not interrupt. Let him have his say.

Shri Saifuddin Chowdhary: So, I am of the firm opinion that this period of Iddat as commonly said—three months—is not for maintenance. It is for reconciliation.

(Interruptions)

Shri G.M. Banatwalla: Re-conciliation does not go on for life.

Re-conciliating is only during the period of Iddat.

(Interruptions)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Please sit down. You have got the right to reply.

Shri Saifuddin Chowdhary: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I accept what Shri Banatwalla has said that Iddat is the period for waiting for re-conciliation. Iddat is the period of re-conciliating. Maintenance comes after that when the parting is formalised. For divorced women maintenance should be provided at a reasonable scale. This is what the Holy Quran says.

It is my firm opinion that gross mis-interpretation is being given to the question by certain people. They are trying to create passions in the minds of the Muslims. A very good judgement was given by the Supreme Court. It could be that while giving a judgement they could have misquoted or misinterpreted the 'Quran'. But the spirit of judgement is right according to 'Quran'. They could have given the judgement as natural justice without going into all that. But I support the spirit of the judgement. I support it for the millions of women who are our sisters and mothers in our country. Nobody has taken monopoly of any community, any religion or any system in our country. The general run of Muslims do not practise anything bad. But there are certain perverted people who are misinterpreting and exploiting them and the system.

Shri Jaffar Sharief: Sir, I have a point of Order. Sir, he has questioned the very fundamental right, that is, right to practise and profess a religion. He has the courage to say and impose his views that nobody has got the monopoly of the religion. I have got the right

of my religion. I have got faith and belief in it.

Nobody on earth can challenge me. But he has no right to say that nobody has got the monopoly.

Shri Saifuddin Chowdhary: Yes, I have said that I don't have the monopoly.

But you claim that you have the monopoly. Let it go to the Muslims and let them know that he has the monopoly of the whole Muslim community in the country.

Sir, our country is secular and there is a very good Section in Cr. P.C. in this regard. There is a certain provision also. Section 125 of Cr.P.C. says like this.

"If any person having sufficient means neglects or refuses to maintain his wife, unable to maintain herself, a magistrate may order such person to make monthly allowance for one maintenance of his wife."

Here the explanation a wife to include divorce is also given. Now, if this Section is complete here, no problem would arise. What is the problem here? Here the Government has added one thing, in between they have added one thing and that is dangerous and derogatory and harmful for keeping our country 'secular'. The discrepancy is in 127.3(B). It says—

"If all dues are paid to the divorcee according to Personal Laws, then magistrate's order will stand cancelled."

Here we say that the State is not interfering with the Personal Law. But the Personal Law is interfering with the "secular" law. Are you to accept that? We are going to enter the 21st Century and they are trying to take us back to 5th Century.

Now, one lady comes to the Court being dissatisfied with the so-called justice given by the Personal Law and you tell her to go back to the same Personal Law. What kind of justice is this?

Shri Ebrahim Sulaiman Sait: She has withdrawn.

Shri Saifuddin Chowdhary: Crying in Indore, why has she to withdraw it? She said about the withdrawal and so much turmoil and so much 'hangama'. I salute that lady who continues to Struggle with courage. She has been put under pressure. Now we have tried to save her. But there is no doubt she had to succumb and she had to make that statement for cancellation of the judgement of the Supreme Court.

(Interruptions)

This is most unfair and pathetic. This has happened as we do not have a common Civil Code. I emphasise the need for a common Civil Code; you may give it the name of uniform Civil Code. We are a secular country, we cannot have separate laws for Hindus, Muslims or Christians and others. I am not suggesting any interference in the personal laws. But in the Cr. P.C. what has happened? State did not interfere in the personal law, but the personal law has interfered in the State law. The Supreme Court judgement is totally supported by the spirit of Quran. There is no antagonism with Muslim personal law. Articles 44 of the Constitution enshrines upon the State to endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the country. What endeavour has been made so far in that direction? What have the Government done? Every time the Government says that they are not going to interfere with the Muslim personal law. Recently in the All India Momin Conference, the Prime Minister said that the Government was not going to interfere with the personal law.

In the name of secularism, a kind of hypocrisy is going on....

(Interruptions)

Shri GM Banatwalla: What is secularism?

Shri Saifuddin Chowdhary: Secularism is not mixing of all religious passions, State has to be separate from various religions. The State should not mix with religion; education should not mix with religion. Everyone should have freedom to pray God. There should be no interference in that ... (interruptions). One misconception is there, that what is now going on in the name of Muslim personal law is immutable and it is sacrosanct. But what did we see in 1937? The British enacted the

application of Muslim personal law in India (Interruptions).

Now Sir, Shri Ansari has referred to the book 'An Indian Civil Code and Islamic Law' by Taheed Mohammad. I can find justification from this book for what I am saying now that nothing is immutable. I would like to quote from his book:

"Statutory recognition of anti-bigamy stipulations in marriage contracts are found in so many Muslim countries like Lebanon, Jordan and Morocco."

This book also says that pre-marriage control by courts exists in Syria, Iran, Iraq and Malaysian state of Sarwak or by administrative bodies in Indonesia, Pakistan and Bangladesh. And there is absolute prohibition of bigamy in Tunisia and Turkey. These are all Muslim countries. I wonder why we have to be so different! If bigamy is prohibited, is Islam in danger?

Shri G. M. Banatwalla: We are more concerned about the spirit of Quran.

Shri Saifuddin Chowdhary: Even the spirit of Quran, so far as I could understand and I may be wrong, is that it tried to restrict so many marriages and that is why they decided on a ceiling. So, the direction is towards monogamy. So, we have to take the spirit and in what conditions that had to be done.

(Interruptions)

Shri Saifuddin Chowdhary: Let me now come to the aspect of divorce. The practice of Triple Divorce or the so called Talaq is abolished in Muslim countries like Egypt, Sudan, Jordan, Syria, Morocco and Iraq. They are prohibiting this triple divorce system. All this, I am quoting from this book of Taheed Mohammed. I do not know anything about him.

Shri Z.R. Ansari: Then, why are you poking your nose?

(Interruptions)

Shri Saifuddin Chowdhary: It is written there that it is abolished. I am only quoting. What can I do? (Inconclusive)

Women's groups shocked at PM's remark

SIX woman's organisations today expressed concern over "concerted efforts being made by fundamentalist forces to deny women their basic and fundamental rights in the name of personal laws." on 10th Dec. 1985.

In a joint statement these organisations also expressed their shock at the Prime Minister's statement that the Government would seriously consider the demand to exclude Muslim women from the purview of Section 125 of CrPC.

The statement was signed by Mrs. Pramila Dandavate (Mahila Dakshata Samiti), Mrs Vimla Farooqi (National Federation of Indian Women), Mrs Kunti Sondhi (All-India Women's Conference), Mrs Ivy Khan (YWCA), Mrs Vimla Ranadive (All-India Democratic Women's Association) and Jyotsna Chatterji (Joint Women's Programme).

Calling on the Government to take "an unequivocal stand" against the deliberate confusion being perpetrated by fundamentalists, the signatories said they welcomed the stand by enlightened public opinion with the Muslim community and would extend support to it.

Press Statement

Com. Manjari Gupta, President and Com. Sushila Gopalan General Secretary of AIDWA has issued the following statement to the press on 4.1.86.

The AIDWA expresses its shock and concern at the recent statement of the Prime Minister to some women's organisations (including AIDWA) that the Govt is seriously considering to issue an ordinance to codify Muslim Personal Law which will protect Muslim women "by making payment of Mehr at the time of divorce compulsory and also increase the Mehr commensurate to any increase in the husband's income. Unfortunataly it appears that increased Mehr is going to be the legal substitute for the right of an indignant Muslim woman to get maintenance for herself and her children under Section 125 CrPc. when the Prime Minister was repeatedly questioned

on this by the women's organisations, he prevaricated on the issue and only after much pressure he gave a mild assurance that at present Section 125 would not be "diluted".

It is unfortunate that the PM and the Govt appear to be more sensitive the pressure of the fundamentalists with their retrograde demands than of the less vocal though strongly felt sentiments and needs of the women of the community.

The question before women is not that Muslim Personal Law should not be codified but that in the name of codification the rights of women who constitute one half of the community, should not be trampled upon and denied.

The AIDWA demands that Muslim women should not be denied their rights to maintenance under 125 CrPC. It calls upon its units to send telegrammes, Post-cards and signatures from women throughout the country on this issue to the Prime Minister. The AIDWA also appeals to other women's organisations and in particular to Muslim men and women to intensify their struggle for justice on this issue.

(Contd. from page 6)

'Jute' textile industries being 13 and 81 per cent respectively of the total women production and related workers in the sampled factories. A majority of the sampled women workers was found to be unaware of the beneficial legal provisions concerning their employment and welfare.

Economic and Living Conditions

The total average monthly household income worked out to be very low for the sampled households studied in the seasonal industries, viz., 'Khandsari and Sugar Products' (Rs. 552) and 'Cotton Ginning' (Rs. 531) as compared to those covered in other categories of industries where this varied between Rs. 693 to Rs. 1,029.

DUTA Women Teachers Continue Struggle

Madhu Prasad

ON 10th December 1985, teaching in Delhi University came to a halt as 6000 college teachers and most of their colleagues in the University Departments went on strike. Two years ago in 1983-84 the teachers had been on strike for 109 days. How the teachers, as some press reports suggest, began to use the 'strike weapon' too frequently? Are they unconcerned with the future of the students? It is essential to understand why the teachers of Delhi University have *had* to resort to prolonged strike actions, for this question is integrally linked to the neglect of higher education by the policy makers, and the consequent deterioration of educational standards. It is well known that the budgetary allowance for education has, with every plan, fallen well below the recommended 6 per cent and today is much lower than allocation even in most third world developing nations. At the same time student strength at the universities has trebled in the last 20 years — it is still however the lowest proportion in relation to total population of most developing countries. Thus the already limited facilities have been spread thinner and thinner over the years. Library facilities are atrociously poor in the majority of under graduate colleges, class room space and conditions are largely absent. These weaknesses have been compounded by the surreptitious lowering of teacher strength by an unfavourable remersion of the student-teacher ratio and an academically unjustified increase in the lecture work load of teachers. The pressures placed on teachers and students in such conditions could not but have led to deterioration in the process of teaching and learning.

A significant impact of inflation in a situation of severe financial restrictions has been seen on the financial emoluments of the teachers. While pay revision committees fail to revise scales every five years as recommended (the much talked of Mehrotra Pay Committee's report is nine years over due!) galloping inflation has made a teacher's salary a pittance. The best talent is no longer attracted to university teaching. Those who

are already in the profession are bogged down with day to day problems of making both ends meet. The prohibitive costs of books have already put this essential part of a teacher's self study and improvement out of reach. No incentive exists for the teachers and they too are now fast imbibing the cynical attitude to education which has been so obvious for years in governmental and bureaucratic circles.

The agitation of 1983-84 aimed at putting an end to this rot. It demanded and got after prolonged struggle. (1) One promotion for all teachers based both teaching even research and on teaching experience alone, (2) speedy implementation of housing scheme for university and college teachers involving Rs. 26 crores, (3) a commitment to implement a scheme for stagnation removal to be drawn up by the university, (4) a commitment to serious and sympathetic consideration by the UGC to the introduction of professors grade in the colleges.

In the last two years the promotion scheme was incorporated in the Ordinances governing service conditions of teachers and implemented. Some, tardy steps to implementing part of the housing schemes were taken. On the last two demands the Education Ministry and the U.G.C. have done nothing on the proposals forwarded by the university.

Through all this the DUTA patiently negotiated with the authorities and the teaching community believing the 1984 agreement to have been concluded in good faith by the authorities and government fully supported the DUTA's approach. In April last year this atmosphere was disrupted by the deliberately provocative action of the UGC in unilaterally terminating the *only* part of the agreement that had been implemented, the promotion scheme. Limited protest actions and intensified negotiation continued till October 1985 when it became clear that the authorities had no intentions of honouring the 1984 agreement.

The DUTA and an angry teaching com-

munity had no option left but to issue a call for a strike, giving the authorities a month-long period to reconsider their provocative stand. The strike has from the start witnessed a militant and firm refusal by the teachers to accept the attitude of the authorities towards the universities, higher education and the teaching community. Demonstration and general bodies have brought out hundreds of teachers from all the colleges and departments. Women teachers are fully in support of the strike and are present in large numbers at dharnas, meeting and demonstrations. The strength and unity of the teachers was evident when they assembled at the Shastri Bhawan. On a miserably cold, foggy and rainy December morning over four hundred teachers, at least half of them women, braved the weather for three hours to make their protest a success. The demonstration at the UGC a week later should have convinced the authorities that the teachers are resolved to continue their struggle till justice is done. The government will have to change its callous attitude to education. Nothing less will satisfy the teachers now.

Agitation by Delhi Telephone Operators

Smt. Vimala Ranadive, Secretary, All India Co-Ordination Committee of Working Women (CITU) has issued the following statement on 14th January 1986:

The All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women (AICCWW) is shocked to learn that a large number of women have been forced to work under horrible service conditions, which smack of unfair labour practice by the authorities of Delhi Telecommunications. Despite clear vacancies these women, who had to undergo the training like regular employees, have been forced to work for shorter hours creating difficulties for the public and denying them full wages. They were given broken duties during the night necessitating their stay in the Exchange without proper resting facilities and no pay. There was no paid lunch or tiffin break for these ladies, no arrangement of transport and no regularisation for the past three, four years, thus imposing unequal wages on the ladies for all these years.

The AICCWW condemns the callous attitude of the Union Govt and the Delhi Telephone authorities which has forced the ladies to start a relay hunger strike to ventilate their grievances. It appears that the Govt wants to utilise the services of these women as bonded labour till the exchanges are fully mechanised electronically.

The AICCWW demands that the Government should immediately give up the practice of short duty services as far as Telephone operators are concerned, fill up the vacancies and settle the just demands of these telephone operators.

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number of prosecutions launched in 1984 were 167, of which 40 cases were disposed off, 38 ending in convictions and 2 in acquittal. The suggestion regarding giving workers the right to prosecute in cases of violations under the Equal Remuneration Act will be examined.

Serial No. 11 The appropriate Government for implementation of legislation concerning women and child labour in most employments is the State Government. The State Govts. are being advised from time to time to improve the enforcement of Labour Laws relating to women and children. In view of the importance attached to the subject of women and child labour, Government have taken a number of steps for their benefit:

Women Labour

(1) A Central Advisory Committee under the Equal Remuneration Act has been set up to advise the Central Government on matters relating to the employment of women. Most of the States have also set up similar Advisory Committees.

(2) Grants-in-aid are being given to voluntary organisations for taking up research and action oriented projects on women labour.

(3) The question of displacement of women due to mechanisation is being examined in depth to enable the Government to take policy decision.

Delhi Co-ordination Committee's Mass Deputation To CEC

ON Working Women's Demands Day, 6th August 1985, a deputation from the Delhi Co-ordination Committee of Working Women had met the Chief Executive Councillor of the Delhi Administration, Shri Jag Pravesh Chandra and submitted a memorandum to him, highlighting the problems and demands of working women in Delhi. The CEC had agreed to look into some of the demands and said that he would enquire into specific violation of protective legislation for women.

After this, the Co-ordination Committee of Working Women being the only women's sub-committee of any trade union in Delhi, met the Joint Labour Commission and asked for representation of the Equal remuneration Advisory Committee of the Labour Dept. Delhi Administration in order to be able to raise issues regarding working women, in this forum. Unfortunately, the Labour Dept. and Executive Councillor for Labour, refused us representation on this committee, without assigning any reason for the refusal, thus making it abundantly clear that the Delhi Administration while professing commitment to the goal of women's development and welfare, is not even prepared to give a proper hearing to the genuine representatives of working women in Delhi.

When three months passed without any action by the CEC on the memorandum, the co-ordination committee decided that it was necessary to bring pressure upon him to act, and it was decided to meet him enmasse on 15th November.

A fortnight long campaign of lunch time meetings were held at factories and offices to prepare for the 15th programme. Posters were put up at all the work sites and the women prepared to take leave from work, with great enthusiasm.

From the morning of the 15th November women started collecting outside the Old secretariat. They came by bus, on foot and by scooter from factories, the LIC, the Municipal Corporation, Schools, Social Welfare centres and resettlement colonies where the Janwadi Mahila Samiti has units. They came from far off areas like Shahdara, Meherulli, Mayapuri, Janakpuri, Lawrence Road. They came with and without leave, many of them

bearing the resistance and anger of their managements.

Within an hour about 80 women had collected, and we marched to the CEC's office, holding placards and shouting slogans. "End discrimination against women workers"; "We want equal wages for equal work" "Give us representation on the Equal Remuneration Committee", "We want jobs or unemployment allowance".

All the women entered the CEC's office and insisted that he listens to all their problems. The Labour Commissioner and Director, Social Welfare, who were present, also participated in the discussions, which lasted almost an hour.

The women workers and employees put forth their case so forcefully that CEC conceded that he would ensure that the Coordination Committee be given representation on the Equal Remuneration Committee. He also assured a solution of the problems of the piece-rated workers at the Social Welfare centres, and that he would call a meeting with the LIC management to discuss about the provision of a creche there. The cases of wage disparity between men and women workers at the Nafed factory, and of the terminated teachers of private schools were referred to the Labour Commissioner.

While the CEC agreed to the demand for an increase in the number of mobile employment exchanges, on the major issue of increasing employment opportunities for women he said "No, No. No. No-I cannot give any further employment to women as long as the government ban on recruitment is there".

The Government's tall claims about its programmes for women's employment and welfare stand exposed. In reality the govt. is not serious about taking any concrete steps for women's advancement and it lacks the will to implement even the existing legislation for women.

The women in the mass deputation left the CEC's office, on the basis of his assurance, but only after warning him that they would be back, in large numbers, if he did not keep his word, and that their struggle would continue, until their problems are solved.

Right to Maintenance Under Section 125 Cr P.C.

Kirti Singh

FREEDOM from discrimination and equality for women still remains an unfulfilled hope for the vast millions of Indian Women. Our constitution guarantees equality and equal protection for women. It also states that no citizen of this country shall be discriminated against by the State on the ground of sex. Despite all this, the so-called "personal Laws" continue to flout the constitutional mandate of equality. While the essence, content and quality of discrimination against all Indian women is the same, different personal Laws stipulates how, to what extent and if at all women can seek redress from their exploitation. These laws to varying extents make a mockery of the Women's cry for equality and all their hopes and aspirations to live in their country free from discrimination. Article 44 of the Constitution of India places a duty on the State to secure for all citizens of the country a uniform Civil Code throughout the territory of India. It is interesting to note, however, that even after almost 40 years of independence, our legislature has not even tried to legislate upon this article. Reforms under the various personal laws have also been resisted by vested interests in the different communities while women continue to be the sufferers.

The Controversy surrounding the Supreme Court judgement in Shah Bano Begum's case highlights the fact that the so-called defenders of faith are in fact offenders against women's rights. Shah Bano Begum was married to Mohd. Ahmed Khan, an advocate in 1932 and five children were born from the marriage. However, in 1975, more than 40 years after the marriage Mohd. Ahmed Khan threw Shah Bano Begum out of the house. Shah Bano Begum applied for maintenance @ Rs. 5000/- p.m. under section 125 Cr. P.C. in April 1978 and was awarded a pittance of Rs. 25 by the Magistrate. This sum was enhanced to Rs. 179.20 by the High Court of Madhya Pradesh. In the meanwhile, in November 1978, Ahmed Khan divorced Shah Bano Begum by unilaterally pronouncing a triple talaq in one breath. It is relevant to mention that Shah Bano Begum had alleged that her husband earned Rs. 60,000/-per year.

Mohd. Ahmed Khan appealed to the Supreme Court against the order of maintenance. The Supreme Court upheld the right of a divorced Muslim women to maintenance under Section 125 Cr. P.C. The first issue examined by the Supreme Court was whether Section 125 Cr. P.C. is applicable to Muslim and other religious communities irrespective of their personal laws. The Supreme Court distinguished between the different civil laws like the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, the Shariat and the Parsi Matrimonial Law and Section 125 Cr. P.C.

It held Section 125 Cr. P.C. was enacted to prevent destitution and vagrancy and that under the Section, a person if he has sufficient means and neglects or refuses to maintain his wife who is unable to maintain herself, he can be asked by the court to pay a monthly maintenance to her at a rate not exceeding Rs. 500/-. It further pointed out that the expression "wife" clearly included a divorced woman by clause (b) of the explanation to Section 125 (1). It clarified that the religion professed by the spouse has no place in the scheme of the provisions and that the section was enacted to provide a quick and summary remedy to a class of persons who are unable to maintain themselves. It also pointed out that the liability imposed by Section 125 Cr. P.C. to maintain close relatives who are indigent is founded upon the individual's obligation to the society and that section 125 Cr. P.C. was truly secular in character and cut across the barriers of religion.

The second issue which the Supreme Court dealt with was whether there was any conflict between the provisions of Section 125 Cr. P.C. and those of the Muslim personal law on the liability of the Muslim husband to provide for the maintenance of his divorced wife. It had been intended by the husband, Mohd. Ahmed Khan, and other fundamentalist Muslim organisations that the liability of a husband to pay a divorced wife is limited to the period of Iddat and also to the payment of the customary Mehr. The Supreme Court at great length dealt with Muslim personal law and reached the conclusion that in fact there was
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Convention of Working Women at Kurnool

A convention, attended by about 400 women was held in Kurnool on 21-11-85 near the A.P. glass factory. The women came from various industries situated in Kurnool town. The convention was presided over by Com. Yella Devi. Smt. Visalashi, Secretary town Democratic women's organisation greeted the convention by stating the experience of women's organisation while taking up various issues. She said there was a great need of organising working women under CITU.

Com. Punnyavathi, Convener of Co-ordination Committee of Andhra Pradesh greeted the convention. While explaining, she narrated as to how the women were exploited by the managements under the present capitalist system. The managements are avoiding the application of minimum facilities to the working women given by the law. She explained the aims and objects of AICCWW. She emphasised that without a strong organisation, and active participation of women in their

trade unions, women would not be able to achieve any demand.

Com. Shadrak, the Dist. leader of CITU cited many instances of the heroic role women have played in their struggle without which no success could have been achieved. Shri Murthy the President of Town CITU also addressed the gathering. A committee of 8 members with Com. Yella Devi as convener was elected at the end of the convention. On the same day a meeting of about 300 women was held on behalf of AIDWA Kurnool Dist. near Paper Mill area. The Secretary of the Unit, Smt. Vusala gave the work report in which she stated how the unit was organising the members to solve the problems of water scarcity, sanitation, etc and also against the obscene literature and films.

Com. Punnavathi, Jt. Secretary A.P. Mahila Sangham, while addressing the gathering reminded the heroic Telangana people's struggle.

A Committee of Working Women Formed in Hyderabad

WORKING Women activists from Hyderabad held a meeting on 19-11-85 to discuss their urgent problems in the factories and offices. Com. P. Sathyanarayana, President CITU and Com. Raghupal, Secretary Hyderabad city council were present and guided the deliberations.

The meeting discussed as to how to improve the work among working women in Hyderabad who constitute a large number. After discussing various problems, an ad-hoc committee of working women was formed, with the following members: Smt Sujavati (Staff Nurse) Convener, Smt. Vanu (NGO), Smt Vasantha (Telephone), Smt. Padmini (ECIL), Smt. Shyamala (IDPL) Smt Saroja (IDPL), Smt. Sanyuktha (Teacher), Smt. Vimala (ALWINS).

The members decided to improve the sale of Voice of Working Women. The Committee also took a decision to hold a city convention in the near future, probably in the month of February or March 1986. Com.

Punnavathi, the Convener of Andhra Pradesh Co-Ordination Committee was present who guided the discussion.

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no conflict between the provisions of Section 125 Cr. P.C. and the Muslim personal law and thus justified the giving of maintenance to a divorced Muslim women also on the basis of the Quran. Prominent members of organization like the Muslim Personal Law Board, Jammat-e-Islami.

In condemning the judgement, they completely ignored the plight of the poor muslim women who are abandoned by their wilful and irresponsible husbands without any means of support merely because they wish to marry again or no longer desire their wives. This leads us to the inescapable conclusion that those who oppose the judgement are merely using the instrument of Islam to legitimize the oppression against women and stop women from raising their voice against the injustices meted out to them.

Appeal to the Women of the World

Women's International Democratic Federation

WE women, who have come together from all parts of the planet in Prague, capital of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the founding of the WIDF, make an appeal to the women of all countries, to their organisations and movements, to all peace-loving people.

Millions and millions of women have come together, strengthening the ranks of the WIDF and multiplying its strength, in the conviction, that only in a world at peace can women move forward to achieve their rights. But our struggle is not over yet. New dangers threaten humanity, war in space, the arms build-up and imperialist plans for world domination endanger life itself. They conjure up the danger of nuclear war and the eradication of life on earth. This crime must not be allowed to occur! A nuclear catastrophe must be averted.

We welcome the results of the summit meeting between the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, Mikhail Gorbachev, and US President Ronald Reagan and their joint statement in which it was confirmed that a nuclear war must never be unleashed and that both sides will not strive to gain military superiority. This creates more favourable opportunities for improvement of the international situation.

People now expect that the results of the summit meeting will be used to speed up the talks on nuclear and space weapons, and this must be translated into practical steps and concrete deeds.

Let us live up to our responsibility and our human conscience. Let us increase our vigilance and act before it is too late.

Let us all fight together for the human right to life, for a peaceful future for coming generations. Our planet must not be allowed to become a target for nuclear mass murders.

What we want is not "star wars plans", but a peace plan for outer space. What we need is not new nuclear weapons but serious steps towards disarmament and the abolition of all weapons of mass destruction. We want

not enmity but common sense and understanding to determine relations between peoples. To achieve this, however, an end must be put to the policy of imperialist aggression and intervention which hinders the progress of the peoples and grossly violates national independence and sovereignty.

Women of the world, peace is our foremost human right.

We do not want to perish in the holocaust of nuclear war, we want to live.

We know that it is not enough to want peace. We have to act for it, now more than ever.

The most important and urgent tasks for the survival of mankind are:

- prevention of the militarization of space,
- ending the arms race on earth,
- reducing, totally eliminating and prohibiting all nuclear and other weapons of mass extermination.

We women — half of humanity — are a mighty force. Let us use this force boldly and resolutely. Let us overcome everything that divides us and resolutely unite against war; then peace will be triumphant.

WIDF Council Meeting
Prague, USSR
28/11—2/12/1985

AIDWA Meets in Bombay

The CEC meeting of AIDWA will meet in Bombay on 8-9th February 1986. The main agenda will be to discuss the All India Conference to be held in Kerala.

Women in Action

In Chile

The Movement for the Emancipation of Chilean Women (MENCH) organised as activity called "Women Accuse" which was joined by 650 public figures including representatives of all opposition political groups. All participating groups had done excellent work in advertising this event. Female physicians, lawyers, journalists, psychologists and educationists took part in it and delivered speeches. The meeting was characterised by a deep democratic spirit. It started with a touching testimony given by Maria Doris Cifuentes, a young woman from Valparaiso, who had been tortured and raped on 18 April of this year. With great courage she reported on that terrible day and finished with the words "We must resist the terror. Nothing will change my commitment to the freedom of my people..." The activity ended with a call for the unity of all Chilean people, for the continuous indictment of human right violations and for the struggle to reestablish democracy in Chile. Democratic Women of Chile (MUDECHI) commemorated the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and sent solidarity messages to the Lebanese and Nicaraguan Women.

In South Africa

On the occasion of August 9, the South African Women's Day, and the International Day of solidarity with the struggle of Women of South Africa and Namibia the Women's Section of the African National Congress (ANC) recalled the 29th anniversary of the heroic march by 20 thousand women to the Union Building of Pretoria, the racist administration's capital, under the banner of the Federation of South African Women to protest against the evil system of passes and oppressive laws.

In an appeal, all peace-loving forces, particularly the women of the world, are called upon to intensify their activities in solidarity with the just struggle of the people of South Africa.

In Paraguay

On August 6 and 9, 1985 an event commemorating the holocaust of Hiroshima and Nagasaki took place under the auspices of the Women's Union of Paraguay in the building of the Revolutionary Febrist Party. Representatives of political parties, groups of working people and university students took part in it and adopted an appeal for peace, which was transmitted also by Radio Nanduti.

Representatives of the Women's Union of Paraguay actively participated in solidarity events dedicated to the peoples of Chile and South Africa struggling against fascist and racist repressive regimes and with people of Nicaragua, struggling against U.S. aggression, which took place on August 18, 1985.

In Britain

A Women's conference on justice, peace and disarmament was held in Manchester, England, on the 14th and 15th September, 1985. Over six hundred women attended the conference in Manchester City Hall, which the City Council had generously offered to the organisers free of charge, a gesture in keeping with the City's Nuclear Free Status. The conference entitled "Many Visions, Many Hands" was organised by a number of Women, Greenham Support Groups and Women from the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. The wide range of workshops, exhibitions and discussions focused on International, regional and local issues. The topics discussed included a workshop on "Women Working for Peace in Countries at War", with women from Iran, Iraq and Turkey participating. "The police State in Britain" was the title of another workshop, whilst one of the most popular sessions proved to be a workshop on "Irish Women: building bridges", where women from the Northern Ireland, Women's Right's Movement spoke on their struggle for justice and peace in the North of Ireland.

Granada will not Happen in Nicaragua

Vimal Ranadive

THE people in Nicaragua, a small country in Latin America with only 3 million population are challenging the US imperialism with all their strength at their disposal. The 1979 revolution in Nicaragua has made a complete change in the lives of common people and Sandinista Government had come to stay despite the daily attacks, destruction, sabotage by 'contras', the stooges of US imperialism. According to the latest reports, the CIA have murdered 3,652 people, 146 of whom are women and 210 children under 12 years old, 4,039 people have been wounded and thousands have been abducted. The most of the attacks come from the neighbouring country Honduras. The terrorists actions of US have resulted in destruction of 321 schools and 50 health centres. It is reported there are 5,000 US marines in Honduras and 12 destroyers off their coast. Since 1985 this small country has been invaded by US 12 times in major attacks.

Under such a difficult situation, men and women are defending their country with weapons in their hands. The Family guidance and Protection Agency in Nicaragua reported that in 34 per cent of the urban homes the father is absent. In Managua, the capital of Nicaragua the figure is 60 per cent. Reason is obvious, the men have been enrolled in the army, to defend their country.

What was the situation before the revolution in July 1979? The rate of infant mortality was 121 per thousand which has come down to 90 now. The illiteracy was 53 per cent which came down to 11 per cent. The number of children in the Health consulting centres increased to 263.3 per cent between 1977 and 1983. There are many undernourished children due to the present situation. But they are getting help from the Govt. and their number increased from 1,28,362 in 1981 to 4,53,408 in 1984.

The working women's participation in the production, in the field of welfare schemes is significant. The representatives of women sit on the social security and welfare council when they are the spokesman, to decide the number of child care centres, women's hospitals, and in which area they should be built. The working women in the factories check-up the implementation of laws. For instance they say "we

will organise a working committee of AMNLAE. The women in the working committee will mobilise the rest of the women in that factory to make sure they are aggressive enough in their union so that the labour leaders learn that they are not only the leaders of men, but the men and women in the Union" and "the women's issues must be put in the collective bargaining process..."

The large number of laws based on the Fundamental status are promulgated on 22nd August 1979 which proclaimed the right to equality without discrimination based on sex, race and religion, and the Govt. saw that the equality comes into practice, The Govt. realises that the emancipation of women can not be achieved in one stroke by enacting laws only. They are therefore encouraging the leading role of women in all spheres of life, and in discussion, with the application of laws.

The existence of Nicaragua Govt. Latin America therefore is disturbing US imperialists. It has, decided to step up an economic blockade by refusing to ship material, it is trying to get through the congress the funds to help the 'contras' to invade Nicaragua. But all attempts to overthrow the Nicaraguan Govt. have failed. Recently, the Sandinista Govt. has supplied the International Court of Justice 1500 documents to prove that the US has been waging an undeclared war against Nicaragua by mining ports, and supplying training, arming the counter revolutionaries who murdered civilians and try to plunge the country into a civil war.

Women, men and even children are prepared to face any eventuality, sacrificing everything to defend the gains of the revolution. Women had put up the uniforms during the revolution by taking up arms against Somoza's tyranny. And if it is demanded they will again take up to arms. As one activist said "I do not like to put my uniform again leaving my children behind and go to the battlefield. I do not like to see my 14 years old son, who should be playing football and baseball, having to be a member of the militia. He is the head of his squad in a battalion at present. I am extremely proud of him. But I do not like it. But we should be prepared for, that is why we do it. That is why Granada will not happen in Nicaragua..."

Did you Know?

1,000 post of Teachers Vacant!

Mr. Mahesh Vhandra, former chairman, Education Committee, Municipal Corporation of Delhi, in a statement on Saturday said that nearly 1000 posts of teachers and 300 other posts were lying vacant in about 200 schools aided by the Directorate of Delhi Administration.

The Government has lifted the ban on recruitment to vacant posts in government schools. But in the case of Government aided schools, the ban is still existing and thousands of children were suffering, Mr. Sharma pointed out.

8th December, 1985
Indian Express

Women Teachers

The Government is considering continuance of central assistance to states for appointing women teachers in backward areas, the Minister of State for Education and Culture, Mrs Sushila Rohatgi, told the House. She told Mr. Mahendra Singh that the scheme had been started in 1983-84 for providing central assistance to nine educationally backward states. It was proposed to continue the scheme during the Seventh Plan, she said. In reply to another question, the minister said the states helped so far were: Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

13th December 1985
Indian Express.

75 PC Women illiterate

Over 75 percent of the women in the country are illiterate, the Lok Sabha was told by Minister for Human Resources Development P.V. Narsimha Rao on Thursday.

In a written reply to a question by Mr. R.M. Bhoje, Mr Rao said that Arunachal Pradesh, Rajasthan and Bihar with woman

illiteracy percentages of 88.68, 88.58 and 86.38 had the highest illiteracy rate among women.

29th November 1985
Patriot

Feminists' Uproar

Feminist groups were up in arms over a remark by President Christos Sartzetakis that Greek women should have more babies to help confront any future military threat from Turkey. "Women are not child manufacturing machines which must give birth to soldiers for war," a joint announcement said.

It is the unchallenged right of a woman alone to decide whether she will have children, how many and when, and this right cannot be ignored in favour of any national interest or other excuse, "the announcement said."

2nd December 1985
Times of India.

Position of French Women Hopeless

Despite the fact that for the past ten years women have been taking an increasing part in the economic life of the country, many of them are still victims of discrimination, they get least important jobs, their average wages are 25 per cent lower than men!

France not only holds the European record for infringing women's rights, but lacks any laws in this sphere, a fact that makes the position of French women hopeless.

SIMON—France

Robots do Displace Workers

The old view that automation does not displace workers is being given up even by experts. University of Michigan study predicts that robots will displace 2,00,000 industrial workers by 1990. While robot manufacturing will create only 44,500 jobs, reports PTI. The use of robots is increasing. Last year industrial robots orders reached 5,600 units in the US against 5100 in 1984.

Times of India 7.1.86