

Live encounters

February 2013

Free online magazine from village earth

**One in three women
will be raped or beaten in her life time
that is one billion women worldwide.**

The Second Sex speaks out!



Ibu Ayu, Bali, Indonesia © Mark Ulyseas

Support Live Encounters

Live Encounters is a not-for-profit free online magazine that was started in 2009 in Bali, Indonesia. It showcases some of the best writing from around the world. Civil and human rights activists, animal rights activists, poets, writers, journalists, social workers and more have contributed their time and knowledge for the benefit of the readers of the magazine.

We are appealing for donations to pay for the administrative and technical aspects of the publication. Please help spread the free distribution of knowledge with any amount that you feel you want to give for this just cause.

BANK DETAILS

Sarita Kaul

A/C : 0148748640

Swift Code : BNINIDJAXXX

PT Bank Negara Indonesia (Persero) Tbk

Kantor Cabang Utama Denpasar

Jl. Gajah Mada

Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia

Every donor will have his/her name published (if they so desire) in following issues. Also, we will email you every issue. Kindly email us your name and the amount donated so that we can add you to our mailing list.

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

Mark Ulyseas

Publisher/Editor

Live Encounters Magazine

markulyseas@liveencounters.net

Dear Readers,

On Valentine's Day, February 14, 2013, one billion women will dance, dance to highlight the atrocities committed against them, sing for equality, and celebrate freedom of Self. So we have dedicated this issue to 'The **Woman**' and have invited the following women to contribute articles on women's issues.

Kalyani Menon-Sen, Feminist Researcher and Activist, has written the Guest Editorial.

Jemma Purdey, Writer and Mother, throws light on the mass rapes of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia in 1998.

Anat Hoffman, Civil and Human Rights Activist, on Jewish women's fight for the right to worship at the Wailing Wall on par with the men.

Jill Gocher, international photographer presents her images in celebration of the spirit of woman.

Paula Banerjee, author of Indian Women in Borderlands speaks to Live Encounters on her book.

Natalie Wood, journalist and flash fiction writer, pens a hilarious short story.

Candess M Campbell shares a chapter from her just released book, 12 weeks to self healing.

Call for Justice – a statement by women's and progressive groups and individuals condemning sexual violence and opposing death penalty.

Simone de Beauvoir, author of the ground breaking book, The Second Sex, speaks to us at The Late Writers & Readers Festival.

Please share this magazine with your family and friends.

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

Mark Ulyseas

Publisher/Editor

Cover pic © Mark Ulyseas

All articles and photographs are the copyright of www.liveencounters.net and its contributors. No part of this publication may be reproduced without the explicit written permission of www.liveencounters.net. Offenders will be criminally prosecuted to the full extent of the law prevailing in their home country and/or elsewhere.



Guest Editorial - India, rising?

Kalyani Menon-Sen

She is a feminist researcher and activist whose work explores the impacts of neoliberal economic policies on women. Menon-Sen has contributed to critiques of urbanisation policies in India and is closely involved with struggles against eviction and dispossession of the working poor in Delhi. She has written and campaigned extensively on issues of violence against women, particularly state violence and its linkage with economic policies. Email: kmenonsen@gmail.com <http://feministsindia.com/>



One Billion Rising

Jemma Purdey

Purdey is an Adjunct Fellow in the School of Political and Social Inquiry, Monash University. She is author of *From Vienna to Yogyakarta: The life of Herb Feith*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2011; *Anti-Chinese violence in Indonesia, 1996-1999*, NUS Publishing, Singapore, 2006 and editor of *Knowing Indonesia: Intersections of self, discipline and nation*, Monash Publishing, Clayton, 2012. She is a chair of the Board of the Indonesia Resources and Information Program, which publishes the magazine, *Inside Indonesia*.



A Wall that wails for all...

Anat Hoffman

She is a major leader for social justice in Israel best known for never giving-up, even when faced with seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Born and raised in Jerusalem, she served in its City Council for 14 years, leading the opposition to the right wing and ultra-Orthodox administration. She is a founding member of Women of the Wall and continues to be a tireless advocate for freedom of religion and women's rights. From 2002, Hoffman is Executive Director of the Israel Religious Action Center (IRAC), the legal and advocacy arm of the Reform Movement in Israel. www.irac.org



The Spirit of Woman – a Celebration

Jill Gocher

Bali based international photographer has spent her life exploring and enjoying Asian cultures. Her work has appeared in National Geographic, Time, International Herald Tribune, Asia Spa, Discovery, Silver Kris and many more. Her books - *Asia's legendary Hotels*, *Periplus*, *Bali- Island of Light* - Marshall Cavendish, *Indonesia - Islands of the Imagination*, *Periplus*, *Australia - the land down under* - Times Editions, *Singapore, Indonesia - the last paradise* - Times Editions. She has held exhibitions in Singapore, Kathmandu, and Bali. www.jillgocher.wordpress.com



Women in Indian Borderlands

Paula Banerjee

Banerjee specializes in issues of conflict, peace and displacement in South Asia. She has published extensively on issues of borders in South Asia; recently edited a special volume in the *Journal of Borderlands Studies* entitled *Women in Indian Borderlands* (2012). Her latest book called *Borders, Histories, Existences: Gender and Beyond* has been widely quoted. She is the international editorial board member of a number of journals including the *Oxford Journal of Refugee and Refugee Watch*; VP of the International Association of Studies in Forced Migration and teaching at the Dept of South and S.E.A Studies, University of Calcutta. www.mcr.ac.in



Samson, Delilah – And A Slice Of Treacle Tart

Natalie Wood

Born in Birmingham, England, U.K., Natalie Wood began working in journalism a month before the outbreak of the 1973 Yom Kippur War. She remained in regional Jewish journalism for more than 20 years, leaving full-time writing to help run a family business and then completed a range of general office work. Natalie Wood and her husband, Brian Fink emigrated from Manchester to Israel in March 2010 and live in Karmiel, Galilee where she continues to work from home, concentrating on creative writing. She features in *Smith Magazine's new Six Word Memoirs On Jewish Life*. Natalie Wood also contributes to *Technorati*, *Blogcritics* and *Live Encounters* magazine. Read her stories at <http://www.perfectlywritefamilytales.blogspot.com> and her general journalism at <http://www.walwayswriteagain.blogspot.com>.



The Myth of Mother India

Mark Ulyseas

Ulyseas has served time in Advertising as copywriter and creative director selling people things they didn't need, a ghost writer for some years, columnist of a newspaper, a free lance journalist and photographer. All this took up nearly three decades. End 2009 he created Live Encounters for the free sharing of knowledge hoping that the 'humane' in humanity still remained albeit scattered around the globe. This has become a celebration of Life by people of village earth.

www.marculyseas.wordpress.com

www.coroflot.com/markulyseas



Finding Your Passion

Candess M Campbell

Candess M. Campbell, PhD is an internationally known Intuitive Life Coach, Licensed Mental Health Counselor, Seminar leader, Hypnotherapist and Author. She specializes in assisting others to gain their own personal power and to live a life of abundance, happiness and joy. Early 2012 she will be releasing her book *12 Weeks to Self-Healing: Transforming Pain through Energy Medicine*.

www.12weekstoselfhealing.com



Call for Justice

by women's groups and others in India

Statement by women's and progressive groups and individuals condemning sexual violence and opposing death penalty in the aftermath of the horrible rape and murder of a young woman on a bus in New Delhi, India. Please share this with everyone you know and help raise awareness of the plight of women and other 'weaker' sections of society in India.



The Second Sex

Simone de Beauvoir at the Late Writers & Readers Festival

Simone was a French existential philosopher, who became the youngest teacher of philosophy at age 21, is the author of – **The Ethics of Ambiguity** (1947); **The Second Sex** (1949) which was/is a cult book for feminists and had been banned by the Vatican for its radical perspective of woman's position in the world; **The Coming of Age** (1970); in addition to numerous short stories, novels, plays; and observations on America and China as a result of her travels to these countries.



Kalyani Menon-Sen

Feminist Researcher and Activist

India, rising?

"In five weeks the world will RISE!!!" says a mail that popped into my inbox a couple of days ago. It comes from the organisers of "One Billion Rising", a global campaign that aims to get a billion people across the world to come out on the streets on 14 February to demonstrate their commitment to ending violence against women by singing, dancing and celebrating on the streets.

In India though, the OBR Campaign feels a bit like a video re-run of the big screen original. For the last month, the country has experienced a rising that even the most optimistic of feminist activists could not have anticipated. Sparked by the brutal assault and gang-rape of a 23-year old student in Delhi, thousands of people across the country – students, teachers, office workers, professionals, home-makers, NGOs, human rights groups and feminist activists – have kept up an unrelenting pressure on the government to ensure justice for the young woman, and an end to violence. The government reacted with characteristic clumsiness – water cannons, tear gas, riot sticks, shutting down the metro system in the city centre, invoking an archaic law prohibiting public assembly. Far from stifling the protests, these measures served only to stiffen the protesters' resolve. Day after day, night after night, the protesters stayed on the streets: marching into the forbidden high-security zones of the capital, pushing against the barricades, sitting on silent vigils with lighted candles and hand-drawn posters, confronting armed police with slogans and songs.

Of all the images that flooded our newspapers and TV screens, one stands out for me: a middle-aged sari-clad woman, drenched to the skin, facing the water cannons on that freezing December morning, clenched fist held high, screaming her defiance against the backdrop of India Gate, the monument symbolic of the power of the Indian state.

Dancing in the streets might seem somewhat tame after this.

The extraordinary and spontaneous outpouring of anger and grief that swamped our streets has moved even the most cynical of us to dream once again of the overthrow of patriarchy. The silence around sexual violence is broken, hopefully for ever. Everyone is talking. Personal experiences, theories, explanations, prescriptions, pronouncements are being shared and debated. Politicians and religious leaders who have followed the time-honoured tradition of blaming the victim are facing unaccustomed public condemnation. Die-hard fans of Bollywood movies are turning on their idols and condemning the violence, sexism and misogyny embedded in storylines, dialogues and lyrics. The media is discovering a new sense of responsibility: reporting every case, giving space to every voice, naming and shaming violators among the powerful. More and more women are speaking out without prevarication or shame about their intimate experiences of sexual violence, and asserting their rights to their own bodies.

Feminists and women's movements are aware that sustaining this momentum will not be easy. The turbo-charged crowds that thronged the streets are thinning out. Students are going back to their classes. The dialogues initiated on the streets must not only be sustained, and their ambit widened beyond this one incident to ask and answer difficult questions must be asked and answered. **Why do so many of those who were shaken by this incident, remain unmoved at equally horrific and brutal violence against women branded as "terrorists" or "separatists" or "criminals"? Why does rape evoke such extreme reactions? Why is it considered "a fate worse than death"? Does the demand for the death penalty for rapists feed into the ideology that consigns a raped woman to a living death? Why the silence around marital rape and incest? Are there ways of being masculine without being violent, or being feminine without surrendering selfhood? Can one condemn violence against women without condemning all forms of violence?**

Women's movements have their own list of difficult questions. There are growing concerns about some of the positions being taken in the immediate aftermath of the protests, pushed by the need for a "united voice" at this critical juncture. The eagerness with which the government has responded to calls for increased police presence and heightened surveillance of public spaces is in itself suspicious: the implications of such measures for privacy and human rights cannot be brushed aside. The demand for fast-track courts is similarly loaded – quick justice usually involves short-cuts and surrender of rigour in the application of laws. There are conflicting views on punishment. Cancellation of bail and denial of parole may be violative of human rights but are advocated by many who point out that perpetrators carry out revenge attacks while out on bail or parole. Even those who oppose the death penalty for rapists recognise that the alternative of life imprisonment is hardly redemptive, given the state of our prisons. There are many other questions that need to be confronted sooner rather than later.

As I write, people are gathering to pay homage to the young woman whose brutal rape and tragic death infused new life into struggles against violence in India. There are candles, songs, poems, tears, pledges. There is an affirmation of purpose. There is a determination to stay on for the long haul, to keep the commitment alive, to confront and challenge all forms of violence. There is a new slogan: "Freedom without Fear". There is energy. And there is hope.

Long live the struggle. Zindabad.

New Delhi, India



One billion rising

One in three women will be raped or beaten in her lifetime - that is one billion women worldwide.

In December last year the brutal rape and subsequent death of a 23 year old Indian physiotherapy student, brought thousands onto the streets of the nation's capital and across the country to protest against the extreme violence and the relative inaction of the police and politicians on sexual violence in general in that country. The woman, given the name 'Nirbhaya' meaning 'fearless',¹ by sections of the nation's media, died of her injuries in a hospital in Singapore two weeks after she was raped by six men on a public bus in Delhi. She and her boyfriend were beaten before she was raped and both left for dead on the roadside. The protesters on Delhi's streets and many around the world were shocked not only by the brutality, but by the apathy of many who passed by and did not render assistance to the two.

Commentators remind us that sexual violence in India occurs at a rate second to none. Delhi reported over 600 rape cases in 2012, and it is referred to as the 'rape capital' of India. My short experience in the city left a profound impression on me of it as a sinister place after dark, where I was warned about travelling in taxis and being out after 9 pm. This was especially marked because it seemed to be in stark contrast to the bustling and lively night time atmosphere in Mumbai, where I was living at the time. Generalised impressions aside the statistics are startling. A rape is reported every 28 minutes in India, and this number is rising. The Delhi case has attracted worldwide shock and condemnation and so it should, for this is not a particularly Delhi, or Indian, or South Asian or 'Third' world problem. Rape and sexual violence against women, strikes everywhere, in every nation.

The **One Billion Rising campaign** was launched late last year and will hold a **global day of action on 14 February** calling for an end to violence against women. It is so called, because one in three women will be raped or beaten in her lifetime - that is **one billion women worldwide**.

¹ In India the law does not permit the naming of a rape victim. It is to protect her identity. So the Indian media gave the victim different names: Amanat, Narbhaya, Damini

I carried out research and wrote a book on violence against ethnic Chinese Indonesians covering the late 1990s period, which included the mass riots in Jakarta, Solo, Medan and Surabaya leading up to Suharto's resignation in mid-May 1998.

In the days following the mass rioting that saw large parts of these cities, particularly the national capital, burn, it slowly emerged that a large number, perhaps up to 100, women had been raped, many of them gang-raped, on the streets and in their homes.

More than 14 years later, there have been no mass rallies, not one single charge has been laid for these crimes and presidents and politicians have chosen to largely forget.

Only a few months before this case in Delhi, in late September last year, the reality and horror of sexual violence struck very close to home for me, my friends and family living in Brunswick, an inner-suburb of affluent Melbourne. Not unlike the protests on the streets of Delhi in December, tens of thousands of Melburnians took to the streets in a 'peace protest' following the rape and murder of 29-year old, Jill Meagher. Jill was walking home from a night spent with friends at a bar less than one kilometre from her home in Brunswick; less than one kilometre from my home too. She had made the relatively short and well-lit walk home many times. Jill was attacked not 100 metres from her flat, where her husband was waiting for her.

In the aftermath of Jill's murder, women from across the area used social media to assist police in their investigations, which proved crucial in enabling for the relatively quick arrest of a suspect. What came to light from the public response was increasingly disturbing. Multitudes of women reported incidents of being harassed, attacked, followed and abused on the streets of Brunswick. My friends and I were overcome with a sense of insecurity and vulnerability and questioning about the efficacy of public policing and our legal system (the suspect was a known sex offender who had previously served sentences in prison). The realisation that we too are not excluded from that frightening statistic of one in three.

Though they took place in such different places, so far apart, the responses to the rape and murder of both Jill and Nirbhaya, share some striking similarities. Both precipitated widespread public outrage and grief for their suffering, in both cases Prime Ministers made statements of compassion and sympathy to the women's families. And in both cases, police detained suspects in a relatively short space of time. In Delhi the courts are expediting the trials of the six accused there, amid intense public and media interest, as there will be in Melbourne when Jill's case comes to trial later this year.

A few years ago I carried out research and wrote a book on violence against ethnic Chinese Indonesians covering the late 1990s period, which included the mass riots in Jakarta, Solo, Medan and Surabaya leading up to Suharto's resignation in mid-May 1998. In the days following the mass rioting that saw large parts of these cities, particularly the national capital, burn, it slowly emerged that a large number, perhaps up to 100, women had been raped, many of them gang-raped, on the streets and in their homes. More than 14 years later, there have been no mass rallies, not one single charge has been laid for these crimes and presidents and politicians have chosen to largely forget.

...the Joint Fact Finding Team (TGPF) into the May 1998 Riots represented a watershed moment for human rights and justice procedures in Indonesia. Though it failed to fulfil its potential as a vehicle for truth and justice-seeking, due to the limitations imposed by the lingering New Order apparatus and personalities impacting its work, the TGPF made significant achievements.

In late May 1998, a small group of brave women, including feminist and psychiatrist, Saparinah Sadli and academic Mely Tan, led a delegation calling on the newly installed President Habibie to demand an investigation into the riots, particularly into the sexual violence and gang-rapes. Due to their persuasiveness, Habibie established the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan). He also established a Joint Fact Finding Team (Tim Gabungan-Pencari Fakta) taskforce to investigate the riots, to seek out the 'truth' of what took place; who was responsible for it and establish who its victims were. Saparinah was appointed as Komnas-Perempuan's inaugural head, a position she held until 2004, and also as leader of a critical team within the larger team of investigators put together to find out the truth of the May 1998 riots, the team for Victims' Facts.

In its conception, processes, final report and recommendations the Joint Fact Finding Team (TGPF) into the May 1998 Riots represented a watershed moment for human rights and justice procedures in Indonesia. Though it failed to fulfil its potential as a vehicle for truth and justice-seeking, due to the limitations imposed by the lingering New Order apparatus and personalities impacting its work, the TGPF made significant achievements. The most important, for my mind, being exposing the complexity, the politics, the multiplicity of 'truths' about any single event of violence, let alone one as large as the May 1998 riots. It exposed the reluctance and recalcitrance of military, security and intelligence figures to cooperate with the investigation. The Joint Team's report was a highly problematic representation of the predominantly Jakarta-based violence in May 1998. Yet, it must also be recognized as the best available account of those events.

The most controversial issue arising from the violence and its reporting was undoubtedly the rapes. It was certainly most problematic for the Joint Team, as they grappled with determining the number of victims. The Joint Team considered data from numerous outside groups as well as that collected by the members themselves. These reports varied widely in the definition of rape and the processes of verification, which made assessment complicated. Another problem was the composition of the team itself. The presence of members of the police and the military on the Joint Team made most victims, particularly those who had suffered sexual assault, reluctant to testify, because they believed that certain of the security officials were complicit. Consequently, there was concern that the pursuit of hard evidence regarding the rapes could lead to prosecutions being handled by possible perpetrators.

The same concerns applied to certain prominent figures in politics and society who might also be involved in the prosecutions. In either case, victims saw giving testimony as having the potential to endanger their lives or cause further trauma. Such reluctance made it clear to many Joint Team members that the true number of rape or sexual violence victims would never be known.

...public attacks were potentially so damaging that Saparinah Sadli, in a brave and unprecedented act was compelled to issue an 'Open Letter' to counter the negative voices increasingly asking, 'Did the rapes actually happen?', and demanding victims step forward to prove it. She, like other members of her team, believed that they had been appointed to seek out the truth about the May 1998 violence...

At the same time that Joint Team members were setting about their task of finding and analysing data, comments made by religious leaders, journalists and members of parliament challenged the veracity of the rapes, and threatened to undermine the fact-finding process.¹ Islamic groups like the Indonesian Preachers Coordinating Agency (Badan Koordinasi Mubaligh se-Indonesia, Bakomubin) protested that the rape cases were being used to discredit Islam. Its leader Toto Tasmara met with President Habibie in late July 1998 to oppose media claims that the rapists had shouted 'Allah is Great'. Tasmara claimed that it was part of a political conspiracy to discredit Islam.²

It was also reported that at a meeting between some Joint Team members and a parliamentary committee to discuss the report held on 24 September, opposition to the rapes claims came from members of a particular parliamentary faction. These public attacks were potentially so damaging that Saparinah Sadli, in a brave and unprecedented act was compelled to issue an 'Open Letter' to counter the negative voices increasingly asking, 'Did the rapes actually happen?', and demanding victims step forward to prove it.³ She, like other members of her team, believed that they had been appointed to seek out the truth about the May 1998 violence, including drawing conclusions and making recommendations. However, such understanding of the extent of the Joint Team's role would later prove to be a critical point of conflict.

The Joint Team was already divided over methods of verification and collection of data about victims of sexual violence. Now, the dispute was compounded by the public and political debate. On one side were the police, military and supporters of the verification process known as the Jakarta Protocol – the name chosen by its implementers, the Indonesian Doctors' Association – in which a doctor's confirmation of assault was required. On the other side were those who supported procedures accepting evidence on behalf of the victim from third parties such as eyewitnesses and members of the victims' family, while protecting those parties' identities. The debate over these standards was clearly influenced by the wider public discourse about the rapes, and it forced the Joint Team to delay the release of the final report.

At the last minute, the team reached a compromise: the final report would state that two sets of figures on the number of victims of sexual violence existed. The first set were cases that had been verified under the Jakarta Protocol, totalling 15 rapes. In the second set were 37 rapes, as verified by data from victims' families, psychologists, religious clerics and eyewitnesses.

¹ Sri Muryono, 'Did Mass Rapes Actually Happen?', *Republika*, 2 August 1998. See also 'News Report Says Official Denials of Indonesian Rapes Hinder Investigation', *Human Rights Watch* press release, 8 September 1998.

² 'Kasus perkosaan dimanfaatkan untuk sudutkan Islam', *Republika*, 22 July 1998.

³ Saparinah Sadli, 'Open Letter to the Minister of Defense and Security', *Jakarta*, 3 August 1998.

...the Final Report included neither the sub-team’s finding that the sexual violence was planned, nor the alternative explanation that the violence was just an ‘excess of the riot’. Rather, the report stated that it simply could not be determined whether the rapes occurred spontaneously or were a part of engineered violence.

In total, the Joint Team found 52 rapes, 14 rapes with torture, 10 cases of sexual violence and torture, and nine cases of sexual harassment. In contrast again, data collected by other agencies places the number of rape victims at more than 100. As a further concession to those Joint Team members who disagreed with the content of the Victims’ Facts sub-team report, including numerous ABRI representatives on the team¹, the Final Report included neither the sub-team’s finding that the sexual violence was planned, nor the alternative explanation that the violence was just an ‘excess of the riot’. Rather, the report stated that it simply could not be determined whether the rapes occurred spontaneously or were a part of engineered violence. The report did conclude, however, that the sexual violence was another facet of the riot activities, together with looting, burning, kidnapping, and torture².

Writing about those who suffered from kidnap, torture, and rape in 1998, Ariel Heryanto argued eloquently that a gendered distinction was made between different ‘victims’ in Indonesian society, even in the midst of ‘reformasi fever’. As Heryanto pointed out, the female victims of rape in the riots were stigmatised and marginalised, a response that grew out of social constructions of femininity and the values imposed on the female body, such as chastity and virginity. It could be said that they were virtually subjected to a ‘second rape’ by society at large. An article by Antara Newsagency reporter Sri Muryono titled ‘Did Rapes Actually Happen?’ published in the Republika newspaper on August 2, 1998, epitomized this response. Its author was sceptical about whether the rapes had occurred and called for the victims to come forward to ‘prove’ their claims. In her brave Open Letter, and later reiterated her comments in public comments Saparinah Sadli stated that the opinions in this news coverage and elsewhere were “bound to have a negative social impact” and were “dangerous, as they shy away from the horrifying reality”.³

Ten years after the May riots, Saparinah was appointed Komnas Perempuan’s Special Rapporteur to report on the current situation of victims of rapes and sexual violence. Her appointment was an ideal one given her close and deep knowledge of the data and political, legal and also psychological challenges and problems that enmeshed this issue. Her report pulled no punches.

10 years after the May 1998 riots, responsibility for the series of violations and violence which took place has not yet been resolved. yet to be touched by its achievements, especially in fulfilling their rights to truth, justice and recovery.

1 **Tempo, 16 November 1998.**
2 **Joint Fact Finding Team (TGPF), Final Report About The 13-15 May 1998 Riot, ‘Executive Summary’, Jakarta, 23 October 1998.**
3 **SaparinahSadli, ‘Open Letter’, 3 August 1998.**

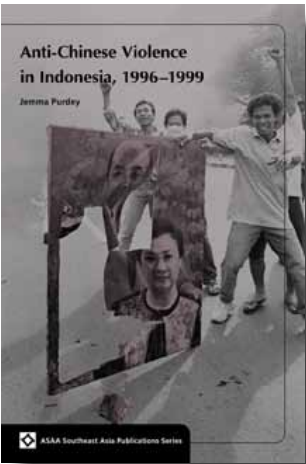
“10 years after the May 1998 riots, responsibility for the series of violations and violence which took place has not yet been resolved. yet to be touched by its achievements, especially in fulfilling their rights to truth, justice and recovery. In this, national responsibility for upholding the human rights of the victims of May 1998 still constitutes a debt that has not yet been paid”
- Saparinah Sadli

In this, national responsibility for upholding the human rights of the victims of May 1998 still constitutes a debt that has not yet been paid. ¹

This time she was not hamstrung by the politics surrounding the TGPF. The report drew strong conclusions about the failure of successive democratically elected governments to investigate and provide justice or even closure for these victims. This impact, she wrote was not only felt on the victims and their families, but in society as a whole, which does not yet have a full account of these crimes and their perpetrators. As academic and feminist Karlina Supelli wrote soon after the violence, the pursuit of truth about mass violence such as this should never cease and for victims is essential:

(T)o remember, to convey the truth about painful events is an important prerequisite in order to heal individual victims, also in order to give restitution to the social order which was caused by these events to be in disarray. ²

In Indonesia, all too often politics continues to sideline human rights and justice for victims. Not only is truth seeking essential for all victims of these crimes, but for the societies they inhabit it is also imperative lest nothing be learned and our daughters also look certain to face that horrifying statistic of one in three.



Anti-Chinese Violence in Indonesia, 1996-1999

1 **10 tahunTragedi Mei 1998 Saatnya Meneguhkan Rasa Aman: Langkah MajuP emenuhan Hak Perempuan Korban Kekerasan Seksual, Jakarta: KomnasPerempuan, 15 May 2008: 60.**
2 **KarlinaLeksonoSupelli, ‘Pembelaan Perempuan Korban Kekerasan Negara’, paper presented at conference in Jakarta held by JaringanMitraPerempuan, 24 July 1998.**

A Wall that wails for all...



Above: The Wailing Wall. Pic © www.irac.org

For over twenty years, women have been coming to the Kotel at the start of the Jewish month to pray as a group and, for that same amount of time, men (and some women) at the Kotel have been harassing them and trying to stop what is their right in Jewish Law to do. In recent years the police have been using all types of intimidation to try to silence us. Arrests have been made on a regular basis, but no charges have ever been filed. We have committed no crime, but they hope that, by dragging us off to the police station in handcuffs, they will humiliate women into accepting their place at the Kotel.

The Kotel has been handed over to the care of ultra-Orthodox Rabbis who manage the area as if they are living in a medieval shtetl. They impose their interpretation of religious modesty on all who come to pray there. In the separate women's section of the Wall, women are not permitted to sing or pray out loud as a group. They are not allowed to wear a tallit or to read from a Torah scroll. These acts of religious devotion are normal in many synagogues around the world, including in Israel, but at the spot to which all Jews turn when they pray, regardless of where they are in the world, the sound of a woman's voice is a crime.



Above: Anat Hoffman arrested by Police. Apparently a women praying out aloud at the Wall is a crime Pic © www.irac.org

When people ask me about my arrest in October 2012¹ for wearing a tallit at the Western Wall, they often want to know what was the reaction inside Israel itself. We had hundreds of articles about the arrest in English, French, Spanish, Russian, and others from news sources abroad, but not one single article in Hebrew for local Israeli consumption. Journalists here did not understand why it was a worthwhile story, or how the treatment of women at a "holy site" that very few Israelis go to on a regular basis has any impact of them.

¹ I was taken to jail in handcuffs, pulled along the ground by my wrists, strip-searched, and left to sleep on the floor of a jail cell with nothing to keep me warm but the same tallit that started the problems in the first place. When I asked why I had to sleep on the floor, the guards simply said they were having a shortage of beds. [LINK](#)

Prime Minister Netanyahu recently empowered the Jewish Agency, headed by Natan Sharansky, to convene a panel to discuss the future of the Western Wall. The disturbance to the peace has grown too loud and the Prime Minister has to take action. But will this amount to actual change or just another attempt to silence cries from abroad on an issue that is of crucial importance to Jews in the Diaspora, but does not really have the same weight for Israeli Jews? Why aren't Israeli Jews more bothered?

Certain moments stand out in a person's memory for a lifetime. We remember our first kiss, our first day at school, or the first time we really felt loss. For Jews living in Israel or abroad, we almost always remember the first time we stood before the Western Wall (the Kotel), sometimes called the Wailing Wall. This is Judaism's holiest site, and it is a place filled with meaning for secular and religious Jews for many different reasons.

The Wall's original purpose was to keep the mountain from coming out from under the Second Jewish Temple, and this piece of retaining wall still stands to remind us of another time in history when Jews also ran their own State. From the founding of the modern state in 1948 until the Six Day War in 1967, Jews were not allowed to pray at the Kotel. Elation burst across the whole Jewish world when the city was unified and Jews could once again visit this site. The Wailing Wall was crying tears of joy.

That joy did not last. The Western Wall is ground zero in the struggle for religious freedom in Israel. The Kotel has been handed over to the care of ultra-Orthodox Rabbis who manage the area as if they are living in a medieval shtetl. They impose their interpretation of religious modesty on all who come to pray there. In the separate women's section of the Wall, women are not permitted to sing or pray out loud as a group. They are not allowed to wear a tallit or to read from a Torah scroll. These acts of religious devotion are normal in many synagogues around the world, including in Israel, but at the spot to which all Jews turn when they pray, regardless of where they are in the world, the sound of a woman's voice is a crime.

For over twenty years, women have been coming to the Kotel at the start of the Jewish month to pray as a group and, for that same amount of time, men (and some women) at the Kotel have been harassing them and trying to stop what is their right in Jewish Law to do.

In recent years the police have been using all types of intimidation to try to silence us. Arrests have been made on a regular basis, but no charges have ever been filed.

We have committed no crime, but they hope that, by dragging us off to the police station in handcuffs, they will humiliate women into accepting their place at the Kotel. This tactic will never work.

On Friday the 14th of last December, the first day of the Jewish month of Tevet, we went back to the Kotel to welcome the new month and to pray for the peace of Jerusalem. We did not do this as Reform, Conservative, or Orthodox Jews; we were simply Jews standing in solidarity with all Jewish women.

Once again the Rabbis of the Wall used their influence to deny us the right to pray in our own way. Now they were confiscating our prayer shawls before we entered the holy site. At the security check point each woman was asked if she had a tallit and, if one was found, it was confiscated until we left.

How can police say we are subversive? We had to bring sixty prayer books with us because the ones that are provided to visitors to the Kotel have had the prayer for the welfare of the State of Israel removed. The Government of Israel stays silent while an extreme minority of Jews alienates the majority of Jews in Israel and abroad, all the while rejecting the very legitimacy of the Jewish State.

A few women, with the help of some male supporters, managed to smuggle tallitot through the checkpoint. They were arrested. A well-known Reform Rabbi (Rabbi Elyse Frishman), a board member of Women of the Wall, and two 18 year-old students were detained for three hours.

As always, they were not charged with breaking any laws. The goal was and is to intimidate women into knowing their place at the Kotel, and that place is to be seen and never heard.

How can police say we are subversive? We had to bring sixty prayer books with us because the ones that are provided to visitors to the Kotel have had the prayer for the welfare of the State of Israel removed. The Government of Israel stays silent while an extreme minority of Jews alienates the majority of Jews in Israel and abroad, all the while rejecting the very legitimacy of the Jewish State.

Now we have a glimmer of hope. Prime Minister Netanyahu recently empowered the Jewish Agency, headed by Natan Sharansky, to convene a panel to discuss the future of the Western Wall. The disturbance to the peace has grown too loud and the Prime Minister has to take action.

But will this amount to actual change or just another attempt to silence cries from abroad on an issue that is of crucial importance to Jews in the Diaspora, but does not really have the same weight for Israeli Jews? Why aren't Israeli Jews more bothered?

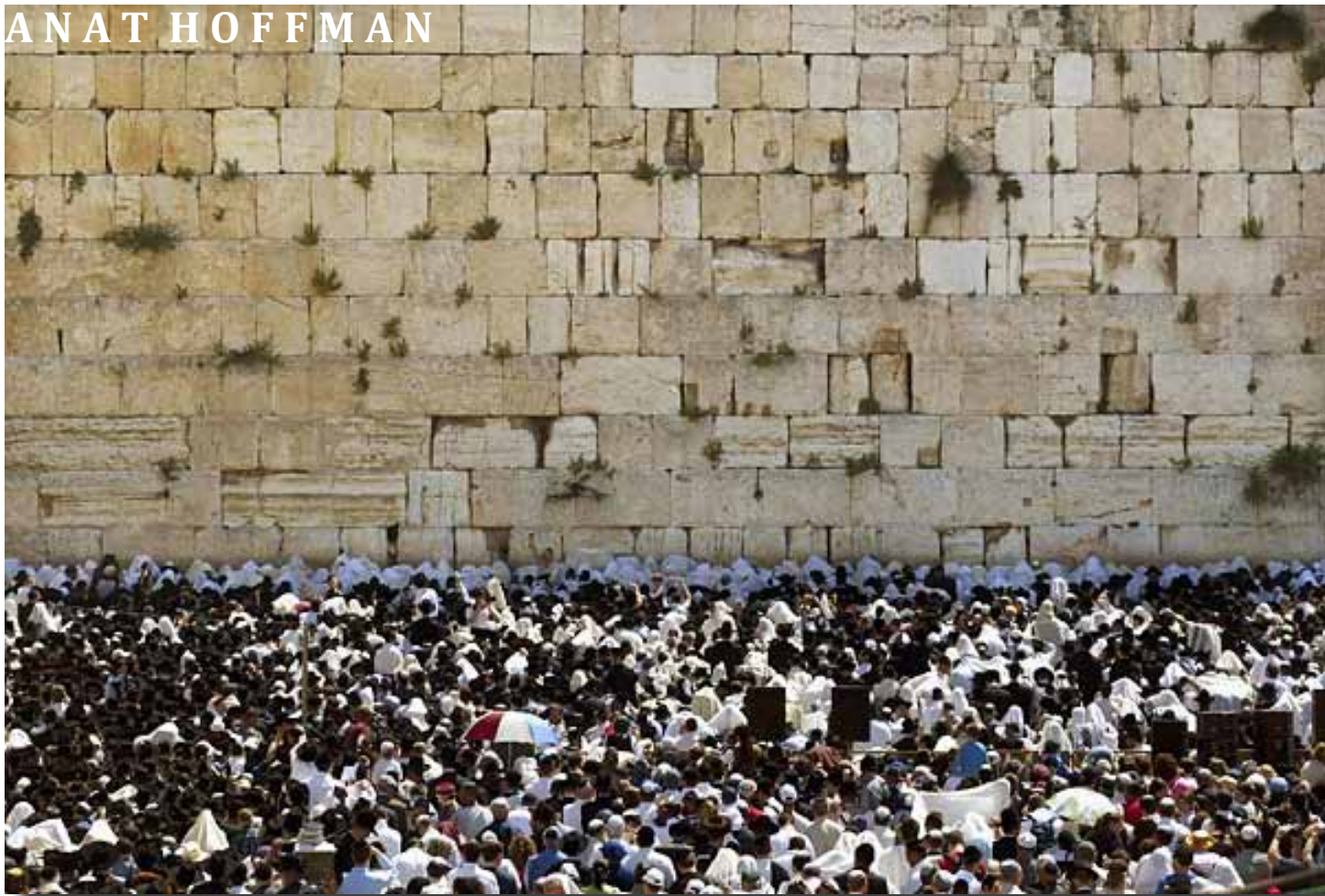
When people ask me about my arrest in October 2012 for wearing a tallit at the Western Wall, they often want to know what was the reaction inside Israel itself.

We had hundreds of articles about the arrest in English, French, Spanish, Russian, and others from news sources abroad, but not one single article in Hebrew for local Israeli consumption. Journalists here did not understand why it was a worthwhile story, or how the treatment of women at a "holy site" that very few Israelis go to on a regular basis has any impact of them.

In one sense they are correct. Only very religious Jews regularly come to the Kotel.

Many secular Jews see the site once or twice in their whole lives. They understand that it is the direction we turn when we pray, but for the most part it is a place for the ultra-Orthodox and foreign tourists. They do not understand why they should spend energy fighting to democratize a place that they will not use when Israel has so many other pressing issues.

The reason is simple; a democracy cannot allow gender discrimination to occur anywhere. Israelis understand this concept, which is why we had such broad support for our campaign against ultra-Orthodox efforts to segregate public buses. Even Israelis who never rode public transportation understood that they could not accept a situation where women were forced to ride in the back of the bus.



Above: The Wailing Wall. Pic © www.irac.org **Below:** Anat Hoffman being accosted by Police officers at the Wall who are attempting to take away the Torah she is carrying. Under the Law enforced by the Ultra-Orthodox women are not permitted to pray from the Torah at the Wall. Pic © www.irac.org



The change we are looking for is really very simple. We want the Western Wall Heritage Council to become an inclusive body that represents the many faces of Judaism. We want the body to include both men and women, and Jews from all denominations. We want the management of a site that affects all Jews to speak for all Jews. After all...when a tallit is considered contraband at the Western Wall it is time for change!

We have broad support for our campaign to eliminate discrimination on Israel's public airwaves. Several radio stations that cater to ultra-Orthodox listeners instituted a policy where women could not speak on the radio. If they wanted to ask a question on one of the popular talk radio programs, they could fax their question to the station and a man would read it on air. Israelis who do not listen to these stations understood that this use of a public resource was wrong.

If it is so clear that relegating women to second-class status on buses, billboards, and the airwaves is wrong, why is it acceptable at Judaism's holiest site? Some people say it is because the ultra-Orthodox are the ones who use the site the most so we should respect their wishes. However, the majority of riders on Jerusalem's public bus routes are also ultra-Orthodox.

The reason we persevere is not because Israelis do or don't identify with this struggle; it is because we represent the majority. The majority of world Jewry is not ultra-Orthodox and one minority group does not have the right to tell the majority what is a legitimate way to celebrate our faith, tradition, and culture. As long as the Israeli government keeps trying to brush us under the carpet, we will keep making as much noise as we can until our right to have a meaningful voice at the Western Wall is respected.

We have dedicated our lives to Ahavat Yisrael (love of Israel) and we will not relent until the Wailing Wall once again cries tears of joy. This will not happen until all Jews feel they have a place to pray at the Wall and a stake in its future.

The change we are looking for is really very simple. We want the Western Wall Heritage Council to become an inclusive body that represents the many faces of Judaism. We want the body to include both men and women, and Jews from all denominations. We want the management of a site that affects all Jews to speak for all Jews. After all...when a tallit is considered contraband at the Western Wall it is time for change!



Left: Anat Hoffman wearing her tallit. Pic © www.irac.org

© Anat Hoffman

The Spirit of Woman – a Celebration

The spirit of woman lies in the heart.
It shows in her eyes.
Young and old.
May it never diminish.
Woman who experience a lot in their lives
can just get stronger, more luminous
more caring, more understanding.

May the spirit of woman never die.

For each of us.



Jill Gocher
Photographer
Bali, Indonesia



Tibetan nomad daughter - young girl of spirit. Pic © Jill Gocher



Ibu Mangku - woman of spirit. Pic © Jill Gocher
© www.liveencounters.net february 2013



Balinese Girl - dancer of spirit. Pic © Jill Gocher



Japanese- woman of spirit. Pic © Jill Gocher
© www.liveencounters.net february 2013



Nyoman Sani - Balinese painter. Pic © Jill Gocher



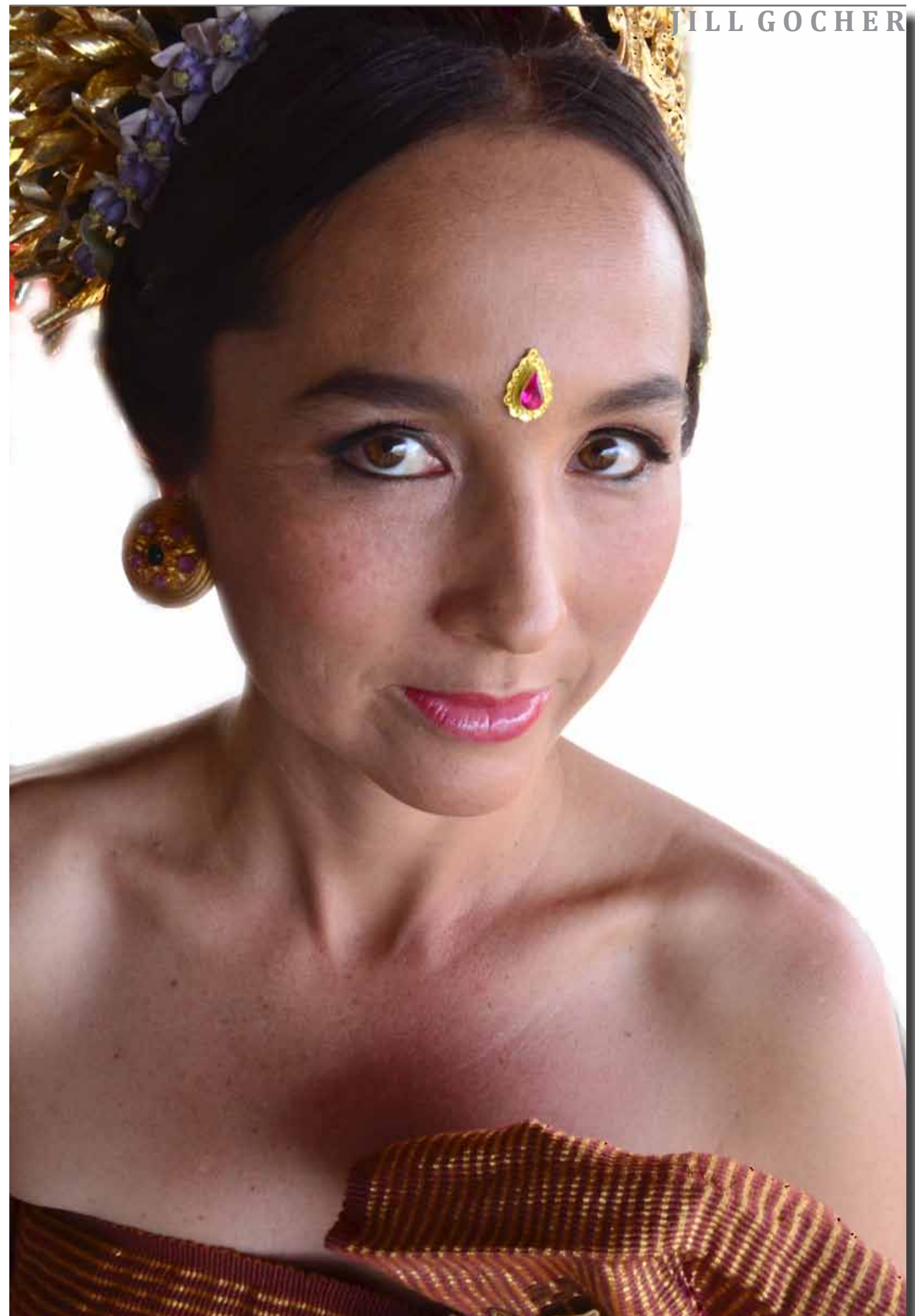
Wayang Kambing - young girl of spirit. Pic © Jill Gocher
© www.liveencounters.net february 2013



Marisa - woman of spirit. Pic © Jill Gocher



Bali girl- with love. Pic © Jill Gocher
© www.liveencounters.net february 2013



Blushing bride. Pic © Jill Gocher



Paula Banerjee

co-author of *Women in Indian Borderlands*
in an exclusive interview with Mark Ulyseas

Borders become the site where this contest over inclusion and exclusion is played out. They demarcate the inside from the outside, sovereignty from anarchy and the singular from pluralistic space. They construct what Nira Yuval-Davis has termed “the space of agency, the mode of participation in which we act as citizens in the multi-layered polities to which we belong.”

Hence borders are not merely lines. They are zones that situate the gray areas where the jurisdiction of one state ends and the other begins. They are the common ground of two or more states that share them and also interpret its meanings in very different ways to its citizens in their national narratives, history writing and collective spatialized memories. In the case of India security concerns overwhelm all other equally legitimate concerns and values. Military security dominates over human security in the border region.

These borders, or more precisely borderlands, are also peopled by groups that have linkages to both sides of the borders. Yet in their efforts to emphasize the national identity, state sovereignty demands a severance of those linkages that “encourages difference” leading to a conscious exclusion of the recalcitrant from the inner circles of privilege. As a result of this, States often forget that borders are not only lines to be guarded, they are also lines of humanitarian management, because borders are not lines but borderlands – that is to say these are areas where people live, pursue economic activities, and lead civilian lives attuned to the realities of the borders.

WOMEN IN INDIAN BORDERLANDS

Paula Banerjee
and
Anasua Basu
Ray Chaudhury



They are the lines of hatred, disunity, informal connections and voluminous informal trade, securitized and militarized lines, heavy para-military presence, communal discord, humanitarian crisis, human rights abuses, and enormous suspicion, yet informal cooperation. Borders become the site where this contest over inclusion and exclusion is played out.

Why did you choose this subject?

I have been working on the theme of borders for some time now. A few years back I published another book entitled *Borders, Histories, Existences: Gender and Beyond*. This book became instrumental in popularizing border studies among my students. They found out that in recent years a few studies have appeared on the borderlands but hardly any on the myriad roles that women play here. On verifying this we from Calcutta Research Group decided to undertake a project on this issue. We approached [ICSSR](#) and they approved of a project that led to a series of papers on women in Indian borderlands that was ultimately published in this volume.

What do you hope to achieve with the publication of this book?

In the case of India, military security dominates over human security in the border region. The book concerns itself with women living in these borderlands and discusses how they negotiate their differences with a state, albeit democratic, which denies space to difference based on either ethnicity or gender.

Women living in the borders are the subject of the series of research papers presented in this volume not merely because they belong to these perilous territories or the borders but also form them. Further, as transmitters of cultural value women construct differences that shape the future of the nation and the border. But in fact most of our traditional efforts to make geopolitical regions more secure are nothing but attempts to privilege a masculine definition of security that result in only feminine insecurities. In addressing questions of security the insecurities of women always remain behind. In publishing this volume we wanted to foreground feminine insecurities in the border that ultimately leads to human insecurity. By foregrounding this we wanted our readers to think of how to envisage a more peaceful world.

Kindly share with us a detailed overview of your book?

There is hardly any literature on women's role in the borderland in India and this series of articles are meant to address that lacunae. The present state system in South Asia, in particular the state system of the sub-continent, is a result largely of the partitions in the eastern and western parts of the erstwhile united India, giving birth to three states – India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. The borders dividing these countries are markers of past bitter history, current separate, distinct, and independent existence, and the sign of the territorial integrity of these states. The bitterness of the past, the lack of mutual confidence at present, the security concerns of all these states, at the same time the existence of thousand and one linkages make the South Asian borders unique.

States often forget that borders are not only lines to be guarded, they are also lines of humanitarian management, because borders are not lines but borderlands – that is to say these are areas where people live, pursue economic activities, and lead civilian lives attuned to the realities of the borders. Human security in the borderlands would mean first security of the civilian population along the borderlines which hardly ever happens in this sub-continent.

They are the lines of hatred, disunity, informal connections and voluminous informal trade, securitized and militarized lines, heavy para-military presence, communal discord, humanitarian crisis, human rights abuses, and enormous suspicion, yet informal cooperation. Borders become the site where this contest over inclusion and exclusion is played out. They demarcate the inside from the outside, sovereignty from anarchy and the singular from pluralistic space. They construct what Nira Yuval-Davis has termed “the space of agency, the mode of participation in which we act as citizens in the multi-layered polities to which we belong.” Hence borders are not merely lines. They are zones that situate the gray areas where the jurisdiction of one state ends and the other begins. They are the common ground of two or more states that share them and also interpret its meanings in very different ways to its citizens in their national narratives, history writing and collective spatialized memories.

In the case of India security concerns overwhelm all other equally legitimate concerns and values. Military security dominates over human security in the border region. These borders, or more precisely borderlands, are also peopled by groups that have linkages to both sides of the borders. Yet in their efforts to emphasize the national identity, state sovereignty demands a severance of those linkages that “encourages difference” leading to a conscious exclusion of the recalcitrant from the inner circles of privilege. As a result of this, States often forget that borders are not only lines to be guarded, they are also lines of humanitarian management, because borders are not lines but borderlands – that is to say these are areas where people live, pursue economic activities, and lead civilian lives attuned to the realities of the borders. Human security in the borderlands would mean first security of the civilian population along the borderlines which hardly ever happens in this sub-continent.

This project concerns itself with women living in these borderlands that Edward Said calls “the perilous territory of not-belonging,” and discusses how they negotiate their differences with a state, albeit democratic, which denies space to difference based on either ethnicity or gender. Women living in the borders are the subject of this series of articles not merely because they belong to these perilous territories or the borders but also form them. Nira Yuval-Davis once stated that women have a dualistic relationship with the state:

On the one hand women are always included, at least to some extent, in the general body of citizens of the state and its social, political and legal policies; on the other – there is always, at least to a certain extent, a separate body of legislation which relates to them specifically as women. **(Yuval-Davis in *Gender and Nation*, p. 27)**

In the case of the borderlands of India such dualistic nature of women's engagements with the

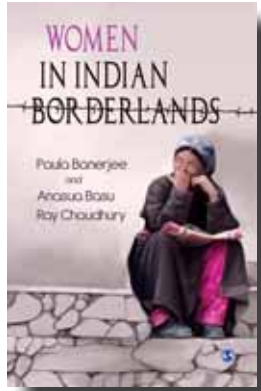
Rape and sexual abuse is nothing new in the history of warfare. Marauding armies have through different periods of history, around the globe, taken advantage of women in the course of military conquests. What is new is the role of media. Instant reporting from the field has resulted in rapid sensitisation of public opinion, greatly reducing the time lapse between the perpetration of such tragedies and their responses to them.

national and ethnic collectivities leads to further discrimination against them. This becomes problematic because social attitudes over time get transformed into legal provisions. Therefore, women have to live not only under draconian national laws, by virtue of their location, but also suffer other discriminatory traditions and practices by virtue of their gender. How do they negotiate such multiple borders given borders propensity to violence is the question that we ask?

The universalistic nature of citizenship that emanates from traditional liberal and social democratic discourses is extremely deceptive as it conceals the exclusion of women from national identities of citizenship. Thus the ideological constructions of the state are weighted against women who remain in the borders of democracy. Yet in moments of conflict at times they assume centrality. This is because in areas of civil conflict men withdraw from civic life for compulsions of war and self-defense. In such a situation the public sphere retreats into the private and women form the civil societies. They assume roles that are completely new to them and confront and negotiate with the massive power of the state machinery in their everyday lives.

Further, as transmitters of cultural value women construct differences that shape the future of the nation and the border. But in fact most of our traditional efforts to make geopolitical regions more secure are nothing but attempts to privilege a masculine definition of security that result in only feminine insecurities. Yet in addressing questions of security the insecurities of women always remain in the back of beyond. In this series of articles we deal with insecurities of women posited on the borderlands and analyse how they deal with them. A further question that we pose is how globalization impacts on all of this. This collection of articles include two on the Bengal/Bangladesh border, two on Kashmir/Pakistan border and two others on Northeast/Myanmar border.

The first paper by *Paula Banerjee* is entitled **Bengal Borderland Revisited: Chronicles from Nadia, Murshidabad and Malda**. Banerjee in this paper addressed a vexed issue that she has not previously dealt with. She looked at the notion of flows and how that impacted on notions of security. With every election and every census borders become an issue. The concern remains over undocumented migrants and whether their arrival threatens the nation form? She also addressed notions of increasing violence in the borders, fencing as a marker of such violence, women and the evolution of their relationship to the border etc. She returned to an intensive study of the Bengal-Bangladesh borderlands in the three districts of Nadia, Murshidabad and Malda. Instead of meta-narratives she came back to the question of micro politics and questioned whether present day flows have any relation to past histories or not. Her argument is that borders have historically evolved as gendered entity and thereby these have become spaces of extraordinary control and violence.



In the next paper, entitled **Narrated Time: Constructed Space - Remembering the Communal Violence of 1950 in Hooghly**, *Anusua Basu Ray Choudhury* argued that borders are not just lines in the landscape they actively shape the societies and cultures that they enclose. Borders denote a spatial dimension of social relationships that are continually being configured and, in this process, the meaning of borders is produced, reconstructed, strengthened or weakened. The notion of borders in today's world is a testimony to the importance of territoriality with the creation of the 'other'.

The imagery of borders has become a popular metaphor in the study of socio-spatial development in post-Partition societies. In this study, Basu Ray Choudhury unraveled the stories of three Muslim women of Hooghly, an otherwise calm and quiet place during the turbulent years of partition. Anusua's study captured the lives and experiences of the people who lived through the 'partitioned time', of the way in which the events accompanying the partition were constructed in their minds, and the identities or uncertainties that partition created or re-enforced. The main purpose of the study was to enquire on how women negotiated borders – borders of sect, community, patriarchy, and of conflicts not only in their own land but also in an alien land away from their homeland.

In the next section there are two narratives from Kashmir. The two papers are entitled **Women's Voices on Borders** by *Anuradha Bhasin Jamwal* and **Borderlands and Borderlines: Renegotiating Boundaries through a Gender Lens in Jammu and Kashmir** by *Sumona Das Gupta*. Anuradha in her paper highlighted women as the major victims of warfare. One of the most obvious examples of specific victimhood of women in armed conflict, she argued, is their vulnerability to sexual assault and rape.

Rape and sexual abuse is nothing new in the history of warfare. Marauding armies have through different periods of history, around the globe, taken advantage of women in the course of military conquests. What is new is the role of media. Instant reporting from the field has resulted in rapid sensitisation of public opinion, greatly reducing the time lapse between the perpetration of such tragedies and their responses to them.

However, in the case of borders, lack of access and no reportage make the consequent sensitisation elusive. She argued that, the victimisation started when the borders were carved out in 1947-48, when people living in fairly peaceful areas suddenly found themselves on the fringes of nowhere, close to places that had become simply lines drawn on a map for everybody else in South Asia. The brunt was borne not simply by women living on the borders; the prolonged trauma is also shared by women living away from the borders but affected in many ways by the sudden carving of new boundaries, dislocation and its multiple consequences.

The everyday life stories of these women reflect not only their identity as women but how these realities are shaped by their location near a porous international border-town where the border not only divides the lives of “women” but plays a crucial role in joining them in their labouring lives as women continue to cross borders takes on multiple roles as traders/ sex workers/ household workers etc.

For majority population of India and Pakistan, the traumatic memories of partition have become historical narratives but in J&K because of the disputed nature of its borders, these memories are a festering sore, which continues to bleed and makes people to suffer in the form of displacements, dispossession on account of border skirmishes between the hostile neighbours. She claimed that, weird border contours on the maps of J&K have intensified the militarisation of borders on both sides thus adding to the insecurity among the border population in general and women in particular. A continuum of tragedy and victimisation has followed till date due to constant hostility and wars that have adversely affected the border people in many ways.

At the very outset Sumona Dasgupta identified the term borders not just as physical boundaries represented by de facto and de jure cartographic lines that separate the sovereign writ of one state from another, but also as other faultlines generated or accentuated by a conflict. Acknowledging borders as lines that separate and delimit spaces, in her paper she went beyond ‘cartographic anxieties’ and physical landscapes to ‘non cartographic anxieties’ -borders that are etched on mindscapes – lines that separate ‘us’ from ‘them.’ In doing so she recognized that there can be an overlap between these two sets of anxieties and that where they intersect faultlines come into even sharper relief.

In her research she portrayed how these border-lines are mediated by gender. Gender is used not just as a descriptive category but as an analytical tool that is as much about men and masculinity as it is about women and femininity. A gender perspective consequently explores how men and women’s roles are constructed in society and gender sensitive conflict analysis will look at ways in which gender roles, gender identities, gender ideologies and gendered power structures may be altered in the course of a protracted conflict.

The next section is composed of two articles from the Northeast India-Myanmar border. *Chitra Ahanthem’s* paper entitled **Sanitized Society and Dangerous interlopers: Women of a Border Town:** focused exclusively on the plight of women, in the border town of Moreh. In her study through the narratives of women living in the border town of Moreh on the Indo-Myanmar border she intended to examine the contradiction, paradox, difference and conflict of power and domination in contemporary global capitalism and the nation state, especially as manifested in local level practices.

The everyday life stories of these women reflect not only their identity as women but how these realities are shaped by their location near a porous international border-town where the border not only divides the lives of “women” but plays a crucial role in joining them in their labouring lives as women continue to cross borders takes on multiple roles as traders/ sex workers/ household workers etc.

The Indo- Burma border thus becomes extremely significant for continuing migration and cross border terrorism. Sahana focussed on the experiences of women crossing these borders and the response of both the state and the Central governments. It is through the legal frame that she sought to analyse how women who have been forced to migrate negotiate the complex social, political and economic web of relationships of being branded as a foreigner and in many cases illegal. The law being rooted in the patriarchal mindset is inadequate in perceiving and responding to women’s needs.

Women not only negotiate with the “borders” through crossing as a “labouring subject” but also negotiate at a socio-cultural level on a day to day basis through shifting identities produced by “borders”. This study examined the relationship between women who stay in Moreh during day-time, crossing over from the Myanmar border as traders/sex workers and women of Moreh. The lives of women in Moreh indicate the multiple realities faced by women living at a border area with a history of protracted conflict.

Sahana Basavapatna in her paper entitled **Sanitized Society and Dangerous interlopers: Burmese Migration into Mizoram through the Legal Lens** analysed from a legal perspective the experiences of Burmese women who in migrating across international borders problematised democracy, identity and citizenship. She explored the theme from two perspectives - first how the legal frame and secondly how cultural, political ties of Mizoram itself affect the Burmese migrants in India. A host of factors led to the migration of the people from the Chin state to Mizoram.

The Indo- Burma border thus becomes extremely significant for continuing migration and cross border terrorism. Sahana focussed on the experiences of women crossing these borders and the response of both the state and the Central governments. It is through the legal frame that she sought to analyse how women who have been forced to migrate negotiate the complex social, political and economic web of relationships of being branded as a foreigner and in many cases illegal. The law being rooted in the patriarchal mindset is inadequate in perceiving and responding to women’s needs.

This series of articles is exceptional in many ways. It deals with an issue that is seldom dealt with in Indian social science. There is currently only one book on the gendered dimension of borderlands in South Asia. Therefore this in many ways is an exceptional topic. Yet borderlands are an extremely vexed issue in this day of securitization and cross border flows of all kinds. And the role that women plays in this flows is extremely pertinent. Apart from that this series of articles also confirms that violence is a constitutive element of borderlands when analyzed from a gender perspective.

All of these articles deal with violence in their own respective ways. Apart from that these articles go beyond the trope of “coping” and “agents”. It makes the theoretical claim that all coping mechanisms are agentive. So in terms of feminist theory this series of articles mark a departure. It also deals with a number of contentious issues such as aids in the borderland, migrant trade, migrant labour, affects of globalization on borders. Above all it celebrates what it means to be a woman in the border and a survivor, notwithstanding whether the state recognizes her as an agent or merely coping for survival.

Our story reaches its climactic height in the early hours of July 11, 2004, when a young woman named Thangjam Manorama was allegedly raped, tortured and murdered by members of the Assam Rifles, who had arrested her a few hours back. She was arrested from her Bamon Kampu Mayai Leikai house by the 17 Assam Rifles. When her body was found it was immediately noticeable that there were a number of finger scratch marks all over her torso, she also suffered seven bullet wounds and one of them blew out her vagina and private parts.

Could you give the readers a glimpse of your life and work?

I am a teacher in the University of Calcutta, a researcher in Calcutta Research Group and the President of IASFM. Given below are some of my publications (books and monographs)

1. "Unstable Populations, Anxious States: Mixed and Massive Population Flows in South Asia," Editor,(Stree Samya, Kolkata, 2013)
2. "Forced Migration and Displacement," Guest Editor, Peace Prints, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Summer 2012)
3. "Women in Borderlands: India," Guest Editor, Journal of Borderlands Studies, Volume 27, No. 1, 2012.
4. Women in Indian Borderlands (Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2011) co-editor Anasuya Basu Raychowdhury
5. UNSCR 1325: Women, Peace, and Security (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Finland, 2010.)
6. Borders, Histories and Existences: Gender and Beyond (Sage, New Delhi, 2010).
7. Migration and Circles of Insecurities (Rupa, New Delhi, 2010) co-author Ranabir Samaddar.
8. Marginalities and Justice (Sage, New Delhi, 2009) Co-editor Sanjay Chaturvedi.
9. Women and Peace Politics (Sage, New Delhi, 2008)
10. Autonomy: Beyond Kant and Hermeneutics (Anthem, New Delhi, 2007) Co-editor Samir Das
11. Internal Displacement in South Asia (Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2005). Co-editors Sabyasachi Basu Raychoudhury and Samir Das.
12. When Ambitions Clash: Indo-US Relations 1947-1974 (South Asian Publishers, New Delhi, 2003).
13. Girls in the Twilight Zone: South and Southeast Asian Scenario (University of Calcutta, Kolkata, 2003). Co-editor Lipi Ghosh.
14. Co-authored a book on Women in Politics and Society in France, 1945-1995, Eureka Publishers (Calcutta, 1997). With Paramita Das and Anuradha Mukherjee

What are you working on now?

My present research is on women, borders and crime. In this research I will narrate the experiences of women from two different regions of India in the post-colonial times and discuss how the definition of crime is evolved on the basis of one's location and how it changes from region to region on the basis of governmental priority. The two regions that I wish to discuss here is Northeastern India, particularly the Nagaland/Manipur area of the Northeast and the three border districts of West Bengal, Nadia, Malda and Murshidabad.

Meira Peibies and other civil liberties organizations were undeterred. They claimed it to be merely the most recent state action against women in Manipur, a border region, where women have faced multiple injustices from the colonial period onwards. They also claimed that the brunt of injustices came after the passage of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) in Northeast India in 1958 when it criminalized the entire population of the region. This is an Act that made it possible for the State to treat its people as criminal and perpetrate the most gruesome human rights abuses on them.

Our story reaches its climactic height in the early hours of July 11, 2004, when a young woman named Thangjam Manorama was allegedly raped, tortured and murdered by members of the Assam Rifles, who had arrested her a few hours back. She was arrested from her Bamon Kampu Mayai Leikai house by the 17 Assam Rifles. When her body was found it was immediately noticeable that there were a number of finger scratch marks all over her torso, she also suffered seven bullet wounds and one of them blew out her vagina and private parts. There was also a knife wound on her right thigh. Protest against this heinous act took the character of a mass uprising. The Meira Peibies (women torchbearers) were in the forefront of this protest.

On 15 July they bared themselves in front of the Kangla Fort where 17 Assam Rifles were housed. In an effort to justify their act the Assam Rifles called Manorama an activist of the banned People's Liberation Army and as such a criminal. They also alleged that she was killed when she was trying to escape from their custody. The Meira Peibies and other civil liberties organizations were undeterred. They claimed it to be merely the most recent state action against women in Manipur, a border region, where women have faced multiple injustices from the colonial period onwards. They also claimed that the brunt of injustices came after the passage of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) in Northeast India in 1958 when it criminalized the entire population of the region. This is an Act that made it possible for the State to treat its people as criminal and perpetrate the most gruesome human rights abuses on them.

In this research I hope to portray the plight of women living in Northeast India's Manipur and Nagaland and border districts of West Bengal and show how these areas are marked as hostile by the majoritarian state of India. I also intend to show that women do not accept such a situation passively and constantly effort to create a space in which they can be heard, and that can be considered as their own space of empowerment.

What message do you have for the readers of Live Encounters?

For a researcher: if research projects are ethically pursued then those will be supported by ethical human beings whose voices will always remain undaunted. They will work towards a just and ethical world. If a researcher's politics is compromised then no amount of support or funding can improve the quality of such research. For a researcher the most important aim is to be just and ethical. The rest is merely cosmetic.



The phone barely beeped before it was answered.

"Hello. Phil E Stein. Turf Accountants. How ..."

"Phil, you don't have to be posh with me," whispered Hazel Judge. "The beast's watered and fed and we're raring to go."

"Ha-ha! Samson or Delilah?"

"Sam, of course! Delilah's muzzled and thumping her tail in excitement. I'll tell you more when you arrive here. Please get the boys round, double quick. Sam'll sleep tight for hours but he'll be a ton weight to bundle into the back of the van."

When Phil turned up with his mates, they were shocked by the scene before them.

Samson Judge, six foot six inches tall, once boasted the physique of a prize body builder. Now his bloated, flabby form was straddled supine and naked across the kitchen floor. He was bound by ropes; his head had been shaved and what looked like honey dripped from every orifice.

"For chrissakes, Hazel. What have you done? I know we want to teach Sam a lesson. But a joke's a joke ...!"

"Phil," retorted Hazel. "he owes you a bloody fortune – and me a huge apology. He's a great geezer. If he wasn't, I wouldn't have put up with the gambling and womanising for twenty years."

"I made him his favourite dinner, including a huge helping of treacle tart, which he loves almost as much as he adores Delilah. To wash it down, I got in a bottle of that red non-alcoholic wine, Vida Vita and chucked in crushed Temazepam pills. They should do the trick as they are supposed to help you sleep like the dead and can even make you lose your memory. But here's the magic:



“The scalping. I did it after Sam fell asleep. You know how he’s always insisted his long hair was tied to his masculinity and that’s why he wouldn’t have it cut? I’d been nagging him for ages to chop it off as it’d become a coarse, tangled mess. It also made him look like an ancient hippy, so I took matters in hand and did the job myself.

“But there’s more. When he gets soppy with me, Sam starts quoting Scripture which makes me very cross. He started up again yesterday and what with the new teenage lady friend and the dosh he owes you lot, it got too much for me and you’ve seen the results.”

“But it’s still a bit of a puzzle, Hazel,” said Phil, as the other lads started to drag Sam off the floor to take him to the van. “Why the ropes and honey?”

“It’s not honey, it’s treacle and it’s part of the same reason why I shaved him. One of his favourite bits of Bible is the story of Samson and Delilah. That’s how our precious bloodhound got her moniker.

“Whenever I’ve made the tart, he’s stared intently at the label on the tin illustrated with the lion and the swarming bees, and then read it out solemnly, like he was in church: ‘Abram Lyle & Sons, Sugar Refiners.’ Then the motto, ‘Out Of The Strong Came Forth Sweetness’. The words are supposed to be part of a riddle that Samson posed to his enemies, the Philistines. The performance really annoys me. So I decided to add treacle to the mix.

“Anyway, if you send the boys with Samson to Martin’s Mill, we won’t be disturbed. The place has been disused for years. I’ve got booze and nosh which we can enjoy on the upper floor while we watch Sam’s antics below. I remember from when I worked there that there’s a loose floorboard we can remove to view the circus when he wakes up.

When Hazel and Phil arrived at the mill with Delilah, they found Sam manacled to the central pillar of the old shop floor. Despite Hazel’s best efforts, something had roused him. But he could

barely move, mainly because the treacle had set hard and stopped him speaking. He couldn’t see much either, as strings of syrup had dripped from his forehead and stuck to his eyes.

As Hazel and her friends moved about upstairs, they heard what may have been the rumble of distant thunder. After all, the noise from the CD playing on the ghetto blaster drowned out everything except the sound of their raucous laughter as Delilah, muzzle off, howled to the tune of the Tom Jones classic.

“If Sam doesn’t like this,” said Hazel, “it’s his fault. He taught her. Our mutt’s the only one I know which does Karaoke to the sound of her own name! They sing along together and make a great duo.”

As she spoke, the crowd gazed through the hole they’d made to see Samson’s huge frame moving, wracked by sobs. Then, as the dog whined on, there was a gluey coughing and spluttering followed by a familiar voice growling the song’s concluding line, “Forgive me Delilah I just couldn’t take any more.”

Moments later, with an almighty heave, Samson Judge, former Mr Universe and champion weight lifter, pumped his final iron. He tore down the decrepit pillar to which he’d been strapped, bringing with it Hazel, Phil, their friends and his beloved hound in a hail of dust and rubble.

Several weeks later, after the fuss had subsided and the district coroner had recorded multiple deaths by misadventure there was a memorial service at the church where Samson had preached.

“A horrible affair,” said Rev Tom Waters, giving the address. “Sam was a strong personality who heaped trouble on his own head, but brought the house down with him.”

The Myth of Mother India

**A woman is molested every 12 minutes,
burnt for dowry every hour
and raped every 21 minutes.**

(Praful Bidwai Column [LINK](#))

A man attaches himself to woman - not to enjoy her, but to enjoy himself.

Simone de Beauvoir

Rape, female foeticide, casteism and slavery are diseases that are endemic in the world's largest democracy. But where do these sordid social afflictions originate from and why has the mindset of Indian society been largely resistant to the legitimate protests from women's rights groups and enlightened citizens ?

Will 2013 be a watershed year for the emancipation of the Indian woman?

The "Amanat"¹ rape case in Delhi, which is believed to be the rape capital of the country by statistics, has unraveled the myth of Mother India. Perhaps it should be called Father India because of its skewered patriarchal society that continues to treat the Woman as a receptacle for the male libido, breeding machine and domestic help... an appendage to Man. The myth of Mother India has been perpetuated based on the premise that the country is the spiritual mother – *strong, passionate, loving, forgiving*... And that the people rest in her embrace. A movie was made portraying the '*super Indian woman with high moral values overcoming all life's hardships*'.

In reality this personification of the Indian woman has just been raped.

In fact, this has been going on for a very long time and the image perceived and flaunted of "Mother India" exists in the realms of fantasy. One has only to read how Sita ended her life in the Ramayana and the fate of Draupadi in the Mahabharata to understand the psyche of many Indian men who view women as a sub -species.

In the aftermath of the Delhi rape there were quite a few misogynistic statements by Indian politicians. Here are some classic examples:

01. "One has to abide by certain moral limits. If you cross this limit, you will be punished, just like Sita was abducted by Ravana" - [LINK](#).
02. The President of India's son has said, "These pretty ladies coming out to protest are 'highly dented and painted,'" - [LINK](#).
03. "Rapes are rare in "Bharat" (rural India) but occur frequently in "India" - [LINK](#).
04. "Restrict women to household work" - [LINK](#)
05. "Rape of grown-ups understandable but not of minors" - [LINK](#)

¹ In India the law does not permit the naming of a rape victim. It is to protect her identity. So the Indian media gave the victim different names: Amanat (treasure), Narbhaya (fearless one), Damini (lightning)

A sting operation by [Tehelka](#) targeting 23 police stations across the Delhi NCR reveals that men in uniform have a strict litmus test when it comes to determining “real” rape cases. According to their stringent criteria, almost all women deserve to be raped.

Religion is a controlling tool for man as no one dares argue with his interpretations. The man interprets/makes/imposes the religious laws, while the woman is supposed to obediently comply. **Followed closely by religion is the wretched caste system which continues to exist and in some areas flourish thanks to the Great Indian Middle Class, the powerful Indian media and caste politics. One has only to glance through the matrimonial pages/supplements of leading newspapers to view the evidence; and also to trace the machinations of political parties that play vote bank politics.**

It is the caste system and the class divide that adds to the Indian woman’s vulnerability. This is reflected in the disparity between the educated Indian Middle Class and the great unwashed; homeless and lower class people of rural India, bonded labourers (people bought/sold into slavery), subsistence farmers and daily wage workers in cities... nearly 400 million living on or below the poverty line. **(61 people were set free from a life of slavery in India, including children as young as 5, by International Justice Mission - [LINK](#)).**

Around 77% of the country’s population lives on Rs.20 (00.40cents) per day (*Ranjana Padhi’s interview in Live Encounters January 2013 - [LINK](#)*). These people who have every right to assistance from the State are often subject to abuse. The women in particular face the daunting task of surviving beatings and/or sexual abuse. **Even children a few years of age, little girls, fall prey to the sexual depravity of men who know these helpless people cannot retaliate nor seek justice because the System fails miserably.**

There are instances where the police themselves have taken sexual advantage of these poor folk. Criminal apathy is the order of the day. *(A sting operation by [Tehelka](#) targeting 23 police stations across the Delhi NCR reveals that men in uniform have a strict litmus test when it comes to determining “real” rape cases. According to their stringent criteria, almost all women deserve to be raped. [LINK](#)).*

The massive demonstrations in Delhi showed the class divide - women from the educated classes in Metros are more ‘important’ than those of the lesser class... the great unwashed.

The class divide is self evident in these two instances that failed to ignite the Nation:

01. Sikar, Rajasthan – An eleven year old girl abducted/raped by six men and after a day left on the roadside bleeding profusely. Five months till date she lies in a hospital after 14 reconstructive surgeries. **The men who raped her are believed to have told the family, “You are poor, what can you do? Take some money and take back the case”. [LINK](#)**

02. Kerala – The Suryanelli rape case. A sixteen year old abducted/raped by a bus conductor and then passed onto others. She was raped by 42 men in 40 days and left on the roadside seriously injured for she couldn’t sit or stand. **The Supreme Court is to hear her case after an 8-year gap. [LINK](#)**

There is no Mother India. It is a myth based on warped perceptions and an embedded Oedipus complex. The sooner Indians except this and work towards creating a living breathing Mother India the better it would be for the position of women in this country.

Amanat, the brave Delhi woman, is now called the daughter of India. Politicians and others are falling over one another to condemn the savage rape/murder. And the government with an eye on the 2014 General Elections has grandly announced that they are working on instituting new laws and fast track courts for rape cases. Others vociferously demand castration/death penalty for the accused. Even United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon spoke out about the case and urged India to protect her women!

But there are no voices for the girl in Sikar and the other in Kerala. The silence from the Indian Middle Class and political parties is deafening. The less said about the response from religious leaders the better.

India has a fixation with the ‘Mother’. Here men adore their mothers and sisters and yet torture and abuse their daughters-in-law for insufficient dowry, sometimes murdering them. Rampant female foeticide, new born girls abandoned on garbage dumps and other public places is wide spread even among the educated classes. The Indian State of Haryana is said to have the lowest male-female ratio. Their men have to look as far as Karnataka in south India for brides. There is no Mother India. It is a myth based on warped perceptions and an embedded Oedipus complex. The sooner Indians except this and work towards creating a living breathing Mother India the better it would be for the position of women in this country.

One hopes that the massive protests in Delhi and elsewhere across the country will bring about a social change in India, a country contaminated by the caste system, class system, puerile caste politics and religious fundamentalism. The change will only come if the Indian middle class, intelligentsia, national media and enlightened politicians come together as a cohesive force to be the Change!

Perhaps a brave new world for the much abused Indian women will begin in 2013.

Prior to publishing this I sent a copy to [Ranjana Padhi](#) and this is her reply (unedited).

“I could follow what you write. The logic is correct. Caste and class barriers are formidable here. But as an activist/feminist I would not arrive at such conclusions without looking at (1) resistance and (2) what women are achieving despite such barriers. So it turns out like one big event gets the attention and we see the worst. It does not work like that. And if you do not do it, how do you show hope? Look at the struggle of [Bhanwri Devi](#) etc., or the resistance of women in Manipur against the rape of [Manorama](#) by Indian Army. I liked the way you have touched on the epics and the basic ingrained patriarchy in the culture. But let us see what is redeeming too.” - Ranjana Padhi, Author, Activist, Feminist

Live Encounters has included other views in this edition.

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om



Finding Your Passion!

After evaluating your situation and discovering more about yourself from my article, *Transformation in the New Year*, in the [January issue of Live Encounters](#) and my book [12 Weeks to Self-Healing, Transforming Pain through Energy Medicine](#); the next step is to harness the energy from within to motivate you forward. This is where passion enters. **How fitting this article happens in the month of February when we celebrate Valentine's Day by focusing on passion. Whether it is dining with a loved one, giving or receiving chocolates and flowers, or giving yourself a mini-vacation or a spa day; it is a time for love!**

There seems to be a theme in my counseling and coaching practice. As I listen carefully to the stories of my clients, underneath I continually hear that at some point in their life they gave up their passion. I see more and more that the "should" and "busyness" in their lives overcame their dreams. This is when emotional and physical pain began to present itself. So, what happened?

Often the busyness of becoming a student, getting a job, getting married, and having children usurped their creativity. They felt lost and stuck. They didn't know how to become present to themselves again. This means they became so externally focused that they forgot to simply check in with themselves to see how they were experiencing their life. Somehow, along the line, they forgot to ask themselves if they were happy and what would make them happy.

Passion comes from taking time to reflect and living from your excess.

When I say, "I see you have lost your passion," they light up, and their answer is, "Yes!"



Pic © Candess Campbell

This month is about regaining your passion. First, focus on your relationship with yourself and then with the people in your life. Focus on what supports and what diminishes your efforts to be creative and passionate. Look at finding meaning in your life and your life purpose. You will discover how you can identify and create your own passion that carries you beyond the experience of your pain.

What is passion?

A good way to explore passion is to think of people you know. Who would you say is passionate? What is it about them that appears to be passionate? What are some characteristics of passion in others? How do you recognize passion in your friends and in yourself? As you think about those who are passionate, ask yourself, "What gives them this special presence?"

Of course, many associate passion with romance. Many think of falling in love and sensuality when they think of passion. Passion goes much further than this and is the foundation for your increased energy and happiness. The plan here is to explore beyond the amorous look at passion; looking at what drives you forward toward a behavior or a goal that brings you pleasure and happiness. What makes you feel fully alive?

Passion can be described as the inner energy that moves you toward creativity, life, love, new adventures, and new ideas with intensity, in order to become more fully who you are and to express yourself wholly and vibrantly in the moment.

Passion led me to complete the coursework for my doctorate and then my dissertation, which became my book. I pushed forward, with my nose to the grindstone for three years, even though others doubted I would be able to finish by the university's deadline. This challenge lit me from the inside, and I became very passionate and determined. My passion increased as I gained support from my virtual assistant, my editor, and several friends. It became a team effort and the challenge, support, and passion became contagious.

You will find passion serves you as you focus on your self-healing. It will stir within you a focus and determination to heal and recreate both yourself and your life. When you allow passion to move within, you will notice it shining through you. What's more, you will actually attract others who are passionate as well.

You can watch children and notice they are full of passion. They are alive, in the moment, and fully expressing themselves. Children are intensely passionate about most of what they think, say, and do. They have an intense desire for knowledge, and they learn easily. How can you regain the child-like passion in yourself?





Irish Dancers in Ireland. Pic © Candess Campbell

Inspired Passion

Now that you have identified others you see as passionate, you can ignite your own passions through the example of others. By reading about or identifying with celebrities, authors, dancers, writers, athletes, etc., you can become motivated to ignite your own passion. You can match other people's energy and follow what they do to help you manifest your own passion.

Commitment

No matter how you are inspired to live passionately, an important facet is commitment. The more you focus on a given subject, the more you become involved. It becomes larger in your life, and you become more intense and encompassed. Whether it is a political group, a financial group or a parenting group, when you connect with others it helps you to continue to commit to your focus and your passionate cause! What person or group of people can you commit to so that you can stay on track to feed your passion?

Tools and Exercises—"Get out your journal!"

1. When you were an adolescent or younger, about what did you feel passionate? What did you spend your time doing? Who were your friends?
2. In high school, what was your main focus? How did you envision your life would develop? What were your dreams?
3. Who or what inspired you in the past? Who or what inspires you now?
4. Write out a list of people whom you admire. What are their passions as you see them? How do they motivate you to become passionate as well?
5. Close your eyes and let your mind wander back to times when you felt excited, passionate, and happier than usual. Think about and then journal what you were doing, who was there, what the experience meant to you. Have you done this again? If not, why not?
6. Often you lose our passion with busyness. List some of the ways you distract yourself from doing what you really want to do. What do you tell yourself that distracts you from doing what you love?
7. Another way you may lose your passion is by disconnecting with the voice within. In what ways like this do you tune out your inner voice?



Bloomsday Race-Spokane Pic © Candess Campbell

In healthy relationships, you have room to grow into your best self. You become energized and feel increased by the connection with the other person. Here, let's look at your passionate relationship with yourself. What do you do that increases your passion and your health? It may be taking time to go to the gym, going to a movie with a friend, or even going to the park alone. It may be taking a cooking class, learning how to making sushi, or getting voice lessons. What is it that you dreamed about when you were younger but never developed in yourself?

Next, take a look at your relationships with others. Ask yourself these questions:

1. Do I take the time needed to nurture my relationships?
2. Do I ask for what I need or want rather than expecting others to read my mind?
3. Do I take the time to plan and follow through with activities and trips necessary to keeping a relationship alive?
4. Do I continue to date my loved one rather than fall into a pattern of monotony?

Take some time this month to evaluate what you need to do to become more fully alive, to increase the passion in your life, and to ignite that child part of you that does not resist, but jumps in quickly and playfully ... and grows exponentially!


There is so much more you can find in 12 Weeks to Self-Healing: Transforming Pain through Energy Medicine that will help you evaluate where you are increase your Passion! In March I'll focus on Increasing Health through Diet and Exercise.



[12 Weeks to Self-Healing: Transforming Pain through Energy Medicine – UK](#)

[12 Weeks to Self-Healing: Transforming Pain through Energy Medicine – US](#)

© Candess M Campbell



Silent witnesses to everyday forms of sexual assault such as leering, groping, passing comments, stalking and whistling are equally responsible for rape being embedded in our culture and hence being so prevalent today. We, therefore, also condemn the culture of silence and tolerance for sexual assault and the culture of valor-ising this kind of violence.

**Statement by
women's and progressive groups
and individuals condemning sexual violence
and opposing death penalty**

On 16 December, 2012, a 23-year old woman and her friend hailed a bus at a crossing in South Delhi. In the bus, they were both brutally attacked by a group of men who claimed to be out on a 'joy-ride'. The woman was gang raped and the man beaten up; after several hours, they were both stripped and dumped on the road. The young woman died from her injuries thirteen days later while undergoing emergency treatment in Singapore. Her male friend has been discharged from hospital and has helped identify the men responsible for the heinous crime.

We, the undersigned, women's, students' and progressive groups and concerned citizens from around the country, are outraged at this incident and, in very strong terms, condemn her gang rape and the physical and sexual assault.

As our protests spill over to the streets all across the country, our demands for justice are strengthened by knowing that there are countless others who share this anger. We assert that rape and other forms of sexual violence are not just a women's issue, but a political one that should concern every citizen. We strongly demand that justice is done in this and all other cases and the perpetrators are punished.

This incident is not an isolated one; sexual assault occurs with frightening regularity in this country. Adivasi and dalit women and those working in the unorganised sector, women with disabilities, hijras, kothis, trans people and sex workers are especially targeted with impunity - it is well known that the complaints of sexual assault they file are simply disregarded. We urge that the wheels of justice turn not only to incidents such as the Delhi bus case, but to the epidemic of sexual violence that threatens all of us.

We need to evolve punishments that act as true deterrents to the very large number of men who commit these crimes. Our stance is not anti-punishment but against the State executing the death penalty. The fact that cases of rape have a conviction rate of as low as 26% shows that perpetrators of sexual violence enjoy a high degree of impunity, including being freed of charges.

As seen in countries like the US, men from minority communities make up a disproportionate number of death row inmates. In the context of India, a review of crimes that warrant capital punishment reveals the discriminatory way in which such laws are selectively and arbitrarily applied to disadvantaged communities, religious and ethnic minorities. This is a real and major concern, as the possibility of differential consequences for the same crime is injustice in itself.

Silent witnesses to everyday forms of sexual assault such as leering, groping, passing comments, stalking and whistling are equally responsible for rape being embedded in our culture and hence being so prevalent today. We, therefore, also condemn the culture of silence and tolerance for sexual assault and the culture of valorising this kind of violence.

We also reject voices that are ready to imprison and control women and girls under the garb of 'safety', instead of ensuring their freedom as equal participants in society and their right to a life free of perpetual threats of sexual assault, both inside and outside their homes.

In cases (like this) which have led to a huge public outcry all across the country, and where the perpetrators have been caught, we hope that justice will be speedily served and they will be convicted for the ghastly acts that they have committed. **However, our vision of this justice does not include death penalty, which is neither a deterrent nor an effective or ethical response to these acts of sexual violence. We are opposed to it for the following reasons:**

1. We recognise that every human being has a right to life. Our rage cannot give way to what are, in no uncertain terms, new cycles of violence. We refuse to deem 'legitimate' any act of violence that would give the State the right to take life in our names. Justice meted by the State cannot bypass complex socio-political questions of violence against women by punishing rapists by death. **Death penalty is often used to distract attention away from the real issue – it changes nothing but becomes a tool in the hands of the State to further exert its power over its citizens. A huge set of changes are required in the system to end the widespread and daily culture of rape.**

2. There is no evidence to suggest that the death penalty acts as a deterrent to rape. Available data shows that there is a low rate of conviction in rape cases and a strong possibility that the death penalty would lower this conviction rate even further as it is awarded only under the 'rarest of rare' circumstances. **The most important factor that can act as a deterrent is the certainty of punishment, rather than the severity of its form.**

3. As seen in countries like the US, men from minority communities make up a disproportionate number of death row inmates. In the context of India, a review of crimes that warrant capital punishment reveals the discriminatory way in which such laws are selectively and arbitrarily applied to disadvantaged communities, religious and ethnic minorities. This is a real and major concern, as the possibility of differential consequences for the same crime is injustice in itself.

The State often reserves for itself the 'right to kill' - through the armed forces, the paramilitary and the police. We cannot forget the torture, rape and murder of Thangjam Manorama by the Assam Rifles in Manipur in 2004 or the abduction, gang rape and murder of Neelofar and Aasiya of Shopian (Kashmir) in 2009. Giving more powers to the State, whether arming the police and giving them the right to shoot at sight or awarding capital punishment, is not a viable solution to lessen the incidence of crime.

4. The logic of awarding death penalty to rapists is based on the belief that rape is a fate worse than death. Patriarchal notions of 'honour' lead us to believe that rape is the worst thing that can happen to a woman. **There is a need to strongly challenge this stereotype of the 'destroyed' woman who loses her honour and who has no place in society after she's been sexually assaulted. We believe that rape is tool of patriarchy, an act of violence, and has nothing to do with morality, character or behaviour.**

5. An overwhelming number of women are sexually assaulted by people known to them, and often include near or distant family, friends and partners. **Who will be able to face the psychological and social trauma of having reported against their own relatives?** Would marital rape (currently not recognised by law), even conceptually, ever be looked at through the same retributive prism?

6. The State often reserves for itself the 'right to kill' -- through the armed forces, the paramilitary and the police. We cannot forget the torture, rape and murder of [Thangjam Manorama](#) by the Assam Rifles in Manipur in 2004 or the abduction, gang rape and murder of [Neelofar and Aasiya of Shopian](#) (Kashmir) in 2009. Giving more powers to the State, whether arming the police and giving them the right to shoot at sight or awarding capital punishment, is not a viable solution to lessen the incidence of crime.

Furthermore, with death penalty at stake, the 'guardians of the law' will make sure that no complaints against them get registered and they will go to any length to make sure that justice does not see the light of day.

The ordeal of [Soni Sori](#), who had been tortured in police custody last year, still continues her fight from inside a prison in Chattisgarh, in spite of widespread publicity around her torture.

7. **As we know, in cases of sexual assault where the perpetrator is in a position of power (such as in cases of custodial rape or caste and religion violence), conviction is notoriously difficult. The death penalty, for reasons that have already been mentioned, would make conviction next to impossible.**



continued...

The State acknowledges the reality of custodial violence against women in many parts of the country, especially in Kashmir, North-East and Chhattisgarh. There are several pending cases and immediate action should be taken by the government to punish the guilty and to ensure that these incidents of violence are not allowed to be repeated.

We, the undersigned, demand the following:

- Greater dignity, equality, autonomy and rights for women and girls from a society that should stop questioning and policing their actions at every step.
- **Immediate relief in terms of legal, medical, financial and psychological assistance and long-term rehabilitation measures must be provided to survivors of sexual assault.**
- Provision of improved infrastructure to make cities safer for women, including well-lit pavements and bus stops, help lines and emergency services.
- Effective registration, monitoring and regulation of transport services (whether public, private or contractual) to make them safe, accessible and available to all.
- Compulsory courses within the training curriculum on gender sensitisation for all personnel employed and engaged by the State in its various institutions, including the police.
- **That the police do its duty to ensure that public spaces are free from harassment, molestation and assault. This means that they themselves have to stop sexually assaulting women who come to make complaints. They have to register all FIRs and attend to complaints. CCTV cameras should be set up in all police stations and swift action must be taken against errant police personnel.**
- Immediate setting up of fast track courts for rape and other forms of sexual violence all across the country. State governments should operationalise their creation on a priority basis. Sentencing should be done within a period of six months.
- **The National Commission for Women has time and again proved itself to be an institution that works against the interests of women. NCW's inability to fulfil its mandate of addressing issues of violence against women, the problematic nature of the statements made by the Chairperson and its sheer inertia in many serious situations warrants that the NCW role be reviewed and audited as soon as possible.**
- **The State acknowledges the reality of custodial violence against women in many parts of the country, especially in Kashmir, North-East and Chhattisgarh. There are several pending cases and immediate action should be taken by the government to punish the guilty and to ensure that these incidents of violence are not allowed to be repeated.**

The formulation of the crime of sexual assault as gender neutral makes the identity of the perpetrator/accused also gender neutral. We demand that the definition of perpetrator be gender-specific and limited to men. Sexual violence also targets transgender people and legal reform must address this.

- Regarding the Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill 2012, women's groups have already submitted detailed recommendations to the Home Ministry. We strongly underline that the Bill must not be passed in its current form because of its many serious loopholes and lacuna. Some points:
 - **There has been no amendment to the flawed definition of consent under Sec 375IPC and this has worked against the interest of justice for women.**
 - The formulation of the crime of sexual assault as gender neutral makes the identity of the perpetrator/accused also gender neutral. We demand that the definition of perpetrator be gender-specific and limited to men. Sexual violence also targets transgender people and legal reform must address this.
 - **In its current form, the Bill does not recognise the structural and graded nature of sexual assault, based on concepts of hurt, harm, injury, humiliation and degradation. The Bill also does not use well-established categories of sexual assault, aggravated sexual assault and sexual offences.**
 - **It does not mention sexual assault by security forces as a specific category of aggravated sexual assault. We strongly recommend the inclusion of perpetration of sexual assault by security forces under Sec 376(2).**

Endorsed by the following groups and individuals:

- Citizens' Collective against Sexual Assault (CCSA)
- Purnima, Nirantar, New Delhi
- Sandhya Gokhale, Forum Against Oppression of Women, Bombay
- Deepti, Saheli, Delhi
- Mary John, Centre for Women's Development Studies (CWDS), New Delhi
- Jagori, Delhi
- Vimochana, Bangalore
- Stree Mukti Sanghathan, Delhi
- Madhya Pradesh Mahila Manch
- Kavita Krishnan, AIPWA, New Delhi
- Anuradha Kapoor, Swayam, Calcutta
- Kalpana Mehta, Manasi Swasthya Sansthan, Indore
- Nandita Gandhi, Akshara, Bombay
- Indira, Women against Sexual Violence and State Repression, (WSS), New Delhi
- National Alliance of people's Movements (NAPM)
- Mallika, Maati, Uttarakhand



continued...

Endorsed by the following groups and individuals:

- Meena Saraswathi Seshu, SANGRAM, Sangli
- GRAMEENA MAHILA Okkutta, Karnataka
- WinG Assam
- Arati Chokshi, PUCL, Bangalore.
- Action India, Delhi
- Majlis Law, Legal Services for Women, Mumbai
- Sahiayar (Stree Sangathan), Vadodara, Gujarat
- Vasanth Kannabiran (NAWO, AP) Asmita
- Sheba George, SAHRWARU
- SAMYAK, Pune
- Shabana Kazi, VAMP
- Sruti disAbility Rights Centre, Kolkata
- Forum to Engage Men (FEM), New Delhi
- MASVAW(Men Action for stopping Violence Against Women), UP
- Breakthrough, New Delhi
- V Rukmini Rao, Gramya Resource Centre for Women, Secunderabad
- LABIA, a queer feminist LBT collective, Mumbai
- Law Trust, Tamil Nadu
- Men’s Action to Stop Violence agaisnt Women (MASVAW), UP
- National Forum for Single Women's Rights
- NAWO-AP, Arunachal Pradesh Women's Welfare Society (APWWS)
- Indigenous Women's Resource Centre (IWRC)
- New Socialist Initiative, Delhi
- Gabriele Dietrich, Pennurimai Iyakkam
- Sangat, a South Asian Feminist Network
- Stree Mukti Sanghatana, Mumbai
- SWATI, Ahmedabad
- Tamil Nadu Women Fish Workers Forum
- Subhash Mendhapurkar,SUTRA, H.P.
- Mario, Nigah, queer collective, New Delhi
- Sushma Varma, Samanatha Mahila Vedike, Bangalore
- Priti Darooka, PWESCR (The Programme on Women's Economic, Social and Cultural Rights), New Delhi
- Pushpa Achanta (WSS, Karnataka)
- AWN, Kabul
- AZAD and Sakha Team, Delhi
- Ekta, Madurai
- Empower People
- Vrinda Grover
- Chayanika Shah, Bombay
- Aruna Roy
- Kalyani Menon-Sen, Feminist Learning Partnerships, Gurgaon
- Nandini Rao
- Pratiksha Baxi
- Amrita Nandy
- Farah Naqvi, Writer & Activist, Delhi
- Nivedita Menon
- Urvashi Butalia
- Kaveri R I, Bengaluru
- Dunu Roy
- Harsh Mander
- Anil TV
- Laxmi Murthy, Journalist, Bangalore
- Rahul Roy
- Rituparna Borah, queer feminist activist
- Ranjana Padhi, New Delhi
- Trupti Shah, Vadodara, Gujarat
- Vasanth Kannabiran
- Sudha Bharadwaj
- Veena Shatrugna, Hyderabad
- Kamayani Bali Mahabal
- Kiran Shaheen, Journalist and activist
- Lesley A Esteves, journalist, New Delhi
- devangana kalita, assam
- Aruna Burte
- Anita Ghai
- Mohan Rao, New Delhi
- Rakhi Sehgal, New Delhi
- Charan Singh, New Delhi

- Geetha Nambisan
- Manjima Bhattacharjya
- Jinee Lokaneeta,Associate professor, Drew University, Madison, NJ
- Kavita Panjabi, Jadavpur University, Kolkata
- Albertina almeida, Goa
- Satyajit Rath, New Delhi
- Prerna Sud, New Delhi
- Priya Sen, New Delhi
- Aarthi Pai, Bangalore
- Kalpana Vishwanath, Gurgaon
- Aisha K. Gill, Reader, University of Roehampton, London
- Ammu Abraham, Mumbai
- Anagha Sarpotdar, Activist and PhD Student, Mumbai
- Anand Pawar
- Anuradha Marwah, Ajmer Adult Education Association (AAEA), Ajmer
- Asha Ramesh, activist/researcher/consultant
- Bondita
- Gauri Gill, New delhi
- Sophia Khan, Gujarat
- Niranjani Iyer, Chennai
- Dyuti Ailawadi
- Gandimathi Alagar
- Gayatri Buragohain - Feminist Approach to Technology (FAT), New Delhi
- Geetha Nambisan, Delhi
- Sadhna Arya, New Delhi
- Vineeta Bal, New Delhi
- Suneeta Dhar
- Geeta Ramaseshan, Advocate, Chennai
- Sonal Sharma, New delhi
- Anusha Hariharan, Delhi/Chennai
- Jayasree.A.K,
- Gautam Bhan, New Delhi
- Jayasree Subramanian, TISS, Hyderabad
- Jhuma Sen, Advocate, Supreme Court
- Teena Gill, New Delhi
- Kannamma Raman
- Karuna D W
- Kavita Panjabi
- Shalini Krishan, New Delhi
- Lalita Ramdas, Secunderabad
- Manasi Pingle
- Madhumita Dutta, Chennai, Tamil Nadu
- Manoj Mitta
- Pamela Philipose
- Parul Chaudhary
- Preethi Herman
- Sunil Gupta, New Delhi
- Radha Khan
- Rama Vedula
- Rebecca John
- Renu Khanna, SAHAJ
- Rohini Hensman (Writer and Activist, Bombay)
- Rohit Prajapati, Environmental activist, Gujarat
- Roshmi Goswami
- Shipra Nigam, Consultant Economist, Research and Information Systems, New Delhi
- Shipra Deo, Agribusiness Systems International Vamshakti, Pratapgarh
- Rukmini Datta
- Sridala Swami
- Sarba Raj Khadka, Kathmandu
- Satish K. Singh, CHSJ
- Shinkai Karokhail, from the Afghanistan Parliament
- Sima Samar, Kabul
- Smita Singh, FTII, Pune
- Subhalakshmi Nandi
- Sujata Gothoskar
- Swar Thounaojam
- Inayat Sabhikhi
- Jaya Vindhyala, Hyderabad



End

Some months ago when the moon played truant with the night and the shadows had taken a day off, a visitor from the twilight zone dropped in unannounced to invite me to the festival. The visitor, the director of the festival, was none other than Sylvia Plath. Her captivating melancholic demeanor was overwhelming so I had to accept the invitation.

There are no tickets or dinners or literary lunches or congregating culture vultures or for that matter book launches or book signing ceremonies. The uniqueness of this 24 x 7 festival is that every visitor can conduct a one on one with any (late) writer or poet by simply walking into a book shop and picking up one of his or her works; and then, reading it in the confines of one's mind.

So join me dear readers on this truly enchanting journey through the labyrinth of the lexicon world of (late) authors who have often brought enlightenment to oppressed and suppressed peoples.

Simone de Beauvoir **author of The Second Sex** at the Late Writers & Readers Festival, Bali

interview by Mark Ulyseas

For all those women who had been and continue to be subject to male chauvinism through coercion and/or benign enslavement in social, religious and sexual obligations; here's a few words of enlightenment and encouragement from eminent French philosopher, Simone de Beauvoir author of the ground breaking magnum opus The Second Sex.

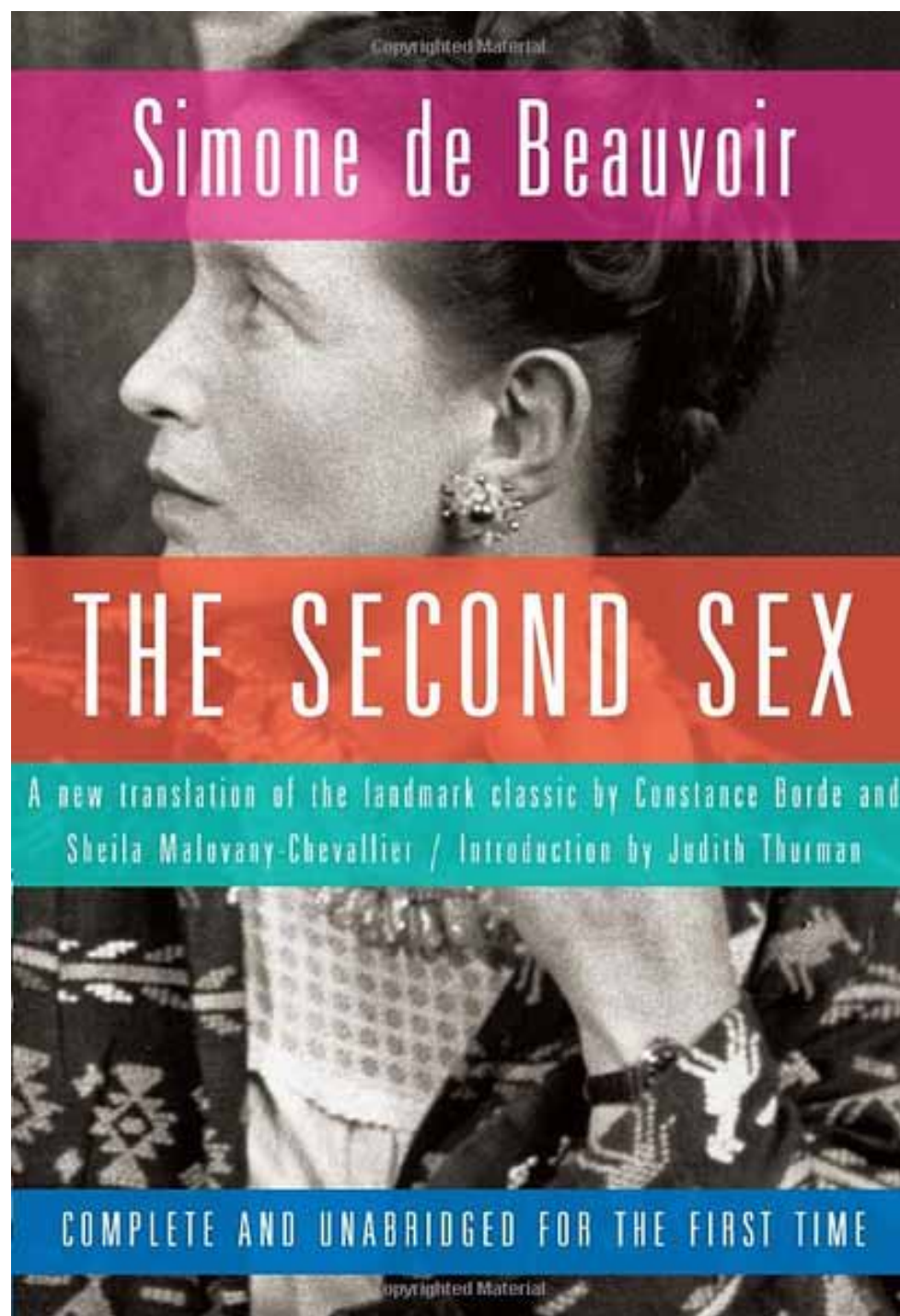
Simone and her friend, longtime lover Jean-Paul Sartre, are attending the festival more as spectators than participants. Chinese whispers doing the rounds suggest that they are jointly working on a thesis to define the sexual parameters, profundities and existential dilemmas confronting asexuals and metrosexuals in the After Life.

But before I share with you the details of my tête-à-tête with Simone de Beauvoir let us take a glimpse at her life and works that gave impetus to the feminist movement and highlighted the social, religious, historical and anthropological aspects of women in a male dominated environment.



“One is not born a woman, but becomes one”

A woman's experience of giving birth, lactation and menstruation are alien to man and therefore this prompts man to 'view' the woman as lesser of the two sexes, basically an unequal...In the first part of the book I had explored the myth of the **"Eternal Feminine"** such as the myth of the mother earth, the virgin, the motherland, mother nature etc. This myth creates an unattainable image of the woman thereby **'collaring'** her and disregarding individual circumstances and prevailing conditions of women in various societies.



In the second part I have researched the role of wife, mother and whore to portray how women instead of progressing through their work are forced into the humdrum daily existence of pregnancy, giving birth, looking after the home and being the vessel for the male libido...I have shown the modern woman as one who takes the reins of her life in her own hands by empowering herself through actions like working and creating on the same level as man. So instead of maligning the male sex she seeks to pronounce herself equal.

Simone was a French existential philosopher, who became the youngest teacher of philosophy at age 21, is the author of – **The Ethics of Ambiguity** (1947); **The Second Sex** (1949) which was/is a cult book for feminists and had been banned by the Vatican for its radical perspective of woman's position in the world; **The Coming of Age** (1970); in addition to numerous short stories, novels, plays; and observations on America and China as a result of her travels to these countries.

In her teens, Simone had a crisis of faith that transformed her into an atheist. She preferred the life of an intellectual (though Sartre had proposed to her) than that of married life.

It is a known fact that she never shared her home with Sartre but remained his lifelong companion, while at the same time conducting affairs with both men and women.

I began by asking her to briefly outline her controversial book The Second Sex that arguably shattered the age old sexist and unchallenged views on women held both by men and women! This deeply insightful book continues to be the basic foundation of study in philosophy and feminism.

"Mark, my book contains two major themes. The first part delves into the "Facts & Myths" about women and in the second part I have attempted to dismantle the perceived notions that women are born feminine. When I wrote that one is not born, but rather becomes a woman I meant just this that women become feminine through the process of social 'brainwashing and stereotyping.

Women have been relegated to being the "Other Sex" whilst man has taken on the role of Self. In simple terms, Man is the Absolute and the Woman is the "Other".

I have paid heed to the facts including biological-scientific, psychoanalytic, materialistic, historical, literary and anthropological perspectives of women.

A woman's experience of giving birth, lactation and menstruation are alien to man and therefore this prompts man to 'view' the woman as lesser of the two sexes, basically an unequal.

In the first part of the book I had explored the myth of the **"Eternal Feminine"** such as the myth of the mother earth, the virgin, the motherland, mother nature etc. This myth creates an unattainable image of the woman thereby **'collaring'** her and disregarding individual circumstances and prevailing conditions of women in various societies. **On one hand the mother is venerated and on the other she is reviled as the messenger of death. She is both hated and loved and this contradiction traps individual mothers in their respective situations.**

I cannot surmise that all women are innocent in the subjugation. Many of them who are living in Patriarchal societies have willingly allowed themselves to be oppressed for the reason of the advantages accruing, as well as, respite from responsibility that freedom/emancipation entails and offers/brings... My existential belief is that every individual regardless of sex, class or age must define oneself and take individual responsibility that comes with freedom of Self.

In the first part of the book I had explored the myth of the “Eternal Feminine” such as the myth of the mother earth, the virgin, the motherland, mother nature etc. This myth creates an unattainable image of the woman thereby ‘collaring’ her and disregarding individual circumstances and prevailing conditions of women in various societies.

On one hand the mother is venerated and on the other she is reviled as the messenger of death. She is both hated and loved and this contradiction traps individual mothers in their respective situations.

In the second part I have researched the role of wife, mother and whore to portray how women instead of progressing through their work are forced into the humdrum daily existence of pregnancy, giving birth, looking after the home and being the vessel for the male libido.

However, I cannot surmise that all women are innocent in the subjugation. Many of them who are living in Patriarchal societies have willingly allowed themselves to be oppressed for the reason of the advantages accruing, as well as, respite from responsibility that freedom/emancipation entails and offers/brings.

My existential belief is that every individual regardless of sex, class or age must define oneself and take individual responsibility that comes with freedom of Self.

I have shown the modern woman as one who takes the reins of her life in her own hands by empowering herself through actions like working and creating on the same level as man. So instead of maligning the male sex she seeks to pronounce herself equal.

My book suggests changes in universal childcare, equal education, contraception, legal abortion and the economic freedom and the casting off of the ‘dependence’ on man.

In 1970, I launched the French Women’s Liberation Movement by signing the manifesto of the 343 for Abortion Rights. Incidentally at that time abortion was illegal in my country.

An interesting part of my life with Jean-Paul has been the assertions made by my contemporaries that my work as a philosopher was not original.

They probably based their misplaced assumptions on the fact that as we were engaged in a physical relationship ‘the other sex’ (me) was not an accomplished individual in her own right but merely an appendage to the Self i.e. Man. This only confirmed my hypothesis.

My book suggests changes in universal childcare, equal education, contraception, legal abortion and the economic freedom and the casting off of the ‘dependence’ on man...In 1970, I launched the French Women’s Liberation Movement by signing the manifesto of the 343 for Abortion Rights. Incidentally at that time abortion was illegal in my country.

By the way, what is the position of women in this century? Has there been significant positive development since I died in 1990?” she asked.

I told her that wife beatings and burning, social imprisonment in stifling societies, female foeticide and more are alive and well and progressing in the world. Some changes are taking place in many countries where women are now on parity with men in a few areas. Unfortunately, there still remains much work to be done in the field of education, protection and enforcement of women’s rights. The heartening development has been woman’s increasing participation in politics which has brought about a new kind of empowerment.

“Jean-Paul and I have noticed that there are quite a few single western women who have made Bali their home. Any thoughts on this subject that you can share with us?” she asked.

I suggested that they meet some of the women in question; adding that they (women) were not discards from the countries from whence they came but probably fleeing their apparent masculine culture to the safe haven of Bali’s ‘feminine environment’.

Simone nodded her head and looked at Jean-Paul who by now was listening intently to our dialogue. She told me that they had been to a delightful Kecak dance performance the previous day and were now looking forward to their weeklong sojourn in enchanting Amed (east Bali).

Prior to leaving the café, Simone wrote down something on a piece of paper, folded it and handed it to me.

After they left I opened the folded paper to read what she had written...

“If I do not actively seek to help those who are not free, I am implicated in their oppression”.

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om



Simone de Beauvoir & Jean Paul Sartre @Rues des Archives

www.liveencounters.net

Live
encounters

February 2013

Free online magazine from village earth

Pic © Mark Ulyseas