

Short course in women's studies at Satavahana University, Karimnagar, October 2010

The course was conceived as an attempt to understand and influence the current discourse on gender at the mufasil universities. Given the limited access that the students have to resources and debates, we designed the course in a way that they would be able to relate to the discussions. Satavaahana University students, majority of who belong to SC and BC sections, being in the heart of Telangana movement, we hoped would be able to understand issues related to history, law, nutrition, Dalit questions and the impact of globalization. The four day course was designed with lectures and discussions around these issues.

The first day's session was on gender and history. The Anveshi group thought that '*We were making history*' would be a good entry point to introduce the discussion on gender for one has heard that almost all students in all Telangana Universities are active in the movement for a separate state of Telangana. Lalita's lecture was received very well. Most of the students did not know that there were women in Telangana armed struggle of 1948 and were glad to know this. Shyamala's talk picked up many themes from Lalita's, elaborated them and went on to describe Nallapoddu. Her presence there, as a Telanagana Dalit intellectual, discussing the Dalit writings of the entire Andhra Pradesh was very important. It conveyed the importance of scholarship for all those who are interested in the movements.

The second day's session was on gender, health and food. Many students also turned up to watch the films that were screened. A whole range of issues from nutrition, food and hunger were discussed on this day. On third day, five groups of students made presentations based on the essays from *Quotapai Charcha*. Subhadra's talk on Dalit women and reservations in Panchayat Raj also underscored some of the complexities about the question of women's reservations though the experiences of Dalit women.

On the fourth day, Rama Melkote spoke about globalization process and the paradigm shifts that it has brought in knowledge and thinking and discussed how it impacted the university education in Telangana. Vasudha discussed the changes in the law brought by the women's movement about dowry, domestic violence and the workings of 498A law in and outside the

courts. It was well received because it was interspersed with several anecdotes and court asides.

The course had on an average there were 50 to 60 students in each session, going to over 100 in one. All are post graduate students, male and female, from different disciplines ranging from sociology (maximum number - 30), Telugu literature, English lit, Chemistry and Urdu lit. The sociology and Urdu group were most active. Though slow to warm up, many students had questions for the speakers and expressed anxieties such a course inevitably tends to generate. But the students were eager to learn, were glad that they came to know of many new issues and new people.

Through out the course, there were two directions/guiding in thinking that the students received. However, they did not clash. One was being pushed by Sujatha, who sought to foreground the importance of changes in personal life by learning about gender inequality. As such, she stressed on the need to take a stand on issues such as dowry, women students' freedom of movement and speech, male students' tendency to dismiss their women colleagues, women's students' fears etc. The second was being pushed by the entire Anveshi group - of taking gender as an element of thought in intellectual inquiry and the partial and biased nature of knowledge one acquires through disciplinary training in the universities. The University administration were quite cooperative though they could not offer any financial support. The course closed with a certificate presentation programme on the last day, with Registrar and Head of the Dept of Sociology giving away the certificates. Nearly 100 students came to take certificates.