

## **Report: The visit to ANU by Prof Gopa Samanta, 2017**

**Tenure:** Professor Gopa Samanta Visited Gender Institute, ANU for four weeks in winter 2017. The exact tenure of her visit was 15<sup>th</sup> May 2017 to 9<sup>th</sup> June 2017.

**Accommodation:** Prof Samanta stayed for four weeks at my place (231 Antil Street, Canberra, ACT 2602). This was meant a) to save money; and b) to facilitate intensive discussions on a paper.

**Meeting People:** Besides academic discussions and writing during her visit to ANU, Gopa met a number of individuals from ANU having expertise on gender issues. The list includes: Professor Tamara Jacka, Department of Political and Social Change; and Prof Sharon Bessel, and Dr Colin Filer, from Crawford School of Public Policy. One of the more productive meetings was with SARI (South Asia Regional Institute) members in ANU. Gopa also discussed and exchanged knowledge with ECRs such as Joyce Das, and Annie McCarthy. She also met with other researchers from ANU working on Gender such as Sara Spiller, Patrick Kilby and Joyce Wu (of CASS).

**Outcomes / Impact: No public lecture could be offered due to the lack of availability of dates at the Gender Institute.**

However, one of the significant outcomes of the visit was the planning of two jointly authored papers. The time at the ANU allowed Gopa to spend intensive time for reading from ANU resources to develop the conceptual background for writing those papers. ANU Gender Institute will be acknowledged in both papers. We developed two abstracts and planned the target audience and deadline for writing those papers. Please find the details below.

**Paper 1 (1<sup>st</sup> draft to be completed by 31<sup>st</sup> May, 2018)**

**Target audience: *Feminist Review***

**“Indian Women”: Is there a need for Intersectional lens in Indian Feminism?**

Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt

Gopa Samanta

### **Abstract**

Indian Feminist movements have long history and diverse trajectories. Although started with enlightened men with modern education in the late eighteenth century, the mainstream feminist movements gathered momentum in the 1960s and 1970s through the intervention of urban educated Middle class women in India. Ongoing debate exists on whether those organized movements were influenced by western feminist movements or by indigenous way of fighting

against the inequality and oppression triggered by their everyday experience. Without getting into that debate, the paper claims that metro-based mainstream feminist movements in India, influenced by the western feminist literature, methodologies and language, bypassed looking down upon themselves. Although claimed as 'indigenous,' the mainstream feminist movements always uses the term 'Indian women' and never use intersectional lens to understand the context of difference. India, being a big and socio-culturally diverse country, does not have singular category called 'Indian women' as the injustice are not only rooted in gender, but also in ethnicity, religion, race, caste, location and many others. To address the needs of enormous categories of difference among women in India, there is an urgent need for intersectional analysis on the conditions of different groups of women along with their other identities. The paper using both the feminist literature and the individual experiences, explores how import it is to look into the so-called 'Indian Women' with an intersectional lens.

**Key Words:** India, Feminism, Women, Intersectionality

**Paper 2 (1<sup>st</sup> draft to be completed by 31<sup>st</sup> September, 2018)**

**Target audience: *Gender, Place & Culture***

**Indian geography and Indian feminism: are they still two worlds in collision?**

Gopa Samanta

Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt

### **Abstract**

The long-lasting and deep influence of positivist philosophy on almost every aspect of Indian Geography is widely known, understood and accepted. The influences are evident also in the research carried out, and methods applied, by geographers on women, and in their self description as gender geographers rather than feminist geographers. Geographical analyses of gender inequalities over space tend to classify parcels of space a la regional science mode, leading to the thriving of geography as a discipline in India, unlike in its Anglo-American counterparts. The success is attributed to the fact that higher education in the discipline is generally located within the science faculty in tertiary education system, and in some instances is integrated with hard social

science such as Economics. At the same time, India boasts of a vibrant feminist movement that has deep historical roots and considerable geographical spread and diversities within. Feminists have demonstrated active agency in dealing with the multiple challenges that Indian women face in their lives. Yet, the feminist movement has been more intensely felt in research carried out by cultural studies scholars, historians and sociologists rather than geographers. The apparent paradox, therefore, is the way these two areas - gender research in geography and Indian feminist movements – seem to be two different worlds that are colliding with each other in their mutual lack of understanding. We analyse this apparent contradiction and mismatch in this paper. To start with, we provide a broad socio-historical explanation of the contexts of Indian feminism, regional disparities in women's condition, and the spatial science approach through which geographers have treated them. We argue that while Indian feminists have been vocal in their critiques of Anglo-American feminists, they have failed to adopt reflexivity and to break the hierarchy within. They have also failed in critically understanding their own subjective positions within the gendered milieu of Indian society.

**Key Words:** India, geography, feminism