

# *Deepalaya*



The Dr. Deepa Martins

Memorial Lectures

Volume One: 2004 - 2009





Ms. Mrinal Pande  
2004



Shri Ved Vyas  
2004



Ms. Aruna Roy  
2005



Dr. C.S. Lakshmi  
2005



# *Deepalaya*

The Dr. Deepa Martins Memorial Lectures

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*The lamps are different,  
But the Light is the same.  
- Rumi*

## AN INTRODUCTION TO DR. DEEPA MARTINS AND THE MEMORIAL LECTURES

It is not easy to give a glimpse of the life and work of Dr. Deepa Martins in a few words, yet there are five words that are metaphoric to her multi-dimensional and complete personality, and these five words were also very close to her heart and the work she did – dedication, harmony, integration, compassion, communication.

इन्हीं पाँच शब्दों में से एक शब्द को उन्होंने अपने निवास के नाम के लिए चुना। वे पाँच शब्द हैं – समर्पण, समन्वय, समष्टि, संवेदना और संवाद।

समर्पण का भाव उनके संपूर्ण जीवन में उजागर रहा है। 5 अप्रैल 1951 को, अजमेर में एक कुमाऊँनी ब्राह्मण परिवार में डॉ. दीपा मार्टिन्स का जन्म हुआ। सात भाइयों और तीन बहनों में सबसे छोटी डॉ. दीपा के आध्यात्मिक तथा चारित्रिक विकास में उनके अध्यापक पिता श्री भगवान वल्लभ पंत का संपूर्ण योगदान रहा। उनके बाऊजी की उदारता तथा उनकी ईजा की सादगी व कर्तव्यबद्धता से ही उनके व्यक्तित्व की नींव की रचना हुई। शिक्षा व विकास को समर्पित डॉ. दीपा प्रारंभ से ही प्रतिभाशाली रहीं। वे न सिर्फ पढ़ाई वरन् अन्य शैक्षिक व सह-शैक्षिक गतिविधियों जैसे कि वाद-विवाद, लेखन, अभिनय आदि में अपनी प्रतिभा निखारती रहीं। सिर्फ अपने ही नहीं वरन् सबके संपूर्ण विकास की ओर समर्पित डॉ. दीपा अपने परिवार तथा मित्रों को भी हमेशा प्रेरणा देती रहीं।

सावित्री स्कूल से उन्होंने सैकण्डरी व इंटरमीडियेट कर सावित्री कॉलेज से बी.ए. किया। अपनी नेतृत्व क्षमता का प्रदर्शन करते हुए, वे अपने कॉलेज की प्रेसीडेंट भी रहीं।

1972 में उन्होंने राजकीय महाविद्यालय, अजमेर से अंग्रेजी में एम.ए. किया तथा श्रमजीवी कॉलेज में अंग्रेजी की प्रवक्ता के रूप में अध्यापन प्रारंभ किया। व्यापक सोच और दृढ़ निश्चय के साथ 23 जून 1973 को उन्होंने अपने मूल्यों तथा भावनाओं के साथी, तथा एम.ए. के सहपाठी श्री गिलरॉय मार्टिन्स के साथ विवाह किया।

Strong-willed that she was, the idea of marriage with a Roman Catholic thirty-seven years ago in a small town like Ajmer did not deter her and this gave highlight to another inherent dimension of her life that of harmonious coexistence.

समन्वय उनके हर रूप में प्रतिबिंबित है। जहाँ अपने आध्यात्मिक जीवन में उन्होंने अंग्रेजी व हिंदी भाषा और साहित्य की ओर अपनी रुचि को समान

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रूप से विकसित किया, वहीं अपने व्यक्तिगत जीवन में हर तरफ की अच्छी परंपराओं का नवीन रूप से समन्वय किया। आज भी उनके घर में मंदिर का दीपक तथा ऑल्टर की मोमबत्तियाँ एक साथ प्रज्वलित हो समन्वय की आस्था को पूरित करती हैं।

But this value too, like her life, was not confined to only one family. She ensured that through her work as a genuine, grassroots-level social worker that harmonious co-existence enlightens her entire society. Her work in organizations like Mahila Samooh, that she co-founded, and Inter-Faith Fraternal Association, with which she was closely associated since its inception, are testimonies to this.

Her life itself, in its social, professional and personal dimensions was a celebration of harmony, and despite her commitments, she was very particular about each and every loved one and reached out to them with her values and love. She would be the first one to wish her dear ones on their special days and would bake them cakes of good wishes and blessings.

Her role as a lecturer in Hindi, 1975 onwards, after doing her MA in the subject ensured that she gives meaning, direction and inspiration to her students, not just in class, but far beyond the confines of classroom teaching. No wonder she is the role model for so many of her students.

While maintaining her commitment with Savitri College, where she worked from 1976, she alongwith her husband Mr. Gilroy Martins decided to nurture the very young with the establishment of St. Stephen's Ajmer in 1985. While Mr Martins fathered the school, Dr. Deepa was, is and will be its guardian angel. She would keenly monitor and be involved in every activity, every aspect of the school.

पर उनका दायरा घर, स्कूल और कॉलेज से भी बढ़ा था और उनकी सोच में अपार विस्तार था। इसलिए ना सिर्फ उनके लेखन बल्कि उनके सामाजिक कार्यों में भी समष्टि चिंतन का भाव उजागर होता है। महिला-समूह, सर्व-धर्म मैत्री संघ, पीपुल्स यूनियन फोर सिविल लिबर्टीज, प्रौढ़ शिक्षण संस्था, सिटिज़न्स कॉउन्सिल तथा अजमेरू पत्रकार संघ जैसी अनेक सामाजिक, कलात्मक, साहित्यिक व सांस्कृतिक संस्थाओं में उन्होंने अपना संपूर्ण योगदान दिया।

महिला समूह को तो वे अपने अस्तित्व का पर्यायवाची मानती थीं और सर्वधर्म मैत्री उनके जीवन का प्रतिबिंब थी। उन्होंने हर मुद्दे को दो रूपों में समझने व समझाने का प्रयास किया – पहला संवेदना के साथ फिर संवाद द्वारा।

उनका मानना था कि मतभेद कितने ही हों, संवाद नहीं छूटना चाहिए और इसी धारणा के साथ वे अपने कर्मक्षेत्र में जुटी रहीं। महिला उत्थान में भी उन्होंने हमेशा हक के साथ घर जोड़ने का प्रयास किया और आशावादिता व संपूर्ण संवेदना के साथ मानवाधिकारों की सुरक्षा के प्रयत्न किए। उनके साथियों के शब्दों में, “बहुत सारे लोग ऐसे थे, जो मानते थे कि और कोई हो ना हो, दीपा है।” अपनी संवेदनशीलता के बल पर लोगों के एहसासों को छूकर वे उनके दिलों तक आसानी से पहुँच बना लेती थीं।

Her social commitments gave many more dimensions to her family to grow on. Her personality was such that while being a committed teacher and totally involved social worker, she was also completely sensitive to her family needs and was the best wife, sister, mother and friend at the same time. She would ensure that she is there for her family while being there for her larger family and society all the same. Her sensitivity and commitment to education also came up in the fact that she was instrumental in shaping the lives and careers of many of her students, and often, when they couldn't get time and space at their homes to study, Dr. Deepa would bring them home and heartily gave them her time.

उनके व्यक्तित्व का हर आयाम इतना संपूर्ण था कि यदि किसी का उनके एक आयाम से परिचय होता तो वो उन्हें इतना पूर्ण लगता कि वे ये नहीं समझ पाते कि उनके अन्य आयाम भी उतने ही प्रबल तथा संपूर्ण हैं।

अपनी बात रखने और मनवाने का उनका अंदाज़ अपने आप में अनूठा था। वे पूर्ण मनोयोग से बात करती जिसका पूर्ण प्रभाव होता था – ऐसा कि सिद्धांत-भेद रखने वाले व्यक्ति भी उनसे सहज प्रभावित हो उठते। जिजीविषा और अपार ऊर्जा के साथ उन्होंने अस्तित्व-बोध को अपना मूल मंत्र बनाया। डॉ. दीपा मार्टिन्स की पंक्तियों में –

कभी राम कभी श्याम ने किया था मेरा उद्धार  
पर अब मैं स्वयं ही बनूंगी अपनी नैया की खेवनहार  
शक्ति को अपनी संचित कर जाऊँगी क्षितिज के पार  
नई सहस्राब्दी की ऊर्जस्विता मैं, अब नहीं मानूँगी हार।।

The Dr. Deepa Martins Memorial Lecture Series was initiated in April 2004 to mark her 53<sup>rd</sup> birth anniversary. Each year a social activist of national repute is invited to share her views and work with the students of St. Stephen's and the people of Ajmer. This Lecture series links the academic aspect of Dr. Deepa Martins with her passion for grassroots-level social work, and hence celebrates her multi-

dimensional contribution to the city. Over the past six years, eminent speakers have shared their experiences in various fields, which are linked to current issues and especially to causes close to Dr. Deepa's heart – inter-faith harmony and women empowerment. The students, through these lectures, not only get first-hand information about the current situation of various aspects of our society – women's health, the secular fabric of the country, children's education, the Constitutional entitlements of women and the like – but also get ideas and ways to choose and apply their own contribution to their society, which indeed is a fitting tribute to Dr. Deepa Martins.

The Lecture series is successful through the efforts of the people associated with Dr. Deepa, especially her friend and co-worker Ms Aruna Roy, who takes personal interest in inviting a suitable speaker each year. Her family, with particular help from her brother Dr. Col. C.S. Pant, who also helped invite some of the speakers, is instrumental in and committed to making these lectures successful each year.

I invite you on behalf of all those who have been associated with these Lectures over the years to imbibe and cherish in the light that “Deepalaya” brings. We look forward to bringing these out at regular intervals, and may this be the first of many.

*Shefali Martins*  
April, 2010



With Mr. Gilroy Martins on their wedding day



Dr. Deepa Martins



The joy of motherhood — with Shefali and Anupam



Giftng a poem to Mr. Gilroy Martins on his 50th birthday



Katha Pathak Club



Rajasthan Lekhika Samelan



Founder Member, Mahila Samooh, Ajmer



At Savitri College: teacher, mentor and friend



Kavya Ghoshthi



Campus Diversity Initiative



Celebrating International Women's Day





Secretary, Governing Body, St. Stephen's School Society, Ajmer



Vice President, PUCL, Ajmer



President, SID, Ajmer Chapter



President, Inter-Faith Fraternal Association, Ajmer

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मैं शक्ति, मैं ऊर्जा, मैं तेजस्विनी  
मेरे ही गर्भ से जन्मते हैं तुम सम प्रखर तेज—पुंज  
अपने व्यक्तित्व के महकते विविध आयाम  
नहीं लगते मुझे धड़विहीन, अप्रासंगिक, लुंजपुंज  
सहचरी बन नव—अस्तित्व बोध को अपने  
परखना, पहचानना, सहेजना मैंने सीख लिया है  
कालपुरुष, युगपुरुष, ओ इतिहास पुरुष!  
तुम्हारी चेरी बनना मैंने अब छोड़ दिया है  
मैंने अब छोड़ दिया है।

ओ कालपुरुष—युगपुरुष—इतिहास पुरुष  
—डॉ. दीपा मार्टिन्स



*Ms. Mrinal Pande, daughter of the Hindi novelist Shivani, is a renowned television personality, journalist and author.*

*Ms. Mrinal Pande has worked with The Times of India and she was Editor at Saptahik Hindustan, and till recently, chief-editor of the Hindi daily, Hindustan. She was the first woman editor of a multi-edition Hindi daily and was also the Group Editor for the Hindi publications of The Hindustan Times.*

*Ms. Pande is appointed chairperson of Prasar Bharati, India's largest public broadcaster and an autonomous corporation of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India.*

*Having studied initially at Nainital, Ms. Pande completed her Master's degree from Allahabad University. She further studied English and Sanskrit literature, Ancient Indian History, Archeology, Classical Music and the Visual Arts at the Corcoran in Washington DC. She has been on the faculty of Allahabad University, Delhi's Jesus and Mary College and has also taught at the Maulana Azad National Institute of Technology, Bhopal. Subsequently, she joined the news agency, Samachar Bharati.*

*Ms. Mrinal Pande hosts a weekly interview show, Baaton Baaton Mein, on Lok Sabha TV Channel, having earlier worked with Doordarshan, STAR News and NDTV. From 1984-87 she was also the editor of the popular magazine Vama, a women's monthly brought out by the Bennett and Coleman Group.*

*Ms. Pande's work includes serials like Adhikar, Drishtikon and Shakti, all of which sensitize people to women related issues.*

*Apart from her work in media, both television and press, Ms. Pande has published a number of books. Her first story was published in the Hindi weekly Dharmyug, at the age of twenty-one. She has continued to write since then, covering a wide range styles from short stories to novels and drama. Her books include Devi, Tales of the Goddess in Our Time, Viking/Penguin; Daughter's Daughter, Penguin Books; That Which Ram Hath Ordained, Seagull Books; The Subject is Woman, Sanchar Publishing House, New Delhi; and My Own Witness, Penguin.*

*Ms. Mrinal Pande has dedicated several years to the National Commission for Self-Employed Women, inquiring into the conditions of rag-pickers, vendors and domestic help.*



*Ms. Mrinal Pande  
delivering the keynote address*



*Ms. Aruna Roy  
& Ms. Mrinal Pande*



*Ms. Mrinal Pande  
& Ms. Aruna Roy  
lighting the lamp before  
the portrait of  
Dr. Deepa Martins*



*Ms. Mrinal Pande with Ms. Shefali Martins, Ms. Anjali Martins,  
Mr. Gilroy Martins & Mr. Anupam Martins*

## भारत की स्त्रियाँ और उनका स्वास्थ्य

दीपा जी की ही तरह, मैं भी उत्तरांचल से संबंध रखती हूँ। हम लोगों के यहाँ जब किसी भी प्रियजन को औपचारिक चिट्ठी लिखी जाती है, तो उसमें सदा एक वाक्य होता है – 'प्रथम गात को जतन करियलो, तबै आपुणी पालयना होली .....।' इसका मतलब है – सबसे पहले आप अपने शरीर का यत्न और सार सम्भाल कीजिएगा, तभी हमारे जैसे लोगों का लालन-पालन ठीक तरह से होगा। ये बात स्त्रियों पर बखूबी लागू होती है कि अगर स्त्रियाँ अपने गात का जतन करती हैं, तो कुटुम्ब का लालन-पालन होता है लेकिन अगर किसी कारणवश स्त्रियों के स्वास्थ्य की उपेक्षा होती है, तो न सिर्फ स्त्रियाँ बल्कि पूरा परिवार एक प्रकार से बीमारी झेलता है क्योंकि परिवार का लालन-पालन, बच्चों के व्यक्तित्व के निर्माण का काम, उनकी शिक्षा-दीक्षा और कुटुम्ब में सभी लोगों के स्वास्थ्य सुविधाओं का ख्याल रखना ये हमारे यहाँ पारम्परिक रूप से महिलाएँ ही अधिक करती हैं।

कुछ वर्ष पूर्व जब मुझे एक पुस्तक लिखने का काम सौंपा गया, पुस्तक का विषय था 'भारतीय महिलाएँ और उनका प्रजनन स्वास्थ्य' और इस सिलसिले में मैंने अनेक प्रांतों की यात्रा की, करीब डेढ़ वर्ष तक उसके लिए सामग्री एकत्रित की तो मुझे यह देखकर बहुत अचम्भा हुआ कि सभी लोग स्वास्थ्य के विषय में कितने अनजान हैं, जिसमें मैं स्वयं को भी गिनती हूँ। हम पढ़े-लिखे शिक्षित लोग और स्वयं महिलाएँ भी स्वास्थ्य के विषय में अनजान हैं, भेदभाव की शिकार हैं और बहुत सारे अंधविश्वासों और पूर्वाग्रहों से ग्रस्त हैं। इसलिए आज हमारे समाज में स्वास्थ्य समस्याएँ एक भीषण रूप धारण करती जा रही हैं। जो सबके स्वास्थ्य का ख्याल रखती हो, यदि वे स्वयं स्वास्थ्य सुविधाओं से वंचित हो तो आप सहज ही अनुमान लगा सकते हैं कि समाज में स्वास्थ्य की क्या दशा होगी? मैं किसी भी शहर में जाती हूँ – आप बड़े शहर तो छोड़ दीजिए, मैं अजमेर को भी बड़ा शहर मानती हूँ जब छोटे से छोटे कस्बे में मैं जाती हूँ, वहाँ पर जो चार-पाँच दुकानें होती हैं, निश्चित रूप से उसमें एक प्राईवेट क्लीनिक होता है और एक केमिस्ट की दुकान होती है, और उस शहर की सबसे अधिक कमाई करने वाली दो दुकानें ये ही होती हैं। परचूनी या किराने की दुकान से कहीं अधिक कमाई केमिस्ट की और उस डॉक्टर की होती है जो क्लीनिक चला रहा है और आकलनों के अनुसार अब तक जो सर्वेक्षण हुए हैं, इनमें से तेहत्तर फीसदी क्लीनिक ऐसे लोगों द्वारा चलाए जा रहे हैं, जिनके पास डॉक्टरी की व्यवस्थित पढ़ाई की कोई भरोसेमंद डिग्री नहीं है। ये झोलाछाप डॉक्टर हैं, जिन्होंने कभी कम्पाउन्डरी की है, या केमिस्ट की दुकान पर काम किया है। मैं कुछ प्रश्न पूछना चाहती

हूँ। इसमें दीपा जी की कविता की पंक्तियाँ आपके सामने मैं दोहराती हूँ –

‘जब कभी जीवन की लंबी डगर में शिथिलता हावी होने लगे  
सारे मार्ग – सब दिशाएँ अंधेरी सी दिखने लगे।  
और प्रश्नचिह्न हर धुमावदार पगडंडी पर अड़कर  
क्षितिज को धूमिल करने की कुमंत्रणा करने लगे  
तब हाँ तब अपने ही भीतर खोजना हर प्रश्न का उत्तर  
प्रश्नों की उधेड़बुन से ही अंकुरित होते हैं जीवन सत्य।’

यह पुस्तक जब मैंने लिखनी शुरू की, तो पहले एक प्रश्नों की लम्बी श्रृंखला सामने आयी। हमारे यहाँ अमूमन प्रश्न पूछना अच्छा नहीं समझा जाता। हम स्वयं को बहुत ही अनुशासित व दबू समाज बनाने की प्रक्रिया में भागीदार हैं। इसलिए परिवार में बच्चे द्वारा या स्त्री द्वारा प्रश्न पूछना अक्सर बहुत बड़ी अभद्रता मानी जाती है। चाहे प्रश्न कितना ही व्यवस्थित क्यों न हो। लेकिन आप किसी भी जीवन्त समाज को देख लीजिए, जो नई राह बना रहा है, उसकी नई राहें ही प्रश्नों से फूटती हैं। स्वास्थ्य के बारे में भी हमारे यहाँ यही बात होती है कि आखिर क्या वजह है कि जब भी हम जनस्वास्थ्य या डॉक्टरों पेशे या अस्पताल वाले मरीज या स्वास्थ्य बीमा का चैक काटने वालों के बारे में सोचते हैं, तो हमारे मन में पुरुषों की ही छवि आती है। औरतें पुरुषों की तुलना में अधिक लंबे समय तक बीमार रहती हैं, ये बात आप और हम हर घर में देखते हैं, लेकिन फिर भी जन-स्वास्थ्य के दायरे में औरतों की दशा, उनकी शारीरिक हालत और घर के संसाधनों में उनके हिस्से की बात हम अलग से करना जरूरी नहीं समझते हैं।

सन् 2001 की जनगणना के आंकड़े हमारे सामने हैं और यह साफ दिखाई दे रहा है कि हर प्रांत में पुरुषों की तुलना में औरतों की तादाद् घट रही है और इसका कारण गरीबी नहीं है, क्योंकि जिन प्रांतों में सबसे अधिक तादाद् घटी है, वे सबसे अमीर प्रांत हैं। पंजाब, हरियाणा, दिल्ली, तमिलनाडू, मुंबई और अहमदाबाद जैसे समृद्ध धन-कुबेरों की नगरी में औरतों की तादाद् पुरुषों से इतनी कम है कि कहीं-कहीं तो हजार पुरुषों के पीछे आठ सौ से कुछ ही अधिक महिलाएँ बची हैं और इसका सीधा असर हरियाणा, पंजाब में देखने को मिलने लगा है। वहाँ गाँव के गाँव ऐसे हैं जहाँ नवरात्रों में कन्या पूजन के लिए लड़कियाँ ही नहीं मिलती हैं। वहाँ पर लड़कों की शादी के लिए बहुएँ नहीं मिलती हैं इसलिए उनके परिवार उड़ीसा से या बुंदेलखण्ड से उनके लिए पत्नियाँ खरीद कर ला रहे हैं। यह एक भयावह स्थिति है और यह दिखाती है कि हम कुदरत का बनाया हुआ तालमेल और सन्तुलन बिगाड़कर अपने लिए ही बहुत बड़ा सरदर्द पैदा कर रहे हैं।

सबसे अधिक तादाद् घटी है जन्म से लेकर छः वर्ष तक की आयु की लड़कियों की और इसके बारे में विशेषज्ञों की राय है कि बहुत बड़े पैमाने पर अल्ट्रावायलेट साउण्ड द्वारा अजन्मे शिशु का लिंग जाँच कर कन्या भ्रूण हत्या की जो घटनाएँ बढ़ रही हैं, ये इसके लिए कुछ हद तक जिम्मेदार हैं। कुदरती तौर से यह सम्भव ही नहीं है कि एक गाँव में लड़कियाँ पैदा होना ही बंद हो जाए या किसी प्रांत विशेष में लड़कियों का जन्म ही कम हो जाए, लड़कों की तादाद् बढ़ जाए, कुदरत का न्याय इस पक्ष में नहीं है। कुदरत स्वयं संतुलन कायम रखती है, लेकिन जब उस संतुलन से छेड़छाड़ होती है और नवजात लड़कियों की उपेक्षा होती है या उनको कुपोषित रखा जाता है, तो या तो उनकी मृत्यु हो जाती है या वे जब बड़ी होती हैं तो उनका शरीर इतना कमजोर होता है कि उनके गर्भ से जन्म लेने वाली हर संतान कमजोर और कम आयु दर वाली होती है। इस स्थिति को सुधारने की जब भी बात उठती है तो एक तर्क दिया जाता है कि यदि परिवार की स्त्रियाँ खुद ही पुरुष संतान को जन्म देना चाहती हैं, लड़की होने पर दुःख मनाती है तो इसका मतलब यह है कि स्त्रियों को ही स्त्रियों से बैर है, स्त्रियाँ ही लड़कियों को जन्म नहीं देना चाहती।

यहाँ से हट कर यदि आप स्त्रियों की दृष्टि से पूरी स्थिति को देखें तो आपके राजस्थान में ही जिन लोगों के पास धन-सम्पत्ति या खेत हैं, उन लोगों के अगर लड़के नहीं होते हैं, तो पारिवारिक सम्पत्ति में उनको हिस्सा नहीं दिया जाता है। कितने ऐसे वाकिये प्रकाश में आये हैं जब नाते प्रथा के अंतर्गत बिना बेटे वाली स्त्री को पति की मृत्यु के बाद दूसरे परिवार में बेच दिया गया है। मैं बेचना ही कहूँगी क्योंकि इससे उसके पीहर वाले तथा ससुराल वाले दोनों को ही धन की प्राप्ति होती है। इसी प्रकार से उत्तर प्रदेश में, बिहार में, जिन स्त्रियों के लड़के नहीं होते हैं, उनकी सम्पत्ति को खुर्दबुर्द करने के लिए अक्सर उन्हें डायन बता कर उन्हें पत्थरों से मारा जाता है। झारखण्ड में कई ऐसे प्रकरण हुए हैं। अगर स्त्रियों की दृष्टि से देखें तो लड़के की उनकी हवस इसलिए नहीं होती है कि वे उन्हें श्रेष्ठकर मानती हैं, वरन् इसलिए होती है क्योंकि यह उनके जीने-मरने का सवाल है। अगर उनका बेटा है तब उनको सम्पत्ति मिलेगी, तभी उनको उस घर की अधिकार-सम्पन्न बहू का दर्जा मिलेगा, अन्यथा उनका भविष्य अन्धकारमय है। मान लीजिए, कम उम्र में उनके पति की मृत्यु हो गयी, उनका कोई रखवाला नहीं होगा। तो ये सामाजिक विषमता है और यह मनुष्य निर्मित है। इसके लिए स्त्रियों को दोष देना मैं उचित नहीं समझती हूँ क्योंकि वे अपने जीवन के लिए लड़ रही हैं। मैं इतनी महिलाओं से मिली हूँ, किन्तु आज तक मुझे कोई ऐसी स्त्री नहीं मिली जिसने कहा हो कि वो अपनी लड़की को पढ़ाना नहीं चाहती या उसकी शादी नहीं करना चाहती है। मूल चीज़ गैर नहीं है। मूल चीज़ यह है कि स्त्री होने

के कारण उसके अधिकारों में बहुत अधिक कटौती समाज में शुरू कर दी जाती है, जिसमें उसके सम्पत्ति के अधिकार हैं, जिसमें मानवाधिकार हैं, रोजगार करने के अधिकार हैं तथा शिक्षा के अधिकार हैं। इन अधिकारों से वंचित अगर उसे रखा जाता है तो वह न सिर्फ स्वयं से घृणा करने लगती है अपितु उसकी कोख से जन्मी लड़की के लिए भी उसको भविष्य अंधकार में लगता है।

यह कह कर कि 'औरतें ही तो औरतों को मार रही हैं, हम क्या कर सकते हैं?' अपना पल्ला झाड़ लेना ठीक नहीं है। मैं सोचती हूँ कि यह बहुत ही स्वार्थ और अंधेपन का परिचायक है, क्योंकि आज से 100-150 सौ साल बाद, जब स्त्रियाँ ही नहीं बचेंगी, तो समाज की क्या दशा होगी। यही सोचकर मन में सिहरन होती है। अपने यहाँ स्त्री-स्वास्थ्य के बारे में कोई खास सोच या सरोकार विकसित नहीं हो पाया है। यहाँ तक कि उसकी मृत्यु और गैर मौजूदगी के बारे में भी सवाल नहीं पूछे जाते हैं। उदयपुर के पास एक गाँव में मैं गयी थी, वहाँ पर जो महिला बालवाड़ी की परिचारिका थी, मैंने उससे पूछा कि इस गाँव में प्रसूत में कितनी महिलाओं की एक साल में मृत्यु होती है, तो उसने कहा साल में यहाँ तो हर महीने दो-तीन जवान महिलाएँ प्रसूत बिगड़ने से मरती हैं तो मैंने कहा कि इसके लिए तुम लोग या ग्राम पंचायत क्या कोई रिपोर्ट तैयार करते हो? रजिस्टर में उसको दर्ज करने के बाद अधिकारियों का ध्यान खींचते हो? उन्होंने कहा कि देखिए जब कोई जवान औरत मरती है तो कोई मक्खी भी पर नहीं फड़फड़ाती है, लेकिन अगर कोई बूढ़ा अकाल से भी मरता है, तो पूरा सरकारी अमला जीप में भरकर आता है यह देखने के लिए कैसे इसको अन्न में हिस्सा नहीं मिला और फिर यह साबित करते हैं कि अकाल से उसकी मृत्यु नहीं हुई, वो तो पहले से ही बीमार था। उन्होंने यह भी कहा कि अकाल चूँकि एक राजनैतिक मसला बन गया है इसलिए अकाल से होने वाली मौत तो दर्ज होती है, लेकिन प्रसव जैसी कुदरती और नितांत युवा स्त्रियों के जीवन में घटने वाली स्थिति में एक जवान लड़की मर रही है और एक जगह नहीं अपितु गाँव-गाँव में मर रही है, इसको लेकर कोई सवाल नहीं पूछेगा। इन सवालों का न पूछा जाना एक मृत या संज्ञाहीन समाज का लक्षण है, जो अपने आप में बहुत चिंताजनक है।

अब आते हैं स्वास्थ्य-क्षेत्र पर। हमारे यहाँ तीन तरह की स्वास्थ्य संस्थाएँ हैं। पहला है गैर-मुनाफा क्षेत्र जिसे स्वयंसेवी संगठन, मिशन या दातव्य संस्थान चलाते हैं। इनमें से अधिकतर अच्छा काम कर रहे हैं, लेकिन उनकी क्षमता और क्षेत्र सीमित हैं। जिन इलाकों में ये हैं वहाँ पर अच्छा कार्य हो रहा है। लेकिन आप और हम सब जानते हैं कि इस तरह के संगठन कम हैं।

दूसरा है, संगठित निजी क्षेत्र। यह आज देश का सबसे बड़ा उभरता हुआ

और ताकतवर क्षेत्र है। सभी बड़े शहरों में अब बड़े अस्पतालों की चेन खुल गयी है। दिल्ली में भी बड़े-बड़े अस्पताल खुलते जा रहे हैं। आपको लगेगा कि यहाँ इतने अस्पताल हैं, यहाँ बीमारी की कोई समस्या नहीं होगी। लेकिन ऐसा नहीं है। सर्वप्रथम यहाँ जितने बड़े निजी अस्पताल हैं, वे महंगे हैं। यहाँ पर भरती होना कीमती है, कमरे में रहना और ज्यादा महंगा है। दवाइयाँ अक्सर इन्हीं अस्पतालों के अन्दर से खरीदनी पड़ती हैं। फिर जाँचें होती हैं। अगर आपके नाखून में भी इनफेक्शन है, तो आपके सिर का सिटीस्कैन लिख दिया जाएगा। कई ऐसे भी मसले प्रकाश में आए हैं कि कोई डीप-कोमा में हैं और डॉक्टर ने कह दिया कि उसके मस्तिष्क की मृत्यु हो चुकी है। जबरन उसको संसाधनों से जिन्दा रखा जाता है ताकि बिल मोटा बन सके। यहाँ डॉक्टर सेवा के लिए नहीं मुनाफा कमाने के लिए आते हैं। आज सरकारी अस्पतालों की हालत इतनी खराब हो गयी है कि वी.आई.पी. लोग सरकारी अस्पतालों में नहीं जाते। सरकार ने उनकी सुविधा के लिए एक नियम बना दिया है कि जो बड़े अधिकारी अफसर हैं, यदि वे बीमार पड़ते हैं और उन्हें यह लगता है कि उनकी बीमारी का इलाज सरकारी अस्पताल में नहीं हो सकता, तो वे रेफर कर दिए जाएंगे और वे सरकारी अस्पताल से निजी अस्पताल में जा सकते हैं। इसलिए हमेशा ऐसा ही होता है कि अगर किसी भी क्षेत्र में बड़े लोग शिरकत नहीं करते हैं, तो वह उपेक्षित हो जाता है, और जो क्षेत्र उन्हें संसाधन उपलब्ध कराता है, वो क्षेत्र हृष्ट-पुष्ट होता है। मान लें एक बड़ा हृदय-रोग का अस्पताल है। हमारे देश में बड़े लोगों को अक्सर हृदय-रोग होता है तो जितने भी बड़े-बड़े एम.पी. या मिनिस्टर हैं, जिनके हृदय की धमनियों की सफाई जो डॉक्टर कर चुका है, उस डॉक्टर की आप पहुँच का अंदाजा लगाइए। यदि वो एक फोन करेगा तो उसके लिए सब दरवाजे सिम-सिम की तरह खुल जाते हैं। कोई उनके अस्पताल में केस होगा तो वे खुद भी बात नहीं करेंगे। उनके यहाँ एक छोटा डॉक्टर फोन करेगा तो खुद आई.जी. स्तर से उनका केस रफा-दफा हो जाएगा। यह निजी संगठित क्षेत्र बहुत ही बढ़िया क्षेत्र बन सकते हैं क्योंकि हमारी इतनी बड़ी आबादी है कि जब तक निजी क्षेत्र की भागीदारी चिकित्सा क्षेत्र में नहीं होगी तब तक लोगों को आराम नहीं मिलेगा। लेकिन जरूरत है कि इस क्षेत्र की मॉनिटरिंग की जाए। समाजसेवी संस्थाओं को निजी संगठित स्वास्थ्य क्षेत्र के बारे में भी सवाल पूछने के अधिकार के बारे में सोचना चाहिए, क्योंकि ये क्षेत्र बहुत बड़ी सेवा का स्रोत बन सकता है, लेकिन इसकी चौकसी की, इसकी निगरानी की, तथा इससे सवाल पूछे जाने की बहुत बड़ी आवश्यकता है।

तीसरा, जो बहुत बड़ा क्षेत्र है, वो है असंगठित निजी क्षेत्र, जिसका कोई पंजीकरण नहीं है, जिसका कोई ब्यौरा उपलब्ध नहीं है और इसमें बहुत बड़ी

तादाद में एलोपैथिक से इतर किस्म की चिकित्सा सुविधा उपलब्ध कराने वाले लोग हैं। यूनानी दवाईखाने भी हैं, होम्योपैथिक के क्लीनिक भी हैं तथा झाड़-फूंक व जादू-टोना करने वाले लोग भी हैं। आपको याद होगा, कुछ महीने पहले केन्द्र सरकार के एक राज्यमंत्री अपने सिर पर साँप लेकर नाचे थे और कहने लगे थे कि वे जादू-टोने से उपचार कर सकते हैं। जिस देश में गरीबी, अशिक्षा और बदहाली के चलते इस प्रकार की मानसिकता सरकार के सर्वोच्च पदों पर बैठे लोगों में हो तो असंगठित निजी क्षेत्र की क्या स्थिति होगी? यह समझना कठिन नहीं है। इसमें अशिक्षित दाइयों भी हैं, इसमें अवैध गर्भपात कराने वाले लोग भी हैं, इसमें नाई भी हैं जो कि गन्दे रेजर से फोड़ों में चीरा लगाकर उसमें मलहम लगाते हैं, इसमें वे हलवाई भी शामिल हैं, जिनके पास जले हुए का कुछ रामबाण इलाज भी पाया जाता है। सरकारी अस्पताल में जाना, पर्ची कटवाना, वहाँ डॉक्टरों की तवज्जो पाना इतना दुष्कर हो गया है कि झक मारकर लोग निजी क्षेत्र में जाते हैं। निजी क्षेत्र में जिनके पास पैसा होता है उनकी तो पुछवायी है, जिनके पास पैसा नहीं है फिर वे असंगठित निजी क्षेत्र में झोलाछाप डॉक्टरों के पास जाते हैं जो या तो पानी की सुई लगा देते हैं या फिर अनाप-शनाप दवाइयों से उनका इलाज कर देते हैं कुल मिलाकर जब हम स्वास्थ्य-क्षेत्र को देखते हैं तो हमें लगता है कि स्वास्थ्य-क्षेत्र यहाँ का सबसे बीमार क्षेत्र है और सरकार इसमें बहुत कम पैसा खर्च कर रही है, जबकि यह सचमुच जीवन-मरण का सवाल है।

अर्थशास्त्री डॉ. अमर्त्य सेन ने दो क्षेत्र बताये थे, जो हमारे जैसे विकासशील लोकतंत्र को सबसे अधिक ऊर्जा व बल देते हैं, एक शिक्षा और दूसरा जन-स्वास्थ्य। शिक्षा के क्षेत्र में तो अच्छा काम हो रहा है, जैसा कि यह विद्यालय कर रहा है, लेकिन जन-स्वास्थ्य के क्षेत्र में क्या हो रहा है, हमको – आपको कुछ पता नहीं। ऐसा लगता है कि कोई सोचता ही नहीं। हम लोगों की डिग्रियों की चिंता कर रहे हैं, कॉल सेंट्रों की चिंता कर रहे हैं, लोग जिन्दा हैं कि मर रहे हैं, इसकी कोई बुनियादी चिंता ही नहीं हो रही है। सरकार कह रही है कि हमारे पास इसके लिए पैसा नहीं है और हम इससे हाथ खींचते जा रहे हैं। निजीकरण को हम बढ़ावा देंगे। यह एक बहुत ही खतरनाक चीज़ है। इसलिए तमाम जन-संस्थाओं तथा जनता से जुड़े लोगों को इस बारे में सरकार पर दबाव डालना चाहिए कि शिक्षा और जन-स्वास्थ्य इन दो क्षेत्रों से सरकार कतई हाथ नहीं खींच सकती। अपनी बुनियादी जिम्मेदारी से मुँह नहीं मोड़ सकती है।

हमारे यहाँ जो सरकारी अस्पताल हैं, उनकी क्या दशा है? वर्तमान में हमारे यहाँ जो हॉस्पिटल बैड्स हैं उनमें से यह जानकर खुशी होती है कि अस्सी फीसदी बैड्स सरकारी अस्पतालों में है। कभी न कभी हमें अस्पताल में भर्ती

होना पड़ता है, लेकिन खुश होने से पहले यह भी जान लें कि अस्सी फीसदी ट्रेन्ड डॉक्टर निजी तबके के प्राइवेट सैक्टर में है। सरकारी क्षेत्र में जहाँ अधिक बिछौने हैं, वहाँ बीस फीसदी प्रशिक्षित डॉक्टर हैं। निजी क्षेत्र में जहाँ सिर्फ बीस फीसदी बिछौने हैं, वहाँ अस्सी फीसदी प्रशिक्षित डॉक्टर हैं। इसका मतलब डॉक्टर्स सिर्फ ओ.पी.डी. स्तर पर उपचार कर पाते हैं और फिर ज्यादातर लोगों को रेफर कर देते हैं। इसके बाद जिसके पास पैसा है वो प्राइवेट क्लीनिक जाता है और जिसके पास पैसा नहीं है वो सरकारी अस्पताल में भर्ती होता है। सरकारी अस्पतालों में भी भेदभाव खूब चलता है और हम सब यह जानते हैं कि इन सरकारी अस्पतालों के अधिकांश डॉक्टरों ने अपने क्लीनिक खोल रखे हैं जो वहाँ पर मरीजों को रेफर कर देते हैं। ये लूट-खसोट का जो भारी धंधा है, इसकी बहुत बड़ी कीमत हम चुकाने जा रहे हैं जब तक कि हम इस पर विचार न करें।

एड्स के रोग के बारे में हम सब ने सुना है। संयुक्त राष्ट्र संगठन के अनुसार अभी भी भारत में अज्ञान और भय बहुत अधिक है। लोग इसके बारे में बोलना नहीं चाहते, खासकर स्त्रियाँ इस पर किसी भी प्रकार की चर्चा करने से बचती हैं। कुछ स्वयंसेवी संगठनों, जिन्होंने इस पर चर्चा करने की कोशिश की, उन्हें मारपीट कर भगा दिया गया, लेकिन जिस देश को दुनिया में सबसे अधिक संभावित एड्स-संक्रमित लोगों का देश पाया गया है, उस देश में अपने स्वास्थ्य को लेकर इस प्रकार की भ्रांति पालना और उसको लेकर इस तरह की ज़िद पालना कि हमारे यहाँ इस प्रकार के यौनजनित रोग नहीं हो सकते हैं क्योंकि हम लोग बहुत पूजापाठ करते हैं, मुझे लगता है कि यह परले सिरे की बेवकूफी है और हमको इससे छुटकारा पाना चाहिए।

अनियोजित क्षेत्र में हमारी नब्बे फीसदी महिलाएँ खेती, पशुपालन, सड़क निर्माण जैसे काम कर रही हैं। एक तो ये बचपन से कुपोषण की शिकार होती हैं, उसके बाद फिर जल्दी विवाह व एक के बाद एक सन्तान उत्पन्न होती है। इसलिए नब्बे फीसदी महिलाओं में एनिमिया पाया जाता है। इनकी हड्डियाँ भी कमजोर होती हैं। काम करने से और अधिक कमजोर हो जाती हैं। कैल्शियम की कमी से तो चालीस की उम्र में इनके फ्रैक्चर हो जाते हैं, कमर झुक जाती है, और उस उम्र में वे कमाई देने में असमर्थ होती हैं। अतः उनकी भयावह उपेक्षा होती है।

हम कहते हैं कि हमारे यहाँ बूढ़ों का आदर होता है। हम उनके पाँव छूते हैं। परंतु वस्तु-स्थिति यह है कि गाँवों में जहाँ गरीबी बहुत उत्कट है, वहाँ भी और शहरी क्षेत्रों में भी बूढ़े लोग दूसरों के लिए एक बोझ हैं। जब तक व्यक्ति दो हाथ की कमाई करके नहीं ला रहा है उसकी घर में कोई पूछ नहीं है। अतः आप गाँव-गाँव चले जाइये, झुकी हुई कमान जैसी पीठ वाली बुढ़िया

और आँख से अंधे बूढ़े आपको घर-घर में मिल जाएंगे जिनके लिए सिर्फ मनीऑर्डर भेजकर उनके बच्चे अपनी इतिश्री मान लेते हैं। उनके लिए पंचायतों के पास कोई स्वास्थ्य-कार्यक्रम नहीं है, और उनके लिए पी.एच.सी. में कोई कार्यक्रम नहीं है। सरकार ने बूढ़ों के लिए दादा-दादी वान्ट्स स्कीम तो चला दी परंतु दादा-दादी बनने तक वे जिंदा तो रहें। बूढ़ों के लिए भी हमें कुछ सोचना है। इतनी बड़ी हमारी आबादी है, जितनी तेजी से हमारी आबादी जवान हो रही है उतनी ही तेजी से हमारी पहली पीढ़ी बूढ़ी भी हो रही है। बूढ़ों की स्वास्थ्य-सुविधा के लिए हमारे पास कोई सोच नहीं है।

पोलियो-अभियान हमारा सफल रहा। हम घर-घर जाकर बच्चों को पोलियो ड्रॉप्स देते हैं। घर-घर में बूढ़े भी तो हैं। उम्र से जुड़ी जो उनकी तकलीफें हैं, उनका निराकरण करने के लिए, आज तक किसी ने यह सोचा नहीं है कि इनके लिए हम एक पैसे की दवाई या ड्रॉप्स भी आवंटित नहीं करा रहे हैं। अगर हम अपने को सभ्य समाज मानते हैं तो हमें बच्चों को ही नहीं, संतानोत्पत्ति योग्य दम्पति की ही नहीं, बूढ़ों की भी सोचनी चाहिए। कोई स्वास्थ्य-योजना इस वक्त हमारे यहाँ बूढ़ों के लिए नहीं है। अगर किसी ने संतान उत्पत्ति की उम्र पार कर ली है तो क्या वे हमारे लिए मर जाते हैं?

भारत में परिवार-स्वास्थ्य को लेकर आजादी के बाद दो सर्वेक्षण हुए हैं। इनके अनुसार बच्चों को जन्म देते समय मरने वाली महिलाओं की विश्व में सबसे बड़ी तादाद उत्तर प्रदेश, बिहार, राजस्थान और पूर्वोत्तर इलाकों में हैं, लेकिन 1990 से लेकर अब तक इन सभी क्षेत्रों में स्वास्थ्य में होने वाले खर्च में कटौती हुई है। डिफेन्स में होने वाला खर्चा हर साल बढ़ रहा है। हम जीवन समाप्त करने वाले अस्त्र-शस्त्र की खरीद पर अधिक राशि आवंटित कर रहे हैं लेकिन जीवन को बचाने वाले स्वास्थ्य क्षेत्र में हर साल राशि में कटौती हो रही है। भारतीय चिकित्सा अनुसंधान परिषद ने अठारह राज्यों के 398 प्राथमिक चिकित्सा केन्द्रों का मुआयना किया और उसमें सिर्फ बारह प्रतिशत ठीक-ठाक क्षमता वाले थे। यह भी पाया कि गुजरात जैसे सम्पन्न राज्य में सरकार प्रति व्यक्ति पूरे साल में बावन रूपया अठारह पैसे खर्च करती है। देखना कठिन नहीं है कि इतनी राशि में कितने व्यक्तियों को स्वास्थ्य सुविधाएँ मुहय्या कराई जाती हैं। सरकारी अस्पताल में सिर्फ लोहे के पलंग होते हैं, गद्दे-तकिए खुद ले जाने पड़ते हैं, दवाओं का तो कहना ही क्या? हमारा सार्वजनिक स्वास्थ्य क्षेत्र का अस्सी प्रतिशत बजट बड़े शहरों के अस्पतालों में जाता है जहाँ वी.आई.पी. लोगों की भर्ती होती है। राजधानी क्षेत्रों में अस्सी प्रतिशत बजट खर्च होता है, इनमें ये शहरी क्षेत्रों के प्रति ज्यादा सजग हैं। ग्रामीण क्षेत्र में कोई बीमार हो तो उसका भगवान ही मालिक है। अनेक अस्पताल हैं किंतु अस्पताल तक मरीज के पहुँचने के

साधनों का अभाव है। उदाहरण के लिए यदि किसी महिला की प्रसूति के समय उसे शहरी अस्पताल ले जाना हो और कोई साधन न हो तो ऐसे समय में पहले उसके पीहर सूचित किया जाता है, फिर जब वे रूपयों का बन्दोबस्त करते हैं तो गाँव के व्यक्ति से उसका ट्रेक्टर उधार लिया जाता है। ऐसे करते पाँच-छः घंटे बीत जाते हैं, फिर या तो वह महिला भगवान को प्यारी हो जाती है या फिर माँ या बच्चे दोनों में से कोई एक ही बच पाता है। ये जमीनी सच्चाई है। हम यह कहते हैं कि हमने सारी सुविधाओं से लैस एक अस्पताल जयपुर या उदयपुर में बनाया है, लेकिन गाँव-ढाणियों में लोगों को तकलीफ होती है तो लोग कैसे वहाँ तक पहुँच पाते हैं, इस बारे में कोई बात नहीं करता।

जब मैंने स्वास्थ्य-मंत्री से यह बात पूछी तो वे कहते हैं कि गाँवों में हरित क्रांति हो गई है। वहाँ लोग प्राइवेट अस्पताल का खर्चा उठा सकते हैं। गाँव के किसान सम्पन्न हो गए हैं, फील गुड के माहौल में कोई यह मानना नहीं चाहता कि गाँव के लोगों के पास स्वास्थ्य पर खर्च करने के लिए पैसा नहीं है। महाराष्ट्र में एक गरीब किसान का एक पुत्र है जिसके पैरों में चोट लग गयी थी। सरकारी अस्पताल के डॉक्टरों ने कहा कि यदि इसे प्राइवेट अस्पताल न ले जाया गया तो उसकी टाँग काटी जा सकती है। थोड़े दिन बाद वह बूढ़ा किसान खुश नजर आया। मैंने उससे उसकी खुशी का कारण पूछा तो वह कहने लगा कि एक लाख रूपया खर्च कर उसके बेटे की जान बचा ली है। जब मैंने उससे पूछा कि उसके पास एक लाख रूपया कहाँ से आया तो वह कहने लगा कि उसने अपनी जमीन बेच दी है। यदि इस प्रकार की सुविधाएँ हम लोगों को प्रदान कराते हैं तो उसका कोई औचित्य ही नहीं रह जाता है।

अभी तक सरकार ने एक कार्यक्रम चलाया है : रीप्रोडक्टिव चाईल्ड हेल्थ का। इसके अलावा और कोई इस प्रकार का कार्यक्रम नहीं है। ये भी उन महिलाओं पर केन्द्रित है, जिनके बच्चे हुए हैं या होने वाले हैं। उससे आगे और पीछे महिलाओं को इन सुविधाओं की जरूरत नहीं है?

इसी प्रकार से गरीबों और स्त्रियों के स्वास्थ्य का, उनके सामाजिक जीवन, पर्यावरण शरणम् और काम-धन्धे के स्वरूप से गहरा रिश्ता होता है। जैसे-जैसे इण्डिया फील गुड कर रहा है, गाँव से लोग बहुत बड़ी संख्या में शहरों की ओर पलायन कर रहे हैं। दिल्ली में बावन प्रतिशत, मुंबई में पचास प्रतिशत संख्या की बढ़ोतरी हुई है। इन लोगों के लिए कोई स्वास्थ्य-सुविधा नहीं है क्योंकि वे अवैधप्रवासी माने जाते हैं। उनके रहने पर ही वहाँ प्रश्न-चिह्न लगा है। इनका स्वास्थ्य सबसे अधिक खराब होता है क्योंकि ये सबसे दयनीय स्थिति में अपना जीवन-यापन कर रहे हैं। इनके यहाँ पेयजल

व शौच की व्यवस्था नहीं होती है, इन इलाकों में मानसिक रोगों से ग्रस्त स्त्रियों व पुरुषों की अधिक तादाद है।

अब सवाल है भाषा का। हमारे यहाँ जितने भी शोध कार्य हो रहे हैं, इनमें से निम्नानवे प्रतिशत अंग्रेजी भाषा में हो रहे हैं, जबकि देश के सात प्रतिशत से अधिक लोग अंग्रेजी नहीं समझते। खासकर जो लोग जमीनी क्षेत्र में कार्य कर रहे हैं, उनके लिए इस भाषा को समझना अत्यधिक कठिन है। जिस इलाके का डाटा है, वह उस इलाके की भाषा में क्यों न उपलब्ध कराया जाए जिससे लोगों की जानकारी बढ़े। अंग्रेजी भाषा में उपलब्ध डाटा से सरकार पर दबाव नहीं बनता है और न ही लोगों की जानकारी बढ़ती है।

पहली चीज यह है कि हमें हर स्त्री के मानवाधिकार की बात करनी चाहिए क्योंकि इसी से उसका विकास जुड़ा है। सबसे पहला है उसके जीने का अधिकार। हमें इन अधिकारों के हनन को रोकने का प्रयास करना चाहिए। समाज में हिंसा बढ़ रही है, जिसके फलस्वरूप स्त्रियों के जीने का अधिकार छीना जा रहा है। इससे इनकी शारीरिक व मानसिक क्षमताएँ कम हुई हैं। आर्थिक उदारवाद तभी फल-फूल सकता है जब वह एक कल्याणकारी राज्य से जुड़ा हो। अगर सरकार जनकल्याण के स्वास्थ्य-शिक्षा जैसे व्यापक क्षेत्रों से हाथ खींचती है तो जो शून्य उत्पन्न होगा उसे मुनाफे की इच्छा से संचालित होने वाला निजी क्षेत्र नहीं भर सकता है, तब अमीर लोग ही शिक्षा और स्वास्थ्य पा सकेंगे, गरीब नहीं और इसके दीर्घकालिक असर पूरे देश के लिए घातक होंगे।

अक्सर यह कहा जाता है कि स्वास्थ्य बीमा होना चाहिए और मैंने पाया कि हमारे देश का सिर्फ एक दशमलव पाँच प्रतिशत भाग ही बीमाधारी है। इसमें भी अनेक निजी कंपनियों ने अपने हाथ खींच लिए हैं क्योंकि उनका कहना है कि भारत में इतनी ज्यादा बाबूशाही है कि प्रीमियम देने और भुगतान करने के इतने पेचीदा तरीके बना दिए गए हैं कि वे भुगतान नहीं कर सकते। बीमा सुविधाएँ ऐसी बनाई जानी चाहिए कि बीमाधारियों को एक कवच प्राप्त हो सके।

अंतिम मुद्दा है परंपराओं का। इसमें शक नहीं कि एक अरब की आबादी वाले देश में जहाँ अज्ञान, अशिक्षा जैसी सामाजिक कुरीतियाँ व अंधविश्वास आज भी कायम है वहाँ ऐसी सुविधा प्रदान करना मुश्किल है। मैं दीपा जी की पंक्तियों द्वारा अपनी वाणी को विराम देना चाहूँगी –

थोड़ी सी परंपरा, थोड़ी सी आस्था  
जो सहेजी है तुम्हारे पूर्वजों ने अब तक  
उसे दाय समझकर ही स्वीकार लो, स्वीकार लो

एकाकार कर दो नूतन, पुरातन को  
अधिक न सही तो थोड़ा ही विगलित कर दो अपने अहम् को .....  
फिर जो कुछ तुम कहोगे वह क्षणिक न होगा  
होगा सत्य, शाश्वत् चिरंतन .....

सिर्फ कोरी लम्बी-चौड़ी बातें या हवाई बातों से नहीं, वरन् परंपरा व नवीनता के मेल से ही इस क्षेत्र में एक नया रास्ता निकल सकता है। थोड़ी मेहनत से ही हमारी राह बनेगी, लेकिन उसको बनाए बिना हमारी कोई गति नहीं है।

**मृणाल पाण्डे**

6 अप्रैल, 2004



सुगमता से जिया जो जीवन ही क्या?  
बिन जूझे पायी तो मंज़िल ही क्या?  
हमें तो संघर्षों ने दिया है बल,  
तूफानों ने दिया सहारा है।  
यातना ने हमको निखारा है।।

यातना ने हमको निखारा है  
डॉ. दीपा मार्टिन्स



*Born on 1 July 1942, Shri Ved Vyas is a poet, acclaimed litterateur, an eminent journalist – all rolled into one. He was associated with Akashwani, Jaipur, from 1962 to 2002 and was Founder President of Akashwani Kalakar Sangh.*

*Shri Ved Vyas is an active social worker dedicated to the cause of amelioration of hardships to the deprived section of society. He is the founder General Secretary of the Pragatisheel Lekhak Sangh, an association of Progressive writers of Rajasthan. He is a prolific writer and has written 18 books on various topics of common interest. Some of his famous and prominent literary works are Paramveer Gatha, Parikarma, Halfnama, Jagte ko kaun jagay and Samay-Samay Per.*

*He has written some popular books for children also viz. Ek Banege Nek Banege, Hanste Gate Bade Chalo and Ek Desh Mere Sapno Ka.*

*In the field of Rajasthani Literature, he has written books like Barah-khari, Dharti Helo Mare, Gandhi Prakash and Nimjhar. Some of the books and poems composed by him are prescribed in the syllabus of the Board of Secondary Education Rajasthan. He has been the Coordinator of the Review Committee to review the syllabuses of National Council of Education for Research and Training.*

*He has also been a Member of the Kendriya Sahityic Academy and Rajasthan Pustak Vikas Parishad.*

*Shri Vyas is also active in the field of journalism. He has been writing a weekly permanent column named Dhyanakarshan for the last 40 years in the Hindi newspaper, Danik Navajyoti. Shri Vyas has been the Chairman of Rajasthan Sahitya Academy and Rajasthani Bhasha Sahitya and Sanskriti Academy. He is a recipient of Bihari Puruskar in 2000 and Vishishit Sahityakar Sammaan in 2002. He represented the Government of Rajasthan at the Sixth & Seventh World Hindi Conferences at London and Surinam respectively.*

*Currently Shri Vyas is the Chairman of Bhaichara Foundation, Rajasthan and Rajasthan Pragatisheel Lekhak Sangh.*



*Shri Ved Vyas addresses the gathering*



*Releasing Dr. Deepa Martins' anthology,  
'Jeene Do Mansi Hokar Mujhko'*



*Dr. U.V. Pant felicitating Shri Ved Vyas*

## वर्तमान परिवेश में भारत की स्त्रियों की दशा एवं उनका साम्प्रदायिक सद्भाव में योगदान

मेरे लिए यह समय, यह दिन, यह स्थान एक भावनात्मक यात्रा का अवसर है क्योंकि मैंने भी दीपा मार्टिन्स को देखा है, उनको सुना है और उनके साथ कार्य किया है, और उनके व्यापक सामाजिक सरोकारों और मूल्यों के प्रति प्रतिबद्धता को लेकर मेरे मन में बहुत आदर है। जिस तरह वे कागज पर अपनी कविताएँ लिखती थीं, उसी तरह जीवन में नए-नए संघर्षों की सरंचना भी करती थीं। उनके साथ काम करते हुए तथा उसके पहले भी मेरे जीवन में ऐसे कुछ सवाल थे, जिनके उत्तर मैं आज तक तलाश कर रहा हूँ। यदि आप देखें तो पाएँगे कि हम जितने भी लोग सामाजिक सरोकारों से जुड़े हुए हैं, वे एक बेचैन आत्मा की तरह प्रश्नों के उत्तर तलाशते हुए जनता के बीच में काम करते रहते हैं। मेरे मन में आज भी यह सवाल आता है कि मेरी माँ क्यों सबसे बाद में खाना खाती थीं और क्यों सबसे बाद में सोती थीं? मेरे मन में यह सवाल आता है कि क्यों घर में जब किसी का देहान्त होता है तो महिलाएं ही विलाप क्यों करती हैं? मेरे मन में आज भी यह सवाल है कि जब अकाल पड़ता है तो धूप में, सड़क पर, रेत के टीलों में एक औरत ही क्यों मजदूरी करती है? मेरे मन में आज भी यह सवाल आता है कि क्यों औरत को ही सती बनाया जाता है तथा दहेज-उत्पीड़न के लिए उसे ही मौत के घाट क्यों सुलाया जाता है? मेरे मन में आज भी यह सवाल आता है कि स्त्री को ही झूठा क्यों समझा जाता है? मेरे मन में आज भी यह सवाल आता है कि भँवरी देवी से बलात्कार करने वाले सारे अपराधी अदालत से निरन्तर बरी क्यों हो जाते हैं? क्यों रूपकंवर को जिंदा जलाने वाले अदालतों से बरी हो जाते हैं और क्यों एक स्त्री का हमने हमारे घर में ही दायम और तीसरे दर्जे का स्थान तीन हजार वर्षों से बना रखा है?

अनेक सवाल हैं मेरे मन में। मैं अपने संक्षिप्त निवेदन में यही कहना चाहूँगा कि कृपया इन सवालों से कभी रुबरु होने की कोशिश करें।

राजस्थान के वरिष्ठ प्रगतिशील कवि गणेशलाल व्यास उस्ताद ने अपनी एक कविता में लिखा है, "आधा अंग अचेतन होगा, आधा अंग लड़ेगा कैसे?...।" सौ करोड़ की आबादी से बड़ा देश है और मैं स्त्री की चिंता को लेकर देश तक ही सीमित नहीं रहना चाहता। पूरी दुनिया की आधी आबादी अंधेरे में रहती है। आधी आबादी उपेक्षा में रहती है, आधी आबादी उत्पीड़न में रहती है, आधी आबादी निर्णय करने का अधिकार नहीं रखती। इन बर्बर परिस्थितियों में मित्रों! दीपा मार्टिन्स गाँव में, कस्बों में, सावित्री महाविद्यालय

में, या जहाँ भी अवसर मिलता, वे यह सवाल उठाती थीं कि स्त्री ने क्या अपराध किया है कि उसे सब कुछ सहने की सजा दी जाती है कहने को हम भले ही कहें “यत्र नार्यस्तु पूज्यन्ते रमन्ते तत्र देवता।” इससे बड़ा पाखण्डवाद इस समाज में कुछ नहीं है। वेद, पुराण, उपनिषद लिखने वाला यह भारतीय समाज जिसकी दुंदुभी सत्ताधीश राजनेता बजा रहे हैं हम उनसे यह पूछना चाहते हैं कि स्त्रियों के प्रति उनका क्या दृष्टिकोण है? वो स्त्रियों को समानता का अधिकार क्यों नहीं देना चाहते? वे स्त्रियों को न्याय क्यों नहीं देना चाहते तथा वे स्त्रियों को समान विकास के अवसर क्यों नहीं देना चाहते? ये सवाल कल भी हमारे मन में थे, आज भी हैं और तब तक रहेंगे जब तक स्त्री अंधेरे में रहेगी। दिक्कत यह है कि हम जानते तो हैं किंतु हमने आज तक यह नहीं सोचा कि, दीपक तले अंधेरा क्यों है? हमने आज तक नहीं सोचा कि, “घर का जोगी जोगना आन गाँव का सिद्ध” क्यों है? हमने आज तक यह नहीं पूछा कि ये मेरी माँ, मेरी बहन, मेरी बेटा, ये भी स्त्रियाँ हैं। क्या मैं इनके साथ न्याय कर रहा हूँ? सौ में से निन्यानवे लोग होंगे जो न्याय नहीं कर रहे होंगे। हमने स्त्री को देवी बना दिया। समस्या से निजात पाने का सबसे सही तरीका है कि इन्हें देवी बना दो और आप बरी हो जाओ। लेकिन सामान्य जीवन में महिला को लेकर जो हमारी मानसिकता है, उसे बदलना होगा। हम मध्यमवर्गीय लोग हैं। हम अपनी ही समस्याओं के घेरे में रहते हैं। आप एक स्त्री से पूछिए कि जब कभी साम्प्रदायिक दंगा होता है तो सबसे अधिक आँसू स्त्री ही बहाती है। जब भी कभी अकाल पड़ता है तो निष्क्रमण के समय में स्त्री व बच्चों को ही सबसे अधिक बोझ उठाना पड़ता है। वह स्त्री ही है जो पूरी संस्कृति को धारण किए हुए है। जिस हिन्दू संस्कृति की बातें की जा रही हैं, उसमें सबसे अधिक पिछड़ा वर्ग कोई है तो वह स्त्री है। हम इस स्थिति को बदलने के लिए प्रयास नहीं करते। ये सारी बातें हम अखबारों व चैनल के माध्यम से देखते हैं किंतु पाखंड के अन्तर्विरोध को दूर करने की चेष्टा नहीं करते, क्योंकि हमारे पास इतना समय नहीं है। हमारा सारा समय स्वयं के लिए समर्पित है न कि समाज के लिए, और इसलिए मैं दीपा मार्टिन्स का आदर करता हूँ, क्योंकि उनका पूरा समय समाज के लिए समर्पित था। मैं अरुणा जी का प्रशंसक हूँ और कहता हूँ कि काश अरुणा रॉय व दीपा मार्टिन्स जैसी और पाँच-दस महिलाएँ और सामाजिक जीवन में सक्रियता से आगे आएँ तो इस वातावरण को, इस लाचारी को, इस बेबसी को बदला जा सकता है। कुछ भी असंभव नहीं है मित्रों!

जिस निजीकरण, उदारीकरण, भूमण्डलीकरण की आज बात हो रही है, इसका भयावह चेहरा आने वाले पच्चीस वर्षों में आप देखेंगे। 2005 के बाद जब डब्ल्यू.टी.ओ. का रैजिम लागू होगा तब यह देश एक खुली मण्डी के रूप में परिवर्तित हो जाएगा। उस मण्डी में सबसे ज्यादा दुर्गति घर-गृहस्थी को

चलाने वाली महिला की होगी। मैं मेरे घर में व पड़ौस में देखता हूँ कि हम लड़के व लड़कियों में अंतर करते हैं। लड़के पर न्यौछावर होते हैं, उसके जन्म पर ढोल बजवाते हैं, मिठाइयाँ बँटवाते हैं, आयोजन-प्रयोजन करते हैं, परंतु बेटा के जन्म पर आँसू बहाते हैं। आज आवश्यकता इस बात की है कि आपकी संवेदना लड़की को लेकर कितनी जागरूक है। आप देख रहे हैं कि मीडिया महिलाओं को उपभोक्ता-सामग्री के रूप में इस्तेमाल कर रहा है। आज निन्यानवे प्रतिशत जनप्रतिनिधि महिलाएँ कभी महिलाओं के विषय में संसद में प्रश्न नहीं उठाती हैं। हमें इस खुशफहमी में नहीं रहना चाहिए कि किसी राज्य की पहली महिला मुख्यमंत्री बन गई तो महिलाओं के पौ-बारह हो जाएंगे। ऐसा कुछ नहीं है। जब तक समाज की सोच व मानसिकता नहीं बदलेगी तब तक जमीन की हकीकत नहीं बदलेगी। जब तक हम महिला को समानता का दर्जा नहीं देंगे तब तक उसकी स्थिति में अंतर नहीं आएगा।

कहने को तो संविधान में महिला को समानता का दर्जा प्राप्त है, किंतु क्या जो संविधान में लिखा है, वह आज हकीकत में समाज में है? अरुणाजी ठीक कह रही हैं, संविधान को लोगों ने पढ़ा ही नहीं है। संविधान की प्रस्तावना में लिखा है, “हम भारत के लोग”, भारत के नागरिक शपथ तो लेते हैं लेकिन यह नहीं जानते कि उनके सपनों का निर्णायक कौन है। आज राजस्थान में नब्बे हजार से ज्यादा जनप्रतिनिधि हैं जिनका चयन आरक्षण के माध्यम से ग्राम पंचायतों या स्वायत्तशासी संस्थानों में हुआ है। वे भी जागरूक हो जाएँ और गाँव-गाँव में अलख जगाएँ। नारी शक्ति का उदय पुरुष शक्ति का विध्वंस करना नहीं है मित्रों! यह भी एक इक्वेशन समाज में समझायी जाती है, कि महिलाएँ आगे आ जाएँगी तो हमारा क्या होगा? लेकिन इस बर्बर पुरुष-समाज को जगाने के लिए जरूरी है कि आप अपने अधिकारों के लिए, अपने इंसानी हुकूकों के लिए ज़द्दोजहद करें और ये ज़द्दोजहद दीपा मार्टिन्स करती थीं। ये मुहावरा अब इतिहास से बाहर हो जाना चाहिए कि औरत ही औरत की दुश्मन है। इन मुहावरों का निर्माण तात्कालिक सामाजिक, आर्थिक व सांस्कृतिक परिस्थितियों ने किया, किन्तु अब परिस्थितियाँ बदल रही हैं। राजस्थान जैसे पिछड़े हुए प्रदेश में, जहाँ 1991 में बीस प्रतिशत महिलाएँ साक्षर थीं, और 2001 में चालीस प्रतिशत से ऊपर महिलाएँ साक्षर हैं।

मुझे अचरज होता है जब रोज सवेरे मैं देखता हूँ करीब दो लाख महिलाएँ प्रतिदिन गोविंददेव जी के मंदिर में दर्शनों के लिए आती हैं। वे किसी प्रधानमंत्री, राष्ट्रपति को नहीं जानती। मैं रोज सवेरे देखता हूँ चार-पाँच महिलाएँ व बच्चियाँ भीख माँगने घर के दरवाजे पर आती हैं। आज भी सुबह सफाई का काम, सड़क बुहारने का काम, मैला उठाने का काम, शहरों,

महानगरों में, महिलाएँ ही करती हैं। पुरुष कौने में बैठकर बीड़ी पीता रहता है। ये सत्ता के निर्णायक बीड़ी पीते हैं, महिलाओं की हँसी उड़ाते हैं। इस परिस्थिति को, इस अन्तर्विरोध को समाज द्वारा दूर किया जाना चाहिए। चुनाव आ रहे हैं — इसमें महिलाएँ नहीं घर के पुरुष निर्णय करेंगे और वे वहीं वोट डालेंगी जहाँ पुरुष चाहेंगे। पुरुष इन विसंगतियों को दूर नहीं कर पाए हैं। राजस्थान में शिक्षा कम है, फिर भी बोर्ड रिजल्ट में मेरिट में प्रथम पाँच स्थानों पर लड़कियाँ ही होती हैं। लड़कियाँ शिक्षा में लड़कों से आगे हैं, किन्तु दहेज की माँग के कारण उनके लिए लड़का नहीं मिलता। हमने कौनसी जगह स्त्री के लिए सम्मान की छोड़ी है मित्रों? इस प्रश्न पर कभी विचार करिए। क्योंकि हम कितना भी विकास कर लें, अगर समाज में ये असंतुलन बना रहा, तो आर्थिक व सामाजिक क्षेत्र में किया गया हमारा विकास कोई काम नहीं आएगा। जब भी दुनिया में महायुद्ध हुए, स्त्रियों ने ही विलाप किया। साहित्य में तो स्त्रियों का रुदन भरा पड़ा है। स्त्री में करुणा, ममता व प्रकृति का ऊर्जा स्रोत हम ढूँढते हैं। वह स्त्री भारतीय सामाजिक जीवन में एक निष्कासित का जीवन जीती है। किसी उत्पीड़ित महिला का पुनर्वास करने की स्थिति में ये समाज नहीं है। आश्चर्य होता है कि ये समाज कितना बर्बर है! संगठित क्यों नहीं है? आज समाज मंदिर व स्कूल बनवाता है, प्याऊ बनवाता है, किन्तु निर्वासित महिला के पुनर्वास के लिए कोई प्रयास नहीं करता। जितने भी राजनैतिक दल हैं, उनमें स्त्री निष्कासित है। वर्षों से महिला आरक्षण बिल हमने पास नहीं किया है। महिलाओं के प्रति हमारा पूरा नजरिया एकांगी है, पूर्वाग्रह से ग्रसित है और हम महिला को जागीर या अपनी प्रापटी समझते हैं। ये मेरी अपनी छोटी सी समझ है। आप भी इन सारी बातों को जानते हैं। मैं आपके मन का दरवाजा खटखटा रहा हूँ। आप कभी अपने से बात करिए और पूछिए कि हमारी माँ, बहन, बेटी, बहू उपेक्षित क्यों है? इसको मैंने क्यों बाँध रखा है? ये आजन्म कैदी मेरे इर्द-गिर्द कैसे घूम रहा है? इसका भी कोई सपना होगा? दीपा मार्टिन्स इसी सपने की तलाश में संघर्ष करती रहती थीं और इसलिए मैं दीपा मार्टिन्स का बराबर आदर करता हूँ।

थोड़ा बाहर निकल, थोड़ा पैदल भी चल, थोड़ा करवट बदल, ये समय लौट कर नहीं आएगा। इस समय को थोड़ा बदलने की आवश्यकता है। यदि हम अपने मन को, अपने विचार को, अपनी मानसिकता को, इस पूरे परिवेश को बदलने की चेष्टा करेंगे, तो निश्चित रूप से आने वाला समय स्त्रियों के लिए समानता का होगा, देश के लिए विकास का होगा। ये कैसा राजस्थान है जहाँ मीरा की सबसे ज्यादा उपेक्षा होती है? कभी आपने सोचा है इस देश में मीरा उपेक्षित क्यों है? आपने कभी नहीं सोचा होगा कि डालीबाई, सहजो बाई और नानीबाई क्यों उपेक्षित हैं? जब तक हम स्त्रियों को सभी क्षेत्रों में

विकास का समान अवसर नहीं देंगे, ये उपेक्षित रहेंगी। स्त्री को दान-दक्षिणा नहीं देनी है। वह अपना हक व हकूक माँग रही है। वह आभूषण, महल या राजपाट नहीं चाहती, वो सम्मान चाहती है, बराबरी चाहती है, वो निर्णय करने का अधिकार चाहती है। अपने इन्हीं शब्दों के साथ मैं आपका आभार व्यक्त करता हूँ।

दीपा मार्टिन्स की स्मृति में जो कुछ भी हम कर सकें वो कम होगा, क्योंकि ये किसी व्यक्ति की स्मृति में नहीं है, बल्कि एक विचार की स्मृति में किया गया आयोजन है, और मुझे विश्वास है, राजस्थान के दूर अंचलों में इस प्रकार की महिला-सामाजिक कार्यकर्ताओं को लेकर एक उमंग, उत्साह और महिला जागृति का, महिला सशक्तिकरण का, नारी चेतना का एक पूरा माहौल बनेगा और वो दिन भी आएगा —

खुदी को कर बुलंद इतना कि हर तद्बीर से पहले  
खुदा बन्दे से खुद पूछे, बता तेरी रज़ा क्या है?

मित्रों अब हमें स्त्रियों को इस चिरंतन विरोध, इस लाचारी व उत्पीड़न से मुक्त करना होगा, और ये काम समाज करेगा। दीपा मार्टिन्स जैसी सामाजिक कार्यकर्ता करेंगी। ये काम कोई महिला प्रधानमंत्री या महिला मुख्यमंत्री नहीं करेंगी ये मुझे पूरा विश्वास है समाज को जगाइए। इस समाज को जगाने के लिए शंकर जी जैसे समाज सुधारक गाँव-गाँव में गीत गा रहे हैं। उनके गीतों का प्रभाव मेरे भाषण से अधिक है। हमें राजस्थान में संगठित प्रयास करने होंगे, क्योंकि राजस्थान में महिला मोर्चा बहुत कमजोर है। मैं अरुणा जी से भी निवेदन करूँगा कि सूचना के अधिकार को तो उन्होंने अपना पूरा समय समर्पित किया, किन्तु महिला सशक्तिकरण के मोर्चे को भी सफल बनाने के प्रयास करें, क्योंकि महिलाएँ जब तक अंधेरे में रहेंगी, वे कमजोर रहेंगी।

**वेदव्यास**

6 अप्रैल, 2004

यद्यपि समाज में विसंगतियाँ अभी भी विद्यमान हैं, और बालिका का शोषण हर तरह से किया जा रहा है, पर मंथन की प्रक्रिया प्रारंभ हो चुकी है और वो दिन दूर नहीं जब यह कथन एक सरकारी प्रचार नहीं बल्कि मनोरम सत्य में परिणत हो जाएगा—

बेटी छुएगी आकाश  
बस एक मौके की तलाश

‘समाज के विकास में बालिका एक सक्रिय भागीदार’  
डॉ. दीपा मार्टिन्स

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*A tireless campaigner for India's millions of villagers, Ms. Aruna Roy, has been fighting for over a quarter-century to improve living standards. Ms. Roy majored in English Literature from Indraprastha College in New Delhi and then took the Indian Administrative Services examinations in 1967. Of the one hundred people from all over India who qualified for the IAS that year, Ms. Roy was one of only ten women.*

*She served as a civil servant in the Indian Administrative Services from 1968-1974, before resigning to become a social and political activist, working to empower villagers in Rajasthan. She joined the Social Work and Research Center in Tilonia, Rajasthan, and worked there until 1983. She then moved to Devdungri, a drought-prone, environmentally-degraded village in Rajasthan where along with Shanker Singh and Nikhil Dey, she set up the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan in 1990.*

*The MKSS is a grassroots movement, a working example of transparent organization, that triggered broad debate and a nationwide demand for the public's right to scrutinize official records – a crucial check against arbitrary governance. Leading the movement, Ms. Roy has worked for people's issues, looking at ways in which equality and justice can be claimed by the people as their right. The Sangathan was successful in building a broad-based demand for the Right to Information by linking it to survival and livelihood issues and defining a paradigm for transparency and openness in government functioning, specific to the Indian context. The fight for the right to information, which began in the early 1990s culminated with the passage of what is considered as one of the most robust transparency legislations in the world – the Right to Information Act 2005.*

*Prior to its enactment, in 2004, Ms. Aruna Roy was inducted into the National Advisory Committee to formulate the Act itself. Ms Roy is an active member of a number of campaigns including the National Employment Guarantee Council, the National Campaign for People's Right to Information, and NAPM, PUCL. She has authored Education of Out-of-school Children: Case Studies of Selected Non-formal Learning Programmes in South Asia.*

*The awards and honours received by Ms. Roy sufficiently illustrate the range of her grassroots-level developmental vision. She has received several awards for her group's commitment to social justice and rural workers' rights. Ms. Aruna Roy is a recipient of the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership and International Understanding. In 2005, she was amongst the 1000 peace-women from 150 countries, nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. In 2009 Ms. Roy was honoured with the Nani Palkhivala Award for protection and preservation of civil liberties in India.*



*Ms. Aruna Roy delivering the keynote address*



*Lighting the lamp before the portrait of Dr. Deepa Martins*



*Ms. Bharti Tolumbia felicitating Ms. Aruna Roy*

## धर्मनिरपेक्ष समाज के उत्थान में महिलाओं की भूमिका

आज मेरे लिए बहुत मुश्किल दिन है। बोलने में कभी शब्दों की दिक्कत नहीं होती है, मगर आज दीपा की याद में मन खूब भर गया है। मुझे कहा गया है कि मैं सेक्यूलरिज्म पर बात करूँ, और ये कुछ हद तक दीपा की जिंदगी का पर्यायवाची था। इस बारे में बिना दीपा को याद किए मैं इस शब्द का उच्चारण भी नहीं कर सकती हूँ।

वैसे जिंदगी तो एक नाटक है और इसमें स्क्रिप्ट कुछ तो लिखा हुआ होता है और कुछ हम लिखते हैं। जिस परिवार में हम जन्म लेते हैं उस परिवार के संस्कार, उसकी आर्थिक स्थिति, उसके परिप्रेक्ष्य में हम अपने जीवन को निर्धारित करते हैं। मगर कुछ बातें हमारे हाथ में भी होती हैं और दीपा के जीवन ने इन दोनों ही बातों को हमारे सामने बहुत सुन्दर तरीके से प्रतिष्ठित किया है। अपने जीवन में दीपा खुद एक हिन्दू ब्राह्मण परिवार में जन्मी, एक इसाई से शादी की, मगर इन सबसे बहुत आगे दीपा एक इंसान थीं, और इस इंसानियत, संवेदनशीलता, प्यार और स्नेह के नाते उसने कभी संवाद नहीं छोड़ा। मैं आंदोलन में काम करती हूँ, इसलिए अनुभव के आधार पर कह सकती हूँ कि कई बार विभिन्न मुद्दों पर चर्चा बहस का रूप ले लेती है। मदभेद हो जाते हैं, और वे मतभेद कभी-कभी कटु भी होते हैं। ऐसे में सहज है कि हमें गुस्सा आए, हम लोग संघर्ष करें, वाद-विवाद करें। दीपा भी आंदोलनों से जुड़ी हुई थी और ऐसी स्थिति में दीपा हर समय यह कहती थी कि कोई भी मतभेद हों संवाद नहीं टूटना चाहिए, और मुझे सबसे बड़ी शिक्षा दीपा से यही मिली है। कई जगह वो मेरी गुरु भी रही हैं और मैंने उससे यही सीखा है कि मतभेद तो होंगे ही, यह स्वाभाविक है, परंतु संवाद नहीं टूटना चाहिए।

जिस ग्राम की पंचायत में मैं वोटर हूँ, हर 26 जनवरी के दिन मैं वहाँ जरूर जाती हूँ। इस 26 जनवरी को ग्राम सभा में मुझे कहा गया था कि मैं ग्रामीणों के साथ बात करूँ और मुझे भी यही लगता है कि ग्रामीणों के साथ औपचारिक रूप से वार्तालाप करना व भाषण देना भी उतना ही आवश्यक है जितना कि उनके घरों में बैठकर बातें करना, क्योंकि हम गरीब लोगों के साथ काम करते हैं, उस गाँव के प्रबुद्ध लोग हमसे कम मिलते हैं। वे कई बार हमारे बारे में यह सोचते हैं कि ये दलितों से बात करने वाले हैं, महिलाओं से बात करने वाले हैं तो हमारे साथ कटते भी हैं, ऐसे में जरूरी होता है कि हम उन प्रबुद्ध लोगों के समक्ष अपनी बात रखें। 26 जनवरी के दिन डेढ़ हजार लोगों के सामने, जिनमें कुछ अशिक्षित तथा कुछ शिक्षित वर्ग के लोग थे, उनसे मैंने पूछा कि हमारे बीच में कितने ऐसे लोग हैं जिन्होंने इस देश के

संविधान को कम से कम हाथ में पकड़ा है। आप ताज्जुब करेंगे कि मात्र पाँच हाथ उठे और कहने लगे कि हमने इस देश के संविधान को पकड़ा है। मैंने पूछा कि हम में से कितने लोग हैं जिन्होंने संविधान के पन्ने पलटकर देखा है, तो कुल तीन हाथ उठे थे, दो लोग थे जो संविधान के अनुच्छेद का थोड़ा सा ज्ञान रखते थे। इस परिप्रेक्ष्य में जब कोई पार्टी या कोई सोच या कोई राजनीति हमारे सामने आकर यह कहे कि इस देश का संविधान ठीक नहीं बना है, इसमें परिवर्तन होना चाहिए, तो क्या गलत है? संविधान को पहली बार तो मैंने एक बच्चे के समान टैक्स बुक जैसा पढ़ा था, तब कहा गया था “भारतीय संविधान को पढ़ा जाना चाहिए।” इसलिए एक भारतीय नागरिक होने के नाते हमने इसे पढ़ा। तब भी अच्छा लगा था, मगर आज के परिप्रेक्ष्य में जब मैं उसकी प्रस्तावना को पढ़ती हूँ, तो मुझे लगता है कि इस देश के मेरे पूर्वज हम लोगों के लिए एक बहुत अच्छी विरासत छोड़ कर गए हैं। उसको पढ़ते ही मेरे रोंगटे खड़े हो जाते हैं, क्योंकि आज के इस परिप्रेक्ष्य में उसकी हर चीज का उल्लंघन हो रहा है। वैसे तो यह एक अनमोल विरासत है, मगर हम में से कितने लोग उसे पढ़ते हैं, उसे समझते हैं? आज आवश्यकता है कि बिल्कुल बुनियादी बातों से सेक्यूलरिज़्म की चर्चा हो, इसके लिए हमें संविधान से ही शुरु करना होगा और यह जानना होगा कि संविधान हमारे लिए क्या कहता है? दो दिन की एक कार्यशाला में हम बीस-तीस जनों ने संविधान के बारे में चर्चा की। मेरे एक मित्र हनुमान सिंह यह कहते हैं कि मैंने तीस-पैंतीस साल से संविधान को रोज प्रार्थना की तरह क्यों नहीं पढ़ा? मुझे लगता है कि हमें संविधान को पढ़ना होगा और समझना होगा कि सेक्यूलरिज़्म और धर्म अलग-अलग चीजें हैं। कोई यह नहीं कहता कि आप अपने सम्प्रदाय में या धर्म में या पंथ में विश्वास नहीं रख सकते हैं, मगर आज आप विशेष समाचार पत्रों को पढ़ें, चाहें हिन्दी में या अंग्रेजी में, तो वे सेक्यूलर शब्द आते ही आपको हिन्दू अपोलोजिस्ट कहते हैं, आपको स्पूडो-सेक्यूलरिस्ट कहते हैं। सेक्यूलर तो हम सभी हैं किंतु यह स्पूडो-सेक्यूलरिस्ट होता क्या है? हम किसी भी धर्म से सम्बंध रखें, मन्दिर, मस्जिद आदि किसी भी धर्म-स्थल पर जाएं तथा कोई भी धार्मिक ग्रंथ पढ़ें, इस बारे में हमसे कोई भी कुछ भी नहीं पूछेगा। उस व्यवस्था को कायम रखने के लिए हम जो काम करें वही सेक्यूलरिज़्म का सही अर्थ है और उसी को हम मन में रखें, तो यह देश बहुत सुन्दर देश बनेगा। हम मंदिर भी जाएँ, हम मस्जिद भी जाएँ, हम गिरजाघर भी जाएँ और अगर हम कहीं न जाना चाहें तो न जाएँ मगर हम सब सेक्यूलरिज़्म को ध्यान में रखें, संविधान में विश्वास रखें।

आपने कभी गाँधीजी को पढ़ा है? गाँधीजी एक धार्मिक व्यक्ति थे। उनके दिन का शुभारम्भ प्रार्थना सभा से होता था और उस प्रार्थना सभा में सारे धर्मों का

तथा इस देश में मौजूद सारे सम्प्रदायों का श्लोक जपा जाता था। गाँधीजी इन श्लोकों को हिन्दी में जपते थे ताकि सबको समझ में आ सके। व्यक्ति श्रोता चाहे इसाई हो, हिन्दू हो, सिख हो या जैन हो, सभी इन श्लोकों को हिन्दी में जपते थे। उन्होंने यह भी कहा था कि मैं अच्छा हिन्दू इसलिए हूँ, क्योंकि मैं अच्छा इसाई भी हूँ, मैं अच्छा मुसलमान भी हूँ, मैं अच्छा बौद्ध भी हूँ, क्योंकि जो भी व्यक्ति अपने स्वयं के धर्म के प्रति प्रतिबद्ध होते हैं वे न किसी धर्म को छोटा समझ सकते हैं न किसी भी धर्म पर आक्रमण कर सकते हैं।

सन् 1947 की हिन्दुस्तान-पाकिस्तान की लड़ाई में लोग मरे। लोगों की याद में दोस्त-दोस्त से अलग हुए, परिवार भिन्न हुए, बच्चे मरे, माँ मरी, पिता मरा, कहीं हिन्दू मरे तो कहीं मुसलमान। उन लोगों के लिए स्नेह, शांति, करुणा, एक साथ रहना एक बहुत बड़ा मूल्य था, इसलिए आज हमें उन लोगों को भी याद करना है, उस विरासत को याद करना है जिसे हम भूल जाते हैं और सोचते हैं कि केवल बड़े-बड़े किले हैं, बड़े-बड़े लोग हैं जो आज वर्तमान में हमारी विरासत हैं। यदि हम इस सोच को नहीं बदलेंगे तो हमारा यह देश नहीं रहेगा।

साम्प्रदायिकता से जोड़कर मैं आपको छोटे-छोटे किस्से सुनाना चाहती हूँ। आपको याद होगा कि गुजरात में दो साल पूर्व जो हुआ, तो उसे हम नरसंहार मानते हैं परंतु वास्तव में वो था जातिसंहार, क्योंकि पूर्व में सोच कर यह दुष्कर्म किया गया था, कोई ऐसे ही ये लड़ाई-झगड़े शुरु नहीं हुए, मगर वो जातिसंहार होता रहा। हम गुजरात में उलझते रहे। साईनाथ का कहना है कि उसी समय लोकसभा में कुछ ऐसे कानून बनाए गए जिसके द्वारा हमारी जरूरत की वस्तुओं पर से आयात प्रतिबन्ध हटाए गए और हमें मालूम भी न पड़ा। हम गुजरात मसले में उलझते रहे, हम उस खूनखराबे के विरुद्ध आवाज़ उठाते रहे और पीछे के दरवाजे से कुछ ऐसे कानून पारित हुए। यदि हम गुजरात की तरफ नहीं देखते, तो उनके खिलाफ हम बुलंद आवाज़ उठा सकते थे इसलिए कहीं न कहीं साम्प्रदायिकता, निजीकरण स्वार्थ को परे रखकर मुनाफे की ओर बढ़ने का जो एक नया रूप हमारे सामने आया है उसे हमें पहचानना पड़ेगा।

कुछ दिन पहले मुम्बई में वर्ल्ड सोशियल फोरम में लक्ष्मी सहगल जो करीब नब्बे साल की हैं, तथा जो नेताजी के साथ इंडियन नेशनल आर्मी में थीं, उन्होंने कहा कि “जब ईस्ट इण्डिया कम्पनी भारत में आई तो वो एक दरवाजे से आई और हम उसे पहचान गए थे, परन्तु आज अनेक ईस्ट इण्डिया कम्पनियाँ तथा उनसे भी बड़ी ऐसी कम्पनियाँ आ रही हैं, जिन्हें हम देख नहीं सकते, किन्तु बाद में हमें यह समझ में आएगा कि हम उनके षडयन्त्र का शिकार हो गए हैं।” भाषा में साम्प्रदायिकता का इस्तेमाल हमें अलग करने के

लिए किया जा रहा है, और जिस दिन हम उनके विरुद्ध आवाज उठाएंगे, हम एक हो जाएंगे, फिर कोई भी हमारे देश का नुकसान नहीं कर सकेगा। आज हम प्रबुद्ध लोग जो यहाँ बैठे हैं, हमें एक रहना पड़ेगा, हमें अपनी एकता को मंचों से निकालकर गाँव में, चौपाल में, आम लोगों तक लाना होगा।

सामान्यतः मतभेद तो होगा, परंतु हमें उस मतभेद को शान्त करना पड़ेगा। ऐसा करने पर देश का विकास हो सकेगा अन्यथा नहीं। एक और बात सूचना का अधिकार अपने आप में कुछ नहीं है। यह एक संवैधानिक अधिकार है। निखिल चक्रवर्ती जैसे लोगों ने पूछा कि क्यों यह पहले नहीं बना? यह संविधान का अंग होना चाहिए था। जहाँ-जहाँ अंग्रेजों ने राज किया वहाँ-वहाँ यह था। वे चाहते थे कि जहाँ वे राज कर रहे हैं वहाँ के बाबू लोग सूचनाएँ बाहर न ले जाएँ। राष्ट्रीय आन्दोलन में रत् लोगों की मदद न करें इसलिए 1925 में उन्होंने यह कानून बनाया। हमारे देश में यह कानून आज भी है। मगर जब तक यह कानून हर क्षेत्र में लागू नहीं होगा तब तक इसका कोई महत्व नहीं है। अंग्रेजी में हम कहते हैं, "It's an entitlement to enable all entitlements" अपने आप में तो कुछ भी नहीं है। दो माह पूर्व जवाजा पंचायत समिति की सी.एफ.सी. की जब हमने जाँच की तो हम अत्यन्त आश्चर्यचकित रह गए क्योंकि वहाँ टी.बी. रिकार्ड्स आप देख नहीं सकते, दवाइयों के रिकार्ड्स आप देख नहीं सकते, वहाँ जो गर्भवती महिला है उसके लिए कई सुविधाएँ हैं किन्तु उसे अपने हकों का ज्ञान नहीं है। वह ए.एन.एम. के घर बच्चे को जन्म देती है। ए.एन.एम. उससे पैसा लेती है, आने-जाने का खर्चा खा जाती है। इतना ही नहीं अपितु शिशु के जन्म के समय बी.पी. एल. माताओं को जो धन की प्राप्ति होती है, वह भी ए.एन.एम. ले लेती है। ऐसे में आवश्यक है कि हम इसके विरुद्ध अपनी आवाज उठाएं। जब तक हम संघर्ष नहीं करेंगे तब तक हमें सफलता प्राप्त नहीं होगी। हमें साम्प्रदायिकता, चोरी तथा अशांति के खिलाफ सवाल खड़ा करना पड़ेगा। जब तक हम ये सवाल खड़े नहीं करेंगे, हमारी जो लोकतांत्रिक जगह है, वह हमें नहीं मिलेगी। आज हम जयपुर में एक बाड़े में बंद हैं। धरना कहीं नहीं दे सकते। दिल्ली में हम रामलीला ग्राउंड में नहीं बैठ सकते हैं। राजघाट के बाहर नहीं बैठ सकते। हम तो बोट क्लब लॉज में भी नहीं बैठ सकते। जब देश के लोगों को बाड़े में बंद करते हैं, किसी की अभिव्यक्ति पर हमला होता है। किसी के घर में उन पर हमला होता है तो हमें समझना पड़ेगा कि हमें ऐसी सांप्रदायिकता नहीं चाहिए। अगर हम अपनी लोकतंत्र की जगह को सुरक्षित नहीं रखेंगे तो सांप्रदायिकता भी अपनी जगह आ जायेगी और लोकतंत्र के कदम छोटे होते जाएंगे। मैं अंत में दीपा की कविता की कुछ पंक्तियाँ प्रस्तुत कर रही हूँ—

हम तुम न होंगे तब भी उगेगा सूर्य  
निकलेगा चंद्र, चमकेंगे नक्षत्र,  
लहलहाएंगे वृक्ष  
आएगा हर वृक्ष पर बसन्त  
और विदा लेगा पतझड़।

इस अनंत प्रवाह में हम हैं बुलबुले मात्र  
आओ सहज उन्मुक्त हो  
बहते जाएँ  
बहते जाएँ।।

बहते-बहते अपनी दोस्ती को न तोड़ें। बहस जरूर करें, मतभेद रखें, किंतु दोस्ती कायम रखें। अगर ऐसा करेंगे तो सबसे अच्छी श्रृद्धांजलि दीपा के लिए वही होगी। संवाद कायम रखें, मित्रता व इंसानियत कायम रखें, जो इसका विरोध करे, उसके विरुद्ध जुझारू लड़ाई जारी रखें।

**अरुणा राय**  
5 अप्रैल, 2005



शिक्षा ही वह रामबाण है जिसके माध्यम से लड़कियाँ और औरतें परिवर्तन की प्रक्रिया शुरू कर सकती हैं। शिक्षा एक ऐसे मध्यस्थ की भूमिका निभा सकती है जो लिंग भेद को समाप्त करे और लड़कियों में विवेकपूर्ण सामाजिक चेतना जगाए। शिक्षा की इस भूमिका को तभी न्यायसंगत माना जा सकता है अगर इससे लड़कियों को किसी शिल्प या हुनर में प्रशिक्षण दिया जाए तथा उन्हें आत्मनिर्भरता के लिए प्रोत्साहित किया जाए ताकि वे अपने निम्न स्तर से ऊपर उठ सकें।

**‘असमानता में जन्मी लड़की’  
डॉ. दीपा मार्टिन्स**



*Dr. C.S. Lakshmi (Ambai) is a distinguished fiction writer in Tamil. She is an independent researcher in Women's Studies and has several publications to her credit. Dr. Lakshmi is the founder-trustee Director of Sound & Picture Archives for Research on Women (SPARROW) in Mumbai, a non-governmental organization for documenting and archiving the lives and work of women. She is a current member of the University of Michigan's Global Feminisms Project.*

*Dr. Lakshmi was a visiting fellow in the University of Chicago's Institute for Culture and Consciousness. She was instrumental in the establishment of Roja Muthiah Research Library. She has been a research Officer in the Indian Council of Historical Research and a college lecturer in New Delhi. She has worked in two research projects - Illustrated Social History of Women in Tamil Nadu sponsored by the Ford Foundation and An Idiom of Silence: An Oral History and Pictorial Study sponsored by the Homi J. Bhabha Fellowship.*

*Dr. Lakshmi is a prolific writer whose work is characterized by her feminism, an eye for detail, and a sense of irony. Her books in English include: The Face Behind the Mask: Women in Tamil Literature; A Purple Sea; Body Blows: Women, Violence, and Survival: Three Plays; Seven Seas & Seven Mountains: Volume 1: The Singer and the Song – Conversations with Women Musicians; Seven Seas & Seven Mountains: Volume 2: Mirrors and Gestures – Conversations with Women Dancers; (ed.) The Unhurried City – Writings on Chennai; and In A Forest, A Deer: Stories by Ambai.*

*Her books in Tamil include: Nandimalai Charalilae, Andhi Malai, Sirakukul Muriyum, Veetin Mulaiyil Oru Camaiyalarai, Ambai : Kalacchuvadhu Nerkanalgal, Kaatil Oru Maan, and Varrum Eriyin Meengal. Dr. C.S. Lakshmi is the only Tamil writer to have been included in the recently published Picador Book of Modern Indian Literature edited by Amit Chaudhuri.*

*For her contributions to Tamil literature, Dr. C.S. Lakshmi received the 2008 Iyal Virudhu (Lifetime Achievement Award) awarded by the Canada-based Tamil Literary Garden. She is also the recipient of the Kalaimagal Narayanaswamy Aiyar Prize and the Vodafone Crossword Book Award. The Library of Congress holds five of her writings in its collection.*



*Dr. C.S. Lakshmi  
addressing the gathering*



*Ms. Aruna Roy & Dr. C.S. Lakshmi  
releasing Dr. Deepa Martins'  
second anthology, 'Kurja Ke Ter'*



*Ms. Aruna Roy presenting a memento to Dr. C.S. Lakshmi*

## BEING A WOMAN, BEING A HUMAN

I am honoured to be here with all of you to share my memories of my friendship with Dr. Deepa Martins, the founder of this school, and also tell you the kind of work we do in SPARROW, the organization I head, located in Mumbai.

It is in the course of the work of my organization that I met Dr. Deepa Martins. She came to my organization to talk to me about the kind of work she was doing with underprivileged women in Rajasthan through Mahila Samooch, a women's self-help group. The next time I visited Ajmer, I interviewed two women of the group, one of whom was a Panchayat President. Dr. Deepa Martins and I got to know each other better when we continued to exchange notes on the work of Mahila Samooch and SPARROW which is an acronym for Sound & Picture Archives for Research on Women.

In SPARROW we collect oral history and visual material on women's history and life. The history of women has not always been a history known to everybody. Only some famous women like Vijayalakshmi Pandit or Sarojini Naidu or Kasturba Gandhi figure in History books. The role women have played in the politics of the nation has been something that has been hidden in the crevices of history. SPARROW's role has been to bring out this hidden history and give women visibility. So we have interviewed freedom fighters, some members of Subash Chandra Bose's Jhansi Rani wing of the INA, women from the Left and other progressive movements, women in the environment movement, women educationists, women writers and so on. We strongly believe that unless this history is understood and women are written into history, history will remain incomplete.

You are all very young. So you will not know what a struggle it has been for women to get educated in the regular school and college system in modern India. It is not that women were ignorant or illiterate in earlier days. There have been women scholars, women poets and many famous women rulers also. They were all well-trained in the traditional system of education. Despite the fact that there were exceptional women in history, there was a general feeling that women's major role in life was to be a good daughter, good wife and a good mother and be a homemaker. Women were supposed to be kind and gentle and obedient. Women were not supposed to voice their

opinions publicly. Although they were homemakers, the decisions were taken by the men of the family and very often their life revolved around the kitchen. Marriage was considered the most important goal of a woman's life. When a girl child misbehaved she was always told, "How will you get a good name in your *sasural*?" or "How will you get married?" Since everything revolved around marriage, a girl was supposed to be fair and beautiful and later when educated boys came into the picture, in order to get an educated son-in-law, people began to give a heavy dowry. In such a marital framework, books and different forms of expression were denied to women. Women gained knowledge often stealthily. There were girls who stood hidden behind doors and walls and heard their fathers teach their students and learnt what was taught. There were women who read the paper in which provisions from shop came packed. There were women who learnt music listening to sounds of music emanating from a nearby music hall and there were women who wrote on bits of paper and kept them hidden. I know women who kept diaries and whose diaries were burnt along with them when they died.

In this kind of a situation, for a woman to get the right to education was not easy. There was a fear that educated girls would be disobedient and rude and too independent. That they would misuse their independence. Many social reformers fought to get women the right to education. If many of you are sitting here today as happy students, it is because many women struggled to get women what they deserved as individuals. Many mothers helped their daughters to get educated. But even now, if you go to the rural areas or small towns, a girl child is denied so many things, one of them being education, due to poverty. I visited a village in Himachal Pradesh where a little girl kept telling me her house had no door, when I asked her why she was not going to school. I thought, she had not understood my question. Later, when I went to her small hut without a door, I understood what she meant. In the hilly regions, animals like dogs and even foxes can enter your house and take away food kept on the floor, when the huts don't have doors and you need someone to protect the hut all the time when the parents went to work in the potato farm or elsewhere. This little girl was protecting her hut and hence could not go to school. So we still have a long way to go. The work SPARROW is doing is to record and document the process in which women's history is being made in many ways.

There are many boys here and men too. You may wonder if so much of importance given to women will deny man anything. Not at all; on the contrary, when women and men have equal rights, a better society based on justice and equality will be built. Many women like Dr. Deepa Martins are involved in this process of giving women self-respect and dignity. We are all working for it in different ways. We are not constantly in touch with one another. Even when we don't communicate with each other, I feel that we are constantly in dialogue with one another. We are connected through our work. And it gives me great pleasure to come and talk to all of you in this school founded by my friend Dr. Deepa Martins and her husband and being run by their son Anupam Martins and so many efficient teachers. I wish you all well and thank you once again for inviting me.

*C.S. Lakshmi*

*April 5, 2005*

आभास कुछ ऐसा होता है तुम्हें  
कि कल तुम्हारे जाने पर  
दिशाएं सूनी हो जाएंगी  
सूर्य—चन्द्र जड़वत् हो उठेंगे  
नक्षत्र धूमकेतू बन टूट पड़ेंगे  
और प्रकृति गतयौवना हो उठेगी।

यह तुम्हारा भ्रम है बन्धु  
समय की गति अबाध है  
उसका प्रहरी बनने का दंभ मत पालो।

तुम्हारा भ्रम  
डॉ. दीपा मार्टिन्स



*Ms. Indira Jaising, a practicing lawyer and Senior Advocate at the Supreme Court of India, is the second woman to be designated as a Senior Advocate by the High Court of Bombay and the first woman to reach the post of Additional Solicitor General of India (2009). Ms. Indira Jaising has been a member of The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) Committee since January 2009.*

*Ms. Jaising went to school in Mumbai and graduated in Bangalore, before getting her degree in law in 1962. Throughout her legal career, Ms. Jaising has focused on the protection of human rights and the rights of women. She successfully defended several landmark cases on discrimination against women in India. She played an instrumental role in the drafting of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005). She has also represented the victims of the Bhopal tragedy in the Supreme Court of India in their claim for compensation against the multinational Union Carbide Corporation and argued cases of homeless pavement dwellers of Mumbai who were facing eviction. A keen environmentalist, Ms. Jaising has argued major environmental cases in the Supreme Court. She has been associated with several People's Commissions on Violence in Punjab to investigate the extra judicial killings, disappearances and mass cremations that took place during the period 1979 to 1990.*

*Ms. Indira Jaising has attended several national and international conferences on women and represented her country at these conferences. She had a fellowship at the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies London and has been a visiting Scholar at Columbia University.*

*Ms. Jaising is also the Founder Secretary of the Lawyers Collective, a group of lawyers, law students and social activists in India committed to the use of law as an instrument of social change to further the constitutional and human rights of marginalized groups. She founded a monthly magazine called The Lawyers, in 1986, which focuses on social justice and women's issues in the context of Indian law. She is currently Project Director of the Women's Rights Initiative of the Lawyers Collective.*

*For her relentless and outstanding service to the cause of public affairs, Ms. Indira Jaising was awarded the Padma Shree in 2005. She was also conferred with the Rotary Manav Seva Award in recognition of her services to the nation in fighting corruption and as a champion of the weaker sections of society.*



*Dr. N.K. Jain  
presenting a bouquet  
to Ms. Indira Jaising*



*Mr. Anupam Martins  
with  
Ms. Indira Jaising*



*Ms. Indira Jaising  
delivering the keynote address*



*The Gathering*

## CONSTITUTIONAL ENTITLEMENTS OF WOMEN

Today I feel that I am here before you because of the call of that bond which goes beyond words. I was telling Mr. Anupam Martins that I am not accustomed to speaking to a group of school children, but it is this group, and it is this school that brought me here today to speak a few words in honour of Dr. Deepa Martins and I can only think that it is that bond of a common commitment that I share with her. It is amazing how these bonds can come into existence even though you have never met the person in real life. Yet because the commitment is common, you can call it a bond. I am glad that I chose the topic, "Constitutional Entitlements of Women", considering that all her life Dr. Deepa Martins stood for the rights of women in addition to issues of secularism.

When I was coming here, I spoke to a friend who knew Dr. Deepa Martins and she said to me, "Something is missing from the city of Ajmer after Dr. Deepa Martins has departed." That says it all – a person's absence is felt when you look at the issues the person dealt with and the contribution to those issues. So, in that spirit of commitment, I would like to just say a few words before you today about the Constitution of India and about promises that it holds for women. Then I would like you to reflect for yourself whether these promises that are made in the Constitution of India have been redeemed by our generation. When I say our generation, I mean my generation and perhaps a generation that comes after me. If we come to the conclusion that these promises have not been redeemed, then I think there is a very, very heavy burden on the shoulders of your generation – those of you who are in school now – as you go through your life, to redeem the promises that the Constitution of India makes, not only to women, but to all the weaker sections of society as I will presently point out to you.

The Constitution of India is a founding document of this country and basically a constitution is meant to tell you all about how our country is governed: what are the power centres in this country, what is the relationship of the states to the centre, what are our rights as citizens. You know that every person born in this country is considered a citizen of this country. Therefore almost all of us sitting here today are citizens of this country by birth and as citizens we have rights, and as citizens, we have duties. All these rights and all these duties are

articulately spelt out in the Constitution of India.

When it was first drafted, the Constitution did not have a chapter on duties, it only had a chapter on fundamental rights. Much later, a chapter on fundamental duties was also put into the Constitution of India, when the realization dawned on our parliamentarians that duties and rights have to go together. Now, in the Constitution, you do have a listing of duties and a listing of rights. It is something that all school children need to internalize, it is something that all school children need to know before they leave school, enter college and take up their vocation in the world, because these duties and these obligations are not meant to be confined to the pages of the Constitution – they are meant to be lived in different ways and some of the ways in which they are meant to be lived have been illustrated by the life of Dr. Deepa Martins. In our commitment to women, in our commitment to the issues of the dalits, in our commitment to the ideal of secularism, we are meant to live and internalize the rights which are conferred on us and the duties by which we are obliged in the constitution.

The end of conflict is a precondition to a dignified life and for the end of conflict in this country, we need secularism. People like me have been pained by the fact that in recent years, particularly in Gujarat in 2002, the fabric of secularism in this country looked like it was torn because there have been major attacks on minorities. But I can only say that time and again, my faith in secularism gets restored because of the existence of active civil society groups who are working to end communalism. The atrocities in Gujarat did not go unaddressed. There was nation-wide protest against what happened in Gujarat and a lot of these cases were taken to the Supreme Court of India.

I will return to the theme of the rights of women. The rights of women cannot be guaranteed without peace. We cannot look at women in isolation. Women's rights have to be linked with the rights of all other sections of society. Whenever the rights of any section of society are threatened, the rights of each one of us are threatened. Let us not live in the belief that we are secure in our middle-class and upper middle-class homes and that we do not have to worry about those who are less fortunate than us. Nothing can be further from the truth because the destruction of peace for any one section of society means the destruction of peace for all of the society. None of us can remain untouched by problems which occur in any part of society. So if the rights of women have to be guaranteed, the rights of all have to be

guaranteed as well. You will find this beautifully reflected in the Constitution of India. The main guarantee that you find in the Constitution of India is what we call the Right to Equality and in a very simple article of the Constitution - Article 14 - we will find very clearly mentioned that there will be equality before law and equal protection of the laws to all persons.

Now you can see how simply the idea of equality is expressed, because equality is indeed a very simple idea. Of course we have our own ways of complicating the idea but we do not need to go very far to get a definition of equality. We find it right up-front in the Constitution of India in Article 14 which says equality before law and equal protection of the law is available to every person.

Then you must know that Article 15 is a guarantee against discrimination and it says very clearly that there shall be no discrimination based on sex, religion, caste, place of birth or any combination of these factors. So there you have the guarantee of equality based on sex, which means that you cannot be discriminated against in any sphere of life simply because you happen to be a woman or a girl child.

You have the guarantee of Article 16 which guarantees to all persons equality in public employment. Obviously a very, very important guarantee is that you know everybody goes to school, goes to college and then goes out into the world and makes their living and looks for employment. The state and the government is a very important provider of employment in our country and it is necessary to have the guarantee of equality. India is of course not alone in having this provision of guarantee of equality. Countries all over the world, certainly all democracies, have guaranteed this right to equality.

I would just briefly point out to you another definition of equality contained in the Constitution of South Africa: Everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefits of the law. Notice how simple this definition is, and then as you go out into the world, you need to apply this definition to what you see around you and to see whether this guarantee is actually made real. Equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. To promise the achievement of equality, the legislative and other measures designed to protect persons or categories of persons disadvantaged by unfair discrimination, may be taken.

Now you have a very important pointer to the definition of equality

over here, "Persons disadvantaged by unfair discrimination." What is this telling us? This sentence is telling us that we are born into a society where all are not equal. There can be with us the birthmarks of discrimination inherited from a previous generation. Don't forget, this constitution came into existence only in the year 1950. One of the major forms of historical discrimination is the existence of different castes. We fought against the abolition of untouchability. In fact the Indian Constitution does have an article, Article 17, which says that untouchability in this country should be abolished. This is the legacy of historically- faced discrimination.

So what does the guarantee of equality mean? The guarantee of equality means that you have to end the historical disadvantage. You end historical disadvantage by compensating the disadvantaged with advantage and it is from this that India has historically evolved the whole policy of reservations in jobs for scheduled castes and for scheduled tribes. There is also a demand for reservation of women in Parliament and in our legislatures. It is based on the fact of historical disadvantage. If you look at the statistics of the percentage of women in Indian Parliament today, they constitute less than seven percent of the total number of elected parliamentarians. So these statistics tell you the story of the status of women in this country.

I want you to understand the concept of unfair discrimination, unfair disadvantage and then understand that equality means setting right this unfair disadvantage so that the state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds including race, gender, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth. So what this is telling you is that governments cannot discriminate against people because they belong to a particular race, because they belong to a particular ethnic group, because they belong to a particular religion, because they belong to a particular caste, because they have a particular sexual orientation or because may be a particular age. Equality is the removal of discrimination based on these factors. No person may be unfairly discriminated against, directly or indirectly, on any one of these grounds. Legislation must be directed towards the removal of these grounds. Every human being is entitled to inherent dignity and the right to have dignity respected and protected.

Then you have Article 25 of the Constitution of India which guarantees Freedom of Conscience. Every person is guaranteed the

right to pursue their own religion but this does not mean that any particular religion can be privileged by the state over any other religion. This brings me straight to the question of women.

It is being argued that this guarantee of freedom of religion allows us to have laws relating to women based on our different religions and so in India we have Muslim law relating to Muslim women, Hindu law relating to Hindu women, Christian law relating to Christian women, Parsi law relating to Parsi women and so on. This is a very controversial issue because many, many of these laws discriminate against women. Many of these laws do not guarantee equality in the matter of inheritance rights, in the matter of marriage, in the matter of property, in the matter of child custody and in the matter of maintenance to women during marriage. The field of family laws is highly discriminatory against women and the women's movements in this country have articulated a demand that there should be a common law dealing with the rights of women in the field of family law, entity of minorities. For that reason the government of India has laid off and we do not still have a common civil law. But I believe it is one of the unfinished agendas of the Indian Constitution and perhaps in time some of you sitting here today will be working for these issues and who knows during your lifetime you might see a common civil law for women in the right of marriage which is not discriminatory.

Since I have come to the issue of women, I must direct your attention to Article 51 A of the Constitution which says that we all need to promote a spirit of harmony and common brotherhood among all people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional diversity and practices derogatory of the dignity of women. You will have to ask yourself the question: What are the practices which are derogatory of the dignity of women that we need to renounce? As many of our commissions have noted, there are lip services paid to the doctrine of gender equality while the fact remains that generally women are still regarded as inferior to men both at home and in the workplace.

I have pointed out to you the kinds of discrimination women face at home. As far as the workplace is concerned, one of the most major issues that has surfaced in recent times is the issue of sexual harassment. The Supreme Court of India delivered a judgment which is commonly known as the Vishaka judgment. It arose after the case of Bhavri Devi, an *aanganwadi* worker who was raped while she was on duty propagating the idea that child marriage was to be abolished.

People who had vested interest in child marriage organized her rape. Thereafter the matter had to be taken to the court with great difficulty and it is a matter of shame that the court acquitted the rapist. The matter is now in appeal before the High Court. But this case was taken to the Supreme Court and the argument was that Bhavri Devi was performing her duty and she was at work when the act of rape took place and therefore we need a law to stop sexual harassment at the workplace. The Supreme Court delivered a judgment known as the Vishaka Judgment which said that sexual harassment at the workplace violated the right of equality of women and the right of women to work. Here you have a beautiful example of how equality is to be understood, how equality is to be actualized, and how equality is to be put into practice.

So it is not enough to say that you have the right to equality. What is the meaning of the right to equality and the right to equality of work if when women go to work they are sexually harassed by their co-workers or by their boss? I myself get shocked to see, as a practising lawyer, the number of cases that come to me of employed women whose lives are being made miserable because their male colleagues or their male seniors harass them. This harassment can take different forms. It can be nasty comments about the way they dress, it can be personal remarks about their family, it can be asking for favours, it can be asking for sexual favours. The net result is that their labour is not respected for what it is and this is only because they are women. Sexual favours are demanded and if sexual favours are not given, they are disadvantaged. Their annual confidential reports are spoiled or their promotions are not given. It is very common and I think its very, very important at this age, at the school going level, that the children be aware of the whole issue of sexual abuse and sexual harassment.

There is also a lot of sexual abuse at home of children within families and it is important for children that institutions like schools be able to raise these issues and discuss them because there is no other protection against this form of abuse except awareness – protection through awareness, knowledge and preparedness. I cannot expect the state to police the whole society by sending policemen to every workplace or by providing security at every doorstep. The best protection against sexual abuse is awareness and the ability to speak out to talk about it without feeling embarrassed. What normally happens is that the person who is sexually abused is the person who ends up feeling guilty and does not want to talk about it. Therefore the whole issue of sexual

abuse, in particular the sexual abuse of children, remains under the carpet.

My object is to point out to you that these are all issues which are mentioned in the Constitution of India. It is like a Bible which each one of you should have a copy of. I can say that when in doubt, open the Constitution of India look at it and decide how you should proceed forward in a particular situation – you will find the answer there.

I would just give you one definition of gender justice which Justice Anand had put down in one of his essays. I quote, "It is the process of confirmative rights of women and their empowerment that has come to be recognized as gender justice. Attaining social justice and peace through empowerment of women is basically another description of the same process. This process has many dimensions ranging from the private sphere at home to the public sphere outside the home. The process of gender justice broadly speaking covers the rights of women against exploitation and victimization."

Now I will move on to a few of the cases that I have argued, just to give an example of how it can and does make a difference to people's everyday lives. Gita Hariharan, an author, wanted to make a small deposit in the name of her son with the RBI. When she went to make the deposit she was told, "Madam we are very sorry, we can't accept this deposit from you because the father has to come and sign the form." That is when she decided to come to me and she said, "I refuse to get the signature of my husband on this form. I have earned this money, I want to make a deposit in the name of my son and I should have every right to make it without my husband's signature." We took this matter up to the Supreme Court and the argument of course was that under the Hindu Law, the father is the natural guardian of the child and we said, this is what discrimination is about and it has to change. Although the Supreme Court did not strike down that section which it should have done, it did say that the mother is also the guardian along with the father, and the concept of joint guardianship was introduced. It is after that case that the government of India has changed a lot of its forms. It allows women to make applications for passports for their children; it allows women to put their children in school without necessarily having the consent of the father. The significance of this is that when there is no dispute between husband and wife, it is not a problem, but where there is, the husband uses this authority in order to victimize the wife and refuses to give his signature



and so it is important to have these kinds of guarantees.

The next is the case of Rupan Deol Bajaj, a case of sexual harassment at the workplace. She was severely criticized by the media over the fact that she took a “trivial” issue to court. It was a tremendously uphill battle trying to convince people that it is not a trivial issue. What you have to understand is that sexual abuse begins in trivial ways, and then goes on to assume more severe forms, because it is the mindset of a person. The mindset of a person, who is in a position of power, and who publicly harasses a woman, is that, *I don't respect you for being an IAS officer. I don't respect you for the work that you have done.* That is the same mindset of a person who would rape a woman and that is why the case was very important. That is why it was carried forward. Another reason why it was very important is because the person who did it was, after all, the person who is supposed to respect law and order – a Director General of Police. So think what message it gives to the forces below him, *If our Director General can do this and get away with it, so can we.* That is why I would say it is very important to check this, for us to protest, for us to organize, for us to carry our battles to court wherever we see injustice. This is of course one of the stories that succeeded.

The third and the last case I will just briefly mention is the case of Mary Roy, an extraordinary woman who has founded a very successful school, the Corpus Christi School in Kalathipady. It happened to be that she is a Christian woman and the law in her state was that a daughter could inherit only Rs. 5000/- from her father and the rest of the estate would go entirely to the son. She said that she would not tolerate this law on the grounds that it was discriminatory against women.

So these are you know stories of people who fought their way through life and who came out as winners. I can only hold them up for you as role models as you go further in life. Just as Dr. Deepa Martins is a role model, these women that I have talked to you about, are also role models.

Now I am going to conclude on a bit of a pessimistic note because although these are the guarantees of the Constitution of India, when we look at the reality around, we find a very, very different picture. Statistics tell a different story when it comes to women. That is where the challenges lie, because if you read all the reports, particularly when you read the human development reports that have been

published each year, you will find that India is ranked pretty low in the family of nations on what is known as human development index. At one stage, development was measured in terms of Gross National Product. It is no longer measured in terms of Gross National Product. Now when we assess human development, we look at literacy rates, we look at housing, we see education, we see female mortality and we see enrollment of girl children in school to decide whether or not the country is making progress – and there the statistics of the women of India are poor.

Gender is considered one of the strongest markers of disadvantage. Link this with the earlier discussion on equality. In order to understand inequality, we have to understand disadvantage. This is especially the case in South Africa where the large numbers of missing women in the region bear testimony to the scale of the problem. Disadvantage starts at birth. In India, the death rate for children in the age group 1 to 5 is 50% higher of girls than of boys. Expressed differently, 1,35,000 young lives are lost each year because of the disadvantage associated with being born with two X chromosomes. This holds true across the spectrum when it comes to women. In terms of literacy, women fare poorly – 67% as compared to men are illiterate. In terms of enrollment in primary school also they fair poorly – its 85% . But as you go to secondary schools, the presence of the girl declines from 85% to about 67%. So there is a huge gap of economic activity. No more than 42% of the economic activity generated by men goes in the direction of women. In terms of employment also it is no better.

I would like to end by saying that it is not enough to have a beautiful constitution as we do have. A constitution cannot come alive on its own. A constitution needs people like you and me to bring it alive and the extent to which we will enjoy these rights is the extent to which we believe in it and we make it a part of our life - namely that we walk the talk. I thank you for giving me this opportunity to say a few words before you, and I have no doubt that you are all going to go out into the world being the most wonderful citizens of India.

Thank you.

*Indira Jaising*  
*July 1, 2006*



*Madhu Kishwar is a Senior Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies and Director of the Indic Studies Project. She is the Founder Editor and publisher of Manushi – A Journal about Women and Society published since 1979. Ms. Kishwar is also the Founder President of Manushi Sangathan – a forum for research-based activist interventions. It works for democratic reforms that will promote greater social justice and strengthen human rights. The Sangathan endeavours to*

*go beyond offering critique to testing strategies that provide viable and worthwhile solutions to the problems confronting India today – denial of inheritance rights to women, religious and ethnic conflicts, and livelihood rights of the self-employed poor.*

*A scholar and a prolific writer, Ms. Kishwar has authored and edited a number of books: Zealous Reformers, Deadly Laws; Deepening Democracy: Challenges of Governance and Globalization in India; Off the Beaten Track: Rethinking Gender Justice for Indian Women; Religion at the Service of Nationalism and Other Essays; The Dilemma and Other Stories; Gandhi and Women; In Search of Answers: Indian Women's Voices from Manushi; Women Bhakta Poets, Lives and Poetry of Women Mystics in India from 6<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> Century and Rashtriyata Ki Chakri Mein Dharm. Ms. Kishwar has also contributed chapters to over twenty books and has published numerous articles and research papers. She also makes documentary films on a variety of themes in order to mobilize opinion on social issues.*

*Ms. Kishwar is a member of Task Force, Criminal Justice, National Security and Centre-State Cooperation, Inter-State Council Secretariat, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India; a member of Steering Group for a series of seminars on 'Public Representation of Religion called Hinduism', set up by School of Arts, Histories and Cultures University of Manchester; a member of Governing Council, Common Cause; on the Board of Governors, Janaagraha, Centre for Citizenship and Democracy; a member of the Advisory Board, National Commission on Enterprises in the Unorganized and Informal Sector, Govt. of India; on the Executive Committee, Editors Guild of India; on the Board of Trustees, Indian Social Studies Trust; and a member of the Advisory Board, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library Society.*

*For her outstanding achievements and contribution, Ms. Kishwar has received a number of prestigious awards: Order of Human Rights: All India Sikh Conference; Chameli Devi Jain Award, Best Woman Journalist of the Year, Media Foundation; Haldi Ghati Award, Outstanding Journalist of the Year, Rana Mewar Foundation; Prabha Puruskar, for 'distinguished service to the cause of women' Keshav Smarak Sansthan; Deshasnehi Award, India Development Foundation; Vidula Samman, instituted by Vikas; and the Annual Award for Community Service by Indians for Collective Action.*

जब स्त्री और पुरुष को समाज को मिलकर चलाना है तो पुरुष को भी अब सामंती दृष्टिकोण त्याग कर स्त्री को अनुगामिनी नहीं, सहयात्री के रूप में देखना चाहिए।

नारी शक्ति जब जागती है तब निर्माण होता है और सृष्टि रचनात्मकता की पुलक स भर उठती है।

अतः आज आवश्यकता है कि नारी अपनी शक्ति को पहचाने। उस पर विश्वास करे, स्वयं जागे और फिर सारे विश्व को जगाए।

अस्तित्व संकट से जूझती तीसरी दुनिया की नारी  
डॉ. दीपा मार्टिन्स



*Ms. Madhu Kishwar with Mr. Anupam Martins,  
Ms. Teresa John Mathew, Ms. Shefali Martins & Ms. Bharti Tolumbia*



*Ms. Teresa John Mathew  
welcoming Ms. Madhu Kishwar with a bouquet*



*Ms. Madhu Kishwar delivering the keynote address*

## THE AVATAR OF MANUSHI SWACHH NARAYANI – THE GODDESS OF GOOD GOVERNANCE AND ECONOMIC FREEDOM

I am really delighted to be here with you to share this occasion to remember Dr. Deepa Martins, one of the outstanding daughters of Mother India. We met through the People's Union for Civil Liberties in Jaipur, and when I read what she wrote, when I read about her engagements, I realized that it is not just a birthday that I share with her – Dr. Deepa Martins and I, we are truly kindred spirits.

Dr. Martins talked not only about rights related to women alone. Being women, we must talk about rights related to women, but we should avoid following what I call, "the ladies' compartment approach" to women issues which is to say, "We hurt only when women hurt" or that "When it's about dowry or rape laws, let women talk. Or if it's about foeticide or sex selection, women may speak. But rest of the issues are the responsibility of men. What is farm policy? Let men decide." Why can't women talk on farm policy? Or why can't they talk on defence policy? Why should we leave these issues just to men? Women should also be aware of the structure of our economy. In fact women *should* know which sector holds what share in the national budget. It should not be that men discuss the issues of health and education and women only discuss dowry acts and laws against rape. Dr. Deepa Martins, moving ahead of the ladies' compartment approach, worked for communal harmony. She was a very active member of the PUCL of which I am a life member. She was active on socio-cultural issues; she was active as an educationist and took an interest in a variety of issues especially those that have a deep bearing on the well-being of society. We do share that kind of approach.

We are kindred spirits in another sense also. Dr. Deepa Martins started her career teaching English and so did I. Like her, after doing my MA in English and becoming a lecturer, I moved away from the discipline because I realized that knowledge only of English and English Literature cuts us off from our own social reality. If we do not have knowledge about the culture and languages of our own country, if we know what Milton and Coleridge have written but not what Tagore and Premchand have said; if we have read Chaucer but lack information about Shakuntalam; if we are without a live connection

to the culture, to the language, to the history and the civilization of our own people, we cannot be useful members of our society. So I moved to study History and wrote bilingually. Most of my work is in Hindi. Many of us who learn English, tend to get stuck in it, like the frog in the well, because it has too many rewards. I want to tell you young students that you are studying in one of the best schools in Rajasthan, and it is an English medium school. But I do hope that you take inspiration from the founder of this school, Dr. Deepa Martins, and you do not cut yourselves off from your own people, your own languages, your own culture. Stay connected. Yes we must learn to converse with the whole world, but we must not forget to converse with our own people. We should know how to talk to people in England when we go there, but we should also know how to talk to our own people at home. Dr. Deepa Martins did this during her lifetime. You are truly fortunate to be in a school where I see every brick breathe her spirit.

I unconsciously have a habit of creating a measurement scale in my mind about the moral health of the institutions where I am called. I first go and look into the washroom. If that is clean and spotless, it shows that the institution is in good health. And very unconsciously, I didn't plan it, but as I entered I asked, "May I use the washroom?" And it was spotless. Then, as I came here, I saw you all, so many students, sitting here together in complete silence, in complete discipline. It was very inspiring because these are values that will stand you in good stead. Discipline – when to talk, when not to talk – these values will come even more handy to you than the marks you get in your examinations.

You are very fortunate to be studying in a school which has been founded not as a business exercise, but to serve society, to give you the best education, to give you the best values. Your parents and your families will expect that you build good careers – and you will, because in this country very few have the golden opportunity of getting an education as good as this. You know, many children are not even able to reach schools. And those who do reach, reach those schools where teaching does not take place or the level of teaching is so low that even after studying for eight and twelve years, students are not able to read or write four lines of a letter. So their education is of little use. You have among the best teachers; you are getting the best education that the country has to offer. So you do not need to worry about your careers – you will, without doubt, have many doors open to you. There are

more jobs than there are people to fill them, especially qualified people, and you will be among those. Of course it is important to work hard. I am not trying to discourage you from doing that, and I am sure that your teachers remind you of that every day. But what is equally important, is to fulfill your duties towards the society you live in. In your own family, if you are bright, but some of your relatives are not, or if your brother is lagging behind, then it hurts you, because you would like to see the whole family move forward together. Similarly, it is also very important that the whole society moves up together.

Today, the other nations are talking about our corporate sector building up and setting the foundation for the multi-nationals which are succeeding. The IT sector is booming and gaining popularity and our scientists, technologists and graduates from IIM are gaining recognition throughout the world. But at the same time we cannot afford to forget that India as a whole is not shining. The lives of more than 65% of people in our country are not shining. In fact their lives are getting darker – particularly the lives of people who are self-employed – rickshaw pullers, fishermen, bus drivers, hawkers and weavers.

This nation has been witnessing the aftermath of poverty for 20 decades or so, but the difference between the rich and poor, the divide between the privileged and unprivileged is increasing day-by-day. It is our duty to bridge this gap between the two sections of our society.

We always think that it is the duty of the government to fulfill the demands of the society, to sketch out the plan and work upon it in such a way that it bridges this gap between these two extreme zones within the society. We believe if we are electing our representatives, then they ought to work for the welfare and betterment of the society. Why do we forget that *we* are part of this society? We also need to work for the betterment of the society and its people, because unless we join hands together and help and work for the upliftment of the downtrodden, our society cannot develop. *We all* have to be the part of that common resolve.

The greatest achievement of the freedom movement led by Mahatma Gandhi in this country was that Gandhiji was able to bring the rich and the poor, the mill owner and the labourer, people from different regions of India, from different caste backgrounds, and different religions together to fight for the common cause of freedom. However, Gandhiji did not just want freedom in the sense of being

free from foreign rule and letting society be the way it was – his vision was 'Swaraj'. And yet if we look into the depth of reality, we find that the history of the post-independence India has been such that with the widening gap between the income of the rich and the poor, the gap between the heart and the mind i.e. the emotions and intellect, has also increased.

I have often heard the middle-class and the upper-middle class people, my friends, relatives and my neighbours, talking about the poor as, 'they', 'these people' as if the poor are somewhat different, as if they are not like us. This in itself tells us that we have stopped identifying with our own people and the moment we do this, our success comes to a halt. Those of us who think we can build little islands of privileged people with massive gates and a watchman, thinking that we are safe and secure, are mistaken. It will not work, because if we are surrounded by miserable people, angry people, desperate people who are not able to make a good living, then they will take their revenge, and we will witness more crime. So our own well-being lies in the well-being of everybody in society.

However, if we want to build a just society, then we should make a beginning from our own homes. It is not only the duty of the NGOs to work for the development of society. In fact it is the responsibility of one and all; otherwise we have no right to call ourselves citizens, because citizenship means duties, responsibilities and rights. It must start from our own families. I see lots of young boys and girls here studying together. I believe in this school two-thirds of the students are boys and one-third are girls. All you young people have brothers and sisters at home. I would say that your first act of responsibility must begin with ensuring that the rights of all the members of the family are respected.

A trend in Indian society is to take the view that girls are '*paraya dhan*', and have to leave their family and go and serve their in-laws, while the boys will stay back to take care of the ancestral property. Girls are given only a dowry – a dinner set, a sofa set, jewelry. The boys get income-generating forms of property like a house, a shop, a piece of land, a factory, a business – whereas girls only get basic domestic essentials. Lots of people talk about abolishing dowry, but I must say that the act of dowry or the system of giving dowry will not come to a halt until the daughters get a share in the parental property. Think – if there is no unanimity in our own homes, then how we can talk of unity in the

society? If you want to live in a society which operates with dignity for all, with dignified rights for all, then you must start with your own family. So I would appeal to all the young men to make a promise to yourself to see that your sisters get an equal share in the property. I must say to the girls that if you wish to be treated as equal members of the family, then you have to be ready to take equal responsibility with your brothers towards your parents. Your parents must never think that their security in old age lies only in the hands of their sons. It is the responsibility of all the girls to prove themselves as daughters and as good supports as their brothers prove to be. That is the pledge you must take. Your parents must never treat you as '*paraya dhan*', as if you cannot support them and only need protection yourself. Each one of you can be a Durga, a Rani Laxmi Bai without picking up the sword. Today's Durgas should not shed blood. On the contrary, they must bring peace in today's violent world. Once you build up that atmosphere of equality, of fair play, in your own families, you can then act as responsible citizens who become instruments of social justice in our society.

People tend to think that if we want to give justice to all sectors of society then we have to act like Gandhiji and live an ascetic life. That is not necessary. This is required only when the common man of the society has forgotten his/her responsibility. But if we all become little Gandhis then it will make a vast difference. Raja Rao's novel 'Kanthapura' tells you that if Gandhiji was able to take his message across the length and breadth of the country, it was because Gandhiji was able to get the support of many little Gandhis all over India. In every village and city, little Gandhis came forward and this made a vast difference.

Whichever environment you are living in, you only need to become active citizens who ensure that injustice is not being done. If a woman is being beaten by her husband and by her in-laws, you, as the neighbours, have a responsibility to stop the violence. For this you do not need the police. All you have to do is to go and raise your voice against the injustice done to the woman.

It is not enough to think only of our family and of people like ourselves. That is one part of being good citizens. But an equally important aspect that we tend to miss out, is to see that in our own city, in our own neighbourhood, the poor people who come to work for us and our neighbours, are not being mistreated. Do we help them

when the slum areas where they live are wiped away in order to 'beautify' the city? The reality is that we often do not even think about them. So, at least in your city, in your neighbourhood, be aware of what is happening in the lives of the people who are less privileged. As students, the least each one of you can do is to share your privileges with the poor children around you. Each one of you, for example, could start with adopting one child from a poor family and try to share some of the education that you are getting with this child. If you learn to share your time and knowledge with others, you will be able to expand your own knowledge and develop your own capacity to do better. Remember, good work is to be done everyday. I learnt this from an old woman with whom I stayed in America. She expected her grandchildren to keep aside 10% to 20% of their pocket-money everyday to help the needy. When I asked her why she made the children save their money everyday and not on a monthly basis, she replied that good deeds must be practised everyday. If you want to become a good human being, you need to practise being good everyday. And you will see your own life becoming so much richer once you do that. If you start your day with giving, even if you give little things, that makes your personal life rich. Then you, in your own environment, can be a citizen who can change the fate of India. It is very easy to give a little donation if you have a lot of money, but you will find that far more important is to give of your time, give of yourself.

When I was in Delhi about 15 years ago, I used to buy fruits and vegetables from a nearby market. The hawkers there were unnecessarily troubled because the municipality officers used to come and destroy the hawker markets. When I asked them why they were doing so, they replied saying, that the hawkers had illegally occupied the area and that the municipality was clearing the area for the convenience of people like myself. Now, it sounds very reasonable, but the story that came out was one of horror. After sometime these hawkers came back and setup their markets. I asked them how they had managed to come back after the clearance operation. I discovered that these hawkers who were earlier paying a bribe of Rs. 500 to the policeman and to the municipality officers, had now promised to pay Rs. 600 to 700 after the clearance operation. We also estimated that the policemen and the municipality officers, by exercising their control over the lives of vendors, were taking bribes to the tune of 500 crores per month.

Now, the government keeps talking about poverty alleviation and employment guarantee schemes. We only make one request to the government: "Kindly do not create problems for such people. Enable them to earn their livelihood." When I was young, the cycle rickshaws were beautiful but today they are not so. If you go to Korea and Thailand, you find the street hawkers with efficient vehicles on which they conduct their business successfully. But in India these cycle rickshaws are either broken or they are not in good condition. The reason behind this is that they are taken in custody and heavy taxes are levied on them. So no one is ready to use modern technology in their rickshaws. Our municipal law regarding street vendors comes from British law according to which, without a license from the government, it is illegal for a person to have a cart. But the municipality does not give them the license and so it is not fair. These hawkers sell us things at cheaper rates. They are vital for farm economy as well as small-scale industries because they have a business turnover of four hundred thousand crore rupees per year. It means that they are a vital part of the urban economy. Yet we consider them illegal. They provide services to us and yet we allow them to be frequently beaten. Vendors have fought long battles over this.

So, when we started our campaign, I shot a film and telecast it on Doordarshan, and subsequently we started showing it to policy-makers, to the ministers and even to the bureaucrats showing them the consequence of considering the vendors illegal. The vendors, seeing the policemen taking bribes and beating innocent people, had stopped respecting the law. This in turn led to the spread of crime. One feels, *if I am a pick-pocket at least the police will give me protection but if I am a vendor I will be beaten black and blue*. A very a dangerous message was being given that hard work does not pay. So we began campaigning for reform. We organized public hearings, *jan sunwaies*, and we petitioned the municipalities saying that we would show that world class discipline and order could be built, if people were given dignity and security of livelihood. We asked to be given a dirty market and said that we would try to build a world class, well-disciplined hawker market there. After taking the permission of the Supreme Court, we began organizing the street vendors systematically. We told them that we had to show that this hawker market was one of the best hawker markets in the town. We made each one sign a legal document to show that they were not a public nuisance, but it was the system which forced them to stay in such a manner.

There are still some who consider the fourth class society 'untouchable' and it is just because they do our cleaning for us. I believe cleanliness is a sacred activity. So, to instill this respect for cleanliness, and to instill the respect that cleaning is a sacred duty, we began worshipping the broom. This broom is not only the symbol of cleanliness but also a symbol of sweeping out the corruption prevalent in society. It is also the symbol of universal brotherhood, because if you tie sticks together to make a broom, it is difficult to break them. So this commitment towards making the environment clean gave birth to a 'goddess' and we gave her the name *Manushi Swachh Narayani*. This goddess holds a broom in one hand and a camera in another, because all the work of a campaign needs to be documented. In her other hands she holds a clock to remind us that in order to uphold the laws, the system of governance must change with time to fulfill the requirements of the citizens and country; a calculator which says that we should ask for accounts; a lamp which is a symbol of hope; a clarion to invite happiness in one's life; a *jow-ki-barley* to say that the message must spread. Finally, the 10<sup>th</sup> hand of the devi is in *abhay mudra*, blessing everyone.

I wish good luck to one and all.

Thank you.

*Madhu Kishwar*  
April 5, 2007



*Dr. Shantha Sinha is a Professor in the Department of Political Science in Hyderabad Central University and an anti-child labour activist of international repute. She is the founder Secretary Trustee of the Mamidipudi Venkatarangaiya (MV) Foundation. The foundation's work in setting up residential bridge courses for rescued child labourers and preparing them for formal schooling into an age-appropriate class, has been widely acknowledged and has informed education policies in India and other developing countries. The foundation has withdrawn over four lakh children from work and mainstreamed them into schools.*

*As head of an extension programme at the University of Hyderabad in 1987, Dr. Sinha organized a three-month-long camp to prepare children rescued from bonded labour to attend school. Later, in 1991, she guided her family's MV Foundation – established to honour her grandfather – to take up this idea as part of its overriding mission in Andhra Pradesh. This was to link the total abolition of child labour to the absolute right of every child to go to school. Working locally in each school district, her foundation mobilizes parents, teachers, and elected officials to insist upon better schools and to support the cost of schoolhouse improvements and extra teachers.*

*In the poverty-stricken villages of Ranga Reddy district, Dr. Sinha and her foundation team encouraged local people to identify out-of-school and bonded children and urged their parents and employers to release them. They then organized transition camps to prepare the children to attend school. Today, the MV Foundation's bridge schools and programmes extend to 4,300 villages.*

*Dr. Sinha's formal organization is relatively small, but nearly thirty thousand volunteers and countless youth clubs, village education committees, teachers' groups, and other affiliated organizations are carrying its spirit and work even farther afield. Through this ripple effect, the foundation is creating a social climate hostile not only to child labour but also to child marriage and other practices that deny children the right to a normal childhood.*

*A rights activist, Dr. Sinha's contribution to a phenomenal reduction in child labour is perhaps unparalleled. Recognizing her work, the Government of India appointed her as the first chairperson of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) which was set up in March 2007 under the Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005.*

*In recognition of her untiring efforts and deep commitment to the welfare of children, Dr. Shantha Sinha has been awarded the Albert Shanker International Award from Education International in 1998, the Padma Shree in 1999, and the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership in 2003.*



*Dr Shantha Sinha  
with Mr. Anupam Martins  
& Ms. Bharti Tolumbia*

## BATTLE FOR SCHOOLS: STRUGGLE OF THE FIRST GENERATION LEARNERS

I must say that I am indeed honoured that I have been asked to speak today, and deliver the Dr. Deepa Martins Memorial Lecture. I have been listening with a lot of interest to the great contribution that Dr. Deepa Martins has made, the person that she was, the inspirational role that she played, in a manner that was strong and silent, the varieties of issues that she was closely involved with, her values of secularism, communal harmony, civil liberty, dignity of women, and most importantly, the value of education – these are very significant issues, which the entire country is grappling with, and Dr. Deepa Martins has contributed hugely in enhancing these values which we need to imbibe, need to celebrate, need to remember, need to foster and to take forward.

*Ms. Aruna Roy  
& Dr. Shantha Sinha  
light the lamp before  
the portrait of  
Dr. Deepa Martins*



Today I thought I will talk to you about the battle for schools and what I mean by this. Most of you here today are children. Not corrupted by the world of adults, you have a clean heart, you are, each one of you, a spiritual entity, you are willing to see the truth. So it is nice to be talking to you and sharing some truths with you. I want to tell you two things that are happening in our country today regarding children. One thing that is of significance but which is not fair, is that children are being drawn into joining the labour force. Large numbers of children, millions of children are not in a position of advantage as we are. Just as many children are sitting here today, the same numbers of children are not sitting in a school and are outside the schools today. What are these children doing there? These children are in fact producing almost all that is necessary for us to sit here on these chairs today.



*Dr. Shantha Sinha  
delivering the  
keynote address*

*Mr. Anupam Martins  
presenting a bouquet  
to Dr. Shantha Sinha*



If we have *roti, kapada, makan*, then, somewhere, in some way, children have contributed to all the three. Let me tell you that no agriculture in this country is happening without children working. Young girls of nine, ten, and eleven, are working on farms under the sun day in day out. Deprived of their right to education, they work relentlessly, they work very hard. They work hard to see that our country's food is produced, that we all live well with food security. In fact our country owes it to the generations of young girls and boys who worked in producing food in our country.



Let us look at the watch we wear. If I give you a call now: *Let us boycott products made by child labour* – then you will find that none of us would be wearing what we are wearing today. Every yard of cotton has the blood and sweat of a child in the making of it. No cotton in this country is produced without children working and, in fact, I have been following the plight of children who work for production of hybrid cotton seeds. There are estimates that somewhere between fifty thousand and one lakh fifty thousand children go from Rajasthan to Gujarat to produce hybrid cotton seeds. Huge numbers of children, like butterflies, are doing cross pollination. They take the pollen of a flower and then pollinate it to produce cotton buds, which will be used for seeds to grow more cotton. So in a way, the cloth we wear, also has child labour in it.

In every building built, brick by brick, you will find that there are children who have been deprived of their right to education, deprived of their right to health and nutrition. Children are at the moment working at brick kilns and construction sites – children between the ages of fourteen and eighteen, which seems to be the most productive age for construction work at the moment. You find that for all the *roti, kapada* and *makan* that is being produced in the country, there are children working for these products. So we are duty bound to see that they do not work there. They are working there not because they are poor – they are working because they can work for long hours; they are working because they can work without questioning; they are working there because those who employ them need cheap labour.

While this is happening, on the other hand there is an explosive demand for education today – poor or rich, everybody today sees the value of education. Parents want their children to go to school, they are willing to make enormous sacrifices to send their children to school, but for the poor, it is not easy. That is what the battle is about. It is very difficult to go to school and even more difficult to finish higher secondary. In fact, there is no guarantee that all children will even finish the fifth class examination.

Out of every 100 children who join schools in our country today, only 22 pass the class ten level, and only seven reach higher secondary. So the students in this school are indeed privileged that they know that when they join in class I, they will continue till they finish class XII. I am sure there are no school drop-outs in this school. There is a guarantee that once they come to school, they will be there, and at no

time is there is a doubt that they will not be there. But this is not true for most children. For many children coming up to class X is like winning a lottery ticket. There is no guarantee. They do not know whether they will finish class X or not. Like, when you buy a lottery ticket, you do not know if you are going to win the lottery or lose the lottery. So for many, many children in this country, completion of school is like winning a lottery. And this is not a condition that should prevail.

What are the things that come in the way of their continuing school? I will give you an example of what happens. Many of us think that the parents of these children want them to work. But I think that it is because the parents, as they are illiterate, do not *know* how to send a child to school. When we go to school in the morning, we have to be punctual. If the school starts at 9:00 we must be in school by 9:00. I am sure even in St. Stephen's the teachers and the school administration say that you must be disciplined, you must be here by 9:00 in the morning. So you will find between 8:00 and 8:30 in our houses, the entire family is trying to prepare you for school, so that you don't miss out. Before 9:00 in morning, your school bags get ready, your home-work books get ready, your lunch box gets ready – sometimes you don't know where you put your tie and then you have your brothers, sisters, mother, father everybody searching for the tie, and then putting the last knot on your tie and you are packed to school by 9:00. There is a whole culture of packing a child to school, and as literate parents, we know how to do it. The illiterate parents, they know how to pack their children for work, because they have been doing this for generations, but they do not know what it means to pack a child for school, to pack a school bag, what home-work is; they don't even have lights in their homes. So, in a way, you see this is the great divide – that illiterate parents just do not know how to send a poor child to school, whereas parents who are literate, know how to send their child to school.

The system has to be prepared to understand these hurdles – prepared to understand the background from which these children come. They need some sympathy and even before disciplining them, they need to be told: *This is the manner in which you should get your child ready for school, otherwise it will be difficult for us to run the institution or for the child to continue in school.* There has to be a kind of negotiation, a dialogue, a discussion with the parents. This is so necessary because

they do not understand why we are telling them that their children have to come to school by 9:00.

In many tribal areas, you will find, they just go away for a wedding, absenting themselves for two weeks or so. Then, when they come back, they don't know to get back to school. When they are absent from work for three weeks, they know how to get back to work, how to talk to an employer. But when the children are absent for three weeks the parents do not know how to get them back to a school. And that also requires some training along with telling them that education can not happen if there are such long absences. These are the things one will have to notice about the first generation learners.

In a survey we did, we found that many schools have a lot of requirements. They tell the students to come with a long note-book or a checkered one or a double-ruled one. Now the parents of the first generation learner, who are illiterate, do not know the long note book from short note book. There are no stationery shops in the village. They go once in a fortnight to the market. Many a times it has happened in the schools that we were working with that, the parents would bring say a short notebook and not a long book and then the child would be punished for getting the wrong book. The child now cannot tell the parents: *My teacher wants this and not this*, because even that wrong book was brought with such a great difficulty. Gradually, the child gets discouraged. The child gets the message: *You don't know how to come to a school*. So the child stops coming to school, starts playing marbles, climbing trees, going out and slowly, without the parent knowing, the child just drops out of school, because he has not brought the long notebook which he should have brought. This kind of problem we have with first generation learners – over such small things, a child loses the opportunity of education.

We have also found that children, who finish class V and have to go to class VI, must get their transfer-certificate done. Many poor parents do not know how to get a transfer-certificate done and the schools keep postponing this work. In some cases we found they were not issuing certificates because of a lack of stationery. They had just three to four sheets of paper, there were over 50 children who needed certificates, so they kept dodging and only those parents who had the grit to continue got the transfer-certificate, the others did not. These are minor issues and can be rectified if the schools are sensitive to the problems of illiterate parents and tell them what it is that they have to

do. In fact, if the school prepared the transfer-certificates without waiting for the parents to ask for it, many of the issues would be resolved. But again what is important is that we must be sensitive to first generation learners. We have to stand by them and tell them: *We are with you, we will support you*. We have to give them confidence and then send them to school. If we do not give them confidence and keep on saying: *Your parents are illiterate, you are silly, you know nothing* – then it shows that we do not know how to keep a child in school.

Children are discontinuing education because the system is still not ready to absorb, to embrace the poor child. I can give you two examples. We have just looked at issues of corporal punishment. We did a public hearing in Tamil Nadu. We heard about 19 cases of corporal punishment of children where children were forced to commit suicide because they could not take that punishment. One of the cases was about a child who had only one set of school uniform. It got wet in the rain and he went to the school without the uniform and was punished – not physically, but insulted so much that the child went into depression, preferred not to live, and by night, committed suicide.

We have to know that children are delicate. They have a mind of their own, a heart of their own. They are to be treated with respect, and yes – they have to be disciplined, but if it comes with a respect for the child, then the child is willing to accept the discipline. Children cannot be insulted, they cannot be humiliated just because they are poor, just because their parents have not been educated. These are the battles, and if we win these battles in the schools, I am sure these children will not join the ranks of child labour. Schools must prepare students. Schools must not push out children to join the labour force and be available for the market.

Before I close, I want to give you examples of how brave children are. One is a case of a girl whom I met at Jharkand two months ago. She is a girl from a tribal society. She is now about ten years old. When she was seven years old, she was living in the forest in a tribal area and a middle man, a contractor, came and took her away to send her to Delhi to work as a domestic servant with the false promises of money and schooling. She cried and said that she did not want to be separated from her forest, from her home, from her neighborhood, from her family; she didn't want to be separated from her parents. But they just carried her and put her in the truck and said that she had to go. From

the time she got on to the truck, she began to plan her escape. From the truck, she was put into a train. She had to stand all night, then finally, she went to the employer. She was not treated well. She was given a place under the stairway to sleep. She was very courageous and everyday she made plans how to escape. She did try twice, but each time she was brought back to the house to work.

The third time when she tried to escape, she was eight-and-a-half years old. The police handed her over to a missionary organization. The organization arranged for her to be enrolled in school, and when I met her, she was in the sixth standard. Within a year she had an accelerated learning bridge course. She wore a pretty a pink dress with a checked blouse with nice red ribbon, and when she narrated the story, she looked like the greatest heroines I have ever met in my life. She told me how she planned her escape from drudgery, how she planned her escape from exploitation single-handedly, without any support. She said, "I will not tolerate this injustice on me. I want to be a free person," and that is how she got out of it and I saw her narrating the story with such pride. Her mother was next to her and she stood up and said, "She is my child. Now she is in sixth class." You know that pride in that mother – when a child becomes a child the parent also becomes parent. And she said, "I will never do this again to my daughter. I am very sorry. I should have never done this. Nobody told me that I too can send my child to school." Today that mother is an agent to help send all the children in the tribal village to school.

Young girls and young boys are sending out the message that they do not want to work, they are planning to get out of work. I can give you stories of how young boys, who are working as farm servants, wear one set of clothes over the other, scheming to escape at night, taking trains and buses, coming to Delhi to see if they can find a way to study. Unfortunately when they come to Delhi, they get into a racket of drug addiction and they get into another kind of mafia over which they have no control. This should not happen. Children must win their battles.

In fact, children should not be fighting at all. As adults we have to stand by children. We have to see that they are not exploited. We have to see that there is no drudgery of work, we have to see that they go to school regularly. It should not be a lottery ticket. It has to be a certainty, an institutional responsibility, that they finish school. And if there is some barrier that comes in the way, then, as adults, we have to

stand by them and see that they win their battle for schools. If there are no teachers, we have to find out why are there no teachers and get them there. If there is problem of attendance, then we have to look into the genuine reason for the absence and then put the child back into school. There must be zero tolerance for a child being out of school. We have to see that the child is actually in school and studying. Our society must feel shocked, must feel outraged that children are not at school. We must look at the children's yearning for school, their aspiration for school, and get them to be in school because without education, there is no democracy. Unless there is education, there is no mobility. Unless there is education, choices cannot be made. Only education can break the cycle of inequality, and democracy is about equality. Democracy means bridging the gap between rich and poor. Democracy means social justice. It is not just voting rights. And if we support the education of children, if we stand by the poor in their battle for schools, we are actually building a great nation and a great democracy.

Let me finally tell you that I am, as all of you are, a very proud Indian – proud of our achievements, proud about our democracy. But if we work hard and nurture it, I think we will become a greater democracy and much prouder Indian citizens.

I must thank St. Stephen's School for giving me this opportunity to talk to you, and I urge all the students here to stand by the poor, and to see that they win their battle for schools.

Thank you very much.

*Shantha Sinha*  
*April 5, 2008*

छंटते हैं जब हताशा के काले बादल,  
मन सरोवर में खिलते हैं शुभ्र शतदल ।  
फिर से कर्मठता में होती है रति,  
जीवन के सुंदर स्वरूप में जगती है अनुरक्ति ।

वाणी को मिलने लगते हैं वरदान नये,  
व्यक्तित्व के फिर महकते हैं आयाम नये.  
हमें यही शाश्वत सत्य सदा बंधाता है धीरज,  
कि हर काले बादल के पीछे से अवश्य झांकता है सूरज ।

‘काले बादल से झांकता सूरज’  
डॉ. दीपा मार्टिन्स



*Dr. Syeda Hameed is a Member of the Planning Commission, Govt. of India. Her responsibilities include Women and Children, Health, Voluntary Action Cell, and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises. She was responsible for writing these chapters for the Eleventh Five Year Plan. The states of Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan and the UTs of Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, Daman & Diu, Dadra & Nagar*

*Haveli are also under her charge. Dr. Hameed is the Chancellor of Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad. She is a Founder Member of The Muslim Women's Forum; Founder Trustee: Women's Initiative for Peace in South Asia; Founder Member: South Asians for Human Rights; Founder Trustee: Centre for Dialogue and Reconciliation; Vice-Chairperson, National Board for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises; Member, Island Development Authority, and co-chairs the Sub-group of Experts on the Jarawa.*

*Dr. Hameed's major publications include: They Hang: 12 Women in My Portrait Gallery; My Voice Shall be Heard: Status of Muslim Women 2003, and Mussaddas-e-Hali, verse translation of Maulana Altaf Husain Hali's Magnum Opus comprising 394 cantos. Dr. Hameed has also authored Shanti Parasmoni: Women's Bus of Peace from Kolkata to Dhaka, and Journey For Peace: Women's Bus of Peace from Delhi to Lahore; Dr. Zakir Husain: Teacher Who Became President; Voice of the Voiceless: Status of Muslim Women in India; Islamic Seal on India's Independence: Maulana Abul Kalam Azad; The Contemporary Relevance of Sufism; Rubaiyat-e-Sarmad; India's Maulana: Abul Kalam Azad; and A Dream Turns Seventy-Five; Under publication is Gard and Gardish: Dust and Movement.*

*The honorary posts that Dr. Hameed holds include: Advisory Board Member, South Asia Foundation-India; Board Member: Indo-Global Social Service Society, ActionAid Association, Indian Social Institute and Olakh; Chairperson, Hali Panipati Trust; Member Haryana Urdu Academy; Trustee: Dalit Foundation, Janvikas, Navsarjan, Sahr Waru and Sangat Trusts. She has previously been the Chairperson, Governing Body: Lady Irwin College; Member Women's Empowerment Committee, Govt. of NCT of Delhi; Member Delhi Urdu Academy and Trustee National Foundation of India. Dr. Hameed has taught extensively as a Sessional Lecturer at the University of Alberta and at Lady Shri Ram College. She has held the posts of Executive Assistant to Minister of Advanced Education & Manpower and Director of Colleges & Universities, Govt. of Alberta, Canada.*

*For her outstanding and monumental contribution, Dr. Hameed is the recipient of the Padma Shree, 2007, and the Al-Ameen All India Community Leadership Award, 2006.*



*Dr. Syeda Hameed with Mr. Anupam Martins*



*Dr. Syeda Hameed & Ms. Aruna Roy lighting the lamp  
before the portrait of Dr. Deepa Martins*



*Dr. Syeda Hameed delivering the keynote address*

## FAITH AND TOLERANCE

The very first thing I want to say is that when I was asked to come here by Dr. Aruna Roy, I did not realize what a unique experience this was going to be coming to your school and to your city. I already feel the spirit of Deepa Martins. Though I never had the privilege of meeting her, I am imbibed with her spirit. I tried to understand her from reading her poetry. I also realize that what she stood for are the most compelling issues of our times and today as we remember her certainly for the memory that she has left behind we also remember her because the issues that she spoke of, she stood for, are the need in the times that we are going through.

मैं शुरू करना चाहती हूँ, उनकी कविता की तीन-चार पंक्तियों से, जो बहुत से दिलों को छूती हैं और वे बहुत सादगी से अपनी बात करती हैं, जो मेरे ख्याल से बहुत जरूरी भी है। वे लिखती हैं –

‘हम तुम न होंगे, तब भी उगेगा सूर्य,  
निकलेगा चन्द्र, चमकेंगे नक्षत्र,  
लहलहायेंगे वृक्ष, आयेगा हर वर्ष बसन्त,  
और विदा लेगा पतझड़।  
इस अनंत प्रवाह में, हम हैं बुलबुले मात्र,  
आओ सहज उन्मुक्त हो,  
बहते जायें, बहते जायें।’

और जब मैंने उनकी यह पंक्तियाँ पढ़ी, तो मुझे डॉक्टर इकबाल की दो पंक्तियाँ याद आईं। ये दोनों भावनाएँ कितनी मिलती हैं। डॉक्टर इकबाल कहते हैं –

‘जिन्दगी इंसान की दम के सिवा कुछ भी नहीं  
दम हवा की मौज हैं, रम के सिवा कुछ भी नहीं  
गुल तबस्सुम कह रहा था जिन्दगानी को मगर  
शमा बोली गिरिआये, गम के सिवा कुछ भी नहीं।’

तो आज हम कुछ श्रद्धा से, कुछ गम से, और कुछ उम्मीद से उनकी याद को उजागर करते हैं।

I draw certain parallels with Deepa Martins' life and mine and one very basic parallel is - we both are students of Literature. We studied Literature and then from English Literature we switched completely to another idiom. She switched to Hindi and her books of poems and her other writings are a testimony to that. I switched to Urdu. I think

in both the languages but the work I do is from Urdu to English which is a very interesting leap of mind. The other parallel I found was the type of background we hailed from. I also come from a family of Educationists. I come from a small place in Haryana, Panipat a city known to all of you. Everyone is familiar with the Battles of Panipat but what people don't know is that Panipat is a place for Sufis. It is the garh of Sufis. This is where my ancestors came eight hundred years ago from the Arabian Peninsula through Afghanistan during the time of Ghiasuddin Balban. They came and settled down at Panipat - they lived in Panipat. They were teachers, Sufis and philosophers because they were educationists essentially, Balban gave them land and said they could live off the land and engage in teaching the people. And so, against that family background, we lived in Panipat, till 1947, when by mutual agreement of the two Governments, my entire family was put into trucks and herded across the border and very few of us remained here. तो मेरा वतन जो पानीपत है, जो है भी और नहीं भी है। That is another commonality of the background of education.

The other thing which I want to share with you is that my great great grandfather was an important poet of the Urdu language and hundred years ago he was writing about women's rights, rights of widows, harmony among various communities — how the Hindus, the Muslims, the Christians can live together. His name was Altaf Hussain Hali. He is a household name in Urdu literature. Unfortunately today we don't have enough *aadan-pradan* - which is another mission that we have to engage with, because this is the literature of our country. I'll just quote four lines from his poem which lines that I feel are appropriate for this occasion as we are talking about faith and tolerance. Writing about the various communities, hundred years ago, he wrote—

तुम अगर चाहते हो मुल्क की खैर, न किसी हमवतन को समझो गैर। सबको मीठी निगाह से देखो, समझो आँखों की पुतलियाँ सबको। सर सैयद अहमद खान कहते हैं — मेरी आँख की एक पुतली हिन्दू है और मेरी आँख की दूसरी पुतली मुसलमान, मैं उन दोनों में कैसे अंतर कर सकता हूँ। सर सैयद हाली कहते हैं — सबको मीठी निगाह से देखो, समझो आँखों की पुतलियाँ सबको।

I grew up in a family which was Muslim in the most liberal sense of being Muslim. We thought Islam just meant being liberal. We had no other interpretation of Islam. There are two tenets of Islam on which I

grew and both have to do with tolerance. They are lines from the Koran. One says, — ला इकरा फिद्दीन and the other is लकुम दिनाकुम, वलेयदीन. These were the two pillars— ला इकरा फिद्दीन means *there is no compulsion in religion* and लकुम दिनाकुम, वलेयदीन means *to your religion and to me, mine*. We co-exist. So with this underpinning and these teachings, I simply assumed that faith and tolerance were the tenets of Islam. In my growing years though I grew up at a time, when the tensions were very high between the communities post partition - our doors were open to all faiths. We did not just consider the people of all faiths but the whole of humanity - the global human family. We believed in all. By the time Marshall McLuhan was writing *The Medium is the Message*, we had already imbibed it. Having studied in a Convent school, we would go to the Church before exams, we would say our Namaz and we would observe all the Hindu festivals with our friends. It was just a way of life. It was not a conscious process and the only thing which mattered while we were going to school was “excellence” - the achievements in academics, in sports, in extra-curricular activities. There was no consciousness that somebody was very rich or that somebody came from a modest family, who was a Muslim, a Hindu, a Christian. Food was shared; it was also a co-educational school.

So that was the kind of atmosphere in which I grew up. Perhaps, now things have changed considerably and children today are facing new challenges. What are these challenges? The cauldrons of animosity, distress, hatred have halted the deliberation of diversity. What it simply means is that instead of celebrating diversity, we have halted the celebration of diversity. We have broken down on so many different lines. I want you children to understand that we are a part of South Asia - Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, India the strongest region in the world and yet we are completely fragmented inside and outside. Our bonds of community are dissipating and people to people problems are under great strain.

मुझे याद है, जब सन् दो हजार में कारगिल की लड़ाई हो रही थी, उस समय हम चालीस महिलाएँ दिल्ली से निकलीं, हमारे पास कुछ खास पैसा नहीं था, कोई साधन नहीं थे, आपस में पैसे जोड़कर, हमने एक बस की और महिलाओं की एक बस लेकर हम लाहौर गए, अमन का पैगाम लेकर, उसके जवाब में महिलाओं की दो बसें लाहौर से दिल्ली आईं वहीं अमन का पैगाम लेकर। उस वक्त लगता था, एक बहुत बड़ा कदम था। बल्कि उस समय

सबसे ज्यादा नफरतें थीं। दिल्ली से अमृतसर के रास्ते में लोग बैनर्स लेकर हम लोगों के खिलाफ खड़े थे। हम लोग बिल्कुल मामूली महिलाएँ थीं, हमारे पास कोई सरकार का सेंक्शन नहीं था, पर जब हम महिलाएँ वहाँ गईं और वे महिलाएँ यहाँ आईं, तो उस समय जो सरकार थी वो बढ़कर आई और कहा कि हमको बताओ आपका मिशन क्या है?

That is the strength of the peace movement that ordinary people can start. But our children are growing up, as spectators to the dividing society, where terrorism has been accorded a religious identity.

Yesterday, in the morning, I was thinking about what I would say to you. I was reading an Urdu paper in which there were two columns that gave the number of terrorist attacks in Pakistan and India in a span of one year. I read the details and computed that in one year India lost 567 people to terrorist attacks and Pakistan lost 428 people. India is a country of over billion people and per lakh India lost .05 people and per lakh Pakistan lost 3 people. The enormity of it strikes us - the fact that it is such a shame to humanity. What is happening today in the name of religion? I can firmly say that is not the meaning of my religion. It is a view which is propagated by certain subversive elements across the border and all over the world in the name of my religion. That is not my religion because my religion means peace. Islam means peace. Where a Muslim greets another Muslim with *As-Salamu Alaikum* which simply means may peace be on you and the response *Wa Alaikum As-Salam* means may peace also be on you. The story of Jesus is in the Koran, the story of Moses is in the Koran, the story of Ibrahim is in the Koran - so how can we not respect every religion? The absolute number of messengers that were sent down is one lakh and twenty-four thousand - that is the plurality, the eclecticism of Islam.

I was looking at the pictures of Afghanistan where the Bamiyan Buddhas used to stand and what a tragedy it is that all of that is gone - history is gone - because of madness. There was a time when pluralism and eclecticism were practised in Islam, when Islam really grew. Started in the Arabian Peninsula, it spread all over the world but today that whole eclecticism is gone, giving way to narrowness, and the result is before our own eyes. So I think that it becomes incumbent on the younger people to restore that pluralism and eclecticism. आप जवान लोग हैं, आपके मन में यह भावना जागनी चाहिए कि धर्म का असली मतलब विश्वास और उदारता है। जितने धर्म हैं दुनिया में, उन सभी का जो

मूल है, वह एक ही है, लेकिन उसके तरीके अलग-अलग हैं। जो उसका अस्तित्व है वह एक है और उसको जब राजनीतिकरण करके, लोगों में नफरत की आग जलाकर दुनिया में आंतक फैलाया जाता है तो उस समय हमें अपने विवेक और इन्सानियत से काम लेना चाहिए। यदि हम अपने मन में झाँक कर शान्ति से नहीं सोचेंगे तो हम दुनिया का यह रूख बदल नहीं सकते।

What have our children seen? Episodes of Maharashtra being driven out of Maharashtra, attacks on Christians in Khandhmal, on Muslims in Godhara - children have been witnesses atrocities upon atrocities. What are we doing to the plurality of the country? When I was growing up, Urdu was not just the language of Muslims like it has become today.

उर्दू एक प्रान्त की जुबान थी, उर्दू की शायरी हर मजहब के लोग करते थे, सबसे बेहतरीन शायर उर्दू के थे। हिन्दू लोग उर्दू की शायरी करते थे और मुस्लिम हिन्दी की शायरी करते थे। अब तो इस परिधारणा को सीमित कर दिया गया है। मुझे प्लानिंग-कमीशन में पाँच साल पूरे हो गए हैं, मैं प्लानिंग-कमीशन की मेम्बर रही हूँ और मैंने यहाँ देखा है, पूरे देश में जाकर बच्चों में, आपकी उम्र के जो बच्चे हैं, उनमें क्या भावनाएँ हैं? मैंने तस्वीर के दोनों हिस्से देखे हैं। मैंने आप जैसी बहुत सी युवा लड़कियों को देखा है। बारह से चौदह साल की लड़कियाँ बुनकरों के पास बैठी, कोई उनकी तालीम का जरिया नहीं है, छोटी लड़कियाँ और बच्चे दूर-दूर से पानी की खोज में यहाँ आते हैं। छोटी-छोटी लड़कियाँ अपने से छोटे भाई-बहिनों को संभालती हैं, धुएँ से भरे चूल्हे के सामने खड़े होकर खाना बनाती हैं। कश्मीर में बहुत से बच्चे खो रहे हैं, उनके अभिभावकों को यह पता ही नहीं है कि उनके बच्चे कहाँ हैं? वे जिन्दा भी हैं या नहीं?

Then, I've also seen the other side of the picture - the picture of hope - and what I remember the most are children like you. I've seen a small school in Kargil in Jammu & Kashmir where children faced bullets and bombs during the Kargil war and yet when I met them after one and a half years of the war, they were absolutely determined to continue their education. In the far distance of Kargil, they were dreaming of being engineers and teachers, to ensure a better future for themselves. I remember in the very cold climate of Ladakh, girls sitting under the trees, attending lectures for their important Class 12 Board Examinations. I can think of a young girl in Malar Kotala named Parveen. I still remember her with a red dupatta, a Muslim girl reciting a Punjabi poem. It was such a beautiful blend. I remember,

Saddam, a young boy in Malegaon - who was about twelve years old at that time. He operated power looms in the day and studied by night. I remember a young girl in Jalpaigiri, her name, Hema Chaitri. Living on a remote tea estate she had to walk kilometers to her school everyday. She was bright. She wanted a future for herself. What I am trying to tell you is, that as students of this very prestigious school with the best of teachers, with the best examples of Mr. Gilroy and Dr. Deepa Martins with people who are interested in furthering your education - there is a lot more responsibility that rests on your shoulders because for every child going to school, there is a girl who is not getting good education and there are children who despite many difficulties are still pursuing an education. What is your responsibility? The poet, Dylan Thomas wrote two lines that I will always remember and I would like you all to remember. He wrote

*“Do not go gentle into the goodnight*

*Rage, rage against the dying of the light.”*

So, I want to advise you if I may, as a mother, as a person who deeply respects the sanctity of this engagement of this institution - that do not take the hatred lying down. Every time you hear someone spreading hatred against any community Hindus, Muslims, Christians engage, talk, think, try to cool down the temperatures. Try to change the minds and nothing can be done unless your own mind is clear, unless your own conceptual clarity is there.

अगर आप मन में सोचेंगे कि कोई मुस्लिम है तो वो आतंकीवादी ही होगा क्योंकि आपने मीडिया में उनकी छवि देखी है। अगर आप उसकी गहराई में नहीं जाएंगे, सोचेंगे नहीं, असलियत में क्या है तो आप किसी को समझा नहीं सकेंगे।

You must open the windows of your mind, get conceptual clarity yourself and only when you get that, can you fulfil the responsibility and do not go gentle in into the goodnight- rage, rage against the dying light. Today, we are facing a global recession but if this violence continues, then that melt down will be something of the most horrendous proportions.

We are in the city blessed by Khwaja Garib Nawaz. The Dargah is here, the understanding is here, the Sufi tradition is in Ajmer and that is why Ajmer is so special. I have written a small little book about another Sufi Saint poet, Zahid Saeed. He is buried in Delhi and he is one of the most important Sufis. He was a mentor of Aurangzeb's

older brother Dara Shikoh, who was himself a Sufi. Dara translated Upanishads from Sanskrit to Persian. The title of that Upanishad was *Sirr-i-Akbar, The Great Mystery*.

I want to end with four lines from Sarmad. Although they are in Persian, I'll translate them in English. I think that this verse basically epitomizes what I'm saying about faith, about tolerance and about true understanding. Sarmad wrote *“A true lover of God is misled, both by religion and lack thereof.”* The moth burns herself, it does not choose between a burning candle, whether it is in the Mosque or the Temple.

So I leave with you the idea of true religion which means not distinguishing between a Mosque, a Temple, a Church, a Gurdwara. If you are a moth, then your end is *fanna* and if this is the understanding, then Faith and Tolerance, easily becomes our creed.

God bless you all, God bless the memory of Deepa Martins.

Thank you.

*Syeda Hameed*

*April 11, 2009*



अधिकार तुमने अपनी झोली में भर लिये  
और मुझे पकड़ा दी कर्तव्यों की लम्बी सूची  
पर किया व्यंग्य नियति ने यह  
कि तुम्हारी भरी झोली रीतती चली गई  
और मुझे प्रतिदिन टूटते रहने की प्रक्रिया में  
मिल गया जीवन सत्य ।  
तुम विजित होकर भी पराजित हुए  
और मैं जय पराजय की सीमा से बहुत दूर निकल आई हूँ  
बहुत दूर निकल आई हूँ ।

**‘नारी पुरुष—प्रश्न प्रतिप्रश्न’**  
**डॉ. दीपा मार्टिन्स**

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Ms. Indira Jaising

2006



Ms. Madhu Kishwar

2007



Dr. Shantha Sinha

2008



Dr. Syeda Hameed

2009



*Dr. Deepa Martins  
1951 - 2003*

**D**r. Deepa Martins, a teacher, grassroots social activist and litterateur was the first Secretary of the Governing Body of St. Stephen's Senior Secondary School, Ajmer. She was a gifted teacher, nurturer, institution builder and a passionate social activist. In addition to giving unflinching support to her husband, Shri Gilroy Martins, in the educational pursuit of providing Ajmer a much-needed English medium school, she also dedicated much of her time to social issues in Rajasthan at the grassroots-level through the 'Mahila Samooh' — a women's self-help group she co-founded, and the Inter-Faith Fraternal Association — a group that promotes inter-religious harmony in Ajmer. Dr. Deepa Martins was also involved in several other voluntary and NGO efforts in Rajasthan while being a model friend, parent and wife. Her life reflected the values of youth working hard, improving knowledge with a career goal, serving family, society, the nation and humanity as a whole — all being complimentary, and starting with education.

To celebrate these dimensions of Dr. Deepa Martins' life, and to carry forward her unique legacy, each year the School invites stalwarts from various fields to address, inspire and motivate the students and the faculty to foster the values of secularism, communal harmony, civil liberty and gender equality. Ms. Mrinal Pande, Shri Ved Vyas, Ms. Aruna Roy, Dr. C.S. Lakshmi, Ms. Indira Jaising, Ms. Madhu Kishwar, Dr. Shantha Sinha and Dr. Syeda Hameed are the distinguished Keynote Speakers that the School has hosted. This volume is a compilation of the thoughts and values that they shared with the St. Stephen's School Family.

