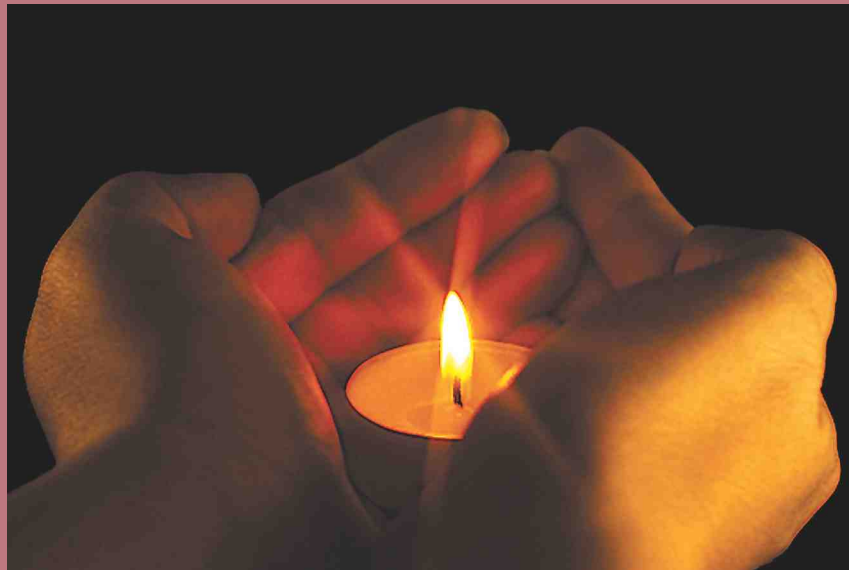


Deepalaya



The Dr. Deepa Martins

Memorial Lectures

Volume Three: 2016 - 2021





Ms. Pamela Philipose
2019



Dr. Ginny Shrivastava
2020



Ms. Rajni Bakshi
2021

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

Deepalaya

The Dr. Deepa Martins Memorial Lectures
Volume Three : 2016 - 2021

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FOREWORD

I recall how much I learnt from Deepa through the years of our invaluable friendship, which was cut short so unexpectedly. With the discourse of exclusivity taking over the popular media, I miss her involvement with multi-faith work acutely. Her insistence on dialogue and discussion coupled with her indomitable energy has brought so many of us together to reinforce these values.

Deepa has been on my mind almost all the time because she celebrated difference, and the coming together of people from different communities and beliefs to create understanding, tolerance and harmony. She was a woman who thought of the other as herself, and lived her principles through in life. We seem to be losing these values, and her absence underscores the need to remember her, and to reinforce public assertion and dialogue.

We recognise more than ever before, the need to celebrate Deepa's ideology, "मतभेद होने पर भी मनभेद हो न पाए" (a difference in opinion should not cause a change of heart). मतभेद is a fact of life. It is bound to happen, because each one of us would at some time or the other have a different opinion. But, why मनभेद? Why should difference convert to dislike, hatred, victimization and violence? Deepa's strong conviction and public action emphasized the need for religions and diversity to come together, build compassion and understanding amongst all people.

This collation of the Lecture series, captures thoughts and ideas that resonate with what Deepa would have said, believed and propagated.

I can imagine her, wherever she is, happy with the oration of each speaker in this lecture series emphasizing one or more principles she believed in. As I reflect on the memorial lectures of the past six years, I see her varied gifts at play, and her values underline the thoughts of these kindred spirits. Swarnamalya spoke of multiculturalism in arts, a space Deepa inhabited.

When Shabnam sang Kabir, she gave musical voice to Deepa's ideology and philosophy. Maya spoke of theatre in the classroom, something that Deepa used effectively in her own life as a teacher. With Pamela came the intellectual understanding and the acumen of the journalistic world, another of Deepa's academic concerns. Ginny's powerful narratives of the single woman echoed Deepa's pre-occupation with women's identity. Rajni, in her talk on non-violence, brought forward the immense strength of compassion and respect of a human being, completely aligned to Deepa's faith in the goodness of people. Deepa is with us every year in the words of these committed and eloquent speakers in the series of lectures we have hosted in her memory.

I have learnt the importance of writing from Deepa's life and letters. The written word is important because it leaves narratives for the future generations to read and construct their histories. This volume captures their words for now and for posterity, and will tread its own path; reach many we know and others we do not know, but it will surely make a difference to their lives.

Deepa left us in her prime 19 years ago. We miss her vibrant personality and her courage, but she left us the heritage of her abundance of connections and her interconnections. We carry on with the legacy of her spirit and some of her boundless energy. We celebrate her life not only every year on her birthday, but in our actions, as we fight for the values she held dear.

Even after Deepa has gone, her children make sure that we continue to remember her with love. We also deeply appreciate St. Stephen's School for this continuing annual lecture series, organized with diligence and love. It is a tribute to Deepa and her commitment to education understood in its largest definition – of sharing a common bond with humanity.

Aruna Roy

April 2022

अस्तित्व संकट से जूझती तीसरी दुनिया की नारी

नारी शक्ति जब जागती है तब सृजन होता है और सृष्टि रचनात्मकता की पुलक से भर उठती है। अस्तित्व संकट से जूझती तीसरे देश की नारी के लिए डॉ. तस्लीमा नसरीन ने निर्वाचित कॉलम में यह संदेश दिया है:

“ये दुनिया तुम्हारी है नारी! जैसे चाहो, वैसे जियो इस संसार में। ये संसार अगर एक नदी है तो तुम इस नदी में उतरकर चूर्ण करो लहरों का दर्प। ये संसार अगर एक आकाश है तो तुम इस आकाश में पंख पसारकर उड़ानें भरो। ये जीवन तुम्हारा है, असल में तुम्हारा है, तो इस जीवन को जैसे चाहो, वैसे गुजारो। कायम करो स्वयं पर अपना अधिकार।”

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

— डॉ. दीपा मार्टिन्स



A committed academician



A compassionate educator



A tireless crusader

सूरज से

मत ओढ़े रहो सूरज बादलों की रजाई
कब तक लेते रहोगे तुम यूँ ही अंगड़ाई।

तुम्हारे सोने से छा गया है कोहरा ही कोहरा
नहीं दिखता मौसम का वो रंग सुनहरा।

मन पर चढ़ने लगी है उदासी की परत
उड़ने लगी है पृथ्वी के चेहरे की भी रंगत।

खोया सा दिखता है धरती का उल्लास
प्रकृति की चंचलता का नहीं होता आभास।

उष्ण संबंधों की झील ज्यों जमने लगी है
जीवन की गति ही सहज यों थमने लगी है।

तुम्हें तो सूरज अभी बहुत चलना है
पल-पल चुनौतियों और संबंधों की आग में जलना है।

तुम तो बने हो सूरज सतत चलने के लिए
अपने आलोक से अंधकार को ढकने के लिए।

अपने संकल्पों से बिगड़ती को बनाने के लिए
अपने प्रयासों से संस्कृति को सजाने के लिए।

झेलनी पड़ेंगी तुमको भी बाधाएँ कई
कुछ होंगी चिर परिचित और कुछ नई।

करेंगे तुमको भी लोग छलनी और हताहत
मत होने देना अपने विश्वास को आहत।

उठो सूरज, जागो और फैला दो प्रकाश
उदास चेहरों पर फिर लौटे जीवन का हास।।

— डॉ. दीपा मार्टिन्स

मानवाधिकार चेतना में स्वयंसेवी संगठनों की भूमिका व योगदान

मानवाधिकार की न तो कोई सर्वसम्मत परिभाषा है और न कोई व्याख्या। अतः मानवाधिकारों की कोई अन्तिम सूची नहीं बनाई जा सकती है। संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ के सदस्यों ने 10 दिसंबर 1945 को आम सहमति से एक सूची तैयार की जिसे 'सार्वभौम मानवाधिकार' नाम दिया गया। आज मानवाधिकार शब्द का प्रयोग इसी संदर्भ में होता है।

मानवाधिकार के दो पहलू हैं — राजनैतिक और आर्थिक। पहली श्रेणी में जीवन, व्यक्तिगत आज़ादी, घूमने-फिरने की आज़ादी तथा राज्य सरकार द्वारा कई प्रकार के हस्तक्षेपों से आज़ादी आदि आते हैं। दूसरी कोटि के अधिकारों में रोजगार का हक, शिक्षा, एक खास जीवन स्तर, कपड़ा, मकान का हक आदि आते हैं। साथ ही साथ जीवन की कई विषम परिस्थितियों (जैसे बीमारी, बुढ़ापा या शारीरिक अक्षमता) में राज्य में सुरक्षा की गारंटी आदि का अधिकार भी इसमें शामिल है।

सन् 1993 में भारतीय संसद ने राष्ट्रीय मानवाधिकार आयोग का गठन किया जिसे बहुत सीमित अधिकार दिये गये फिर भी वह कई दृष्टिकोणों से उपयोगी सिद्ध हुआ है। अब देश के नागरिकों को अपने मानवाधिकारों के हनन के मामलों को उठाने के लिए एक सशक्त व निष्पक्ष संगठन प्राप्त हुआ है। मानवाधिकार के क्षेत्र में कार्यरत देश के कुछ प्रमुख स्वयंसेवी संगठन हैं — पी.यू.सी.एल., पीपल्स यूनियन फॉर डेमोक्रेटिक राइट्स, एसोसिएशन फॉर प्रोटेक्शन ऑफ डेमोक्रेटिक राइट्स तथा कमिटी फॉर प्रोटेक्शन ऑफ डेमोक्रेटिक राइट्स। 'अमनेस्टी इंटरनेशनल' अंतर्राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर सबसे बड़ा मानवाधिकार संगठन है।

ऐसा नहीं है कि इन स्वयंसेवी संगठनों के अस्तित्व में आ जाने से मानव अधिकारों का हनन समाप्त हो गया है। अपने ही देश में जिस प्रकार की लोमहर्षक घटनाओं से समाचार पत्र रोज़ भरे ही रहते हैं उससे स्पष्ट होता है कि प्रत्येक स्तर पर मानव अधिकारों का प्रतिदिन हनन हो रहा है। पर यह निर्विवाद है कि ये स्वयंसेवी संगठन जिस प्रकार से दलितों, पीड़ितों व शोषितों को उनकी मानवाधिकार चेतना के प्रति जाग्रत कर रहे हैं उससे देश में एक नई क्रान्ति का सूत्रपात हो रहा है और आम आदमी भी अपने हक की लड़ाई लड़ने के लिए कटिबद्ध होकर संगठित हो रहा है। काली सियाह रात के अँधेरे की प्रगाढ़ता मशालों की रोशनी से निश्चय ही कम होती है और भोर की लालिमा को निकट लाती है। अतः हमें किसी कवि के शब्दों में यही कहना पड़ेगा :

मशालें लेकर चलना जब तक रात बाकी है

सँभल कर हर कदम रखना जब तक रात बाकी है।

— डॉ. दीपा मार्टिन्स



AN INTRODUCTION TO DR. DEEPA MARTINS AND THE MEMORIAL LECTURES

“A difference of opinion, should not cause a difference in hearts.” This oft-quoted phrase from Dr. Deepa Martins’ own philosophy of life was a tenet she followed every single day across the numerous roles she essayed. Born as Deepa Pant in a large Kumaoni family on April 5, 1951 in Ajmer, values of humanity and inclusivity were essential elements of her formative years. She was the youngest of seven brothers and three sisters and the most pampered child of her academician father Shri Bhagwan Vallabh Pant. Her father, committed to the values of patriotism and education, had a deep influence on her. His magnanimity and the simplicity and large-heartedness of her mother Mrs. Lakshmi Pant made the foundation of her value system. Right from the beginning, Dr. Deepa believed in multi-dimensional growth and besides excelling in academics, she would be deeply involved in all co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. Debating, dramatics and writing were areas of her special interest.

Dr. Deepa’s wish to reach out and contribute manifested itself in various ways right from her student days. She would constantly encourage her friends to be involved in creative and academic pursuits. Friendships that she nurtured in school and college were maintained through her life. After doing her Secondary and Intermediate from Savitri School, Ajmer, she pursued her BA from Savitri College where she was the President of the Student Union. She completed her Master’s in English from Government College, Ajmer in 1972. She then worked as a lecturer in English in Shramjeevi College and also pursued her Master’s in Hindi. She chose her alma mater Savitri College as her workplace where she continued to work as a lecturer in Hindi from 1975.

As a teacher, Dr. Deepa was completely absorbed in every dimension of her students’ lives. They’d often be seen studying at her place when they didn’t get time and space at their own

homes. Balancing the roles of teacher and friend, she made a unique place in the hearts of her students who remember her drawing examples from Keats and Wordsworth in a Chhayavaad class of Hindi poetry. Similarly, English grammar made its way into Functional Hindi classes. Her students would not miss her classes because the depth of her knowledge strengthened by her power to communicate well charmed them. She went out of her way each time to help her students. She became and still is a role model for so many of them and even after decades of their graduation, their point of reference of their college days continue to be her classes.

Dr. Deepa believed in harmony in every aspect, and just like her academic life was a harmonious blend of two different languages, she incorporated the broader perspective in the choices she made and the examples she set. She chose to marry her MA classmate and her companion of values and vision Shri Gilroy Martins. The idea of marrying a Roman Catholic in 1973 when even inter-caste marriages were rare in Ajmer did not discourage her. She followed what she firmly believed in and created a family atmosphere where values, culture and traditions of both religions coexist with no side having to compromise on identity. Even today, the candles at the altar, and the light of the *puja* lamp at her home radiate the essence of her all-inclusive faith.

Identity and harmony formed the essence of all her work that she undertook across various academic, cultural, social and creative spaces. She believed that one shouldn't only conceptualise a better society, one must get into creating it. And so, she entered the social realm and connected herself to the grassroots. Interfaith harmony and the quest for women's identity were very close to her heart.

When confronted with challenges over various cases in Mahila Samooh, an organization that she co-founded, Dr. Deepa would stress on the importance of dialogue. She believed in supporting a cause through protests and rallies, but would insist on finding a way out first through dialogue and then other means. The method that she adopted was so unique and full of empathy that even people with strongly varied opinions would be taken in by

her approach to an issue. Even during her work in the activism space, her fearless persona met her loving side and besides rallying for a cause and taking issues head-on, she would prepare and carry tiffins of food for her co-workers. She ensured that each person around her was looked after well. In this way, she added her own touch to many social, cultural, creative and literary organizations in Ajmer – People's Union for Civil Liberties, Citizens' Council, Adult Education Society and Ajaymeru Press Club – to name a few.

Dr. Deepa held a unique space at St. Stephen's. While extending her whole-hearted support to Shri Martins in the day-to-day aspects of the School, she was closely associated with every activity along with managing her multiple roles in society. She also brought all her exposure of the social world into the School and students, teachers and the ministerial staff alike were inspired by her positivity, energy and love.

Dr. Deepa was very keen on the individual aspect, the finer detail and was closely involved in the lives of the expansive circle of her close ones. Her friends and family remember her as the first person to wish them on their special days and also as the one person who was most regular with her communication through letters, cards and calls.

The poet and writer in Dr. Deepa found ample expression despite her schedule. She would pen down her reflections on a spare piece of paper or even a notepad, when she didn't have adequate time or space to look for a proper notebook or diary. She would even write impromptu poems while signing greeting cards.

A note of positivity and the faith in optimism is visible in all her writings. Her sphere was large and she would ensure that each member of her family and the extended family she made for herself was given due attention. In the words of her friends, "There were many who believed that whether or not anyone else would stand by them, they had Deepa, and that was enough!"

A sense of celebration surrounded all Dr. Deepa's endeavours, whether it was having a conversation with students, leading an issue-based rally, working on an academic conference, spending time with family or writing poetry. Positivity, happiness,

harmony, simplicity, sensitivity, the ability to connect with everyone, and the unwavering will to stand for righteousness gave her a unique place in the hearts of people. She left a legacy that continues to radiate values and hope, and the belief in reaching out and touching lives.

On April 5, her birthday, over the last 19 years, St. Stephen's and the Ajmer community have benefitted from visits of distinguished women in various fields who have shared their thoughts with us through this Memorial Lecture series. The topics of these Lectures have been close to Dr. Deepa Martins' life and work – promoting communal harmony and a secular society, women's issues linked to health, constitutional rights and gender equality, Kabir, inclusive learning and social activism through music, dance, theatre and art, the importance of journalism, working with the marginalized and non-violence.

We have had the privilege to host luminaries including Ms. Mrinal Pande, Dr. C. S. Lakshmi, Ms. Indira Jaising, Ms. Madhu Kishwar, Dr. Shanta Sinha, Dr. Syeda Hameed, Ms. Vrinda Grover, Ms. Kamla Bhasin, Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath, Dr. Mallika Sarabhai, Prof. Tripurari Sharma, Mr. Vinay Mahajan and Ms. Charul Bharwarda, Dr. Swarnamalaya Ganesh, Ms. Shabnam Virmani, Ms. Maya Krishna Rao, Ms. Pamela Philipose, Dr. Ginny Shrivastava and most recently Ms. Rajni Bakshi. The last two connected with us online owing to Covid protocols.

Ms. Aruna Roy, as a close friend and co-worker of Dr. Deepa has graced us with her presence and support as a co-host of this lecture series.

Every six years, the School brings out a compilation of these Lectures in *Deepalaya* to capture these powerful messages for posterity. This is the third volume of the publication. I invite you on behalf of all those who have been associated with Dr. Deepa Martins and these Lectures to cherish and imbibe the light that *Deepalaya* stands for.

Shefali Martins

April 2022



Dr. Swarnamalaya Ganesh is a combination of a performer with over 35 years of experience, a scholar of dance history as well as a trained academician in art practice and sociology. For her Ph.D., as a pioneering effort, she studied the history and sources involved in the lost performing traditions to reconstruct them. From The Attic (FTA) is a performance- lecture- exhibition series based on her research.

From collaborations with artistes of various genres to reflecting the multi-cultural historicity of dance and music in South India, FTA stands as a unique voice that speaks of inclusivity and plurality as inherent values of performing traditions. Jakkini, Sivalila, Gondhali and Perani are some of her reconstructed repertoires that are widely appreciated.

Dr. Ganesh's performances in the UK, European countries as well as Australian Arts Council tour to Asia - Topa brought excellent visibility to From The Attic. She was one among six Indian artistes featured in the film series #Behind The Seen produced by Arts Quotient and India Foundation for the Arts. Her further research interests include Sadir as the subaltern form of Bharatanatyam through gender, culture, society, stigma and political movements. Her book Nammai Marandara Naam Marakkamattom (Tamil) is based on her successful stage production of the same title. Through her production Dancing in the Parlour she brought to light the history of dance in early 20th century Madras. Her production Choreographing Society - a tryst with destiny raises critical questions around inherent inequalities; identities, stigma and the legal frames in democracy. As a writer and thinker, some of her eminent contributions to critical theories on performance history call for interrogation of post-colonial scholarship through her projects Decolonising Dance History Project, Notions of Classical in Bharatanatyam, Sex and Gender in Performance, Mired in Dravidian Politics, Womanity and Daughters of Pandanallur – the other story. She is also a sought after speaker on topics pertaining to Education, Art and Culture.

As a Fulbright-Nehru Fellow for Academic and Professional Excellence, Dr. Ganesh went to UCLA to teach and pursue post-doctoral research. She is trained in Indian and Middle Eastern music, epigraphy, history and archaeology. She has received prestigious awards and fellowships for her contributions. An invited member on the Ministry of Culture advisory board for the Telangana Government, she is currently Professor of Practice, KREA University, India. She is also the Director of Ranga Mandira Academy of World Dance / Performance and Indic Studies which works at providing education in Performing Arts. Ranga Mandira runs a community radio and also creates a platform for sustainable ethical practices of hereditary forms.



Mr. Anupam Martins, Honorary Mentor, felicitating Dr. Swarnamalya Ganesh



Dr. Swarnamalya Ganesh delivering the keynote address



Dr. Swarnamalya Ganesh and Ms. Aruna Roy releasing 'Deepalaya', Volume Two

DISCOVERING MULTICULTURALISM IN INDIAN ARTS

I haven't had the fortune of knowing Dr. Deepa Martins. But as I was going through the book *Deepalaya*, I read a line somewhere in it that made me understand her role in society. It said, "Something is missing from the city of Ajmer after Dr. Deepa Martins has departed". I am reminded of an old Tamil film song that roughly translates to "when some people shut their eyes for the final sleep, they awaken the world". In remembering Dr. Deepa Martins every year, an opportunity is created here to think, awaken and arise. I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to Shri Anupam Martins for inviting me to speak to all of you. Of course, he only knew of me through Smt. Aruna Roy whom I fondly address as Perima. Thank you, Perima.

I have been a dancer from the age of three. My world revolves around music and movement. Every lesson I have learnt in school, to me translated into either *abhinaya* or *adavu*, that is as an expression or as a movement. Be it mathematics, science, English or history, I related to it all in terms of dance. I was obsessed with the form of the dance I was learning, Bharatanatyam. Its lines, curves, patterns mattered a whole lot to me. I practised hours on end to perfect each stance, to allow my body to perform everything I was taught almost like a feat.

Every Bharatanatyam dancer is taught a *sloka* that is considered the formula for an elevating experience for both the performer and the spectator.

Yatho Hasta Tato Drishti – where your hands go there your eyes must follow

Yatho Drishti Tatho Manaha – where your eyes travel there your mind must too

Yatho Manaha Tatho Bhavo – where your mind dwells there is born Bhava or the emotion that is to be expressed

Yatho Bhavo Tatho Rasaha – where there is truly expressed

emotion, there is bound to be great rasa or aesthetic pleasure for both the viewer and performer

It was after many years of learning and performance that I developed a curiosity to ask questions. My search for what could have prevailed or existed before what we know as Bharatanatyam today, led me into a life changing path.

I will share with you some aspects of the story of why I have a new interpretation to the above *sloka*. This *sloka* is found in one of the earliest written texts that we find on drama and dance called the Natya Sastra. People believe that therefore the classical dance of Bharatanatyam is at least as old as this text which could be about 2000 years old.

This brings us to an important question. That many centuries ago, what was India like? In what kind of an India did these arts grow and thrive? Many mainstream historians and history text books prescribe a “three phases theory”. The first being a formative one, usually synonymous with the idea of ancient India. This is imagined to be a golden era to which many of our ideas of civilization, cultural creations are attributed. This closes with the early centuries of the *After Christ Era*, the second is a phase of confusion and decline that roughly has the same boundaries with Islamic rule where decay of values, destruction of cultural edifices are attributed, and then a third phase which may be yet incomplete – which they believe is a sort of resurgence and return to the roots era.

In South India or the Deccan, the second phase or the sad tale of the medieval decline is often portrayed using the example of the mighty Vijayanagara Empire as a brave attempt of the Hindu Kings to hold out against Islamic invasion.

However, a closer look at the historical facts of Vijayanagara history will tell us a different story. The story of the dependency or inter- dependency between Vijayanagara and the Muslim rulers with regards to military powers, horse-traders, Portuguese firearms etc. and the shared court ritual styles, lifestyle, fiscal structure, administration and even architecture between Vijayanagara and its neighbouring kingdoms of Bahmani,

Bijapur and Golkonda sultanates.

Cities were sacked, religious sites were destroyed and political opponents were massacred every day by all these groups. Notwithstanding this history of violence, power struggle and empire building, what is most astounding is how cultures merged. Art, architecture, sculpture, food, music, dance, paintings, poetry, textile and handicrafts of each region were borrowing heavily from the other. Things came and went from not only within empires in India but from distant lands such as Europe, Central Asia, Iran, Ottoman Empire, South East Asian, East Africa, Sri Lanka etc.

It is this immediate past, medieval past that we as a nation have access to, in terms of memories, documentation and evidence. So this medieval India is a reality for us in a way that ancient India can really never be. Therefore seeing the continuity of Bharatanatyam during this medieval period was of the greatest interest to me.

A phenomenal example of this shared and connected history is Jakkini. Jakkini is a dance form that is found mentioned in a number of medieval dance texts. A dance that was practised until the 19th century in many Indian Kingdoms both in the South and North, Jakkini was lost in memory and practice during the 19th century when the third phase of resurgence was initiated. The dance form is mentioned in a text called Nartana Nirnaya as a dance and song by experts from Persia which is a favourite of the yavanas (Persians). Therefore, that brought me to the question of who these yavanas were. Indian coast was part of the great spice route. The Cēra and Pāṇḍya countries (South India) were pepper kings. Merchants and travellers sailed through India, particularly the southern regions, on their spice route for procurement and trade. The practice of setting sail along the monsoon winds meant that they have to spend time in-land, between monsoons. This spice route was called ‘peruvazi pāḍai’ – the great route. In fact, the area from Pulicat to Calicut was called mābar, which in Arabic means transit. Historians believe that the West Asians may have very well come

before even the Greeks and Romans to India. One of the vital evidences is the sculpture panel at Tirukurungudi temple where the entire retinues of Persian traders are depicted including their horses (the famous Arabic horses), their elephants, musicians along with musical instruments and camels carrying chests full of trading goods.

Does the term Jakkini then have a Persian origin? 'Jhañk' means ankle bells in the Persian language. The terms Jhanak, Jhankini mean the sounds of the guñghurū or pāyal while dancing. The suffix 'ini' as part of Jakkini or Jhañkini simply is a local accent of spoken Persian in the Deccan. Therefore, a dance form that is performed with the sounds of ankle bells is Jakkini or Jhañkini. Jakkaḍi in Persian means 'to arrest' or 'to hold'. I therefore began to believe that Jakkini could perhaps mean a dance using the sound of the ankle bells and freezes and poses interspersed. Of course by the 17th century, a poet scholar named Paṇḍarīka travelled from Karnataka to Akbar's court. He wrote in his work how Jakkini was a favourite of the emperor.

My research complication arose when I realized that all works talking of Jakkini said they have to be done in the yavana bhāṣā. In all Jakkinis that I discovered from manuscripts, I saw the employment of the words "ellilām ellilām dēva ellilām ellilām lāle". Upon closer reading I was able to understand that these were the terms 'Ilāhi' with the root word 'Ilā' meaning God in Persian. It is with this significance that Akbar named the city of the Prayāg on river as Ilāhābād (Allahabad), the city of the God. In Urdu 'eliyā' means "look at me". 'Ilāha' in Urdu too means God or Oh! God. Therefore, the terms 'ellilām ellilām' mean "Oh! Lord, oh! Lord".

To reconstruct this lost dance form I needed more than just this evidence. I was looking for several years at various texts. They all said Jakkini has to be a whirling dance with freezes and poses in between. Finally, I arrived at a set of movements where I hold one hand up and the other down whirling continuously. This movement closely resembles the Whirling Dervish dance practised by the Sufi mystics who follow Jallaludin Rumi.

I substantiate my finding and reconstruction with the help of paintings that I found on the ceiling of an 18th century palace in South India where a Hindu king is seated on his throne flanked by two saree clad women bearing the *chauri* while in front of him is a dancer wearing a long dress, resembling a kurta holding one hand up and the other down in an animated whirling position. Behind her is a man with a French beard wielding the cymbals or tal. This image gave me the strength to explore and present Bharatanatyam for the first time as a dance of shared histories between two faiths and connected cultures.

Interestingly, Jesus Christ's last words were also

"Eloi Eloi lama sabachthani?"

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Psalm 22)

The term Elāhi here is said to be Aramaic. It is therefore astounding to see how multiple faiths such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism are bound by a simple dance called Jakkini.

Like I said earlier, the medieval era did not stop with influences from Persian, Islamic, Maharashtrian, Telugu, etc. but also imbibed from the Dutch, Portuguese, French, English and many other cultures. I'd like to tell you the story of a beautiful English song: a *padam* (musical poetry), that I discovered from the 18th century written by a Tamil courtesan dancer. She wrote this poem for Sir Thomas Munro. The poem is in English and it was sung and set to Carnatic music. When I discovered this, I was fascinated by how they were able to so easily assimilate.

The lines are:

It's thy will that I must leave thee
Oh then best beloved farewell
I fore bear lest I should grieve thee
Half my heart felt pangs to tell
Soon a British fair shall charm thee
Though alas her smiles must woo
But though she to rapture warm thee
Don't forget thy poor Hindoo

(Dr. Ganesh also performed these lines for the audience.)

With this understanding, I reinterpreted the *sloka* that I learnt from the Natya Sastra.

Yatho Hasta Tato Drishti – our hands represent the present form of our culture – a bit limited as it can reach only thus far. But let our eyes or *drishti* travel beyond, rather inward and seek a wholeness which breaks the shackles of what is framed in our history books as monochromatic or single narrative of cultural history.

Yatho Drishti Tatho Manaha – let the mind expand even further towards the idea of India and its cultural wealth as a gift of connected histories of the world thus reaching a little more beyond what we can envision.

Yato Manaha Tatho Bhavo – when the mind is truly that expansive there dwells the Bhava or expression of harmony as a certain oneness of the universe.

Yatho Bhavo Tatho Rasaha – at a place where this harmony exists, there true art thrives which belongs to and is appealing, pleasurable to all – Rasaanubhava.

Therefore, to portray the epoch from 12th-18th centuries as some sort of dark age in our history books, to tell you all that it was a period when religions fought, one group gained control over another or enslaved another etc. would not be the right way to look at our past. It is after all at this time that the Mughal influenced Khayal enriched Hindustani music, Kshetravaya a Telugu poet, wrote the best of poems for South Indian classical dance, the violin, a western instrument, was introduced in Indian classical music, so on and so forth. So, we don't need cultural cleansing. We need cultural connectedness. Bharatanatyam therefore to me is not anymore a normative dance whose movements were born out of a process of selection and exclusion, but to me, Bharatanatyam is vitality. It is life itself, inclusive and all encompassing.

Swarnamalya Ganesh

April 5, 2016

आत्मबोध

क्या तुमने यंत्रों के संसार को त्याग कर
पक्षियों का मधुर कलरव सुना है ?

क्या कभी अवांछित कर्कश ध्वनियों से परे
अन्तर्मन के झंकृत संगीत को गुना है ?

क्या कभी मेघखंडों को शुभ्र आकाश-वन में
उमड़ते, घुमड़ते या विचरते पाया है ?

क्या कभी पर्वतों के उन्नत शिखरों को
आत्मलीन, तटस्थ हो प्रशान्त भाव से सिंहरते पाया है ?

क्या कभी तरुओं की शाखाओं को
मस्त पवन के आमंत्रण पर झूमते थिरकते देखा है ?

क्या किसी राकाविहीन रजनी में तारागण को
धरती का प्रहरी बन कुछ प्रकाशकण बिखेरते देखा है ?

क्या डूबे हो सूर्यास्त पर भास्कर के साथ ?
क्या उगे हो उषाकाल में दिनकर के साथ ?

— डॉ. दीपा मार्टिन्स

कहाँ खड़ी है नई सहस्राब्दी की भारतीय नारी ?

तो इस सहस्राब्दी की नारी क्या करे ? आज इतना अवश्य हुआ है कि बीसवीं शताब्दी के अंत तक आते-आते जिस प्रकार देश-विदेश में महिला आन्दोलन पनपा है, उससे भारतीय नारी को भ्रम के छलावे व यथार्थ के सच का अंतर समझ में आने लगा है। ग्रामीण क्षेत्र में भी साधिन की सरकारी परिकल्पना से आगे बढ़कर वह सशक्तिकरण की ओर उन्मुख हुई है। संगठन ने उसे नई ऊर्जा व शक्ति दी है। आज आवश्यकता है अपने ऊपर अपना अधिकार कायम करने की और अपने धरातल को पहचानने की।

ऐसा नहीं है कि भारतीय नारी सर्वत्र ही पदाक्रांत हुई है। नई सहस्राब्दी में अरुणा रॉय, मेधा पाटकर, अरुणधती रॉय, महाश्वेता देवी जैसे अनेक हस्ताक्षर हैं जो कहीं सूचना के अधिकार की माँग कर, कहीं बड़े बाँधों की आड़ में वास्तविक विकास का विरोध कर व कहीं कलम की ताकत से अपनी अस्मिता व अस्तित्व की लड़ाई लड़ रहे हैं। अतः उसका परिणाम अवश्य ही सार्थक होगा और उसके लिए भी किसी दिनकर को कहना पड़ेगा —

ये दीप अमा के बुझते हैं — सारा आकाश तुम्हारा है।

— डॉ. दीपा मार्टिन्स



Ms. Shabnam Virmani is a filmmaker, singer and artist in residence at the Srishti School Institute of Art, Design and Technology, Bangalore.

In 2003, Ms. Virmani started the Kabir Project journeys, travelling with folk singers in Malwa, Rajasthan and Pakistan in a quest for the spiritual and socio-political resonances of the 15th century mystic poet Kabir in our contemporary worlds leading to the creation of a body of work spanning documentary films, music CDs, books of the poetry in translation, rural yatras and urban festivals.

The Kabir Project team has since forayed into other poets and regions, and their current work is focused on the creation of Ajab Shahar — a vast web duniya on the oral traditions of Bhakti, Sufi and Baul poetry and song. Ms. Virmani's film, Kabira Khada Bazaar Mein, won the Special Jury Prize at the 52nd National Awards in 2011. Inspired by the inclusive spirit of folk music, somewhere along these journeys, she took up playing the five-stringed tambura herself and now sings the folk songs of Kabir and other mystic poets.

In her earlier work, Ms. Virmani has been a journalist and co-founder of the Drishti Media & Arts Collective in Ahmedabad, where she worked closely for over a decade with the women's movement in the country through film and community radio.

In 2002, Ms. Virmani co-directed an award-winning community radio programme with the Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan in Gujarat. Her work has won numerous awards and recognitions including the First Prize at the One Billion Eyes Documentary Film Festival, Chennai, the Chameli Devi Jain Award for Women in Journalism, the Best Film in the Society & Development Category, International Video Festival (IVFEST), Thiruvananthapuram, 1995, the Special Jury Prize at the 58th National Awards, India, June 2011 and the Grand Prize at the Sixth Tokyo Global Environmental Film Festival.

Ms. Virmani's work has been celebrated at numerous forums of theatre and art across the world including the Mahindra Indo-America Arts Council Film Festival, New York City, the World Performing Arts Festival, Lahore, Pakistan, the Bangalore International Film Festival, the Kala Ghoda Festival, Mumbai, the VIBGYOR International Film Festival, Thrissur, Kerala, the International Festival of Sacred Arts, Delhi, the Chingari Video Festival, Conference on South Asian Studies, University of Wisconsin, Madison, USA, the Margaret Mead International Film Festival, New York City, the Margaret Mead Travelling Film and Video Festival, Film South Asia, Kathmandu, Nepal, the Fifth Mumbai International Film Festival, the Sakshi Film Festival, Bangalore, the Prakriti Film Festival, Pune, the New Delhi Video Festival, the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival, Japan and the Fribourg Film Festival, Switzerland.



Lighting the lamp before the portrait of Dr. Deepa Martins



Ms. Bharti Tolumbia and Mr. Anupam Martins addressing the gathering



Ms. Shabnam Virmani delivering the keynote address

HAAN AUR NA KE BEECH MEIN

Questioning Identity & Duality in the World of Kabir

I feel really happy to get this morning's assembly moment with all these young minds and hearts to share an inspiration that has infused my life and many people's lives. And, whatever I have, over the last few weeks, understood and learnt about Dr. Deepa Martins' life makes me feel really humbled to be invited here on a day special to all of you.

We live in very difficult times. We open the newspaper in the morning and we are flooded with news of despair, violence and a lot of hatred and brutality. If you look around right now, there is violence between genders, a lot of brutality on women, caste-based violence, inter-nation violence and inter-religious violence.

I am here today to share with you an inspiration which started around the 6th century of this country's history in the South of India and grew over the years and has continued to stay in our lives, and the history of our nation as well, as a vibrant tradition, and that is the *bhakti movement*. I would like to expand the idea of *bhakti* to include Sufi, mystic and Baul traditions as well.

So, who were these people? They were love-intoxicated wanderers, saint poets, singers, mystics and fierce social critics. And over the centuries, their songs have continued to wander and travel and have continued to inspire many of us. So, it's an unbroken tradition. I am mentioning this vast tradition because if there are two things that it stood for, it stood for 'love' and it stood for 'the spirit of questioning'. And the two go together. I am saying this with the complete conviction that no matter how despairing we may get – when we look around us and see the terrible folly of human divisiveness leading to violence and war – *know that this is your true heritage*. Please know that this spirit is not contained in any one religious faith system. It stands outside it, fiercely. It refuses to be contained in Hinduism or Islam or

any organized religious system of faith or social ideology for that matter. This tradition stands apart and it mirrors back our folly to us and lovingly tells us that there is something at the core of this violence that is dividing us all.

Let's see what clues this song holds to us. I thought, let me start with this very famous song of Kabir. But before that, a Sufi poem...

(sings)

तू इश्क़ का ज़र्फ़ आजमा तो सही
तू नज़र से नज़र मिला तो सही

Who's this *me* here, and who are *you*? We could be lovers. I could be a Musalmaan and you could be a Hindu. I could be a Pakistani and you could be an Indian. I could be gay, and you could be straight. I am saying to you...

(sings)

इश्क़ का ज़र्फ़ आजमा तो सही
तू नज़र से नज़र मिला तो सही
दिल को तस्कीन न हो तो मैं ज़ामिन
तू ज़रा मैकदे में आ तो सही

Put the genius of love to test, just once (ishq ka zarfaazma to sahi).

Exchange a look with me, just once.

If your heart isn't hushed, I'll take the blame.

But come into this tavern (maikada) just once.

So, this is the invitation that the mystic gives you - try it out! The whole history of human kind has worked with hatred, division, borders, boundaries, separation and we see where that has brought us. It takes a lot of courage to practice love.

(sings)

ये तो घर है प्रेम का, ख़ाला का घर नाहिं
सीस उतारे भोई धरे, तब बैठे घर माहिं

So, what Kabir is saying here is that this is the house of love, it's not your favourite aunt's house where you'll be fed and pampered. It's a tough place to be. What does it take to enter the

house of love? "*Sees utaare bhoi dhare!*" Cut off your head and put it on the floor and then walk into this house. The head here symbolizes ego, your sense of superiority, this pride! See where this whole idea of '*garv*' has landed us. So, these mystics ask us to be humble and bow, only then can we taste the power of love.

(sings)

चाखी चाहे प्रेम रस, राखी चाहे मान

एक मियान में दो खड़क, देखा सुना नहीं कान

So, taste the sweet nectar of love or keep your prestige and your identity intact. Two swords in one scabbard is not going to happen. Love is not an easy, feel-good thing. There are a lot of trials in here.

(sings)

हमन हैं इश्क मस्ताना, हमन को होशियारी क्या?

रहें आजाद या जग से, हमन दुनिया से यारी क्या?

I am intoxicated on love. I don't need to be clever or worldly-wise anymore.

जो बिछुड़े हैं पियारे से, भटकते दर-ब-दर फिरते

हमारा यार है हम में, हमन को इंतेज़ारी क्या?

Those who are separated from their beloved, wander from door to door. Those whose beloved is within them, who have they to wait for?

न पल बिछुड़े पिया हमसे, न हम बिछड़े पियारे से,

उन्हीं से नेह लागी है, हमन को बेकरारी क्या?

Not for a moment was I separated from this beloved.

कबीरा इश्क का माता, दुई को दूर कर दिल से

जो चलना राह नाजुक है, हमन सिर बोझ भारी क्या?

Kabir says, get drunk on this taste of love, of togetherness, because the path is really delicate, and tough. It's impossible to walk with such a load of burden on your head. So, he talks about '*dui*' and '*bojh*'. '*Dui*' translates as 'duality'. And, he talks about this as a '*bojh*', which if we carry upon us all the time, it would make our lives tough. For the sake of this lecture, let's argue that this '*bojh*' is identity.

The root of all violence in our society is an identity that we are clinging to. Identity is not a bad thing though. I could ask you now, who you are, and you would give your name, say, Aditya Sharma.

But is that who you are? asks the mystic. Every aspect of your identity, positions you on one side of duality. It gives you a sense of comfort and a sense of cultural belonging. All these are very important things, but it also excludes. It defines who you are in opposition to something or somebody else. And the whole dual nature of our identity is a sense of self and the Other. Just think about it! Let's take the name 'Aditya Sharma'. This makes you upper caste, so, naturally on the other side of this duality. You're Hindu, so then again on the other side. You are male, so again on the other side of somebody else. Now, you might say I am being super-idealistic, imagining an identity that is free of all this.

But this is what the Sufis and the mystics ask us to do. They ask us to question who we are. They say, Sufism asks three questions: Who are you? Where have you come from? Where are you going? No one asks themselves these three basic questions because we have believed that by that accident of fate, we were born here, at this time, in this manner, in this nation, in this faith and we assume that is who we are. We get very attached to that identity. Then, if people are swinging in our favour in the country, we feel good about being X, Y or Z. And then, we go to another country for work and someone extreme comes to power, then we feel threatened. So, what is this sort of identity that makes our chest swell with pride in one place and makes us shudder with fear in another place? Is this how frail our identity is, that wherever we go, we need to defend it, we need to protect it, it is constantly under threat. Either it's on the top or it is struggling to assert itself.

Kabir says this is absolutely *not* who you are. You are something far beyond. You are something far greater than this small, little identity that you have attached yourself to. Think about it. It's a deep question, "Who am I?"

I met a gentleman in Pakistan while working on the films I made

on Kabir. He said something really special that deeply resonated with me. He said, "देखिये, किसी चीज़ को 'जानने' और उसे 'पहचानने' में बहुत फ़र्क़ होता है।" '*Jaanana*' is to know something, '*pehchaanana*' is to identify that thing later once you have known it. But, these days, people identify with something first, even before they know it. Let me explain.

You may *know* Rama in a way, as an experience, that he exists in the entire universe and in your body. Or, you could *identify* yourself with Rama. These are two totally different things and people tend to short-circuit the first and jump into the second. The whole scenario of violence around us is a game of identities. These are ego clashes. Nobody is really stopping to experience fully the reality they are claiming to defend.

So, this is what the mystic says to you, understand something before you identify with it. In fact, he says, don't identify with it. It just is! There is a *doha* from Malwa, where somebody asks Kabir, who are you?

He says,
(sings)

जात हमारी आत्मा और प्राण हमारा नाम
अलख हमारा इष्ट है और गगन हमारा गाम

*My caste is my soul, my name is my breath. That unknown,
unseen, invisible is my deity and my native place is the sky.*

Something as limitless as sky, as vast as that. Not something that can be contained in anything narrow.

कर गुज़रान गरीबी में साधो भाई, मगरूरी क्यों करता?
जोगी होकर जटा बढ़ावे, नंगे पाँव क्यों फिरता है रे भाई?
गठरी बौध सर ऊपर धर ले, यों क्या मालिक मिलता है रे भाई?
कर गुज़रान फ़कीरी में साधो भाई, मगरूरी क्यों करता?

*You put on all the trappings of being a pious person and you strut
about calling yourself a yogi, is this how you find your truth, is this
how you find peace?*

मुल्ला होकर बाँग पुकारे, क्या तेरा साहिब बहरा है रे भाई?

You shout loudly but what is the sense? Loudspeakers in this

country are true kings, aren't they? Competing loudspeakers, because we want to proclaim our faith to the world. We don't want to deal with it, we don't want to understand it intimately like a conversation with our own soul. We want to broadcast it first. The latest way of doing this is on social media. Before something happens, you would have already posted it on Facebook.

चींटी के पाँव नेवर बाजे, सो भी साहिब सुनता है
The anklet on the feet of an ant can also be heard by the Lord. That is how subtle it is.

धरती आकाश गुफा के अंदर, पुरुष एक वहाँ रहता है रे भाई
 हाथ ना पाँव, रूप नहीं रेखा, नंगा होकर फिरता है रे भाई
 It takes courage to embrace that sense of yourself which is free of all these markers.

जो तेरे घट में, जो मेरे घट में, जो सबके घट में एक है रे भाई
 कहे कबीर सुनो भाई साधो, हर जैसे को तैसा है रे भाई
 कर गुजरान गरीबी में साधो भाई, मगरूरी क्यों करता?

There is a reference in this bhajan, “पुरुष एक वहाँ रहता”. Let us not take this as a male chauvinistic statement. By *‘purush’*, Kabir means an energy, a truth that is revealed through its manifestation.

So, let me come to another divide – the gender divide. When we create a very clear sense of the Other, then we suppress that part of the Other that is in ourselves. “I am a man, you are a woman. I am a Hindu, you are a Muslim.” That's why, in far Eastern philosophy, there is this symbol of the Yin and the Yang, there is this white, there is this black. But there is a dot of white in the black and a dot of black in the white. There is no pure duality and here's where we don't get it.

I believe that a lot of brutal violence on women that we see around us is because men are deeply uncomfortable with the feminine in themselves. It's an energy that Gandhiji could

embrace, it's an energy that Ramkrishna Paramhans could embrace and it's an energy that all the Sufis and the bhaktas and the Bauls have embraced. As male poets and mystics, they have embraced the feminine energy in themselves and that is why, you would find in the poetry of Kabir, the woman's voice. He is not scared of being vulnerable, expressing his torment. There is this tender voice in his work expressing yearning for union with the beloved.

And, on the other hand, what did the women mystics do? They set out, they challenged the house, they challenged the supremacy of family honour, they challenged the constraints of the walls of the house and they stepped out. Instead of taking husband as God, they took God as their husband.

I'd like to read you a poem. There is a famous woman mystic called Mahadevi Akka from the South. So, here is Mahadevi Akka whose beloved was Shiva.

*I love the handsome one
 He has no death
 Decay nor form
 No place or side
 No end nor birthmarks.
 I love him O Mother. Listen.*

*I love the Beautiful One
 With no bond nor fear
 No clan no land
 No landmarks
 For his beauty.*

*So my lord, white as jasmine, is my husband.
 Take these husbands who die
 Decay, and feed them
 To your kitchen fires!*

And, there is one woman very, very close to you in Rajasthan,

who said something similar.

मीरा कहे राणा हूँ तने ना वरूँ, तू आज जीवे काल मरी जाय
वरूँ म्हारा सांवरियां ने, म्हारो चूड़लो अमर होई जाय

Meera says, Rana, look here, if I get married to you, you will live today and die tomorrow. But if I get wedded to my beloved Krishna, my wedding bangles are eternal.

This is a really valuable thing for all the young girls sitting here. You can find that beloved within, you can have that strength of *purushutva*, of standing autonomous, of standing alone, standing tall like a tree, not like a vine. Don't look for a strong tree to wind around, be a strong tree yourself (as my friend Parvathy Baul says)!

And what's the message here for the young boys? As Kamla Bhasin had said in a previous lecture to you, "Learn to cry!" There is an incredible strength in that. And, I think, a tribute to Dr. Deepa Martins and all the women who have spoken after her in her memory, is that women bring that strength of emotional intelligence which makes all the difference. So, embrace that in yourself.

Now, I am going to sing you a Baul song in which in a woman's voice, the poet says, "*Aami Tomaro Lagiye Re...*"

*Aami tomaaro laagiya re
Ghar baari chhaadilaam re
Aar shaagar seenchilaam
re manek paivaar aashe*

*O bondhu re!
Tomaar paagol omi re bondhu
Jaane desher lok re
Aar paashon hui maar le chhuri
Abhagineer buke*

*O bondhu re!
Dukher kopaal shukh hoi lo na
Phiri deshe deshe
Jugol raashe jonma bodhi*

Chokher jole bhaashe

*O bondhu re!
Nodeer kachhe koile re dukho
Paani jai ujaiya re
Vriksher kachhe koile re dukho
Taar paatr jaaye jhuriya*

I, for your sake, have given up the home and the hearth. I am mad about you. There is one stanza here, which I really love, where she says, "*I went and told the river of my sorrow, its water evaporated. I told the tree of my sorrow, and its leaves shed.*" This is a poem that recognizes that what is outside is also within.

I know it's difficult for you, young people, who are being told by society every day, "Who will you be when you grow up?" That's the big thing, "Who am I going to become?" And consolidating an identity is very important for you. That's not wrong either. But I'd like to use the image of a jacket for identity. Please wear a jacket, but wear it in such a way, that it allows some air in. Let it not be very tight or stiff. Don't cling to your identity so hard that you suffocate in it, that you are strangled by it, that you become so uncomfortable that you make your life miserable for people around you because of your identity. The Bauls wear a *choga* (loose tunic) and the Dervishes wear big swirling robes. I think it's symbolic.

We delight in identity, we delight in language, culture, location, geography, poetry. These are all about our identity. Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater, but always be in a state of ecstasy. That's what the mystics invite you to experience. The Greek word 'ecstasy' means ex-stasis. 'Ex' means outside or separate and 'stasis' is where you become unmoving or fixed. So, in a state of 'ecstasy' or 'ex-stasis' you step out of yourself. Let go of that sense of 'me', 'me' and 'me' that you've created. Step out of that small 'me' and experience a vaster sense of Self! That's what these mystics have been doing.

So the play is this stance, between being me and being the bigger

Me. We will end with one song in which all of you would join me. It's a song from Malwa which tells you to do away with all these dualities and the sense of self-importance that you have created because of your identity. Our truth is bare from all sides – real, pure, original – before all these markers trapped us.

So, he says,

इनका भेद बता मेरे अवधू अच्छी करनी कर ले तू
डाली फूल जगत के माहि, जहाँ देखूँ वहाँ तू का तू

हाथी में हाथी बन बैठो, चींटी में है छोटी तू
होय महावत ऊपर बैठे, हाँकन वाला तू का तू

चोरों के संग चोरी करता, बदमाशों में भेड़ो तू
चोरी करके तू भाग जावे, पकड़ने वाला तू का तू

दाता के संग दाता बन जावे, भिखारी में भेड़ो तू
मंगतो हो कर माँगन लागे, देने वाला तू का तू

नर नारी में एक बिराजे, दो दुनिया में दीसे क्यों
बालक हो कर रोवन लागे, राखन वाला तू का तू

जल थल जीव में तू ही बिराजे, जहाँ देखूँ वहाँ तू का तू
कहे कबीर सुनो भई साधो, गुरु मिल्या है ज्यों का त्यों

He says, “अच्छी करनी कर ले तू डाली फूल जगत के माहि, जहाँ देखूँ वहाँ तू का तू”. This is to do with the whole question that one raised in the course of this talk about ‘*pehchaan*’ and ‘*jaanana*’. To identify with something is one thing. To *be* that something, to *practice* it, is quite another. And there is a world of difference between these two. First be something, know it and believe it, before you identify with it.

The great ancient thinker, Lao Tzu says,

*When the great Tao is forgotten, goodness and piety appear.
When the body's intelligence declines, cleverness and knowledge step forth.
When there is no peace in the family, filial piety begins.
When the country falls into chaos, patriotism is born.*

So, let's have the courage to know the One within, let's have the courage to experience ourselves as vast as the ocean. Kabir says,

दरिया की लहर दरियाव है जी,
उठे तो पानी, बैठे तो पानी,
कहो जी दूजा किस तरह होयम?

You are a wave of particularity that has arisen in your lifetime from this sea – that is the source – from where we come and where we will all go. Enjoy the ride!

Once a Sufi thinker told me, “A wave arose and a thousand droplets were thrown into the sky,” and then he stopped and said, “We are those droplets. We are arching into the sky right now... little droplets... the sun is winking through us, and very soon we will land back into the ocean.”

So let's feel this doha by Kabir,

बूँद पड़ी समुद्र में, जाने है सब कोय
समुद्र समाना बूँद में, बूझै बिरला कोय

Kabir says, that the drop merges into the ocean, everyone knows. But, that rare one is the one who realizes that the entire ocean is held within this drop. So, that is who you are. That's the answer to the question the Sufi asked you. Who are you? Where have you come from? And, where are you going?

Shabnam Virmani

April 5, 2017

सेवानिवृत्ति

मेरे पास है स्मृतियों का संचित कोष
संबंधों का संबल
आत्मीयता का संस्पर्श
और भविष्य का आह्वान
जो मेरे कल को सार्थक कर
मुझमें करेगा अपार जिजीविषा का संचार
और भर देगा मुझमें इतनी नवस्फूर्ति
कि मेरा रोम-रोम
प्रकाश, जीवंतता और आह्लाद से
हो उठेगा सराबोर
हो उठेगा सराबोर।

— डॉ. दीपा मार्टिन्स



Ms. Maya Krishna Rao is a theatre artiste, teacher and activist. In an illustrious acting career spanning over five decades, Ms. Rao has played leading roles in numerous plays including the Dream of Reason, Shakespeare's King Lear and Twelfth Night, Henrik Ibsen's A Doll's House, Aphra Behn's The Rover (invited by Womens' Playhouse Trust, London); Desdemona for

Theatreworks, Singapore, among others.

Ms. Rao's work has been celebrated at festivals and workshops all across the world including many locations across the UK, USA, Jordan, Germany, Denmark, South Africa, Finland, France, Spain, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Pakistan, Laos and the Netherlands. Her life has been celebrated in Portrait of Maya Krishna Rao, a 1997 film by Doordarshan and documented with video notes at Sparrow. She was also featured among 20 notable living Indian women of the last 50 years by the National Book Trust.

An alumni of Miranda House, Delhi, Ms. Rao completed her Master's in Political Studies from the Jawaharlal Nehru University. She also received a Master's in Theatre Arts from Leeds University, England and a Drama in Education Diploma from Trinity College, Ireland. She has trained in Kathakali in Delhi and Kerala specializing in the male role, with several performances in India and abroad of the Ramayana, Mahabharata and Shakespeare's Othello among others.

Ms. Rao serves on the Advisory Committee of the National School of Drama Theatre in Education Company. She is an Advisor to the Gati Summer Dance Residency and has served on the NCERT Drama Syllabus Committee and the Delhi University Academic Council.

Ms. Rao lends a new dimension to contemporary Indian theatre— both on and offstage. She devises performances that range from dance theatre to comedy and multimedia. She has created performances over a short period of time in response to events. She also creates comedy that offers insights into social structures and human nature. She has been commissioned to create performances for prestigious theatre festivals at home and abroad. Some of her celebrated shows are Khol Do, A Deep Fried Jam, Heads Are Meant for Walking Into, Hand Over Fist – perspectives on masculinities, Lady Macbeth Revisited, Ravanama and Walk.

Ms. Rao has been a Professor in the Department of Arts, Design and Theatre at the Shiv Nadar University where she designed an Applied Theatre Diploma Programme - Theatre for Education and Social Transformation, TEST. She has also taught at the Perspectives Theatre Company in England, at the Theatre in Education Company in Leeds and has been a Lecturer in Political Science at the Kamala Nehru College in Delhi University. Ms. Rao has created participatory Theatre in Education programmes for children, Drama Syllabus for Classes I-XII, B. Ed. courses and School Teacher Workshops for NSD and schools all over India.

Ms. Rao's work was recognized in the Sangeet Natak Academy Award for Acting in 2010 by the Government of India, an award she returned in 2015.



Mr. Anupam Martins welcoming Ms. Maya Krishna Rao



Ms. Maya Krishna Rao delivering the keynote address



Students watching Ms. Maya Krishna Rao's performance

ARTS, LIFE AND EDUCATION - SOME CONNECTIONS

I can't tell you how happy I am to be here. I feel that I've already been here for months. My time here began only yesterday but I know that I have got a home and an adoptive family here, it feels wonderful. So, thank you for having me here.

Three lovely words – Arts, Life and Education – are what I'm going to talk about today. And, a little about acting, because I teach acting. That's my job – to prepare actors to go on stage, to make plays for audiences like you who watch and these actors perform what they have rehearsed for many days. Some themes are taken from a story or a play, they create scenes and they rehearse it.

Please remember this word 'rehearse'. We have heard about the term 'role play' in life and then there is 'role play on stage'. So, I spent many years doing this, and then I realized, very fortunately for myself, and that was really connected with school education, that there is a whole 'other' world of theatre, that's usually called drama, where there is another way of looking at this wonderful connection between theatre and life. Also, there is a whole range of other arts: music, dance, film, culture, architecture, television... Today, I will focus on how theatre can draw in together all the other arts into its folds and do some really wonderful, magical things.

So, this is one kind of theatre (gestures towards the screen which shows a picture of a performance on stage). There is another kind of theatre where there is no audience, but a room full of children. So, all the way from when life begins to where it ends, can be enacted. Sometimes in death or just moments before death, we get to speak to someone who's going to go from one world to another. And then the person passes on. And, we prepare for that person's spirit to be amongst us.

I feel very fortunate that Dr. Deepa Martins and Shri Gilroy Martins are here among us in spirit. While they were here, they

too played many roles.

Theatre is in acts of life and death. When we prepare for people's deaths, we choose flowers, songs, we write them, too. Some of those songs have lived on for centuries. We still sing them. All this is art. But what's art is also the way in which we dress in the morning. When you're getting ready in casual wear, you'd wear a t-shirt but sometimes tuck it in from the middle or tuck it loosely, however you choose to wear it – that's art. How I cook, what I choose to put in say a *gobhi aloo sabzi* today, which was different from what I did yesterday, and would be different the day after, is also art. I'd go by how I feel today, so I add this or that *masala* accordingly. It is art because, it has to do with the senses, of taste, of touch, and when the taste goes down into the stomach – it goes into the head, it goes into the heart, it seems to fill the soul. Hence, there's art in many things you do in life. Somebody designed the way you wear a tie in the morning. Somebody designed the tie and the knot of the tie. Can you imagine, it's been there for more than a century! And, that design, the knot, it's an art.

So now, here are these two people (refers to the image on screen of a teacher and student in a classroom). They have no audience, they are in a classroom and they are investigating life. And that too is theatre. We call it 'drama', just to make the difference.

While 30 or 40 of you are in the classroom, along with a teacher, you can pluck a bit of life from the world outside and bring it inside the classroom and bring it to life through drama. There is no script, no one will tell you how to sit, how to get up, speak or react. You just escape into another world, and live and speak in it. Drama can start here, just in that little space of a classroom. Some of you can stand here and make a still picture and somebody else can act as a facilitator and say, "What do you think is going on here?" She may ask you, "Why do you think this one is looking angry?" Your answers could vary: Maybe, she had a fight with someone. Maybe, she doesn't want to go to school today. Maybe, she has done badly in her exam. Maybe, she's really angry because the question paper leaked out. So

many possibilities are there in this space from where you can explore life, its little moments and live them in entirety. And, from there, we can progress to the next thought, "So, she's really mad at her friend!" "Ahh! What could be the cause?" And, of course you would give many causes. Then, the teacher will say, can we go along with that cause which he (one of the students) suggested? Following this, she divides you into groups and then you go and make little sequences where you create this girl and her friend and give them names. And then they create a sequence which is all about how that fight happened. Then, we can get into the next stage – what should we do about this fight. Some children may say, "Let's find out some ways to resolve it. Because we want them to be friends." So again, through suggestion and creating still pictures, where the still pictures comes to life, all of you explore life because you know what friendships mean, you know what it is when friendships break. There is a lovely word in English called 'negotiate'. You may decide what the angry girl is thinking, *Shall I keep quiet for a few days? Let them come to me. Would they? May be not! Should I write a note for them asking them to meet me?* This is all negotiation. You are exploring life.

So, in a nutshell, you are plucking a bit of life, bringing it into the classroom and exploring it. In a way, you are rehearsing life so that when you are at your current stage of life or later on, you know better what to do in a moment of crisis. In fact, you know much better than people who haven't done drama. You'd say to yourself, "This is what I've already practised in the classroom. I know what it is to negotiate, I know what it is to be in a conflict, I know how it is to look at a picture in the newspaper and actually *read* it."

By read, I mean analyse. For example, here is a picture where Indian and Pakistani soldiers are standing in front of each other and the clash is about to begin. You already know how to look at this picture and analyse it – *What goes behind those soldiers? There is a government. What goes behind the government? There are ministers, there is policy, there is a notion of war. Where does it come from?* Etc. You become a person who can look at a problem and ask a series of questions that lie, invisibly, behind it, the causes of

it and therefore, what possible solutions could be found.

We heard about Dr. Martins earlier today. How she just decided to get into life trying to help people with their problems. And then, of course, as a wonderful teacher, what she learnt from people's problems, she brought it back to education.

Drama loves looking at problems and observing what's happening and the possibilities of what could happen. Which is why, we don't need an audience, we play for ourselves.

Now, how did all this start, why did we think to bring drama into the classroom. It came from a very wonderful, universal thing. I remember when I was very little, I would go to my uncle's room on Sunday afternoons when everyone would be asleep and pick up his briefcase that he'd carry to his office because I'd feel very important. My cousin would wrap a towel around his head and play my 'wife'. And, we would immediately get into playing 'Mummy - Papa'. I would get into the role of Papa and shout, "Where is my tiffin, why isn't it ready? I have to go to office. I am getting late." I'd just become a very bossy husband. Now here, I didn't have to imagine to become a man. I just became one because I had observed my uncle and my father. My cousin, playing my wife, would say, "I don't have time, I am a teacher. I have to rush to school." My cousin had observed his aunt. In this way, we would play for hours. Nobody told us to do this. I am sure if I was going to have a conversation with you now, many people would raise their hands and say, "Of course we have played these role play games like *chor sipaahi*, doctor-patient and the like." Did anyone ask you to play these? No! You could play like this for hours together. Your smiles are telling me that I am right. This whole business of going and escaping into another world and becoming somebody else for real, not for the stage, is what all of us have done. The body lifts, the mind lifts when we escape into another world.

Child psychologists and educationists found that this roleplay that children are busy with for hours is not just entertainment. They learn a lot as they play. In fact, that's why we use the word 'play' for a stage theatre. We say we are doing a play, but actually

this is play! So, they thought if children will get into drama without anybody telling them, "Come and be a part of drama," and if they are also learning something from this, then we better bring it into the classroom. In this way, drama started getting used in the classroom.

We call one theatre, that comes on the stage, and we call the other one drama. So, these are all images (pointing towards photographs on screen) from a college where they are actually living it. They are not preparing for a play on stage. These are young women who are training to become teachers and are experimenting with drama. I am standing right there in the corner, I'm their teacher and trying to excite them to get into the world. I asked them, "Should we go to the forest?" These young girls who are actually 20 and 21 are becoming little children of three or four and imagining the forest. *Will there be a lion in the jungle, what about snakes? Oh, it's going to be so dark!* All these thoughts cross their minds. The next thought then, "What would we do to help each other?" The three-four-year-old's mind would think, "Let's hold hands!" Already, the idea has arrived that if we move together, we can fight fear. We all know from life, the things that we can do when we are together work out much better sometimes. In this roleplay here, these 21-year-olds have entered the jungle and then I, as teacher said, "It's cold in the forest." Without thinking, all of them piled up on each other, to keep each other warm! I didn't tell them to do that. My next prompt was – "such lovely grass". They promptly began to roll in imaginary grass. In this way, they escaped into another world which of course is wonderful for a three or four-year-old child. And, it is such fun!

I can start drama in a classroom with a picture. It can start with this (points towards a Moghul miniature of a portrait of a woman on a horseback bowing towards a deer; her bow is around its neck) – who is this woman? Where did she learn to sling her bow on this deer? This can start a whole drama exploration of the medieval world. You can go into the library and look for books. You can see this painting is from the Mughal

times. How did people live those days? How did they trade? How did they become warriors? Were women also soldiers? You would research a bit about this and then you would come back and your teacher will guide you into another world. You may make little scenes of families of that time and some of them preparing to go to war, and so on.

There is a story in the NCERT EVS book of Class V, Chapter 18. It's about this man Jatryabhai who had to migrate from his village with his family as a dam was to be constructed. The story begins in Bombay. It starts with him looking at his daughter while the daughter is watching television playing in the neighbour's house through a window. And then the story winds back to the time he was a boy and lived happily in his native village. It is a lovely thing in theatre - you can rewind and go back in time, you can also move forward in time. Coming back to this story, Jatryabhai has to make a bundle of his belongings and move to another place where he can neither sow, nor is there water. When he puts his children into the school, they don't understand the language. His daughter feels lonely and they are all unhappy. Then, his relative calls him to Mumbai and so they move again.

I designed a little drama where we are not following the story entirely but its wider theme. I start by asking the students, what do you think is the main theme going on in the story and many of them said – loss. The loss of one's home, the loss of a familiar river, fields, the loss of one's whole world. Then I pull out a *gamcha* and put it on the ground and say – “This belongs to Jatryabhai. The bus is about to leave and he's packing the last few belongings into a bundle and will close the house and leave.” Along with the *gamcha*, I keep a little wooden bullock cart – as a representation of a toy that belonged to Jatryabhai when he was a little boy. Now, I ask the students to watch me. I pick up the toy and first play with it. Then, I go to the entrance of the house and make the action of digging a hole just outside the door. I then carefully ‘bury’ the toy. I don't say anything. Jatryabhai is alone with his thoughts. Then I run to the imaginary river and kick the

waters – angry and sad. I then go back to the ‘house’ and hear people call out for me. “Yes, I am coming. Wait, wait, don't let the bus leave!”, I shout out. I stop for one last moment at the place where I have buried the toy and run on. All this is done in only two minutes of drama. When I finish I ask the students, “What just had happened here?” There are so many possibilities. The students may say, “Jatryabhai buried his toy here as a remembrance. Others may say, as a time capsule. Even though tomorrow this place will be submerged in water, a part of him will continue to live here. There would be some sign of him. This is what we call civilization! Jatryabhai is leaving a specimen of his civilization. We can analyse various aspects of this act. The teacher can ask, “Why did he behave that way when he went to the river?” The student can reply, “Oh, he was very angry with the river, because he was to leave his house as a dam was to be built on it. If there was no river, there would be no dam.” The teacher can break the students into groups and ask them to explore what could happen next.

It doesn't have to be Jatryabhai's life. It can be any situation in which you have experienced a kind of loss. How do you feel when you move from one class to the next? How does it feel when your parents get transferred to another city and you've to say goodbye to your friends. You can make little sequences and share them. In this particular version of the drama, the villagers of Kheri Gaon (Jatryabhai's original village) go and meet the Collector to negotiate better terms for themselves, “If you are asking us to move bag and baggage from here, then there are some provisions you will have to make for us”. Or, “Why have you decided to make the dam on your own, why didn't you consult us first, this is our river, we can advise you how to use its waters.” So, then another drama process begins. The children sit down and talk about what they want to discuss with the government officer. And then I come in as this very fierce ‘Collector Sahib’ and say, “Come, sit. Let's discuss!” We set up a whole table and the representatives of the village (students like you) put forward the set of demands: “Take us to the proposed place where you want to send us. Is there water, are there fields,

will we be able to sow, will we be able to go to school? We want to know all of this before we resettle into a new place”. Or, “We can advise you about this river... a dam can create floods and destroy homes and crops...” It all depends on how the students – in role as villagers along with their teacher (me) – decide to take matters forward. So, through this act, they learn to negotiate. They learn about real problems in society. And it all started with a chapter in the EVS textbook.

You can create a whole play with just a series of charcoal sketches, where you can examine various parts and gestures of the sketch and take the story forward in your own way. You can create something with a single picture of this man drowning in the sea (points to a picture from the refugee crisis). You can decide what happens to him, what preceded this picture and what came after through your imagination. The buzz word here is possibilities! The central idea being – what could have happened! We are creating multiple possibilities of life, we are rehearsing it and doing it in our own classroom without judgments about our acting skills. There is no question of acting, because we are believing it!

Now, I want to tell you about another way of doing drama. I'd like to tell you about Pandita Ramabai Dongre Medhavi (points at the picture on the screen). Ramabai was born in Maharashtra, British India to a knowledgeable Brahmin scholar. The family fell on bad times and Ramabai, her parents and brother had to leave their home. They walked from Maharashtra to Kashmir to Bengal, homeless. On the way, Ramabai lost her parents and her brother. All three died of hunger. Ramabai walked alone till she reached Bengal. As a Brahmin, Ramabai had learnt several shlokas and the wisdom behind them from her parents. So when she arrived in Bengal, leaders of the social reform movement were amazed to meet her. They gave her the title, Pandita. But soon after, to their utter shock, this free-spirited Ramabai decided to marry a Christian! Her husband died some time later. She went back to her home in Maharashtra, setup a home for child widows. When people stopped giving her money to run the institution, so firm was her resolve, that she got into a boat,

went to America and travelled up and down the country and collected funds. She came back, set up a printing press, a hospital, etc. She would go in disguise and pick up famine struck children and bring them to her institution Mukti Bhawan.

So, we were so inspired by this true story that we created a theatre programme based on Pandita's life where we got the audience – students like yourselves – to explore the kinds of problems that she had to face.

I believe one of the best ways to learn or to educate yourself is to escape into drama. If you want to do drama and you want to do theatre and you want to make your own little plays, the first thing you have to be is a really good listener in every space. When you're travelling by bus, keep listening to conversations around you, you will pick up many things. By listening I mean total listening – you observe every detail while you listen. How people use their hands, their face, their mannersims.

The biggest thing in drama is that you are ready to jump into life, and the life that you recreate in your classroom. You are ready to take every risk, you are not worried about being judged, you are not worried about being laughed at and you are not worried about being alone with your views, like Pandita Ramabai.

I'm going to give you an idea for an activity you can do. You are a bunch of five people, let's say for example. For this month, each one chooses one person – it could be the newspaper boy, the vegetable vendor, the person who comes to clean or the guard of the school – and spends some time with that person. You sit with them and observe them, talk to them – how they sit and walk, how they speak, how they eat. You listen to what they say, and what they don't say and their attitude to themselves. You can also ask them about a life-changing event. Then, five of you think of a place where the five characters could meet. Now, these five people come to life and you play the person you chose and create scenes with them. Since you have observed the person you are playing so closely, you know how they may interact with the others. So, five of you could create these five-minute pieces –

glimpses – of these peoples lives.

The next month you choose another bunch of people – maybe your family members – and do the same exercise. Very soon, you would have observed so much of life! The more you observe, the more you listen, the more you learn about life. Not only do you educate yourself, but you also become a better person. And that's because you've been observing people with empathy, with sensitivity and consideration.

Nobody taught it to you, you learnt it for yourself! And then, the next step from there is, when you feel so much for some people, if you find something wrong being done to them, you'll say, "I have the power of drama. I will come out on the street and make something to be able to tell the world, 'this is their life, don't spoil it for them'."

(The lecture culminated in Ms. Rao's iconic performance 'Walk'.)

Maya Krishna Rao

April 5, 2018

मदर्स डे— अभिनन्दन मातृशक्ति का

पश्चिम में मई माह में मौसम अत्यन्त खुशनुमा होता है। हर तरफ सुंदर, मोहक पुष्पों से परिवेश महकने लगता है। अंग्रेजी के सुप्रसिद्ध कवि जॉन कीट्स ने अपनी प्रसिद्ध कविता 'ओड टू ए नाइटिंगेल' में मौसम के पहले गुलाब को "मिड मेज़ फर्स्ट चाइल्ड" अर्थात् मध्य मई का प्रथम शिशु कहकर अभिनंदित किया है। अतः मदर्स डे ऐसी ही सुरम्य ऋतु में मनाया जाता है जो एक तरह से प्रकृति माँ के साथ अपनी जननी के प्रति भी कृतज्ञता ज्ञापन का उत्सव है।

— डॉ. दीपा मार्टिन्स

सृष्टि का क्रम

कभी छाता है बसंत, खिलते हैं फूल
कभी जलती है धरती उड़ती है धूल।

कभी भागता है, सरपट मन का चंचल घोड़ा
कभी थक जाते हैं कदम, चलकर ही थोड़ा।

परिवर्तन है प्रकृति का अटल नियम
सुख-दुःख, दुःख-सुख का यूँ ही रहता है क्रम।

हम भले ही इस सत्य को न कर पाएँ सहन
भार हर कंधे को करना ही पड़ता है वहन।

अतः आओ अब बन जाएँ समदर्शी हम
चलता रहेगा यूँ ही सृष्टि का क्रम।

— डॉ. दीपा मार्टिन्स



Journalist and author Ms. Pamela Philipose, who is presently the Public Editor of the New Delhi based news portal The Wire.in, was until 2014 the director and editor-in-chief of Women's Feature Service (WFS), a media agency mandated to highlight gender concerns in mainstream media coverage. She was an advisor to the Media Task Force of the Government of India's High Level Status of Women Committee Report over the years 2013-2014. She was awarded a senior fellowship by the

Indian Council of Social Science Research between 2014 and 2016, during the course of which she also studied the impact of mediatisation on contemporary India.

As senior associate editor with The Indian Express, Ms. Philipose anchored the edit page and wrote extensive commentary on a range of issues, including those of conflict, gender, development and the media. The Indian Express ran her satirical column, Straight Face, for 10 years. She was awarded the Chameli Devi Jain Award for Outstanding Woman Journalist in 1999 and the Zee-Astitva Award for Constructive Journalism in 2007.

Ms. Philipose has authored Laugh All The Way To The Vote Bank, a book of political satire and Media's Shifting Terrain, a book on India's changing patterns of mediatisation. Besides, she has co-written and extensively contributed to many anthologies. She has co-edited Across the Crossfire: Women and Conflict In India and Women's Employment: Work In Progress. She has contributed to various anthologies including Memoirs From The Women's Movement In India: Making A Difference as well as Making News, Breaking News, Her Own Way and Practising Journalism: Values, Constraints, Implications. A 2017 book on The Mothers of Manipur: Twelve Women Who Made History by Teresa Rehman carries an introduction by her.

Ms. Philipose has been invited to present papers and speak at various international fora. Among other occasions, she presented a paper on Crossing Borderlines in South Asia: Women, Divided Identities, Uncertain Destinies at a seminar on Immigrants, Refugees and Women at Meiji Gakuin University, Tokyo in 2005. In 2013, she participated in an international conference at the South Asian Studies Council, Yale University, on Inequality, Mobility, and Sociality in Contemporary India during which she presented a paper entitled Changing Expressions: Youth, Media and Public Culture. In January 2017, she was invited to speak at the 11th Ewha Global Empowerment Programme, Ewha Woman's University, Seoul, on Anti-GBV Feminist Activism in India – New Breakthroughs, New Challenges. She delivered a keynote address at the University of Chicago's 17th Annual South Asia Graduate Student Conference in March 2019.



Lighting the lamp before the portrait of Dr. Deepa Martins



*Ms. Shefali Martins addressing the gathering,
Ms. Bharti Tolumbia walking with Ms. Pamela Philipose*



Ms. Pamela Philipose delivering the keynote address

SO YOU WANT TO BE A JOURNALIST?

There is so much to learn from the life of Dr. Deepa Martins. As I read her daughter, Shefali Martins' reminiscences, 'My Sir', my respect for this quiet yet dynamic woman only grew. Though the book is primarily the story of Gilroy Martins, the father of two brilliant, loving children, Anupam and Shefali, it provides important insights into the figure of Deepa Martins, her wisdom, understanding, ability to give all of herself to not just her family, but her students and larger society.

Deepa Martins' belief in interfaith relationships, her civil activism as a part of PUCL, and the manner in which she reached out to the local community are all extremely inspiring. You are lucky to have an icon such as her, and I am honoured to be delivering the Sixteenth Dr. Deepa Martins Memorial Lecture. Thank you for inviting me here to your beautiful city and the School.

I want to speak here of great journalism. Not the bad journalism spewing out of many television channels, newspapers and social media platforms today, a lot of which is all about putting out fake news in order to benefit some powerful group, institution or personality. Learning to distinguish between good journalism and bad journalism is something we – as citizens, as members of civil society, as people who cherish human rights and human values, must learn to do. It is never too early – and there are a lot of young faces in this room – and it is never too late to do this. Each one of us should critically engage with what we read, see and like in the media, not just accept at face value what is put out for public consumption. For aspiring journalists, especially, this sense of discriminating between good and bad journalists becomes extremely important.

In order to be able to distinguish bad journalism from good journalism, we need to first understand what journalism is all about. Here we come to the basic principles that underlie such journalism. The first of these is a commitment to the truth. But

how do journalists arrive at the truth? Through a process of fact-finding, usually done by reporters, and through a process of fact-checking, usually done by sub-editors who work in the newsroom and who finalise the material brought in by the reporters before it becomes public.

As eye-witnesses to events and developments, journalists tell the rest of us what is really going on. Another principle that is central to journalism is keeping in mind the people for whom these facts are being gathered. Journalists should be loyal first of all to their public – readers, viewers, those who engage on digital platforms. They should ensure that the words they produce serve a public interest. Public interest rises above all other interests, including the interests of the owner of a media establishment or the interests of a politician who may want to influence media content, or even advertisers who pay these publications money to have their products promoted. This is why it is said that good journalism is “without fear or favour”.

The sense of the public also means that journalists should keep not just one section – say very rich and powerful people – in mind when they do their stories. If their work is in public interest, it means that it should be relevant to the whole of society. If you ignore one section of the public in your reporting, it is almost as if you disenfranchise them, as if you are ensuring that they do not exist. Unfortunately, in India, because the media is so focused on the urban middle and upper classes, we are seeing the disturbing trend of rural India being ignored greatly. The concerns of people in the agricultural sector do not figure in the news, as much as those in the corporate sector. According to one study, it was found that India’s highest circulating Hindi and English newspapers devoted just two per cent of their coverage to “rural issues”. Of this, 36 per cent was devoted to “non-agrarian issues”, like crime, violence and the like, and only 28 per cent focused on agrarian themes. We see news on farmers’ suicides occasionally. It is only when farmers are driven to choose death over life, do their concerns figure in the news. If, instead, the media were reporting consistently on

farmers’ problems, the government and local authorities may have been forced to take action on these concerns, and then perhaps things may not have come to the point where those who grow our food for us feel they have no options but to end their lives.

Let’s now go to the third important principle that journalists should always keep in mind: independence. We have spoken of truth, loyalty to the audience, and now let us talk about professional independence that can ensure that the powerful people within society do not get to control what a journalist writes or records or films. This is not easy, especially today when there are attempts constantly being made by powerful corporations and politicians, to control the media, and even silence them. It sometimes requires extraordinary courage not to be intimidated by power or to succumb to the enticements and allurements that those in important position may offer.

Attempts are always being made to influence journalistic writing and it is the independence and integrity of the journalist that ensures that he or she doesn’t fall prey to the offer of better job prospects or a valuable gift, in exchange for putting out fake news.

Independent journalists are not just passive takers of notes, they are curious observers who work hard, talk to many people, research, piece together background details and thus put together the many pieces that make up a story. The source of journalistic independence then is not devotion to a particular interest group or outcome, but accuracy, intellectual fairness and this ability to inform. This is why they say good journalism is about “speaking truth to power”, “about holding up a mirror to society”, about being a “watchdog” of society’s interests.

When we consider great journalism, we need to also have a keener sense of what we mean by news, because news is an important part of journalism. Gathering news is an attempt to make sense of those times that are out of the ordinary: that we played with a pet dog does not make news, if our pet dog bit somebody, it still would not make news, but if someone bit our

pet dog, that could be news. News is also about highlighting those developments that impact many people, not the individual person. So at the moment, we are having elections, and news on the elections is important because they decide the future of the country as a whole. News is also about exciting things that happen – when India wins the World Cup it instantly becomes news – in fact on front pages and prime time news bulletins. But news can also be about things that are going wrong, such as that terrible accident, a human-made disaster that occurred in Bhopal in 1984. It also has a social function and is supposed to make society more aware of democratic values – which is why reporting on the poor, or those suffering from tuberculosis become important. Journalism of this kind provokes society to take action to address the issue.

The biggest challenge journalists face is in making their journalism more interesting, so that it gets read. Among the tools that journalists have, to make their stories more interesting, is their power of description. As we will see in the story on the Salt March, the reader is able to feel the “skin” of that story, almost feel the blows that rained on the heads of Gandhi’s followers.

This takes us to the second attribute of a good development story, the power of building rapport with the subject, so that the reader empathises with the subject. One way of doing this is to focus on one or two people who represent all the others. In other words, there is a human face that is given to the subject. Take the case of a tribal girl child who loves learning arithmetic, but cannot go to school because she has to fill up three buckets for her family every morning. Then there is the right angle – not what you hear about in geometry class – but the angle of the story that is put out. Every story can be told in innumerable ways, so it is important to get the angle that would best convey the story.

Journalists, in order to make their stories more credible, ensure that they use the power of information. In order to do this, they would need to research into the subject they are writing on and

collect data that is relevant to their story. There are many other tools that journalists use in the course of their work, and one particularly I would like to flag here is the interview. It is only by going to the spot and talking directly to the people involved, can an important story become a great story. What people affected by the disaster or who participated in the winning match tell you themselves, lifts the story by several notches.

Good journalism is often described as the first draft of history. Some of the world’s best thinkers and doers were also journalists. Karl Marx was for many years a correspondent of the New York Daily Tribune. In fact, in one of his dispatches as a journalist, on June 25, 1853, he wrote about how badly the British treated India: “There cannot, however, remain any doubt but that the misery inflicted by the British on Hindostan is of an essentially different and infinitely more intensive kind than all Hindostan had to suffer before”.

As many of you may know, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, was also a journalist and was the editor of four newspapers over his lifetime, beginning with *Indian Opinion* in South Africa, and *Young India*, followed by *Navajivan* and *Harijan* after his return to India. He used each of these publications to convey his thoughts, beliefs and plans to the public.

It all began for him when, as a 19-year-old, he went to London for his studies in law, and read a newspaper for the first time. He was later to recall in his autobiography that this experience of reading newspapers inspired him to write articles and thus began a brief career as a freelance journalist. During his three-year stay in London he contributed nine articles for a local newspaper! As he evolved as a political activist, he began to perceive journalism as a public cause. He was to say later that the “sole aim of journalism should be service”. So he had very little patience with news stories that were sensational or which were economical with the truth.

In August 1929, he even wrote a piece in *Young India*, expressing his annoyance with contemporary journalists, under the heading “Reporters, a nuisance”. It was a reaction to a story that

was circulating then about how his weight had been reduced to 80 lbs and that he was so ill that he fainted. “This was baseless,” he stated emphatically. You could call this an early reaction to “fake news”!

Women's contribution to Indian journalism tends to be underplayed. Yet, as early as 1875, we had a woman writer, Srimati Mayasundari, document discrimination against women in a newspaper called *Bangamahila*. She wrote, “From birth we are deprived of good fortune; even our parents and relatives are unhappy about us. The father who wished for a boy, expresses his disgust at being the father of a girl child. We are unable to understand what prevents us from being the apple of his eye.” This dislike for the girl child has translated, we know, into a multi-crore medical industry based on sex-selective abortions. Among the first to report on this ugly trend was Ritambara Shastri writing for the United News of India. Her investigation, carried in 1982, noted how a private medical practitioner and his gynaecologist wife in Amritsar were conducting a thriving practice in administering amniocentesis tests to detect the sex of the foetus and then offering abortion services.

It is not entirely surprising that it happened to be a woman who broke this story. Here we come to one of the most important arguments for why equal representation of women in media concerns is so important. Women represent 50 per cent of the world and it follows that what happens to them constitutes a major proportion of human experience and therefore should be part of what constitutes news. Just as it is important to have, for instance, the voices of Dalit journalists or religious minorities in media content.

Finally, journalism is about harnessing the power of words. I have always believed that good journalism, like good literature, lives on long after the event it describes passes into history. Sometimes good journalism even becomes great literature. Let me read some excerpts of great journalism from various historical moments.

The first is Webb Miller's eye witness account of what happened

during the Dandi March of May 21, 1930 that appeared in a newspaper called *New Freeman*: “By eleven, the heat reached 116 degrees in the shade and the activities of the Gandhi volunteers subsided. I went back to the temporary hospital to examine the wounded. They lay in rows on the bare ground in the shade of an open, palm-thatched shed. I counted 320 injured, many still insensible with fractured skulls, others writhing in agony from kicks in the testicles and stomachs. The Gandhi men had been able to gather only a few native doctors, who were doing the best they could with the inadequate facilities. Scores of the injured had received no treatment for hours and two had died. I was the only foreign correspondent who had witnessed the amazing scene – a classic example of satyagraha or non-violent civil disobedience.”

Note how the writer describes the scene. The heat, the way people were writhing in agony, the lack of medical attention – and yet he recognized the historical moment this protest signified when he observes that it was “a classic example of satyagraha or non-violent civil disobedience”.

When the US dropped an atomic bomb over the Japanese city of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, no western newspaper reported on the widespread devastation that it had caused because the US army ruled that it was out of bounds. Slowly the world came to know about the sheer enormity and barbaric nature of the bombing – it was nothing but mass annihilation. The first reporter who told the story of Hiroshima to the world, Peter Burchett, correspondent of the Daily Express, reached the scene almost a month after the bombing. It is said that he travelled 400 miles from Tokyo alone and unarmed, carrying rations for seven meals – food is almost unobtainable in Japan – a black umbrella, and a typewriter. His report, which came out a month after the bombing, was carried under the heading, ‘I Write This as a Warning to the World’.

He wrote, “In Hiroshima, 30 days after the first atomic bomb destroyed the city and shook the world, people are still dying, mysteriously and horribly – people who were uninjured by the

catclysm – from an unknown something which I can only describe as an atomic plague... Hiroshima does not look like a bombed city. It looks as if a monster steamroller had passed over it and squashed it out of existence. I write these facts as dispassionately as I can in the hope that they will act as a warning to the world. In this first testing ground of the atomic bomb I have seen the most terrible and frightening desolation in four years of war ...

When you arrive in Hiroshima you can look around and for 25, perhaps 30, square miles you can hardly see a building. It gives you an empty feeling in the stomach to see such man-made devastation. And so the people of Hiroshima today are walking through the forlorn desolation of their once proud city with gauze masks over their mouths and noses. It probably does not help them physically. But it helps them mentally...

I picked my way to a shack (sic) used as a temporary police headquarters in the middle of the vanished city. Looking south from there I could see about three miles of reddish rubble. That is all the atomic bomb left of dozens of blocks of city streets, of buildings, homes, factories and human beings. There is just nothing standing except about 20 factory chimneys – chimneys with no factories. I looked west. A group of half a dozen gutted buildings. And then again nothing. The police chief of Hiroshima welcomed me eagerly as the first allied correspondent to reach the city. With the local manager of Domei, a leading Japanese news agency, he drove me through, or perhaps I should say over, the city. And he took me to hospitals where the victims of the bomb are still being treated... In these hospitals I found people who, when the bomb fell, suffered absolutely no injuries, but now are dying from the uncanny after-effects. For no apparent reason their health began to fail. They lost appetite. Their hair fell out. Bluish spots appeared on their bodies. And the bleeding began from the ears, nose and mouth. At first the doctors told me they thought these were the symptoms of general debility. They gave their patients Vitamin A injections. The results were horrible. The flesh started rotting

away from the hole caused by the injection of the needle. And in every case the victim died...

My nose detected a peculiar odour unlike anything I have ever smelled before. It is something like sulphur, but not quite. I could smell it when I passed a fire that was still smouldering, or at a spot where they were still recovering bodies from the wreckage. But I could also smell it where everything was still deserted. They believe it is given off by the poisonous gas still issuing from the earth soaked with radioactivity released by the split uranium atom.

...They counted dead numbering 53,000. Another 30,000 are missing, which means 'certainly dead'. In the day I stayed in Hiroshima – and this is nearly a month after the bombing – 100 people have died from its effects... They were some of the 13,000 seriously injured by the explosion. They have been dying at the rate of 100 a day. And they will probably all die. Another 40,000 were slightly injured."

And this is a BBC report on the event that occurred much closer to us: Bhopal on the night of the Bhopal December 2-3, 1984: "Chaos and panic broke out in the city and surrounding areas as tens of thousands of people attempted to escape. More than 20,000 people have required hospital treatment for symptoms including swollen eyes, frothing at the mouth and breathing difficulties... Thousands of dead cats, dogs, cows and birds litter the streets and the city's mortuaries are filling up fast. Bhopal resident, Ahmed Khan, said: "We were choking and our eyes were burning. We could barely see the road through the fog, and sirens were blaring. We didn't know which way to run. Everybody was very confused. Mothers didn't know their children had died. Children didn't know their mothers had died and men didn't know their whole families had died."

Each of these reports, selected randomly, testify not just the terrible scenes that were witnessed, but also the unique power of the media to capture a fleeting and decisive moment and make sense of it for the world. In other words, to bear witness.

Today, despite having this unique power to interpret the times for the community and country, we are acutely conscious that somewhere the mainstream media's role as witness is fading. Many of you, young people may consider a career in journalism and it is my hope that should you do so, you will become the generation that will change the unhappy reality that prevails at present, that you will truly be eye-witnesses to history in your role as journalists.

I began this address by appealing to you all, as part of civil society, to become more involved in the world of the media. As intelligent, critical readers, as viewers, as social media users. As pointed out earlier, one of the reasons why we are seeing the rise of paid news, news television that blindly promotes those in power, and the disturbing rise of fake news is precisely because civil society has failed to do this, passively receiving information and often forwarding the material to their circles without any application of mind or thought. Fake news has extremely dangerous and disturbing consequences. For the last two or three years, fake messages, claiming that child traffickers and robbers have their neighbourhoods, have led hundreds of people to take to mob violence and vigilante murders. This is a pattern that has been replicated across the country and indicates a planned use of spiked information for purposes of spreading communal hatred.

If true journalism has to withstand the onslaught of fake news as it is meant to do, it is only through a unrelenting quest for truth, despite the attempts of many, including the most powerful forces in the country and the world, to control the truth. That quest for truth is linked crucially to our constitutional guarantee of the right to freedom of expression, which in turn draws on the right to information, a principle that Aruna Roy – who delivered the Dr. Deepa Martins Memorial Lecture in 2011 – and others have struggled so hard to achieve for the people of India.

There will be efforts by the powerful to derail that quest. Many journalists have been killed for their pursuit of the truth – and we all remember the courageous Gauri Lankesh who was

gunned down in September 2017 by those who wanted to stop her from writing. Similarly, nearly a hundred Right to Information activists have been killed over the past years. It is this tragic context that makes it crucial for ordinary people to speak up and support the quest for truth, which is inherent in the work of honest journalists and courageous right to information defenders.

So I end with the question that makes up the title of this keynote address: "So you want to be a journalist?" Implicit in this is yet another question, "Why do you want to be a journalist?" I go with the words with which a woman media person responded, "I became a journalist to come as close as possible to the heart (and mind) of the world."

Pamela Philipose

April 5, 2019

फिर आ गया बाल विवाह का मौसम

शिक्षा के प्रचार से इस कुरीति को मिटाया जा सकता है। समाज के सभी लोग यदि बीड़ा उठा लें तो हर मुश्किल आसान हो जाती है। यदि आज हम अपनी पंचायती राज व्यवस्था पर गर्व कर उसकी झाँकी अमेरिका के राष्ट्रपति बिल क्लिंटन को नायला में दिखा सकते हैं तो क्यों न हम हर आखातीज पर अपने आसपास के गाँवों में चेतना जागरण की आधारशिला रखकर हर सम्भावित बाल विवाह के खिलाफ मानसिकता बनाकर, बाल शिक्षा को बढ़ावा देकर एक नए सूर्योदय का आह्वान करें? एक विकासशील देश में बालविवाह जैसी कुप्रथा का कायम रहना मानव अधिकारों का भीषण हनन है, जिसे समाज के जाग्रत नागरिकों को एक चुनौती के रूप में स्वीकार कर इसको जड़ से मिटाने के लिए कृतसंकल्प होना ही पड़ेगा और जब हम कुछ करने पर आमादा हो गए तो — असम्भव तो कुछ भी नहीं है यदि ठान लें हम, हम ही करेंगे नव-युग का निर्माण, यह जान लें हम।

— डॉ. दीपा मार्टिन्स



Dr. Ginny Shrivastava holds a doctoral degree in Adult Education from the University of Toronto, Canada – the country of her birth. She came to India in October, 1970 after she married Shri Om Shrivastava of Rajasthan, and has been in the state ever since. Since 1986, her base has been at Astha Sansthan, Udaipur.

Dr. Shrivastava has worked with Bhil tribals and with rural women. From 1998 to date, she has been working with low-income single women (widows, separated, divorced, older-never-married women).

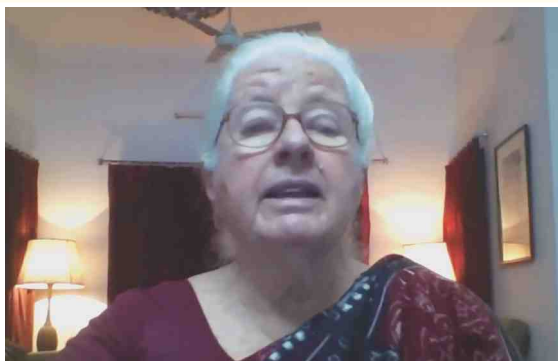
A recipient of the Stree Shakti Award by the Government of India, Dr. Shrivastava has also been awarded for her work by Queen's University, Canada. She was one of the India nominees among the 1000 Peace Women nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005.

In addition, Dr. Shrivastava is the President of the Budget Analysis and Research Centre Trust (BARC) based in Jaipur, Rajasthan. She continues to support work with women, in particular, single women in Rajasthan and in India.

Dr. Shrivastava is an inspiration for giving hope, a sense of dignity and a transformed life to thousands of women in India. She stands for fighting effectively against the long-set traditions against women. She has devoted her entire life to working for people across borders and nationality.



The panel for the online memorial lecture



Dr. Ginny Shrivastava delivering the keynote address



Ms. Aruna Roy addressing the online audience

IN FROM THE MARGINS

Working With The Marginalized Towards Inclusion

It is a great pleasure for me to be invited by the Deepa Martins Memorial Lecture Committee, and St. Stephen's School, and given the opportunity to speak to you. Apart from the fact that Dr. Deepa Martins was concerned and active in relation to many aspects of society which I also share – women's empowerment and activism, communal harmony, value-based education – it was the stated key values of the School – “discipline, humanism, secularism and the pursuit of excellence in every sphere” that attracted me to accept the invitation to speak to you. You may think that these values are common values, of every school or institution – but these days, they are special. Even the “pursuit of excellence in every sphere” is special – we live in a “*Chalega*” society – “*Sab cheez chalega*”. I have coined a new “*kahavat*” – “*Chalega Nahi Chalega!*” Keep working for excellence, don't be satisfied with “*chalega*”. But that is a topic for another lecture!!

Today, I am going to share with you some of the exciting work I have done with marginalized people – low-income Single Women, who are widows, separated, divorced, older-never-married women. There are many marginalized people in society – those who have been pushed to the margins of Mainstream Society, *by* Mainstream Society. In India, everyone knows about Scheduled Caste people, Dalits, who at one time in history were even called “out-castes” – so many, gone to the margins, even today! Through no fault of their own, nothing they had done, just the happenstance of birth made them “marginalized” by all the other castes who thought they themselves were “mainstream”. To some extent, physically handicapped or “differently abled” persons are marginalized, because Indian society has only recently woken up to the need for special ramps, railings, and lifts in public buildings for people in wheelchairs. The deaf, the blind, they also need special provisions to enable them to participate in society as equal citizens, but we have not yet provided for them.

“Marginalized” usually has the meaning that someone, or some group of people, have been pushed to the margin – away from the mainstream, by the mainstream’s ideas, actions, (or inactions), prejudices, stereotypes, misunderstandings. Most often it is through no fault of their own that people are marginalized. Widows, for example, are thought to be inauspicious, because people think they have somehow been responsible for their husband’s death! So they cannot participate fully in happy social ceremonies like marriages and all the various functions associated with marriages. Single Women, living without a man as their life partner, are thought to be “loose women”, ready to go with just any man, and so are marginalized because many in the society think they have a bad character. In fact, most Single Women do not want to re-marry, particularly if they have children. They want to live safely, with dignity, and bring up their children. Some Single Women are called “witches” in an attempt to get them to move away from the community. They are blamed for bad things that happen in the community – sickness, problems with cows not giving milk, etc. Those with some enmity, or feeling of revenge, manipulate simple people’s superstitions. In fact, those who start such rumours either want the Single Woman’s land, or have been shunned and denied sexual favours, or something. Old customs, some of which continue to the present day, restrict widows from wearing colourful clothing and jewellery, prevent them from eating tasty food. In this way, low-income Single Women have been pushed to the margins of social life within the communities in which they live.

Sometimes, if it is just one person who has been marginalized, it *is* because of something that the person did. That is different. For example, in a school setting, if a student *is a bully*, the rest of the students may “marginalize” him or her and refuse to do school projects with him, or socialize with him in the school grounds or after school.

Today, I will be talking mostly about categories or groups of people who, through no fault of their own, are marginalized,

who are made to feel that they are not supposed to participate in society in the same way that other people do. When there are whole groups of people who have done nothing to deserve this “pushing out of the Mainstream” of society, it is unjust and cruel. Not only do the people so marginalized suffer, but the Society suffers too – for each person has strengths and abilities that are not used for the development and well-being of the Society as a whole.

I will now start to share with you about work with low-income Single Women in Rajasthan, done from a base in the NGO, Astha Sansthan. We, who want to work with and for marginalized people, must have a certain perspective, a set of values that guide the strategizing and decision-making. From my experience, I think the following would be at least some of the necessary values and perspectives necessary. Indeed, to eliminate marginalization of any group of people in society, *all people* should have the following values and perspectives :

- Faith in “The People”
- Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion
- Empowerment and Human Rights, Not Only Welfare
- A Strong Humanitarian Perspective

Faith in “The People” – While working with low-income Single Women, many of them living in rural areas as well as in urban areas, we have faith that each of these women has strength and ability that neither they nor society recognized. Almost the fact that they were still alive, bringing up their children single-handedly, is proof that they are strong, not weak! After the death or desertion by their husband, society perceives the Single Woman as “helpless”. A woman without a man behind her – what else would a patriarchal society believe! Even a place to live is a big issue – the marital family does not want her when the husband is no longer with her, and her natal family will help for a short time, but are not happy about long-term support. But somehow, she does daily wage labouring, or fights for her land and property rights and grows food on her own land, and

survives. More often than not, her children go to school, even on to high school. But society still marginalizes her, doubts her character, thinks she is inauspicious or of loose character. She feels isolated, and lacks self-confidence to “come forward”. And from over 20 years of work with low-income Single Women in Rajasthan, having faith in their strength and ability has not been misplaced. Listen to this true story:

Premvati had a complaint about the government school in her village. There was no water or electricity facility in this school. The children had to go across the highway to drink water. It was dangerous for them to cross the highway. Premvati spoke to the villagers and the elected representatives about these issues, but she could not get a solution to the problems. Troubled by their responses, Premvati went to meet the District Collector of Dholpur with eight members of the Single Women organization, the Association of Strong Women Alone (ASWA). Suchi Tyagi, the District Collector made them wait for a long time and then came out of her office to proceed to another meeting, without meeting them. Premvati caught hold of the Collector's hand, stopped her, and told her about the Water and Electricity problem in the village school. She told her about the Association of Strong Women Alone as well. About two weeks later, electricity was provided to the school, but water was still a problem. Premvati spoke to the former Sarpanch of the village who made arrangements for water to be available at school. With the efforts of Premvati and the single women of ASWA, electricity and water were provided at the school. Premvati says, “All this was possible with the knowledge and self-confidence that I received from the Association.”

Another value that is necessary for work in helping marginalized people to come in from the margins, is:

Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion – The population of India, indeed of all countries of the world, is made up of people of different ages, life conditions, talents, castes, classes, religions, sexes, skin colours, education, occupations, marital status. The differences in people make the country strong. Together we can thrive – alone, each would have trouble even surviving! A strong

commitment to diversity and inclusion of everyone in all aspects of the community life, of the nation's life, is necessary. We do not want people of only one way of thinking, only one religion, only men and no women, etc. Nazi Germany, before and during the Second World War, eliminated thousands of Jewish people in an attempt to get rid of those who were not of the Aryan race. It was racial discrimination, not religious. That was an extreme. But in working with different groups and categories of India's marginalized people, diversity and the principle of inclusion are values that must be firmly held. In working with low-income Single Women, for example, organizations of Single Women have been formed and there are women of all ages – old, young and middle-aged; literate and illiterate; Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Jain, Sikh; tribals, and all castes within Hinduism. The thing they have in common is their “singleness”, each is now living without a partner – without a husband or another person in a marriage or marriage-like relationship.

Here is a true story of two women, Chanda Banu and Lakshma Bai, of Tonk District in Rajasthan:

Chanda Banu, age 45 and a Muslim, lost her husband five years ago, and was a member of the Association of Strong Women Alone. Lakshma Bai was a poor Hindu woman. Her husband was a labourer. Both the women were great friends.

Lakshma Bai's son was to get married in May. Lakshma did not have any brother, because of which she was very sad. There was nobody for her to do the ritual of “mayara”. Chanda Banu could not see her friend so sad. She told her, “I am alive now and we are everything for each other. I will perform the ritual of mayara for your son's marriage.” From Tonk, she got a beautiful chunari and gave Lakshma Bai a mayara of Rs. 10,000. She was like a true sibling for Lakshma Bai and for the entire family. Whoever saw this could not believe what they saw... and said, relationships should not be based on caste or religion, they should be based on humanity, just like Chanda Banu and Lakshma Bai.

Empowerment and Human Rights, Not Just Welfare – Work with the marginalized, as we have said, is from a perspective of

“faith in the strength and ability of the people”, and so our approach to them is not one of “pity”; we do not seek to give them welfare. We seek to empower them to recognize the strength and ability they have in themselves, and to work to solve their problems and overcome the challenges that face them. They too are citizens of India, and so a struggle to fight for their rights, to live with dignity, claiming their full citizenship rights, is an objective. A welfare approach makes the receivers of the welfare dependent on the givers of welfare. If and when the welfare stops, the marginalized will be still in the same situation as they were before, or *a little better off*. We seek to help them to be able to solve their problems, with the help of others, and more – affirming their personhood, helping them to become self-confident, empowered, agents of change in their lives, and in the lives of the people of their families and the communities in which they live. This is the approach and the objective.

Here is a true story about almost 50 Single Women, who had been allotted Housing Scheme grants (under *Indira Awas Yojana*) in the rural areas. They got their second and third installments out of the government when the Block officials were not inclined to transfer the money to them! With the efforts of the single women of the Association of Strong Women Alone, 48 people got their installments of the Indira Awas Yojana.

Jaina of Barmer District, along with Mohan Bai, Jabra Bai, Bhavri Bai, Rajo Bai and others had all proclaimed that, ‘once you make up your mind then, nothing is impossible’. In Barmer District, Sindhari Block, there were 48 beneficiaries of the Housing Scheme and all had gotten their first installment credited into their bank accounts, including the five Single Women beneficiaries. But none of them received their second installment!

When they spoke about this in their Single Women Block meeting, they got together and went to their Block Office to sort out the problems. The clerk in Sindhari Block said that they would get their installments credited into their accounts after the elections. A few

months after the elections when the women went to enquire about their money, they were told that the Block Office had not received the funds, and once they receive the funds, the amounts would be transferred to their accounts.

Some time later, a development camp was organized in their village. The District Collector was also an invitee at the camp. The women of the Association of Strong Women Alone spoke about this problem to the Collector. He immediately asked the Block Development Officer and the Panchayat Secretary of the village why they were not transferring the funds to the beneficiaries. Immediately, the BDO and clerk agreed to transfer the funds.

But when the Single Women reached the Block Office, they found that the BDO, the clerk and the Panchayat Secretary were all angry with the Single Women because they had complained to the Collector! The government functionaries also said, “you can go and complain anywhere you want, you are not going to get your money under any circumstance”! The Single Women said that they were associated with the Association of Strong Women Alone which would certainly help them to get their money. “If we don’t get our Indira Awas Yojana installments credited in to our accounts, then we would meet higher officials for help.”

After 3-4 days, the amounts were credited into the bank accounts. In total, 48 persons who were not getting their second installments paid, received their money. When the Committee meeting of the Block was going on, the single women members of ASWA approached the BDO and told him that the beneficiaries should all receive their third installment also in time! “We will not leave a single rupee, and demand full benefit from this scheme – the money, after all, belongs to us”! Then the Housing Scheme benefits reached the people – in totality.

With the thousands of members of the Single Women’s Association spread all over Rajasthan, it will be possible for the women to address one of the main problems of “development” in the state – the problem of implementation. There are many good laws and schemes, India’s Constitution is one of the best possible, and yet the government employees often do not

implement the programmes or enforce the laws correctly and sincerely.

You can see from this housing case study, that Single Women, organized and aware, can fight for their rights. Like in the previous story, they can reach out and help others, as the Muslim widow did. And in the first story, of the school's electricity and water, even though Premvati did not herself have children in the school, she acted for the benefit of the community's children. All these characteristics and behaviour are what we mean by "empowerment". It is not that the widow or deserted woman just sits and waits for someone to arrange her pension, or her housing installment, or tolerates injustices in society — she, with the strength of others, goes out and demands her rights and attempts to put right whatever she sees that is wrong!

A Strong Humanitarian Perspective – This is necessary for effective work with marginalized people in India. A "humanitarian perspective" means that you see all people basically as human beings, and treat all people with respect and dignity. It sounds simple and logical, but as you know, many people treat rich people one way, and poor people another way; some people will rent their house to a Hindu but not to a Muslim. All people living in India, have their humanity in common, and to marginalize some of them because of class, caste, region, religion, nationality, gender, colour means that some categories of people are made to feel excluded, different, marginalized. Differences can be recognized — boys are indeed different from girls; at Christmas we go to visit our friends who are Christian, and on Eid we visit our Muslim friends; and so on. In working with low-income Single Women, we see them as equal human beings and try to promote and strengthen in them the perspective that they too should treat all people equally.

Here is one true story about how Single Women saved a "Hijra" or "third gender" person, a transgender person, from persecution:

In Baran District, Atru Block, Piplod panchayat during the month of March, after the harvest, several Hijras go around in groups

asking for charity. This particular year, a single Hijra had come asking for charity and had collected it from half of the village. When he was going back to his home, at the crossroads there were about 7-8 rowdy and unruly men who were playing cards. When they saw the Hijra coming their way, they started teasing him and took away all the money he had collected. They started to rip off his clothing. They were abusing him, and other villagers also began to gather there. The Hijra was pleading for help but nobody came forward; they were all mere spectators.

Janaki Bai, Miriam Bai and Kastoori Bai, members of ASWA came to know this was going on. They asked three others from the Association to join them. All of them went to the place where the Hijra was being tortured. They saved the Hijra from the rowdy men, and questioned the men and bystanders about their humanity. How could they see such an inhumane thing happening in front of them? Wasn't the Hijra a human being as well??

Then Miriam Banu informed the police. The police arrived at the spot and chided the men and warned them not to do any such thing in the future. The members of ASWA wanted more severe action. They insisted on going to the police station and filed a report against those men. The police had no choice but to arrest the offenders, and the others learnt a lesson too.

You can see that the Single Women members of this Association of over 70,000 low-income Single Women in Rajasthan are indeed empowered, compassionate, knowledgeable women, bringing needed changes in society. And the members also have new meaning and purpose in their lives. The Association acts like an alternate family, and has brought them in from the margins of society.

From what has been said and reported, there are a few effective strategies we have used in working with large numbers of marginalized Single Women:

- Build a Collective or Organization, run on Democratic principles

- Leadership for the Collective from the Members of the Organization
- Train Leaders in Needed Skills and Knowledge
- Members of the Collective Advocate Rights

A Collective or Organization – The Rajasthan organization of Single Women was formed in the year 1999 at a widow convention held in Bassi, Jaipur District. The objectives were to help to form an organization in which Single Women could help each other to solve their problems. To date, there are over 73,000 members of ASWA all across the 33 Districts of Rajasthan. There are so many Single Women in society, that neither a government nor a non-government project could touch the lives of the hundreds and thousands of them. Rajasthan has 16,73,885 Single Women according to the last census, and there are 5 crore or over 50 million Single Women in India! Not all are “low-income”, but at least half are! When marginalized people get together, they become visible, and society and policy makers take note of them. Also, individually, no one person can bring large numbers of marginalized people into the mainstream of society. Members of an organization of marginalized people can do so.

The organization, ASWA, has Gram Panchayat level groups at the local level; Block Level and District Level Committees; and a State Level Committee of three Single Women from each District in the State. There is also an Executive Committee of 11 Single Women from across Rajasthan.

We have also found that members of the organization are strengthened by wearing an ASWA badge! A badge signifies membership in an Organization. It gives the women confidence, and it lets people who see them know that “she is not alone – she is part of a large organization”.

Closely related to the need for an organization of marginalized people, is the need for leadership for the work of the organization.

Leaders for the Collective come from the Members of the Organization – It has been my experience that while we can work with groups of marginalized people, the strongest and most tenacious and compassionate leadership comes from leaders who emerge from amongst the members of the marginalized. Why would this be so? I think it is because the leader then is “one of the marginalized” and knows how it feels to experience some of the pain of being shoved to the margins. They then work with more energy, understanding, and feeling for the issues taken up. When I began work with the Single Women, my husband was alive, I was not a “Single Woman”. I thought I was working with full commitment. In 2003, when my husband died, I could sense a difference in the way Single Women related to me – I was now “one of them”, and the relationship was more affectionate and close. This work in solving individual cases of violence takes time. It needs counseling of in-laws who are abusing their daughters-in-law; it requires struggling for the possession of land over which a widow has legal rights, but is denied possession by her brothers-in-law, or others or is called a “witch” and driven from the village. Since all this work takes time, perseverance, courage and commitment, those who themselves know how it feels to be “down” and “out” are the most effective leaders to help others solve their problems and to advocate with political and administrative decision-makers for the need for a new law or policy, rule or scheme.

Training in skills and knowledge for Leaders – Of course, the leaders of the organizations of marginalized people need training to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to perform their leadership roles. From my experience, training in relevant laws that affect the lives of the marginalized, is extremely important. In training, we not only include giving knowledge and information, but also take the trainees to a police station to break the hesitancy of ever entering such a place! And it is not always necessary to file a case if someone is breaking a law – a knowledge of the law can be used to get justice. Violence, abuse, discrimination, witch-calling, illegal

land encroachment, bribery, less payment of wages, etc. can be taken up by organizations of marginalized people who often need only to show that they know that if they go to the court, they have a strong case. And, in front of confident collectives, those exploiting the marginalized negotiate justice. Other dimensions of leadership training programmes include building skills in speaking in front of a group, in speaking into a microphone – in short, helping the Marginalized to find their Voice! And another important lesson, leaders from amongst the members – those who are already leaders – they are the best trainers. In the case of Single Women, the women trainees think “If she, who is like me, can do it, I can do it too.”

One thing we have also noticed, in the work with Single Women, is that once the leaders are trained, and they start conducting meetings of Single Women and other meetings, and take up cases at the local level, their status in the community goes up, and people consult them for help in solving all kinds of *their* problems. In fact, it looks like the women have moved from the Margins of their communities to the Centre!

Members of the Collective Advocate for Rights – And so, with an Organization of the marginalized, and leadership for the Organization, and thousands of members, the Organization is well positioned to advocate with the government for better laws, policies, rules, schemes which will benefit the large numbers. That is to say, not only will the members of the Organization benefit, but all Single Women in the State or in the Nation will benefit. For example, in the case of Single Women in Rajasthan, before the organization was formed, there were few social security provisions for low-income Single Women – only widow pensions. Separated and divorced women whose husbands had deserted them, taken another wife, or disappeared, had no provision for pension – now they do, as a result of the advocacy work of the Association of Strong Women Alone. It is not “widow pension” but “single woman pension” now.

In 2009, the National Forum for Single Women’s Rights was formed, and there are now 11 States and Union Territories that

have organizations of Single Women working to help each other solve problems. There are now Separated/Divorced Social Security Pensions in the states of Himachal Pradesh, and Jharkhand and others are working for this.

I hope that the stories and examples from work with Single Women have shed some light on the work that can be done to enable them to come in from the margins. The members of *Ekal Nari Shakti Sangathan*, the Association of Strong Women Alone, Rajasthan, aside from working together to solve their own problems, are reaching out to help others. Today, in India, there are other categories of people who are in some ways “marginalized” – not included in the “mainstream” through no fault of their own. They are differently-abled people or “disabled” people, tribal people, Dalits, Muslims.

India, and some places in the rest of the world, have moved into a phase of their history where diversity, and inclusion of all are threatened. The vision of/for a country is synonymous with how the *majority of the people* are, or life lived according to the *historical roots of the country*. In India, the historical roots of the country are in Hinduism, and the majority of Indian citizens are Hindu, or are followers of religious traditions that have their roots in India, like Jainism and Sikhism. Others are in some ways marginalized, all-be-it to a greater or lesser extent. Added to those are more liberal people who see some government decisions as “in need of change”, and as a result, they are silenced in one way or another. We see India narrowing and closing down the inclusion and diversity which has marked India’s long history.

This Memorial Lecture is making the main point that all people, male or female, are equal human beings, and that society is at its best if the diversities that make up our large population are accepted, celebrated, regardless of whether those differences have their roots in social, historical, religious, or physical reasons. And when we include all as equal citizens, making up this diverse, great country, we all shall go forward, together, in harmony.

I have been able to work with large numbers of marginalized Single Women, because I had an NGO base. Individual persons too can reach out and include several marginalized people in community life. If everyone, students of St. Stephen's School, citizens of Ajmer and of other places too, reach out to others who seem "marginalized", and take action, do whatever is needed to include them – our world will be stronger and better.

If low-income Single Women can do so – we all can do so too!

Thank you for inviting me to speak to you this evening.

Ginny Shrivastava

December 5, 2020

जीने दो मानसी होकर मुझको

अब और नहीं सहूँगी मैं अपने अस्तित्व का क्षरण
मैंने भी अब कर लिया है सबलता का वरण
मत करो देवी कह कर अब और मेरा वंदन
जीने दो मानसी होकर मुझको, मत डालो और बंधन!

— डॉ. दीपा मार्टिन्स

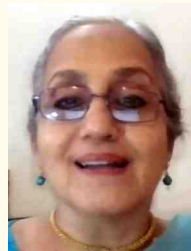


छठे राष्ट्रीय महिला सम्मेलन के मुद्दे और भारतीय नारी की वर्तमान स्थिति

कवि दुष्यन्त कुमार ने कहा था :
मेरे सीने में न सही तेरे सीने में सही
हो कहीं भी आग लेकिन आग जलनी चाहिए

लोगों के सीने में आग जलनी तो क्या लगनी ही बन्द हो गई है। हमारी आँखों के सामने रोज ही अनेक स्त्रियों को अमानुषिक अत्याचारों की यंत्रणा दी जाती है। पर हम या तो मूकदर्शक बने रहते हैं या तटस्थ होकर अपने हाथ झाड़ लेते हैं। जब तक आग हमारे अपने घर को नहीं जलाए हम पड़ोसी के जलते घर को बचाने की चेष्टा नहीं करेंगे। बल्कि हो सके तो उस आग से अपने ठिठुरते हुए हाथ जरूर सेक लेंगे या फिर हम हर उत्पीड़न की ज़िम्मेदारी महिला संगठनों पर डालकर निश्चिन्त हो जाएँगे।

— डॉ. दीपा मार्टिन्स



Ms. Rajni Bakshi is a Mumbai-based author, speaker and founder of Ahimsa Conversations, an online platform for exploring the possibilities of non-violence.

Ms. Bakshi's books include:

- Bazaars, Conversations and Freedom: for a market culture beyond greed and fear *which won two Vodafone-Crossword Awards;*

- Bapu Kuti: Journeys in Rediscovery of Gandhi *which inspired the 2004 Hindi film Swades;*

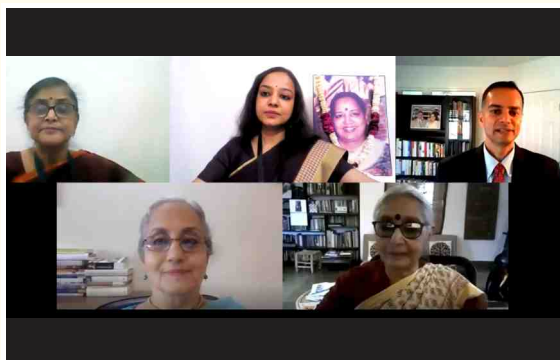
- Long Haul: the Bombay Textile Workers Strike 1982-83

The author of several monographs, Ms. Bakshi's works include : Trusteeship: Business and the Economics of Well-Being (2016); Civilizational Gandhi (2012); An Economics for Well-Being (2007); Let's Make it Happen: a backgrounder on New Economics (2003); A Warning and an Opportunity: the Dispute over Swami Vivekananda's Legacy (1994).

Ms. Bakshi is a member of the Executive Committee of the Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti, an autonomous body under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India.

An awardee of the Homi Bhabha Fellowship in 2000, Ms. Bakshi was the Gandhi Peace Fellow at Gateway House: Indian Council on Global Relations, a Mumbai-based foreign policy think tank, from 2013 to 2016. She serves on the Boards of Child Rights and You (CRY), Citizens for Peace (CfP) and the Centre of Education and Documentation (CED).

Ms. Bakshi has a BA in Journalism and Political Science from George Washington University and an MA in Philosophy from the University of Rajasthan.



The panel for the online memorial lecture



Ms. Rajni Bakshi delivering the keynote address



Ms. Aruna Roy addressing the online audience

THE FUTURE OF NON-VIOLENCE

I thank Bhartiji, Anupamji, Shetaliji and the entire team behind this Memorial lecture for inviting me to speak here today. It is an honour to be a part of the Dr. Deepa Martins Memorial Lecture tradition. I begin by honouring the memory of Dr. Martins' dedication and compassion. I also thank the staff of St Stephen's for sending me the thoughts and questions on their mind about non-violence.

Since 'non-violence' as a theme was already decided, it is not surprising that none of the questions sent to me are about *why* we should, at all, bother about non-violence. But if we are going to reflect on 'The Future of Non-Violence' it is imperative that we first recognize two things:

One: The reality of violence, and

Two: The deep history of non-violence

The reality of violence is that Mahatma Gandhi was murdered. The reality of violence is that even today there are some people who ritually re-enact that murder and the video of that action goes viral on social media. The reality of violence is that many who work for equality and justice suffer – either by being thrown in prison or by being killed. Above all, today, social media is filled with verbal violence and threats of physical violence.

So, if you have often felt sceptical about non-violence having any scope or being at all effective – you are not alone. Or you may perhaps feel that non-violence is a worthwhile aspiration but it is too lofty an ideal – that it is not practical for ordinary people. This is why, today I invite you to join me in exploring how this scepticism can be challenged. In order to do this we must ask why did Gandhi keep saying that 'non-violence is as old as the hills'.

But, wait a minute! Perhaps you are sceptical about Gandhi as well. For anyone who is now under 20 years old it would be quite

easy to be influenced by the many stories that now circulate – depicting Gandhi as being anti-Hindu and depicting non-violence as a form of weakness.

So, for the next 20 minutes or so, I request you to forget about Gandhi. The story of non-violence is much older than Gandhi. Yes, Gandhi offers us vital clues on the future of non-violence but let's look at that in the end.

Deep History of Non-Violence

Most of the evidence for the deep history of non-violence is actually coming not from historians or moralists but from the natural sciences. There was a time when something known as the 'Killer Ape Theory' dominated. This was the claim that it was those apes who were more aggressive, more capable of interpersonal aggression that evolved into homo sapiens.

Over the last few decades multi-disciplinary research has shown that our ancestors' capacity to cultivate cooperation, compassion and mutual interdependence seems to have played an equal if not greater role in the rise of our species 'Homo sapiens-sapiens'.

Isn't it common sense that if violent aggression were our dominant impulse – as a species we would not have survived. We would have destroyed ourselves centuries ago.

In the mid-1980s, UNESCO assembled a panel of natural and social scientists to examine whether war is a natural or dominant trait of humans. This panel's deliberations led to the Seville Declaration on war, which says that:

1. War or any other violent behaviour is NOT genetically programmed into human nature.
2. Humans do NOT have a violent brain.
3. War is NOT caused by 'instinct' or any single motivation.

To quote from the Seville Declaration:

“Just as ‘wars begin in the minds of men’, peace also begins in our minds. The same species who invented war is capable of inventing peace. The responsibility lies with each of us.”

What then is the future of non-violence?

What are the strengths we can build upon?

What are the on-going challenges we must recognize and grapple with?

And the most basic question of all – what is non-violence?

One:

Let us deal with the claim, famously made by Mao Tse Tung, that 'Power flows from the barrel of a gun'. A powerful counter view to this was posed by the great political theorist Hannah Arendt. Arendt says, "What comes out of a gun is effective command, resulting in the most instant and perfect obedience – but never power."

Any group, any society in which people obey out of fear and compulsion, rather than themselves feeling empowered, cannot thrive for long.

Two:

Can ordinary people cultivate non-violence as a way of life and as a way of resisting oppression? Because Gandhi is known as a Mahatma – many of us have fallen into the habit of thinking, only saints can be non-violent. This wrong impression persists because there is a tendency to think of non-violence in absolute terms. But both natural science and spiritual traditions tell us absolute Ahimsa is not possible for human beings. All life subsists on some form of life – even if it is fruits and vegetables. Yet for centuries people have accepted this reality and then cultivated ways of living that strive for non-violence.

I draw your attention to the Ahimsa Conversation with Acharya Srivatsa Goswami of Vrindavan – in which he explores these issues within the Indic traditions.

Three:

Ahimsa/ non-violence is often equated with weakness. Nothing could be farther than the truth. Passivity or submission in the face of oppression is a form of weakness. But non-violence requires steadfast valour, the willingness to boldly speak truth to

power – thus it can only be the weapon of the brave. Ahimsa is NOT for the weak.

On the contrary, Gandhi often said that unless you have the ability to defend yourself, you cannot be non-violent. Arunaji has spoken eloquently about this in her Ahimsa Conversation and I am eager to hear her thoughts again today.

Four:

It is also often claimed that non-violence cannot work against a ruthless opponent. There is no doubt that specific acts of non-violent resistance can be crushed by a brutal opponent. But it is equally important to note that there are some cases of non-cooperation and non-violence succeeding even against Nazis.

For example:

- During the Second World War the Norwegian government issued a directive to make the teaching of Nazi doctrine compulsory in schools. But so many Norwegian teachers refused to follow the order, some even going to prison camps, that eventually the order could not be carried out.
- In 1943, when the Nazis began to arrest Jewish men who were married to Christian women – thousands of those women protested peacefully for several days until their husbands or sons were released.
- Thousands of people who struggled against apartheid in South Africa dealt with the most brutal repression. It was actions like the Soweto boycotts of the late 1980s, that led eventually to the end of apartheid.
- When the Polish union Solidarity dug in for its struggle using non-violent principles – its votaries were up against the still powerful and ruthless Soviet regime.
- Similarly, millions came out on the streets and peacefully overthrew the regime of General Pinochet in Chile in 1973.

If you are keen to learn more about these stories please see the American PBS documentary called 'A Force More Powerful'

which uses archival footage from each of these and other movements to show how non-violence works on the ground.

These are stories of how effective political non-violence requires a combination of training, determination and valour.

In fact, throughout the 20th century, non-violence has worked more often than violent insurgencies. A study by Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan has combined statistical analysis with case studies of specific countries and territories to show why civil resistance and non-cooperation was able to involve far greater numbers of people and usually led to more durable and internally peaceful democracies.

Swarthmore College in the USA has created a database on non-violent struggles across the world – and the range of these struggles is astounding – for it goes much beyond the more well-known events like the Occupy Wall Street movement and Arab spring.

Of course, struggles against oppressive regimes are merely one dimension of the striving for non-violence. Equally important are developments in efforts to counter violence in everyday life. In the West, members of the Quaker community have been at the forefront in developing non-violence training programs that help people to resolve conflicts in communities.

The Nonviolent Peaceforce is today working with unarmed teams to counter violence in some of the world's most troubled places. For details please see the Ahimsa Conversation with Tiffany Easthom who heads Nonviolent Peaceforce.

In Latin America, a wide variety of groups have evolved methods of conflict resolution. Much of this work has been done in societies that have suffered from a high level of violence in daily life, so the longing for non-violence is intense.

What then can we draw from all these developments for our everyday lives? Some of the staff members at St Stephen's School kindly sent me the questions on their mind regarding non-violence. Many of your questions are about 'nonviolent communication' which is now a highly developed skill that is

being taught across the world.

However, the core question, or linking thread, that ran through all your questions was about 'how' we can work towards non-violence? A related question that many of you posed was – is non-violence possible or desirable in all situations?

In a recent episode of Ahimsa Conversations, Shri Gopal Gandhi has eloquently pointed out that the beauty of non-violence is that there is no fixed manual or rule book. This may be why the ideal of ahimsa is so empowering to those who walk down this path – because you are experimenting with yourself and your material reality rather than just following the dictate of anyone else.

What then are the key principles we can work with, or what are these days called 'takeaways'? I will close by sharing the insights I have gained from three of the most well-known travellers of this path:

Gandhiji, Martin Luther King Jr. and Thomas Merton, a Christian monk and anti-war activist.

1. To be non-violent means that I cannot feel superior to my opponent.
2. I must at least try not to see the adversary as being totally wicked and utterly incapable of being reasonable or well-intentioned.
3. Such an attitude, as Merton wrote, would defeat the very purpose of non-violence – namely, openness, communication, dialogue. It is when these core values are undermined that some acts of civil disobedience or passive resistance become self-defeating because they end up antagonizing the adversary, making him or her more unwilling to communicate through anything other than bullets and batons.
4. The purpose of non-violent action is not to humiliate or destroy the opponent but to win his or her friendship and understanding.

5. The focus is sharply on the wrong doing, not on the wrongdoer.
6. Action is rooted in the belief that the universe is on the side of justice.
7. And last, but not least, there is a willingness to suffer without retaliation.

Some, if not all of this, is possible for most of us. This is why millions of people are deeply moved by Nelson Mandela's famous words that:

"... to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others."

Hannah Arndet put it quite precisely:

"...the distinction between violent and non-violent action is that the former is exclusively bent upon the destruction of the old and the latter is chiefly concerned with the establishment of something new."

Non-violence is the road to a higher freedom. Arunaji and her colleagues are a living manifestation of this striving for higher freedom. When we think about the Future of Non-Violence it is not a destination we can seek. It is a way of being and of striving for this higher freedom.

The true obstacles in this striving have not so much to do with the external reality and material circumstances – the only real obstacles are about lack of confidence within.

Last but not least – why is Gandhi vital to this on-ward striving? Because he approaches non-violence as a scientist would – for in science there are no 'failed' experiments. Knowing what does not work, moves us forward in the process of discovering what does work. As Gandhiji said, we live in an age of wonders when no one will say that an idea is worthless or impossible because it is new.

"Things undreamt of are daily being seen, the impossible is ever becoming possible. We are constantly being astonished these days at the amazing discoveries in the field of violence. But I

maintain that far more undreamt of and seemingly impossible discoveries will be made in the field of non-violence.”

Thank you for your presence and your attention.

Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti!

Rajni Bakshi

April 6, 2021

दिनचर्या

कभी-कभी होता है ऐसा ही
कि अचानक भारी व्यस्तता के बाद
सहसा सब कुछ रीत सा जाता है
रौनक, चहल-पहल, आवागमन के बाद
भरा-भरापन बीत सा जाता है।

रह जाता है उत्सव के पश्चात का सूनापन
छा जाता है विचित्र सा खालीपन
किन्तु अधिक नहीं चलता है ऐसे भी
हम समझा लेते हैं मन को कैसे भी।

स्थायी नहीं रहती है जीवन में रिक्तता
भाती है अत्यधिक मिटास के पश्चात थोड़ी सी तिक्तता
रिक्त स्थानों की शनैः-शनैः होने लगती है पूर्ति
आ जाती है जीवन में पुनः नयी ताकत, नव-स्फूर्ति।

— डॉ. दीपा मार्टिन्स

मित्रता – जीवन की मुस्कान

कोई कहीं हमारे लिए भी सोचता है, यह अहसास ही मन में कई सुखद रंगों को सृष्टि कर देता है। हमें यह ज्ञान अवश्य होना चाहिए कि केवल महंगे उपहार ही मित्रता का मापदण्ड नहीं होते। एक प्यार भी छोटी सी पाती, एक स्नेह भरी मुस्कान, फूल या एक फोन भी यदि हम यदा-कदा अपने आत्मीय मित्र तक संप्रेषित कर सकें तो आपा-धापी और स्वरति से पीड़ित इस युग में हम बहुत सी सकारात्मक भावनाओं को तरंगित कर सकेंगे जो हमारे परिवेश को स्नेह की सुगंधि से महका देगी और हमारा अन्तर्मन कह उठेगा :
जीवन-सागर को मथने पर, अमृत-सम मिले हो तुम
कंटकाकीर्ण मरु-पथ में मित्र, सुमन-सम खिले हो तुम।

— डॉ. दीपा मार्टिन्स

सृष्टिक्रम

हर कोपल में फूट कर कुछ बनने का उत्साह
हर बीज में महावृक्ष की अवस्थिति
मिट्टी का सोंधापन, चतुर्दिक हरियाली
यूं भरती जाती है लबालब जीवन-मदिरा की प्याली।
यही है चिह्न जीवन का
यही कहलाता है सृष्टिक्रम
इसी को हृदयंगम कर जी पाएं तो
होगा सार्थक यह क्षणभंगुर जीवन।

— डॉ. दीपा मार्टिन्स



Dr. Deepa Martins
1951 - 2003

Dr. 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 hard work, 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. This third volume of the Memorial lectures is a compilation of the thoughts and values that Dr. Swarnamalya Ganesh, Ms. Shabnam Virmani, Ms. Maya Krishna Rao, Ms. Pamela Philipose, Dr. Ginny Shrivastava and Ms. Rajni Bakshi shared with the St. Stephen's School Family. The foreword to this volume has been written by Ms. Aruna Roy, a close friend and associate of Dr. Deepa Martins and a co-host of the lecture series.





Dr. Swarnamalya Ganesh
2016



Ms. Shabnam Virmani
2017



Ms. Maya Krishna Rao
2018