



SPARROW

SOUND & PICTURE
ARCHIVES FOR
RESEARCH
ON
WOMEN

Publication Number 46

Published by

Sound & Picture Archives for Research on Women

B-32 Jeet Nagar, J P Road,

Versova

Mumbai 400 061

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This Newsletter is published with the support of HIVOS

[Editor's Note]

This issue of SNL is a bumper issue. A great many things happened in the last three months and we thought that it would be possible to share all this only if we put the material of two issues together. And to make it look really special we decided to print it in colour.

We are still recovering from the Women's Expression Camp we organised. We managed to bring together nearly fifty writers from various parts of India for five days to read their works, to listen to what others read and also to have a lot of fun together.

Immediately after coming back we began to make preparations for our non-gallery based photo exhibition of women's activism. You will see inside details of the exhibition. Along with all this we have also been keeping track of the latest books on women. We bring you a review of Himanshi Shelat's book on daughters and mothers. The last two films for the Global Feminisms project have been completed. We chose the North Eastern region for these two films. We have written about the experience inside.

Do enjoy the colours and the images and do write and tell us what you feel about this issue. And visit our website at www.sparrowonline.org

SPARROW

newsletter

SNL Number 06 & 07

March 2006

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Women's Expression Camp

In 2005 SPARROW worked out a project to celebrate and publish women's writings called *Leaps and Bounds*. The project aimed to do this with a Women's Expression Camp and a series of five volumes of translated stories and poems from 24 different languages to be executed with the support of Prince Claus Fund. The Women's Expression Camp was planned as a camp to bring together writers from various regions. It was conceived as a work-holiday camp, which would create a space for communication and sharing. SPARROW wanted to make an attempt through this camp to open up regions and languages that have not received attention so far and also make it possible for other regional writers to receive their experiences and share their own experiences with them.

Space plays a very important part in the lives of women. Given a certain space, women can bring out from within what they never knew was there. Maybe one does not want to break into poetry or colours or music but would like space to just be—to look out of the window and stare at a flower or a squirrel. Creating such a space can create dialogues, communication and a sharing which may not otherwise be possible. The idea of a shared space even while having a private space to retire to was the notion that was at the heart of this extended and exploratory activity structured as a work-holiday camp planned for five days from January 26 to January 30, 2006. The invitation we sent out told the writers that it would be a five-day camp where along with sounds of different languages they would also hear the sound of the sea waves.

For the Women's Expression Camp, the participants were chosen through a process of conversation and exchange of ideas. We felt that the participants—about 50 in number—must be those who would feel that this expression camp would be an important dimension of their creative work. There would be no pressure to have results or obvious declarations of transformation. The idea was to create a space for sharing.

The camp that we organised had a programme of morning reading sessions organised in the dining room, a beautiful room surrounded by trees, and evening reading sessions in the sand-filled courtyard of a formal seminar room. Nature walks, music programmes, film viewing, visit

to the beach, games and open heart sessions in the night with different themes, with a cup of hot chocolate, were all built into the daily programme of the camp. We chose Kashid Beach Resort, which is an hour away from Alibagh for its beautiful Spanish-style bungalows and because of its enterprising manager Praveen Kumar. Another reason for choosing it was that mobile phones were non-functional there! We also decided to record the camp on video as it progressed.

The camp was planned in this manner because we felt that a process of sharing, learning, communication and creative archiving would get linked with it. It is also a method that combines several aspects and unifies them as an archiving and sharing experience that conscientises in the process of execution. Planned like a work-holiday, the Women's Expression Camp, we felt, would dissolve tensions of interacting with one another and generate a camaraderie that would open up dialogues.

MADE Designers designed the camp with a lot of creative input from SPARROW. We decided to overwhelm the writers with huge 6ft by 3ft posters with their photographs and quotations from their works. Light bulbs were strung all over on the trees and other surrounding areas making the place look like a fairyland. We are happy we did that for when the writers arrived, after a six-hour bus ride that seemed endless, they were carried away by the gigantic posters and twinkling bulbs all over. In the twenty-four rooms we put impossible people together with a lot of loud complaints that this camp would be a bore. B K Sangma, a writer from Meghalaya, had to share a room with a young Punjabi writer, Deepinder. "I am sure I am going to have a terrible time with her broken English and my broken Hindi," she complained. "Maybe it would generate a whole new way of communication," we told her gently. On the last day, B K Sangma, came to the mike and said with tears in her eyes that she was wrong; Deepinder and she were now sisters.

That was the kind of reaction the camp generated. There were a lot of readings, heated discussions, performances, dance and drama and a lot of laughter. And when we gave the writers a smaller version of their own posters as a parting gift, they were delighted. The four editors of the volumes planned, Arundhathi Subramaniam, Menka Shivdasani and Sampurna Chattarji made the reading sessions into lively listening sessions. At the end of the camp all of us felt exhausted but euphoric. The SPARROW girls were witnessing a camp of this nature for the first time and it meant a lot of hard work but it was combined with enjoyment and learning. The photographs here, we hope, will speak for the camp and its success. Priya D'Souza and Kutti Revathi took them and some are from the albums of Mithra Venkatraj.



0.3 Writers' Camp



Above

> Some serious reading: Himanshi Shelat

Left

> Taking it all in: Mithra Venkatraj, Karuka Ha Ma and Suneetha Shetty

> Getting acquainted: Deepinder, Simrat Gagan, Sukhwant Kaur Maan and Kavita Mahajan

> SPARROW Staff and MADE Designers on stage

Below

> Menka Shivdasani and Arundhati Subramaniam

> Reading with a smile: Afeefu Banu and Jameela Nishat



0.4 Writers' Camp



Above
> Mona Zote settles down to read her poems and Sampurna Chatterji looks on
> AnithaThampi and Sampurna Chatterji
> Moizangthem Borkarya and Menka Shivdesani

Left
> Walking towards the evening reading session venue
> Nayana Adharakar reading her poem
> A section of the writers



0.5 Writers' Camp



Left

- > Keen listeners in the evening session.
- > Grouped together

Below

- > The Shooting Unit: Amala, Tamil writer Kutti Reyathi, M Shanti and Vishnu Mathur
- > Malsawmi Jacob receiving the poster
- > Pratibha Ray receiving the poster



0.6 Writers' Camp



Above
> Disco!
> Brucellish K Sangma making a tentative entry
> Dancing!

Left
> Open Heart Session with hot chocolate



0.7 Writers' Camp

Nirmala Ghantasala, Rajalakshmi and Satyawati Kondaveeti rendering a Telugu folk song



Sushama Deshpande in *Viby: Mee Savitribai*



Bimabati Thiyam Ongbi and Aramban Ongbi Memchoibi doing a Manipuri number



Above: Malika Shetty Siddhakte Below: Aditi Desai and Devaki Desai in *Ek Sanj Awaraj Bhoir*



Above: Jayanti Naik singing a Konkani folk song Below: Kavita Mahajan joking her way through



Above: Zaitungpui Wuangtu reading a poem Below: Suneetha Shetty singing Tulu folk songs



0.8 Writers' Camp



Above

- > Sukhwant Kaur Mann doing the Titanic pose
- > Saniya, Indira Poonerwala and Simrat Gagan
- > Nee Devi, Memchobi and Birabati

Left

- > Group at Chikne Village
- > Outing to see a nearby dam
- > Off to Birla Mandir

Global Feminisms >>

18 11111111111 11111111111

Eight films have been so far completed under the Global Feminisms project to document women's scholarship and action.

For the last two films we chose the North East region. The North East has not figured in a prominent way in our print and visual collection and in the documentation work we have done. We wanted to make up for this lacuna by choosing two women who have been actively involved in women's issues. We chose Ima Thokchom Ramani from Manipur and Jarjum Ete from Arunachal Pradesh. The preliminary visit to both the places made us realise how little we knew about lives in these places. In the first place we found out that we needed an inner line permit to enter Arunachal Pradesh. This had to be got from Delhi. And it took more than six months to plan the trip because e-mails and phones did not always work. But early one morning when I went and met Ima Thokchom Ramani I felt it was worth all the trouble.

A simple, down to earth village woman, Thokchom Ramani is the General Secreary of the All Manipur Women's Reformation and Development Samaj. Their office is currently located in the green room of an open amphitheatre. Thokchom Ramani is about seventy-five years old. She says that the struggle women had to put up to live their every day life made her stand up for them. She has been actively involved in the Nishabandhi (banning of alcohol) movement, efforts to deal with violence against women and has been raising her voice strongly against the special powers given to the army in Manipur.



Above: Jarjum Ete
Below: Ima Thokchom Ramani Devi



Jarjum Ete is currently the chairperson of the State National Commission for Women. She has been the spokesperson for the Arunachal Pradesh Women's Welfare Society and has been an active participant in bringing various issues of women to the fore.

We scheduled both the shootings towards the end of November. Ima Thokchom Ramani's was done with the help of North East Network and their able team in Manipur. Monisha Behal with whom we were constantly in touch helped us to organise the research and the shooting with help from the Manipur wing of NEN. Thokchom Ramani shared her life and work openly. At the end of it she said that what all the seniors in the group wanted really was peace in Manipur before their death. Then she added ruefully, "Maybe death will come earlier." Jarjum Ete spoke about the various tribes in the region and the status they accord women and their ways of handling issues concerning women. Jarjum Ete is considered a rebel of sorts and she has been raising various issues like forced marriage, property rights, alcoholism, violence, education and similar issues which concern women.

The shooting in both the places generated a lot of warmth and friendship. Ima Ramani and her colleagues sang and danced on the last day before bidding us good bye. Jarjum Ete arranged a get together on the last evening and all of us sang old Hindi film songs and gazhals all through the evening.





PAHELO AKSHAR edited by Himanshi Shelat >>

Reviewed by Divya Pandey

Pabelo Akshar edited by the distinguished Gujarati writer Himanshi Shelat is a collection of writings on mother-daughter relationship. The title of the book is borrowed from a poem *Bolu Hu To Pabelo Akshar, Ba, Ba, Ba* (The First Letter I speak is Ma, Ma, Ma), taught in Gujarati medium schools. Himanshi has rightly dedicated this book to all those unborn daughters who were victims of female foeticide. Had they been born maybe their mothers would have experienced a different kind of love and friendship.

Mother's love, warmth, support and generosity are always there for their daughters despite differences in their educational levels, thoughts and ideas. However, the focus of the book is to highlight a very unique relationship between the two based on sharing of their joys and sorrows, speaking out their problems, confusions and resentments, valuing each other's views, being there in hours of need and expressing unconditional love.

As mentioned by Himanshi in her preface, the idea was to document such a friendly relationship between mothers and daughters from among three generations of women. However, some of the narrators have talked

about being both daughters and mothers. For example, Mallika Sarabhai writes about the intimate relationship she shares with her mother Mrinalini as well as her daughter Anahita. Similarly, the narrative of Varsha Das also deals with being a daughter and a mother to a daughter. The other five Gujarati writers who have contributed to this collection—Manoghna Desai, Supriya Pathak, Nirupam Sheth, Falguni Pathak-Dholakia and Himanshi Shelat—have focussed primarily on their relationship with the mother. This collection has broadened its scope by including write-ups on mother-daughter relationships of some known personalities and writers like Sylvia Plath, Agatha Christie, Simone de Bouveir and Vijayalakshmi Pandit.

This suggests that mother-daughter relationship is not necessarily only biological and can be developed and nurtured with women one comes to associate with.

These narratives are well written, lively and are expressions of fine emotions and sentiments. Apart from mother-daughter relationship, they reflect on various aspects of the joint family system as well as inter personal relationships amongst family members. In Falguni Sheth's narrative,

the definition of a mother has expanded from mother to Masi and Mother-in-law. Interestingly, she calls her mother's sister, her second mother and her mother-in-law, her third mother. This suggests that mother-daughter relationship is not necessarily only biological and can be developed and nurtured with women one comes to associate with.

These narratives throw some light on the status of women in Gujarat. Education and opportunities vary in different strata of the society. Despite an intense desire for education, some women portrayed in this book were unable to study due to family circumstances and they seem to have nursed in their hearts a deep sense of dissatisfaction regarding this through out their lives.

Mother-daughter relationship is based on faith and intimacy, love and bonding. It goes beyond cultural and national boundaries. American writer Sylvia Plath's two letters to her mother included in this collection reveal how close she was to her mother and how much she shared with her.

Himanshi's book adds a new dimension to Women's Studies. It is a labour of love that only writers like Himanshi can take up and succeed in.

Book Details:

Pabelo Akshar

Himanshi Shelat

December 2005

Published by

Gurjar Grantharatna Karyalaya

Number of pages: 6 + 98

Price: Rs. 100

1.1 Bus Photo Exhibition

Marching On The Roads: Making Oneself, Making History,
a Non-Gallery Based Photo Exhibition To Celebrate International Women's Day
8th March 2006 >>

SPARROW has been involved with the work of alternative methods of narrating women's history. Throughout the history of the nation, women have been out there on the roads fighting for the nation, demanding their rights, raising their voice against injustice, fighting for human dignity and demanding a world without war. Unless constant efforts are made to remember this history, it will be forgotten, hidden and ignored.

As a part of the 8th March International Women's Day celebrations this year, SPARROW decided to put up a photo exhibition of women's activism from 1931 onwards not in a gallery but on running double-decker buses in Mumbai and as photo-exhibit notices to be circulated along with newspapers. The photographs and print visuals were chosen to remember and celebrate the history of women's action. The exhibition was part of SPARROW's endeavour to

bring women's history into the public sphere. Four different bus routes were running carrying the photo exhibition for fifteen days from March 6 to 20, 2006.

On March 8 and 9, 2006 one lakh of Mumbaikars received SPARROW photo print posters with their morning newspapers. We hope it was a pleasant surprise. Supporting us as usual, in designing and executing these exhibition ideas were MADE Designers.

Photo Credit: Pioneer Publicity Corporation and Priya D'Souza





8th March 1947 **SPARROW** SOUND & PICTURE ARCHIVES FOR RESEARCH ON WOMEN International Women's Day

1931

Freedom Fighters out of jail, Lucknow, 1931
Photo Courtesy: Dr. Geraldine Forbes



A march for the nation, Mumbai.
Photo Courtesy: Times of India Archives

1949

1956



Some of the Mahila Punjab women demonstrators marching in procession in Delhi to Parliament House, Aug 1956
Photo Courtesy: Times of India Archives

1965

March for Unity by Andhrajammal and other freedom fighters, Chennai.
SPARROW Collections



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1970



Demonstration in Mumbai by women of backward classes to press their rights and relief according to Indian Constitution, Mumbai.
Photo Courtesy: Times of India Archives



Protest against price rise, Mumbai.
SPARROW Collections



Mill Natarajana, Mumbai.
SPARROW Collections

1973

A march led by women Metall workers in Sachivalay in Mumbai demanding bonus, provident fund and other things.
Photo Courtesy: Times of India Archives



Advised Mahila Marcha, Kalghoda, Mumbai, 07-04-1973
SPARROW Collections



Save Mahila Andolan Sampark Samiti demonstrating against atrocities on women, Mumbai.
SPARROW Collections

1976

1972



Peon Critical Yakkam march in Chennai.
SPARROW Collections



Protest against obscene posters by Peon Critical Yakkam in Chennai.
SPARROW Collections

1979

1960



Meira Phuli Group in Manipur.
SPARROW Collections



A section of the women's marcha from Azad Maidan, Mumbai on 08-03-1982, International Women's Day.
Photo Courtesy: Times of India Archives

1983

late 1970's



Rally organised by Forum Against Women's Oppression against sex discrimination and sex harassment at Chattraghat, Mumbai, 14-11-1984
Photo By: VISHWANI Patel
SPARROW Collections

1986

1970



Protest against dowry organised by Shree Virashi Manch, India.
Photo By: Shoba Chavan
SPARROW Collections

1983



A protest rally in Mumbai by members of SACHETA protesting against dowry and campaigning for justice.
Illustrated Weekly, 1983
Photo Courtesy: Times of India Archives

1983



Anti-price rise marcha in Mumbai from Azad Maidan to Mantralaya on 08-12-1984
Photo Courtesy: Times of India Archives

1986

Marching On The Roads: Making Oneself, Making History

1930
1940
1950
1960
1970
1980

Marching On The Roads: Making Oneself, Making History



Rally against religious fundamentalism, Delhi, 1986
Photo by: Sheba Choudhri
SPARROW Collection



March by Chhatra Yuva Sangharsh Yabhi, Bihar, 1986
SPARROW Collection

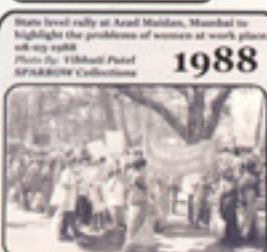


Rural women demonstrate against Union Carbide, Delhi, 1986
Photo by: Sheba Choudhri
SPARROW Collection



Demonstration against beauty contest organized by Women's Centre at Shantabhand Hall, Mumbai, 1987
Photo by: Yibhuti Patel
SPARROW Collection

1986



State level rally at Azad Maidan, Mumbai to highlight the problems of women at work place, 1988
Photo by: Yibhuti Patel
SPARROW Collection



Usha Mehta leading a march in Mumbai on Anti Hindutva Day, 1990
SPARROW Collection

1990



Mahila Marcha, Churchgate, Mumbai, 1993
SPARROW Collection

1993



Marcha by sex workers, Karmacharys, Mumbai, 1996
SPARROW Collection

1996



Procession on International Women's Day, Bargaraj, Anandpur Pradesh, 1997
SPARROW Collection



Marcha by girl students for keeping the city clean, Churchgate, Mumbai, 1998
SPARROW Collection

1998



Women demonstrate against lack of adequate relief in quake - 80 ML districts of Uttar Pradesh in Lucknow
Photo by: Ashir Bag
The Hindu 20.04.1999

1999



Mumbai's rally in front of Governor's House in Bhubaneswar to protest against inadequate relief after the super cyclone.
Photo by: S. Mohan
The Telegraph 27.01.2000

2000



Anti-bomb activists protest at a demonstration at Churchgate, Mumbai on the second anniversary of the Puhbatan explosion.
The Times of India 14.2.2000

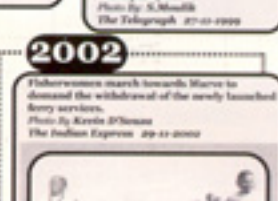


Women protesting against price rise, Azad Maidan, Mumbai, 2000
SPARROW Collection



Women at a rally in Bhubaneswar demanding Government action to supply sufficient drinking water.
The Statesman 17.4.2000

2001



Fishermen march towards Bureo to demand the withdrawal of the newly launched Army services.
Photo by: Karan D'Souza
The Indian Express 09.01.2002

2002



Landless people under the banner of Karnataka People's Forum for Land Rights protesting at Arts College grounds demanding land for poor farmers in Bangalore.
Deccan Herald 09.04.2002



March to repair N.E. 39 and solidarity march by women in Manipal, Aug 2002
SPARROW Collection



Puhbat Phari, Mumbai, 09-08-2002
SPARROW Collection



Women ML workers' procession demanding benefits, Mangalore, 2004
SPARROW Collection

2004



March against Armed Forces Special Powers Act 1958 (AFSPA) organized by Amnesty International India and women's groups in Manipal, 2005
SPARROW Collection



National Federation of Indian Women Activists demonstrate in New Delhi to press for 33% reservation of parliamentary seats for women.
The Times of India, 26.07.2002

2005



Mumbai Women's Struggle organized by STEPS, Puhbatkar, at WomansRoad, Varel Vadu, 2004
SPARROW Collection



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1.4 Homage

POPATI HIRANANDANI >> By C S Lakshmi

After many painful years of cancer Popati Hiranandani died quietly on December 16, 2005. She was 81. In Sind, Pakistan literati held condolence meetings and paid homage to her. But in Mumbai where she lived and elsewhere in India no one even knew she had passed away. That is how we respect some of our senior writers and artists. We prefer sensational news of suicides of young actresses and super stars falling ill. We love disaster deaths where we put microphones in front of people emerging from a shocking, traumatic disaster to ask them how exactly they feel at that moment. Popati's books are prescribed as part of the syllabus in Pakistan. But in India where she spent her entire life, non-Sindhis have not even heard of her name. Apart from an interview done by Sivasankari for her Knit India Project published with a translation of one of her stories and a recent translation of one of her stories by Thilakavathi, Popati has remained unknown in the literary world.

Popati was born in Karachi on September 17, 1924. As a child Popati lived in Karachi and she was one of seven children. Popati lost her father who was an officer in the Forest Department when she was ten years old. Her mother was 32 years old and had seven children to look after. Her mother was a woman of spirit. She sold all her ornaments and came and settled down in Hyderabad (Sind). Popati belonged to the Amil community of Hyderabad. The Amils had a long tradition of education and had always encouraged their daughters to go for higher education. But the community also believed in demanding a huge dowry from the bride's side. Popati was vehemently opposed to the system of dowry and had endless arguments with her mother about it. Once her mother told her that Popati need not worry about this aspect of marriage for she would sell the ancestral home.

"Nothing doing," Popati said firmly. "I will not let myself be treated like an Arabian mare who has to be adorned with a golden saddle to attract the rider."

At one point Popati's mother entreated her to marry and Popati agreed. But she came to know that her mother had given a dowry of fifteen thousand rupees. Popati went and met the boy and told him that since she earned more than him he should pay her a dowry and if he didn't she would not marry him. That evening all the things that had been given to the boy's parents were returned. Popati consoled her crying mother saying that she did not want to be insulted in the name of tradition and all that she wanted to do was to uphold her dignity as a person.

I write what I feel. I do not want to entertain or amuse my readers. I endeavour to restore to the Indian woman her lost sense of dignity.

Popati decided to remain single but throughout her life she had to listen to degrading comments that made her feel that the society had really no regard for its women. She writes in one of the chapters in her autobiography that a woman is made to suffer "not on account of any vice in her character but because of her virtues." On one occasion she gave a lecture in the Sindhi Sahitya Sangat on Kalidasa and his works. After she had finished the lecture a man approached her and asked her why she had not been married.

"Does your question arise from my lecture or from personal curiosity?" she asked.



Photo Courtesy Menka Shivdasani

He looked unnerved. "But you have talked about the Shastras. In Shastras it is written that a girl must marry," he said.

"And I am sure you have not set eyes on even one of the Shastras, let alone studying it?" Popati replied.

Since she chose to be single, Popati was subjected to similar questions and even more foolish ones from men who claimed to be litterateurs. Menka Shivdasani, a poet, in one of her articles says that once, when Popati was 67, she was being felicitated by the Sahitya Akademi at a function in Mumbai. After a two-hour speech, during the question and answer session she was asked by a man, "Since you insist you are not a man-hater, which of the men in this room do you like?" Popati gave him a look of disdain and moved on to the next question.

Popati took up a busy teaching career but managed to make time for writing. In the preface of one of her books she says: I write what I feel. I do not want to entertain or amuse my readers. I endeavour to restore to the Indian woman her lost sense of dignity. I want to tell her that she should unfold her inner strength and should manifest her potentialities. At a time when women writers were not allowed to use the word *isbj* (love) Popati wrote a poem about the uterus calling it a small box beneath the navel. The poem created a furore as she used the word *dabli* for the uterus and wooden *dablis* were beautifully

1.5 Homage

painted works of art and a speciality of the town of Halan in Sind. Popati's poems and stories spoke about women who were independent and strong.

Popati received the Sahitya Akademi award for her autobiography but throughout her life she retained a sense of homelessness for she felt that

Sindhis were treated as refugees and never as Indians. In one of her poems entitled *Homeless Me* she writes:

*...I am homeless
And destined to be buried alive
In the graveyard of nonentity.*

That Sind celebrates her writing to this day tells us how deep this sense of

loss must have been. I feel a deep sense of gratitude towards women like Popati Hiranandani for I feel that people like us could write because women like her lived and wrote before us and brightened our history by living during our times.

T SUNANDAMMA, Senior Kannada Writer >> By Tulasi Venugopal

T Sunandamma, a senior Kannada writer passed away recently. She was the first woman writer, in the line of Sriranga, Na Kasturi and G P Rajaratnam to write humorous essays.

Born in an aristocratic family, Sunandamma was sent to school. As she was the only girl student among boys a separate seating arrangement was made for her. She was made to sit behind a curtain. She excelled in studies. But at the age of eleven she was married off. Meanwhile her grandfather and well-read parents introduced her to English and Kannada literature. During her school days itself Sunandamma wrote poems and short stories.

Sunandamma continued her education after marriage but could not go to college after completing Intermediate because she had to look after her two children. Sunandamma managed to make time for writing. In 1942 Dr. Shivaram Rao started a special tabloid *Koravanji* that concentrated on humorous writings. T Sunandamma was the only woman writer who contributed regularly to this tabloid.

Some women writers were into creative writing during the time Sunandamma wrote. Most of their writings glorified women who lived in traditional and bound circumstances. So a woman writing humorous essays with derision, parody and sarcasm about society and family life was not quite accepted. Naturally Sunandamma

was sidelined by male critics of the time. Sunandamma created a funny couple, who are simple and gullible. Later, this couple, Sarasu and Mailarayya, became household names among readers. A sharp sense of humor and skillful expression were the unique features of her writings. She sketched in a humorous manner middle class life with its desires, disappointments and dilemmas.

Nine collections of essays and a volume of her entire work have been published. For forty-five years she was associated with radio programmes, contributing plays and various women's programme and also giving talks. Despite the pain of personal tragedies, Sunandamma kept on writing humorous essays to give some lighter moments to her readers.

In later years, critics appreciated T Sunandamma's writings and she was honoured for her humorous style of writing. She received many awards including the prestigious Kannada Sahitya Akademi Award, Karnataka Rajyotsava Prashasti, Dana Chintamani Attimabbe Prashasti, Anupama Prashasti and other similar awards. She was the founder President of Karnataka Lekakiyara Sangha.

T Sunandamma was a pioneer in her field and inspired many women writers. Now several women writers walk on the path laid by Sunandamma and remember her with great respect and humility. SPARROW was fortunate

to meet and talk to T Sunandamma and include her in its Literature Leap Project.



“She sketched in a humorous manner middle class life with its desires, disappointments and dilemmas.”

1.6 Homage



TARA REDDY >> .

The death of CPI leader Comrade **TARA REDDY** came as a great shock to many. Tara Reddy played a major role in the Naval Revolt of 1946 and since then she has been part of many movements such as Samyukta Maharashtra Andolan, Goa freedom struggle and the Dalit Panther Movement. Along with Ahilya Ranganekar she has been part of the Women's Movement also.

Tara Reddy has authored several books. Marathi writer, Director and Producer P K Atre has spoken highly of her collection of stories *Jeevan*. Her erudite articles appeared in journals like *Saptabik*, *Sangram*, *Dainik Chitra*, *Dainik Jaybind*, *Saptabik Navyug*, *Navi Waat* and *Yug Samwad*. She also edited the women's journal *Mabila Andolan Patrika* brought out by the Party. The Sixth Protest Literature Conference was presided over by her.

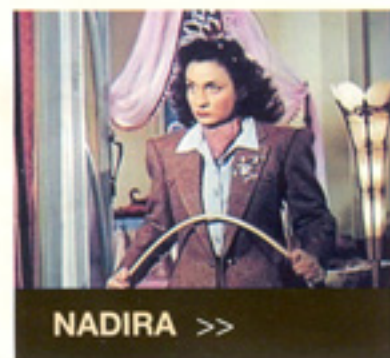
SPARROW has her interview as part of its oral history project. Women like her have inspired many other women to take up committed work.

BHANUMATHI RAMAKRISHNA, the veteran Tamil film actress, who died on 24th December, 2005, could be rightly called a maverick. The big screen has always been dominated by heroes. And in Bhanumathi's period, there was MGR and Shivaji Ganesan in the Tamil field and NT Rama Rao and Nageswararao in Telugu. But Bhanumathi still stood out because of her versatility. She was a fantastic actress, a very good and trained singer, a storywriter and a director. *Chandi Rani*, a film directed by her was a box-office hit.

She set up the Bharani Studio named after her son. Her husband Ramakrishna, was a director himself. But what stands out in Bhanumathi's case is that she was her own woman. There was no gossip about her. She was bold enough to tell off her male co-stars. Even MGR had experienced the rough side of her tongue. Her story, *Atbagaru Katba*, won the Sahitya Akademi Award. There is an apocryphal story that when Bhanumathi came on the sets, there would be a hush. She commanded the respect of everyone. She lived life on her own terms, she was no sycophant and as such, when MGR offered her the Principal's post in Madras Music College, there were no sniggers. It is a pity that her death has been unsung and unwept by the media. But the silver screen has truly lost a dynamic personality.



BHANUMATHI RAMAKRISHNA >>



NADIRA >>

NADIRA, who passed away on February 6th made her debut in Mehboob Khan's *Aan*. She shot to fame with Raj Kapoor's *Sbree 420* and her song *Mud Mudke Na Dekh* was on everyone's lips. She acted in many films later but none of them made a lasting impression. She resurfaced with *Julie* as an Anglo-Indian. She was seen in some TV serials. She also appeared in a TV programmes with yester-year actresses like Lalita Pawar and Usha Kiran. She spoke about her insomnia and her loneliness. She broke down many times during the interview. She had been married four times and all of them ended in divorce. She was a strong-willed woman. When she acted in Motilal's film *Choti Choti Baate* she would berate him openly for treating his wife so shabbily. She never acted in many films as a heroin because she did not have the fragile look a heroine was supposed to possess. They say that she turned into an alcoholic towards the last years of her life. She must have taken refuge in the bottle to ward off loneliness.

SUNDARI BAI, who breathed her last recently, graduated from the stage to films. Initially she appeared in black and white films. She was on the pay roll of Gemini Studios. She was married to Kothamangalam Subbu and they were a team. She excelled in comedy. She was a permanent in all Gemini films. Her role as a fortune-teller in *Chandralekha*, a block-buster, produced by Gemini and the way she inveigled her way into the palace, where Ranjan, the villain, had kept the heroine captive, to tell her how to escape, was the highlight of the film. Her husband was a writer. After his death, she left Gemini and became a freelancer. She began doing character roles as the mother or grandmother. She was also a very good cook. Once she narrated an incident about her culinary skills on TV. Dilip Kumar and Dev Anand, who were acting in *Insaniyat*, produced by Gemini, were invited by her husband for dinner. Those days there was no gas and she cooked biryani on a fire-wood stove and the two stars relished it. She was a simple woman and it always seemed she had got into acting by mistake. She contributed a great deal to Tamil cinema but Tamil cinema did not give her, her due.



SUNDARI BAI >>