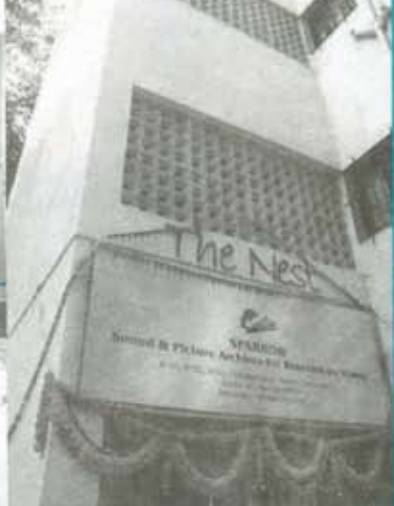



*SPARROW
CELEBRATES
25 YEARS...*



25 years...

A Journey, A Struggle, A Joy

In India Women Spoke, Women Worked,
Women Wrote, Women Acted



Women Chose, Women Demanded,
Women Created, Women Rebelled



We Put Them
All Under One Roof
And Called it
SPARROW

25 years of Archiving Women's Lives,
Women's History
SPARROW

For Change For Knowledge

To Change the
World for Women

Come Join Us in Our Mission,
in Our Dream

We thank all our trustees and advisors who reposed immense faith in our efforts which has made it possible for us to spread our wings. They continue to stand by us. We also thank our funders, donors, supporters, well-wishers, friends and many more who have supported us in many ways.

Contributions to SPARROW qualify for 80 G. Donations can be sent by cheque or draft marked to SPARROW. They can also be sent by wire transfer to:

Name Account Holder: SPARROW Bank Name: STATE BANK OF INDIA.
Address: Orchid Plaza, Ram Kuwar Thakur Road,
Dahisar (East), Mumbai-68 Branch: Dahisar (East) Branch
Corresponding Saving Account number: Saving A/c No: 10154465558
Bank code: 4664, IFSC Code: SBIN0004664, Bank MICR Code: 400002022
Email: sbidahisar@vsnl.net Contact No: 022-28283749



SPARROW
SOUND & PICTURE
ARCHIVES FOR
RESEARCH
ON
WOMEN

SPARROW

newsletter

SNL Number 30

April 2014

Publication Number 78
Published by
Sound & Picture Archives for
Research on Women
The Nest, B-101/201/301, Patel Apartment,
Maratha Colony Road, Dahisar (E),
Mumbai-400068
Phone: 022 2828 0895, 2896 5019
E mail: sparrow1988@gmail.com
Website: www.sparrowonline.org

Editor:
C S Lakshmi

Publication Co-ordination:
Pooja Pandey

Printed at :
Mouj Prakashan Griha,
Khatau Wadi, Goregaonkar Lane, Girgaum,
Mumbai - 400 004
Phone: 022 2387 1050

This occasional Newsletter for only private
circulation, is published with the support of
Stichting de Zaaier, Utrecht

CONTENTS

Editor's Note	01
Review: <i>Light & Shade In Life's Glade : A Memoir</i> Tara Bhadbhade	02
-Priya D'Souza	
Review: <i>Aaya Pir, Bhagga Mir and other Sindhi Proverbs</i> Sarla Kripalani <i>Parsi Bol: Insults, Endearments & other Parsi Gujarati Phrases</i> Sooni Taraporevala and Meher Marfatia	02-03
-Roshan G Shahani	
Review: <i>Panchathanthiram (From the Sanskrit Original)</i>	04
Translated by Annapoorna Easwaran -C S Lakshmi	
Review: <i>Ragi-Ragini: Chronicles from Aji's Kitchen</i>	05
Anjali Purohit -C S Lakshmi	
A Story: <i>From the Panchatantra</i>	06
-Suniti Namjoshi	
Events	07-09
Homage: Anuradha Potdar, Sarojini Varadappan,	10-14
Reshma, Tarla dalal, Dr Jyoti Lanjewar, Suchitra Sen, Vasudha Dhagamwar, Pradulla Dahanukar, Leelavati Bhagwat, Lakshmi Shankar Anjali Devi, Meenakshitai Apte, Nanda & Sudhatai Varde	

[Editor's Note]

This is our first Newsletter after SPARROW has entered its Silver Jubilee year. We thought this should highlight our extraordinary journey in visuals and hence a cover that shows you some aspects of this journey on roads untravellered.

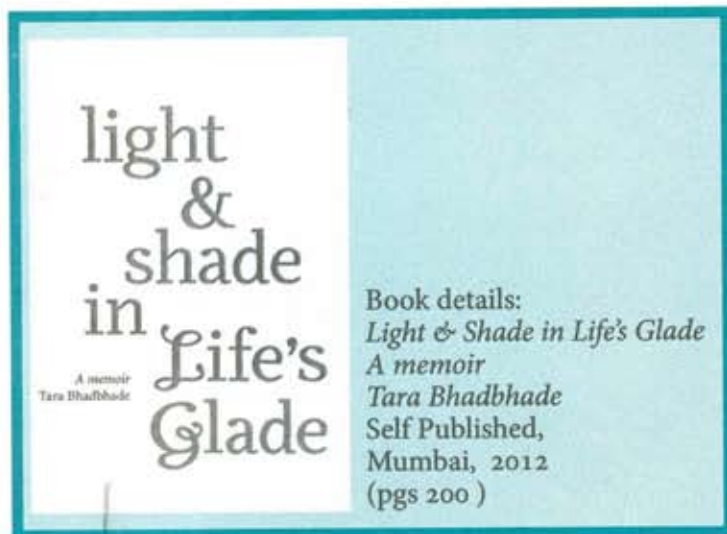
Women writing on their lives and the language which expresses the politics of everyday life through proverbs and phrases used in conversation is an interesting part of SPARROW's collection. In this SNL we bring you glimpses of the unusual life of Tara Bhadbhade and the efforts to record Sindhi proverbs and insults, endearments and other Parsi Gujarathi phrases. We also bring a note on a book that combines songs and recipes of millet with stories of a grandmother who not only knew how to cook but also knew why a girl child had to be pampered and cherished.

As children we have read and heard stories from *Panchatantra*. In this SNL we draw attention to the publication of a Tamil version. And since we were talking of *Panchatantra* we felt tempted to publish a story of Suniti Namjoshi connected with that. Suniti Namjoshi was gracious enough to allow us to use it in this SNL.

Many women who have made us what we are today, paving the way for us by living and working with principles and commitment to human dignity and progress have passed away and in this SNL we remember them with love.

Do write to us and do visit our website www.sparrowonline.org.

Light & Shade In Life's Glade Tara Bhadbhade



Book details:
Light & Shade in Life's Glade
A memoir
Tara Bhadbhade
Self Published,
Mumbai, 2012
(pgs 200)

On Tara Bhadbhade's 70th birthday, a well-wisher gifted her a Cross pen and requested her to write about her life. Thankfully she obliged and the readers are gifted with an engrossing read. She not only includes anecdotes and factual information but also her thought processes, decision-making, uncertainties, viewpoints and struggles.

Born into a Marathi-speaking Gaud Saraswat Brahmin family in Karnataka, Tara has led an interesting and unconventional life. She begins the book with sketches of her ancestors, including that of her maternal grandfather who made a life for himself in Burma. She writes about her childhood, school and college life and later on, her career as an academician.

Tara writes warmly about her friendship and marriage with Madhu, who started off as her badminton doubles partner. We can sense their mutual respect for each other's education and careers. Madhu was transferred to different Forest Departments around the country and they struck deep, lasting friendships with people in each place. When her young son, Raju is diagnosed with polio Tara brings him to Bombay since her husband has to stay behind on work. She is supported again by friends and takes her son for treatment everyday carrying him herself in public buses. All the effort pays off as Raju is able to go to school and can later even ride a bicycle.

Many dynamic women feature in this book. Tara's great-grandmother Tarabai (whom she is named after) was widowed at an early age and struggled to educate her son, who later became an eminent lawyer. Tara's mother, Sulochana Pandit, insisted on a holistic education, including music and sports, for her children and thought nothing of going to the living quarters of performing artistes of those days in search of the best music teachers. When Tara's father died without leaving behind much, her mother started a boarding house for students of a nearby school. Tara's

daughters, Rani and Sadhana share the same zest for life and spirit of entrepreneurship. Tara records the support she received from many other women, too.

It is clear that Tara has a deep affection for her family and friends. But she does not gloss over any unpleasantness and notes how as a child, she was deeply disturbed by the treatment meted out to a child widow in the household.

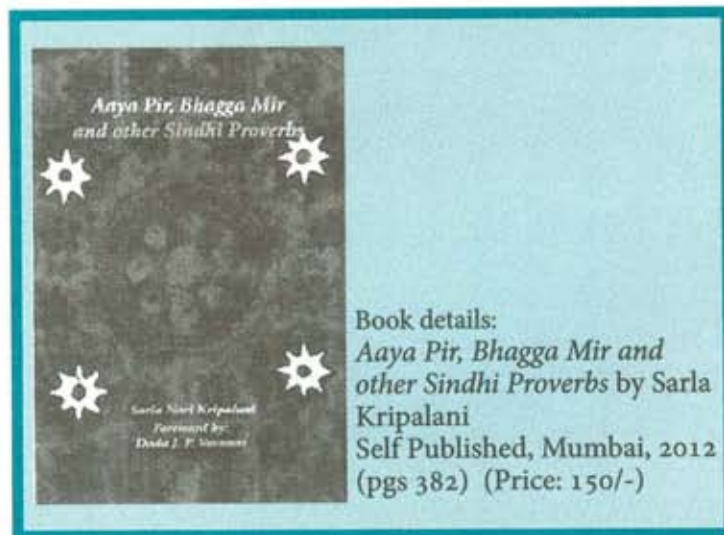
This personal history is written also with a view to sharing her heritage especially with her grandchildren, most of whom reside outside India. There is no trace of self-pity even as she writes about her heartbreak at the loss of her daughter, Rani, to cancer and later, her husband too. Though Tara insists she is no social historian, she does share in an entertaining manner about traditions, festivals, and different customs and religious practices in her family. Tara Bhadbhade is a careful observer of human nature with an amazing memory and eye for detail which include sights and sounds of different places in India and abroad, habits and quirks of others.

Beautifully designed by Rachita Dalal with water colours by Bina Nanavati, this book takes us into the lives of women of many generations in a family.

—Priya D'Souza

Native Woodnotes: Wild and Wise

Two interesting publications, followed by a lively panel discussion (at the Kala Ghoda Festival) are of immense archival value to all who want to retrieve the past, not only as an act of nostalgia but as one that has relevance to the present. *Aaya Pir, Bhagga Mir and other Sindhi Proverbs* by Sarla Kripalani and *Parsi Bol: Insults, Endearments & other Parsi Gujarati Phrases* by Sooni Taraporevala and Meher Marfatia take us back to a world and a time when family and social conversations were replete with colourful idiomatic expressions, pithy nuggets of wisdom and yes, wicked scatological humour as well. Nostalgia, undoubtedly, is the privilege of the old and many septuagenarian and octogenarian readers/audience remembered these sayings, as familiar as family faces and as lost in time today. Noisy



Book details:
Aaya Pir, Bhagga Mir and other Sindhi Proverbs by Sarla Kripalani
Self Published, Mumbai, 2012
(pgs 382) (Price: 150/-)

children would have been admonished with “*Sakhini kunni gharon vajjay*” (Empty vessels thunder most); “*Surat khan Seeratt bhallie*” (Choose a wife by your ear rather than your eye) would be the sage advice given by father to son. I remember the Parsi ones, most of them sarcastic, such as this one—“*Lesson Na chopra abrai pur churavee deedhake?*” (Put your lesson books up in the loft?) Have you stopped studying? Some, viewed in today’s context, sound terribly sexist and politically incorrect but those were the days when such concepts did not exist. An elderly lady, flashily dressed, would thus invite this rude remark from my father—“*Ghurdee ghoree neh lal lugam*” (Old mare sporting red stirrups.)

Perhaps, it is no coincidence that both books from two different communities and two different languages have appeared on the scene in recent times. The need to preserve a tradition is inversely related to the disappearance of that particular tradition. All three authors mention in their respective introductions, the need to draw on oral traditions and to archive them in today’s global milieu. One is always on the run and linguistic communication, like all other communication, has to be quick, urgent—I almost said telegraphic, forgetting that that word will soon be an archaism, the last telegrams already having no more than archival value. In fact, “*Tara ghere taar ave*”, an insult hurled at an enemy, hoping s/he would receive bad news, commonly used by an earlier generation, might soon need annotations to a ‘digitised’ generation. As an irritated septuagenarian friend remarked, “These SMSs (itself an abbreviation) have killed the joy of language; and now we are going to lose commas as well.” Perhaps, we had stood in greater awe of our parents and grandparents and had listened—or had at least pretended to listen—to their wise aphorisms with greater reverence. If at all today’s youngster has time to listen to your pontific sayings, s/he might resort to just enough Gujarati to ask you to stop this *mastakmari*.

Moreover, today English or Hindi have become so much the daily means of communication in the heterogeneous mix of Bombay, idiomatic expressions or wise sayings in Sindhi or Parsi Gujarati would be lost on the younger generation.

Sarla lamented the absence of the joint family which in the past would have ensured the fluency of the mother tongue in the young. A contributing factor, which came up for discussion, was that many youngsters today speak English as their first tongue since increasingly they are products of mixed marriages. At the same time, even English proverbial sayings sound rather pompous and clichéd today and are best used ironically. The question of translation inevitably came up; undoubtedly the flavour of the original could get lost in translation, not so much among the regional languages as in English. Yet some of the sayings cut across language and cultural barriers; in fact, Sarla’s translations of Sindhi proverbs are often in the guise of English ones e.g. *Mohabbat ni ddissay burra-ee* has its English counterpart in “Love is Blind.”

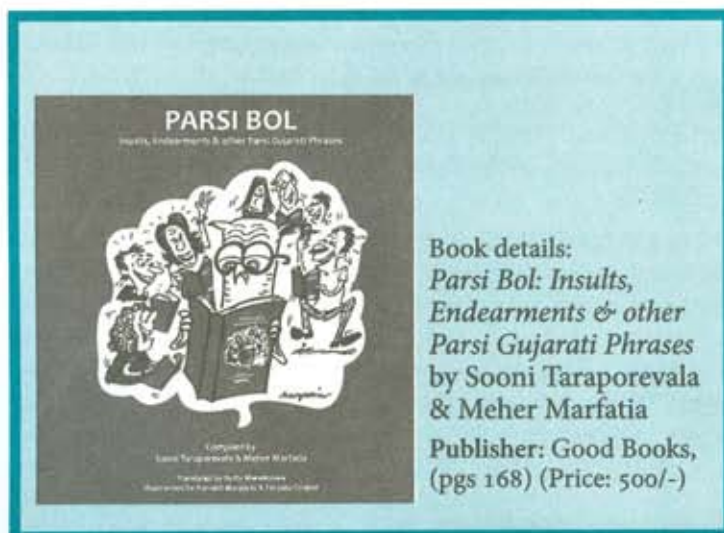
As interesting was the realisation that many of the idiomatic phrases were used among all our regional languages “*Chaavi na aap*,” (egging someone on) “*Khan kha*,” (expecting the impossible) “*Tara monay sakar*” (literally meaning ‘sugar in your mouth’ but used when someone hopes something mentioned by someone really happens), don’t need clumsy English translations; they are used even today and even by folks whose first tongue is English. One more, in particular is worth mentioning—*Mian bibi raazi to kya karega kazi* (a loose translation—when a man and woman desire to be together, no law can prevent them). Sarla includes it among those headed “Culturally Unique: No Equivalent.” But for one thing it is in Hindi, for another, I have heard many use it, Parsi or otherwise. In fact, on a personal note, my maternal grandmother was supposed to have quoted this proverb to my paternal grandfather when he had raised some trivial objection to my parents’ forthcoming marriage.

It was argued during the discussion that both communities being stateless had contributed to the loss of a regional/state language but the counter argument, seemed more productive. A stateless community was more ubiquitous, less parochial and more open to change, more ready to absorb other cultures.

The three authors were unanimous in the joy they expressed in compiling their book. Sarla’s is more a book of proverbs and hence, more serious in intent. Looking back “at my beloved Sindh, my native land”, she dedicates her book to her mother and mother-in-law, whose dignified photographs, like their use of dignified proverbs, tell us of a once-upon-a-time world. *Parsi Bol* comprises more of colloquial expressions than sage proverbs. If Sarla’s is stately and old-worldly, Sooni’s and Meher’s is raunchy and hilarious—the illustrations add to the ‘dhaansak’ humour.

Going by what Sooni said, one of the idiomatic expressions used for “kicking the bucket”—*Evan toh photo frame thai guya* (he has become a photo frame), is of recent origin. Uproariously funny, though it speaks of death—it tells us that our languages, our colourful expressions, our sense of humour are all “alive and kicking”.

—Roshan G Shahani



Old Texts and Present Times

Panchathanthiram (From the Sanskrit Original)
Translated by Annapoorna Easwaran



Book details:
Panchathanthiram
(From the Sanskrit Original)
Translated by: Annapoorna Easwaran
Publisher: Sadhuram Padhippagam,
Chennai, 2012,
(Pgs 424) (Price:Rs. 300)

Panchatantra stories occupy a very high place in world literature. There have been several versions of *Panchatantra* stories. In 1859, it was published in German by Theodor Benfey. It was after this that many scholars became interested in *Panchatantra*. Some scholars say that it existed as a fully written text in 3rd century AD itself authored by Vishnu Sarman and that even before that the stories were part of oral history. It is said that the original was in Paisacha-Prakrit and that there were several language versions that came later in 6th Century in Persian, Syriac and Arabic. Around 11th century AD many versions were published in European languages from the Persian version. By 15th century AD it was published in Spanish, Italian, German, English, Old Slavonic and Czech. At present there are some 200 revised versions in 50 languages all over the world of the *Panchatantra*. A Jain saint, Purnapathirar, brought out a second revised version in 1199 AD after a first revised version that came out in 900 AD. In 1958, Sakthi Govindan brought out a classical Tamil version translated by Annapoorna Easwaran, wife of the well-known scholar, writer and nationalist Manjeri Easwaran, a postgraduate who was known for her proficiency in Sanskrit. Annapoorna Easwaran took up this task and she translated from the Sanskrit text of Purnapathirar. This is considered the most accurate version in Tamil. This second edition is a timely one brought out by Krishangini of Sadhuram Padhippagam in the centenary year of Sakthi Govindan.

R Natarajan, a literary enthusiast, who kept an old torn version of the 1958 edition for several years, says in one of the introductory notes to the book that not many know that *Panchatantra* stories were not stories meant for children but that they were literally meant to be a crash course in management. Vishnu Sarman understood the worth of the stories and used them to teach management and political administration to some very dull princes. The story goes that the king, who was ruling a kingdom called Mahilarupyam, had three idiotic sons. He began to worry how they would

rule the kingdom after him. When he consulted scholars they asked for twelve years' time to train them. The king wanted it done in lesser time. His advisors suggested the name of Vishnu Sarman, an exponent of shastras. The king invited him and told him that he would grant him more than 600 acres of land if only he could educate his sons. Vishnu Sarman did not want the land but promised to educate them in six months. He took them to the forest and showed them the animals and talked about their nature and also introduced several other human characters in the stories to explain human nature and in six months he taught them the intricacies of political administration and management.

The second edition has been reprinted with meticulous care and concern for details by Krishangini. In a very interesting preface Krishangini says that it is impossible to read the stories without being reminded of the present day political coalitions, deceits, lies and fraudulent behaviour. She calls it entirely a book on political diplomacy. She also makes the interesting comment that all women characters come associated with the male characters except in a few places. Mostly they are the monkey's wife, the crocodile's wife, a princess or a queen with no specific names. She wonders if it is because political administration is being talked about that women find no important place in the stories. She quotes a few illustrative comments:

Moreover, don't we know about women? She will gossip with one; she will look at another fondly; and she will be thinking of a third one in her mind. Can a woman love anyone steadfastly?

The fire is not satisfied whatever the number of pieces of wood thrown into it; the sea is not content with whatever quantity of water poured into it; Yama is not happy with any number of people he kills; likewise whatever the number of men she has relationships with, the woman is never fully satisfied.

Krishangini also says that the stories branching from one to another and the way they are knitted together reminds one of magical realism and that the comments on politics and life are very contemporary. Here are some:

Kings swallow nations; doctors swallow their patients; traders swallow their buyers; scholars swallow the illiterate and work swallows them all.

One who has forsaken things will never sit in a position of power; one who is not intelligent will never indulge in flattery.

Apart from being a text that is relevant for all times, *Panchathanthiram* definitely needs to be printed many more times in Tamil, according to Krishangini. In present times when the internet is full of all kinds of details, it is full of excellent information about *Panchatantra* in English and other languages with illustrations and intricate details. But when one looks for Tamil *Panchathanthiram* all that one gets is Kamalahasan's film *Panchathanthiram*!

—C S Lakshmi

Ragi-Ragini: Chronicles from Aji's Kitchen Anjali Purohit



Book details:
Ragi-Ragini: Chronicles from Aji's Kitchen
Author: Anjali Purohit
Publisher: Yoda Press,
New Delhi, 2012
(Pgs: 99) (Price: 150/-)

Ragi Ragini is an unusual book. It combines millet with music; it is a book of recipes of ragi or nachani or finger millet, which come along with 'ovis' of Bahinabai. An ovi is a poem in a couplet form with two lines forming a verse. The recipes are from the kitchen of a much-loved grandmother and the ovis are poems that resound in many Maharashtra households written by a simple, unlettered woman who wrote these poems about life and its meanings, during her daily chores. These poems were passed on as a part of oral tradition just as grandmothers' recipes were. They were published posthumously in 1952 by Bahinabai's son Sopandev Choudhari. Anjali Purohit creates Ragini, a character who could be any woman, any unwanted girl-child lovingly brought up by a grandmother and puts together Ragini's grandmother's recipes of ragi into a book in a similar fashion bringing alive both a grandmother and Bahinabai. Ragini says in the prologue that interspersing the recipes with the ovis is a rather personal story about her Aji, her genius grandmother, herself and the transcendental nachani/ragi grain.

The book begins with how a grandmother and aunt lovingly fed the premature child of a battered woman who died giving birth to her child, with ragi extract in diluted milk and later with ragi porridge, ragi rotis, ragi laddoos and seviyan and how she became a healthy, strong child. Ragini is doing her post-graduate studies in medicine when she decides to share these recipes with us. She begins with breakfast fares and moves on to mealtime fares. And interspersed with all the recipes with extraordinary names that she gives them (The Incredible Lightness of Being Custard, The Amazing Ontology of the Ragi Laddoos) the story of Ragini unfolds. She cannot understand why her mother bore with the torture of her in-laws and her husband when she had a loving parental family. Then her grandmother sings a song of Bahinabai and she knows.

It is an ovi about a woman in her marital home (sasural/sassar) who sings about her mother's home (maher) while

she goes about her work near the fence in the backyard. A sadhu who is sitting across the fence trying to meditate is disturbed by these constant paeans to her maher and he rebukes her saying:

My maher, my maher, is the constant song on your lips then why, pray, from your maher did you ever come to sassar?

To this Bahinabai replies:

*I feel the dohale (food cravings typical of pregnancy), says the soil from the fields
I sing of my maher for my womb will bear a daughter
Now listen carefully you yogi, hear what I have to say,
So that her daughter may have a maher, does her mother in her sassar stay!*

Ragi-Ragini is an extraordinary book which combines emotions, food and music and it is a 99-page wonder.

—C S Lakshmi

Congratulations!



SPARROW congratulates Urmila Pawar & Shashi Deshpande, for winning the Soi Samman in West Bengal in November 2013.



SPARROW congratulates Urmila Pawar for receiving Bodhi Vardhana award, Bangalore, 2014.



SPARROW congratulates Dr. Rohini Gawankar for winning the Navratna Award from Sahaydri Channel, Mumbai, 2014

From The Panchatantra

Suniti Namjoshi

In the holy city of Benares there lived a brahmin, who, as he walked by the riverbank, watching the crows floating downstream, feeding on the remains of half-burnt corpses, consoled himself thus: 'It is true that I am poor, but I am a brahmin, it is true that I have no sons, but I, myself, am indisputably a male. I shall return to the temple and pray to Lord Vishnu to grant me a son.' He went off to the temple and Lord Vishnu listened and Lord Vishnu complied, but whether through absent-mindedness or whether for some other more abstruse reason, he gave him a daughter. The brahmin was disappointed. When the child was old enough, he called her to him and delivered himself thus: 'I am a brahmin. You are my daughter. I had hoped for a son. No matter. I will teach you what I know, and when you are able, we will both meditate and seek guidance.'

The Panchatantra is a Sanskrit book of fables. Unlike Aesop's it contains both brahmins and beasts.

Though only a woman, she was a brahmin, so she learned very fast, and then, they both sat down and meditated hard. In a very short time Lord Vishnu appeared. 'What do you want?' he said. The brahmin couldn't stop himself. He blurted out quickly, 'I want a son.' 'Very well,' said the god, 'Next time around.' In his next incarnation the brahmin was a woman and bore eight sons. 'And what do you want?' he said to the girl. 'I want human status.' 'Ah, that is much harder,' and the god hedged and appointed a commission.

The Panchatantra is a Sanskrit book of fables. Unlike Aesop's it contains both brahmins and beasts.

Reprinted with permission from Suniti Namjoshi from *Feminist Fables: Saint Suniti and the Dragon*, Penguin, New Delhi, 1995

Interns in SPARROW

We had 5 post-graduate interns for two months from a LJNJ Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Vile Parle (East), Mumbai. They were hard working and did a good job. One of them did not come for a while and when asked, another girl casually said that she had just had a baby! When we looked shocked, she said that this was actually her second baby. After some fifteen days, the young girl came back to complete her internship. It was wonderful to see how she managed to combine education and motherhood with such ease!

SPARROW participated in NGO Asia Expo

SPARROW took part in the NGO Asia Expo held at the Convention Centre at Gurgaon from 18th to 20th November 2013. Pooja Pandey and C S Lakshmi decided to go all the way to Delhi and set up a SPARROW stall at the Expo. It was a great experience to say the least.

For one, we realised that almost all the NGOs there were set up by big industrial groups like Reliance, Vedanta etc. But

we put up a brave front and made our stall as colourful as possible with just the two of us doing everything. We stayed at a friend's place and were happy to eat hot parathas

from wayside stalls. However, many visited our stall and on the day when NGOs had to speak we did give them a piece of our mind explaining the nature of the qualitative work we do. It was a nice adventure and I must say Pooja

Pandey was game for it. She kept her cool despite some trying experiences which we later laughed about, like a bad stomach when the toilet at the expo was nearly a mile away and

when we made it home in an auto on a highway where autos never ply because many highway robberies take place. The auto driver was more scared than us!



CS Lakshmi interacting with the students



SPARROW staff interacting with the students

SPARROW had some interesting visitors. Some 80 students from Pal Rajendra B.Ed College, Mumbai, visited the archives in four batches on 11th March 2014. We took them around and also showed them some films. They seemed to have enjoyed it for



SPARROW staff interacting with the students

they were very effusive when they thanked us. One of the boys said that we were doing very good work making young girls aware of many issues. We told him that our aim was to make boys like him also aware of many issues and he quickly corrected himself!

SPARROW Silver Jubilee Celebration Programme CONVERSATIONS

SPARROW entered its Silver Jubilee year in December 2013. In order to celebrate this we have taken a few initiatives, one of which is to organise a celebratory programme called **CONVERSATIONS**. Under this programme we hold conversations with women from various walks of life. The event will be on the last or third Saturday or Sunday of every month. The details will be updated on our website and Facebook page every month.

The **VERY FIRST CONVERSATION** was held with the well-known Hindi writer, Sudha Arora on 25th January 2014 at Keertan Kendra, JVPD, Juhu from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m. The conversation was informal, smooth, warm and very informative. Sudha Arora spoke about her life, her stories and her writing career. Sudha Arora's forte is short-story writing but at some point she had a terrible frozen shoulder and could not sit for a long time and write. That is when she took to writing poems. She read out a few of her poems which led the conversation to interesting aspects of the inner lives of women, old age, being single and violence. On this occasion Sudha Arora also released SPARROW's e-books *A Random Harvest*, a book of diary sketches, drawings, collages and watercolours of women painters and *Making Faces*, a book of painted film posters with introductory notes by V Jeevananthan and Theodore Baskaran.

The **SECOND CONVERSATION** programme to celebrate SPARROW'S Silver Jubilee year, with musician and LesBit activist Sumathi Murthy on 23rd February 2014, was a heartwarming experience. Sumathi spoke effortlessly and with no holding back, just like her music, about her life and her musical experiences. She broke into songs whenever she felt the need to illustrate an experience. It was a musical evening that began with Raag Janjuti and ended with Raag Hussaini Todi. And between these two raagas we traversed the distance of Sumathi's life.

The **THIRD CONVERSATION** programme to celebrate the Silver Jubilee year of SPARROW was with a difference. This time we had well-known Tamil writer Salma talking about her life and work in the film *Salma* directed by Kim Longinotto. The film was screened on 29th March, 2014. Salma was present to interact with the audience after the screening. A lively interaction followed where Salma spoke about her family in the village, her political life and about the making of the film. The film says that she was locked up in a room for 20 years and not allowed to see the outside world. An interesting discussion took place around this perception of the film. The term "locked up" creates an impression that she was imprisoned in a way and this was clarified to explain how girls do go to school and how they are stopped from going to school when they come of age. While they don't go out alone they do go out with their

families. Salma also explained how in her village women only wore the *chadar* initially and how the *burqua* has now been introduced because of the Middle-East influence. The discussion then extended to the subject of women, family and culture. Salma spoke about how she could intervene in stopping marriages of minor girls in Hindu families but that she could not do this in the case of Muslim families where young girls had to marry against their will. The audience then asked her about her writing and when the discussion touched upon the scene where Salma tries to read her poem to her sons and how indifferent they are (while screening there was much laughter during this scene), most women in the audience felt that that was not just Salma's experience for generally women writers are not taken seriously by their own families. No woman poet can claim that her family throngs to listen to her reading out her poems!

Salma has come a long way from the village Thuvarangkurichi where like most young girls of the village she was also confined to her house and not allowed to actively pursue her studies or even write after she came of age. She has struggled to attain her current position but it must be stated that she must not be seen as some Malala Yousafzai, the educational activist from Pakistan. Women in Salma's family stood by her and after initial resistance and even threats, her husband also seemed to realise that he cannot stop her from doing what she wanted. Her writing career itself was encouraged by her cousin, Manushyaputhiran and a senior writer, Sundara Ramasamy and his publishing house, Kalachuvadu. Her political career was shaped by the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam Party and by its leader Kalaaignyar Karunanidhi himself. Salma actively and tirelessly worked towards her goals but a cultural context existed where she could see her goals come to fruition.

—C S Lakshmi



Do join us for our
Silver Jubilee
Celebration
Programme
CONVERSATIONS
every month.

For details visit our website or our
Facebook page.



C S Lakshmi in conversation with Sudha Arora



C S Lakshmi in conversation with Sumathi Murthy



C S Lakshmi with Sudha Arora



Salma with some of the members of the audience



Salma interacting with the audience after the screening



SPARROW Team

Our Silver Jubilee Celebration Programme CONVERSATIONS can be viewed online on YouTube through Parivadini Channel, our social media partner.

A Completed Musical Circle: Anuradha Potdar (1927-October 4, 2013)



Anuradha Potdar passed away at the age of 85 but in her lifetime she had taught many what poetry was and how to make poetry a part of one's life. As the granddaughter of D K Ghate (Datta), the Marathi modernist poet, and daughter of V D Ghate, an educator and writer, Anuradha inherited the love for Marathi literature. She tried fiction but poetry became her way of expressing her thoughts. She had a doctorate in Marathi literature and taught at the Pune University until her retirement in 1987. Three of her poetry collections are well-known: *Avarta* (A Completed Musical Circle, 1969), *Kaktas Flawar* (Cactus Flower, 1979) and *Manjidhar* (Mainstream, 1989). Her students have paid her a tribute saying that none could teach poetry like her with such passion and feeling. She did not teach poetry for them to pass exams but to become sensitive individuals. Anuradha was a rare teacher and a rare poet. There are very few who can be creative and also teach others to be creative and alive to life around them. Anuradha will be remembered as someone who managed to do this.

A Committed Social Worker: Sarojini Varadappan (September 21, 1921- 17 October 17, 2013)



Sarojini Varadappan is generally referred to as a social worker which is the way she would like to be seen as. She was the daughter of former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, M Bhaktavatsalam. But she did not like that to be seen as her only identity. Many years ago, when I was doing some research on women in Women's Indian Association (WIA) and All India Women's Conference (AIWC), I had hesitantly written to her seeking an appointment. She readily agreed to talk to me and was able to handle critical views of a person from a younger generation who wanted more than working women's hostels and similar activities. She was a gracious person who spoke about her views with conviction and a deep belief in what she was doing. I could understand her for I saw her as the young girl whose education had been stopped after the 9th Standard because her family was conservative. She studied Hindi at home and had to give her Prathmic Hindi exams at home for her family objected to her travelling to an exam centre to do her exams. And yet she was part of Indian National Congress and Congress Seva Dal in her early days. She was president of Women's Indian Association and from 1981-85 was also president of All India Women's Conference (AIWC). The WIA had taken big strides under her leadership and expanded into many branches.

It was after her marriage that she did her MA from Mysore University and later did MA in Vaishnavism from Madras University. At the age of 80, she got her doctorate degree.

Sarojini Varadappan, like many women of her generation, was a lover of music. She learnt music from Parur Sundaram Iyer and sang prayer songs at Congress meetings. She also learnt Kshetragna padams and Tamil padams from Mylapore Gowri Amma, Bharatiyar songs from E Krishna Iyer and Hindi bhajans from Veena Visalakshi.

Despite her own experience of a conservative family and the shackles it imposes on women and the fact that she had overcome many of the hurdles in her life by her own efforts, throughout her life Sarojini Varadappan remained an active advocate for reforms within the system to deal with several issues concerning women in the field of education, empowerment and development. Even in 2012, in a conference held in Chandigarh by the AIWC, which works towards upliftment of women and children, to discuss many issues including domestic violence, she had said, "We also want to address the issues faced by adolescent girls in rural areas and plan to facilitate the manufacturing of affordable sanitary napkins as we have identified it as a major cause for girls dropping out of schools after Class X."

Sarojini Varadappan was awarded India's fourth highest civilian award, the Padma Shri, in 1973. But other awards came to her when she was in her late eighties when she could not even go and receive them. Both the Jankidevi Bajaj award for 2004 and the Padma Bhushan award for social service given in 2009 came too late and had to be given to her at a function held in Chennai. But women like Sarojini Varadappan do not work for awards. They do their work because they believe in it.

—C S Lakshmi

Lambi Judai: Reshma (1947-November 3, 2013)



Reshma was known as Sitara-e-Imtiaz and was a renowned folk singer of Pakistan who was also very popular in India. Reshma had very humble beginnings. She was born to a camel and horse trader from Malashi. She belonged to a tribe that converted to Islam and migrated to Pakistan after the Partition. She had no formal education and spent her childhood singing at the mazars of the mystic saints of Sindh. It was when she was singing at the shrine of Shahbaaz Qalandar that she was spotted by a TV and radio producer and she recorded her famous song *Laal Meri* for the Pakistan radio. She has performed in India and some of her songs have been included in Hindi films and she has won several awards in India. *Lambi Judai* and *Damadam Mast Kalandar* are songs which have become universally popular. Reshma was diagnosed with throat cancer in the 1980s but continued to perform till 2002. In 2004, she recorded *Ashkan Di Gali Vich Mukaam De Gaya*, which was used in the Bollywood film *Woh Tera Naam Tha*, and it was a record that became a hit in India. The Pakistan government took care of her medical expenses and eased the tensions of her final days. For all of us who loved her, Reshma will live in her songs and it will be difficult for us to accept that this is a really *lambi judai*.

Cooking and More: Tarla Dalal (June 3, 1936-November 6, 2013)



Tarla Dalal was India's first celebrity chef. Her cookery show "Cook it Up with Tarla Dalal" was aired weekly on Sony Entertainment Television for three years. The show broadcast all over South East Asia, India, the Gulf, UK and even the US. Her first cookbook, *The Pleasures of Vegetarian Cooking* was published in 1974, and was an instant success. Since then she has written over 100 books and in all sold more than 3 million books. She also ran the largest Indian food website, and published a bi-monthly magazine, *Cooking & More*. She was awarded the Padma Shri in 2007 for her contribution to cooking.

These are factual details about a woman who has been part of my household for many years now. I was cooking a Tarla Dalal recipe when I heard, coincidentally, that she had passed away the night before. Perhaps, it was not a coincidence; I have been cooking her recipes for so long and so frequently, I forget that they were originally hers. In fact, in our family, three generations have cooked and relished her cuisine. It started with my mother who, in order to cater to my very fastidious vegetarian father, joined Tarla Dalal's cooking classes way back in 1966; Parsi cuisine at the time was confined to vegetables added to meat or poultry or of course, the famous *papeta par eedu* (eggs on potatoes). Tarla Dalal's classes changed our cooking and eating habits. She taught her diligent student to make Spanish rice and Cannelloni at a time when the former seemed an exotic dish and the latter never even heard of. That's why I was almost personally offended when a contemporary chef referred to Tarla's cuisine as "Gujju-Italian."

My mother would make copious notes of these recipes—I still have the now faded scraps of paper—what's more, she would try them out with my assistance, the very next day while her teacher's instructions were fresh in her mind. Over the years Tarla's recipe books had made history and she would come regularly on TV shows. Though I stuck to what my mother had learnt, my generation of home cooks had become her faithful followers. Today my children follow those time-honoured recipes as well. Global cuisine has created new resources and yet I find myself accessing Tarla's online recipes for these new ventures as well. One can trace the trajectory of culinary technology through the changing ways of accessing her repertoire. Yet some things remain changeless.

Just once, I had a chance to meet Tarla. She was at the next-door table at a restaurant but somehow I could not. So I say it all today to a woman who has become a household name to me.

—Roshan Shahani

Do write to us if you get to know about a life, a book, a visual, a film or a song which you think must be documented in SPARROW. For reviews please send two copies of the book.

Red Slogans on the Green Grass: Dr Jyoti Lanjewar

(November 25, 1950-November 8, 2013)



When Jyoti Lanjewar agreed to be part of the Dalit Writers' Camp we were overjoyed. She was a writer all of us admired. We were in awe of her for we knew that she had several facets to her personality: she was a noted critic, poet, columnist, activist, short story writer, biographer, linguist, feminist scholar and academic. But the four days we spent with her at the Meet in Pondicherry were very happy days for despite her acclaimed position in Marathi literature she was extremely warm and informal. She was full of stories about her life and writing and ever willing to talk and listen to other writers from other languages. She seemed in perfect health even getting up to dance at one point. She spoke about her life, her mother and her poetry with passion. When she spoke about her mother Shuddamati Bondhate who had worked in Baba Saheb's movement and who had died saying Jai Bhim, Jyoti became emotional and all of us were moved by her narration.

As a university lecturer and head of the department of Marathi, she taught Marathi but she also became one of the foremost voices in Marathi literature. Of her poetry she has said: "My poetry is about humanity and its seemingly endless struggles for survival, for change, for justice and sometimes humanity happens to be the oppressed marginalised... it's a wonderful process of all these voices coming out of me." Her determination seems to have begun early for a poem she wrote as a young girl goes thus: *Don't underestimate me / I may be wearing bangles/But they can turn into weapons / Anytime*. A compilation of her poems translated into English by Dr Aparna Lanjewar Bose has been brought out by Scion, Pune, entitled *Red Slogans on the Green Grass*.

Her demise has saddened fellow writers and admirers of her poetry. But we know that Jyoti Lanjewar will remain an inspiration to many.

A Friend of Children: Leelavati Bhagwat

(1920-November 25, 2013)



Very few writers attempt to write for children. Leelavati Bhagwat was one of those rare people who committed herself to write for children very early in life. She was a well-known figure in Marathi children's literature. She graduated from SNDT University in 1940, and started working for the children's magazine *Balamitra* with Ba Ra Bhagwat (Bhaskar Ramachandra Bhagwat), her husband who was also a writer and was famous for the work he did for children's literature. Leelavati also worked with All India Radio for several years. It was due to the tireless efforts of Leelavati that the Balkumar Sahitya Sansthan was set up in Pune. Leelavati was also the president of Balkumar Sahitya Sammelan, a literary meet on children's literature. She is remembered for her books *Kone*

Eke Kaali (Once Upon A Time Pt.1-1972, Pt.2-1974), *Bhavale Bhavale* (Doll, Oh, Doll) *Khelu Hodi Hodi* (Let Us Play the Boat Game), *Vaat Valana Valanachi* (The Road Turns), *Pandhara Chafa* (The White Champa Flower, 1968), *Faster Fenecha Kampu* (Faster Fene's Group), *Raghu Raghu Rana* (1986), *Kudkud Thandi* (Cold Shivers) and *Bhara Bhagawat* (Edited). Leelavati lived a long life but her death at 93 will still be a loss for children's literature for more than any other time, children need writers like Leelavati to tell them different tales while they are lost in Harry Potter stories.

A Voice Death Cannot Take Away: Lakshmi Shankar (June 16, 1926-December 30, 2013)



There are some artists who are so much a part of your life that one begins to think that they are immortal. Lakshmi Shankar is one such artist. In the growing up years of many of us, Lakshmi Shankar and her resonant voice was always there like some unending background music to keep us going. Her contribution to the arts may not have received the recognition she deserved but she was someone who rose above all that.

Lakshmi Shankar was a Tamilian from Madras but she went to Almora to join Uday Shankar's Almora Cultural Centre. She married Rajendra Shankar, Pandit Ravi Shankar's brother. She performed with the troupe. In 1946 when the Shankar brothers choreographed the *Discovery of India* ballet, Lakshmi was their main performer. The person who stood behind her in all her pursuits was her mother Visalakshi, a singer and short story writer herself. Lakshmi fell ill and was never to dance after that. But women like her don't give up so easily. She wrote short stories and did playback singing in films like *Neecha Nagar* (1946), *Dharti Ka Lal* (1946), *Do Phool* (1958) and *Mastana* (1954). She sang and choreographed for Nav Ketan's *Aandhiyan* (1952). Later when she decided to take up music, instead of Carnatic music she decided to learn Hindustani music. Her gurus were Ustad Abdul Rehman Khan in the beginning and later Pandit Deodhar, a disciple and associate of Pandit Vishnu Narain Bhatkhande. Lakshmi Shankar belonged to the Patiala gharana. Her soulful rendering of thumris, ghazals, Rabindra sangeet and bhajans in many languages endeared her to her listeners. And for them her voice will live on and linger in their memories.

The One Who Was Sita: Anjali Devi (August 24, 1927-13 January, 2014)



Anjali Devi, an actress who dominated the childhood of many of us passed away at the age of 86. Anjali Devi was born Anjanamma. She acted in plays and met a young musician and drama producer P Adinarayana Rao whom she married in 1940 at a young age. She came to Chennai to take

part in a programme to raise funds for the war in 1943 and that became her entry door to movies in a big way. In 1936 she had acted in *Raja Harishchandra* and later there was *Kashtajeevi* of L V Prasad which did not take off after three reels. During her Chennai trip, C Pullayya discovered her and she acted as Mohini in *Gollabhama* in 1947 and became a star. She has acted in more than 350 Telugu films and many Tamil and Kannada films. The number of films in which she has acted would easily exceed 500. The mythological films of the fifties are remembered by the roles Anjali Devi did in them. In *Suvarna Sundari* (1957) she was the apsara, a female spirit from heaven, who falls in love with a human and the songs of the film like *Tejulavuthe* (*Hayi hayigaa aamani saage* in original Telugu) sung by Ghantasala and Jikki was later sung as *Kuhu Kuhu Bole Koyaliala* by Lata and Mohammad Rafi. The song is remembered not only for Ghantasala and his melodious voice and the voice of Jikki, and the music director P Adinarayana Rao, but also for Anjali Devi, the heavenly creature and her romance with a human. She has done many different roles but she remained in the public memory as Sita of the film *Lava Kusha* (1963). Anjali Devi has won several awards for the films in which she acted. Later she also produced many films.

Anjali Devi was an extraordinary woman in many ways. The eightieth birthday of a woman is normally not ritually celebrated. Anjali Devi became a widow in 2005 but she ritually celebrated her eightieth birthday with a photograph of her husband next to her. She was also the only woman president of the South Indian Actors' Association in 1959-60. In a male-dominated film world she held her own and she lived her life on her own terms.

—C S Lakshmi with inputs from Jeevasundari Balan

The Fragrance Will Remain: Suchitra Sen (April 6, 1931- January 17, 2014)



Suchitra Sen, the Bengali actress who passed away at the age of 82, started acting in 1952 and did many films with Uttam Kumar. For nearly thirty years she was considered the queen of Bengali films. For those of us who have seen her in Hindi *Devdas* (1955), *Aandhi* (1975) and *Mamta* (1966) she will remain the gentle Paro of *Devdas*. Her role in *Aandhi* as a politician loosely based on the life of Indra Gandhi, brought her much fame.

Suchitra Sen was the first Indian actress to receive an award at an international film festival. At the 1963 Moscow International Film Festival, she won the Silver Prize for Best Actress for *Saat Paake Bandha*. In 1972, she was awarded the Padma Shri. After her retirement in 1978 she stopped making public appearances and lived a private life shunning publicity very much like Greta Garbo. In fact, in 2005, she refused the Dadasaheb Phalke Award, the highest cinematic award in India, to stay out of public eye. In 2012, she was conferred the West

Bengal Government's highest honour, Banga Bibhushan. Like the song in one of her films, *Rahena rahe hum mehka karenge*, the fragrance of her life will remain.

The Woman Who Showed Us the MARG: Vasudha Dhagamwar (1940-February 10, 2014)



Vasudha Dhagamwar was known as a legal activist and academician but she was much more than that. She inspired two generations of women academics and activists interested in the issues of women.

For anyone familiar with feminism and activism in India Dhagamwar's name is associated with the Mathura rape case of 1972. Mathura was a 16-year old tribal girl gang-raped inside the Desai Ganj police station in the Chandrapur district of Maharashtra. The Nagpur bench of the Bombay High court acquitted the accused stating the sexual intercourse was voluntary since the onus of proving that the act was one of coercion, rested on the victim. In 1979, three law professors from Delhi University—Upendra Baxi, Raghunath Kelkar and Lotika Sarkar—along with Vasudha Dhagamwar, wrote an open letter to the Supreme Court challenging the judgement and urging the court to bring about a change in legislation. The law was changed and thereafter the onus was on the accused to prove that the act had been consensual. In the 1980s, this open letter became the theoretical basis for the debates on rape and for understanding gender-based violence.

Vasudha became an Ashoka fellow in 1982 for her sustained work for the rights of displaced people. She set up MARG (Multiple Action Research Group) in 1985 for legal advocacy with regard to people's rights in connection with land acquisition and displacement arising out of the Sardar Sarovar Project in Gujarat. There are many books and other activities for which she would be remembered and hopefully the biography of her mother Geeta Sane, a writer and a feminist, which she was working on, would soon be published by Granthali.

In a tribute written in *Feminists India*, Aruna Burte says that even a person of Vasudha's calibre could not escape communalisation of perceptions. Vasudha's perception with regard to communal issues was reflected when she was part of a fact-finding team after the 2002 post-Godhra Gujarat riots when a great number of Muslims suffered irreparable losses. Vasudha wrote in *The Hindu* on 22nd May 2002, "We had also decided that the Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, was not our direct concern." Aruna Burte says that the report "failed to record or recognise, the pain, anguish, loss, injustice, death, rape and more suffered by Muslims—women, girls, children and men—in Gujarat and state complicity in it." Aruna Burte rightly points out that such pitfalls exist for everyone and being on constant vigil should be our way of offering our salute to Vasudha and her contribution to our sustained campaigns for gender justice.

Entering the Eternal Space: Prafulla Dahanukar

(January 1, 1934- March 1, 2014)



In 2007, Prafulla Dahanukar completed fifty years of her career as a painter. Jehangir Art Gallery honoured her by sponsoring a Retrospective show of her paintings through the last five decades. Prafulla, graduated from the J J School of Art with a gold medal in 1955. With a scholarship from the French

government she went to Paris to study fine art. Prafulla has held several solo exhibitions from 1956 onwards in all the major cities in India and abroad and has won several awards. In November 2008 Barclays Bank sponsored her exhibition in Dubai which was opened by the famous painter MF Husain.

Prafulla was a familiar figure in the Jehangir Art Gallery where I saw her first. I had organised a fund-raising painting exhibition for SPARROW in 1992 and many painters had generously given their paintings. She stopped me one day and asked me why I had not asked her for a painting. The other painters who had helped were all friends or were introduced by other painter friends and I had not really been introduced to Prafulla Dahanukar and hence had been hesitant to ask her. When I told her the reason she laughed aloud and said: 'Next time you think of an exhibition, don't hesitate to ask me.' We have not organised a painting exhibition on a big scale after that but I always remembered her generosity and warmth. They say that Prafulla painted landscapes in generally one vivid and dominant colour. She called her paintings "Eternal Space". Her memorial page <http://prafulladahanukar.muchloved.com> tells us about her life and her paintings. At the age of 80 Prafulla has not really passed away but as a painter who wanted to paint peace through space, she has entered that eternal space she always painted.

A Gandhian Till the End:

Meenakshi Apte

(November 11, 1933-March 14, 2014)



Meenakshi Apte had twelve years of work in various welfare extension projects of Central Social Welfare Board and later Bombay State Social welfare Board before she joined TISS as a student. She graduated in 1967 and soon after joined the faculty and retired as Head, Department of Family

and child Welfare in 1994. In 1983, along with Mrinal Gore she set up Swadhar Mumbai. In July 1995, she set up Swadhar Institute for Development of Women & Children, in Pune after her retirement.

In a long interview she had given to Anjali Monteiro of TISS, Meenakshi Apte speaks about not losing hope about the situation around us. She says that hope will give a person lot of strength. If not today, tomorrow we shall overcome, she says in the interview. Along with Swadhar work, she had also set up Vidyarthi Sahayak Samiti to help students from rural areas. 700 hostels were set up for rural students at affordable rates.

Other activities she was involved in were Anganwadi workers training centre, women development centre, rural balwadis, child welfare activities, adoption, foster care, child sexual protection, and also agriculture. They had some land where new varieties of vegetables and grains were experimented with. There were also farms for demonstrations. Throughout all these years, she was involved with Swadhar work which was helping women in distress and educating out of school children through the Akshardeep programme. She also began to travel to rural colleges giving lectures on Gandhian philosophy. In the interview she says that she had to do this for in our rural colleges “there are no libraries, students don’t get enough reading material—that is one of the drawbacks in expansion of education. Our rural colleges don’t have enough reading materials, enough resources, enough classrooms, and enough playgrounds.”

“So we have to develop,” she concludes, “and certainly we shall overcome. In a few decades.” When people like her after so many years of work feel that there is still so much more to do, and advise us to not lose hope, the least we can do is to follow her advice. That will be the only way to acknowledge her life and work.

Lamp in the Storm: Nanda (January 8, 1939-March 25, 2014)



On the 25th morning came the news that film actress Nanda has passed away due to a heart attack. The news has come as a shock to many, including me, because Nanda occupied a special place in Hindi films.

Nanda’s coming into films was an accident. She was forced to act in films from a very young age, as her father, Vinayak Damodar Karnatak (Master Vinayak) a well-known director, passed away at a young age. He left a big family of seven children and the need to take care of this family fell on the young shoulders of Nanda. V Shantaram was her paternal uncle and he came to her rescue and she made her debut in his film, *Toofan aur Diya* in 1956. She was only 16. After that came *Choti Bahen* in 1959 and she became the ideal *chhoti bahen* to many. And then there was no looking back. She got one meaty role after another and she went on to win many awards. Nanda stole the show in *Hum Dono* (1961) and in *Teen Deviyen* (1961). She acted in more than seventy films and *Prem Rog* (1983) was her last film. In the mid-eighties, she found herself side lined. There were actresses, who were willing to bare and dare. And Nanda decided to call it a day and retired gracefully. She did make an occasional appearance but they were few and far between. People still remember her as the *choti bahen*. But in real life, she was the backbone of her family. Nanda’s life could make a good story for a film. A star who saw to it that her entire family was well settled lived a lonely life with her old mother who died later of cancer. Her brother is Marathi film director Jaiprakash Karnatak and Jayashree Talpade is her sister-in-law. A marriage proposed to well-known director Manmohan Desai never took place for he passed away after a fall from his terrace which was suspected to be a suicide because he could not bear the pain of his illness.

Nanda lived alone avoiding publicity. She lived in her residence in Mumbai interacting only with family and close friends, such as Waheeda Rehman, Asha Parekh, Helen, and Saira Banu. After a long time she made a public appearance with Waheeda Rehman for a screening of the Marathi film *Natarang* (2010).

And just as she had lived her life, she died a quiet death and as I write this she has already been cremated at the Oshiwara crematorium. So do some women live and die.

—Rajeswari Thiagarajan

The Story of a Spring: Sudhatai Varde (1930-April 4 2014)



Social activist, Sudhatai Varde, who inspired many generations of young people, passed away on 9th April 2014.

Sudha Varde was just 12 years old and studying in King George High school when she was inspired by a speech given by Achyut Patwardhan, a senior leader of Rashtriya Seva Dal, on the country’s need for young people to work for the freedom of the country. The young Sudha was a dancer and she began to use her art to create awareness about the freedom struggle. Rashtriya Seva Dal (RSD) was initially Congress Seva Dal which was started in 1924 as Hindustani Seva Dal and in 1931 was rechristened Congress Seva Dal. Every region had a branch and the RSD movement attracted the youth through many of its cultural activities like games, plays, singing and dancing. Sudha Varde became active in the Kala Pathak wing of the Rashtriya Seva Dal and led all its activities. Later she married Sadanand Varde who was also one of the main leaders of RSD.

Until the Emergency, Sudha continued her work in the Kala Pathak. After emergency she felt that the RSD did not have a policy which viewed women as separate entities with their own issues. At this time Pramila Dandavate started Mahila Dakshita Samiti and Sudha became a part of it. Until 1993, she remained an active worker of MDS dealing with issues women and family. In 1993, she was invited back to RSD to work for its women empowerment programme. She returned to RSD as its president. With grants that became available she developed a workshop model for women empowerment. She did 16 workshops from 1993-95. She took a leading position during the Latur earthquake. She set up a school and a hostel in Osmanabad after the Latur earthquake. She has set up several schools in different places: 11 in Bihar, 1 in Mumbai, 10 in Gujarat and 1 in Osmanabad. When she was 79, she met author Harimohan Paruvu at a friend’s place and she spoke to him about her life and work and she told him she was definitely planning to go to Purnea even if it meant “walking in river beds, getting stuck in the slush, being carried by other women or being ferried on bullock carts.”

Her autobiography *Goshta Zaryachi* (The Story of a Spring) published by Granthali in 2008 tells the story of this never-say-die woman and is a must read for everybody. The epitaph for Sudhatai can never be Rest in Peace! She would mind it!