

**A  
Conversation  
on  
Sexual  
Rights  
in  
India**

**CREA  
SANGAMA  
TARSHI**

**Manesar,  
7-9 January 2004**



# context

Over the last decade, the discourse on sexual rights has emerged as a powerful tool to articulate and connect the goals of progressive movements concerned with diverse aspects of sexuality, such as sexual and reproductive health, sex work, gender identity, sexual orientation and sexual violence. The emerging sexual rights discourse has built on principles such as those of 'bodily integrity' and 'sexual autonomy', which are already an integral aspect of many movements, including the women's movement, the anti-violence movement, the reproductive health movement, and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender movement. Sexual rights as a discourse and a basis for political advocacy is useful in a variety of diverse contexts.

*A Conversation on Sexual Rights in India* was organised as part of a larger initiative, *Sexual Rights: Sexuality and Security at the Turn of the Century*. Sonia Correa, a sexual rights activist from Brazil, and Richard Parker, currently at Columbia University, New York, lead this initiative. This initiative attempts to consider the state of the debate on sexual rights; the participation and interaction of various groups of actors in this debate; and the possibilities, conceptual challenges and problems that face these actors in their attempts to work on sexual rights in different countries. A meeting exploring these themes was held in Mexico in October 2000. Subsequently, CREA, SANGAMA and Talking About Reproductive and Sexual Health Issues (TARSHI) were invited to convene a meeting on sexual rights in India.

In the Indian context, a number of recent developments indicate the need for a larger dialogue around sexuality and rights. In 1998, militant right-wing forces disrupted screenings of the feature film *Fire*, which explores a sexual relationship between two women. Two years later, activists of Sahyog, a non-profit organisation in northern India were arrested for publishing an 'obscene' report on HIV/AIDS and sexuality. More recently, the Bharosa Trust has faced police harassment for distributing educational materials on HIV/AIDS, materials that were deemed 'offensive', 'immoral' and 'obscene'.

The presence of a growing number of organisations and individuals working on issues of sexuality and rights is also indicative of the need for a dialogue on these issues. However, there have been very few opportunities to engage in such a dialogue. Given this, the meeting in India was conceived as a conversation around sexual rights, rather than a debate, which implies a for/against polarity.

In summarizing these discussions, I have tried to bring together the various movements, groups and individuals who have been part of this movement. I have also tried to bring together the local, national and international

# introduction

A group of 18 activists and advocates from progressive movements participated in the three-day Conversations on Sexual Rights held at Manesar, Haryana in January 2004. Participants included key actors from the women's movement, the sex workers' movement, sexual minorities' groups, People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLHA) groups, and other peoples' movements. Each participant was known to at least one of the three organisations convening the Manesar meeting. All invitees had engaged with sexual rights, albeit in different ways, and shared certain bottom-line convictions (such as an acceptance of the rights of sex workers and of sexual diversity).

The three-day meeting provided an opportunity to clarify thinking, build linkages, strengthen alliances, and dialogue through differences without privileging one position over another. It became a space for an honest, meaningful exploration of issues that are intimate yet institutional, and helped define areas of further engagement between sexual rights and the law, social movements, gender and human rights. This discussion is critical to the advancement of sexual rights.

This report is not an 'India report' in any sense of the term. It should neither be assumed to be such nor referred to as such. It does not speak for or represent the diversity of views, opinions, actors, struggles and movements that engage with sexual rights in India. Rather, this report stands as a record of a conversation on sexual rights, containing diverse voices, views and opinions.

# critical questions

Within its overall framing as a conversation, the Manesar meeting was structured around the following questions:

- What do we mean by sexual rights?
- How have progressive movements engaged with sexual rights?
- How have organisations working on sexual rights engaged with progressive movements?
- How do we conceptualise issues of sexual rights in relation to children?

The discussions around these questions seamlessly moved from issues to experiences, encompassing the personal and the political. The conversations pivoted around the women's movement, sexual minorities' groups, people's movements, networks of People Living with HIV/AIDS, and the sex workers' movements. Most sessions were triggered off by a brief presentation, followed by intense, frank discussions. In summarising these presentations and discussions, this report hopes to contribute to emerging local, national and global conversations around sexual rights.

ns and disabled from issues add to the past. The evening's programme was triggered off by a brief presentation followed by intense, frank discussions. In summarising these presentations and discussions, this report hopes to contribute to emerging local, national and global conversations around sexual rights.



# what do we mean by sexual rights?

The meeting began with an exercise through which participants aimed to come up with a collective though not necessarily common understanding of the term 'sexual rights'. Participants used index cards to record their diverse understandings, which were expressed as words, questions, definitions, slogans, and statements.

## Words

Participants listed several words as being affirmative of sexual rights, including: sensuality, desire, enjoyment, pleasure, self-affirmation, fantasies, dreams, bodies, identities, practices, freedom, love, sexual autonomy, respect, dignity, informed choice, equitable relationships, decriminalisation, action, collectivisation, freedom to express, freedom from stigma and discrimination, access to health care, and control over one's body.

Conversely, words that were identified as negating or restricting sexual rights included: threats, fear, coercion, external control, discrimination, rape, killing, suicide, restrictions, sexual prejudices, sexual privilege, power imbalances, patriarchy, compulsory heterosexuality, and violence of a judgemental attitude.

## Definitions

Sexual rights were defined in intensely individual, playful ways that, at the same time, were extremely political. One participant defined sexual rights as “the freedom to own and express my sexuality, and the freedom to not have external impositions on how I dress, behave, identify, who I love, make friends, have sex with; where or when I do it (as long as I don't intrude on anyone else's space); why I have sex or sensual experiences. My body, heart, mind, sex are mine.”

Using language that is reflective of international rights discourse, many participants defined sexual rights as including the right:

- of all to make choices based on consent on who their partners are, what kind of sex they want to engage in, and every other issue regarding their sexuality
- to have sex or not have sex in all contexts including marriage and paid sex
- to have sex with one or more people simultaneously if all involved consent to it

... depriving these men of this information is protectionist. The helpline resolved this dilemma by printing materials that were not only in their own language but also in their own script. The helpline also provided information on the importance of consent and the right to refuse sex. The helpline also provided information on the importance of consent and the right to refuse sex. The helpline also provided information on the importance of consent and the right to refuse sex.

- to marry or not to marry
- to play, discover, have fun with one's sexuality
- to sell and buy sex
- to differ on the issue of sex
- to information
- to advertise sexual services
- to produce, use and advertise sex objects, and sexually explicit materials
- to claim gender and sexual identities irrespective of one's biological status
- to express oneself without discrimination because one is different
- to live a life free of coercion, violation, discrimination based on sexual identity and practices
- to unfettered practice of one's sexuality in all spheres of activity, except sexual abuse
- to a positive and affirmative sexuality

## Statements and Questions

Many participants expressed their understandings and dilemmas around sexual rights through statements and questions echoing certain themes.

All sexuality is not 'rights' was one such theme. Where does sexuality feature in sexual rights? Why do we talk of 'sexual rights' and not 'sexuality rights'? The difference between 'sexual rights' and 'the right to sexual health' was highlighted, as was the distinction between 'sexual rights' and 'reproductive rights', even though there are areas of overlap between the two.

Several participants noted that sexual rights implied respecting difference and diversity, and considering men, women, *hijras*<sup>1</sup>, *kothis*<sup>2</sup>, gays, lesbians and bisexuals as equal, irrespective of their sexual orientation. But is it really possible to include everybody within the framework of sexual rights, without creating hierarchies?

Given that sexuality is located within contexts of race, caste, class, gender, age, religion, region, physical ability, how can the definition of sexual rights give meaning and expression to this entire range of experience? Interventions and discussions on sexual rights often remain confined to sexually active people. How can this emerging discourse begin to address the sexual rights of those who are single, lonely, old or disabled?

In talking of 'sexual rights for all', whose rights are being discussed? Does 'sexual rights' apply to all adults and children? One participant felt

1. A Hijra is a person who could be biologically male and take on a female gender identity. Most hijras are born biologically male although a small number of them are born hermaphrodites/intersexed.
2. Kothi is a term that is used across South Asia with local variations. Kothis often see themselves as non-English speaking, with a feminine homosexual identity distinct from the gay/bisexual identity.





## Language, discourse, struggle

As the conversation moved from neo-liberal economics to sexual rights, a participant said that the language of sexual rights is effective in capturing violations or negative experiences of sexuality, but does not reflect an affirmative vision of sexuality.

Does language such as 'freedom from discrimination' and 'consensual relations' enhance one's understanding of sexual rights? Or does it take away from the sense of fun, play, and discovery, which are also part of one's experience of sexuality? Participants agreed that the emerging sexual rights discourse needs to build on a language of violations and on a language of liberation, emerging out of a utopian vision of sexuality and rights.

In this context, a participant noted that 'play' needs to be understood not just in transcendental terms, but also as a material tool to explore, express, and perform sexual and gender identities. Kothis, for instance, 'play' with gender and sexual identities in a performative sense.

Some participants felt that sexual rights language relies on jargon, which is limiting in that it blurs or masks political differences. The term, 'sex work', for instance, is widely used nowadays, even by those who do not agree that 'selling sex' is a legitimate form of work. Others felt that jargon has its uses. The act of naming through the use of jargon draws attention to an issue and enables outreach. In this sense, jargon was understood as useful and dangerous, simultaneously powerful and powerless.

## Rights, human rights, sexual rights

The discussion on sexual rights language flowed into an exploration of the linguistic and conceptual roots of sexual rights. From where has the language of sexual rights emerged? Where is it useful? Where is it not? Are concepts of class, caste, patriarchy, and compulsory heterosexuality embedded in the term 'sexual rights'? What is the implication of using this term and why is it being increasingly used nowadays? These were some of the issues that this discussion threw up.

Many participants felt that sexual rights should not be seen as a sub-set of human rights; while the concept of sexual rights overlaps with the human rights discourse, it also exists outside of it. SANGAMA, a sexual minorities group, described how it strategically uses human rights language in its attempts to get mainstream human rights organisations to address issues of sexual rights. While concepts of 'social justice' are useful for building alliances with the human rights movement, the language of sexual rights is needed to build alliances with sex workers' movements, People Living with HIV/AIDS networks, and to some extent, the women's movement.

If sexual rights have not emerged from the human rights discourse, from where have they emerged? By putting 'sexual' and 'rights' together, how

have the discourses of sexuality and human rights been reframed? Discourse is dynamic: the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, for instance, has been used to advocate for women's rights, even though this concept had no place in the original declaration.

A participant shared how her organisation strategically allies itself with the discourse of sexual rights. The international human rights discourse has no space for sex workers except as victims. A sex worker can access this space as a victim, but can never assert the right to sex work within this space. In this context, Sampada Grameen Mahila Sanstha (SANGRAM), a sex workers' rights organisation, turned to other discourses such as citizenship and sexual rights, since these offer greater possibilities for alliance-building and rights claims by its constituency.

Participants agreed that there is enormous power in setting the dominant terms of any discourse, including the human rights, women's rights, or sexual rights discourse. Language is ultimately a tool to express ideas. There is a need to create a discourse or a language of struggle based on lived experiences. But does the discourse define the struggle, or does the struggle define the discourse?

## Coercion, victimhood, pleasure

Pleasure is considered an integral aspect of sexual rights work, but many advocates are uncertain about how to actually build the pleasure principle into their work. The violations framework, which glorifies victimhood, is one of the barriers to using the pleasure principle. In this context, it is critical to separate 'coercion' from an individual experiencing this, so that he or she is not seen only as a victim.

In many ways, however, the 'right to pleasure' is an abstraction. Who defines pleasure, if not the individual? Can one complain about not being pleased? If so, to whom would one take this complaint? "I don't want someone else to define what pleasure is in my life," said one participant. This participant shared a concrete example of working on sexuality using the pleasure principle. Several men call the TARSHI helpline, seeking pleasure-enhancement advice. Many say their wives find oral sex unhygienic; and over time, helpline counsellors have realised that women are using this as an excuse to avoid having to perform it. In providing these men with accurate information about oral sex, the helpline unwittingly offers them counter-arguments against their partners. However, depriving these men of this information is protectionist. The helpline resolved this dilemma by informing callers that sexual pleasure is mutual and needs to be based on consent.

The concept of pleasure was also discussed in relation to sex workers. Among sex workers, there is no concept of the client giving pleasure to the woman; instead, pleasure is viewed as something a man takes from a woman. However, sex workers subvert this notion of pleasure by servicing men for money and keeping other women for pleasure. Sex

By depriving these men of this information is protectionist. The helpline resolved this dilemma by informing callers that sexual pleasure is mutual and needs to be based on consent. The helpline resolved this dilemma by informing callers that sexual pleasure is mutual and needs to be based on consent. The helpline resolved this dilemma by informing callers that sexual pleasure is mutual and needs to be based on consent.

workers with long-term female lovers (*malkins*) talk much more of pleasure than those with long-term male lovers (*malaks*). While the sex worker community freely talks about sexual pleasure, there is a silence around this issue in society at large.

Even though this is not often discussed, women experience sexual pleasure in many different ways, some of them socially sanctioned. In some communities, there is an unspoken tradition of older women initiating younger men into sex. Many women experience sexual pleasure while breastfeeding. Feudal systems have always provided men with access to women; the market economy is increasingly providing not just men, but also women, access to pleasure via paid sex.

In a globalizing world, pleasure is also increasingly being co-opted by pharmaceutical companies and other actors for profit. At international sexology conferences, pleasure is positioned in biomedical terms; lack of pleasure is associated with dysfunction. The solution? Viagra and a host of other drugs that pharmaceutical companies pitch as enhancing the 'right to pleasure'. Sexual rights activists need to engage with such actors, who use the language of sexual rights to meet their own ends.

## Heterosexual, homosexual, identities

How do identities emerge? What is the difference between identity and behaviour? An interesting conversation built upon these questions. Identities can emerge from discourses, such as the sexual health discourse, which created the category of 'men who have sex with men'. Though meant to be a term describing behaviour, it is now being used as an identity. One participant noted that there is no categorisation of 'women who have sex with women', since this is not an important constituency in the context of HIV.

Is the concept of identity one that is emancipatory or constraining? A participant shared how he had identified himself and been identified as a homosexual and a *kothi* at different times, but found such behaviour-based identities constraining. Another participant explored how the identity of *devadasi*<sup>3</sup> can be both stigmatising (when used by the State), and empowering (when used within the community). It depends on who is doing the identifying. Sex workers, for instance, have been called 'commercial sex workers', a term that is never used for other professions. Doctors and lawyers are never labelled 'commercial doctors' and 'commercial lawyers'. Among themselves, women in prostitution refer to each other as 'whores', a term that is shocking to the outside world. What then is their identity - that of whores? Commercial sex workers?

Despite numerous constraints, identities were seen as useful in organising and mobilising. The question then is: how far would one take on an identity? Many participants saw sexual identities as fluid and multiple, rather than fixed and singular. Definitions of oneself may

3. Devadasi refers to a community of women married to temple deities, who are often forced into prostitution.

change over time and occasion. But if identities are fluid, how can one struggle for sexual rights based on identities?

A participant noted that if sexual rights are based within the framework of identity, they tend to be conflated with marginalised groups; sexual rights are seen as gay and lesbian rights. The term 'sexual rights' has to express everybody's rights, not just those of a specific identity-based group. Sexual rights cannot be sexual minorities' rights parading under the guise of sexual rights. "We end up doing to heterosexuality what heterosexuality has done to us," she said.

Others felt that the concept of 'sexual rights for all' privileges normative sexualities such as heterosexuality, and invisibilises all other sexualities. Compulsory heterosexuality occupies the centre, while other sexualities occupy the margins. The notion of 'sexual rights for all' does not express these other sexualities. Nor does it challenge the power inequities that result from privileging heterosexuality over other 'despised' sexualities.

In this context, participants agreed that power imbalances exist, based not only between heterosexuality and other sexualities, but also within heterosexuality; between men and women, married and single, etc. However, participants also pointed out that to be a 'sexual minority' does not necessarily mean that one has less power, it depends on the intersections of sexuality with caste, class, age, religion, etc.

The issue of 'power' was seen as central to and cutting across all relationships - married, single, homosexual, heterosexual, transgender, etc. Gender schemes operate very deeply in all relationships and are expressed in many ways. Performative identities, for instance, often reproduce traditional notions of masculinity and femininity. The femininity that is performed is one of powerlessness and victimhood; it is based on a binary 'madonna-whore' vision of femininity, both of which are disempowering notions for women. Performative identities can be liberating when they are based on empowered notions of masculinity and femininity. Entrenched, irreversible power dynamics, be it in heterosexual, homosexual, or transgender relationships, pose acute problems for realising sexual autonomy, freedom and self-determination.



# the women's movement and sexual rights

The women's movement in India has addressed a range of issues over the last 25 years and was one of the first progressive movements to raise sexuality-related issues. However, the women's movement's relationship with, and articulation of, sexuality has not been entirely unproblematic. In this context, this session explored two critical questions:

- Has the women's movement engaged with sexual rights?
- Where has the movement not engaged with sexual rights?

A conversation around these issues was triggered off by a short presentation from Manisha Gupte of Mahila Sarvangeen Utkarsh Mandal (MASUM), a community-based women's organisation in Pune, western India. The presentation served as a catalyst, touching on key issues. It is based on Gupte's subjective experiences as a women's rights activist, and is not intended to comprehensively represent the Indian women's movement.

## TRIGGER PRESENTATION

### Manisha Gupte, MASUM

Manisha Gupte's presentation started out locating the emergence of the Indian women's movement in the Left movement of the 1960s-70s. Feminists who were part of Leftist struggles had started raising issues of patriarchy, or what was then called the 'women's question'. In the 1970s, autonomous women's groups placed issues of violence, state and family violations on the agenda of the burgeoning women's movement. Health issues also emerged in the 1970s, followed by reproductive rights in the 1980s, and sexuality and mental health in the mid-1990s.

The Indian women's movement's understanding of sexuality was initially influenced by feminist writings from the West. It was difficult to raise issues of sexuality in the movement's early days, since this was seen as a bourgeois issue in the context of Left politics; advocates of sexuality were accused of 'spreading lesbianism'. Women's sexuality was constructed negatively, with a focus on issues such as rape and obscenity. These positions have shifted to some extent, and there is now greater acknowledgement that the depiction of a woman's body is not inherently 'obscene'. Although lesbian and bisexual women have traditionally been part of the women's movement, the issue of lesbian sexuality still does not have enough visibility within the movement.

By depriving these men of this information is protectionist. The helpline resolved this dilemma by providing information on safe sex practices, and 'consensual relations' enhance one's understanding of sexual rights. It does not 'spread' or 'promote' any particular ideology or agenda, but rather provides a platform for people to discuss their concerns and rights. The helpline also provides information on the human rights discourse, from which it emerged. It is important to note that the helpline is not a 'one-size-fits-all' solution, but rather a platform for people to discuss their concerns and rights. The helpline also provides information on the human rights discourse, from which it emerged. It is important to note that the helpline is not a 'one-size-fits-all' solution, but rather a platform for people to discuss their concerns and rights.

Since its early days, the Indian women's movement has been somewhat diverse, including multiple streams and voices of socialist feminism, radical feminism, etc. In this sense, the movement is more of an umbrella sheltering different ideological streams of feminism, rather than a single-ideology monolith. Thus, the inclusion of sexuality-related issues has been seen as pushing the movement's boundaries or opening out, rather than narrowing the umbrella.

However, the women's movement has lost its class politics over the years, as the socialist feminist ideology of the early days has given way to a more radical feminist consciousness. Although the emergence of new issues is seen as a positive move, it has also meant the loss of certain non-negotiable values and principles. The movement has not adequately taken up issues such as the sexualities of mentally and physically challenged women, and the power dynamics between heterosexuality and homosexuality.

Over the years, the concept of equality has changed within the women's movement. Equality was earlier understood as 'being like men'; the concept of 'equal but different' now informs much feminist thinking and organising. There is a greater acknowledgement of the politics of difference, and an acceptance that difference (e.g. of class, caste, sexuality, etc.) results in discrimination. It is understood that when concepts such as 'health for all' exclude marginal groups, it is necessary to talk of difference.

There is a need to question 'identity politics' within the movement; for instance, there are lesbian activists who are anti-Muslim, and leftists who are homophobic. There is also a need to question notions of false sisterhood (such as alliances with right-wing women, since the women's movement locates itself within a context of secularism and anti-communalism). At the same time, there is a need to break false barriers, such as the belief that 'reproductive rights' is a heterosexual issue, while 'sexual rights' is a lesbian issue.

## Discussion

In a stimulating discussion, several participants expressed the view that the women's movement has had a mixed record of engaging with issues of sexuality. Some issues have been taken up; others have not. There is a resistance within the movement to addressing issues of non-heterosexuality on par with other women's issues. Women's groups that participated in the 1998 protests around the banning of *Fire* accused lesbian groups of 'hijacking' the issue. Even today, women's rights activists do not necessarily step into crises surrounding lesbian women; these are seen as lesbian issues.

The women's movement has an even more troubling history of non-engagement with issues of sex work, with sections of the movement actively opposing the struggle for sex workers' rights. A participant



described how she was accepted as a feminist as long as she worked on issues of desertion, property rights, and other rural women's issues. But when she started working with sex workers, her whole history of feminist activism was negated, and she was treated as an outsider.

Within the women's movement the only space available for addressing prostitution is through the lens of exploitation; there is no space for the rights of women in sex work. Feminists who work for sex workers' rights are labelled as 'helping women to be sexually exploited'. There is no space to listen to the voices of women in sex work; activists assume they can speak on behalf of or represent the realities of women in sex work. There is also a significant difference in the way in which sex workers are writing their own history, and in which this is being represented by the women's movement.

Another participant felt that there is an underlying sense of patronage with which the mainstream women's movement treats issues of marginalised sexualities. The mainstream controls the discourse and speaks for those at the margins, sometimes even before those at the margins have begun to speak for themselves. There is an expectation of gratitude in return for this kind of patronage.

Such critiques notwithstanding, many participants noted that the women's movement remains the only progressive movement that has actively engaged with issues of sexuality. Many sexual rights advocates are part of the women's movement, which has traditionally been a nesting ground for sexual politics. Today, in some ways, the women's movement is caught in a double bind vis-à-vis sexuality. Sexual minorities' groups accuse the women's movement of upholding monogamy and marriage, while mainstream society accuses feminism of wrecking monogamous homes and marriages.

Several lesbian groups are rooted within the women's movement, and lesbian issues have been addressed in many ways. A participant highlighted several markers of lesbian activism within the women's movement: the lesbian retreats of the 1980s; the publication of *Humjinsi*, a collection of essays and papers on same-sex love; a special session devoted to lesbian sexuality at the Annual Conference of the Indian Association for Women's Studies in Calicut in 1990, and at the planning meeting in Tirupati for the next conference. In the late -1990s the campaign for gender-just laws acknowledged that laws need to be framed not only in the context of heterosexuality.

During internal deliberations, autonomous women's groups have also challenged the patriarchal institutions of marriage and family, addressed homo- and hetero-relational realities, and tried to conceptualise a new paradigm for marriage. Several women's activists questioned whether sexual minorities groups had engaged with the women's movement or with women's issues at any level. Or whether such groups focused only on the politics of sexuality devoid of the politics of gender, caste, class, religion, etc.?

In this context, participants noted that the issues a movement chooses to engage with are determined not solely by the politics of that movement; they are connected to funding, organisations, and existing alliances. The politics of funding was discussed to some extent. Several participants saw 'funding' as power, and 'non-funded groups' as lacking power. Others felt that non-funded groups take the moral high ground. Activists often work within both contexts of funding and non-funding; there is no purity or impurity about funding. But how does one's work change as a result of funding? Does funding necessarily result in erosion of radicalism, militancy, and spontaneity? Or can donor-driven agendas be subverted?

A participant shared how her organisation continued to resist donor agendas by insisting on setting its own terms. The donor felt social workers should manage the project; the organisation insisted that sex workers would manage the project, as they had always done. In this context, there is a need for groups within any movement to create spaces for sexuality-related issues by continually pushing the boundaries.

issues of police brutality, the rights of the LGBTQ+ community, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on marginalized groups. The organization has been instrumental in advocating for the rights of transgender individuals and has been a vocal critic of the Trump administration's policies on gender equality. The organization has also been a leading voice in the fight against the opioid crisis and has been instrumental in the passage of the Endangered Species Act. The organization has been a leading voice in the fight against the opioid crisis and has been instrumental in the passage of the Endangered Species Act. The organization has been a leading voice in the fight against the opioid crisis and has been instrumental in the passage of the Endangered Species Act.

# sexual minority groups and sexual rights

The last decade has seen the emergence of a few 'sexual minorities' groups in India, a catch-all phrase that is contested by many groups working in this area.

- Have sexual minorities' groups engaged with sexual rights?
- Where have these groups not engaged with sexual rights?

These were the two questions around which this conversation was structured.

The trigger presentation in this section was made by Chatura from Olava, an autonomous lesbian and bisexual women's group based in Pune, in western India. This presentation is based on her subjective experiences.

## Trigger Presentation

### Chatura, Olava

Through the use of three examples, Chatura's presentation explored the meanings and understandings of sexual rights, and diverse strategies used for claiming these rights. The cited examples refer to:

- The 2002 Nippani incident, in which a rural community prevented sex workers from organising and attending meetings in their own space
- An episode of a hijra working in an organisation, who was not allowed by the organisation to do sex work in that city
- An incident in which a bisexual Muslim woman seeking refuge in the office during a communally-tense situation was accused of misusing office space

Some of the questions raised at this presentation included:

- How are such incidents articulated and understood using the language of sexual rights?
- What other language can be employed to articulate and claim these rights?
- How have sexual minorities' groups organised themselves around sexual rights?
- What is the nature of the alliances between these groups and other movements?

- Have sexual minorities' groups experienced a backlash in attempting to claim these rights?
- How is organising being impacted by funding patterns?
- What are the kinds of demands made of the State?
- How do sexual minorities' groups respond to violations by non-State actors?

## Discussion

Reacting to the presentation, a participant highlighted the need to distinguish between the framework of sexual rights, and organisational rules and regulations. A 'no-smoking in office' rule is an organisational rule. It does not mean that an organisation is anti-smoking; it only means that office spaces cannot be used for smoking. In the context of sexual rights, a 'no sex in office' or 'no sex work in office' policy does not mean that an organisation is anti-sex, or anti-sex work. All it means is that office spaces cannot be used for sex or sex work.

One participant demanded that the meeting provide space for discussing a conflict between an autonomous lesbian and bisexual women's group and a community-based women's organisation, which was among its supporters. She felt that this discussion would raise issues related to sexual rights, draw connections between lesbian and bisexual women's organising efforts and established women's organisations, and provide insights into the ruptures in solidarity networks, as well as the tensions that create them. However, several participants expressed their discomfort at addressing a specific conflict involving two individuals who were present at the Manesar meeting. Many invitees said they had come to the meeting to discuss sexual rights, not a specific conflict. The meeting organisers felt that addressing this conflict would inevitably mean discussing the specifics of the conflict, and organisational, rather than conceptual, issues.

An intense discussion focused on the use of legal strategies in the struggle for sexual rights. A participant outlined three ways of using the law as a tool to secure rights:

- Reformism, or legal change. The campaign to repeal Section 377, or to remove references to 'unnatural sexual acts' from the Indian Penal Code is an example of this
- Critique, or addressing deeper structural issues underlying the law, such as homophobia or gender discrimination
- Utopianism, or putting forward a vision of the world one wants to construct. The International Bill on Gender Rights, for instance, posits an affirmative vision of gender identities

In using the law to secure rights, it is important for different legal strategies to intersect. Law reform does not work on its own, and should

not be seen as an end in itself. It needs to be embedded in other legal and non-legal strategies. For instance, a petition for law reform can be used creatively to change public opinion. Participants felt the current campaign to repeal Section 377 is not rooted in a larger mobilisation campaign, and lacks politics and ideology. The central demand of 'repeal Section 377' is not visionary enough to forge connections and mobilise diverse publics. Such initiatives need to be more inclusive of organisations working on similar issues, mobilise public opinion, if necessary through street protests and action.

The social, political, and cultural milieu must be considered before making demands for law reform. For instance, the right-wing party in power in early 2004 was anti-sex work. Does it make sense to demand that prostitution be decriminalised in this context? Or is there a real possibility that any attempt at legal reform will end up ushering in a law that is even worse for sex workers?

A participant shared how he raises deeper structural issues of discrimination while representing hijras in court. Judges tend to treat hijras with disrespect and publicly humiliate them. In challenging such behaviour, this lawyer sends a signal not just to the judge, but also to the other people in court. This helps in changing public opinion at the same time. Media attention and public opinion is useful in changing judicial attitudes.

The Indian courts have taken up a few cases relating to sexual minorities. A judge in Thrissur, Kerala, ruled that two women could live together in a case related to two lesbian women. A Gujarat court took up a case of a transsexual person being denied property rights. A Bangalore court slapped kidnap charges against a sexual minorities' group helping two women who were under house arrest.

The discussion also focused on other strategies used by sexual minorities' groups. In Bangalore, there are linkages with human rights groups around issues of police violence, sexual violence and assault. Class issues mediate the functioning of identity-based sexual minorities' groups. Middle- and upper-middle class issues get articulated, and there is very little diversity within such spaces. HIV-positive persons are not willing to come out in such spaces for fear of discrimination. Sex workers are not accepted in such groups, although other sexual minorities' groups have forged alliances with sex workers' groups.

As sexual minorities' groups seek to forge alliances with other struggles, the politics of coalition-building is an important issue to consider. Should one follow a 'politics of purity' or a 'politics of convenience' in building alliances? For instance, several organisations in Gujarat work with men who have sex with men. But where do these organisations stand on the issue of the genocide of Muslims that took place in Gujarat in 2002?

A participant noted that while there are sexual minorities' groups in India, there is no movement as such. He felt that a utopian vision is missing from the current discourse; some of the work has emerged in the context of HIV/AIDS and sexual health, and is donor-driven to some extent. This is limiting to the emergence of a movement, because the focus is on 'programmes', rather than on politics and ideologies. Many groups say they work on LGBT issues, but the L and T are often missing. Others label their work as 'sexual rights', but both sexuality and rights are missing from their practice. On the other hand, though many organisations work on sexual minority issues, they do not consider themselves as being LGBT or sexual minorities' groups.

Among sexual minorities' groups, there is little interaction between gay groups and lesbian groups; they occupy separate spaces within the discourse. Also, given the fragmentation among sexual minorities' groups, is there any possibility of building a lasting solidarity?





# sex worker's movement and sexual rights

People in prostitution have traditionally been seen as exploited victims in the Indian context. The rights of sex workers began to be articulated in the mid-to-late 1990s with the emergence of organisations working with sex workers in the context of HIV/AIDS. At the Manesar meeting, the conversation around sex workers' rights looked at how the emerging sex workers' movement has engaged with sexual rights, and the gaps in this engagement.

The presentations in this section were made by Meena Seshu of SANGRAM in Sangli, western India, and Maithreya of the Foundation for Integrated Research in Mental Health (FIRM), based in Kerala, south India. Both these organisations work to promote the rights of people in sex work; both presenters represented their individual experiences.

## TRIGGER PRESENTATION

### Meena Seshu, SANGRAM

Meena Seshu described how she came to work on prostitution in the mid-1990s, carrying two pieces of baggage: Hindi cinema's images of prostitution, and feminism's analysis of prostitution. The reality that she encountered did not fit either of these frames, forcing her to confront her own double standards and to acknowledge that she was viewing prostitution within a classic 'good/bad' framework.

As the realities of women in prostitution clashed with the images in her head, Seshu thought that she was not 'moral' enough or 'feminist' enough to see the big picture. The hesitant manner in which sex workers talked to her did not fit her experience of development, in which the underlying idea is one of female solidarity; it is assumed that women activists can talk to women anywhere. She later understood that sex workers internalised the good/bad women dichotomy so strongly that they tended to shy away from 'good women'.

Reflecting external images that they have internalised over time, women in prostitution see themselves as wanton, worthless, weak, and an evil influence on the moral fibre of society. They view their earnings as 'bad money' and prefer to spend, rather than save it, out of the belief that bad money should not stay with them. They see themselves as morally weak, not choosing to do 'hard work' such as washing vessels. Though they experience prostitution as hard work, they do not view it as such. This

internalised view extends to *devadasi* women, who see themselves as debauched, debased, and deviant, even though they occupy spaces of power within their own community.

The presentation explored how the societal need to control women's bodies and fertility has pushed women in sex work and prostitution into a space of immorality. How can purities of caste, class, religion and ethnicity be maintained if women freely choose to have sex with whomever they want, if women's wombs are freed? Thus, women in prostitution exist both as a metaphorical reminder and as a concrete example of what happens to women who transgress societal norms of sexuality. A rich sex worker is not accepted in society; upper-caste sex workers lose caste status on becoming sex workers.

SANGRAM's intervention started with discussions about HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and condom use. Because they were familiar with these diseases, women in prostitution could easily identify specific STDs affecting women in the community. The aspect of violation entered their lives when the health system refused to examine or treat them. The women were trained in identifying the right medication for each STD through a system of colour coding. Using this information, the women started negotiating with the health system. This is how 'rights' crept into SANGRAM's work.

The women also expressed rights violations in refusing to go to the public hospital (even though it offered free treatment) since they were treated badly by the staff. They articulated their 'right to treatment', which SANGRAM enabled them to negotiate.

The organisation currently uses the paradigm of rights at two levels:

- As a tool to organise women in prostitution and explain rights concepts to them
- At the level of advocacy with the arms of the State - police, judiciary, health system

Over the years, SANGRAM has started using the paradigm of rights to deal with the violations encountered by women in prostitution. A process of collectivisation is used to enable women to discuss the violations they face at multiple levels from brothel keepers, money lenders, the health system, and clients.

Through its work, SANGRAM has learnt that exploitation/violence and autonomy/free choice are not mutually exclusive positions. All of these co-exist within a dynamic life process; a woman who 'chooses' to enter prostitution can still face exploitation and violence within it. SANGRAM also believes that the choice/force binary is an artificial divide while the notion that women enter prostitution through free choice is a utopian one, the belief that women are forced into prostitution is not realistic.

## TRIGGER PRESENTATION

### Maithreya, FIRM

Maithreya's work has been with street-based sex workers in Kerala, where the brothel system does not exist. He talked of the agency he sees among sex workers. When someone with a 'rescue mentality' approaches sex workers, 80 per cent of them weep and say they want to be rescued. When they are approached with an open mind, they express different realities.

During a discussion with Maithreya, 60-70 per cent of the street-based sex workers said they do not view sex work as work. Another 20 per cent saw it as work, which they do not enjoy. Only 10 per cent said they saw it as work, and were comfortable doing this work. When this 10 per cent started explaining their position, another 40 per cent of the sex workers crossed the line, and accepted it as work. Dignity is the key to accepting sex work as work; all sex workers have internalised societal attitudes towards prostitution. Only when they perceive that there is dignity in sex work, are they willing to accept it as such.

Street-based sex workers face tremendous violence, and have to take care in choosing customers, since they don't work within the safety of a brothel. The women say they can handle all other forms of violence, barring police violence. In this context, there is a need for legal advocacy to decriminalise sex work.

### Discussion

Does the sex workers' movement see the right to sex work as a sexual right or as a labour right? This was one of the issues raised during the discussion on sex workers' movements.

Seshu clarified that the positioning of sex work varies with the context. In Sangli, the rural area where SANGRAM works, 80 per cent of women in prostitution are *devadasis*. They see prostitution as work, but do not see it as a 9-5 job, or as akin to working for an employer. For them, 'work' is an activity for which one has to go elsewhere. They see prostitution more as *dhandra*, a business, or a trade that they control, which they place above work. Many *devadasis* are also property owners; thus they don't see themselves as 'workers', neither is their work structured within an employer-employee relationship. In this context, where sex workers do not see themselves as labour, sex work is not positioned as a labour right.

However, the women do see the power of coming together, or collectivisation. Although sex workers compete among each other for clients, they override this competition once they see tangible health and other benefits of collectivisation. Today, there is much less disease within their communities, and they are able to better manage illnesses, including HIV. They are also able to tackle police violence to some

More recently, women's groups have provided support to women sex workers to be able to better manage their health and other benefits of collectivisation. Today, there is much less disease within their communities, and they are able to better manage illnesses, including HIV. They are also able to tackle police violence to some extent.

extent, and reclaim the space of being a sex worker. The Veshya Anyay Mukti Parishad (VAMP) collective, which grew out of SANGRAM, has registered itself as an independent association, using the constitutional 'right to form an association for its own welfare'.

The collective identifies the State, including all its arms, as the most oppressive force in their lives. They want the law off their backs as much as possible, and are only willing to engage with the legal system to address violations such as rape and sexual assault. Sex workers have their own legal strategies; if arrested, they will initially pay a small fine of Rs.50 and get off, instead of spending a night in jail and losing Rs.200 in potential earnings. The collective negotiates to end police abuse (such as dragging women by their hair) during arrests. At one time, the collective would provide two to three sex workers to the police to enable it to meet its weekly 'arrest' quota under the Immoral Traffic Prevention Act (ITPA). But since then, it has stopped doing this. A participant shared how other sex workers' collectives negotiate their rights both through the court system and outside of it.

How does one address power hierarchies and dynamics within collectives, including sex workers' collectives? Maithreya felt that hierarchies could be minimised by not having positions of power such as 'chairperson', but by having a co-ordinating committee run the collective. Seshu felt that loose core groups sometimes do not take on responsibilities. She felt that hierarchies exist, and need to be accepted and named. What is most crucial is the decision-making process; this needs to be as broad-based and participatory as possible. In setting up a collective, the 'mother' organisation needs to recognise and address power dynamics that exist between it and the collective. In the VAMP collective, the weekly meeting in which all women participate is the key decision-making mechanism.

“Does prostitution legitimise the idea of male sexual need?” a participant asked. Seshu felt that prostitution legitimises the concept of male sexual pleasure; sex workers negotiate around pleasure with clients. Sex workers demand more payment to perform sexual acts that provide greater pleasure to the client. She used the metaphor of a depleted man coming to a sex worker to get recharged.

The two presenters identified the following milestones in the sex workers' movement in India:

- The emergence of HIV/AIDS in the mid 1980s
- The first sex workers' mela or celebration held in Kolkata in 1998
- The International Labour Organisation's acceptance of sex work as work in 1998
- The launch of a National Network of Sex Workers in 2002 which provides autonomy to member organisations instead of following one line of thinking.

The women's movement opposed the first sex workers' *mela* held in 1998, with some organisations writing to the Prime Minister to stop the *mela*. As a result, the issue got polarised into an 'us vs. them' issue, and reality was lost in the process. More recently, women's groups have provided conditional support to sex workers' organisations around State violations. However, women's organisations still find it challenging to accept sex work as work. "What would exist in a utopian vision of society?" one participant asked. "Well-paid sex workers and domestic workers? Or no domestic workers and sex workers?"



# people's movements and sexual rights

India has a long history of 'people's movements', or mass movements around issues such as displacement, housing rights, workers' issues and tribal rights. This session explored areas of engagement and disengagement between people's movements and sexual rights. Ranjana Padhi, a member of many people's movements and activist fora and Ramdas Rao of the People's Union for Civil Liberties, Bangalore, made the trigger presentations in this session. These presentations are based on their individual experiences, and do not claim to speak for all people's movements.

## TRIGGER PRESENTATION

### Ramdas Rao, People's Union for Civil Liberties, Bangalore

Ramdas Rao explained that PUCL, which is part of the mainstream human rights movement in India, has had a limited engagement with sexual rights. His presentation was confined to the Bangalore chapter of PUCL, of which he is a member.

This PUCL chapter has engaged with sexual rights since 2000 on a contingency basis, mainly due to the ongoing efforts of sexual minorities' groups in the city. Since then, PUCL Bangalore has brought out two reports on this issue: a 2001 report on sexual minorities and a 2003 report on human rights' violations faced by transgender people. PUCL Bangalore is also a member of a city-level sex workers' forum that meets every week. While it provides space for such issues, it does not actively raise them until prodded to do so.

Although the two PUCL reports have been circulated widely, they have barely been mentioned in the national PUCL bulletin, an indicator of the low priority given to such issues at the national level. Despite this, the association of PUCL's name with these issues is useful in mainstreaming them within the human rights movement in India.

The reports are also indicative of PUCL's conceptual shifts and understandings of sexuality-related issues. The 2001 report positioned sexual minorities as an undifferentiated mass; the 2003 report highlighted the kothi as a specific socio-cultural identity. Although the narratives of both reports follow the stream of victimhood, two critical conceptual insights emerge in the preface<sup>4</sup> - a shift in the sexuality discourse from issues of sexual orientation to those of gender identity; a

4. The preface referred to is authored by well known constitutional lawyer Upendra Baxi

It is possible to raise sexuality issues to a livelier and more meaningful level. One of the reasons for this is that the term 'sexual minorities' is a broad and undifferentiated mass. The 2003 report highlighted the kothi as a specific socio-cultural identity. Although the narratives of both reports follow the stream of victimhood, two critical conceptual insights emerge in the preface<sup>4</sup> - a shift in the sexuality discourse from issues of sexual orientation to those of gender identity; a

shift from affirmative politics to deconstructing all fixed sexual and gender identities.

## TRIGGER PRESENTATION

### Ranjana Padhi, Saheli

Deconstructing the term 'people's movements' Padhi repositioned this as struggles by women, tribals and dalits. All these struggles challenge traditional Left thinking, by placing experience at the centre of their politics.

It is possible to raise sexuality issues to a limited extent within mass organisations like Shramik Mukti Dal and Chhatisgarh Mukti Morcha, which challenged wife-battering and alcoholism much before the women's movement took up these issues. Movements such as the Narmada Bachao Andolan and the National Alliance of People's Movements, which work on issues of hunger, displacement and shelter, still do not consider sexuality issues as life-and-death issues. Given this, raising issues of sexuality within mass movements becomes a delicate balancing act for an activist.

However, some mainstream organisations are slowly addressing issues of sexual rights. The People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR) challenged the patriarchal institutions of family and marriage in one of its oldest reports, entitled *Inside The Family* in 1986. PUDR also participated in the 2004 investigation of a vendor who had been forcibly sodomised for four hours in Delhi.

Padhi described how lesbian women in Delhi distributed leaflets at the 1999 International Women's Day Rally and struggled to include lesbian issues in the 2000 rally. These issues were then seen as issues of privileged, upper class and caste women. Thus, several mainstream women's groups did not participate in the discussions.

Padhi felt that the struggle for sexual rights is in its infancy. It needs to connect with other movements that take on broader issues of caste, class and communalism. The struggle for sexual freedom and self-determination cannot take place in a vacuum at a time when all other freedoms are being snatched away. Rather, the struggle for sexual rights needs to locate itself as an integral part of these existing struggles.

## Discussion

Participants discussed how women and other marginal groups have a long history of resisting oppression - much before movements started doing so. Women's issues have been taken up, not just by individual women, but also by struggles that locate themselves outside of the left or women's movement, such as the *dalit* movement, the farmers' struggle in Maharashtra, and the Periyar movement in Kerala - all of which talked of women's oppression and rights. Nurses' unions and workers' unions



have supported specific campaigns around women's issues. A participant talked of the militant involvement of women in the stone workers' movement; this has not been recorded as a feminist action or as part of the women's movement.

At this moment in time, the struggle for sexual rights needs support from other movements; however sexual rights groups rarely address women's struggles or class-based issues. This is a dilemma. The Left is so structured that there is little space for issues of sexuality to be raised; these are only given space within NGOs. The Left believes that "love, sex, romance is not a working-class issue," said Padhi. She explained how it is important to refer to sexual violations, assaults, suicides, etc. to make the Left understand that these are critical life-and-death issues for the working class.

In this context, participants felt that the sexual rights discourse had much to contribute to other struggles, particularly its analysis of gender, 'sexuality' as separate from 'gender', and its inherent belief in diversity.

It is possible to raise sexuality issues to include lesbian issues in the 2000 rally. These issues were then seen as issues of pride and diversity. The 2000 rally was a significant moment in the history of the movement. It was an integral part of the movement's history. It was a moment when the movement was able to challenge the dominant discourse of life battling and alcoholism much before the women's movement.



# PLHA networks and sexual rights

People Living with HIV/AIDS have been organising and creating networks since the early 2000s; the issue of sexual rights is being raised directly and indirectly by many PLHA groups in India. In this context, Shanti Kaniappan from the Positive Women's Network in Chennai, south India, explored sexual rights from the perspective of PLHA groups.

## TRIGGER PRESENTATION

### Shanti Kaniappan, Positive Women's Network, Chennai

Shanti Kaniappan started off identifying a range of issues that people living with HIV face in the Indian context: stigma, discrimination, violence, economic insecurity, lack of access to health care, lack of information and support systems, and issues around negotiating dependence or independence.

In this larger context, HIV-positive women face a number of rights violations, including:

- Lack of access to information on modes of transmission, testing policies, reproductive rights, treatment and care, mother-to-child-transmission, preventive and follow-up information
- Overt and covert stigma and discrimination from natal families and in-laws, siblings and partners, which has pushed some women into destitution
- Denial of property rights at their natal and marital homes, partly out of a belief that positive women will anyway die sooner or later
- Denial of insurance and other claims, including on the death of a spouse
- Stigma and discrimination in the community, including refusal to rent or provide housing, use community water, garbage dumps and other resources
- Denial of the right to treatment and health care at all levels, including lack of pre- and post-test counselling, judgemental attitudes, abusive language, outright refusal to treat infections, and forced abortions
- Differential standards of care, support and treatment vis-à-vis men who are HIV-positive

- Stigma and violation of confidentiality in workplace settings, including NGOs

Sexual rights feature prominently among the rights violations faced by positive women. Positive women are subjected to forcible sex, marital rape, and sex with partners who are unwilling to use condoms. Women lack information and knowledge about their own bodies and sexuality, and are unable to negotiate within sexual relationships where they lack power.

Women are also unable to assert their reproductive rights in the context of HIV, such as the right to decide whether or not to have children. Some health providers insist that pregnant women with HIV undergo abortions, without giving women a choice in the matter.

## Discussion

During an animated discussion, participants asserted that women are seen as instruments in HIV/AIDS policies, which emphasise child health over women's health. Women are tested without their knowledge during antenatal check ups, and are expected to take anti-retrovirals to save their children's lives, even when they do not themselves require ARVs. "Given that ARVs are extremely toxic, how many women will die of toxicity instead of the illness?" wondered a participant.

Voicelessness and lack of control link all women when it comes to HIV; so much so that one participant likened AIDS in the 20th century to *sati* in the 19th century in terms of depriving women of property rights.

In the context of HIV, rights are often positioned as being in conflict with one another. For instance, the rights of HIV-positive people are being pitted against the rights of women; the right to marry vs. the right to know are pitted in opposition, as is the right to confidentiality vs. the right to information.

Policies that limit voluntary testing to those above 18 years violate the right to privacy of those below this age limit. A young woman who is below 18 years may want to get an HIV test, but this policy does not allow her to deal with the consequences of her own sexual behaviour. She needs parental consent, thus violating her right to privacy.

Current national-level prevention policies place 'fidelity' at the centre, proposing condom use as an alternate. Such disabling messages indirectly create situations in which any condom negotiation is associated with infidelity.

Participants agreed that 'objective' (age) and 'subjective' (paran  
'objective' (age) and 'subjective' (age) and 'subjective' (age) and 'subjective' (age)  
by separating adult-child exploration  
Feminists who work for sex workers are labelled as 'helping women  
Street children and others in v  
There is no space to listen to the voices of women in sex work  
separating adult-child exploration from child-child  
sexual abuse be  
high lesbian and bisexual women have traditional  
child sexual abuse be  
'reproductive rights' is a  
while 'sexual rights' is  
Equality was earlier understood as 'being like men'

# sexual rights of children

The issue of children's sexual rights is one that tends to create discomfort among groups of adults. Most participants at the Manesar meeting said they had yet to think deeply about this issue. In this context, participants engaged in a tentative, beginning conversation on this issue.

One participant felt that children's sexuality is always conflated with abuse. He felt that children should have the right to have sex without any age restrictions. However, adults have a fear of children being sexualised.

Others agreed that children do experiment sexually with their peers, but the experience of child sexual abuse is also very real. Can child sexual abuse be conceptually addressed by separating adult-child exploration from child-child exploration? Not necessarily, since abuse exists among peers and children of the same age. Children who express their gender identity in different ways, in particular, are prone to peer abuse, including sexual abuse. Street children and others in vulnerable situations are also prone to abuse.

In many communities, age is not the only parameter for determining who is a child; parameters such as 'age difference' and 'maturity' are also used. In this context, a participant shared how he had a sexual encounter with an older man when he was a teenager. After exploring it during a group process, he is still not sure if his experience constitutes abuse. Participants agreed that 'objective' (age) and 'subjective' parameters (maturity) are insufficient in determining the evolving capacities of children.

Participants agreed that in the context of sexuality, children should enjoy:

- The right to information
- The right to sex education
- The right to contraception and abortion

Children also need to be taught to differentiate between 'good' and 'bad' touches, in a context where child sexual abuse often occurs at the hands of intimates, friends and relatives.



# participants

Anindya Hajra

PRATYAY GENDER TRUST

C/o P251B, Purna Das Road, 1st Floor, Calcutta - 700029.

Phone: 033 - 24641893. Email: anindyahajra@hotmail.com

Arvind Narrain

ALTERNATIVE LAW FORUM

122/4, Infantry Road, Bangalore - 560001.

Phone: 080 - 2865757. Email: arvindnarrain@hotmail.com

Bishakha Datta

POINT OF VIEW

2 New Pushpa Milan, Worli Hills, Mumbai - 400018.

Phone: 022 - 24934478. Email: pointofview@vsnl.com

Chatura

OLAVA

Email: olava\_2000@yahoo.com, besharmee@yahoo.com

Elavarthi Manohar

SANGAMA

No. 9, ABABIL Patil Cheluvappa Street, J C Nagar (M R Palya), Bangalore-560006. INDIA

Phone: 91-80 - 23438840

Geetanjali Misra

CREA

7 Mathura Road, 2nd Floor, Jangpura B, New Delhi 110014, India

Tel: +91-11-24377707, 24378700, 24378701, Fax: +91-11- 24377708

Email: crea@vsnl.net Web: www.creaworld.org

Maithreya

FIRM

14/1514 Thycaud, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India - 695014.

Phone: 0471 - 2368142 / 2369498. Email: maitreya@asianetindia.com

Manisha Gupte

MASUM

B-1, Flat No. 41-44, Rubera Vihar, Gadital, Hadapsar, Pune - 411028.

Phone: 020 - 26995625/33. Fax: 020 - 26995625/33



Meena Seshu

SANGRAM

B 11, Arohan, Ganshyam Nagar, Madhavnagar Road, Sangli-416416.

Phone: 0233 - 2311644. Fax: 91-233-2312191.

Prabha Nagaraja

TARSHI

A 91 Amritpuri, 1st Floor (Opposite ISKCON Temple), East of Kailash New Delhi 110 065, India

Tel No: +91-11- 26474022/ 23 Fax: +91-11- 26474024

Email: tarshi@vsnl.com Website: <http://www.tarshi.net>

Pramada Menon

CREA

7 Mathura Road, 2nd Floor, Jangpura B, New Delhi 110014, India

Tel: +91-11-24377707, 24378700, 24378701, Fax: +91-11- 24377708

Email: crea@vsnl.net Web: [www.creaworld.org](http://www.creaworld.org)

Radhika Chandiramani

TARSHI

A 91 Amritpuri, 1st Floor (Opposite ISKCON Temple), East of Kailash New Delhi 110 065, India

Tel No: +91-11- 26474022/ 23 Fax: +91-11- 26474024

Email: tarshi@vsnl.com Website: <http://www.tarshi.net>

Ramdas Rao

SECRETARY - PUCL KARNATAKA

233, 6th Main, 4th Block, Jayanagar, Bangalore - 560 056.

Phone: 080 - 6639414 (Res), Email: ramdas\_\_Rao@hotmail.com

Ranjana Padhi

Email: ranjanapadhi@yahoo.co.uk, ranjanapadhi@hotmail.com

Shalini

LABIA

Post Box 16613, Matunga, Mumbai - 400019.

Email: streesangam@rediffmail.com

Shanthy Kaniappan

PWN + (POSITIVE WOMEN NETWORK OF SOUTH INDIA)

No. 23, Brindavan Street, West Mambalam, Chennai - 600033.

Phone: 044 - 23711176. Email: poswonet@hotmail.com

Sneha

VIVIDHA

Email: vividhabangalore@hotmail.com

Venkatesh B.T.

SANGAMA

No. 9, ABABIL Patil Cheluvappa Street, J C Nagar (M R Palya), Bangalore-560006. INDIA

Phone: 91-80 - 23438840 / 23438843. Email: sangama@sangama.org.

Website : <http://www.sangama.org>

Contact information is of participants' affiliations at the time of the meeting.

# organisers

CREA promotes, protects and advances women's human rights and the sexual rights of all people by building leadership capacities, strengthening social movements and organizations, creating new knowledge, information and resources, and influencing social and policy environments.

7 Mathura Road, 2nd Floor, Jangpura B, New Delhi 110014, India  
Tel: +91-11-24377707, 24378700, 24378701, Fax: +91-11- 24377708  
Email: [crea@creaworld.org](mailto:crea@creaworld.org) Web: [www.creaworld.org](http://www.creaworld.org)

SANGAMA defends the human rights of sexuality minorities (lesbians, bisexuals, kothis, double-deckers, homosexuals, gays, hijras, cross dressers, transgender and others) facing discrimination due to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Sangama actively supports the human rights of sex workers and people living with HIV/AIDS.

Number 9, ABABIL Patil Cheluvappa Street, JC Nagar (MR Palya)  
Bangalore - 06, India Tel No: +91-80-23438840/ 43 Fax: +91-80-23438948  
Email: [sangama@sangama.org](mailto:sangama@sangama.org) Website: <http://www.sangama.org>

TARSHI, Talking About Reproductive and Sexual Health Issues is a not-for-profit organization based in New Delhi, India that believes that all individuals have a right to sexual well being and to a self-affirming and enjoyable sexuality. TARSHI's work includes providing much-needed sexuality information, counselling and referrals to people of all ages on the TARSHI helpline (since 1996); strengthening capacity of practitioners in the field through trainings on the interlinkages between rights and sexuality and reproductive health; and sensitizing practitioners as well as the general public to sexual and reproductive rights through publications and public education.

A 91 Amritpuri, 1st Floor (Opposite ISKCON Temple)  
East of Kailash New Delhi 110 065, India  
Tel No: +91-11- 26474022/ 23 Fax: +91-11- 26474024  
Email: [tarshi@vsnl.com](mailto:tarshi@vsnl.com) Website: <http://www.tarshi.net>

...initiative. This ... CB

...sexual orientation, and sexual  
...initiative. This in  
...which implies a  
...rights, the  
...rights, and  
...rights, and  
...rights, and

sexual rights in India was organized as part of t

