

Grass Roots Feminism

WE would fully endorse the observation of Arghana Kalegaonkar (*EPW*, April 26) that, "Clearly, there is no bias inhering in the grass roots development framework against the ideals expressed by feminism". We are an NGO based in Bangalore working for the empowerment of women through legal awareness. We work in association with grass roots NGOs. Women members of sanghas (collectives) gather in a taluk or district town for two days and the same group attend three or four such training programmes in the course of an year. The topics discussed in an interactive context are rights *vis-avis* the police, rights pertaining to government development schemes, marriage and maintenance, minimum wages, dowry, co-operatives, violence against women, gender subordination, women's role in panchayats, property and inheritance, etc.

We found that those topics such as minimum wages, development schemes, rights versus the police that related to women's practical gender needs (PGN) were more enthusiastically received by the women, initiating a great deal of meaningful discussions resulting in effective internalisation and eventual action. However, when other topics which would lie more in the realm of strategic gender needs (SGN) such as gender subordination, role in panchayats, etc, were introduced, the responses of women were more subdued.

Yet, we got the impression that the discussions on SGN-related topics set off a reflective process, which when followed up by the sanghas in their regular meetings, created more fundamental learning and changes in perception in the women and their collectives.

The long-term goal of SGN need by necessity incorporate within itself the immediate objectives of PGN. What we have found as effective in the mobilisation of women at the grass roots is a sustained concern with PGN leading organically to SGN issues. If SGN are not to be relegated to the position of a concern only of educated, urban women, theorists and activists have to study and identify with the struggles of women in the area of PGN. SGN should ideally be the meeting point between the millions of impoverished women and their upper class sisters experiencing oppression in the form of gender subordination.

K P GOPINATH

Hengasara Hakkina Sangha,
Bangalore.

Kartik Pannalal

A MEETING of APCLC held at Hyderabad to discuss human rights issues, condoled the sad and untimely death of CPDR activist, Kartik Pannalal. Kartik along with two other friends Jahna vi Phalkey and Sanjay Bonbora was hit by a bus in Delhi in the night of

June 4-5. He and Jahnvi were returning from a human rights fact finding visit to Kashmir and had stopped for a couple of days at Delhi. Kartik died instantly and the other two friends are recovering. Kartik's loss is irreplaceable. He was not only a dedicated human rights activist but also a fine human being. He was a generous and helpful person. His passion for justice was matched by intellectual curiosity and thirst for knowledge. We extend our heartfelt condolences to Kartik's family and friends.

K BALAGOPAL

Hyderabad

Festival of the Subcontinent

JOINT CELEBRATIONS involving Bangladesh, India and Pakistan to commemorate the 50 years of freedom from colonial rule of the subcontinent are being planned over a one-year period, starting from August 1997. The prime objective is to promote understanding, goodwill and co-operation amongst the people, and strengthen friendship between the countries of the subcontinent. All the joint celebrations being organised all over the world would together constitute the festival of the subcontinent. It is planned to involve at least 50 cities in these joint celebrations including about 20 from within the subcontinent. Some of the events/programmes being planned in different cities are mushairas, music and dance concerts, cricket matches, food and film festivals, marathon runs, human chains, melas, folk performances, car rallies, theatre, lectures, seminars, photo and poster exhibitions, etc. It is proposed that there should be no apex body either at the country or at the subcontinent level. Different organisations in each city will come together to organise the joint celebrations in their own city, and will be in contact with other cities involved in this festival of the subcontinent, through fax, E-mail, etc, to exchange information. We hope you will be able to take the initiative in your city to organise the celebrations. If you are interested, we will fax/E-mail a detailed core document giving more information.

VITHAL RAJAN (Convener)

MAZHER HUSSAIN (Co-convener)

Hyderabad Celebrations 20-4-10,
Near Bus Stand, Charminar,
Hyderabad-500 002.

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