

Bhumika Women's Collective **Annual Report 2003-04**

Bhumika Women's Collective has been involved in different activities concerning women's issues. The main flagship of the collective has been the publication of Bhumika magazine continuously for the last ten years, starting in 1993.

Bhumika Magazine:

Bhumika has been continuing to reach out to the critical as well as general readership interested in women's studies, both research and women's issues. The serious women's studies articles are interspersed with the popular vein features, stories and poetry to reach out to the general readers also. In the year 2002 - 2003 four much appreciated issues of Bhumika were brought out.

Issues during the year (Nov2002 – Oct 2003)

Nov 2002 - Feb 2003

Decadal special:

The decadal special issue of Bhumika was released during the Women's Day celebrations in Mar 03. An overview article describing the journey of Bhumika, starting from a fledgling quarterly to a sound established and respected women's studies journal, the only one of its kind in telugu in Andhra Pradesh. The selection criteria, the benchmarks for the articles selected like encouraging rural based first time women writers etc has been specifically mentioned. The various specials on different thematic issues like women's literature in particular short stories, telangana, child rights, agriculture, globalization and economic reforms etc; and their contents were briefly highlighted. Articles through out the decade have been very meticulously chosen, written and researched on women issues irrespective of geographical or economical boundaries.

In this quarter, Bhumika arranged the release of 'Bhumika decadal issue' by noted feminist researchers and founder members of Anveshi Women's studies research center Dr K. Lalita and Prof. Rama Melkote. The journey of Bhumika was traced in the meeting attended by a large number of women's studies people, telugu literary circles, supporters, well-wishers and others. Bhumika also organized the book release function of editor K. Satyavathi's anthology of short stories 'aame kala' (her dream) which was attended by a large gathering of friends and well-wishers.

The issue covers an interesting and sensitive arena feminism and human relations 'human relations in feminist literature' by Prof Katyayani Vidmahe which was thorough, exhaustive and analytical. It is easily among the best critiques on telugu literature in recent times. Renowned Kuchipudi classical dancer Dr.Shobha Naidu shares her life experience. K. Santoshi's moving true childhood experience of being born and brought up in a poor family was retold in a heart warming way in her own words in the interview section. She spoke about her travails to get herself educated, which is representative of thousands of rural backward castes poor, especially girls, thru all the hardships

of life in the article titled 'My Story of Education'. The issue also carried an interview with Ms. Manjula, celebrated woman producer of the avant-garde movie 'Show' which won national awards in India. The decadal issue also has some much-talked coverage of issues like Globalization, an article discussing the pros and cons of the pending bill in national Parliament on 'Domestic violence', portrayal of women characters in Telugu films or media, folk songs and other regular features and columns.

Mar - Jun 2003

The issue carried some interesting articles and features. An essay on 'tribal women deprived of development benefits' by Dr. H. Girijarani, Dr. Katyayani Vidmahe and Dr. T. Jyothirani was carried and has received good appreciation. Focusing on the issue of 'violence against women', another article carried the courageous voices of a few women who are unwilling to suffer any more from Shabad mandal, Ranga Reddy Dist near Hyderabad. Some case studies and culled out experiences on the plight of some adolescent girls who were subjected to domestic violence was also carried in this issue.

An interesting review on the Indian English movie 'Bend it like Beckham' written by K. Satyavathi was carried in the issue, which depicts the way Indian girls are brought up irrespective of whether they are brought up in America, England or India. The perspective of parents in girl child rearing has not undergone much change and the list of dos and don'ts surrounding her life remain the same. The essay is titled as an open ended question " Why can't a girl child play happily".

Is "wife a foe" by K. Mahalakshmi, 'why do women cry?' by Abburi Chayadevi closely depict the every day life of women. Also included are K.Shoba's 'From darkness towards light' which throws a positive light on women's situation, and Bhumika decadal issue appreciation write-up by K.Manepally were the other highlights.

Jul - Aug 2003

The issue featured a well researched and factual field based article on the ongoing agitation of setting up of uranium mines in Nalgonda district by the Govt. Bhumika team visited Pedda adirsapally village in Nalgonda where the proposed mines are to be set up, and interacted with tribal people residing in the nearby villages to understand and analyze peoples' awareness on the issue. Their views were enlisted thru a series of free wheeling interviews and bhumika tried to gauge their views and pros and cons of setting up of the uranium processing unit.

Dr. Poornima Nagaraj added value to this edition of Bhumika with her article on women's stress and related psychological and psychosomatic problems. She also analyzed the inadequateness that women experience when they are advised to visit psychiatrists.

Abburi Chaya Devi, Bhumika's editorial board member in her regular column contributed a thoughtful article on 'violence against women' and how it can affect and traumatize her entire life. Turlapati Lakshmi's story on 'wives' was interesting. Abburi Chayadevi's anthology of short stories was reviewed by P. Visalakshi which brings out the all the fascinating aspects of her

writing. Silalolita continued her much acclaimed column on 'women writers in telugu literary history' by focusing on the contemporary revolutionary feminist writer.

Another interesting addition was the message by renowned child rights activist and Megasaysay award winner Prof. Shantha Sinha on the campaign, accompanied by pioneering efforts that her organization and allied institutions have unleashed on the issue of child labor. Neeraja's story focused on plight of dalit children in facing hunger and their fight to conquer it.

Sep - Oct 2003

In this issue, editor K. Satyavathi shared her views adding to the heated ongoing debate on the HIV/AIDS ad 'Puli Raja gets aids'. She pointed out what the critics of the campaign say, that the ad plays up the notion that –women are the carriers of the dreaded disease which reinforces the gender stereotype. She asks the pertinent question on why Govts do not wage a similar campaign war against issues like gender inequality or domestic violence?

The issue also features special article by Mr Shivaji, well known writer and environmentalist, on domestic girl child labor and also presents the survey report on the numbers of domestic girl child laborers in the slum areas of Mahatma Gandhi Nagar in Secunderabad. The article was extremely moving, eye opening and thought provoking and narrates the experiences of few girls working as maidservants. Most of the girl child labor showed a strong desire to get educated and said that they are compelled to earn and support their families owing to abject poverty and the deprived conditions they live in.

Apart from Abburi Chayadevi's column on child labor, information on prevention of child labor is also featured.

The issue also highlights the aspect which mostly goes unnoticed that business is mandated to advertise that they do not engage child labor - "We do not engage in Child Labour".

Another much appreciated feature was the life-experience shared by India's ace woman mountaineer Ms Bachendri Pal on her mountaineering experiences, on being a woman mountaineer etc. K. Sunita Rani shared her experiences of her visit to native tribes in Canada in her article. The short story of P. Padmavathi conveys the important message that women need to be self-protective while facing problems and say 'no' to and resist all sorts of violence at all times.

Bhumika Documentation Center :

Bhumika is continuing with the documentation center activities and has been earnestly engaged in the compilation of resource material. Diverse assimilation of research material like paper clippings and write ups in Telugu have been sent to all the women kind groups for use of the field level activities in the rural areas. Bhumika is in the process of extracting material from the compiled documentation, is photocopying and sending to different groups. Various important women's issues, relating to women and law, women and economy women's rights, literacy and education women's health general health, nutrition and various health problems, social issues, labour issues, environmental degradation and pollution, macro economic issues like WTO agriculture & patents, famous women personalities, globalization, material from conferences relating Dalit & women

issues etc. have been compiled as booklets and the documentation is a very good source for any research project. Many researchers, students, activists and others visit regularly and use the resource center.

Nirnaya Projects :

In the year 2003 Nirnaya Women's Trust supported Bhumika in conducting 5 Short-term studies, which helped Bhumika build material resources in its research and documentation center.

The five short-term projects are

1. AIDS (HIV + / AIDS) - Sandhya

Various surveys conducted by the government reveal that HIV + cases are increasing at a very fast rate in our state. Situation in some districts has already touched the danger levels with numerous people becoming victims of AIDS. Sandhya has studied and prepared a report after visiting various slum areas of Hyderabad, and she interacted with women of different economic and social backgrounds and varied social conditions and tried to assess their awareness and knowledge on the HIV +/ AIDS issues. She had tried to understand if they are aware on how the disease is acquired and the necessary prevention steps. She also tried to find the effectiveness of Govt campaigns and whether the benefits are reaching women.

2. Women related Government Schemes - Kevala

The project by Kevala gives detailed information regarding various state and central government welfare schemes pertaining to women for the betterment of their socio- economic conditions. The various schemes available are Natural Maternity Scheme, Development of Women and Children in rural area (DWACRA), Old Age Scheme etc and Kevala has given a brief note about few schemes.

3. Women In different Professions - Meena

The project by Meena gives us an interesting view about women taking up different professions and occupations and shows clearly that today's women are engaged in fields which were hitherto dominated by men. There is now an increasing acceptance to women's employment. Women have proven that they can compete on an equal basis with men in the same work environment. Study has taken women from varying backgrounds and assessed their work potential. The study shows positive findings that today there is no profession where women can't enter.

4. Women in Handloom Industry – Prasanna Kumari

This project by Prasanna Kumari aims at studying the women labour engaged in the Handloom industry in the state of AP, their working conditions, socio economic and health problems faced by them. The contribution made by the women weavers working on the looms in the process of

making a beautiful sari or an attractive dress is much more when compared to their male counterparts. The study also reflects on women weavers' life style and shows the plight of the highly unremunerative handloom industry. The hard work put in by women largely goes unnoticed and unappreciated.

5. Women in Old Age Homes - Satyavathi.

This project by K. Satyavathi – old age homes -depicts today's fast changing family situation. Nuclear families are the norm of the day, with the concept of joint family becoming extinct. The new trend in the society from past few years is the migration of younger generation professionals to distant lands for better education and job opportunities. Elder parents have profoundly become affected due to many such changes and are lodged in old age homes away from their families. These elderly people are left with no other place but the Old Age Homes irrespective of whether they like it or not.

Other Activities of Bhumika :

Bhumika participated in a number of meetings on issues like Tribal Education, Domestic violence, etc organized by other groups in Hyderabad., such as Nirnaya , Anveshi, Asmita, NAWO.

Members of Bhumika attended literary meeting organized by Khammam writers association on the eve of birthday celebrations and facilitation of famous writer and critic Cherukuri Rama Rao.

Bhumika has also compiled the database - Women's Organizations in India- A Glossary 2003, supported by Nirnaya.

Member of Bhumika K.Satyavathi is being appointed as Member, Telugu advisory committee, National Book Trust of India, New Delhi.

Paper presentations by Editor K. Satyavathi

1. K. Satyavathi presented Ravoori Kanthama Memorial Lecture on “ Telugu Dina Pathri Kalo –Mahila (Women in Telugu dailies) ” organized by Potti Sriramulu Telugu University.
2. Paper on Alternate Media and Women organized by the Christian Association of Madras.
3. Paper on 'Gender Violence' organized by Women Studies Center, Osmania University.
4. Paper on Bhandaru Achamamba, the first Telugu Story writer in a National seminar of University Grants Commission organized by Telugu Dept, Kakatiya University, Warangal.
5. Translated women's success stories of Velugu project into telugu, published by SERP.

Future Activities of Bhumika

Bhumika is planning to release the 50th issue in the first quarter of 2004 as a special issue with focus on 'Women writers in the History of Telugu Literature'. The special literary issue will be released on Mar 8th 2004, as part of Women's Day celebrations. Bhumika is approaching several organizations for monetary and other kinds of support.