



## WORLD ANTHROPOLOGY CONGRESS 2023

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GENDERED LANDSCAPES  
COMMONALITIES, DIVERSITIES, AND GLOBAL FUTURES

## GENDER-DOMAIN

## NEWSLETTER

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## WOMEN OF SUBSTANCE IN NEWS

## UNDER-17 WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

## Rice-water meal, glass pieces in ground fail to stop her from chasing dream

MUKESH RANJAN @ Ranchi

At home, she often has little by way of nutrition. Surviving mostly on just *pani-bhaat* (rice fermented in water) on as her mother is a daily wage labourer and father a drunkard, Anita Kumari has managed to make it to the list of 33 for the national coaching camp at Jamshedpur for the forthcoming FIFA Under-17 World Cup team.

Fourth among five sisters, Anita's parents are so poor that they can't even afford green vegetables or pulses. They live in Chari-Hochar village under Kanke Block in Ranchi. Anita's father is addicted to drinking and her mother works as a daily wage labourer to run the

family and feed her five children and husband.

"Even though, our financial condition is very bad, somehow I managed to get all my five daughters educated and got three of them married. My fourth daughter is Anita... She has not only made the family proud but has also brought fame for the entire village," said Asha Devi. She is keeping her finger crossed hoping Anita's success would pull the family out of poverty.

"Nobody used to care about us. But now, many people are visiting our place and taking photographs with us," said Asha Devi.

Anita is currently undergoing training along with the

Even though I had to face a lot of adversities and was not getting proper diet, kit and other facilities, I was determined to do my best and got selected for the FIFA Under-17 World Cup team  
Anita Kumari



Anita Kumari

team at Jamshedpur. "Even though I had to face a lot of adversities and was not getting proper diet, kit and other facilities, I was determined to do my best and got selected for the Under-17 team," she said.

"If given proper support from the government, other girls at my village may also do better and bring medals for the country," she added.

Villagers initially used to discourage them from pursuing the game and even threw glass pieces in the ground to prevent them playing football. Anita's youngest sibling Vinita shared, Vinita, too, plays football and wants to bring laurels to the country like her sister.

Anita was coached by Anand

Prasad Gope, who offers free training to nearly 300 youth, mostly girls. Anand is on top of the world after he got to know that Anita was selected for FIFA Under-17 World Cup. "Even though, several other students of mine have been selected for other national tournaments, this is the first such instance that someone has made it to FIFA Under-17 World Cup, which is really a great achievement for me as a coach," he said.

Anita is a very serious player. Through her dedication and hard work she managed to make it to this level," said Gope. In all, seven girls from Jharkhand have been selected for the world cup, he added.

## + JHARKHAND

**TRIBAL woman**  
Kandoni Somo, a home guard with Jamshedpur Police, is the custodian of about 100 hectares of forest near her village Sarakghutu under Musabani block of Jamshedpur district. At least 40 other women of the village help Kandoni. The voluntary work, including protecting the trees, has earned her the moniker 'Jungle ki Sherani' (tigress of the forest) among the locals.

Off-duty, whenever she gets time, Kandoni goes to the jungles to join other women guarding the forests. Locals say Kandoni has been protecting the forests since her childhood. She later formed 'Van Raksha Samiti' along with the other village women. As soon as she gets any leads about felling of trees, she rushes to protect them, they said.

Kandoni believes society cannot afford to be dependent only on the government to protect the environment because a strong nexus sometimes works between the administration and the jungle mafia. "It is impossible to protect forests without active participation of the local people. Reckless felling of trees ultimately affects the rainfall and our environment. I am happy that the people have started recognising my efforts. I wish the state government could help me," said Kandoni.

Mindless deforestation is affecting the tribal community which is dependent on forests for its livelihood. "I started building awareness among the people about the importance of forests. We were very ac-

A woman home guard in Jamshedpur has created her own team of volunteers to safeguard forests, reports Mukesh Ranjan

## 'SHERNI' WHO GUARDS THE JUNGLES B-3-22

morning shift and later joins her team guarding trees. Another woman, Sarika Tudu of 'Hariyali Sakam', says, "No one dares to enter our jungles with an ulterior motive. Even though we do not get any monetary benefits, we support Kandoni because our community is dependent on jungles. Besides forest produce, they also get medicinal plants."

"She runs inside the jungle like a tigress, therefore people call her 'Jungle ki Sherani'. Her physique matches the name given to her," says village head of Sarakghutu, Fagali Kisku. "Tree felling has almost stopped in the jungle and the forest cover has significantly increased in the region. Besides forest mafia, stone mafia has also been deterred with the initiatives taken by Kandoni and her team," says Kisku.

Forest officials appreciate Kandoni's initiative. "If her team learns about illegal tree felling, they inform officials and ensure action is taken against the culprits," said retired forest ranger PK Goswami, who was till recently posted in Musabani. "The forest is quite peaceful. No incident of tree felling or deliberate fire is reported."

I often received death threats from the jungle mafia, but I was undeterred. Gradually, they understood that it was impossible to stop us - Kandoni Somo



Kandoni Somo

# PRELUDE

## BREAKING THE BIAS



Gendered discourse is a cultural and civilizational fact of social history of humankind. For centuries hierarchical placement and inherent discriminations within its larger societal texts remained obscure in the public domain. Biological identities of male and female also came with social roles, responsibilities and obligations that were instrumental in creating hierarchies. Within these structured hierarchies' women often became victims of marginalization and subjugation. In 1946 with the establishment of UN, need to address this anomaly was realised and a separate commission for women was created. The year 1975 was declared as the "International year of the women" and its first conference was held in the same year in Mexico City. This was followed by three subsequent conferences on women, 2nd in 1980 in Copenhagen, third in Nairobi in 1985 and the fourth in Beijing in 1995. In 2000, 23rd special session of the UN general assembly on "Women 2000: Gender equality, Development and peace" was held in New York to review progress made on implementation of action agenda approved in Beijing and to plan future initiatives. In this session, participating governments of various nations renewed their commitment to striving for gender equality, development, and peace. These were followed by three review meetings after intervals of ten-years, 15-years, and 20-years. Reports suggest that member countries expressed satisfaction on actions taken for gender inclusion and parity. Scrutiny of these reports suggest that 1975 onwards, there is a considerable shift in metaphors used for setting agendas, starting from, "Women as the target to be promoted"; "Women to be empowered"; "Women in development" to "gender and development". This shift in metaphors is a gradual recognition of women as decision makers, free of baggage of subscribing to an agenda defined by men. It now talks about Gender mainstreaming, but the fact is that there are only 30 women, permanent representatives of their respective governments in the UN constituting only 15% of its total member countries of 193. From Beijing in 1995 and since the time of formation of women commission by IUAES in 1978, we have had multiple conversations on the 'concepts' that appear more as metaphors, to address gendered social structure and gender culture. Some barriers are broken, few issues addressed but gender sensitivity is still a matter of concern. Gendered stereotypes persist and textbooks from school to college are replete with it. Men are often reluctant participants in dialogues that debate gender issues. It is to address some of these concerns that UIAF- Gender domain is organising Pre WAC-23 gender dialogue series to map the existing gaps that persist between stated goals for gender parity and grounded empirical reality in different social and geographical settings.

SHALINA MEHTA

UIAF-Gender Domain Chair

Prof. of Social and Cultural anthropology (retd.)

# SONIA GUAJAJARA

Sonia Guajajara, an environmental and indigenous activist, and politician is born in Arariboia Indigenous Land in Maranhão. The Guajajara people is one of the most numerous, with about 25,000 indigenous people, and are present in eleven indigenous lands, all in the state of Maranhão. Unfortunately, the Arariboia Indigenous Land holds the second highest number of invasions on the records in the state of Maranhão. Sonia serves as the coordinator of Articulação dos Povos Indígenas do Brasil (APIB). She regularly participates and brings to a broader audience the stories of her people in international fora, such as the UN Human Rights Council and the UN Climate Negotiations. Her invaluable contributions to the indigenous movement of Brazil earned her various recognitions. In fact, she was recently named one of the 100 Most Influential Latinos Committed to Climate Action.



Sônia Guajajara is a mother and leader of the Brazilian Indigenous movement, the executive coordinator of APIB (Articulação dos Povos Indígenas) and one of the most influential environmentalists in Brazil. Photo: Courtesy of Mídia NINJA

Sonia's involvement in the indigenous movement made her a target of various attacks. The head of Brazil's Institutional Security Office harassed Sonia on Twitter and accused her of harming the country. She is consistently subjected to harassment and criminalization by state agents, as attempts to silence and discourage her from continuing her fight for the rights of indigenous peoples.



## TULSI GOWDA

### THE 'ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF FOREST'

Gowda belongs to Halakki Tribal in Karnataka and is also known as the "Encyclopedia of Forest" due to her vast knowledge of diverse species of plants and herbs. The 2021 list of Padma Awards included a 72-year-old tribal woman from Karnataka, Tulsi Gowda.

She was presented the award for her contribution to the protection of the environment. The environmentalist joined her mother in working at a local nursery and was married off before she could reach her teens. Gowda has actively contributed to protecting the environment and has planted thousands of trees. She joined the forest department as a temporary volunteer, where she was recognised for her dedication to nature preservation. She was later offered a permanent job in the department. She retired after 15 more years at the age of 70. To the members of the Halakki Vokkalu community, she's a "vruksha devata" (the goddess of trees). Gowda could identify a mother tree of any species anywhere in the forest. She is a classic example to the fact that utilising indigenous peoples' knowledge and management skill of natural resources will go a long way in protecting biodiversity and combating climate change. "We need forests. Without forests, there is no water, no crops, the sun becomes unbearably hot. If forests thrive, the state would as well," Gowda said.



# FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

## ANTHROPOLOGY OF GENDER AND WOMEN'S STUDIES

The first pre-WAC-23 series of Gender dialogues was initiated on 8th March 2022 on International Women's Day. In 1949 Simone de Beauvoir had observed, humanity is male, and male defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being ----. He is the subject; he is the Absolute-she is the other. More than seventy years later, lived social reality of many women in different parts of the World is experiential nightmare that remains embedded in disturbing silos and silences. Contemporary anthropology rooted in texts of reflexivity presents an appropriate landscape to explore 'contexts of othering'. Thus, the theme of the first dialogue in the series was on the theme of Breaking the Bias.

Experiential learnings of six women professional anthropologists brought to the fore hiatus that exists between claimed parity, equity, and reality of perseverance of discrimination, prejudice and more importantly lack of faith in their abilities to perform and excel. Narratives of three in service women professionals and three retired professors with more than thirty years of teaching experience traced historical itinerary of gendered discourse that marked their professional journeys. The citadels of learning are expected to provide gender neutral workspaces, but the narratives indicate subtle to upfront gender bias. Merit is the stated norm, but questions are often raised over women teachers' administrative capabilities. Young married women struggle to establish their identity and excellence in disciplines involving intense fieldwork and long work hours in laboratories. Women are required to invest much more time and effort to maintain delicate work-home balance. Inference one may draw from the first conversation is that there is perceptible change and decidedly better acceptance, but has it resulted in disappearance of othering? Answer in absolute terms is 'NO'. We must walk many more miles to make women visible and equal!! George Carlin once said,

**"Men are from Earth, Women are from Earth. Deal with it"; to this I must add that there is third gender and Gender dialogues go beyond both men and women. They essentially deal with most marginalized of the marginalized. The first dialogue is on gender bias against women, and it also established academic reality that men rarely participate in these conversations even when they are trained in the holistic tradition of anthropology. This platform promises to be gender neutral and future dialogues would include not only men and their gendered concerns but also third gender and stories of identity and social constructionist paradigm that controls it.**

# CONCEPT NOTE

## GENDERED LANDSCAPES COMMONALITIES, DIVERSITIES, AND GLOBAL FUTURES

ALL HUMAN BEINGS DESERVE EQUAL TREATMENT, NO MATTER  
THEIR GENDER IDENTITY OR SEXUALITY


- ANDREJA PEJIC

Civilizational histories are coloured with gendered landscapes. These map narratives of marginalities, cultural complexities and social tensions rooted in politics of human bodies. With the rise of the feminist movement in early 1980s, acknowledgment of presence of women in historical landscapes and research methodologies of various disciplines beginning with anthropology acquired imminence. Efforts to understand commonalities and diversities in geographical, cultural, social, political, and economic spheres gained momentum. Predominantly progressive women's academic bodies and social action groups started coming together for regular brainstorming sessions to address inequalities, gender related issues of poverty, human trafficking, sexual exploitation, lack of public presence and representation etc.

It was in this context that IUAES organized its first independent session on women at the behest of Prof. Leela Dube in the year 1978 at New Delhi. It was during this congress that a commission on women was established under her stewardship. Women's commission in the able hands of Leela Dube in 1986, gave a frequently cited publication titled *Visibility and Power: Essays on Women in Society and Development* edited by Dube, Ardener and Leacock and published by the Oxford University Press, New Delhi.

However, third gender continued to remain in academic oblivion. It was only after the first wave of HIV/AIDs epidemic hit the globalized world that the discussions on third gender, on sexual choices acquired academic legitimacy generating the need for public discourse on these concerns and marginalities. In 2023, when we assemble for a World congress, a pertinent question is Where should/does gender stand in our social and political world today?





Anthropological landscapes since the time of Margaret Mead, have taken the sociological position that sex is not destiny, instead is culturally constructed, and the resultant gender is what we embody and live. Gender permeates every aspect of our life, be it the individual sense of self, family, workplace, education, law, religion, culture, economics, and politics. Also, gender is not uniformly constructed and is intersected by caste, class, race, and ethnicity. It is interesting to see how gender affects individual and collective lives. Charting from the theories of biological determinism to more recent post-modern and post-structuralist theories, we have an increased awareness of the non-binary nature of gender and a more nuanced understanding of multiple gender identities. The gender question has intrigued us for generations but often refrained from open discussions in the public domain. Researchers now acknowledge its cultural and interpretative content, in a plural construct, and thus concretises the way for candid dialogue. From the perspective of empirical and experiential understanding, individual and normative constructs of gender are being examined by anthropology and multiple other disciplines. It is stated that gender is learned and performed, which has led to newer, more coherent reflections of society.

Traditional ethnographic studies on women and her role in the society, attempted to capture, the socio-historical mechanisms, by which the gendered society is produced. The sexual division of labour has often been stated as a prime reason for male dominance and subordination of women. Women and third gender also internalize their subordinated role, and this is how the gender becomes perpetuated and confirmed. Then the biological role of mothering and child-rearing further extends this sex-gender regime. Patriarchy came to be recognised as the instrumentality through which subordination and subjugation of women is perpetuated. The idea of women as a universal category was also challenged by the early feminist movement. Binaries of public and domestic sphere as exclusive structural domains for effective social order are constantly contested. With the provisions of universal franchise for women and gradually for the third gender too, their voices for fundamental rights and equality of opportunities have gained momentum. Even 'gene research' has given scientific credence to post-modernist theorisation that gender is social categorization and there are miniscule genetic differences between human species. Men, women, third gender are all symbolically equal in their behaviours, attitudes, and decision-making abilities. As researchers, we must look for catalytic agents that aggravate polarisation of roles that are socially created and culturally nourished.





Anthropology of Gender is now exploring cross-cultural analysis of reproductive rights; surrogacy; bodily integrity; reproductive choices and desires; cultural constructions of masculinity and femininity; gay and lesbian rights; gender and political participation and representation; media and gendered narratives; religion and gender; right to education; right to economic participation and parity in emoluments; and broader constructs of equality and human rights; along with several other debates deemed essential for building an inclusive society. Voices from the marginalized sections and ethnic minorities have contributed to a better understanding of the human experience; and thus, the realisation that women as also third gender experience different degrees of oppression. Questions of criminality associated with different sexual orientations are gradually being addressed through legislative progressive judgements accompanied by powerful social movements. Academic discourse on third gender is not only recording complexities of sexuality and its social construction but is making a significant contribution to its acceptance in public discourse.

Gender domain intends to deliberate and discuss the constructed social realities and pragmatics of living these on construed landscapes. It celebrates diversities and commonalities but comprehends complexities of politics of its construction. Recent events in Afghanistan, Iran, India and several other parts of the World are urging anthropological fraternity to evolve theoretical world view that takes cognizance of unprecedented events and its impact on gender and global future.

Incorporation of third gender and intersexuality in formal gender studies has slowly started gaining acceptance in public as also personal domain. However, there are some reservations among different communities across the globe on its acceptability. Gender domain of WAC-23 is sensitive to these perceptions and shall accommodate divergent opinions.



# SUGGESTED CLOSED AND OPEN PANELS/ ROUND TABLES

**THIS SECTION INCLUDES THE PROJECT PROCESSES, IMPLEMENTATION, AND EXECUTION.**

## ROUND TABLES

- Gendered discourse of political participation and representation (180 minutes)
- Gender budgeting and economics of equality (90 minutes)
- Gender, Health, reproductive rights, and choices (90 minutes)
- Women and Religion (90 minutes) · Gender and Religion (90 minutes)
- Eco-feminism and Climate change (180 minutes)

## OPEN/CLOSED PANELS

- Aandemics, epidemics, Gender and Covid 19
- Feminist Theories, Gender, and Sexuality
- Gender Violence, Stereotypes, and transgression of Human Rights
- Human trafficking and gender vulnerabilities
- Differential impact of Disasters on women
- Gender and legal studies
- Access to equal education for all genders

Various round tables/ open and closed panels will be discussing some of the above themes. Delegates may propose other themes for their respective panels keeping the broad objective of the domain in perspective. Interested participants/delegates may send abstracts of 500 words each, along with their brief profile and a photograph. Selected abstracts would be required to submit full text of the paper not exceeding 5000 words by **31st March 2023**. Individual participants are requested not to send more than two abstracts for one domain.



# WAC-23- GENDER DIALOGUE SERIES

## THEME - BREAKING THE BIAS



**8TH MARCH 2022, -ON THE OCCASION OF THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY, WAC-23-GENDER DIALOGUE SERIES WAS ORGANIZED ONLINE BY THE GENDER DOMAIN TEAM OF UIAF,**

### PERSISTING BIASES

Domestic space continues to be controlled by culturally defined gendered social roles. Even an unprecedented challenge of Covid failed to alter these social roles. This added more burden to professional career women now being compelled to work from home. There is need to strengthen women's agency by building women networks and strengthening her individual capabilities to sustain in an unequal power structured institutional set up. Western notion of feminism fails to take cognizance of local and cultural facets of gendered narratives. Challenge is to go beyond rhetoric and lip service and recognise existing realities in which women with exceptional attribute in technology and leadership are not allowed to go forward. Gender is an attitude and continues to thrive as social spaces have not become gender neutral. These biases are perpetuated in the name of tradition and culture and women are denied representation irrespective of growing development indexes. Several legal provisions brought about after 'Towards Equality Report of 1974' by the committee on the Status of Women in India have failed to make any significant dent in giving more power to women in a tradition bound cultural milieu. Without adequate, preferably equal representation in political decision-making bodies ideal of gender neutrality, gender development and peace are bound to remain elusive. Some baby steps are taken but we must traverse many trenches to bridge the gap and break the Bias.

Opening the Pre-WAC-23 dialogue series on international women's day, Prof. Behera highlighted the need for frank and open dialogue to assess existing anomalies that persist both within the domestic sphere and at workplaces. He asserted that the UIAF aspires to address these issues and strives to work towards the goal of Gender equity. He then invited convener of the series Prof. Pandhi to conduct the evening's proceedings.



**PROF. DEEPAK KUMAR BEHERA**

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**PROF. SHALINA MEHTA**

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Prof Shalina Mehta did her M. Sc and Ph D from Delhi University and started her career in Delhi university before joining to Panjab university, Chandigarh. A recipient of many international and national awards and honours, Prof Mehta has received UGC Career Award, visiting fellow at environmental institute, Houston, USA, IDPAD (ICSSR/WOTRO) exchange programme at IIAS, Amsterdam, the Netherlands, Senior Fellow-SSRC, New York and expert guest professor in Gender Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), South Africa are only a few to mention. She is author of five books and more than 80 papers published in journals of international repute. She is currently chair of the Gender Domain of the UIAF.

Reflecting on the proceedings of the first gender dialogue of the series, she clarified that purpose of these dialogues is not going to be women alone but all those marginalized gendered discourses that have created hierarchies and marginalities within constructed notions of collectivist identities. With this first initiative, we have simply articulated our desire to have open conversations in the domain of Gender but also on every other platform within UIAF and among the larger fraternity of social science as also Science research. Equality, dignity, and perseverance are crucial to have meaningful dialogues. For decades defined social and cultural roles restrained women from accessing their full potential. Even after some barriers were removed, women received acceptance in some professions but not in all. A country like India has just opened full participation of women in combat services. Regretfully, women's participation in decision making bodies and in the domain of politics remained insignificant. Lack of representation in these restricted territories is again attributed to women's unwillingness to become an agency. Open entry of the third gender in various professions is a recent phenomenon. Gender domain must discuss not only women but all gendered roles and how participation must become emancipatory to "break the Bias".

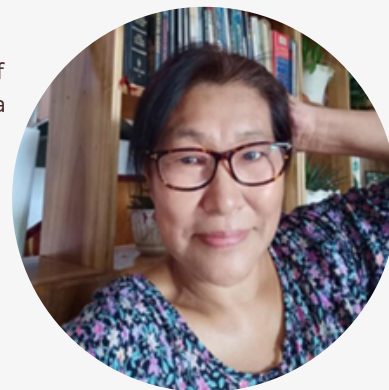
**DR. ITISHREE PADHI**

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Dr Itishree Padhi, convener of the first dialogue series is Professor, Department of Anthropology, BJB Autonomous college, Bhubaneswar. Ph.D. and D.Lit. in Women and Gender Studies. She has published five books and thirty research papers. She is a life member of several international organizations, namely IUAES; SSEASR; SASON and national bodies-Indian Science Congress; Ethnographic and Folk Culture Society; Lucknow, Institute of Social Research and Applied Anthropology – Bidisa, WB. She has travelled to countries like Japan, Croatia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Hong Kong to participate in international conferences, a member in the Commission of Anthropology of Pandemics (IUAES) and a GC member in United Indian Anthropology Forum (UIAF). Introducing theme of the dialogue series, Prof. Padhi brought to the fore continued bias and violence women experience at various stages of their lives.

Missing girls in gender census are victims of deliberate female feticide and infanticide. Average young women experience gender discrimination in food, clothing, education, and health care. Many women continue to be victims of sexual harassment. Legal sanctions have failed to prevent harrowing stories of bride burning and young newly married women committing suicide because of obnoxious dowry demands. For decades, education and family support are cited as catalytic agents for bringing gender parity, but reality is that we still must walk many miles to notice any significant changes. Time is ripe to make the girl child her own protector by making her realize her potential, competence, and basic rights. Family plays a most critical role in making her believe in herself. This dialogue series paves the way for a churning to break the bias and build a gender-neutral society.

Dr Anungla Aier - M.A, Ph.D. Anthropology, retired as the Director of Higher Education Govt of Nagaland; taught Anthropology in Kohima Science College (Autonomous P.G College) and served as the principal of the same college. She also worked as the first Director of Women Study Centre, Nagaland University. She has carried out extensive field research among the Nagas and has published two books on cultural studies and several research articles on women's lives in Naga society. Her major research areas are Folklore, Customary Laws, and Gender studies. In this 21st century we are living at a time of unprecedented development, while at the same time being surrounded increasingly by unsustainable social and economic practices, increasing complexities of work culture and conflicting interests which are accentuated by prejudice and biases.

**PROF. ANUNGLA AIER**

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Whereas such biased attitudes are directed by one social group towards another social group, many a time women and girls are at the receiving end of the biased mindset, be it at the private or public domain. We celebrate International Women's Day this year with the deep concern to break this bias so that our children can live in an unbiased and sustainable future. What is gender bias? It is an idea, an attitude, a mindset that is fuelled by traditions and customs. It is like a wall that divides, excludes, and discriminates. It suppresses and closes doors of opportunities for women. Women's knowledge remains unheard, their capabilities unexplored and their achievements unrecognized. And the worst part is we remain unaware that we are biased because we are culturally so conditioned to think and assume in a certain way. The spoken words and the actions that follow acts like the glue that cements and justifies the bias in the name of traditions. In the end, the entire society and the future generation get negatively impacted. Therefore, for humanity's sake, this wall called Bias needs to be broken down brick by brick that demand the conscious efforts of both men and women because when the bias is broken both men and women are equally liberated and can function together as equal partners.





**DR SHREYASRI  
BHATTACHARYA**

First presentation was made by Dr. Shreyasi Bhattacharya. She is a social-cultural anthropologist, currently working as a resource person for capacity building and training of Panchayati Raj Institutions at the Society for Training & Research on Panchayats and Rural Development (STARPARD), Government of West Bengal. She is associated with three distinguished Anthropological associations INCAA, IUAES and UIAF as a life member and has worked in Tribal Studies, Anthropology of Children and Childhood and Gender Studies.

Shreyasri Bhattacharya emphasises on the arena Covid 19 lockdown and its imprint on Gender Stereotypes in Family. The 2022 IWD campaign theme #BreakTheBias and the UN Women's theme: Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow is looking ahead to distinguish the contributions of women who are leading the charge to build a sustainable future.

However, in India, and World at large, we have made limited progress in the arena of gender equality. Arena of COVID 19 undeniably brought unprecedented turmoil in our lives. Workstations changed as many organizations switched to work from home policy to contain the infection during the first lockdown. For married working women, having small children at home, compulsion of working from home added greater burden. The boundary between home and work blurred. Extended working hours, non-supportive roles of spouses in the domestic sphere, particularly among the extended families, added more misery to these overburdened women. Assumption that in these exceptional times, men would share household chores remained as elusive as before. Paradoxically, instead of lessening working women's burden, COVID 19 deepened the existing gender inequalities. It proved in a way that we are lagging in our efforts to break the gender bias at the familial front even during crisis situations. We have a long and difficult road ahead of us. Let us pledge on this International Women's Day 2022 to break the biases that underpin inequalities and exclusions within the families for greater gender and social equity

Ms. Vinita Bhatia graduated from the Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi in 1976. She did Masters in Anthropology in the year 1978 and was awarded the Gold Medal. This was followed by M.Phil. in social Anthropology in 1981 from Delhi University. Ms Bhatia then moved to Mumbai and taught Anthropology and Sociology at St Xavier's College, Mumbai for about 22 years retiring in the year 2015. She taught courses in Gender Studies, Introductory Anthropology, Urban Anthropology, Corporate Anthropology and Human Rights. She clarified at the outset that her understanding of Gender Bias implies preference of one gender over the other. In our society 'gender bias is often used to refer to the preferential treatment received by the male and more specifically white heterosexual males. This is commonly referred as 'sexism'. Assuming that the Gender is silent, "breaking the bias" means; challenging the existing norms that are ingrained in us and are responsible for nurturing inequality of genders.



**MS.VINITA BHATIA**

The task I have set before me today is to evaluate the biases most hidden that the "Women's Movement in India" post 1970 have highlighted/broken /attempted to break and show the way ahead. For this I am taking as my starting point the 'Towards Equality' Report 1974 by the Committee on the Status of Women in India. The purpose of this report was to assess the impact of the constitutional, legal, and administrative provisions on the status of women, their education and employment. This was a major eye opener and it set in motion the process to find out the biases that prevented achievement of gender equality. This by flagging off concerns such as biases in laws, declining sex ratio in India's population, economic exclusion, and marginalization of women in agriculture and in the informal sector, negligible participation of women in elected bodies and several other hidden barriers in attaining goals of gender equality. Some of the achievements of the IWM have been in bringing about change in gender-biased laws like the Rape Law. Introducing new Laws like the Law against Sexual Harassment at the workplace, the PNMT Act etc. Today we have women entering professions that were exclusive domains of men e.g., Armed Forces, Commercial pilots etc. We still have a long way to go to achieve our goals of a world that's diverse, equitable, and inclusive where difference is valued and celebrated.



### DR RASHMI PRAMANIK

Dr. Rashmi Pramanik acted as the moderator of the first dialogue. She is Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology, Sambalpur University. She was University Gold Medallist in Anthropology in 1998 and received Ph.D. in Anthropology in 2005. She has published forty research papers and authored four books. She has participated in more than 50 national and international conferences. She visited National University of Singapore and Aarhus University, Denmark for academic assignments.

Dr. Mitashree Srivastava is Assistant Professor of Social Anthropology, at the Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi. She was educated and trained in social anthropology at the University of Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh. Her research thesis titled "When a sacred center blossoms; evolution of Bodh Gaya as a sacred complex" explored the development of Bodh Gaya as a sacred complex. Her present research focuses on narrative and discourse analysis to understand the construction of Buddhist identities in the South Asian globalizing contexts. She said, "on this significant occasion of International Women's Day, 08. March 2022, I take pride in participating in the gender dialogue series of the UIAF, the first of its kind in the country. Today, I take the Dias in the capacity of a woman, an academician, and an anthropologist; and I attempt to decode what it means to break the bias, seeking inspiration from my own academic journey and the life journeys of the Buddhist women, whom I encounter in the field".



### MITASHREE SRIVASTAVA

Breaking the Bias begins with ourselves and deconstructing our own life stories, not to identify the collapsing fragments of it but to acknowledge the entire semiotics that goes behind building a woman's life on an everyday basis. Moreover, it is about moving beyond western discourses of 'feminism' and to recognize femininities at the local and cultural level. It is more about celebrating the social, cultural, political, and religious achievements of women by building women's networks, solidarity groups, communication channels, dignity, and value. Academia is no level playing field, of course, it has its own institutional structures and realms that empower and disempower women. As women academicians, we need to be prepared, break this bias by taking risks, by speaking up in collective voices. Today, I fearlessly work for the cause of women empowerment in Buddhism. Buddhist feminist movement of the 21st century has begun, they are all set to break the bias coming forward religious leaders/specialists, religious teachers/professors, and participating in engaged Buddhism, leading to social change. Their empowerment empowers me.



### SAMPRITI PANDA

Third young woman anthropologist to speak on the subject was Dr. Sampriti Panda, Assistant Professor of Anthropology at BJB Autonomous College, Bhubaneswar. She did PhD in Anthropology from the University of Delhi on the Juangs of Odisha. She has also served as a Deputy Superintendent of Police in the Government of Odisha and is also a certified National level Sports Player and Coach. She is a top ranker in the state, a TV show Host, news Anchor and a Social Worker. She is an established content writer for E Pathshala and Odisha State Open University. Currently she is working on PVTGs of Odisha. In her comments she asserted that the theme Break the Bias for the International Women's Day 2022 is most appropriate for "Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow". Women need to be in a world free of bias, stereotypes, and discrimination.

A world that's diverse, equitable, and inclusive. A world where difference is valued and celebrated. It calls on people to work towards a world that is equitable, inclusive, and free from bias and disparity. Women have been suppressed by multiple factors that have restricted their choices and freedom. For decades now women are contesting their subjugation and marching forward challenging stereotypes and making discerning choices in sync with their potentialities. It's time that we forge inclusive work cultures where women's careers thrive, and their achievements are celebrated. We need to celebrate the work of women creativity and elevate visibility of their foresight as a leader. We also need to elevate and advance gender parity in technology and celebrate the women forging innovation. Our society needs to assist women to be in a position of power to make informed decisions about their health. Time is ripe to address the real issues and real problems faced by women to #breakthebias



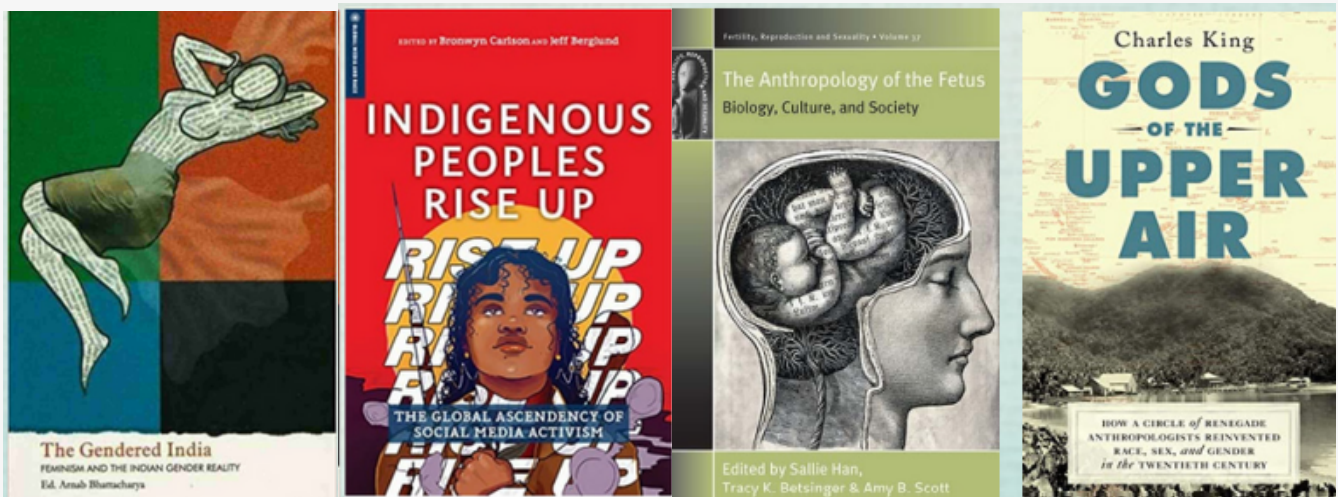
### PROFESSOR S GREGORY

FORMER DEAN, FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
FORMER CHAIRPERSON, DEPARTMENT OF  
ANTHROPOLOGY, KANNUR UNIVERSITY  
MEMBER SECRETARY, UIAF

The first Pre-WAC-23 Gender dialogue on the theme of “Breaking the Bias was closed with a note of appreciation for all the presentations by Prof. Gregory, member-secretary of the UIAF. He also referred to most women after marriage voluntarily assuming last name of their spouses that symbolized their continued conformance to traditional role models and spells problematic that continues to drag woman’s agency.

First gender dialogue also invoked responses from the audience. One of them Dr. Naresh Vaid in a written note thought that the dialogue unrealistically targeted patriarchy and erroneously believed that women in India have been suffering since times immemorial. He argued: The narrative of status of women in India was set during British times, and ever since, we have been parroting the same. For example, Mrs. Manning (Ancient and Medieval India, Vol. I, Allen & Co., 1869 p 294) distorts the truth by her statement quoting Manu (9: 96) to her convenience: “To be mothers, were women created”. The whole śloka reads as, “Women were created to be mothers and men, to be fathers. (as the two are complementary to each other), Vedas have ruled that even the simplest rituals and Dharma activities must be performed by men in the company of their wives”. Parity between men and women during ancient times is also conveyed by WW Hunter (The Indian Empire, 1882, p 92), where he wrote, “Women enjoyed a high position, and some of the most beautiful hymns were composed by ladies and queens”. AN Bose et al. (The Gazetteer of India, Vol 2, p 147) also endorsed the same observations and wrote, “In Vedic times women had access to all branches of learning. Women like Ghoṣa, Apālā and Viśvavara were composers of outstanding Vedic hymns. The age of Upaniṣads produced philosophers like Gārgi who challenged the invincible Yājñavalkya in debate and Maitreyi who spurned wealth because it would not give her immortal light (amrtā). Women of higher castes were indispensable partners of their husbands in the yajna”. Hence, the assumption that women in India are subjugated since time immemorial is distorted and this narrative is deliberately created and perpetuated by some ideological thoughts. Open dialogues generate plural voices and first gender dialogue of Pre WAC series did that with aplomb opening vistas for effective future conversations.

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