

## Editors Speak

The Oxford English Dictionary defines conflict as "a situation in which people, groups or countries are involved in a serious disagreement or argument." And indeed, from times immemorial the very term conflict has become almost synonymous with human existence. For disagreement among groups, communities and nations have often led to warring situations resulting in massive loss in terms of human resources where the very ideals of humanity are at stake. We, the present generations have grown up seeing and feeling conflict all around us. Right from the Gulf war in 1990's to the Kargil war close at home in 1999, the twentieth century has brought both disturbing and saddening realities and realisations to the fore. This apart, the globe has been plagued by incidents of ethnic conflicts and armed militant attack. Conflict has a very close relation with women and children, both being worst hit and victimised in conflict ridden situations. Whatever be the nature of conflict, global, regional or domestic, women and children have always remained vulnerable. In the present volume of *Srotaswini*, an attempt has been made to highlight the plight of women in conflict situations. Women comprise half the population of the world, yet in a patriarchal societal set up, they have been relegated to a secondary status. Women are suppressed and discriminated globally on various grounds and this perpetration of discrimination engulfs both the public and the private domains. From female foeticide to gender discrimination, a woman has to face oppression right from the womb to the tomb. And conflict remains a constant companion in the whole lifetime journey of a woman. Though internationally and nationally measures have been adopted to eradicate oppression and suppression against women, the fact remains that women are the most vulnerable group in the society. So the theme of the present issue of the Journal "Women in Conflict Situations" justifies its relevancy.

In spite of clamouring for Unity in Diversity, India has remained a hot bed for ever increasing conflicts in the very name of diversity. Conflicts in the name of caste, creed, religion, minority groups, language etc. have always pushed women to the brinks of suffering, both physical and mental. And when it comes to the North Eastern parts of India, the situation is even grim. Ethnic conflicts, problems of militancy and border issues have left this part of the country totally crippled. These conflict situations have shown their ugly face when it comes to women victims. In this multifaceted conflict ridden society of the North East, women and women's body have often become the site of establishing patriarchal dominance by resorting to inhuman acts like molestation, mutilation and rape. Women have also been at the receiving end in cases of human trafficking, dislocation, displacement, problems of immigration and migration etc. Victims of sexual abuse and rape as a result of conflict situations are ever on a rise.

Such acts of violence leave women with physical and mental scars. They often become the victims of trauma and instances of PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) are on a rise at

an alarming rate. Although treaties, acts, constitutional provisions, legal measures and other aids have been adopted both at the international and national fronts in the form of CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) 1979, Dowry Prohibition Act 1961, The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act 1986, Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005, etc. etc. but how far these provisions have been successful in eliminating discrimination and oppression against women still remains an enigmatic question. The gap between theory and practice is a lurking and palpable one. However, the scenario is not all grim; the role played by various women and women's organisations in conflict mitigation is immense. Mention may be made about Naga Mothers Association in Nagaland, Meira Paibi in Manipur, Mahila Shanti Sena in Assam, Irom Chanu Sharmila's fight for civil and political rights in Manipur and Mamoni Raisom Goswami's peace initiatives in Assam. Women from this part of the country have played significant roles at conflict mitigation.

In the present issue of *Srotaswini*, we have tried to incorporate interdisciplinary write ups from the fields of Social Sciences and Humanities covering a wide range of aspects from third gender to women as victims of trauma. In some articles, legal aspects of women in conflict situations are also focussed at. The response in the field of literature was immense. Writers dealing with literary texts with women and conflict as the centre stage have flowed from regional literature to Pakistani to African literature. And once again the fact has been established that literature upholds the mirror to society. Though most of the articles are research based, a few have managed to find space by dint of meaningful dissemination of information.

A dream that the J B College Women Cell had envisaged in 2011 of publishing a peer reviewed biennial journal on women's issues by publishing its first volume of *Srotaswini* in 2013 is charting a success story with the publication of the third volume in 2017. Although the updated versions of MLA and APA Handbooks are at hand, we have stuck to the 7th and 6th editions respectively as specified in our Call for Papers. We have applied both the formats as there are papers both from Social Sciences and Humanities.

The views aired by the authors are solely their own and have been endorsed by the referees in the process of review. As such, the editors owe no responsibility whatsoever if the views are detrimental to religious sentiments or otherwise of any person thereof.

However, the editorial remains incomplete without a word of thanks to the J B College Women Cell and the Principal of the college Dr. Bimal Barah for their moral and financial cooperation. We are thankful to the Advisory and Editorial Board for their constant guidance and support. We are indebted to our referees who have taken time and pain out of their busy schedule to mend the papers. We feel extremely honoured to have some notable names as our guest contributors. A word of thanks to the contributors for their valuable write ups without whom *Srotaswini* could not have proceeded through its onward journey. And last but not the least the people at the press whose untiring efforts we were blessed with.

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