

Subtheme 4: Interface between Action and Research

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Final Report

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Defining Action Research

Action research is known by many other names like participatory research, collaborative inquiry, emancipatory research, action learning, and contextual action research, but all are variations on a theme. Put simply, action research is “learning and theorising by doing”. Action research aims to contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to further the goals of social science simultaneously. Thus, there is a commitment at various levels in action research to theorize, study a system in collaboration with the different units and concurrently to plan for a change in a mutually agreed direction.

The most common usage of action research has been in the context of making focused efforts to improve practice. It has gained currency among practitioners who look at research as a problem-solving mechanism. It has also been used as a tool for programme or project evaluations for mid-term corrections.

Kurt Lewin, formerly professor at MIT, first coined the term “action research” in the mid 1940s. He described action research as “a comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action and research leading to social action” that uses, “a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action, and fact-finding about the result of the action”.

However action research is not only this and this has been amply proved by its various usages across disciplines and primarily amongst women’s studies. Its most important contribution from the point of view of feminist studies has been the fact that it has challenged the notion that research is the prerogative of academics. Scholars concede that there are four common characteristics of action research these are:

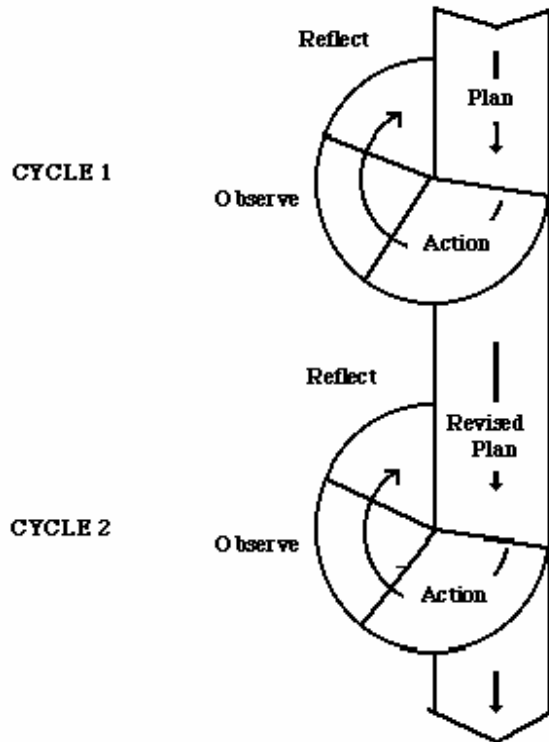
- an action and change orientation of action research based study
- a problem focus
- an "organic" process involving systematic and sometimes iterative stages
- Collaboration among participants [Peters and Robinson, 1984].

Therefore the basic derivations of this definition are that one, it is a multi-disciplinary method--we must here remember that women/gender studies is itself positioned at the intermingling of several

discourses and is uniquely multi disciplinary; second the process is an on going, repeated but a progressing one.

That is the researcher/practioner has to move to and from between the research laboratories/libraries and sites of real fieldwork continuously and the end of every previous cycle means the beginning of yet another. In fact this is exactly what the several fascinating abstracts we received have all been pointing towards unanimously.

Stephen Kemmis has developed a simple model of the cyclical nature of the typical action research process (Figure 1). Each cycle has four steps: plan, act, observe, and reflect.



Feminist Action Research: A reflection on the abstracts

As the website of the women's studies center of SNTD states the first women's study centre of SNTD was not constituted as a teaching department. It realized that the growth of the discipline could only be achieved through the translation of research findings into the classrooms. The Centre sought to develop various Women's Studies courses as well as teaching /learning material accordingly.

We think action research has been the needed tool as far as women's studies or feminists movement or women's movements is concerned. When women's movements questioned the paradigm of science and androcentric perspective of history, the need to compile, observe, study, research and understand plural ways of seeing became the foundation of women's studies. And so action-research became the important intrinsic, inclusive aspect of women's studies. It is also felt while critically viewing the objective paradigm of science to standpoint theory, which takes into account the experiential contextual reality, it is the most conducive model for action research.

So in this light and understanding of action-research we are trying to put down the varied abstracts and presentations we had during our two days of sub theme. It is important to mention, as it also is a statement on the field of action-research studies that the sub theme has received the most diverse and rich set of abstracts, which increasingly highlight the need to look beyond a sectoral understanding of women's issues.

Organisation of the sessions

We have tried to make the subgroups within this sub-theme based on women as citizens. It allows one to discuss, evaluate and analyse much of women's concern in our times. This recognition of women as citizen is crucial because in a democratic country where our constitution believes in equality and fundamental rights what it entails to be equal citizens has important and long lasting consequences for women. But we require to emphasise this fact and view the question of women's citizenship in the largely opposite cultural, social and legal contexts which on the other hand are related to intimate concerns of individuals which get manifested in norms and practices pertaining to marriage, divorce and custody. They have a vital role in defining what really is and how far are women seen an equal citizen-by the community and state. As it has been observed when viewed from this context the notion of citizenship for women inevitably becomes an exercise in looking at the denials of such rights to women. Action research for us should therefore address some of these shortcomings.

The regional and ethnic aspects also have its influence on citizenship of women of particular caste, class and creed and region itself.

After this brief over in the remaining report we take a look at the different sessions. We would first discuss the abstracts that we received, this should be seen as the way we planned our sessions and in the next sub section we will discuss the presentations itself. And lastly attempt to draw some conclusions and challenges that came up during the presentations.

Overview of the papers

Meanings of citizenship: Women, conflict and disaster

In the first session we would address the issue of citizenship and struggles in exercising the fundamental rights which includes not only ownership and access to resources but also issues of peace in most volatile situations. The abstract of the North-east looks at the question of denial of citizenship and the resultant political instability. In this context it looks at the effort made by Naga mothers for peace building. In case of the natural disasters or any calamity the denial of women's fundamental rights in normal circumstances comes as an added burden on women and that has been explored in case of tsunami.

The abstract on peace looks at the Muslim women's question in the post 2002 Gujarat scenario. Since the partition of the country the issue of Muslim minorities and that of Muslim women has remained unresolved. The issue is complicated at various levels- one is the institutionalized religion and its need to keep people together by providing the so called security of the religion. This is done by putting more control over the most vulnerable groups or making everyone to be dependent on the religion. In post genocidal attacks on the community where the control over women is already at stake due to excessive violence and sexual attacks on women by the majority community to teach the Muslim men the lesson and also assuring that no Muslim progeny

flourishes in the region. Women have been losing and gaining their rights and these constant struggles and efforts with its theoretical base has been addressed.

The abstracts in this section look at women's actions informed by research in these situations where there is constant state of unrest either through political compulsions or through natural disasters

Women, Work and Resources

Several abstracts look at women's work, their access to resources and here the processes where academicians and the grassroots workers have come together to understand the question and to advocate for change. These abstracts look at processes, limits and strengths of such collaborations. They provide a great learning ground for building an interface between action and research, by recognising the need for complementarity.

The abstract on land rights of women needs to be seen as part of an iterative process within the Sanghatana as well as a concerted effort to build a particular identity of a woman as sharing work equally or more in the farm and at home. It looks at land rights and the complicated dynamics of exercising this right where the need was felt to develop sound academic tools to deal with the complexities of reality so that one could come out with actions which has strong bearing in research.

Another abstract looks at the question of devdasis or women given away to the goddesses who often are force-led into sex work. It narrates how construction of the devdasi shaped the demands and articulation of a problem within the movements. It narrates how a feminist understanding led to a different set of demands and articulation emerging.

Abstract on women and work also look at comparative situations of the early industrial period and how powerful studies and actions combined to set up trade unions and point to a need for developing a similar understanding of the new globalisation challenges that can lead to organising of women.

Reproductive rights, sexuality and gender

There is a whole set of papers which deal with sexuality and gender: here again the different subsets of sexuality emerge: dominant images of sexuality, sexuality and reproduction, state, reproduction and gender, dominant, (un) acceptable sexual orientations and practices--and yet in the words of one of the presenters there is an inherent need to " take theoretical tools to field and then combining it with action led feedback resulting in 'new-research' findings. One of the abstracts on construction of masculinities shows how the use of feminist methodology to understand the perceptions of young men and women led to new insights related to a presence of multiple masculinities and feminities and how they compliment in producing unequal power relations.

There are a few abstracts on health and sexuality which look at the need for combining innovative ways of looking at a problem. The campaign for hazardous contraceptives and even abortion rights that women need contraceptives which are safe and which would allow them the sense of empowerment. Here action is not merely a reaction to corrosive forces alone. A feminist understanding of the biological evolution which poses an alternative which is more biologically rooted in nature is that of co-existence and plentitude and not as the biological evolution as understood by social sciences which is based on scarcity and competition.

Alternate forms of expression

A few set of abstracts look on alternative forms of expression where teaching is seen as a form of action research and how the changing socio-political contexts force a change in methods and content of teaching. Similarly new forms of expression using theatre as a form of activism, media campaigns in the context of violence against women, use of women's courts and understanding perceptions of girl children highlight the need for use of different forms of studies. While doing so papers have also looked at research dilemmas and questions of ethics.

New Tools for understanding the feminist question

A few abstracts deal with the development of new tools of research needed to construct new identities of the marginalized. In the study of urban spaces in Delhi the group took an initiative to develop new concepts in the safety index concept which looked at urban safety through a gender lens. Similarly the stigma index is a new tool in the area of understanding forms of marginalisation of sex workers.

All these varied abstracts in urban spaces, in conflicts and disaster situations, and their resultant struggle for rights, liberty, articulation of citizenships issues from within these spaces and a space where not only their voice be heard but becomes a part of the institutionalized discourse also harp on the above line of thinking and actions. There is a need to understanding the process, its continued relevance and of research leading to action, giving voice and bargaining power to the concerned individuals and groups. This also leads to the identification of the lesser researched area which simultaneously translates as those which have received minimal to no assistance from the concerned agencies. Like the case of deserted women, women in development. Also the solutions that are suggested and the means of building these through various techniques and innovative literature-like theater etc-- is in itself a pointer towards the new avatar that action-research needs to take in order to accommodate and address and truly fulfill its claims to "comparative research".

Following this we organized our sessions in six broad sessions, which undeniably do overlap in terms of the action research interface. The categorization therefore should be seen as being based on different areas in women's studies.

Along with this we had two key note addresses one as an opening remark at the beginning of the subtheme sessions by Maitreyee Krishnaraj and one as a closing note by Sumi Krishna.



In the opening remarks Maitreyi Krishnaraj emphasized on the need to get out of 'problem solving' mode and avoid water tight compartmentalization of researches on action research. She warned against either action or research as they would remain isolated from field realities. Research in the absence of action would lack the corrections that field action provides. Mere action cannot on the other hand give a long term vision or be capable of taking macro factors into consideration. That action research is only limited to field based, solution motivated studies is therefore a misnomer. Because this belief has prevailed for long and Krishnaraj feels that this could be one reason that today we see a

vacuum of studies which are both reflective and have been internalized. This would involve a complete stock taking of those whom we are studying, for instance their social, cultural, political, economic behaviour and orientations. Since action research is about giving back to the communities with which it engages this giving back can also be useful and meaningful in the light of such reflection and internalization. Furthermore one must also guide against over simplifying things, in this context theory is necessary for action research studies as reality in itself is very complex. But in the absence of overall knowledge of the units and individuals we study, and in the absence of a theory within which we can contextualize this, complexity is translated in a simplified way leading to wrong representations and deduction Krishnaraj recalled a popular anecdote here that a researcher once researching on Harayana farmers had absolutely nothing to say on the labour the women of these households put in (they did 100% cattle work). The researcher's point was he never saw the women working!

Session 1: Meanings of Citizenship: Women, Conflict and Disaster

It deals broadly with issues of citizenship in situations of disaster and political instability. We had three paper presentations in these sessions. First was Navsharan Singh titled, 'Negotiating a feminist Practice of Citizenship: A Reflexive Look at Some Ongoing Action Research Projects' She discussed two kinds of action research programmes undertaken by the IDRC. One is an action research programme on the theme of decentralization and women's rights the other is in the context of conflict situations. Through both these experiences she showed how the political climate and the goals of the agencies are determining the outcomes of the action research.

She began by discussing how the development debate entered feminist discourse, why feminist studies needed to do this and what has been its effect and consequences for feminists. Aligned with this is the entire discourse on women's citizenship rights. And as a combined category and area of study--development and citizenship--have meant for women's empowerment; in terms of the state, at the local community level and in terms of other public rights and activities within the public



arena. The paper felt that participatory approaches to development began to be a largely used methodology and was no longer limited to projects but taken to policies as well. Citizenship was also extended beyond being merely as a set of political choices for women, involving rights as well as participation.

The second paper at this session was by Bonita Aleaz titled, 'Naga Mothers as Agents of Peace'. The paper began by raising questions of such a study being done by and

from an outsider's perspective, and the problematisation of the same and then moving onto why should such a question be important at all, how and what do we draw out of this? The presentation thus concentrated on one specific association called the Naga Mothers Association (NMA) and its engagements in the public sphere. Given the long history of conflict in the region the case was used as an instance to reflect on the possibilities of activism attainable by women and also to define the parameters, which govern the de-limitation of the same.

It was felt that even though a vantage was gained by these women, the Naga women have never used it to the extent possible for furtherance of their own interests. Rather it is seen that women are able to counterbalance the unsettling effects of the clash between the confusing value-systems of modernity and to reconstruct and to heal, by extending familial ties into the wider society. Yet the coming together of women in this fashion to help the youth of the region is a step towards rebuilding the community from within. Here though they are motivated by immediate community concerns their mobilization has an impact on the formation of identity of women as active citizens, they could be seen as the mediator between the state and its disillusioned other citizens having important consequences for communities in distress.

The last presentation of the session was that of Jhanvi Andharia, titled, 'Understanding Muslim Women's Citizenship in Gujarat'. The presentation looked specifically at one section of women that of the Muslim women from the perspective of efforts made towards mobilisation of Muslim women which sought to initiate and ensure entitlements, and reestablishing livelihoods. Moreover there was a need to look at how do Muslim women look at citizenship; whether the means of mobilisation should be different for these women; what is the role of peace building with a women's focus. There is an inherent understanding here that religious identity also gives something to these women and it allows them an understanding of their life as well.

There was a lot of discussion around the meaning of citizenship and how the context becomes so very important for accessing citizenship for women.

Session 2: Health and Reproductive Rights

It looks at the area, which broadly covers the arena of health and reproductive rights. Women's reproductive rights were never at the forefront in India due to the overwhelming concern over issues of over population and world politics of population control. However women's health, women's abortion rights and control over fertility were some of the issues raised in the Indian context and the presentations explored these issues and questions also in terms of reproductive rights.

There were two presentations made in this session. The first was that of Sarojini, from the Sama Resource Group for Women and Health titled, "Feminist", "Participatory" and "Action Research": How can the Voices be Heard? A Case Study on Assisted Reproductive Technologies and Women' Sarojini discussed the implications of artificial reproductive technologies on women in the Indian context. These technologies, the author argues has further subverted women as the woman's identity is largely constructed through her being a mother. Increasingly these technologies are being promoted through public private partnerships. The action research undertaken looks at women's experiences of the perceptions of family and kin towards childlessness. How the use of different methods and methodology has led to a different understanding of these stigmas. She argued for the need to reexamine the notion of motherhood in this context.

Second presentation was by Swatija Manorama, Forum Against oppression of women and Marathmoli titled, Of Erasures and Appropriations: Action and Research During and Following the Campaign against Sex-determination and Sex Pre-selection. The paper tried to reveal the nature of the appropriation of feminist research and politics by mainstream academia and how this appropriation by male researcher's leads to perpetuation of patriarchies. It tried to address this issue through the instance of terminology used for sex selective abortion which was the outcome of feminists' politics taking into consideration abortion rights of women as being central to the demand which has been termed as female foeticide. The issue is that of addressing the women's rights and their dwindling status but the appropriation of issue has reduced the feminists concern to

female foeticide and so its effects and expression gets limited to dwindling sex ratios. The issue of science and technology and development the dilemmas of co-option, mainstreaming of feminist research have been discussed. The interface between action and research was shown by the need to understand the technology and the course of its development and its effects on society. The research in this context was that of understanding the technologies and the direction in which they were developed. Legal reforms or demanding from the welfare state for legal provisions or reforms has been the used methodology of women's movement and here also the recourse was sought in asking for legal regulation of prenatal diagnostic medical technology. The need to document these campaigns and insights in the realm of mainstream documentation has been underscored to deal with these erasures and appropriations.

Session 3: Constructing Gender

It looks at new ways in which action research has contributed to the construction of gender. Construction of sexuality became an issue because of the overemphasis on fertility control and so issues related with sex work, male sexuality have got explored in a major way after fear of HIV/AIDS. However there is a different aspect to it which under such influences has become a little overshadowed but is quite important if sex related issues need to be tackled- perception of sexuality, its experience and the images of sexuality and eroticism. The two presentations in this session tried to address this for the youth through their papers. First was that of Sujata Khandekar titled, Construction of Masculinities and Feminities among Young Men and Women Respectively in Low-Income Communities in Mumbai. Sujata discussed the way she chose her group from a low income neighbourhood of Mumbai to study the changed sexual behaviour of young men. This was a formative research which was used to develop an understanding around masculinities and this was used to design a campaign for change. She described in detail how they were warmed up through the various discussions and workshops and how through this process she with her organization aimed to change certain stereotypes regarding masculinity and sexuality of these young men. Though it is a beginning it is felt it is an important one because much of the time the cultural and social stereotypes associated with masculinity and sexuality determine how safely or unsafely youngsters would behave, irrespective of the fact that they might know the dangers and consequences of deviant sexual behaviour. The second paper was that of Surbhi Tiwari titled, 'Women Studies for Clothing, Feminism for Dress? An Inquiry into Gender and Genre. The presentations had two primary goals one to delve and unfold the nature of relationship between women studies and feminist discourse and secondly through the matrix of clothing/dress code unwrap the sexual orientations and expected women's behavior at different points in time in India. This was done through representative case studies like that of Rukhmabai, Bollywood's first generation of actresses and the more contemporary Sania Mirza.

One of the main themes for discussions was as to why little study or research is done to understand the middle class and upper middle class urban men.

Session 4: Women, Work and Resources

This was one of the liveliest sessions as it dealt with a spectrum of issues from urban work to rural. It deals with women's work and access to natural resources both in the rural and urban context of organized and unorganized workers. The session had six presentations. The first was made by Chhaya Datar titled, Methodology of Feminist Research: Studying Women in 'Motion' Bidi



Tobacco Workers and Devdasis in Nipani. The presentation was centred on the devdasis and how these women use their agency as a devdasi in their day to day life and what impact it has for them and their family and community. For instance the presentation pointed out that not all devdasis were ritually adorned as such. But they claimed this category as it gave them some sort of sanctity among the larger prostitute community. Thus though for

researchers who just look at the nature of these women's work there may not be much of a distinction between devdasis and prostitutes, for them the two are different categories, related to different social-cultural behavior. The process of making of a girl devdasis is also manipulated at different levels to suit the ones related to her. One such is which emerges with the ambiguity over devdasis and single women. The presentation also brought out the nature of relationship, and the uniqueness of the relation between a devadasi and zulva.

Second presentation was by Apoorva Kaiwar titled, Shattering the Silence: Research to Collective Action Amongst the New Industrial Women Workers. Here the presenter talked of women in the emerging ready made garments industry in some parts of the north and south. By concentrating on these units the presenter brought out the mechanisms of inducting of these young girls into the industry. The completely patriarchal nature of the use of their labour is surfaced when we learn that these women are sent to these units by their parents as if being sent to a hostel. However these time not to earn their degrees but their dowry. The income these women earn is given as a bulk sum to the parents and guardians who is later used by them for their marriages. The main argument running through the presentation was the comparison between the early eighties when there was unionization of the unorganized industrial workers which was as a result of a serious theorizing done at that time and the recent times when no such understanding was systematically sought.

The third presentation was by Sneha Bhat titled, Victims or Survivors: A Study on the Deserted and Widowed Women in Sangli District of Maharashtra. The presentation showed the deprived and exploited nature of these deserted women who are ultimately forsaken by both their natal and marital families. The struggle they then have to forge for their survival and basic rights is brought out through the study which tried to look at the ideology of desertion and in the manner that widowhood has been addressed. There is very little analysis of the extent as well as the caste, religion and class dimensions of desertion and whether the manifestations are different. This also leads one to understand that the construction of and identity of womanhood is determined not only by caste, class and ethnicity but also by marital status. The study highlighted how the action research helped bring the question of desertion on the agenda of the state.

The fourth was by Sejal Dand titled, Women's Land Rights: Rhetoric and Reality.

Sejal discussed the land rights struggle in Gujarat, which took off within the feminist economist framework. The struggle highlighted some of the gaps in the initial framework especially in the context of capturing women's agency in managing livelihoods and strategies employed by poor

rural women in coping with changes in the Indian economy and its impact on gender relations. This was an action research over a period of 2-3 years and it highlighted new dimensions of the problem and new understanding of women's agency. The use of innovative tools and networking has been highlighted as important contributions to this understanding.

Sixth by Nancy Gaikwad Stree Gauki: A Female's Force within a People's Movement

This is an example of how experiences of certain kinds shape new forms of action and strategies to address the women's question. What started out as a tribal people's organization slowly but surely looked into the question of women's rights to productive resources. A conscious effort to argue for women's equal rights through highlighting their identity as equal workers on the field, at home related to food security the movement fought its way for joint titles for land in the name of men and women. The main point running through her presentation was the need to build an identity of a woman as a main worker in the agricultural sector and therefore deserving her right to land.

Last by Shruti Vispute Linking action to Knowledge towards Sustainable Development: Rethinking Gender in Watershed Development in Maharashtra

Her presentation was more of a plan for an action learning process in the area of watershed development. She hopes to look at some critical aspects of resource rights and membership and articulation of women's aspirations and needs in the watershed programmes.

Each of the presentations generated lively debates on the main content of the papers. The session had some very interesting debates around the question of agency. How do you really understand agency? Is agency that which acts towards bringing changes in the division of labour, the roles of men and women in the household outside? Is agency that which changes the ownership patterns of resources and reorganizes work accordingly or is agency merely an act where women either as individuals or collectives move towards the welfare of their families as understood in the current normative framework? This discussion holds a lot of relevance in terms of investigating women's agency and throws a challenge for feminist action research. Two recommendations emerged out of this session a) one was the need for grassroots voices to come out more sharply on fora such as the IAWS; b) women should have access to resources such as land and water c) need to think on strategies for counter politicization of SHGs

Session 5: Violence has no boundaries

It looks at violence in the urban and rural context both in the domestic and public arena. Violence against women in the domestic as well as public sphere has been an issue which never could get addressed adequately and it has been an issue of safety and existence of women. The session consisted of three presentations. One was by Rukmini Dutta titled, 'Building Knowledge into Action: Campaigning against Domestic Violence. She showed how women's organizations have been using media as a forum—its different genres like posters, television and print advertising, booklets etc—to raise awareness against domestic violence and the various legal provisions available for the same. This was followed by findings of similar efforts by her organization towards raising awareness against violence against women and its impact assessment.

Second presentation was by Surabhi Tandon Mehrotra and Shrutipriya on Safety and the City: Women and Public Spaces in Delhi. It was similar to the previous one in the sense that it was also an impact assessment of an earlier initiative by the presenter's and their group on raising the issue of safety for women in the urban areas, the case here being that of Delhi. The rising violence on women is related to women's movement (its freedom) in public spaces, how they are viewed and how they are treated especially by men when they venture out of their

personal private spheres. They tried to argue that understanding safety in the urban context has to include women's access to safe places- where they can be protected against violence.

The next presentation was by Madhu Bhusan titled, Speaking Tree, and Women Speak: The Asia Court of Women on Crimes against Women Related to the Violence of Development. Madhu spoke of their experiment on Courts of Women, initiated by Corinne Kumar that has sought to recover and recreate other paradigms of justice and human rights outside the dominant discourse for women. Yet apart from the voices of women as survivors of and resisters to different forms of violence, the court's feminist methodology is also important and unique in that it seeks to weave together this subjective and personal voice of the woman with the objective and political context within which she is located; the affective and the aesthetic aspect of our senses with the logical and the rational.

Session 6: Alternate Forms of Expression

The last session consisted of three presentations. It is the final session, which looks at alternative forms of expression. Research and action have often been looked at in a conventional way even in feminist research, the abstracts in this session look at alternative forms of expression where use of media and cultural forms have been used.

The first presentation in this session was by Mangai from Tamil Nadu. She presented a paper by the title 'Method in Madness: Theatre as a source and expression of difference and collectivity'. Using 'performativity' as a concept the author tries to convey the power that theatrical expression holds to upstage the point of view of the exploited. Here three instances are taken –dalit women's tapattam, transgender group's kannadi and the feminist history of Tamil Nadu. These three theatrical experiences highlight issues of caste, transgender and feminist historiography. They provide new directions for research and activism. The three different groups highlight the difference in issues and yet provide us answers to address differences collectively. The main message here is that cultural expression is a powerful form of interface between action and research.

The second presentation was by Nischint and Madhura from Vacha titled 'Explorations and Expressions: Girls speak Out'. Here again the methodology is critical in bringing out the perceptions and experiences of girl children which have shaped the action programme of Vacha for girl children.

The third and the final presentation was by Santosh Birwatkar which addressed the issue of elderly and the need to build networks among organizations working with senior citizens. The research was done by the Family Welfare Agency on the issue of social organizations working with elderly and with people from economically backward elderly citizens. It also engaged with the kind of actions taken and prevalent at these organizations on a day to day level and at another level the interaction of the multiple service centres.

As mentioned earlier there are overlaps as can be seen particularly within the session on violence has no boundaries and the session on alternate forms of expression.

Sumi Krishna gave a concluding talk on the spectrum of issues that could be followed from the debates taken up here. She in fact put forward a few questions that we need to think if we wish to take this theme forward a) Can all feminist research be termed as action research b) need to understand the broad spectrum of action which ranges from activism to extension work c) similarly research too has a wide spectrum which begins from a mere documentation of action to that which can change the agenda for action.

How the interface can lead to building new theories and categories for our work. A new vocabulary needs to be build and new tools and methods also need to be introduced.

Final Comments

While the subject and the issues with which these abstracts have engaged are varied and would confuse one at first glance in terms of their common linkages however, the problems they raise, the solutions they seek to offer, the engagements they desire to make, point towards a common understanding of action-research. Women's actions emerging from research are innovative and constructive in the sense they illustrate the desire which is two ways. The action is to demand for freedom and research based action shows or helps them to find the ways of constructing a new world. This also calls for freedom. These innovative actions also help research to evolve and go beyond dogma. But we also need to be a bit cautious about how action research is used in today's NGO parlance. As part of this there is a large body of research which is coming out as a response to the international discourse introduced by donor agencies.

This has of course contributed to problem solving of issues of immediate concerns, but it also runs the risk of short term planning which often has reduced the feminist cause to mere sectoral issues. As serious feminist action researchers we need to keep a bearing of this and see how action research does not remain a mere tool for problem solving in a sectoral manner, but rather becomes a process for transformative politics. The challenges it is posing due to globalisation and structural adjustment programmes and market economy should be the driving force behind the action research in present situation. The reforms and actions taken over the years needs to be judged on the basis of women's fundamental rights as citizen and their changed status and the parameters of their empowerment are rooted in their non discriminatory existence.

We are at a juncture where there is need for research that would lead to serious theorising that will contribute to action, but not through a fragmented understanding of gender relations. We need to look at synergies between empirical and theoretical work along with experiential, subjective inputs where a coming together of practitioners and academics becomes critical.

Interface between action and research in the context of women's studies is reconstruction, restructuring and remodelling of reality with feminist's vision and perception. And that is why action is also of multiple, varied nature from documentation of her story to search of missing links in perception of reality to visionary approach towards the egalitarian world based on equality.