



DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN'S STUDIES  
BHARATHIDASAN UNIVERSITY, KHAJAMALAI CAMPUS  
TIRUCHIRAPPALLI-620023

Cordially Invites for a Seminar on



**“ Remembering Dr. Vina Mazumdar & Dr. Sharmila Rege- their  
Contributions to Women's Studies and Sociology”**

Date 18.7.13 Thrusday Time: 11. am

**Venue**

Seminar Hall, Department Of Women's Studies  
Bharathidasan University, Khajamalai Campus,

Welcome Address:

Dr. N.Murugeswari

Associate Professor and Director i/c

Department of Women's Studies, Bharathidasan University

**Vina Mazumdar- A Pioneer in Women's Studies and  
Architect of Status of Women Report 1974**

**By**

Dr. N.Manimekalai

Professor, Department of Women's Studies,

Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirapalli

**Sharmila Rege -a Phule-Ambedkarite feminist, Social Activist and  
*Malcolm Adiseshiah Awardee***

by

Dr. S. Suba

**Asst Prof, Department of Women's Studies,**

Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirapalli

**All are invited**

Department of Women's Studies  
Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirapalli

## **Report of the One day Seminar on “ Remembering Vina Mazumdar and Sharmila Rege- Women's Studies Scholars- Who passed away in May and July 2013 respectively- leaving their tremendous contributions to Women's Studies and Women's Movement**

Department of Women's Studies, Bharathidasan University has organised a one day Seminar on “ Remembering Vina Mazumdar and Sharmila Rege, who passed away recently who have contributed both in the Women's Movement and Women's Studies Development in the Academia. Around 100 participants including Students and faculty members from the University Departments, gender club members of affiliated colleges and interacted on the contributions and drew inspiration on the path and journey followed by both the Scholars during their life time. Dr. N.Manimekalai, presented and shared the experiences, contributions of Dr. Vina Mazumdar, a pioneer in Women's Studies and associated with twin movements of both Women's Movements and Women's Studies since 1940s. Vinadi described herself as a “women's activist”, a “feminist,”, a “trouble-maker”, and “recorder and chronicler of the Indian Women's Movement” and a “grand-mother of women's studies in South Asia.” She believed and practiced that women can balance traditional roles and be a feminist and activist and excel in multitasking. She felt that the youngsters are with fear and do not unite themselves with movements. Associating with Movements would bring tremendous love and affection and its rewards would absolutely be incredible she claimed. A person who was associated with pre independence India till the neoliberal policy context, had several contributions to her credit of which the historically significant contribution will be her association, involvement and contributions to the Status of Women in India “Towards Equality Report” 1974, where she served as a Member Secretary, which was an eye opener for the politicians, policy makers, bureaucrats to understand the real status, issues, and accordingly enact policies, plans etc. She placed herself as a link between unfulfilled ideals of the freedom struggle and the emergence of women's movement in 70s While talking about feminism and people who identify that “ I am not a feminist”, Vinadi held that Feminism emerge from majority that means, majority of the women face and suffer subordination, discrimination, unequal relationship and struggle to realise their rights and one who feel so, must read their foremothers and their struggles to understand feminism. Vinadi held that those who had never thought of themselves as discriminated against cannot accept feminism. So, feminism was associated with people who felt themselves to be discriminated against. She believed that undoing the damage to the ideology of feminism is the first priority Feminism is what we have learnt from the majority of the women through the twin movements – women's movement and women's studies. To her, Women's Studies is from the large majority who are often marginalised including Dalit and Advasis. Women's Movement and Women's Studies are twin movements.They go on inside educational institutions, and percolate. Without learning, drawing from their experience, the needs of the society cannot be planned. At the age of 53 she started the Centre for Women's Development Studies, an institution that has pursued the idea of “action-research”, an experiment that she began in organising landless peasant women in

Bankura district, West Bengal, CWDS, a pioneering institution has greatly influenced the course Women's Studies in India

Dignity and Autonomy are two pillars of equality with justice she held. She added that Political necessity made the faith in human equality, essential. So democracy was just not a preferred ideology. It was a political necessity to Vinadi. She believed that People empower themselves and in the process every one gets empowered. She asserts that is why the women's movement took a deliberate political decision, back in the 80s, not to push for reservations for women at the Legislative Assemblies and the Parliament, but to demand reservations and elections, through elections, with due representation for the Dalits and the Adivasis in the local self-government bodies. It is understood that no can remain involved in any movement without developing higher degree of self-consciousness. But the extent to which that self-consciousness becomes a tool in communicating with others depends on the outcome of the consciousness. How one uses one's consciousness, that itself is such an empowering process. One of her favorite questions of the government was when the government uses the word "empowerment of women", she said 'who is empowering whom?' With this it is understood that the youngsters must be self conscious and associate with movements, to get incredible benefits. Feminism is what the large majority experiences which is often the dalits and adivasis and other marginalised and it is their problem which is to be recognised framing the polices and intervention.

Sharmila Rege:

Dr. Sharmila Rege is an Indian Sociologist, Writer, Feminist said Dr. Suba in her interaction and presentation. She associate herself with the empowerment of Dalits and loved to call herself as Phule-Ambetkarite Feminist. She headed Savithiri Bai Phule Women's Studies Centre, Pune University under the Department of Gender Studies since 1991. She is the recipient of Malcom Adishesiah Award from Chennai for her distinguished contributions to Development Studies. She has authored books on " Writing Caste, Writing Gender: Reading Dalit Women's Testimonies" in which she presented case histories and struggles of 12 Dalit Women Leaders, where she explored the Dalit Feminist Stand Point using Life Narratives. Such contributions paved and opened space for feminist debate in India on the intersection of Caste, Class, Religion and Sexuality. Ms. Rege has greatly contributed to new alternative methods of Historiography, an area not much explored so far, through which she spotted the excluded and most neglected Dalit Voices and Perspectives in Indian History. Her last publication was "Against the Madness of Manu" which highlighted as a Central argument the Role of Ambetkar in Women's Movement invokikng hish ideological fight against " Braminical Patriachal and how the caste system engenders graded violence against women. She asserted that the theoretical explorations and class room teaching never introduce the students to such discrimination and social injustice, its history and hence the students have poor awareness on the politics of Caste and Gender. Ms. Rege's work on alternative history writings, has given a new platform of thinking in Development Studies, which has given new life to oral and local traditions and cultural practices

to form as a subject of enquiry. In the life narratives, she has introduced to various qualitative and institutional variables such as household, food and hunger, resistance and collective struggle and she believed that Dalit feminist stand point is the most emancipatory among the multiple feminisms in operation including the elite brahminical feminism. She left a note that she wanted and work on Dalit Feminist Stand Point and the Mandess of Manu from the Phule and Ambekarite Ideological perspective, which could be done in her life time. The basic areas she questioned is pedagogy in the class room where she was bit tolerant to students who could not conduct themselves to her extreme and exacting standards, but she was much concerned with passing of knowledge to next generations to slowly work towards such stand points to improve the knowledge further. Hence to her, Pedagogy itself is politics. Rege has left enormous lessons and experiences for the Women's Studies and Feminist Scholars which need to be taken in the perspective of moving towards gender equality with social justice. Students, youngsters, researchers, teachers, and the entire group of academicians and activists, must draw inspiration and learning from the work and contributions both the Feminist Scholars.