

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
**Re Orienting Gender: Geographies of Resistance, Agency, Violence and Desire in Asia**  
**Nov 19-21, 2014**

Department of Geography, University of Delhi.

**Supported and endorsed by :**

The IGU Commission on Gender and Geography, The Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR),  
The Swedish South Asian Studies Network (SASNET), The Indian National Science Academy (INSA) and  
the SAP programme, Department of Geography.

The international conference **Re Orienting Gender: Geographies of Resistance, Agency, Violence and Desire in Asia** was organized by the Department of Geography, Delhi School Of Economics, University of Delhi. Convened by Dr Anindita Datta and supported and endorsed by the IGU Commission on Gender and Geography, the conference is the second major conference convened by Dr Datta and organized by the Dept on the theme of Gender and Geography with a focus on Asia. The earlier conference 'Contextualizing Geographical Approaches to the Study of Gender in Asia' was organized in 2010 in collaboration with the Australian National University and also endorsed by the Commission.

The present conference began on a warm informal note with a meet and greet on the evening of the 18<sup>th</sup> of November. Delegates from 9 countries had already arrived and got the opportunity to meet fellow delegates over a light informal dinner sponsored by the INSA (Indian National Science Academy) at the International Guest House University of Delhi.



*Photo 1: A lighter moment at the Meet and Greet, sponsored by INSA.*

A formal inaugural session on the morning of the 19<sup>th</sup> of November saw the convener, Dr Datta along with Dr RB Singh Head of the Dept welcome delegates in their opening addresses and Vibha Parthasarathi, eminent educationist, social worker and former Chairperson, National Commission for Women inaugurate the conference by lighting a traditional lamp and then address the audience on the need and relevance of re orienting gender. Prof Tovi Fenster, member of the steering Committee of the IGU Commission on Gender and Geography represented the Commission and formally endorsed the event. Shawls and flowers were presented to the Chief Guest , Keynote speakers and Commission representative by Dr RB Singh in keeping with tradition and as a gesture of welcome. Chief Guest Vibha Parthasarathi released the proceedings at the end of the inaugural session and commended the organizers for their efforts in making the same available expeditiously to a wider audience.

The conference saw a total of 26 papers being presented in 9 technical sessions, 6 of them parallel sessions. Two paper presenters were unable to present due to illness. In addition there were two keynote speeches delivered by Prof Saraswati Raju and Prof Helle Rydstrom. The conference also saw the screening of a National Award winning documentary on the resilience of farm widows of the Punjab as well as an in conference workshop on feminist methodologies and emerging research on gender targeted

at early career researchers. The plenary presentations were made By Prof Anna Lindberg and Prof Catarina Kinnvall of the Lund University Sweden and supported by the Swedish South Asian Studies Network along with Dr Anindita Datta. The discussion was moderated by Prof Sachidanand Sinha of the Jawaharlal Nehru University.



*Photo 2: Innaugural session. Seen (from L to R) are Prof Saraswati Raju, keynote speaker, Dr Anindita Datta , Convener, Dr RB Singh Head of the Dept, Prof Tovi Fenster, member Steering Committee of the IGU Commission on Gender and Geography, Prof Helle Rydstrom Keynote speaker and Vibha Parthasarathi, Chief Guest.*

The technical sessions were themed around Everyday Geographies of Violence and Desire in NW India, Everyday Geographies of Resistance and Agency in Contested Spaces , Religion Culture and Patriarchal Control in Urban Spaces, Health Healing and Agency, Mapping Work, Well Being and Agency, Geographies of Desire in Real and Imagined Spaces, Gendered Agency and Everyday Geographies of the Home Space, Reading Cityscapes for Agency, Meaning , Violence and Opportunity in Micro spaces. Papers thus maintained a thematic coherence in line with the overall theme of the conference.



*Photo 3: Delegates, Resource persons, Chair and volunteers.*

The 'Workshop on Feminist Methodology and Emerging Research on Gender' began with Tovi Fenster addressing the participants on Feminist Methodology. The resource persons for the workshop were Melissa Butcher (focus on visual methods), Swarnjit Mehta, Surinder Agarwal, Saraswati Raju, Sachidanand Sinha and Linda Hiltmann. In addition to 2 short films screened to demonstrate visual methods, the workshop allowed the early career researchers to interact closely with the resource persons, all of whom made presentations before each interactive session.

Over a hundred persons registered for the conference and the in conference workshop. Delegates belonged to 9 different countries including India and represented a mix of senior academics and early as well as mid-career researchers. The three days saw intense deliberations on gender and space in Asian contexts. Post session activities consisted of a city sightseeing trip and sound and light show on the first evening followed by traditional dinner. The second evening saw a conference dinner being hosted by the

Department of Geography. Both events provided a space for the delegates to continue discussions and network over the social events.

The conference was indeed very well received and has generated interest in the Commissions activities. Timely release of the proceedings was also appreciated by the delegates and has been instrumental in transmitting the deliberations and themes of this important conference to a much wider audience.