



## Editor's Column

Another glass ceiling was recently broken when a 1.3 million Indian army got a woman to join its rank. Shanti Tigga, a mother of two, becomes the first woman to join the Indian Army as a combatant after she outperformed her male counterparts in physical tests.

35-year-old Ms. Tigga from West Bengal will now be wearing camouflage uniform and be an ace shooter in an army that needs her. As the first woman "jawani", she is now a member of the 969 Railway Engineer Regiment of the Territorial Army.

So long women had been denied combatant roles because generally women are perceived as a weaker sex and as such physically inferior to

men. They were allowed to join the armed forces only as officers in the non-combat units.

But belying all apprehensions, Ms. Tigga took 5 seconds less than her male counterparts to complete 1.5 km run and took only 12 seconds to complete the 50 meter run. She also impressed her recruiters with her firing skills and was adjudged as the best trainee.

## FOCUS

### The First "Jawani"

Thus, physical superiority of men over women as the reason to keep women away from being fighters no longer holds good. Time and again women have proved their

physical strength in the sports arena such as in the field of women's tennis, weightlifting, hockey, etc. Many a time, women can be seen carrying unusually heavy loads on their heads at construction sites or digging roads and canals, working shoulder to shoulder with men. Therefore, the other reason could be the 'role' that the society has thrust on women, that despite being tough, women do not have the guts to join the battlefield. However, thanks to Ms. Tigga, not any more.

Ms. Tigga's example, on the contrary, will spur many more women to join the Indian army as soldiers purely on their own merit and capabilities and not on the strength of some gender-balancing policy.

## SEMINAR ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

NCW Chairperson Ms. Mamta Sharma attended a seminar organised by Women Empowerment Manch on "Women Empowerment" in the premises of Carmel School in Varanasi.

Speaking on the occasion, Ms. Sharma women are completely unaware of laws safety. She urged the NGOs to come women to empower them.

She said that hoardings in different regional languages to highlight atrocities foeticide, domestic violence, child under the supervision of a governing body

She recommended stringent punishment the only state where there is comparatively less literacy, she added.



said that in many remote parts of the country, promulgated to protect their rights and forward and work with the grassroots

parts of the country would be put up in committed against women such as female marriage, dowry death, sexual assault etc. of the Commission.

for the perpetrators of such crimes. Kerala is crimes against women because of 100%

## HELPLINE TO PROVIDE PSYCHIATRIC HELP

Delhi Chief Minister has launched a round-the-clock helpline for providing psychiatric services to the people in the city. The helpline number – 1860 266 2345 – will be manned by psychiatrists and trained professionals, who will guide those requiring assistance and support in case of psychiatric and mental health problems.

## NCW gets new Member-Secretary



Anita Agnihotri has taken charge as the Member Secretary of the National Commission for Women on 17th October, 2011. Borne in the Orissa Cadre of the IAS, in the 1980 batch, Agnihotri has held a number of varied assignments in Government of India, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of Orissa and Government of West Bengal, including Social Welfare, Water Resources, Industry, Handloom & Textiles and Information & Cultural Affairs.

Anita Agnihotri had graduated in Economics with Hons. from the Presidency College, Kolkata and done her Masters in Economics from the University of Kolkata and subsequently Masters in Development Economics from the University of East Anglia, United Kingdom.

She has travelled extensively all over the country and in particular, in Orissa, West Bengal, Jharkhand and Maharashtra in connection with her work.

A well-known author of creative fiction, children writings and books on development discourse Ms. Agnihotri has authored over 30 books. Livelihood and struggles of the marginalized people and women have been her focus of concern as a writer. Many of her books have been translated in different Indian languages, including, English and German and also in Swedish.

We welcome Ms. Anita Agnihotri to the Commission and wish her a very successful tenure.

## Seminar on "Women Changes, Challenges and Convergence Plan for Maharashtra"

The National Commission for Women and Women Power Connect had jointly organized a state level seminar facilitated by Mahila Rajsatta Andolan on 'Women Changes, Challenges and Convergence Plan for Maharashtra' in Pune. Smt. Mamta Sharma, Chairperson National Commission for Women chaired the session as the Chief Guest.

The sole aim of the seminar was to effectively address the grievances of women to bring amendments to the laws and policies which will effectively protect women at the grass-root level.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Bhim Raskar, Programme Director, RSCD highlighted five priority concern areas of women – declining sex-ratio, violence against women, right to food, property rights to women and women participation in politics.

Delivering the keynote address, NCW Chairperson, Ms. Mamta Sharma made a plea for larger and active participation of trained and motivated women in politics.

She said, "There are many Acts for women's safety and empowerment and different

schemes for their welfare. But efficient implementation is lacking and crime against women is on a rise. To tackle the situation, collective efforts are needed."

Ms. Sharma also mentioned that mere political reservation will not solve women's issues. They should be made aware of their rights. "The visibility of women in politics must increase. Reservation can offer them position in politics, but if they become aware of their rights, they can use their position for betterment of the society and can strengthen their role in politics. It should trickle down to grass root level," she added.

She said that the NCW has a plan to print women's awareness kit in regional languages and creating awareness through street plays and Doordarshan on various women issues like child marriages, women rights, domestic violence, etc.

The seminar was attended by around 70 representatives of different NGOs, MRA, academics and social activists.



## Workshop on Sexual Harassment at Workplace

A workshop on 'Sexual Harassment at Workplace' was organized by Canara Bank in association with the National Commission for Women in Bangalore. Participants included representatives of Vijaya Bank, Syndicate Bank, Corporation Bank and State Bank of Mysore.



Open house interaction with the participants

Speaking on the occasion, the Chairman and the Managing Director of Canara Bank, Shri S. Raman said that it was the responsibility of every organization to protect women employees from sexual harassment at workplace.



Smt. Archana Bhargava, ED Canara Bank, addressing the gathering

Making a presentation on the law for prevention of sexual harassment at workplace, NCW Member Dr. Charu WaliKhanna explained the salient features of the bill drafted by NCW, emphasizing that every employer or organization is required to constitute an Internal Complaints Committee for redressal mechanism, of which, not less than half of its members should be women.



Releasing the Bi-lingual Booklet in Kannada and English (from left) Shri A.K. Nahar, Shri S. Raman, Ms. CharuWaliKhanna & Dr. Geeta Ramaniyam

Smt. Archana Bhargava, ED, Canara Bank said that though women were great achievers yet they were often subjected to gender bias and sexual harassment. A congenial work environment should be created so that women would be able to work in a non-threatening atmosphere of mutual trust and respect, she added.

A book on 'Supreme Court Guidelines to Prevent Sexual Harassment at Workplace' in Kannada with English translation was released on the occasion.

## NCW Chairperson writes to State CMs to fill up Chairpersons posts

In four states of the country, the post of Chairperson of the State Commission for Women remains vacant. Though the National Commission for Women has written to the Chief Ministers on this issue, yet there has been no reply from them.

In this context, the NCW Chairperson Ms. Mamta Sharma met the Congress President Smt. Sonia Gandhi and urged her to request the state Chief Ministers to expedite appointment of Chairpersons in the Women's Commission of Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh respectively. She also hoped that the three vacant posts of Members of NCW would be filled up soon.

## NCW takes suo motu cognizance of Morena incident

NCW took suo motu cognizance of an incident in which a - 30 - year - old married woman was allegedly beaten to death and set on fire by her husband and in-laws in Madhya Pradesh's Morena District after she eloped with a Dalit youth.

The matter did not reach the police for four days. It came to light when the woman's father lodged an FIR against four persons. Thereafter, the police have arrested the brother-in-law, while the other three accused including, the husband, are still at large. NCW Chairperson Ms. Mamta Sharma said that she would form a five-member committee, who would go to the spot to enquire into this heinous crime.

## IMPORTANT DECISIONS

### ❖ Court sets riders on NRI divorces

A Delhi trial court has held that a divorce decree granted by a foreign court to an NRI is invalid in case the woman does not have the means to go to that country to plead her case and if she had not subjected herself to the jurisdiction of that court.

The court has opined "that where the foreign judgement is in defiance of the Indian law, it could not be said to be conclusive and would be unenforceable" adding the woman's objection fell within the preview of foreign judgement not conclusive.

### ❖ Issue ration, voter cards to sex workers; SC

The Supreme Court has recommended to the centre and state governments to provide ration and voter cards to sex workers by relaxing the verification procedure and without mentioning their profession in it.

Taking into account several recommendations of its expert panel headed by a senior advocate, a bench said that sex workers enjoy the fundamental rights guaranteed to other citizens.

The bench also suggested to: (1) to ensure admission of the children of sex workers in appropriate classes in government or municipal schools (2) extend technical or vocational training to all sex workers not restricting it only to rescued women.

### ❖ Marriage cannot take place without woman's consent: High Court

The Bombay High Court has ruled that marriage is a civil contract under Muslim law and a *nikah* cannot take place without the free consent of the woman.

14 years after a Nagpur resident claimed to have married his cousin - a medical practitioner - a divisional bench threw out his application to order his 'wife' to live with him.

The woman had claimed that she had never married him and was made to sign on blank papers in 1997 under threat. The court said the validity of the contract will also depend upon free consent of both the contracting parties. A *Vakil* is required to be voluntarily appointed to propose and accept the marriage. The proposal should be made in the presence of two sane males or one sane male and two sane females, all Muslims.

### ❖ Delhi to make registration of marriage compulsory

The Delhi Government has cleared a draft bill that will make marriage registration mandatory for all newly married couples in the Capital. The registration of Marriage Bill 2007, also provides for a penalty of ₹ 1000/- on those, who do not register their marriages within 60 days.

In 2006, the Supreme Court had observed how women deserted by their husbands were left in the lurch as they did not have an official document to show that the marriage had been solemnized.



**It's time to change your attitude towards women**

The changes brought about by the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 and the amendments thereto will not by themselves enable full equality in property ownership.

End gender discrimination in inheritance rights.

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**National Commission for Women**  
4, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Marg, New Delhi-110 002  
Ph: 91-11-23207186, 23296988 Fax: 91-11-23206145  
Website: www.nicw.nic.in

for further information visit our website at:  
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