

ALL INDIA WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

PEACE WORKSHOP REPORT

Date: 31st January, 2019

VENUE: India International Centre, Conference Hall 2

Time: 9.30am—5 pm

Why Peace? Dr. Manju Kak - AIWC Hon. Treasurer & Conference Convener.

The concept of 'unity in diversity' makes Indian democracy resilient, and it must be maintained at all cost. AIWC, in its initiative to move the needle in the area of inculcating Peace and harmony in surroundings, spearheaded a two days workshop on 'A Culture of Peace' in collaboration with IIC on 31st January, 2019, at India International Centre and at AIWC head office on 1st February, 2019. Gandhi Museum was a partner for the event, and an exhibition on the life of Gandhi was displayed as part of this workshop.

The programme was divided into four sessions, and had a very impressive list of eminent speakers from across the cross-section of our society

- a) The aim of the workshop was to gain perspective on different aspects of human progress that eliminates violence.
- b) To bring forth realistic attitudinal changes that would lead to peaceful existence by acceptance of diversity in all its forms.
- c) Repairing emotional fabric of the society.

The highlight of the sessions is as follows:

Understanding the Indian Paradigm (1st Session)- Macro view of peace as an integral component in the democratic fabric of our nation. The speakers representing the four pillars of our Democracy presented their perspective on peace from the standpoint of their respective Institutions.

Frameworks for Securing Peace (II Session)- The speakers emphasized on the role of education in bringing about positive change in society. Education was said to be a great tool for social engineering that can help in securing peace and harmony. Likewise, Culture was said to be another great tool that could act as glue to bind communities.

Strategies for Coalitions for Peace (III SESSION)- This session's discussion focused on building knowledge networks to translate knowledge to reality. The issues faced by different groups such as Scavengers, minorities etc. were discussed. An overall discussion was about the peaceful co-existence by communicating the demerits of war and conflict through stories, plays and nukkad natak.

STRATEGY WORKSHOP "A CULTURE OF PEACE" (IV Session) - The session was about individual transformation.

AIWC members from different zones joined their heads together with the Peace educators to engineer attitudinal change and be the peace ambassadors in their respective area by learning to a guiding force for attitudinal Change in Family and Society to insure Peaceful communication and co-existence so as to strengthen the culture of peace and harmony.

ALL INDIA WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

WORKSHOP PROCEEDINGS

Dr Manju Kak--Convenor

The workshop was inaugurated with a **welcome address** by the **AIWC Hon. President**, who emphasised the need for peace promotion while raising questions about the nature of peace and its relationship with human development, socio-economic growth and the environment.

This was followed by **introductory address** from the **workshop convener and AIWC Hon. Treasurer, Dr. Manju Kak** on **"Why talk Peace?"** Highlighting the paradox of the nuclear and arms race juxtaposed against very strong civil society movements for Access to Justice and Information as well as Commitment to Freedom of Expression and Inquiry; she said that a most just and humane society ought not to have any place for arms deterrence and an arms race. But this is not so for the global nature of our economy and control of resources mandates competitiveness not rooted always in common wealth and common good but profiteering. She felt that the root cause of this is perhaps incompletely developed understanding as to where world civilizations should be headed. She cited the stunning example of the President of the US denying the very existence of climate change in the face of the visible negative impacts of climate change on a significant portion of the world population. In her opinion, it shows that creators of wealth don't always understand where that wealth is taking us or choose to ignore lessons of our past. She reiterated the importance of new mechanisms to communicate, propagate and advocate a culture of peace in a constantly shifting scenario of national challenges and global dynamics. She spoke about the importance of implementing the lessons learnt from spiritual education pinned to Humanist principles on one hand and re evaluation of political frameworks where Democracy has become a travesty on the other, coupled with nuclear disarmament initiatives.

According to her, the **SDG Goal 16: Peace Justice and Strong Institutions** constitutes attainable targets which are the hall mark of a developed nation and therefore, affirming ourselves to this as well as reviewing from time to time our accomplishment on these targets becomes a worthwhile and necessary exercise for Civil Society, NGOs and institutions. She said, "if you don't have a seat at the table how can you direct the course of the conversation." A National Action Plan located in the framework of UNSC Art 1325 tries to get women a seat on the table, in her opinion.

Elaborating on the causes of conflict and tensions, she mentioned disabled marginalised groups, unreported sexual assaults, detention of under trials, lack of accountability of security forces, *lacunae* in implementation of the law, systemic inequality, poverty and disproportionate discrimination faced due to gender as some of the prominent reasons creating vast topographies of unrest. She reiterated the axiom that a peaceful society alone can signal growth in a developed nation and debates, discussions and creating awareness is part of this process.

With this goal in view, Dr. Kak said that this 2 day strategy workshop has been convened, to review our national landscape through the prism of national paradigms, institutional frameworks and creating coalitions and the micro lens of individual peace.

Session I Understanding the Indian Paradigm

Ambassador Shyam Saran who was the **Chairperson** for the inaugural first session highlighted the fact that gender justice often gets undermined if communities decide for themselves the parameters of rights. More so, in the light of the fact that there is social regression at play right now as we have begun to make community based assertions which often marginalise women. In this context he quoted Mao Zedong according to whom "Women hold up half the Heaven."

Justice Badar Durrez Ahmed who was the **first speaker** of the session, focusing on **"An insight into Constitutional safeguards"** began with the causes of civil strife and said that there are several divides based on gender, communal, caste, ethnicity, lingual, regional, rich Vs poor, rural Vs urban, class, resources, and opportunities etc. which are causing conflicts. He said that there were attacks on freedoms and privacy of individuals due to internet and social media which are being used as windows for data theft and illicit spying on the unsuspecting citizens, breaching their

ALL INDIA WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

privacy. He emphasised the need for keeping the powers of three pillars of the state *i.e* the executive, legislature and judiciary separate so as to prevent autocracy from replacing democracy. He then pointed out that Indians are descendants of migrants from diverse origins and have mixed genes hence, conflicts based on identities is non-justifiable. He also highlighted the fact that post independence, India is a new nation with majority rule which is subject to its Constitution which stands on the four pillars of Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. According to him, the dignity of individual has to be paired with unity and integrity of the nation. In this context, he highlighted the contents of Article 14, Article 32, and Article 226. He spoke of distributive justice which should be based on “deservingness” of the subject. He remarked that in the present times all institutions are compromised and thus sensitization with regard to the importance of rule of law must be done widely in the society. With regard to empowering communities against all forms of assaults on democracy, gender equality according to him is important. One also needed to guard against certain types of individualistic dominance that did not recognise equal rights of others.

Professor Anuradha Chenoy who was the **second speaker** focusing on “**Governance & Civil Society**” laid emphasis on need to focus on the root causes that lead to continuity of various hegemonic wars like economic, territorial, resource, trade ideological, religious, regime change etc. She highlighted the fact that wars invariably lead to collective oppression of women. She said that conflicts are very much part of our environment with distortion of nationalism and sub-nationalism making them aggressive and xenophobic. According to her nationalism should be progressive not regressive. She emphasised the need for making these concepts part of public discourse. Explaining the damages caused by aggressive nationalism, she said that it instigates and justifies ruthless public killings. It also leads to militarization that justifies steep increase in defence budgets and rising arms race which is wasteful expenditure and benefits only the war mongers. According to her military should have confined roles and security of women should be part of their discourse. She also emphasised the need for placing soft power over hard power since war is highly destructive and has far reaching all encompassing impact which is destroying the planet. Women and children being most vulnerable are the worst hit. She highlighted the need for promoting pluralism and inter-community harmony on one hand and creating a balance between collective Vs community rights on the other. She also endorsed respect for minority rights.

Ambassador Vivek Katju who was the **third speaker** focusing on “**Peace & Diplomacy,**” referred to the problems of implementation and interpretation of the Constitutional ideals. He said that the purpose of a social order is to accommodate the public interests that emerge with the evolution of constitution and community. He said that difficulty arises in defining the interests of distributive justice. Covering the area of foreign policy, he reiterated the fact that Peace was mandatory for the implementation of foreign policy of an independent State which must have an equitable world view. He lamented the fact that due to slack rate of decolonization, we do not have an economically and politically equitable world order and this is compounded by the limitations placed by the UN structure. He highlighted the need for world to be peaceful even if it was not equitable. He then spoke about the safeguards provided by our foreign policy of Non Aligned Movement (NAM) which was one of the most beneficial components of the Nehruvian vision as it cushioned India from the damages of cold war and gave it independence and bandwidth to grow and develop its own equation with individual countries. It also provided India with a leadership role amongst the post colonial nations. He highlighted the felt need for technology transfer after the 1962 war experience that brought our focus on the instruments of war that could not be ignored. He also spoke of giving due importance to group and individual interests for securing peace. Speaking of the current paradigm, he said the world was divided between managers and managed and since the developing India today, straddled the twin worlds which constituted of trade unions and rule makers, peace had to be reinterpreted in evolving contexts where we need to counter balance China and maintain status quo with Pakistan. He also specified that “Peace does not mean Pacification.”

Ms. Shailija Chandra (NGT) who was the **fourth speaker**, spoke about “**Managing Ecological Harmony / Delhi: the river Yamuna**” and emphasised the importance of intrapersonal peace which is damaged due to polluted external environment. Taking Delhi as a case, she said that Delhi had a population of 18 million, 7 million of which do not

ALL INDIA WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

have access to proper sewage as they live in unauthorised colonies. She warned that soon a time would come when the neighbourhood problems of squalor, disease and misery would invade our lives. One third of Delhi's population was of slum dwellers, in cramped living conditions, poverty & disease and this has been leading to rising violence & crime. She lamented the fact that these colonies were regarded as vote banks and were pampered by the political parties despite the fact that they are polluting the environment ceaselessly. This has led to rising conflicts due to the choking presence of huge debris in drains. The presence of excessive number of vehicles and encroachments add to this conflict and rising pollution. The effluents in Yamuna have deprived people from its benefits and contribute to conflict. She highlighted the fact that these social tensions born of the negligence and connivance of the authorities are undermining the rule of law. Citing the good examples of Surat and Indore which have become well managed and clean, she urged all stakeholders to sensitise people for the urgent purpose of securing environmental and ecological peace which are mandatory for intrapersonal peace.

Ms. Nishtha Satyam (UN Women) who was the **fifth speaker**, spoke on "**A Reader on UNSC Resolution 1325.**" She referred to the Indian model of conflict resolution and the fact that we need to analyse the way we interpret negative peace which targets women. She then endorsed the implementation of UN Resolution 1325 for securing gender justice and effective reconstruction of post conflict society. She explained that UN Resolution 1325 urges all actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in all United Nations peace and security efforts. It also calls on all parties to conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, in situations of armed conflict. The UN Women Head said, "When women are included in peace processes there is a 20 per cent increase in the probability of an agreement lasting at least two years and a 35 per cent increase in the probability of an agreement lasting at least 15 years. But from 1990 – 2000, only 11 per cent of peace agreements included at least one reference to women. Out of the 504 agreements signed since the adoption of resolution 1325, only 27 per cent included references to women. In 2016, only 50 per cent of signed agreements contained gender-specific provisions, as compared to 70 per cent in 2015, and 50 per cent in 2014. She lauded the example of Finland's new National Action Plan (NAP) which focuses on women's participation in peace processes and has a gendered perspective in all mediation and transition processes. It focuses on women's effective role in conflict prevention and peace-building; the protection of women and girls during crises; and ensuring a gender responsive approach to security sector and crisis management.

NAPs have potential to address structural barriers and power relations that negatively impact women during conflict and prevent their full and equal participation in peace and security. They are key tools for transforming Security Council resolution 1325 into practical action. But they remain a 'work in progress' for many countries. As of February 2018, 73 countries had adopted national action plans. Most recently, Jordan, Angola, Cameroun, El Salvador and Guatemala adopted NAPs for the first time. A number of NAPs, such as those in Bangladesh, Lebanon, Namibia and South Africa, are in development stage. Knowledge generation, expertise and supporting technical assistance and accompaniment to conflict- affected countries can help countries into developing NAPs of their own.

While appreciating the fact that IPKF has been actively participating in UN peace keeping activities, she pointed out that some regression has crept in the society especially affecting the perception of safety at the moment even though we are progressing on many fronts. Citing the Kathua rape case, she observed that tactics of war were being deployed where there was no war, creating a perception of serious conditions of negative peace. In her opinion, individual should be given the right to opt out of community rights which are oppressive in terms of human rights in many cases. Access to land was another area of contention she spoke about while mentioning that women remain at the disproportionate end in all these episodes. According to her presently, in India, the image of ideal citizen has shifted from farmer to soldier and the demographic dividend is being lost.

Ms Seema Mustafa (The Citizen) who was the **sixth speaker**, spoke on "**New Media- Hopes & Hazards**" and while comparing the new media with the old, observed that journalism today has hit its nadir in terms of ethicality, impartiality, honesty and social responsibility. Censorship is being exercised by the money bags and political dispensations who have begun to control the media houses. In her opinion, since govts. have a well developed propaganda machine to tell people what they are doing, it is the job of the media to communicate the 'disempowered

ALL INDIA WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

voice' of the masses to all those who should hear and provide redressal in spite of illegitimate govt. censorship. She lamented the new trend of fake news, sting operations and disinformation campaign practiced by the new media which is promoting hatred, suspicion and war. She also drew attention to the phenomena of embedded journalists covering war who extolled the military operations and did not speak about the miseries faced by the civilians. She called for a code of ethics for such journalists to make them accountable. Recalling one of the first journalists, Mahatma Gandhi who had started many journals and the kind of honest public good motive that exuded in the content of those journals; she observed that media is supposed to be the fourth pillar of democracy and not industry that it has come to be in present times, in abnegation of its purported moral responsibility. She said that Constitution should be the only yardstick and bible for the media who should be educated in Constitutional provisions and Penal Code. Highlighting the need for self regulation, she quoted Gandhi who said "An uncontrolled pen devastates. Control should be from within". According to her, media should preach peace and compassion.

Lt. General Gurmit Singh who was the **seventh** and last **speaker** of this session, speaking on "**Army & Peace Protocols**"- shared his experiences and gave a vivid portrayal of the flip side of each instance of army operations that badly affected the innocent citizens, damaging their dignity, self respect and in many cases leading to loss of lives. In this context he cited his bitter experience in Sri Lanka where a village woman and her child were killed by the extremists just because she had offered him a cup of tea. He highlighted the fact that army should have a limited role to play within a specific timeline. In his opinion, military cannot provide a lasting peace and conflict resolution should be brought about through social engineering and negotiations. Having been a practitioner of counter-terrorism for forty years, he observed that women need to be a prominent part of the Kashmir solution since they can restrain and mould their family members from indulging in violence and restore values of social cohesion.

Session II Frameworks for Securing Peace

Maja Daruwala, the **Chairperson** for the **second session**, focussed on **internal peace** in her introductory remarks. She spoke of the need to find a way to overcome social regression which is hampering the agenda of the Constitution which is posited on peace. Voicing the rhetoric "Who benefits from conflict today?" she went on to observe that governments are mandated to resolve the conflicts of the day. She raised questions about the country's conflict management capacity vested in the police, panchayats and the courts while wondering whether the institutions of state are capacitated with resources. She also raised questions about the functioning of Information Commission and Human Rights Commissions. Lamenting that the ideals of Gandhi, Mandela and Buddha have been forgotten, she mentioned the precedents of Good Friday agreement, Patton Committee report etc. that should be emulated. She reiterated that fact that Indian Constitution is steeped in Human Rights which is ironically being observed in breach.

Professor Kaushikee, who was the **first speaker** of the session, spoke on "**Building a Culture of Peace - Some Reflections**." She spoke about frameworks for building peace in the culture of violence through attitudinal change. She opined that violence began in the minds of men and one way of preventing this is through education that promotes peace. She also highlighted the fact that peace education is just an element of education for peace which is a much broader concept. She discussed the concept of just peace. She also mentioned the fact that in collaboration with NCERT under its national curriculum framework- 2005, she developed a resource book for school teachers. She has also trained teachers between 2006-13. Sharing her valuable experiences, she gave the example of (NGO) Women Gun Survivors Network of Manipur and their module called Peace Time Save The Children Initiative. She mentioned the fact that in Jammu and Kashmir, taking cue from its state guidelines on how to reach "happy childhood", she wrote a manual which was accepted by the govt. In December 2017. According to her, unlike Manipur, Kashmir has 17,000 school teachers whom she has trained and emphasised the need for correct pedagogy that refrains from subconsciously transferring violence in the psyche of children. She also discussed the lack of farsightedness amongst the authorities who saw peace education as a social science topic and assigned only SST teachers for it. Hurdles like lack of clarity in the minds of teachers who equated conflict and violence was also mentioned.

ALL INDIA WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

Dr. Swapna Liddle (INTACH) who was the **second speaker**, speaking on “**India's Cultural Diversity**” drew attention to the rich cultural diversity of India which is depicted in its art works, monuments and other tangible heritage. She highlighted the fact that the British did not interpret the Indian history properly since they did not understand plurality of Indian heritage. They could not comprehend the fact that India has a composite culture and they saw things from a euro-centric view that had clearly demarcated civilizations, religions, cultures ruling distinct nationalities. Citing the example of Qutub Minar, she mentioned that there are evidences of temple destruction. However, in her view, these were damages incurred during the conflict of one regime with another and not of conflict between one culture or religion with another. The Hindu and Muslim motifs got integrated with each other over time in many monuments. She lamented the fact that simplistic assumptions have been made in thinking that Hindu temples have been destroyed or taken over by Muslims by focussing on the Hindu motifs found on some monuments. She also said that since perceived wrongs cannot be righted today, we should accept the fact that we have a composite culture.

Ms. Seema Kakran (WISCOMP) who was the **third speaker**, spoke on “**A View from the Field**” and referred to WISCOMP which came into being in 1999, with the aim of promoting a global ethics of peace and gender equity. They started with Nobel Peace Prize to Dalai Lama. It began functioning in Jammu and Kashmir since 2000 and according to her has worked in a sustained manner for bringing peace there facing the local mindset which regarded peace as unjust and favouring only the rich and powerful. Sharing her experiences, she spoke about “*Athwas*” (handshake) group that they created initially with only eight people to involve all stakeholders in building peace. Another initiative was called “*Hamkadam*” which works for creating networks for peace, trauma healing, inter-faith dialogue etc. In her experience she learnt that it could not be presumed that women are natural peace builders, things are a lot more nuanced due to sufferings and they needed help to overcome the victim mindset in order to become peace builders since their involvement was essential. She advised that non- hierarchical spaces should be built for peace promotion along with empathetic listening.

Ms. Navaz Kotwal (ICRC), who was the **fourth speaker**, spoke on “**Global Institutions at Work**” and began by raising the question “are we in sync with the values of the international community?” She wondered whether India is presently in a position to take lead in promoting peace or whether it is forced to feel cornered. She elaborated on the role played by ICRC in securing and disseminating International Humanitarian Law and regulations on waging of war. She specified that ICRC works in conflicts to minimise their violations of laws of war, engaging with all actors. She emphasised the fact that criminalizing some of the actors should be avoided. ICRC practices proximity with people, listening to their needs and distributing humanitarian aid accordingly. She cited the example of Colombia where they engaged with the Farc rebel group and negotiated peace by facilitating talks. She also highlighted the fact that there was so far only 9% representation of women in peace processes. She advised that the patriarchal view of women should be overcome to enable them to function as a distinct whole and contribute in peace process.

Professor Shweta Singh (SAU) who was the **fifth speaker**, spoke on the need for “**En-gendering Education for Peace.**” She emphasised the importance of promoting transnational feminism that transcends ethnic identity. She spoke about the need for engendering peace. She emphasised the importance of normative categorization since violence is not always visible. She also brought attention to the fact that India is not a signatory to the UNSC Resolution 1325 (only Afghanistan and Nepal are signatories) and does not recognise violence in the North- Eastern states and Kashmir. In her opinion this is a case of structural violence. She spoke about the epistemic violence inherent in the marginalization of women from the power of knowledge. She advised that women's histories should be highlighted. A civilization is known by the way it treats its minorities and it should be one of the parameters of analysis. She also emphasised the need for cutting across silos in interconnecting for peace promotion emulating the spider's web that has many centres to integrate the knowledge network that should enter the practitioner spaces. She also spoke about participatory pedagogic methods that focussed on the whole question of women's bodies as symbols of honour and thus used as sites of war. In this context she mentioned UNHCR emphasis on the UNSC Resolution 1820 that recognises rape as a strategic weapon of war.

ALL INDIA WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

Session III Strategies for Coalitions of Peace

Prof. Pam Rajput (Women 20-30) the **Chairperson** for the **third session**, stressed upon the importance of knowledge networking to translate knowledge to reality in an optimal manner. In her opinion, AIWC should become a resource centre by connecting with organisations within and outside the country. It should connect researchers, educators, activists, police and army personnel, legal experts, medicos, motivational speakers, spiritual leaders etc. for evolving a consolidated strategy paper based on principles of convergence and dovetailing to carry forward the message of peace. This should be combined with corrective measures based on identification of *lacune*, acts of omission and commission that provide the loop holes for breach of peace through various violation of rights and duties and legal guarantees.

Ms. Farida Hussain (Member in Charge, National Integration, and AIWC) who was the **first speaker** spoke on "**Lessons in National Integration**," spoke about the 'Apna waton' module she had participated in promoting after 2002 riots. Laying stress on the need for inculcating feeling of citizenship, she described how students can spread the message of peace along with mahila mandals using the tools of nukkad nataks, playa, storytelling etc. She spoke about the secular character of freedom fighters and the spirit that should be carried forward to remove the misconception about communities using historical reference. In her opinion, AIWC intervention can play an effective role in minimising the impact of the promoters of violence. People should be sensitised to distinguish between fake news and real news. Students must be taught Constitution in the classrooms on a compulsory basis and not just in optional courses. She also emphasised the need to differentiate between law & order problems and communal problems which should be dealt differently. Stereotyping and demonising of particular caste and communities must be stopped and most importantly, it was imperative to decriminalise the police.

Ms. Meera Khanna (Guild of Service) who was the **second speaker** spoke on "**A Legacy of Volunteerism**" and she drew attention to the fact that India has a tradition of volunteerism- volunteering money and time in temples, feeding the poor, free medical services etc., the independence movement too had a strong backbone of volunteerism and it had the power to change things because volunteerism is formed around human connections with the aim of reaching out to their most vulnerable members, and to act with empathy and shared values. According to her, 70%, does not involve any organization but happens informally between people in their communities. Globally, about 57% of the women take on the majority of volunteer work and an even bigger share of informal volunteering, 59%, often as an extension of unpaid care roles. However, she lamented the fact that voluntarism has taken a backseat in the present day youth who lack the spirit and fervour to become agents of positive change. In this light, she stressed upon the need to institutionalize volunteerism so that it becomes an incentive for the youth. Substantiating this contention, she said that analysis by the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme shows that the efforts of the more than 1 billion volunteers around the world are equal to that of 109 million full-time workers. She quoted Peter Drucker who said, "Volunteers, we know, have to get more satisfaction from their work than paid employees, precisely because they do not get a pay check. They need, above all, challenge. They need to know the organization's mission and to believe in it. They need continuous training. They need to see results." She also shared her own experience of conducting voluntary programme in Kashmir. She highlighted the fact that absence of armed conflict is not peace. Her team created 'Rahatghar' though which access to resources were made possible to the needy in Kashmir. Stating one of the advantages of volunteerism, she said that it enables the formation of highly qualified local advisory committee for all types of communities which value volunteering because it gives people the ability to self-organize around their own priorities.

Ms. Mohini Daljeet Singh (Max India Foundation) who was the **second speaker** spoke on "**Corporate Interventions**." According to her, culture of peace needs to be imbibed in the psyche of the people. She identified economic disparity as the main cause of insecurity. She also held the present day Media responsible for creating feeling of insecurity though provocative reporting and sensationalization. She said that absence of peace is all pervasive and corporate intervention can help in ameliorating the suffering to some extent. Corporate intervention through CSR platform can reach areas where government has not been able to provide succour. Corporate houses

ALL INDIA WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

can adopt villages and finance various needs of the poor for a better life. She also emphasised the need for giving primacy to the Indian identity instead of ethnic identity that causes divisions.

Prof A.R. Vijapur (AMU) who was the **third speaker** spoke on “**Dalit & Minority Rights.**” Speaking about omnipresence of violence, he said that only two people can be said to be at peace; one not at war and one dead. Quoting Gandhi, he said that a nation is judged by the way it treats its minorities. In this context he cited certain cases of discrimination meted out by people from the highest echelons of power and judicial system. He drew attention to the fact of selective law implementation that left out the dalits and minorities from getting justice in many cases due to prejudiced mindsets of the stakeholders. He called for spreading the message of equality and justice amongst the populace and authorities.

Ms Bhasha Singh (activist) who was the **fourth speaker** speaking on “**Grassroots Activism**” drew attention to the fact that no city in India is manual scavenging free till date. The female manual scavengers are the worst sufferers of this system. There are around 1800 sewer deaths across the country per year. She mentioned the Safai Karmachari Andolan (SKA) which is a movement for dignity and justice for India's safai karmacharis or Balmikis. Eradication of Manual Scavenging and Dry Latrines Act was passed in 1993. A commission to deal with the problem was created and crores of rupees were allocated for the rehabilitation of manual scavengers. Seventeen years after the Act, the demeaning work of removing human excreta with a broom, pieces of tin sheet and a bucket or basket is yet to be fully eradicated. She cited the example of Narayanamma who became a crusader in the fight to end manual scavenging as well as Bheem yatra which undertaken to stop sewer and septic tank deaths. The main demands were that the government must apologise to all safai karmacharis for the violation of their dignity and the degradation of an entire community over centuries; all dry latrines must be demolished; those violating the 1993 Act and forcing safai karmacharis to do manual scavenging must be punished. She drew attention to the *lacune* present in the Swatch Bharat Abhiyan which focuses on making toilets but does not focus on cleaning toilets. According to her, caste, class and communalism are enemy of peace since they violate people's rights.

Mr. Manu Singh who was the **fifth speaker** spoke on “**Women in Interfaith and Intercultural sector.**” According to him, without the feminine element there cannot be any faith or culture. Speaking about the concept of Lord as “Ardha Nareeshwar” embedded in the Indian perennial culture, he said that we are all created in the same way and are incomplete if both masculine and feminine aspects do not co-exist. According to him, the general script about the role of women is flawed because it extols women as goddesses but subjugates them in practice. He emphasised the fact that oppression of women through toxic conditioned patriarchy simultaneously damages the males as it impedes their own wellbeing and progress. He highlighted the fact that people have become misguided by those who have turned faith into an industry and this in turn is leading to severe breach of peace. Many such sham religious leaders were instigating people to violence. According to him, women can play crucial role in interfaith and intercultural dialogues and education to enable people to appreciate the difference and commonalities. This would lead to a more composite culture that includes and appreciates others.

Dr. Yuthika Mishra (DU) who was the **sixth speaker** spoke on “**Women as Peace Educators, Initiatives taken.**” She highlighted the role of women as peace educators and gave a PPT presentation. She informed the house that IWPG is a peace NGO registered with the UN DPI (Department of Public Information), UN ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council), and the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family in the Republic of Korea. It was established in 2013 and currently has 100 branches in 130 nations. Appealing to the tender strength of women, the IWPG believes that it is the heart of a Mother, a heart full of love that would be able to establish a world full of peace and stability. If the 3.7 billion women of the world unite, they will be definitely able to establish peace and leave a legacy of peace for their children. In order to achieve this goal the IWPG has outlined a road map of creative ideas which include peace education, creating a culture of peace through workshops, lectures and training sessions in schools and colleges, and a conscious campaign to end war and plant peace instead. The former could be achieved by propagating a global law which would declare peace and end of war and violence among nations. The second part of Dr. Mishra's presentation was centered on the activities and projects that were carried out by her as a part of the peace building

ALL INDIA WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

team of Ujjawal Women's Association (UWA). Amongst many peace centric activities she talked about a seminar which was jointly organized by Vivekananda College, UWA and IWPG which was focused on the theme of the creation of heritage of peace through empowerment. With hundreds of young girl students, a good number of NGO participants and journalists, some from as far of places as Germany and Afghanistan, it was discussed as to how women can join their forces to bring peace on the earth individually, socially, and internationally. The Declaration of Peace and Cessation of War (DPCW), signature campaign, as proclaimed by HWPL was introduced here as also the necessity of an institutional strategy which protects the 'global family' from conflicts, wars, and the threat of potential war. Several other activities that were proposed were holding of a *peace bazaar* or other similar activities involving sale of handicrafts, a cultural programme etc. It was also suggested to build up a worldwide and nationwide network for peace to make several peace projects. Several practical and creative ideas were shared here. One suggestion that has emerged from Dr. Mishra's talk is that AIWC could create a Peace Committee / Department within its precincts (with a minimum of three members) and with the help of its branches it can propagate the 'culture of peace' with the help of such activities as outlined above and many more such programs. Thus the role of women as creators of peace could be established globally by empowering them and engaging them in the activities involving creation of peace.

Dr Piyali Debnath Sarkar (UNESCO MGEIP) who was the **seventh speaker** spoke on "**Institutional Roles in Peace Education Outreach.**" She said that strategies for peace should focus on filling the gaps in the education system so that young minds may be moulded positively. Questions must be asked about the effectiveness of the education system in changing the mindset of the present generation. According to her, defence should begin in mind of children who should be trained to make critical enquiry. The critical thinking skills are important to understand the differences, defects and wrongs. It is important to train them to develop compassion and empathy. She highlighted the role of online peace education for developing a culture of peace. She also spoke about the national chapter which is working with grass roots in bringing attitudinal change.

Dr. Anupama Sharan (AIWC Consultant) who was the **eighth** and last speaker, explaining the **rationale of the workshop**, emphasised the need for opinion making in the minds of the populace and students from an early age with regard to respect for the inherent human values permeating the constitutional provisions, especially in its Preamble, Directive Principles of the State Policy, Fundamental Rights and Duties which encompass the entire gamut of non-derogable human rights that are based on principles of justice and equality before the law. She pointed out that in her experience as an educator, she has observed that there is a general atmosphere of disdain for human values due to the influence of hyper materialism that has lead to a hedonistic and selfish culture that seeks instant gratification at all costs in complete disregard of others rights and this has led to rising violence, frustration, impatience and animalistic behaviour; road rage being one of the glaring examples along with mounting instance of isolated rape cases. Moulding attitudes from young age will definitely bring attitudinal change in society. She felt that those who disturb peace on the surface are just disturbed souls trying to find succour in violence, their souls remain pure and if a culture of peace is created through a multi-pronged education for peace which converges the peace modules provided by the stakeholders from all walks of society, a sustainable peace may be realised. Peace in her opinion ought to encompass all aspects of human progress and dignity- education, health, development, security, opportunities, equality, justice, law and order, individuality, environmental and ecological sustainability etc. For this, a continuous effort to escalate peace in the psyche of the people is the need of the hour through all means. In her opinion, it is also important to guard against the vested interests who damage peace in the name of brokering peace in order to retain their relevance and informal power base.

Ms. Kalyani Raj, Hon. Secretary Gen. AIWC who gave the **vote of thanks**, reiterated the importance of holistic peace that should be all encompassing and interconnected the internal with the external in a continuum in order to secure sustainable peace. She then thanked the speakers, the organisers, the participants and invitees, the AIWC members, the AIWC staff, National Gandhi Foundation, IIC and the research consultant for all their contribution, help and support and dedication in making the workshop a great success.

ALL INDIA WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

Recommendations From The Workshop

- ✓ It should be the aim of peace educators, all other stakeholders and the host, AIWC to strive towards promoting “a culture of peace” which is a more holistic target than just maintaining peace which may be negative in nature. The concept of culture of peace ought to be imparted and promoted in the minds of the populace in order bring genuine attitudinal peace.
- ✓ To this end a political platform ought to be created.
- ✓ A concrete action plan ought to be chalked out.
- ✓ An interconnected knowledge network ought to be created to constantly upgrade the modus operandi with the best practices of others.
- ✓ A format for education for peace ought to be developed.
- ✓ A resource centre for public use ought to be developed.
- ✓ Educators for peace ought to be trained.
- ✓ Critical enquiry into root causes that lead to breach of peace ought to be made in all cases of disturbed peace.
- ✓ An attitude of mindfulness, empathy and compassion towards others interests ought to be inculcated.
- ✓ UN Resolution 1325 which defines culture of peace ought to be referred and disseminated along with the Constitutional provisions to the populace.

MAIN IDEAS EMERGING FROM WORKSHOP

- If we do not respect or follow our Constitution, Gender Justice is compromised for we can fall victim to community based assertions that in many cases violate the values contained in Directive Principles of State Policy which aim to empower individuals.
- The new threat of Social Media and Internet have begun contributing to the already existing multiple divides in society by adding the dimension of non legitimate actors into the process of opinion making. They also become instruments and agents of extra-constitutional government / corporate spying or even the dark web.
- Delinking of the three powers prevents autocracy and subversion of democracy. Ways have to be found to manifest the will of the people today and still call it Democracy. Distortion of nationalism or sub-nationalism undercuts democratic processes and subverts it with Vote bank politics.
- Aggressive nationalism justifies arms race and ruthless lynchings and public killings. The arms control lobbies should gain prominence in the larger fold of national policy in order to contain the arms manufacturers and suppliers who promote war.
- National Action Plan can codify Women's Security both in times of armed conflict and peace negotiations as well as define ways to promote pluralism. There is a public debate about foreign policy based on national interest—Chanakya Niti or Bismarckian *real politik*, but how can we have national interests that are diametrically opposed to the fundamental laws of humanism and favor interests that appease certain community or class interests.
- Soaring defense expenditures need justifying in the face of situations which need urgent attention. For example rising social conflicts in Delhi alone due to lack of access to proper sewerage; significant number of deaths due to manual scavenging; underutilization of Nirbhaya Fund; poverty and disease continue to dominate the vote bank politics to keep large swathes of the populace captured.
- Technology transfers hamper the creation of an equitable world based on environmental and ecological peace. There is need for access to land rights for women.

ALL INDIA WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

- Media reporting has become a TRP industry based on advertising revenue rather than giving a voice to disempowered, or providing a Service. Creating simplistic monochromatic news that sidelines healthy reflection and debate but is created to fit into a particular espousal of a national interest.
- We have to understand that we have a composite culture. It is time for us to create a 5th state of Peace Builders who can micro manage the society and prevent conflict.

Follow Up Action Plan

AIWC's follow up action plan, based on the leads brought out in the workshop, comprise the following:

1. Taking up the recommendations seriously and begin a movement for it.
2. Train peace educators and facilitate its branches to incorporate the suggestions of the speakers into moulding their own local education in peace module.
3. Organise and conduct workshops on national level to cull out the best practices from all the states.
4. Lobby with the govt for developing resource centres.
5. Conduct a Youth campaign on Peace which shall comprise of sensitization, brain storming sessions, debates, and social work assignments based on peace education modules for students.
6. Strive to bring attitudinal change in people towards environmental hygiene and pollution prevention, taking the successful models of the twin cities of Surat and Indore.
7. AIWC shall take lead in creating a political platform for peace that shall include health and environmental aspects.
8. AIWC shall build an interconnected network that shall include all stakeholders for a converged knowledge base which can be implemented by all.
9. With the aim of maintaining unity in diversity and securing national integration, AIWC shall strive to educate the masses in the Constitutional provisions like the Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties, Directive Principles of State Policy and the ideals enshrined in the Preamble to the Constitution as well as the UNSC resolutions related to women and Peace.
10. AIWC shall strive to secure local women their rightful place in the peace building efforts and at the peace negotiation tables in order to benefit from their perspectives and efforts.
11. AIWC shall lobby with the government to ratify and implement the UNSC Resolution 1325, the 17 SDGs and Goals 5 and 16 in particular.
