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Introduction to the Special Issue: Transnational Feminism-Contexts, Collaborations, Contestations: Toward A Liveable Planet: Select Papers from the 7th World Conference on Women's Studies

By Bhushan Sharma¹ with K. Bhavana Raj², Tamanna Arora³

The prime goal of feminism is to raise consciousness and bring about transformation for a gender-equitable world. The movement has continuously been broadening its perspective and undergoing transitions, producing ‘cartographies of knowledge and power’ (Alexander and Mohanty 2015). As the creation of feminist epistemology and knowledge exchange is key to this process, The International Institute of Knowledge Management (TIKM) has taken the initiative to organize the World Conference on Women Studies (WCWS) every year.

The 7th WCWS was organized amidst the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic that took place online from the 20th to 22nd May 2021. The theme of the conference—“Transnational Feminisms: Contexts, Collaborations, Contestations: Toward a Liveable Planet”—draws from postcolonial feminist theories and transnational feminist practice that is involved in activist movements across the globe that work together to comprehend the role of gender, race, class, sexuality, and the state in critiquing and resisting patriarchal structures and capitalist powers. Transnational feminists focus on the diverse experiences of women who live within, between, and at the margins of nation-states around the globe; they rise above the boundaries and speak to a wider intersecting force impacting gendered relationships and experiences. According to Margaret A. McLaren (2017), transnational feminism results in ‘decolonizing feminism’ and Sylvanna M. Falcón (2016) calls it a ‘Paradigm for Decolonizing the Practice of Research.’

The theme of the WCWS 2021 offered to guide questions for participants such as ‘What does it mean to create a liveable planet and what is the role of transnational feminisms in this most necessary of all endeavors?’ A liveable planet demands collaboration across disciplines, ideologies, experiences, and worldviews. It requires us to transform the processes that are creating ever-growing inequalities forged by the poisonous nexus of innumerable factors such as late global capitalism, multiple patriarchies, fundamentalist religious ideologies, increasingly authoritarian political systems, population growth, pollution, and the existential threat of climate crisis.

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The conference emphasized the need for an interdisciplinary approach along with radical political movements to bring the necessary complexity to the multiple narratives about how history is made. The presentations made at WCWS 2021 reveal how transnational feminisms intervene in these processes, transforming them into sustainable, equitable, holistic, nurturing societies that value the creative and loving aspects of human cultural diversity. This *JiWS* Special Issue comprises of few select articles that are broad in scope and richly diverse and harnesses a few promises and challenges of transnational feminisms.

Lorraine J. Hayman's paper, "You Cannot Be What You Cannot See: The Lived Experiences of Women Teaching Digital Literacy in Bosnia & Herzegovina and Germany" provides empirical evidence on the lived experiences of eleven female teachers, who are voluntarily teaching digital skills to women. Two research questions are discussed in the paper: "What motivated the teachers in the cases to teach digital literacy?" And "What made teachers in the cases think the digital skills gender divide exists?"

"The Sexual Politics of *Manusmriti*: A Critical Analysis with Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights Perspective," a research article by N.M Naseera and Dr. Moly Kuruvilla discusses the law codes of the ancient legal text *Manusmriti*, that have a significant role in creating the Brahmanic patriarchy and the heteronormative structures in Ancient India. The paper studies the sexual politics of *Manusmriti* from women's sexual and reproductive health rights perspective and analyzes the choice of women for reproduction and their free expression of sexuality in India are not free from religious or cultural beliefs.

Devina Neogi's article, "Women's Struggle in Kashmir Militancy War" underlines that Kashmir has been a hotbed of violence since India's independence. For the past 51 years, there has been an intense conflict between the locals of Kashmir and India's Military Force trying to curb militancy. The researcher attempts to understand the struggle of women during these turbulent times in Kashmir by a critical analysis of reported incidents and by reviewing relevant literature.

"Rethinking Gender in Translation", a research article by Khaoula Jaoudi discusses translation as a means by which we can cross borders, to move towards a common liveable world of coexistence and transnationality. The scholar exploits the intersection between feminism and translation and how feminist translation can give birth to reformist recreations of an original text that is dominantly masculine. The article discusses women's translation of the sacred using comparativism; specifically comparing two feminist translations of the Quran.

Jacinta Torres Pueyo's article, "Moms Too Soon: Status and Challenges of Teenage Mothers- Implications for Extension" discusses teenage pregnancy that affects girls as young as 14 and who are either in school or out of school. The researcher studies lived experiences of young mothers and the challenges faced by them. It is recommended that results may be translated into an extension program that will benefit the young people of the University.

Bhushan Sharma's article, "Dalit Women: Narratives of Vulnerability, Violence, and a Culture of Impunity" brings forth the various factors, which make women of the Dalit community vulnerable to violence. She explores the writings of three Dalit women: P. Sivakami's *The Grip of Change*, Bama's *Sangati*, and Meena Kandasamy's poetry anthology *Touch* to help us to gain insight into the violent world of the women, and the study reveals the triple oppression of caste, class, and gender.

Astrid Natasha O. Ocampo and Joann P. Binondo's article, "Exploring Gender Dynamics in Rural Tuna Fishing Communities in Lagonoy Gulf, Philippines" elucidates the invisibility of women in the rural Tuna Fishing Communities in the area. It further highlights the need to provide women with the required capital and training to have their part in income generation. The paper

also emphasizes the need for sectoral representation of women in local decision-making and the reforms to safeguard women's roles in the tuna value chain/marketing.

Yamini Virginia John and Dr. Moly Kuruvilla in the paper, "Are the Dispossessed More Battered" examine the linkage between intimate partner domestic violence and the ownership of property among women in 14 districts of Kerala, a southern Indian state. The scholar conducts interviews with the Women Protection Officers of Kerala (WPOs), who serve as resourceful informants. The study reveals that women who manage to hold on to their assets are found to overcome and recuperate from domestic violence and autonomous ownership of these assets facilitated a boost to their self-esteem and thereby their recovery.

The contributions to this *JWS* Special Issue witness and underline practices of women's voices/movements around the world and gender justice across national boundaries, which in turn contribute to the transnational social change processes.

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