

जैसे-जैसे हम बाह्य रूपों की विविधता में उलझते जाते हैं, वैसे-वैसे उनके मूलगत जीवन को भूलते जाते हैं। बालक स्थूल विविधता से विशेष परिचित नहीं होता, इसी से वह केवल जीवन को पहचानता है। जहाँ जीवन से स्नेह-सद्भाव की किरणें फूटती जान पड़ती हैं, वहाँ वह व्यक्ति विषम रेखाओं की उपेक्षा कर डालता है और जहाँ द्वेष, घृणा आदि के धूम से जीवन ढका रहता है, वहाँ वह बाह्य सामंजस्य को भी ग्रहण कर पाता।

संसार के मानव-समुदाय में वही व्यक्ति स्थान और सम्मान पा सकता है, वही जीवित कहा जा सकता है जिसके हृदय और मस्तिष्क ने समुचित विकास पाया हो और जो अपने व्यक्तित्व द्वारा मनुष्य समाज से रागात्मक के अतिरिक्त बौद्धिक संबंध भी स्थापित कर सकने में समर्थ हो। एक स्वतंत्र व्यक्तित्व के विकास की सबको आवश्यकता है। कारण, बिना इसके न मनुष्य अपनी इच्छा-शक्ति और संकल्प को अपना कह सकता है और न अपने किसी कार्य को न्याय-अन्याय की तुला पर तोल सकता है।

इस समय हमारे समाज में केवल दो प्रकार की स्त्रियाँ मिलेंगी- एक वे जिन्हें इसका ज्ञान ही नहीं है कि कव'र्ष' गीए क'ि वस्तुतम' नवस मुदायक'ीस दस्यह'ैअ'रउ नका'र्ष' गीए'ेसास् वतंत्र व्यक्तित्व है जिसके विकास से समाज का उत्कर्ष और संकीर्णता से आकर्ष संभव है; दूसरी वे जो पुरुषों की समता करने के लिए उन्हीं के दृष्टिकोण से संसार को देखने में, उन्हीं के गुणावगुणों का अनुकरण करने में जीवन के चरम लक्ष्य की प्राप्ति समझती हैं। सारांश यह कि एक ओर अर्थहीन अनुसरण है तो दूसरी ओर अनर्थमय अनुकरण और यह दोनों प्रयत्न समाज की शृंखला को शिथिल तथा व्यक्तिगत बंधनों को सुदृढ़ और संकुचित करते जा रहे हैं।

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एन सी ई आर टी
NCERT

राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक अनुसंधान और प्रशिक्षण परिषद्
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING

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NCERT

Memorial Lecture Series



1907-1987

Mahadevi Verma
Second Memorial Lecture - 2009

BY KALPANA SHARMA

Mahadevi Verma
Second Memorial Lecture – 2009



1907-1987

NCERT

MEMORIAL LECTURE SERIES

Mahadevi Verma Second Memorial Lecture

By Kalpana Sharma

at

Regional Institute of Education, Bhopal

5 January 2009

विद्यया ऽ मृतमश्नुते



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OUR OBJECTIVES

The National Council of Educational Research Training (NCERT) is an apex organisation, assisting and advising the Central and State Governments by undertaking research, survey, and development, training and extension activities for all stages of school and teacher education.

One of the objectives of the Council is to act as a clearing house and disseminator of ideas relating to school and teacher education. We have initiated the Memorial Lecture Series in order to fulfil this role and to commemorate the life and work of great educational thinkers. Our aim is to strive to raise the level of public awareness about the seminal contributions made in the field of education by eminent men and women of India. We expect that such awareness will set off a chain of discourse and discussion. This, we hope, will make education a lively subject of inquiry while simultaneously encouraging a sustained public engagement with this important domain of national life.

The memorial lecture series covers public lectures commemorating the life and work of nine eminent Indian educational thinkers and practitioners.

Title and Venue of Memorial Lecture Series

Title	Venue
Gijubhai Badheka Memorial Lecture	Madras Institute of Development Studies, Chennai
Rabindranath Tagore Memorial Lecture	Regional Institute of Education, Bhubaneswar
Zakir Hussain Memorial Lecture	Regional Institute of Education, Mysore
Mahadevi Verma Memorial Lecture	Regional Institute of Education, Bhopal
B.M. Pugh Memorial Lecture	North East Regional Institute of Education Shillong
Savitri Phule Memorial Lecture	SNDT Women's College, Marine Lines, Mumbai
Marjorie Sykes Memorial Lecture	Regional Institute of Education, Ajmer

Sri Aurobindo Memorial Lectures	SNDT Women's College, Marine Lines Mumbai
Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Lecture	Regional Institute of Education, Ajmer

We invite persons of eminence from academia and public life to deliver these lectures in English or any other Indian language. Our intention is to reach a large audiences consisting in particular of teachers, students, parents, writers, artists, NGOs, government servants and members of local communities.

The Annexure (Memorial Lectures 2007-2008) provides a summary of the lectures organised in the year 2007-08.

In due course the lectures will be made available on Compact Discs (CDs) and in the form of printed booklets in languages other than English or Hindi in which it is originally delivered for wider dissemination. Each booklet consists of two sections : Section one highlights the purpose of the memorial lectures and provides a brief sketch of the life and work of the concerned educational thinker and Section two gives the lectures in full along with a brief background of the speaker.

Section 1 in this booklet has been contributed by Dr. Shankar Sharan, faculty in the Department of Educational Research and Policy Perspective, at NCERT. In this section the writer highlights how Mahadevi Verma known as a great poetess was also a teacher by profession. He presents briefly her educational insights on philosophy of education and a comparative of the Indian and Western understanding of it, role of language, place of creative literature in curricula, problems of girls education, circumstances of unemployed youth and the poverty of modern Indian intellectuals enamoured with Western thoughts and phraseology. He draws attention to the fact that the observations made by Mahadevi Verma on all these issues are relevant to our current educational discourse.

Ms. Kalpana Sharma, is delivering the second Mahadevi Verma Memorial Lecture on 5 January 2009 at the Regional Institute of Education, Bhopal. Kalpana Sharma

is an independent journalist, columnist and media consultant based in Mumbai. In over three decades as a full-time journalist she was, until recently, Deputy Editor and Chief of Bureau of *The Hindu* in Mumbai. Her special areas of interest are environmental and developmental issues and she follows and comments on urban issues, especially in the context of Mumbai's development.

The theme of her lecture is *Can the media teach us anything?* In the wake of the terror attacks in Mumbai, on 26 November, 2008 she focuses on the importance of the media at times of such a crisis. She urges us to question: 'Should not the media as a whole, and the electronic media in particular, pause and consider the direction in which it is going?' She elaborates and further questions, "does it not have a responsibility towards its viewers, how is it shaping perceptions, is it more concerned about accuracy or about popularity, and how can it ensure that at times of crisis it acts as a conveyor of information and not panic?" She also highlights the need for the media to consider the impact of the depiction of violent events on young minds. There is a strong need for the media to realise its responsibilities and in her words, "the best way some such issues can be addressed is by internal guidelines developed by the media with the help of civil society representatives – including parents and teachers, as has happened in many other countries. We certainly do not need censorship or government control. But we do need to develop the tools of sensitivity and sobriety along with the awareness of the power we have to influence young minds."

We hope these lecture series will be of use to our audiences as well as the public in and outside the country in general.

I acknowledge the contribution of Ms Shadab Subhan, Junior Project Fellow for helping me with the finalisation of this manuscript.

Anupam Ahuja
Convenor

SECTION 1
ON MAHADEVI VERMA
MAHADEVI VERMA ON EDUCATION

SHANKAR SHARAN¹

Today's graduate has to think ... those who have all the worldly facilities want our life values. Why should those who already have such values consider themselves poor?

(Mahadevi Verma)

Mahadevi believed that a person is always a student in the realm of thought and of feelings. If not, then somewhere he must have closed the door of his heart and mind. She was renowned as a poetess, but in fact, she devoted a lot of time during her life to education and teaching. She had established the *Prayag Mahila Vidyapeeth*, which she served for as long as she could. Few people know that her devotion to education was a conscious choice as she believed that educational institutions built the nation and some of her great contemporaries have noted that. Sachchidanand Vatsyayan 'Agyeya' drew attention to the fact that according to Mahadevi, her poetry was the reflection of her moments of leisure and 'she would devote the rest of her life to the field of education, where it was required.'²

There are many definitions of '*Vidya*' (knowledge/ education) in Indian literature. What Mahadevi liked the most was '*Sa Vidya Ya Vimuktye*' – which means 'education is that which liberates'. She noted that in the past, Indian scholars had a very special regard for education and that is why it was always kept under state control.

Analysing education Mahadevi described two aspects of it: internal texture and external structure. The perceptible subject and its communication comprise the

1. Dr Shankar Sharan is a Lecturer in the Department of Educational Research and Policy Perspective at NCERT, New Delhi.

2. Agyeya, "Adhunik Kavi: Mahadevi Varma" in Trishanku (Surya Prakashan Mandir; 1973), p. 117

internal texture, while the *Guru* (the teacher), the disciple, curriculum and surroundings have a place in the external structure. All these six elements make up "the lotus of education" with all the six petals tied together carefully by language, the lack of which may cause these petals to scatter or fall off.

She considered education to be "the heart of society", which like purified blood, pumps new talent into administration, science, arts and literature, and into society, by and large. If new blood infused into the system by education is healthy, the system would, as a consequence, remain healthy and active. But "if germs of disease enter the system, all spheres would be fatally affected." How painfully true this statement is, can be seen today, in our country.

According to Mahadevi, ancient Indian thinkers planned education carefully since they believed that it played a role in regulating un-chiselled animal instincts in human beings, and shaped human potential. Therefore, neglecting education could take human society back to barbarism. Unfortunately, many countries in the world seem to aptly reflect this fact, today.

Only in this backdrop can it be understood as to why Mahadevi Verma was against drawing divisive lines between tradition and modernity in education. She had pointed out that we have misled ourselves by devaluing the great achievements of our past as the precondition of our future progress. "Only by incorporating the lines of tradition, which carry the history of human progress in the condition of the new era, can we add up new links in the century's long golden chain of development, and not by breaking off with them."³ Only plants, having been rooted in their own soil, can tolerate hot or cold gusts of wind coming from any side. "If they leave the base of their soil, neither the life giving breeze of *Malaya* nor the divine water of rain can keep them alive." The same thing was emphasised by Rabindranath Thakur when he said that emancipation from the bondage of the soil is no freedom for the tree.

3. Mahadevi Verma, "Siksha ka Uddeshya" in *Mere Priya Sambhashan* (New Delhi: National Publishing House, 1986), p. 3

That is why Mahadevi had warned our modernist intellectuals:

Due to the disconnect with the previous achievements of a society, "many cultures have vanished, and this fact can be verified from history." She was not oblivious to the fact that in the process of transmitting the past into present, sometimes unnecessary elements have also come to be preserved along with the valuable ones. In India's case, one more unfortunate fact is that the country had to suffer long periods of foreign subjugation, during which, the preservation of culture was more necessary than choosing valuable elements over those that were worthless. Therefore, it may have happened sometimes that 'a precious element was lost and a useless element was preserved'. However, that is not a matter of serious concern because, according to Mahadevi, in every period only those values last which prove their worth under all circumstances.

Mahadevi had felt from her long educational experience that communicating knowledge was more difficult than acquiring it. Therefore, the sphere of education was a twofold, mysterious laboratory, where one had to provide ample opportunity for the independent development of a student's inner world and of his personality and also help him connect harmoniously with the outer world. This is why Indian thinkers always felt that it was necessary to make the objectives of education clearer by classifying *Vidya* into *Para* and *Apara*, that is, for the benefit of others and valuable in itself. *Para* is a medium of self enlightenment while *Apara* is the means of its development under social circumstances.⁴

On education, Mahadevi's thoughts are quite similar to world famous educationist Leo Tolstoy. Both believed that education could be called 'preparation for life' only in its limited sense, and that, in its broader sense, it would be the ultimate goal of life. Tolstoy had emphasised that there was no such thing as 'the final goal of education'. Rather, it was the law of perpetual evolution that helped and directed real education. Therefore, by its very nature, the education of a man never ends or finishes forever.

4. Mahadevi Verma, "Matribhumi Devobhava" in *Mere Priya Sambhashan*, above, p.13

We must understand that if these classical references to education are overlooked or ignored, a serious disruption takes place in a given society. If education, for instance, is taken as beneficial only for worldly development, not only does it become one-sided, its real meaning is also lost. Such an education becomes a resultless activity with a meaningless preparation for life. It results in producing various diseases or malaises, which come to ail society. Therefore, considering one's education as only a means of personal progress and prosperity is not only harmful for the country and for society, it ultimately makes one 'a feeble person, who is devoid of self-perception'.

For Mahadevi Verma these were not idealist talks; these were practical facts about education. If proper care was not taken, concrete problems could arise, irrespective of whether the reasons for these problems could be identified. "From the beginning till the end, children are usually neither given moral education nor is any attention paid to building their character," she observed. This is why we shall find few young men "whose life contains the values of principles, courage, indomitable bravery and sense of respect and reverence for women."

According to Mahadevi, a person is "undeveloped" during childhood and "the question of the goal of his education is left unattended". In his adolescence, he is in his formative years. So the final goal - his education - is not considered. But when a youth arrives at the entrance of active life and faces his duties on his own with an unhealthy body and a frustrated mind, a critical situation arises for both him and for society. In a sense, this crisis has become severe in our country today.

It saddened Mahadevi to see that India had to suffer prolonged periods of defeat at the hands of foreigners:

And in this cursed voyage, it lost a valuable portion of life, and that was the philosophy of education. It remains undisputed that a victor is never satisfied with

*having merely the governing rights over the country he has defeated. He wants cultural victory as well over the conquered, for which the simplest and surest medium is a domination on education. Therefore, the objectives of education in a country ruled by foreigners can't be the same as in a self-governed country.*⁵

It is an irony that in independent India, its effective intelligentsia was not ready to understand this fact, let alone take requisite measures to counter it! But the fact remains that Mahadevi's views on education were fully in accordance with those of nationalist visionaries such as Rabindranath Thakur, Swami Vivekananda, Shri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi. Her view clearly asserted that, "a self governed nation has to build able heirs for its valuable treasury of culture, society and nation, while the rulers of an enslaved country need only the helpers among the ruled people so as to just maintain the *status quo*. It's not surprising, therefore, if in both cases, the objectives of education were quite different, functionally as well with results."

According to Mahadevi, only in a free country was such an evolution of a future citizen useful, where qualities such as self-esteem, a sense of national identity, and the will to struggle against injustice were developed. Under foreign domination, on the contrary, the development of a new generation of governed subjects was "more threatening than weapons" for the ruling class. Since so far, we haven't changed the inferior education system provided by the colonial rulers, our field of education is disturbed, uncertain and disruptive. Free society and subjugated education are not coherent with each other and there is no way for us to move on without solving this contradiction.

Mahadevi also took note of the world scenario in so far as education was concerned. Analysing the extensive rebellion amongst students here and there, she underlined that in countries where the body of a citizen was free but his soul was enchained, and where soul was free but the body was in rigorous subjugation, education was at the

5. Mahadevi Verma, "Siksha ka Uddeshya" in *Mere Priya Sambhashan*, above, p. 6

centre of wild activity. From this she inferred that something new was taking birth in the inner depths of human consciousness, and that the pain was making the new generation restless. This restlessness was not only the result of a lack of material comfort. If that had been the case, dissent among students of materially prosperous countries like the United States of America wouldn't have been there.

In Mahadevi's view, the world has become unified due to the development of science. However, political conflicts are multiplying divisions among the people. This is a contradictory situation, which can be brought to order only by inducing a sense of higher objective of life. On the other hand, in India, internal and external conditions of the students are so disrupted that to infuse creativity in them is a tough task. The generation born in independent India has altogether different hopes and ambitions. But the last generation, despite being independent now, has yet not got freedom from mental subjugation, nor did it so far even feel it necessary to get it.⁶ This disorder has become a major obstacle in the full-fledged development of our student-class. Our students and educational scenario are in such a condition that although everything is there: education, training and various modes of communication, " what would be trained we don't know yet. There are no books on this, as such things are not in the purview of books. It is in our scriptures, in our philosophy, in our *dharma*.⁷ That is, it is in those things which we have presumed necessary to forget completely.

Finding no means of livelihood after completing education, or being instigation by political parties for various reasons are also causes of dissent amongst students. However, it should be understood that alteration of life's values and beliefs is also disturbing them. Without comprehending the goal of their education, they pass

6. This particular thought is recurring in Mahadevi's writings and speeches. Evidently she gave it much importance. She mentioned it also in her significant speech "*Sahitya, Samskriti aur Shasan*" delivered sometime in the Legislative Council of Uttar Pradesh.

7. Mahadevi Verma, '*Matribhumi Devobhava*' in *Mere Priya Sambhashan*, above, p. 14

through schools, colleges and universities, and never know where they would land. 'Be it primary or higher, our education system has not paid attention to the overall development of a human being'.

Those who are fortunate find jobs, while others feel that spending the golden years of their youth in colleges and universities is a meaningless waste of their time. But no thought is being given to this. It is the same for a self-governed society. Priceless years of its youth are being destroyed and it is watching silently, unable to think of requisite corrective measures. We have been witnessing that in the hope of decent jobs, millions of youth are engaged in a hopeless rat-race. Thus, having no livelihood solutions, even after completing education, and themselves being blamed by society for this condition, causes confusion among students. Some politicians exploit this state of students for their own selfish ends.

According to Mahadevi, if a student could get education that suits his talent and interest, he would not feel the need to involve himself in undue political activity. 'This question will arise not in student life. It will come to the fore only when he attains a certain amount of maturity, and when he is called upon to perform his social duty. Only then will it benefit society'. If a student who has an interest in science, art or literature finds the desired path for his creative talent to evolve and bloom, he would perhaps know that entering active politics at the wrong time would amount to a misuse of his time. Mahadevi had also advised those active in politics against using the student class as weapon, and asked them to change their ways in the greater interest of society. 'Sects of religion do not scare me but sects of politics do scare me', she said.

However, in Mahadevi's view, the most difficult problem regarding education is related to its inner nature and its medium. It is self evident that only the mother-tongue can be the appropriate medium of education for any child. But from the psychological point of view, the question of language is also concerned with culture and a sense of

national identity, especially for a country like India which has been subjugated as a nation despite having a great culture. Even in utility, the English language proves to be an obstruction, as most students fail in it and even those who do not fail, neither comprehend any subject through it nor become capable of expressing themselves fully. This situation persists even today, and we should be apprised of it. Some people may benefit from the predominance of the English medium in our education system but the importance accorded to English builds an inferiority complex and intellectual dumbness in our otherwise able youth. This fact is never taken into account. Mahadevi reminds us that the vision of our great thinkers and seers has helped us so far to counter the vagaries of subjugation, and has kept the path from being lost in darkness. "Language has been the flame of lamp for that light. *Pavakanaah Saraswati*."⁸

Being a sensitive teacher, Mahadevi felt that due to the deep relationship of language with human sensitivities, with perceptions and feelings, the desired development of a student becomes impossible due to the burden of English language. "Nothing can be more miserable for a thinking person than his inability to express himself and when this state of mind gets reflected in activity, it can only produce destructive tendency." This conclusion based on experience was not only an analysis but a warning too, ignoring which, we have not done the right thing. Mahadevi also tried to persuade those intellectuals and educationists of our country who believe that certain colonial legacies cannot be done away with. The educational framework given by the foreign rulers "has no strength to bestow humanism", she explained. Not only has a foreign language has been the medium of our education for a long time, it has also become for some of us, a proof of being erudite and highly cultured. Therefore, it is no wonder that many of us shudder at the thought of living without it. *Always recalling death as the ultimate fate of human beings, no treatment would seem necessary to an ailing person. So,*

8. Mahadevi Verma, "Bhasha ka Prashna" in *Mere Priya Sambhashan*, above, p. 22

to fulfil our national life the inner world of our nation must be made free. This work is hard and demands special efforts, as the chain binding the soul is stronger than the chains tying the body.⁹

Due to her broad-based vision, Mahadevi tried to make our intelligentsia understand that the problems faced by countries with ancient cultures used to be altogether different. Those having young civilizations did not have much to lose or change. And even if they changed, there was hardly anything to fear. But countries with ancient cultures risk great loss in any reckless change. In a misplaced enthusiasm for modernisation or radical transformation, if we lose our valuable heritage, it would be a great loss not only for the particular country but for all humanity. Thus, if a colonial legacy has become a fetter in the natural development of millions of Indians then saying that it cannot be helped is plain defeatism. In the very inspiring words of Mahadevi, "A river that springs from the heart of the Himalayas, whether a small current or a big one, does never ask for the way from the rocks. Has it ever asked to make banks of gold, silver or marble for it? It never said so. Crossing the mountains it moves on overtaking everything with a gusty speed and it is her principle to make her own banks." Similarly, our thoughtful people must build the path on which our nation could overcome the mental subjugation of centuries, not just the elite but every person in the country. And, this work cannot be accomplished by imitating others medium and models.

Therefore, the objective of our education must be to make the natural relationship with our culture lively. Only material prosperity and economic development cannot be the objective of education. If economic development could not be coordinated with the evolvement of the self, it would become an ugly phenomenon. "If someone asks you to give Ganga-Yamuna in exchange to get you to Mars, you would never agree. There is a reason: we are made of this land, we have a soulful relationship with it. You can

9. Mahadevi Verma, "Hamara Desh aur Rashtrabhasha" in *Mere Priya Sambhashan*, above, p.26

harmonise its message with science, but cannot leave it for science."¹⁰ It would be fatal to make merely personal economic advancement the sole goal of anyone's education. That would lead to a blind alley. This can be appreciated by looking carefully at the situation of the so-called developed countries. That kind of selfish goal creates 'mental unemployment', which is as miserable as unemployment itself. Not only has higher education, 'transformed itself into absolute dissatisfaction with life', it has sometimes become merely 'a means to get the necessary amenities for a comfortable life.'

Mahadevi believed that Indian students have the strength to face the challenges of the present times, and contribute significantly. 'If they recognise their inner strengths, then all doors would open automatically.' But for this to happen, one should have self-control over one's life. If our life is not disciplined or if we do not lead a balanced life, we can't get inner strength. Giving the example of electricity, Mahadevi explained that electricity is everywhere: in the sky, in the earth and in every atom; but you can't light a single lamp from it. Light would not get activated until it is collected first in a powerhouse which is a centre, and then and only then can the whole city be illuminated. "A similar process takes place in one's heart. If you concentrate or focus and hold your full strength, physical power, inner power, faith, belief and the power of your soul, and consider the strength you have, all dark clouds could go away. All the obstacles coming your way will be removed." She believed that if today's student recognises his latent strength, the disintegration of society could be contained and that social life would be free from all disparity. But if he fails to understand his duty, the entire nation could become weak and lost.¹¹

Mahadevi had a profound thought on the role of creative literature in education. Usually, we make literature a small part of the study of a language and not an essential part of education in general. Mahadevi was of the view that for every student, literature must have a very important place

10. Mahadevi Verma, "*Matribhumi Devobhava*" in *Mere Priya Sambhashan*, above, p.15

11. *Ibid*, p. 17

in his/her education. She considered it to be 'a chemical capable of removing the discrepancies of life.' Putting it in the perspective of history, she reminded us that the command of armed force creates a relationship of a conqueror and the conquered between two countries, while the influence of literature always bring harmony between two countries. Therefore, "We have to give such importance to literature and culture in education that a student may get the message of unity, fraternity or brotherhood of human beings and ultimately would become a more complete person."

Those who are familiar with the writings of Mahadevi Verma, knows the value of her thoughts on the status of women and their education. The great Hindi poet (*Maharani*) Nirala wrote this about Mahadevi: "Until now, through her, thousands of girl students have been benefited and become dignified." And in the field of education, "Mahadevi is greater than Sarojini Naidu. No doubt, her ideal in Hindi is greater than many great men."¹² Mahadevi had studied the contribution of great women scholars of ancient India and emphasised on learning from them. She did research on the great tradition of women education and the high status of women in social life as existed in our country. According to Mahadevi, in Indian tradition "there has been co-education with common methods for teaching. On completion of study, women graduates were involved in teaching also." It continued till 7-8th centuries. But then during the period of successive foreign rules many things changed in our country.

To bring about the required transformation in the life of women was one of her main concerns. According to her, Indian women are presently 'queens of the empire of ignorance.' On the other hand, the modern education currently being imparted to them takes away some good qualities from many young women. "We can't say easily about a girl student that she is an inquisitive student, because she comes out of her home like an unrestrained butterfly, far from the reality and sensitivity of life, and

12. Surya Kant Tripathi 'Nirala', "Mahadevi ke Janma-Divas Par" in *Chayan: Nibandh Sangraha*, (New Delhi: Rajkamal Prakashan, 1981) pp. 116, 117

does not mind becoming the centre of attraction of others."¹³ Therefore, we may find 'qualities like simplicity and humility, in illiterate women' but almost all the so-called literate women hardly have more than the ability to recognise letters and read some novels in exchange of giving up all their qualities'. The main reason for this sorry state, according to Mahadevi, is imparting education by the wrong kind of teachers. "If our children learn and get education under the guidance of such persons who do not have character and principles, who carry inherent weakness out of their own poor education and character, all these weaknesses would also affect the students." Mahadevi felt sad that we do not care to have even those qualities in our teachers, which we want to see in those people who perform ordinary jobs:

Those teachers responsible for building the future of girls, the mothers of coming generations; our lackluster attitude towards them is an unforgivable fault. To provide the means for country-specific, society-specific and culture-specific mental development is true education by which a person feels harmony in his life and makes it useful for others too. This important task is not such that can be performed by a person ignorant of a distinct culture and one who is frivolous and weak in character.¹⁴

Mahadevi was firm in her view that copying western societies was harmful for the upliftment of women here. Further, mechanical equality with men ultimately makes women more incapable and dependent. And, those educated men, who are 'weak, helpless and useless degree holders', should never be the ideals of women. Abandoning their natural qualities and unsuccessfully imitating men can lead educated women nowhere.¹⁵ Whatever seems on the surface, in fact, such women lose social and personal values. So, if we follow "such suicidal approaches of the

13. Mahadevi Verma, "Hamari Samasyayein: 2" in *Shrinkhala ki Kadiya*, (New Delhi: Radhakrishna, 1995), p. 117

14. Mahadevi Verma, "Hamari Samasyayein: 1" in *Shrinkhala ki Kadiya*, above, pp. 106-07

15. To understand in detail Mahadevi's thought on the situation, sorrows and the way to solve the problems before Indian women her book *Shrinkhala ki Kadiya* is most valuable. All the essays collected in this book centre on this issue.

western world, it would be as ridiculous as cutting one's feet to copy a disabled person."¹⁶ Basically, western approaches are hedonistic. Hence, relationships between men and women generally may not rise above such limitations even though the social courtesies of western societies may appear praiseworthy. Therefore, according to Mahadevi, if our women follow the western model of freedom, it will lead to other forms of distortions and abuses, not towards harmony, which is the life of a society.

Finally, Mahadevi had also assessed the Indian intellectual scenario in connection with the present education system. She noted that the present education system, "is not a bridge to bring us nearer but has become a big gulf to divide us, which our selfishness is widening day by day."¹⁷ This is an education after receiving we try to become persons whom a common man hesitates to approach. It is natural, then, that this type of education transforms our intellectuals into a hi-fi group who neither connect with the Indian people nor do the people feel comfortable mixing with them. Rather, some intellectuals are such, 'in whom education has turned into poison like the drops of *Swati* (*nakshatra*) changes in the mouth of a snake.'

This is why the intellectuals, who consider themselves so very important, are actually extremely incapable of contributing to the interest of the country. Most of them live and grow up with an intellectual inferiority complex, "*whose even totally a lame dream, and who believe that just by attaching some foreign feathers, they have turned into messengers of heaven. Even their ugliest ideals, because they are in a western moulding, are identified as nothing more than being just pretty. Even their shoddiest views, with some foreign patches here and there, are taken to reign in the world of thought.*"¹⁸ Women intellectuals too, are the same. "As a pot of cold water lying near hot

16. Mahadevi Verma, "*Navin Dashak mein Mahilaon ka Sthan*" in *Mere Priya Sambhashan*, above, p.62

17. Mahadevi Verma, "Hamari Samasyayein: I" in *Shrinkhala ki Kadiya*, above, p. 103

18. Mahadevi Verma, "*Chintan ke Kuchh Kshar*" in *Deepshikha* (Allahabad: Bharti Bhandar, Samvat 2022 Vikrami), p. 41

water loses its cool unknowingly, similarly, educated women have silently adopted the weaknesses of men and come to visualise this condition as the reflective of success."¹⁹ That is why most women intellectuals also give more importance to meaningless mental exercises than the simple and truthful feelings of the people. They even take individual confusions as some valuable formulations, publicise it and make selfish enterprises their petty 'knowledge business'.

Mahadevi observed sadly that in such intellectuals, the outlines of culture are found broken and that the images of life are incomplete. For this reason, she tried to inspire us to be attached to our cultural roots, although with an independent mind, and find our way in a new era. Mahadevi's great contribution to education, culture and literature is comparable to any thinker of modern India. This doesn't pertain only to the subject of women education, to which Mahadevi devoted a lot of effort during her whole life to everything she had taken up to write and speak about. Her views send us valuable messages even till this very day:

*Why I ask this night of separation,
how much passed or remained?
Moments echo and the particles sing,
whenever they this way unwillingly come,
writing self-sacrificing for them
remained I an indelible message!*

19. Ibid, p. 104

SECTION 2
MAHADEVI VERMA
MEMORIAL LECTURE

THEME: CAN THE MEDIA TEACH US ANYTHING?

Aspects of the talk to be delivered by
Ms. Kalpana Sharma

ABSTRACT

I visited a government primary and middle school in a village in South Bihar recently. Over 500 students, from Class I to VIII, had just four teachers to instruct them. It is anybody's guess what these children will learn during their school hours. Once school ends, they return to their homes where there is usually no electricity at night. Hence, what they learn is what they see in the daytime.

In Mumbai, in an urban slum, children go to a municipal school. There too the teaching is often inadequate. But at night, they return to their cramped homes where the television is blaring. Their "learning", so to speak, continues even after they leave the confines of their school. But is the quality of what they learn any better than the children in a Bihar village without electricity and therefore without television?

In an age of technology, what are the sources of learning for our children? No more is the schoolroom – the sole source of knowledge. In fact it has never been so. The so-called unlettered are often the most knowledgeable and wise about things that books can never teach. They have a wisdom that surpasses academic learning.

So we acknowledge that learning is not just book learning. But these days, knowledge gained from connection with nature and the outdoors, for instance, has been replaced by all kinds of media – Television and the

Internet. It's interesting to assess what exactly children are learning from these visual and interactive media and whether this improves the quality of learning or diminishes it.

Take television, the very nature of this media suggests passivity. You watch and listen and absorb the messages beamed at you. You can, of course, dismiss what you see and hear. But the medium has a seductive and subversive impact, often difficult to quantify.

In the West, for instance, several studies have tried to link violence depicted on television to children's attitudes towards violence. Do constant images of violence provoke aggression or do they make people hate violence? Do they make us indifferent to violence? Will children try and copy the violence they see on screen? These are some of the questions raised in these studies. We need to ask these questions in the Indian context to assess how much, in the last decade, has the visual media led to indifference, or endorsement, of violence as a way to make a point, to settle a score, to seek revenge.

I am not an expert on this subject. I have looked at the impact of media on attitudes towards women and how the media tackles women's issues. But being a media practitioner, I think I should be thinking about the messages the media is sending out, particularly to children. Do they learn anything? Are they unlearning what they are taught in school, or by their parents? Is there any role for civic society engagement with the media on this issue?

These are some of the issues I want to address today as I believe they should concern all of us - parents, teachers and media practitioners.

CAN THE MEDIA TEACH US ANYTHING?

When I began thinking about what I would say today, I had planned a talk connecting the messages that the media sends out to what people, and children in particular, learn or unlearn from them.

Since then Wednesday, 26 November, 2008 happened in Mumbai, the city where I live. Over the next 60 hours, urban war was brought into our homes. As television beamed images of the siege of the two hotels, the Taj Mahal and the Oberoi-Trident, and of the little known Jewish centre at Nariman House, women, men, children were rooted to the spot. They could not move. They watched in horror and fascination as men in different types of uniforms took on what first appeared to be an inestimable number of gunmen in these three locations.

Meanwhile, the news filtered in that dozens of ordinary men and women, people peacefully waiting for their long-distance trains at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, a real icon for a city where the majority depend on public transport, had been mowed down by these men with guns, these men that we now know were terrorists out to send a bloody and terrifying message not just to Mumbai but to the rest of India, and indeed to the rest of the world. We also know now that out of the 172 killed over those three dark nights and two days, the majority, 58 in all, were actually killed in the first few minutes of the terror strike at CST. There were no commandos or army or navy to save these very ordinary men and women. A few brave Mumbai policemen with their outdated weaponry tried to intervene, and ended up dead. The only images of the CST massacre that we saw the next day were of the platforms with bloodstains and abandoned luggage. It is only much later after the electronic media had pulled itself away from the two hotels that the stories from CST began to be heard. Print media, however, had already begun reporting on this tragedy at the train station the very next day.

It is now more than a month since this unprecedented terror strike in Mumbai people have written and spoken, about it. There has been analysis. Finger pointing. And political repercussions.

Some have claimed that this one incident will prove to be a "defining moment" in our politics. Others, who are more cynical, believe that this too shall pass as we move

back to business as usual, perhaps with a few additional inconveniences in the form of tighter security checks.

What 26 November will define, amongst other things like the quality of governance, is the importance of the media at times of such a crisis. One hopes it will define how the media handles such a crisis without adding to the panic and tension. It will also define how the media can direct, or rather misdirect, anger and popular sentiment when a crisis of this nature ends.

As we all know, the minute-by-minute coverage of the 60-hour siege and gun battle in Mumbai was unprecedented. Never before have television cameras conveyed to an entire nation a terror strike continuously over such a long period. The English news channels did not even take commercial breaks for the first 48 hours.

What was the impact of the sights and sounds that we heard over those hours? How did the interpretation of what was going on by TV reporters and anchors govern what we thought?

We need to consider these and other questions not just because the electronic media, and particularly 24-hour news channels, is a powerful medium but also because the images, the choice of voices heard on this media, the subtle and not-so-subtle subtexts determine attitudes of a listening and viewing public. The impact has also to be seen in terms of how it influences young people, including children, whether it makes them question violence or endorse it, whether it helps them to understand the history that lies behind such events or see them in isolation, whether it encourages responsibility or just rage.

In the book "Bosnia By Television"¹, the televised war in Bosnia has been analysed by several journalists. In his essay, "War Without End? Bloody Bosnia Season on Channel Four", Ian Brough-Williams begins his essay with the following quote that is eerily relevant today:

"Watching the news, we come to feel not only that the world is blowing up, but that it does so for no reason, that its ongoing history is nothing more than a series of

1. Bosnia By Television, edited by James Gow, Richard Paterson and Alison Preston, published by British Film Institute, 1996

eruptions, each without cause or context. The news creates this vision of mere anarchy through its erasure of the past and its simultaneous tendency to atomise the present into so many unrelated happening, each recounted through a series of dramatic, unintelligible pictures. And so we have the correspondent, solemnly nattering among the ruins, offering crude 'analysis' and 'background', as if to compensate us for the deep bewilderment that his medium created in the first place".²

In Mumbai, we saw some of what is quoted above come alive. There was an erasure not just of the distant past, but even the immediate, in the way the television cameras forgot that people had already been slaughtered at CST. The present was endlessly telecast, leaving viewers to watch almost as if they were seeing something unreal. The most "unreal" element was that of the NSG commandos being lowered on to the roof of Nariman House. Those images being telecast, we were told later, might have compromised the entire operation and even lead to the death of a policeman.

And the "deep bewilderment" that Miller speaks of is something that most viewers will endorse. The first few hours, no one seemed to understand what had happened, least of all the journalists on the spot. Their bewilderment, and that of viewers, was compounded by the absence of any kind of authoritative voice - from the police or the state government.

Veteran BBC reporter Martin Bell dubbed the 1990s as the "Decade of the Dish". That is true even today with 24-hour news television and live coverage of events unimaginable even a few years back. Wars, terror attacks, famine, floods, drought, all manner of conflict, are now brought to us even as they happen. There is no time to think, to evaluate what is happening, to pause. You have to talk and report continuously, as the story emerges in front of you. Being a TV reporter in such circumstances is a challenge that most print journalists have never faced as we have time to collect, collate, verify and then write.

2. Quote from Mark C. Miller, "How TV covers war" in "New challenges for documentary" edited by Alan Rosenthal, University of California Press, 1988

The other aspect to consider, and that has a bearing on what people learn from the media, is whether the very fact of continuous real time news, and the sub-text that forms the commentary determines outcomes. In this instance, was it the coverage that brought home the seriousness of the problem, or would that have registered in any case? Did the constant gaze of the camera prolong and hinder the operation, or did it not matter? Did the outrage expressed by civilians and telecast by the channels trigger the government's response or would it have taken place regardless?

For this too, it is useful to look at the experience of some veteran television reporters who covered Bosnia. Nik Gowing, who is now with the BBC but was with another channel during the Bosnia war, writes in the book quoted above about coverage of the war and its impact:

"The information and nuisance value of TV images was clear to diplomats, who, as one reflected, 'are used to working methodically, slowly, systematically and reflectively'. Real-time TV pictures compress response times in a crisis. They put pressure on choice and priorities in crisis management. They skew responses. They shape the policy agenda but do not dictate responses. They highlight policy dilemmas but do not resolve them."

This again is relevant in the context we are discussing. For instance, even before TV anchors had bothered to understand the nature of the operation being fought by the NSG in the three different locations, they raised questions about the time taken to complete the operation. Why so long, some asked. By doing so they raised the wrong question, for they did not have the expertise to understand what was going on within those three locations. Such questions, however, did not deter those who knew what they were doing from continuing their job. Yet, in the manner in which the operations were questioned on television, you would have imagined that these were the experts and those on the spot were amateurs!

Another instance of media believing it could shape policy was the way the Pakistan connection came up. Even before news about the identity of the one terrorist captured alive had been fully confirmed, channels began talking about the Pakistan connection. Predictably, the rhetoric was anti-Pakistan. No attempt was made to distinguish between terrorists trained in Pakistan and those directly supported by the Pakistan government. The assumption that what had happened in the past continued to happen today, despite the change of government in Pakistan and the attempt to establish democracy. And based on this assumption, many channels began demanding that the government should take a "tough" line with Pakistan and several of the people interviewed even suggested "bombing" terrorist bases in Pakistan as a way of resolving the problem once and for all. Was this justified? Is it the job of the media to form judgements and attempt to influence policy in this way, or should it at a time of crisis, when all the facts are not yet known, attempt to place before the public as much credible information as possible? In this instance, the electronic media became virtually another political actor, taking a line, arguing and pushing government spokespersons to respond instantly to their questions on policy that has enormous repercussions in the region.

Fortunately, diplomacy is not led by media badgering. So whether we agree or not with the government's response, it chose to do what it felt best, despite the hysteria drummed up by the media. This is a sobering lesson that the media needs to learn. I am not sure, however, that it has as media anchors continue to believe that they have the power to drive policy.

What the media does drive sometimes is popular opinion, particularly of the class that watches cable and satellite television. If an opinion survey is taken of people who watch only DD news and those who watch primarily private channels, there is bound to be a stark difference in the perception of events, including what happened in

Mumbai on November 26. While the private news channels drummed up considerable anti-politician and anti-Pakistan hysteria, which was then reflected on the streets of Mumbai through numerous demonstrations, candle light vigils and posters, DD in its usual style underplayed this reaction and was more sober. So if you had access only to DD, would you join those who lit candles and shouted slogans against politicians? Chances are that you would not.

The electronic news media can also establish hierarchies of importance of news, placing some news at a higher level than other. So while the attack in Mumbai actually killed more people at CST than at the two hotels, yet for the major part of the crisis, the cameras remained firmly fixed on the luxury hotels. As a result, even when the candlelight marches and demonstrations took place on the days after the crisis, they too were limited to these two locations. On December 3, a week after the end of the siege, thousands spontaneously turned up at the Gateway of India. Yet, no one went to CST. It was left to the porters at the station to hold their own candlelight vigil for the 58 dead. This says something to us about the power of the media to determine a hierarchy even in tragedy, to give greater importance to some locations because of the power they represent over others that are "people's palaces" if you will, like CST.

In fact, one of the little known and moving stories that emerged in the days after the terrorist strike was that of a middle-aged woman who actually lived at CST. She was an orphan who moved out of the orphanage when she became a major, did a variety of jobs, and finally ended up with her three bags sleeping at CST and working during the day as a tourist guide. She got two bullets in her leg. She will not be able to return to her work as a guide. Other stories, such as the one about the bravery and alertness of the announcer, were first reported in the newspapers and later picked up by television.

In many ways, the stories about the dead and the survivors at CST is the real story of Mumbai, a city that is full of ordinary people who work hard, who save, who send money back to their "native" places, who live insecure lives as they sometimes don't know where their next meal will come from, or whether the homes in which they live in a slum will still be there when they return, or whether the daily wage jobs that they do will continue and for how long. Yet these are not the people who are walking around with slogans saying "No security, No taxes". The people who were angry, and were egged on by the media that gave them ample space and air time, are those who are secure, who have the money to make them secure, who live in houses from which they will not be thrown out, who do not depend on public transport, who go to private schools and use private hospitals, who rarely vote and are not interested in politics. These 'non-citizens', in a sense, are the people who now feel insecure, because for the first time "terror" has visited them.

Yet, if you watched and listened to television, you did not hear the voices of the voiceless of Mumbai but you heard plenty from those who can get themselves heard at all times. As a result, you were led to believe that the "mood" in the city was of anger, was against politicians and was also anti-Pakistan. If the TV cameras had ventured beyond that cushioned part of South Mumbai, they would have found a different mood. There is plenty of politics in the rest of the city, people vote because they know that this is what establishes their legitimacy as citizens, and many people are angry, but at the media for presenting only a partial picture and projecting only one voice and one opinion.

Fortunately, our country does not consist of the people who want to disengage. In fact, what is encouraging, is that in each successive election, there is greater involvement, greater engagement, even in a place like Jammu and Kashmir. Far from throwing up their hands

and cursing the system, people are engaging with it, using tools like the Right to Information to expose the sloth and corruption of officialdom.

This is the response that was needed after 26/11, not slogans like "Enough is enough".

But "enough" about 26/11, for the moment. Let us look at the impact of such an event, and its depiction by the media, on the minds of our children, of young people.

Last October, I visited two government primary and middle schools in Bihar's Nawada district. In Loharpura village, the school had around 530 students, but only four teachers. The old building could barely accommodate the children. They were being taught in additional buildings that were still under construction. Even these were not enough. In any case, with only four teachers, three classes crowded into one room so that they could be taught.

We acknowledge that school learning is not everything. Children pick up knowledge in many different ways and today television is an important medium for such additional learning. But in Loharpura, there was no electricity on most days. So even this medium of instruction was not available to the children. And what they learned in the formal system was not much.

In Sikandra village the situation was better. There was a pucca school building and 10 teachers for the middle school and four for the primary. But here again there was no electricity. The water pump did not work as its head had been stolen within days of installation. And the toilets had been vandalised; the doors stolen and the pans smashed.

As in Loharpura, in Sikandra too there was no electricity on most days except for a few hours. So few children had access to a medium like TV. Even if they did, it would most likely be to DD.

I wonder today what those children made of the Mumbai terror attack. Would they have seen anything, or only the photographs in the next day's newspapers shown

to them by their teachers? The rest would be left to their imagination and the folklore emanating from stories relayed through relatives and friends with a contact in the big city.

Perhaps they would hear from relatives or friends of those who were injured or killed at CST. Many of those caught in the terror attack were people waiting to take long-distance trains. On any given day, the people you see on the platforms of CST represent a mini-India. So it would not be surprising if the children in this school had some fairly direct source of information. But it is unlikely that they would have seen the 60-hour terror drama on television.

In contrast, children going to municipal schools in Mumbai, where also the standard of learning is not of a high order, are exposed to "learning" from many other media, including television. In most slum homes, except the very poorest, there is a TV set and a cable connection. Even if your home does not have it, your neighbour does.

And the night of November 26 and thereafter, many children would have watched the on-going terror show for that night and the next day and night and day and night.

Since the end of the terror attack, there have been several reports in the newspapers about children complaining of nightmares, of being afraid of any loud sound. Most such reports are about children of the middle class or the elite. No one has bothered to speak to the children of the urban poor. Yet, all children have fears. But when their fears become part of a reality show on television, how do they deal with it?

Violence is also a part of the lives of people, particularly the poor. Children grow up seeing this violence all around them. Yet, seeing it on TV gives it another dimension.

In India, not much work has been done on the impact of violence on children. But with the rapid growth of television, and the fact that news channels are now beaming images of terror, of conflict and of death right into our living rooms, it is important that we do assess the impact on young minds.

Here I would like to quote Dr N. Bhaskar Rao³ on this subject:

"More than half of television viewers in India today are children of below 15 years. And yet there is hardly any sensitivity about the relevance and impact of what is dished out by various television channels. All of them are operating in a competitive mode for one upmanship in the race for viewership. In this order channels are concerned more about 'what interests or attracts' rather than what is 'in the interest' of children. Neither the Government nor the parents or the teachers seems to be concerned about this situation. For the generation next and the civil society of the country is shaped and molded by what they are exposed to today on the 'idiot-box' day in and day out."

The National Institute of Media and the Family, a US-based organisation that studies the impact of television on children, makes some interesting points about the impact of violence on TV on children.⁴ It points out:

- Children are affected at any age, but young children are most vulnerable to the effects of media violence (Bushman, 2001). Young children are more easily impressionable. They have a harder time distinguishing between fantasy and reality. They cannot easily discern motives for violence. They learn by observing and imitating.
- Young children who see media violence have a greater chance of exhibiting violent and aggressive behaviour later in life, than children who have not seen violent media (Congressional Public Health Summit, 2000).

Of course, the incidents of terror are not the only images of violence that children see. There is much more of it in films and even serials. But violence on the news possibly has a greater impact on young minds, particularly when they watch it happening in real time. Seeing images of those smartly dressed young men, walking around jauntily with an AK-47 after killing over 50 people at CST, is chilling. It could also result in a kind of admiration, of a fascination with the audacity that they display.

3. Dr. Bhaskara Rao, is founder and Chairman of independent Centre for Media Studies (CMS), New Delhi

4. Website: <http://www.mediafamily.org/about/index.shtml>

Some of the violence depicted over those 60 hours was imagined through the sound and the fires but not actually seen. For instance, the bombardment of Nariman House, the landing of commandos on that building, the excitement in the voices of the anchors and reporters, made the entire operation look like a war movie. If a survey is taken of what children thought about that, I would not be surprised if some of them found it "exciting". When the context of violence is removed from its depiction, people begin to look at it as an "event" to watch rather than something that is affecting all our lives and more specifically the lives of those caught in the middle of it. We know now that all six of the hostages at Nariman House were killed including the Rabbi and his six-months pregnant wife.

To conclude, the Mumbai terror attack should make the media as a whole, but the electronic media in particular, pause and consider the direction in which it is going. Does it have a responsibility towards its viewers, how is it shaping perceptions, is it more concerned about accuracy or about popularity, and how can it ensure that at times of crisis it acts as a conveyor of information and not panic.

At the same time, the media must consider the impact of the depiction of violent events on young minds.

I end with the hope that out of tragedy comes some good, or at least some good sense. The electronic media in India has grown exponentially. And in many ways this has been a good thing for our democracy. It has forced greater transparency. It has allowed many more voices to be heard. It has exposed inefficiencies and corruption. It has put leaders and politicians on the spot. But with all this must also come responsibility.

The best way some of these issues can be addressed is by internal guidelines developed by the media with the help of civil society representatives – including parents and teachers – as has happened in many other countries. We certainly do not need censorship or government control. But we do need to develop the tools of sensitivity and sobriety along with the awareness of the power we have to influence young minds.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ms. Kalpana Sharma

Kalpana Sharma is an independent journalist, columnist and media consultant based in Mumbai. Her fortnightly column in *The Hindu* titled "The Other Half", which comments on contemporary issues from a gender perspective, also appears in Hindi in *Hindustan*, in Marathi in *Saptahik Sakal*, and on the website www.indiatogether.org In addition, she writes a monthly column on urban issues for the website www.infochangeindia.org She also writes for several other Indian publications and for some outside India.

Kalpana Sharma was, until recently, Deputy Editor and Chief of Bureau of *The Hindu* in Mumbai. In over three decades as a full-time journalist, she has held senior positions in *Himmat Weekly*, *Indian Express* and *Times of India*. Her special areas of interest are environmental and developmental issues and in 1982 she worked with Anil Agarwal of the Centre for Science and Environment to edit the first Citizens' Report on the State of the Environment. During her years in *The Hindu*, she was responsible for the annual Survey of the Environment published by *The Hindu*, a collection of articles on contemporary environmental issues that appeared in the form of a separate priced publication.

For her fortnightly column that currently appears in *The Hindu's* Sunday Magazine section but began with *Indian Express* in 1985, she received the Chameli Devi Jain Award for an Outstanding Woman Journalist in 1987. In 2006, she received the Laadli Award for gender sensitive writing for her body of work.

Kalpana Sharma follows and comments on urban issues, especially in the context of Mumbai's development. She is the author of "Rediscovering Dharavi: Stories from Asia's Largest Slum" (Penguin 2000).

She has co-edited with Ammu Joseph "Whose News? The Media and Women's Issues" (Sage 1994, 2006) and

"Terror Counter-Terror: Women Speak Out" (Kali for Women, 2003). She has contributed chapters to several books on media and on women.

Kalpana Sharma is one of the founding members of the Network of Women in Media, which now includes women journalists from all over India (www.nwmindia.org). She is also on the boards of SPARC (Society for Area Resource Centres), which works with the urban poor, and Panos South Asia, whose focus is media and development.

Annexure

Memorial Lectures 2007- 2008

NAME	DATE	VENUE	SPEAKER	THEME	CHAIRPERSON
Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Lecture	17 January 2007	India International Centre New Delhi	Prof. Christopher Winch, Professor Educational Philosophy and Policy, Kings College London, U.K.	Individuals Workers or Citizens; Reflections on the Limits of School Based Educational Reform	Prof. Mrinal Miri Former Vice-Chancellor NEHU, Shilong
Zakir Hussain Memorial Lecture	19 January 2007	Regional Institute of Education Mysore	Dr. Radhika Herzberger, Director Rishi Valley School Chittoor Andhra Pradesh	Religion, Education and Peace	Prof. B. L. Chaudhary VC, Mohanlal Sukhadia University, Udaipur, Rajasthan
Mahadevi Verma Memorial Lecture	17 August 2007	Regional Institute of Education Bhopal	Prof. Karuna Chanana Former Professor at Zakir Hussain Centre of Educational Studies School of Social Sciences, JNU	Women in Indian Academe; Diversity Difference and for Inequality in a Contested Domain	Prof. R.S. Sirohi, Vice-Chancellor, Barkatulla University
B. M. Pugh Memorial Lecture	11 March 2008	Laitumkhrak Womens College, Shillong	Shri Ratan Thyiam Chairperson, Chorus Repertoire Theatre Shillong	Theatre Language and Expression	Prof. T. Ao Dean School of Humanities, NEHU Shillong

NAME	DATE	VENUE	SPEAKER	THEME	CHAIRPERSON
Majorie Sykes Memorial Lecture	8 April 2008	Regional Institute of Education, Ajmer Jawahar Rang Manch, Ajmer	Ms. Medha Patkar Social Activist	Socialisation vs. Politics of Education	Prof. M.S. Agwani Former Vice Chancellor, JNU
Sri Aurobindo Memorial Lecture	2 July 2008	Dorozito Hall Presidency College Kolkata	Shri Manoj Das International Centre of Education Sri Aurobindo Ashram Pondicherry	Education for a Faith in the Future	Prof. Sanjib Ghosh Principal, Presidency College, Kolkata
Rabindranath Tagore Memorial Lecture	19 July 2008	Regional Institute of Education, Bhubneswar	Prof. N.R. Menon Member, Commission on Centre State Relations	Realising Equality of Status and of Opportunity: Role of Government, Judiciary and Civil	Professor Chandra Sekhar Rath Eminent Writer
Gijubhai Badekha Memorial Lecture	Dropped due to ill health of Speaker	MIDS Chennai	Shri U.R. Ananthamurthy	Society Learning to be a Writer in the School of Life	Officiating Director MIDS, Chennai
Savitri Phule Memorial Lecture	12 December 2008	Mamiben Nanawati Women's College Vallapi Road Vallapi West, Mumbai- 56	Dr. T. Sunderaraman Executive Director National Health System Resource Centre	School as a Centre for Health Promotion and Health services: The case of conversion between health and education sector	Professor Vidhu Patel Professor and Head Director PGSR SNDT Women's College Churchgate, Mumbai

Annexure

Memorial Lectures 2007- 2008

NAME	DATE	VENUE	SPEAKER	THEME	CHAIRPERSON
Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Lecture	17 January 2007	India International Centre New Delhi	Prof. Christopher Winch, Professor Educational Philosophy and Policy, Kings College London, U.K.	Individuals Workers or Citizens; Reflections on the Limits of School Based Educational Reform	Prof. Mrinal Miri Former Vice-Chancellor NEHU, Shilong
Zakir Hussain Memorial Lecture	19 January 2007	Regional Institute of Education Mysore	Dr. Radhika Herzberger, Director Rishi Valley School Chittoor Andhra Pradesh	Religion, Education and Peace	Prof. B. L. Chaudhary VC, Mohanlal Sukhadia University, Udaipur, Rajasthan
Mahadevi Verma Memorial Lecture	17 August 2007	Regional Institute of Education Bhopal	Prof. Karuna Chanana Former Professor at Zakir Hussain Centre of Educational Studies School of Social Sciences, JNU	Women in Indian Academe; Diversity Difference and for Inequality in a Contested Domain	Prof. R.S. Sirohi, Vice-Chancellor, Barkatulla University
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