

Women on the Move

Dhaka Rally by Sannilito Nari Samaj
The Cry of Anguish

by Shaheen Anam

YES, that is the only way to describe Sharifa Begum's lament as she cried for justice for her daughter Yasmeen. Standing on the stage before a crowd of 10,000 Sharifa Begum aroused an anguish in us all, the anguish felt by one human for another at the loss of a loved one.

society as well as to the authorities. It was not only women who gathered to protest. Hundreds of men came along, standing shoulder to shoulder with their female compatriots to protest at the rising tide of violence against women that seems to be presently sweeping the society.

WOMEN". Is this then the beginning of a women's movement that is determined to succeed? Perhaps it is the issue which has pushed women to a point beyond endurance. Perhaps women are finally fighting with their backs to the wall.

of 16 who is forced to take poison for not bringing enough dowry is no one else but your sister, niece or daughter.



Participants in the rally on October 30: A protest loud and clear

Born for the Wreaths

A Sketch by Meher Akhter

TODAY I want to tell you my story. I don't want to leave this body without telling the cruelty this world has inflicted on me. My wounds are still fresh never to be healed, the excruciating pain tearing apart my existence.

The white pieces of papers changed my world, the feeling of being loved is wonderful. I felt like the happiest person and the world seems to be revolving around me.

The darkness was creeping in, engulfing nature with its dusky gloomy feathers. Waiting in the wilderness, I saw four shadows materializing, my eyes rested on one of the figures.

I regained my consciousness in an unknown world where I was a stranger. The agonizing pain was tormenting my whole body, blurring my sights and numbing my senses.

survive to go back home, into my mother's safe arms. One day I found myself surrounded by unknown people, volleys of questions were shot at me, flash of lights blinded my eyes.

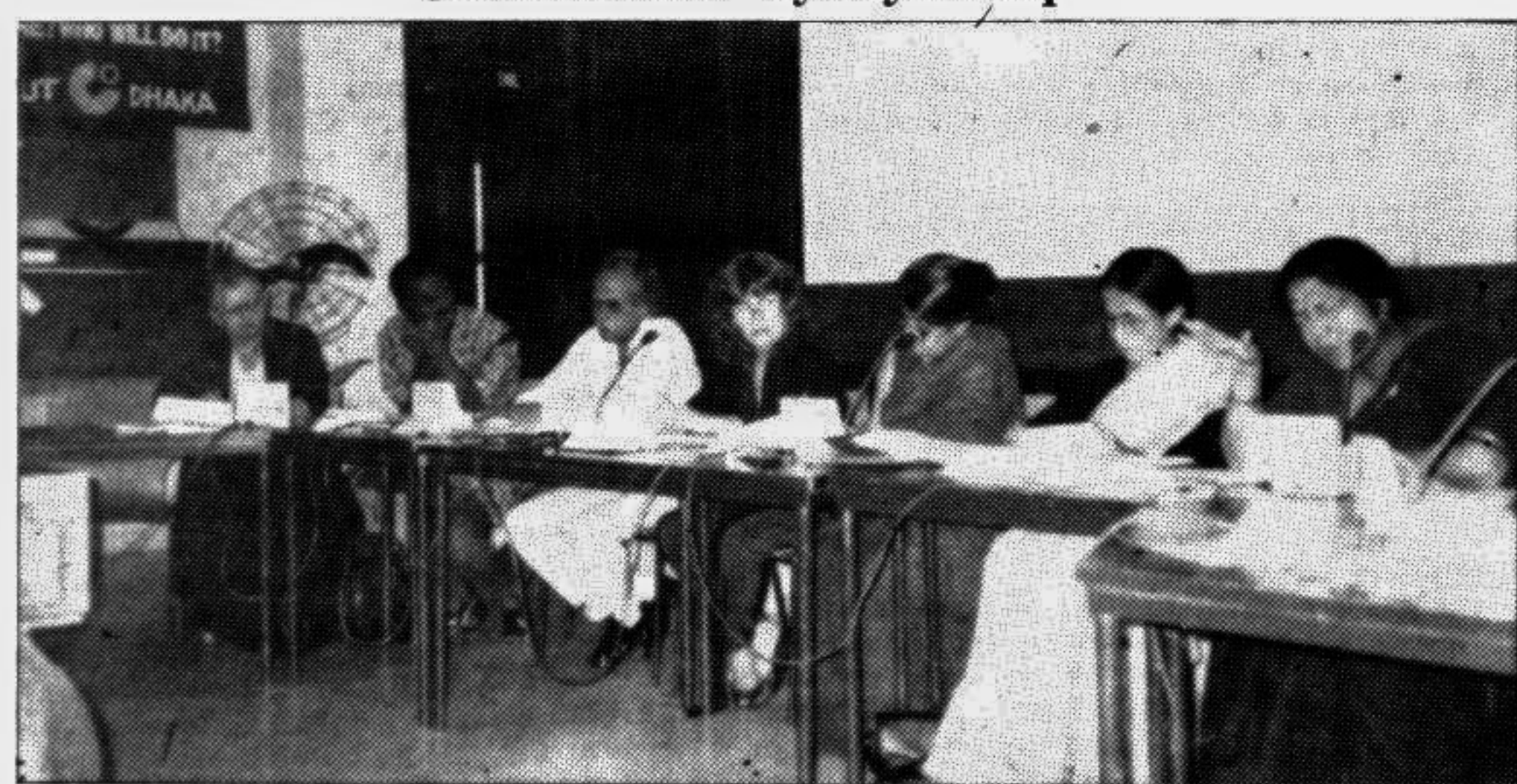
Standing in the court I took a cursory look around me, it was packed with people. I recognised the faces I longed to see were hidden in the crowd.

Today is the last day of my trial, my painful ordeal will soon be over now, my fight for justice will be realized and I will emerge a winner.

I lost my virginity in the hands of insanity, I lost my integrity in the hands of justice, I lost my liberty in the hands of society.

Clamour for Women's Claims

An Interview by Fayza Haq



Dr Ursula Muller, fourth from left

Dr Ursula Muller, who was here recently to chair a workshop on "human rights" for women at the Goethe Institut asked why there should be a separate human rights discussion for women.

Touching on the aspects of the Beijing Conference that appealed to her, Dr. Muller adds, "I am not sure that it was a good idea to have the conference in China as it was a hindrance for some women, specially the NGOs, as they are working hard for the liberation of women."

Is she satisfied with the achievements of the Beijing Conference? "It was good that all sides could come into a resolution of women's rights. In comparison, the conference in Cairo had been a disappointment.

It was disappointing. Papers of the working group that help the government and NGOs were not included in the government paper as an appendix. If this had been done it would have shown a variety of discussions.

As regards enjoying liberated policies of women's rights Scandinavia and Canada are the leading countries. The US had a pilot discussion for equal rights as there is a conservative majority in the US Congress which wants to abolish the equal rights amendment of women and ethnic minority groups.

stitutional court." Dwelling on steps taken against women's harassment in Germany she says, "Sexual harassment may not be regarded as a problem in the eastern countries but the amount of sexual harassment in the west is astonishing.

Talking about women's rights in Bangladesh, Dr. Muller says, "I have read some articles about women's rights in Bangladesh. On the formal level the situation is rather progressive as they have the same rights of equal pay and the right to vote.

Dwelling on the situation in Germany she comments, "On the formal level German women enjoy equal rights. As soon as you go into details

you find that many things are not equal. It is only since '77 that a woman may take up gainful employment without asking her husband. It is only a few years that a woman may marry without losing her original name.

"None of the parties can deny the women's rights except the reactionary neo-Nazi ones. Christian Democrats remain conservative. Women, specially the young find the parties hostile to human rights for women."

reactionary on women's questions." Talking on how German women feel about abortion, she informs, "It is widely believed that abortion should be a woman's decision and is a private affair. Now this is not in fact the case.

Professor Muller works in the department of Sociology at the University of Bielefeld, Germany. Dr. Muller's studies include segregation of labour markets by gender and the strategies that lead to it; the reactions of German men to the women's movement; sexual harassment in the workplaces; models of combining family and working life; women's discrimination in the labour market; men's violence towards women.

Women's Equality : Myth and Reality

Critics were asking : how could China be host of the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women when it is often cited for not respecting the human rights of both women and men? Yet, the choice of venue had prompted a new focus on equality for Chinese women.

Fons Tuinstra writes from Shanghai

ALTHOUGH on paper, the Chinese government stresses the equal rights of men and women, the reality is very different. According to Zhang Bo Hua, chairperson of the Shanghai Municipal Women's Federation, a lot of women expect to get lesser-paid jobs and groups representing women tend to be moderate in their criticism of inequality.

"You cannot expect this attitude to change within one generation. My own mother gave up her job when she married my father. He was an engineer and didn't bother about the household."

It is only since 1950 we started fighting for equal rights in China. Before that, we knew 5,000 years in which the inferiority of women was accepted," says Zhang.

Zhang stresses that Shanghai women enjoy relatively high incomes, a good healthcare system and a high participation in the local economy when compared with women elsewhere in China.

In the economic life of Shanghai, 49.7 per cent of the jobs are occupied by women, says Zhang. "In industry it is 45 per cent, in the countryside 60 per cent. And in Shanghai, all but three of a thousand girls go to school, a big problem in other areas. The majority of university students is female, although only 24 per cent of the post-graduates are female. But their participation in this field is still growing.

However, these rosy figures are not fully reflected in the political participation of women, admits Zhang and Yuan Yue Ying, head of the Shanghai Women's Committee of the Chinese Trade Union.

Closing the wage gap

Women's non-agricultural wage as a % of men's

Table with 2 columns: Country and Percentage. Top 5: Tanzania (92%), Vietnam (91.5%), Australia (90.8%), Sri Lanka (89.8%), Iceland (89.6%). Worst 5: Bangladesh (42%), South Korea (53.5%), China (59.4%), Syria (60%), Chile (60.5%).



conference in Beijing," Yuan says. One of the main issues both organisations try to solve is maternity leave. In Shanghai, pregnant women have the legal right for a 90-day maternity leave and can get up to six-and-a-half months of vacation after that.

She says Shanghai generally has comprehensive legislation to protect women's rights. "But now we have to take care it's implemented. So we go out to inform the women about their rights and we explain the women's rights to the leaders of the work units so there can be no misunderstanding about this."

This positive development does have negative consequences. Many Chinese women complain they can no longer get a job because potential employers are afraid they will get pregnant.

Owned companies have become more profitable. "It is a problem of our whole society," says Yuan. "Especially in the textile industry, where about 60 per cent of the work was done by women. For them and younger women we organised gatherings called, 'Changing Our Minds'."



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