

Vanaja Dhruvarajan
RWWP 1994-1995

**Vanaja Dhruvarajan's Activity Report
as Ruth Wynn Woodward Endowed Chair in Women's Studies at SFU 1994-1995**

The Ruth Wynn Woodward Endowed Chair in Women's Studies at Simon Fraser University (SFU) was established in 1985 as one of the five regional chairs in Women's Studies through a seed grant from the Secretary of State Women's program. The amount of the grant was \$.5 million with the stipulation that each recipient of the grant would raise a matching amount. At SFU the bulk of the matching amount came from Ruth Wynn Woodward's daughters with the stipulation that the chair be named after their mother. The mandate of the chair includes teaching one course each term for two terms, doing one's own research and participating in community outreach. The chair is given considerable autonomy to define this mandate within the field of expertise of the incumbent. The incumbent of the chair is referred to as The Ruth Wynn Woodward Professor (RWWP). The following is a short account of my activities as RWWP during the year 1994-1995. The Women's Studies department and Mary Lynn Stewart, the department Chair, have been fully supportive of all my initiatives. The position provided me with the opportunity to address issues of immediate concern to me - issues of racism and sexism in the academy and in society at large.

My experiences as a woman of colour in the North American academy are not significantly different from many others in similar situations. I must admit that it has been a relentless struggle against racism and sexism. I am grateful for the honour and privilege of serving as RWWP, particularly because it has provided me with opportunities to address the concerns of women of colour through serious attempts at transforming the academy.

During my tenure of one year as RWWP, I taught two courses on women of colour; wrote two papers pertaining to Indo-Canadian women and families, and one paper on women of colour in general; participated in several scholarly activities; and discharged my duties

towards community outreach. In everything I did, I endeavored to bring women of colour perspectives to the fore, make information about the experiences of women of colour available and explore strategies for social transformation to bring about a just and caring society. I briefly discuss these various efforts under three headings, namely, teaching, research and scholarship, and community outreach.

I have prepared a list of activities during the year and have attached several documents pertaining to my activities (#1). These documents are numbered and identified in the list or the text. I have also included a list of recommendations informed by my experiences to make the academy inclusive.

Teaching

The focus in both the courses I taught was on establishing how production of knowledge by centering women of colour perspectives provides new insights. The students had as their first assignment an exercise that involved self reflective analysis of one's social position. The students were asked to position themselves across dimensions of race/ethnicity, class, and gender and compare their life experiences with that of a woman who is of different race. The insights gained from this exercise regarding the impact of the intersections of race, ethnicity, class and gender on one's life experiences were discussed. For example, one white middle-class lesbian woman discussed the dilemmas she faced when her friend, a lower-class First Nations woman, wanted her to attend her wedding with a white middle-class man. The intent all along was to identify one's own privileges and become conscious of lack of privileges of others. I made an analysis of my own life to start with. I am an upper caste, middle-class, Hindu heterosexual woman of colour. In my life I have enjoyed privileges because of my class,

heterosexuality, and caste but have been underprivileged because of my race, religion and ethnicity. The intersections of all these dimensions account for my life experiences.

For the second assignment the students were expected to make a presentation to the class on an issue of concern for women of colour from a woman-of-colour perspective. This meant that they centered women of colour in the production of knowledge. There were long discussions about appropriation of voices, control of media and publishing industries by dominant groups, the plight of women of colour in the context of global restructuring, and so on. The attached course outlines give an idea of the range of topics covered (#1 & 2). In every presentation, the student took into account the intersection of race/ethnicity, class and gender. For example, one student discussed the marginal position of second generation Indo-Canadian women, showing how the young women's lives were constrained in their patriarchal ethnic families and how racism in the larger society gave them little or no room to manoeuvre.

There were always heated discussions about which factor -- race/ethnicity, class, or gender -- is relatively more important. In general, women of colour in the class tended to privilege race more often than class while some white women vehemently disagreed with such an analysis. Even though there were many tense moments, exposing students to women-of-colour perspectives and providing contexts to understand what it means to be a woman of colour in Canada were much easier than exploring strategies for bringing about social transformation.

The students agreed that convincing people to understand their privileges does not automatically lead to their relinquishing of privileges. There were extensive discussions of various strategies but none were considered entirely effective. There was general agreement, however, that those who are marginalized must organize and mount strong resistance to established practices, while those who are in positions of power and privilege must be

convinced that it is in their interest also to work towards the establishment of a non-hierarchical, environmentally friendly, caring and cooperative way of life.

Judging from the student evaluations, both of my courses were well received. The enrollment in these courses was approximately evenly distributed in terms of race when both courses are taken together, although there were only two men. My presence as a woman-of-colour faculty apparently made a difference to both white students and students of colour. The women-of-colour students were particularly happy to have me in their midst. One woman-of-colour said that to see me in a position of authority was an empowering experience. Many others shared similar sentiments and expressed great disappointment that my tenure is only one year. They were distressed to realize that there is no guarantee that the courses I introduced may become part of the Women's Studies departmental curriculum. The degree of social distance they felt towards Women's Studies department was considerable and they very much wanted to reduce that distance.

Research and Scholarship.

It has been a productive year in terms of research and scholarship. I have completed three papers and am working on a fourth one. I made a number of presentations at conferences and gave invited papers. I have made contributions to the profession by reviewing articles and manuscripts for publishers, being an external reviewer of a women's studies program and an examiner for an M.A. thesis, to mention a few. The attached list of activities (#1) gives an idea of my various efforts. I was asked to report on the issues pertaining to the chilly climate in BC Universities by Susan Prentice, Margaret Laurence Chair in Women's Studies, my counterpart in Manitoba, on behalf of the Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association and the Canadian Women's Studies Association. This provided me with opportunities to meet

many people from three of BC Universities. It was an intellectually stimulating year with opportunities for scholarly exchange with people from many fields including sociology, women's studies, psychology, history, political science, biology, environmental studies, anthropology, and philosophy, just to name a few. A copy of the report which I presented at the Learned Societies meetings in Montreal in June is attached (#5). I also attended a number of lectures and meetings and have identified a small sample in the list of activities.

Community Outreach

Community outreach enriched my personal experience since it provided me with opportunities to meet people from different parts of BC and from different class and ethnic backgrounds.

I gave workshops and informal talks to immigrant women from different parts of the world. I had opportunities to speak to these women in Calgary, Vancouver and Winnipeg. These women were from different racial, ethnic and class backgrounds and ranged from teenagers to the aged. We discussed issues relating to various struggles we all go through in our families, schools, workplaces and neighborhoods. We talked about sisterhood among women--particularly between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. The problems of intergenerational conflict, unemployment, accreditation of qualifications, language training, racism and sexism were among the many issues we discussed. General concerns about retaining cultural heritage as well as becoming legitimate members of Canadian society were always in the forefront. In addition to discussions on a group level, I had numerous personal discussions with many women of colour from the community and the university. It is very difficult to identify each by name but I would like to acknowledge that each and every meeting over lunch, coffee, dinner or in my office, was thoroughly enjoyable and informative.

I also gave several talks to audiences where the majority was white. Most of them appreciated knowing more about women-of-colour in Canada and looking at issues from women-of-colour perspectives. After my talk on International Women's Day, where I discussed the struggles of women around the globe, one middle-aged white woman said that she enjoyed my talk and that it helped her to see the world from a brand new perspective. She suggested to me that I should be doing more of this, that in all her life this was the first time she was exposed to such a perspective, and that this should happen more often.

In another talk I critiqued the stereotypes prevalent about people-of-colour, South Asian women in particular. I reversed the argument and talked about stereotyping white Canadian women and their cultural practices. My fear that such a discussion might not be well received by a predominantly white audience was unfounded. There was an extensive discussion after the talk which was very enlightening to all of us. Several women came and complimented me after the talk. The attached list of activities (#1) will give an idea regarding the varied topics covered in discussions as well as the diversity of audience.

There was some confrontation also. I gave a talk to a professional women's club where I criticized the way mothers are treated in North American society. I made the comment that in general mothers are treated with respect in Indian society while perhaps because of Freudian influence, 'mother-blaming' is quite common in North America. This did not go well with the audience. In another group consisting of mixed audiences in terms of gender and race, I critiqued a play by an author from India--a man--for portraying Indian women as not measuring up to the North American standards of beauty. One of the Indian characters in the play, while watching a beautiful white woman said: "can you imagine our Indian women looking as alluring as this?" The other Indian character responded "Never." I took issue with this observation and said that this is nothing but a case of internalized racism. My comments did

not go well with the majority of the audience even though some women of colour agreed with me privately afterwards.

Friendships with women of colour in the community and several students from the two courses I taught were a great support for the work I was doing as RWWP. These women, in addition, helped me to make linkages with the women-of-colour community in Vancouver. Coming from a different province, I did not have many contacts in the community and did not know the city very well. Since I did not have an advisory council to facilitate my efforts, I had to rely on my own personal resources. Getting to know the place and making contacts with the community took most of my first term in office. Because the chair did not have a support staff, I had to rely on the departmental assistant and secretary. It was quite a frustrating experience at times to discharge the duties of the chair promptly even though the support staff of the department tried their best. In general, the first term was most difficult. As I entered the second term, work became more manageable as I learned to make use of the available resources as efficiently as possible.

Two conferences related to the Chair were organized during the year. The first one, "Celebrating Goddess," was part of the welcoming the department arranged for me. It was held in SFU's Halpern Centre on October 20, 1994. About thirty people attended the event. I gave a talk on the significance of goddess in Hinduism and the implications for Hindu women's lives. A summary of this talk and the conference poster are attached (#8 & 9). Dr. M. Bose, a colleague in the department, discussed the different manifestations of goddess in Hinduism and her historical evolution. There was sumptuous food (thanks to Billie Korstrom, who arranged catering) which was eagerly consumed by all those present, including myself!

The second conference "Bridging the Race and Gender Gap," held on May 13, 1995, at SFU's Harbour Centre, was one of the highlights of my tenure. A considerable amount of

effort went into organizing the conference. The departmental assistant, Billie Korstrom, was most helpful. About seventy people attended the conference. The composition of the audience was diverse in terms of both race and age. There were women from the university as well as from the community at large.

The women of WOCESE, (Women Of Colour for Equity, Scholarship and Education) particularly Noga Gayle, Joan Anderson and Yvonne Brown, were a great support in organizing this conference. My friends, Gomi Puri, Yasmin Jamal and Leena Naidu, were always encouraging. Many students from my class and members of the Women's Centre at SFU were very enthusiastic about the conference. Monica Bhatara, one of the students from my classes, volunteered her time on the day of the conference.

The objective of the conference was to draw attention to the fact that the university and community need to work together to achieve the goal of social transformation. This is the only way the university can avoid becoming an elite institution. The conference was meant to draw attention to the possibilities of centering women-of-colour in the production of knowledge. That universities should draw inspiration from and be guided by the day-to-day grassroots experiences was highlighted. There were two panels of presenters. The first panel consisted of representatives of women-of-colour groups. All the speakers identified the achievements as well as the struggles of these groups. More importantly, significant concrete suggestions were made to provide guidance and to implement strategies to promote the interests of women of colour within and outside the academy.

The second panel consisted of faculty members and university students who are active in the women's movement. They addressed issues pertaining to curriculum and pedagogy in universities, and the need for doing research that is relevant to women's lives in communities.

They also pointed out the need for two way communication between universities and communities-at-large.

Carol Christensen's paper on the experiences of women-of-colour faculty in the universities was distributed. (Carol was expected to be one of the panel members but could not be there, instead, her paper was made available.) I was pleased that my own paper, "Women of Colour and Coalition-building," was completed just a week before the conference. We included a copy of that paper also in the conference kit.

The conference is videotaped and will be available for viewing by request at the Women's Studies Department. The conference poster, program, invitation and copies of most of the presentations and conference evaluations are attached (#10, 11, 12, 16 & ¹⁷ 17).

Major Themes Identified By Presenters

Recurring comments in almost all the presentations are that the universities are eurocentric, androcentric, heterosexist, ableist and elitist. The problems are systemic; therefore, to address these problems, the universities must pay attention to the interrelated issues pertaining to representation, inclusivity, and "chilly climate". It is important to have a sense of good will and fair play as well as respect and acceptance of differences in university life. But, in the final analysis, it boils down to sharing of power and privilege by the dominant groups with marginalized ones.

In these presentations, it is consistently recognized that there has to be political will to do the needful. The motivating factor must be a commitment to social justice. Marginalized groups have an important role to play in acting as catalysts to bring about race and gender equality. But unless those in positions of power and privilege commit themselves to this cause, changes will not come about for a long time.

One of the general suggestions to achieve the goal of bridging the race and gender gap is to increase the number of faculty, administration and support staff from marginalized groups. Their presence in the university helps students of colour develop a sense of affinity to the university as well as find mentors and role models for themselves. These people also can, by their very presence, improve the climate of the university by making it more welcoming to students from marginalized groups. They also bring their own unique perspectives to deal with university life, thereby influencing its daily rhythm. If at best some of them are represented in positions of influence, they can transform university policies and practices--for example, by making racial harassment policies more effective; by improving the accreditation policies for qualifications obtained in third world countries; by introducing new courses to make the curriculum more inclusive; by bringing different pedagogical practices into the classroom to raise general awareness among all students about diversity of experiences; and by providing support for each other and for students of marginalized groups to find a voice and strengthen their identity.

Women's Studies programs/departments as the academic arm of the women's movement have an important role in bridging the race and gender gap. It is important that the curriculum in these programs become inclusive. This means that the perspectives, histories and cultures of women of colour become integrated into women's studies curriculum. This also means that women of colour should not only be included as teachers but also as curriculum planners. As researchers they should have equal access to grant money and gate keepers of journals and the publishing industry must be encouraged to be receptive towards work by women-of-colour. Better yet, women-of-colour must be included in the circle of gate keepers of knowledge. Even though at present many women's studies programs are becoming sensitive to issues of concern for women-of-colour, women-of-colour perspectives, histories and cultures

are not integrated to become part of the required curriculum for all students. The debates about authenticity, appropriation of voices, and identity politics are making headlines because women of colour do not have equal access to opportunities to teach, do research and publish.

Maintaining linkages with women's communities helps women's studies to be continuously in touch with the daily life struggles of women. For women's studies to be relevant to women's lives it also helps to resist cooptation by Women's Studies into the university system. Cooperation and collaborative efforts in research, for example, help both the academy and women's communities. During times of economic restraint and shortage of resources, such efforts would be particularly beneficial to women-of-colour groups. Research under those circumstances could both be socially relevant and respond to the needs of women in these communities. Universities can become training grounds for future social activists by integrating community work as part of curriculum. Members of these communities can be enlisted as resource people in curriculum transformation. The university can facilitate use of available talents in communities thereby helping the women in the communities with their career development.

Recommendations

Informed by the recommendations of panelists in the conference and my own experience, I make the following recommendations:

1. Establish a standing Advisory Committee consisting of representatives of women's groups and representatives of student bodies. It is important that the committee consists of members who favour inclusivity particularly in terms of marginalized groups. The committee need not be exclusively composed of members of marginalized groups but it

should tip in their favour. The committee should act as a liaison between the university and the community it represents. Its functions may include:

- a) Identifying resource people in communities.
 - b) Acting as clearing house of community needs in terms of research.
 - c) Identifying university resources for possible use by members of communities.
 - d) Identifying community resources for use by students and faculty.
 - e) Identifying possible avenues for the exchange of ideas, opinions, and research between the academy and the community.
2. Increase the number of women-of-colour in the faculty, administration, and support staff, with a diverse community represented.
 3. Establish a data bank of course outlines, references, films and resource people in communities.
 4. Hold conferences and colloquia on topics of interest for the university and communities on a regular basis. Involve communities in the planning stages.
 5. Establish a Standing Committee to scrutinize curriculum and pedagogy in women's studies. Scrutiny of these issues are particularly important for core courses. It is important to include student representatives, particularly from marginalized groups.
 6. Conduct on a regular basis anti-racism and anti-sexism workshops for students and faculty. Make sure that information on these issues is readily available to students and faculty.
 7. Work towards streamlining and simplifying procedures for appealing sexual and racial harassment as well, make such procedures effective.

Resources: Books

- Bannerji, Himani et al (ed) 1991 Unsettling Relations:
The University as a Site of Feminist Struggle
Toronto: The Women's Press
- Christensen, Carole P. 1993 "Undue Duress: Minority Women
in Academia"
The Journal of Ethno-Development
Vol 3, No. 3.
- Dhruvarajan, Vanaja Women of Colour and Coalition
Building in Canada.
Submitted for inclusion in M. MacDonald et al (eds)
As Canadian as Possible Under the Circumstances:
Concepts of Women, Environment and Canada
Submitted for publication to UBC Press.
- Friol-Matta, L & Chamberlain,
M.K. 1994 Women of Colour and Multicultural
Curriculum
New York: The Feminist Press
- hooks, bell 1994 Teaching to Transgress
London: Routledge
- McIntosh, Peggy, 1995 "White Privilege and Male Privilege:
A personal account of coming to see correspondences
through work in Woman's Studies" in M.L. Anderson
and P.H. Collins (eds) Race, Class and Gender
Madrid: Wadsworth Publishing Company
- Ng Roxanne 1994 "Sexism and Racism in the University:
Analyzing a Personal Experience"
Canadian Woman Studies
Vol 14. No. 2

Resources: Videos

1. Integrity in the Classroom
Concordia University 26 min. 1991
2. The Chilly Climate in Colleges and Universities
28 min. 1991 Distributed by Department Services, University of Western Ontario
3. "Domino" NFB
4. "No Time to Stop" NFB

1. LIST OF ACTIVITIES

Research

1. Papers "Hindu, Indo-Canadian Families" in M.Lynn(ed).
Voices: Essays on Canadian Families
Toronto: Nelson 1995
2. "Women of Colour and Coalition Building in Canada" Submitted for publication in M. MacDonald et al (ed). As Canadian as Possible Under the Circumstances: Concepts of Women, Environment and Canada. Submitted to UBC Press.
3. "Hinduism and the Empowerment of Women" Under Review.

Research Related Activities

- ⇒ External examiner for an M.A. thesis in the Communications Department, SFU.
- ⇒ Member, International Woman's Day Committee. Wrote an article which was published in the University newspaper Peak. Copy of the article attached, (#4)
- ⇒ Member of Gerontology Conference committee.
- ⇒ Member of an external review committee of a Women's Studies department.
- ⇒ Reviewed several grant applications, applications for tenure and promotion and article for Journals, and manuscript for publisher.

Papers Presented in Conferences and Seminars

- ⇒ "Conceptualizing and doing research on Hindu women in changing academic and social contexts: Personal Reflections" Lecture delivered at the University of Victoria for Women's Studies on October 12, 1994.

- ⇒ “Pativratya, Feminism and Development Policies”. Paper presented at the 23rd Annual Conference on South Asia, at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, on November 5, 1994.
- ⇒ “Racism and Ethnocentrism in Academia” An invited lecture delivered to the University of Victoria Student Society, on November 23, 1994.
- ⇒ “Dealing with Difference: Personal Reflections on Teaching a Course on Women of Colour”. A talk presented to the members of Women’s Studies program, Faculty of General Studies, at the University of Calgary on February 6, 1995, on invitation.
- ⇒ Participated in the Seminar “Regional Endowed Chairs in Women’s Studies”, at the Learned Societies Conference in Montreal on June 4th by reporting on my experiences as Ruth Wynn Woodward Endowed Chair in Women’s Studies at SFU.
- ⇒ “Chilly Climate in BC Universities” paper presented in the session “Chilly Climates and Backlash”. Co-sponsored by the Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association and the Canadian Women’s Studies Association, at the Learned Societies Meetings in Montreal on June 4th. A copy attached. (#5)
- ⇒ “Rethinking the Issues: South Asian Women and the New Reproductive Technologies.” Seminar presentation at the Carleton University for the Pauline Jewett Institute and the School of Canadian Studies, on November 30, 1994, on invitation.
- ⇒ “Religion, Empowerment and Development in India”. Seminar presentation during the Development week for the University of Calgary Student Union on February 7, 1995 on invitation..
- ⇒ “Hindu Women and Development in India” Lecture delivered in Parin Dossa’s class SA463 in January 1995 on invitation..

Community Outreach

- ⇒ “Intergenerational Conflict” workshop presentation at the Western Canada Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (WCAISA) in Winnipeg, April 26, 1995, on invitation. A copy of the handout distributed at the workshop is attached. (#6)
- ⇒ Anti-racism workshop, organized by Yasmin Jamal, Human Resources Department, Development Canada on March 10, 1995, on invitation. A copy of the handout distributed at the workshop is attached. (#7)
- ⇒ “Second Homecoming: Integration of Immigrant Women into Canadian Life”. A talk presented to the Calgary Immigrant Women’s Association members on February 6, 1995, on invitation.
- ⇒ “Health and Culture: Multiculturalism and Reproductive Technologies”. Lecture delivered at Courtenay in Comox Valley on February 13, 1995, on invitation.
- ⇒ “Gender, Colour and Community: Multicultural Women in the Canadian Mosaic”. Lecture delivered at the Campbell River Campus on February 14, 1995, on invitation.
- ⇒ “Women Accepting and Respecting our Differences and Working Together for Change”. Lecture delivered on International Women’s Day, March 8, 1995 at the Cowichan Campus, Duncan, BC, on invitation.
- ⇒ “Women and the Community” and “Violence Against Women”. Lectures delivered at the Northwest Community College, Houston Campus on April 24, 1995, on invitation.
- ⇒ “Issues in Anti-Racist Pedagogy in Women’s Studies”. Lecture delivered at the Centre for Research in Women’s Studies and Gender Relations, UBC, on May 5, 1995, on invitation.
- ⇒ Meeting with members of Fiji Canada Association, June 24, 1995, on invitation.

- ⇒ Moderator of Discussion after the play "Sons" by Mohan Narayan at UBC Museum of Anthropology, February 24, 1995, on invitation.
- ⇒ Lunch meeting at the Centre for Research in Women's Studies and Gender Relations, October 27, 1994, by invitation.
- ⇒ "Preserving Cultural Heritage in Canadian Society" talk delivered at the Burnaby-New Westminster Business & Professional Women's Club on February 9, 1995, on invitation.
- ⇒ "Culture Sensitive Health Care Delivery" talk delivered at the Reach Medical Community Health Centre, March 15, 1995, on invitation.
- ⇒ "Middle-Aged Indo-Canadian Women: Caught Between Generations" talk delivered at the Surrey Indo-Canadian Women's Organization, April 5, 1995, on invitation.
- ⇒ "Experiences of Elderly Indo-Canadians in Families and Society" talk delivered at the Edmonds Community Centre for the Indo-Canadian elderly women on January 18, 1995, on invitation.
- ⇒ "Practicing Human Values and Strengthening Family Bonds". Lecture delivered for the Fiji Canadian Association, July 20, 1995. (#13)
- ⇒ Interviewed on I.T. Productions TV on April 14, 1995 and on Radio on April 30, 1995.
- ⇒ Interviewed for "Kinesis", Women's Community Newspaper, June, 1995. (#14)
- ⇒ Interview for "The Link" South Asian Community Newspaper, November 1994. (#15)

Attended the Following Conferences:

- ⇒ CAUT Status of Women Conference, September 30, 1994.
- ⇒ A public forum on the Cairo Conference on Population and Development. Organized by UN Association in Canada, Vancouver branch, August 17, 1994.

- ⇒ Putting a Face on Global Restructuring: Women Examine the Consequences. October 20-21, 1994.
- ⇒ Graduate Women's Studies: Visions and Realities, York University May 26-27, 1995.
- ⇒ Attended Lectures by Nagabhushan, a Shastri fellow, Rebecca Raglan, and Ursula Franklin; several meetings of WACESE (Women of Colour for Equality, Scholarship and Empowerment); Women's Studies Advance; LEAF (Legal, Education and Action Fund) breakfast.

Conferences

"Celebration of Goddess" A talk delivered on the occasion of a welcoming party for me on October 20, 1994 at SFU. Gist of talk and poster attached. (#8 & 9)

"Bridging the Race and Gender Gap" Conference held on May 13, 1995 at the Harbour Centre. Poster, program, invitation, copies of talks delivered and Conference evaluations are attached. (#10, 11, 12, 13, 14)

2. Course Outline

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

COURSE # W S 200-3

**INSTRUCTOR: Vanaja Dhruvarajan,
Ruth Winn Woodward Chair in Women's Studies**

**Title of Course:
Women in Canada:
Gender, Race/Ethnicity and Class**

Mondays: 1:30 to 3:20 p.m. Lecture / 3:30 to 4:20 p.m. Tutorial

Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Overview:

In this course it will be shown how race/ethnicity, class and gender are simultaneous and intersecting systems of relationship and meaning. It is understood that such an analysis is necessary to understand the life experiences of all women even though in this course the focus will be on women of colour in Canada. Readings include examples of women's experiences in different ethnic/racial groups in Canada.

Course Assignments:

I.	Written Assignment (about 2000 words) Due: October 17th, 1994	10%
II.	Term Test Written: October 31st, 1994	30%
III.	Class Presentation	10%
IV.	Written Assignment (Summary of Class Presentation - about 2000 words) Due: November 28th, 1994	10%
V.	Class participation	10%
VI.	Final Examination	30%

Readings: Required

Himani Bannerji (ed.) Returning the Gaze, Sister Vision Press.
1993.

Jesse Vorst et. al. (ed.) Race, Class, Gender: Bonds and
1989. Barriers.

Readings: Recommended

Resources for Feminist Research, Volume 16, No. 1

Canadian Women's Studies, Volume 13, No. 1

Himani Bannerji et. al. Unsettling Relations: The University as
1991 a Site of Feminist Struggle.

McKague, O. Racism in Canada Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers
1991

Detailed Course Outline:

September 12 Detailed Introduction to the Course.

Discussion of course assignments.

Gupta in Vorst et. al. "Introduction".

Bannerji in Bannerji "Returning the Gaze: An
Introduction."

September 19 Conceptual Frameworks

Anthias, F & N. Yuval-Davis "Contextualizing Feminism - Gender,
1983 ethnic and class divisions". Feminist Review, No. 15

Brah, A. "Difference, Diversity, Differentiation," in Race,
1992 Culture and Identity, edited by J. Donald and
A. Rattansi, London: Sage.

Barrett, M. & M. McIntosh. "Ethnocentrism and Socialist
1985 Feminist Theory". Feminist Review. No. 20.

Agnew, Vijay. "Canadian Feminism and Women of Color" Women's
1993 Studies International Forum. Vol. 16, No. 3.

Dhruvarajan, Vanaja. "Women of Colour in Canada: Diversity of
1990 Experiences." in Women Changing Academe, edited by
S. Kirby et. al., Winnipeg: Sororal Publishing.

September 26 Race and Racism

Kline in Vorst et. al. "Women's Oppression and Racism: A Critique
of the Feminist Standpoint"

Thornhill in Vorst et. al. "Focus on Black Women"

Henry, Frances and Effie Ginsberg. "Racial Discrimination in
1992 employment" in L. Tepperman and J. Curtis (ed.)
Everyday Life. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd.

Film. Black History: Lost, Stolen or Strayed.

Brand in Bannerji "A Working Paper on Black Women in Toronto:
Gender, Race and Class."

November 14 Family

Dhruvarajan, V. "Conjugal Power among first generation Hindu Asian
1992 Indians in a Canadian City." The International Journal
of Sociology of the Family, Vol. 22.

Lorde, A. "Manchild: A Black Lesbian Feminist Response" in
1992 M.L. Andersen & P.H. Collins (ed). Race, Class and
Gender. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing.

Yee, May. in Bannerji "Finding the Way Home Through Issues of
Gender, Race and Class"

Naidoo, J.C. "Women of South Asian and Anglo-Saxon Origins in
1980 the Canadian Context: Self Perceptions, Socialization,
Achievement Aspirations." in C. Stark-Adamec (ed.)
Sex roles: Origins, influences and implications for
Women. Montreal: Eden Press.

November 21 Media

Mukherjee, Arun P., in Bannerji "Right One of 'Herstory': Racism
1993 Perkins Gilman's 'Herland' and Feminist Literary Theory"

Razack, Sherine in Bannerji "Storytelling for Social Change".
1993

Bannerji, H. in Bannerji "Popular images of South Asian Women"
1993

Srivastava, A. in Bannerji "Re-imaging Racism: South Asian
Canadian Women writers."

November 28 Economy and Politics

Leah in Vorst et. al., "Linking the Struggles: Racism, feminism
and the Union Movement."

Ng in Vorst et. al., "Sexism, Racism and Canadian Nationalism"

Silvera in Bannerji, "Speaking of Women's Lives and Imperialist
Economics: Two introductions from Silenced."

December 5 Visions for the Future

Dhruvarajan, Vanaja. "Feminism and Social Transformation".
Exploration through Class Discussion.

Brand in Bannerji "A Working Paper on Black Women in Toronto:
Gender, Race and Class."

November 14 Family

Dhruvarajan, V. "Conjugal Power among first generation Hindu Asian
1992 Indians in a Canadian City." The International Journal
of Sociology of the Family, Vol. 22.

Lorde, A. "Manchild: A Black Lesbian Feminist Response" in
1992 M.L. Andersen & P.H. Collins (ed). Race, Class and
Gender. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing.

Yee, May. in Bannerji "Finding the Way Home Through Issues of
Gender, Race and Class"

Naidoo, J.C. "Women of South Asian and Anglo-Saxon Origins in
1980 the Canadian Context: Self Perceptions, Socialization,
Achievement Aspirations." in C. Stark-Adamec (ed.)
Sex roles: Origins, influences and implications for
Women. Montreal: Eden Press.

November 21 Media

Mukherjee, Arun P., in Bannerji "Right One of 'Herstory': Racism
1993 Perkins Gilman's 'Herland' and Feminist Literary Theory"

Razack, Sherine in Bannerji "Storytelling for Social Change".
1993

Bannerji, H. in Bannerji "Popular images of South Asian Women"
1993

Srivastava, A. in Bannerji "Re-imaging Racism: South Asian
Canadian Women writers."

November 28 Economy and Politics

Leah in Vorst et. al., "Linking the Struggles: Racism, feminism
and the Union Movement."

Ng in Vorst et. al., "Sexism, Racism and Canadian Nationalism"

Silvera in Bannerji, "Speaking of Women's Lives and Imperialist
Economics: Two introductions from Silenced."

December 5 Visions for the Future

Dhruvarajan, Vanaja. "Feminism and Social Transformation".
Exploration through Class Discussion.

3. Course Outline

Women's Studies Department Spring, 1995

W.S. 303-3/830-5 (Special Topic)
Indo-Canadian Women:
Change, resistance and adaptation.

Dr. Vanaja Dhruvarajan
Thursday @ Burnaby Campus

In this course the cultural and class background of Indo-Canadian women is examined and the kinds of changes they have experienced and are experiencing in their lives are delineated. The nature of their struggles against sexism, racism/ethnocentrism and classism are discussed and the types of adaptation strategies they have negotiated will be elaborated. In each case generational differences will be identified.

REQUIRED READING:

Dhruvarajan, Vanaja. *Hindu Women & the Power of Ideology*. (Indian Edition)
New Delhi: Vistaar Publications, 1989.
Canadian Woman Studies, York University. Vol.13, #1, 1992

Also several articles on reserve in the Library.

RECOMMENDED READING:

Bannerji, Himani, ed. (1993). *Returning the Gaze: Essays on Racism, Feminism, and Politics*. Toronto, Ontario: Sister Vision Press.
Bannerji, Himani, Linda Carty, Susan Heald, Kari Dehli and Kate Mckenna, eds. (1991). *Unsettling Relations: The University as a Site of Feminist Struggle*. Toronto, Ontario: Women's Press.
Canadian Woman Studies (April 1994). Racism and Gender. Vol. 14, No.2.
Mohanty, Talpade: Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres (1991). *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
Said, Edward W. (1993). *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Written Assignment (about 2000 words) (1)	15%	Due: February 9, 1995
Term Test	20%	March 2, 1995
Class Presentation	10%	
Written Assignment (2)	15%	Due: April 6, 1995
(Summary of class presentation - about 2000 words)		
Class Participation	10%	
Final Examination (take home)	30%	Given out April 6, 1995 Due: April 20, 1995

DESIGNATED CREDIT:

Students may apply to the Liberal Arts Certificate Program to obtain 3 upper division credits toward a Certificate in Liberal Arts.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1. Evaluation of participation will be based on class attendance as well as participation in discussions.**
- 2. Late papers will be penalized which will take the form of lowering of 1 (one) mark per day of delay — holidays and weekends included.**
- 3. Term papers must be written in the standard format which includes proper referencing of relevant scholarly material.**
- 4. Format of tests and class presentations will be discussed in class.**

DETAILED COURSE OUTLINE:

Jan. 12 **Detailed Introduction to the course.**

Jan. 19 **Conceptual frameworks.**

Parmar, Pratibha (1982) "Gender, race and class: Asian women in resistance" in CCCS, The Empire Strikes Back. Hutchinson.

Anthias, F and N. Yuval-Davis (1983) "Contextualizing Feminism — Gender, ethnic and class divisions". Feminist Review No.15.

Brah, A (1992) "Difference, Diversity, Differentiation" in Race Culture and Identity, ed. By S. Donald and A. Rattans. London:Sage.

Barrett, M and M. McIntosh (1985) "Ethnocentrism and Socialist Feminist Theory". Feminist Review No. 20.

Agnew, Vijay (1993) "Canadian Feminism and Women of Colour". Women's Studies International Forum Vol.16, No.3.

Dhruvarajan, Vanaja (1990) "Women of Colour in Canada: Diversity of Experiences" in Women Changing Academe P3-12 ed. By S. Kirby et al, Winnipeg: Sororal Publishing.

**Jan. 26
& Feb. 2** **Ethnic Cultural heritage.**

Dhruvarajan, Vanaja (1989) "Hindu Women and the Power of Ideology". New Delhi: Vistaar Publications, 1989.

Naidoo, J.C. (1980) "Women of South Asian and Anglo Saxon Origins in the Canadian Context: Self Perceptions, Socialization, Achievement Aspirations" in C. Stark-Adamec (ed) Sex roles: Origins, Influences and Implications for Women. Montreal: Eden Press.

Dhruvarajan, V. (1988) "Religious Ideology and Interpersonal Relationships within the family". Journal of Comparative Family Studies 19 (2), 274-285.

Feb. 9 **Immigrant experience in the workplace.**

Ralston, H. (1988) "Ethnicity, Class and Gender among South Asian Women in Metro Halifax: An Exploratory Study". Canadian Ethnic Studies Vol.XX, No.3.

Aggarwal, P. (1987) "Business as Usual in the Factory". Resources for Feminist Research, 16 (1), 42-43.

Aggarwal, P. (1990) "English Classes for Immigrant Women: A Feminist Organizing Tool". Fireweed, 30, 94-100.

Anderson, J.M. (1990) "Work and Health: Considerations for Immigrant Women". Anthropology of Work Review, Vol XI(3), 3-7.

Anderson, J.M. & Lynam, M.J. (1987) "The Meaning of Work for Immigrant Women in the Lower Echelons of the Canadian Labour Force". Canadian Ethnic Studies, 19(2), 67-90.

Boyd, M. (1989) "Migrant Women in Canada: Profiles and Policies. Ottawa: Employment and Immigration Canada.

Joy, A. (1984) "Work and Ethnicity: The case of the Sikhs in the Okanagan Valley of British Columbia". In R. Kanungo (ed) South Asians in the Canadian Mosaic (P87-102). Monreal: Kala Bharati.

Khosla, P. (1983) "Profiles of working class East Indian Women". Fireweed 16, 43-48.

Rajagopal, I. (1990) "The glass ceiling in the vertical mosaic: Indian Immigrants to Canada". Canadian Ethnic Studies, XXII(1), 96-100.

Ralston, H. (1991) "Race, class, gender and work experience of South Asian Immigrant Women in Atlantic Canada". Canadian Ethnic Studies 33(2), 128-139.

Feb. 16

Immigrant experience in the family and the ethnic community.

Dhruvarajan, Vanaja (1992) "Conjugal Power among first generation Hindu Asian Indians in a Canadian City". The International Journal of Sociology of the Family V.22(1), 1-33.

Ames, M. & Inglis, J. (1976) "Tradition and Change in British Columbia Sikh family life" in K. Ishwaran (ed) The Canadian Family (rev.ed) (pp72-91). Toronto: Holt, Reinhart and Winston of Canada.

Bhargava, G. (1988) "Seeking Immigration through matrimonial alliance: A Study of advertisements in an ethnic weekly". Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 19(2), 245-259.

Dyal, J.A., Rybensky, L., & Somers, M. (1988) "Marital and Acculturative Strain among Indo-Canadian and Euro-Canadian Women". In J.W. Berry & R.C. Annis (eds) Ethnic Psychology: Research and Practice with Immigrants, Native Peoples, Ethnic Groups and Sojourners (P 80-85). Amsterdam, Lisse: Swets & Zeitlinger.

Guzder, J. & Krishna, M. (1991) "Sita-Shakti: Cultural Paradigms for Indian Women". Transcultural Psychiatric Research Review, 28, 257-301.

Naidoo, J.C. & Davis, J.C. (1988) "Canadian South Asian Women in transition: A dualistic view of life". Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 19, 311-327.

Ng, R. (1979) "An East Indian Family". Multiculturalism 2(4), 24.

Thakur, U. (1992) "Combating Family Violence: The South Asian Experience in Canada". Canadian Woman Studies, 13(1), 30-32.

Vaidyanathan, P. & Naidoo, J. (1990) "Asian Indians in Western Countries: Cultural Identity and the arranged marriage". In R. Bleichrodt & Drenth (eds) Contemporary Issues in Cross-Cultural Psychology (P37-49). Amsterdam: Swets & Zeitlinger.

Feb. 23 Immigrant Experience in the larger society.

Dhruvarajan, Vanaja. "Hindu Asian Indian Women, Multiculturalism and Reproductive Technologies" in U. Parameswalan (ed) Revising the Canon. Toronto: Tsar Books.

Sheth & Handa (1993) "A Jewel in the Frown: Striking Accord between India/n Feminists" in Bannerji, Himani, ed. Returning the Gaze. Sister Vision Press.

Bannerji, H. (1993) "Popular Images of South Asian Women" in H. Bannerji (ed) Returning the Gaze. Sister Vision Press.

Agnew, V. (1991) "South Asian Women in Ontario: The Experience of race, class and gender". In S. Kirby, Da. Daniels, K. McKenna, M. Pujol, and M. Valiquette (eds) Women Changing Academe P.70-79. Winnipeg: Sororal Publishing.

Buchighani, N. (1979) "South Asian Canadians and the ethnic mosaic: An Overview". Canadian Ethnic Studies, 11(1) 48-67.

- Das Gupta, T. (1986) "Looking under the Mosaic: South Asian Immigrant Women". Polyphony, 8(1-2), 67-69.
- Dua, E. (1992) "Racism or Gender?: Understanding oppression of South Asian-Canadian Women". Canadian Woman Studies, 13(1), 6-10.
- Estable, A. (1986) "Immigrant Women in Canada: Current Issues". Ottawa: Ministry of Supply and Services.
- Ghosh, R. (1981) "Minority within a minority: On being South Asian and female in Canada". In G. Kurian & R. Ghosh (eds) Women in the family and economy (P413-425). Westport, Conn: Greenwood.
- Indra, D. (1981) "The invisible mosaic: Women, ethnicity and the Vancouver Press". Canadian Ethnic Studies, 13, 63-74.
- Li, P.S. (1979) "Prejudice against Asians in a Canadian City". Canadian Ethnic Studies, 11(2), 70-77.
- Mangalam, J.J. (1985) "The Komagata Maru Affair, 1917". Population Review, 29, 1 & 2, 47-58.
- Ng, R. & Estable, A. (1987) "Immigrant Women in the labour force: An Overview of present knowledge and research gaps". Resources for Feminist Research, 16(1), 29-33.
- Thobani, S. (1992) "Making the Links: South Asian Women and the Struggle for Reproductive Rights". Canadian Woman Studies, 13(1), 19-22.

March 2 First Term Test

March 9 Intergenerational relationships.

Kurian, G. (1992) "Intergenerational issues in South Asian immigrant families with special reference to youth in South Asian Canadians". In R. Ghosh & R. Kanungo (eds) South Asian Canadians: Current Issues in the Politics of Culture (P118-129). India: Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute.

Siddique, C.M. (1983) "Changing Family Patterns: A Comparative analysis of Immigrant Indian and Pakistani families of Saskatoon, Canada". In G. Kurian & R.P. Srivastava (eds) Oveseas Indians: A Study in Adaptations (P100-138). New Delhi: Vikas.

Dhruvarajan, V. (1993) "Ethnic Cultural retention and transmission among first generation Hindu Asian Indians in Canada". The Journal of Comparative Family Studies, Vol. XXIV.

Dhruvarajan, V. (Forthcoming) "Hindu Indo-Canadian Families in Canada" in Canadian Families edited by M. Lynn. Toronto: Nelson.

March 16 Experience as Children of Immigrants: Balancing the pressures in the family and ethnic Community". Dhruvarajan: Research findings.

Quereshi, K. (1992) "Living as 'other'". Canadian Women's Studies Vol.13, No.1.

March 23 "Experience as Children of Immigrants: Balancing the pressures from larger Society". Dhruvarajan: Research findings.

March 30 "Life as elderly". Dhruvarajan: Research findings.

April 6 Overview and future directions. Class discussion.

4. Article Written to SFU's Student Newspaper, *The Peak*

Hurrah to Beijing!

By

Vanaja Dhruvarajan

**Ruth Wynn Woodward Endowed Professor
in Women's Studies**

"March 8 is International Women's Day, an occasion to celebrate women's achievements and an opportunity to assess the pace of women's progress toward equality in Canada and around the world.

International Women's Day was born out of women's struggle for equal rights. Its origins have been traced to labour strikes held on March 8 in 1857 and 1908 to protest the overcrowded, dangerous working conditions and wage exploitation faced by women textile workers. International Women's Day was first proclaimed at an international conference of women workers held in Copenhagen, Denmark in 1910. Urged on by Clara Zetkin, a women's rights activist and member of the Ladies' Garment Workers Union, the conference voted to observe "an annual Women's Day" in honour of the movement for women's rights and freedoms. The following year, International Women's Day was celebrated in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland, and its observance spread. The importance of International Women's Day was reinforced in 1977, with the passage of a United Nations' General Assembly resolution, calling for countries to celebrate a day for women's rights and international peace. March 8 became the day of recognition in many countries".¹

The celebrations during International Women's Day will be leading to the Fourth United Nations World Conference on women to be held in Beijing, China in September, 1995. Simon Fraser University is collecting messages on International Women's Day from all those interested to send to Beijing. Beijing Conference will be a momentous event in the history of women of the world. The most important agenda of this conference is to assess the degree to which "The forward looking strategies" adopted during the Nairobi U.N. conference on women in 1985 has been implemented.

More than 15000 women from around the globe participated in the Nairobi conference to take stock of the progress made by women during the United Nations Decade for women — 1976-1985, and develop strategies to overcome impediments faced by women in the next fifteen years — up to 2000 A.D.. The theme of the conference was "Equality, Development and Peace". The document delineates women's concerns and the need for women's participation in changing the course of events around the globe. The resolution is in no way binding on the member countries but is of symbolic value. The hope has been that these efforts will influence public opinion to bring about social transformation.

¹ Status of Women in Canada: Perspectives. Winter, 1995 Vol.7. No.3.

Ten years after this resolution was adopted it appears that not many significant changes have taken place. Even though many countries have legislated gender equality, many of these laws are yet to be implemented. The unpaid work women do in caring for their families is still not recognized as a contribution to the Gross National Product (GNP). A Statistics Canada Survey released in April 1994 estimates that housework performed by a woman is worth at least \$16,580 per year and \$26,310 if she has children under five².

Access to equal opportunity in all fields of endeavors is not within the reach of most women around the world. Gender bias against women prevails in most societies which justify unequal pay for same or similar jobs.

Various forms of violence against women is another concern that needs to be addressed most urgently. Within Canada in the late 80's and the early 90's there has been a growing awareness of the frequency, intensity and circumstance of various forms of violence against women. But we are yet to devise efficient concrete measures to rid our society of this evil. The plight of women in other parts of the world is no less severe.

With regard to development Janet Banana's statement made in 1985 still holds true — "The relationship between economic growth and the development of women is by no means automatic...in agriculture, most technological innovations have had the effect of reducing men's workload, but have failed to address themselves to women's problems, in food production and processing, for example. In such cases...technological changes, while easing men's work, have universally increased women's workload...(In industry), women have occupied and still continue to occupy low-paying jobs with low promotion prospects. This cannot be called...development".³ The only way this state of affairs can be changed is by women becoming participants in setting priorities and policies for development as well as implementing them.

It is still as urgent as it was in 1985 that non-violent methods of conflict resolution be adopted between nations. Women's contributions to bring about peace are most crucial. Wars between countries means poverty and suffering for most people. As evidenced in the case of Bosnia women pay a heavy price in military confrontations. Besides, these ventures lead to diversion of world's precious resources toward non-productive uses thereby depriving many people of basic necessities of life.

There is a growing realization around the world that women must become active participants in influencing the direction of events on global, national and local levels. Development of this conviction did not happen easily. The first two U.N. Conferences - Mexico City 1975 and Copenhagen in 1980, were beset with many problems as women of the world tried to forge alliances, develop solidarity and speak in the interest of women. These conferences revealed deep differences in interest and convictions among women. There were many attempts to separate gender issues from all other issues. But after many agonizing confrontations several lessons were learned. One of them was, in the words of U.N. Secretary General, Javier Perez de Cuellar "It is recognized that women's issues cannot be disassociated from political, economic and social problems which beset countries and peoples".⁴

² Status of Women in Canada: Perspectives. Vol.7, No.2. Summer, 1994

³ U.N. Chronicle. July/Aug 1985. Vol.22 pvi

⁴ U.N. Chronicle. July/Aug 1985. Vol.22, p.2

Another lesson learned during the same process was, as declared by a delegate from Ghana "...the struggle against sex discrimination could not be separated from the struggle against racism, oppression, poverty, ignorance and disease".⁵ The conflict in these conferences was primarily between first world and third world women. The first world women preferred to focus exclusively on sexism while third world women insisted on including issues relating to racism and poverty among others. Historical legacy of colonialism and neo-colonialism of most third world countries makes it imperative that they pay attention to these issues. Particularly when it is realized that developed countries which constitute about 20% of the world's population consume about 75% of the world's resources and are firmly in control of all the decision making bodies that affect the lives of all people around the world. The consequence has been a growing economic disparity between first and third world countries. In addition, as Mohanty points out, no longer can we assume that first and third worlds are distinct and apart since we can see the presence of third world in the first world.⁶ This is due to the impoverishment of indigenous people due to colonialization and fleeing of people from third world countries to the first world to escape from the legacy of colonialism and neo-colonialism in their homelands.

For women of colour in Canada racism, sexism and poverty are all equally real. As Grace Cameron of Vancouver writes during the black history month "...racism isn't just a black, African or Native problem. It is a social problem. Racism strips people of their dignity. For those of us who are oppressed racism robs us of our strength and of the potential of growing to our fullest. It hurts, it wounds, it maims and it kills".⁷

Since the 1970's in the context of the policy of multiculturalism attempts are being made to create an environment for the development of understanding, respect and acceptance of differences among people. But the results have been less than satisfactory because of failure to effectively address racism and sexism. For example, I am teaching a course on Indo-Canadian women for Women's Studies at SFU. It has been remarked that the course is being taken by "weirdo's and Hindus". The policy of multiculturalism has made room to teach such a course but if these racist attitudes and behaviour continue, it can in fact trivialize a scholarly enterprise and marginalise those involved with it.

Multicultural policies can act to the detriment of women in ethnic groups with a patriarchal bent. This concern was expressed by first nations women during the debates on Charlottetown accord. The concern was about establishing native self government without ensuring that gender equality rights of first nations women are safeguarded. In other ethnic groups women can be routinely denied freedom of movement and expression in the name of preserving ethnic culture.

It is important to note that some mainstream women's organizations such as Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (L.E.A.F.) and National Action Committee on the Status of Women (N.A.C.) have taken a stand against racism and have made statements of solidarity

⁵ World Press Review. September 1985, P.2

⁶ Mohanty, C.T. 1991. Third World Women and The Politics of Feminism. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

⁷ The Vancouver Sun. February 27, 1995. A3.

with women of colour who are in the forefront of the struggle. There is a growing awareness of these issues in some circles but there is also evidence of manifestations of racism.

I hope at SFU we celebrate International Women's Day with good will toward all people and dedicate ourselves to the job of eradication of all forms of inequality. Let us send a message of support to Beijing so that women gathered in the conference come out of it rejuvenated with renewed dedication to transform this world into a caring and compassionate place where justice and equality prevail.

5. Chilly Climate

Chilly Climate in BC Universities

by

Vanaja Dhruvarajan

The following report is based on my conversations with several members of three BC universities, namely SFU, UBC and UVIC -- all of them female from both European and non-European origin.

It took me quite some time to gain access to this information. Being an outsider in the province, it was difficult to establish contacts. Those who participated in these conversations included faculty and students as well as some in administrative positions. Most of them spoke to me in person and a few sent me e-mail messages. Since this is a self selected relatively small (about 60) sample, one cannot claim that the views expressed here are shared by all members or even by most members of these universities. Nevertheless, it does give an idea as to what it means to be a woman and a member of marginalized groups in these universities.

The overall impression I came out with after speaking with all these people is that the climate is chilly for most women and minorities. These minorities include women of non-European origin, and lesbians. The degree of chilliness may vary from one department to the next but nevertheless it is always present. The underlying causes of this problem are systemic. It is a question of power as well as representation. Universities are androcentric, and Eurocentric, therefore are not welcoming of people who deviate from the norm. It is the perspectives of men and those of European descent that are privileged.

This is true in spite of the fact that there are equity offices and harassment policies in place and human rights abuses can be challenged. In all of these universities there are explicit sexual harassment policies but not racial harassment, which is subsumed under other human rights abuses. Some expressed the opinion that these policies, since they are legitimized by those in positions of power, set the tone for the acceptable conduct in the academy. One white woman faculty member said how grumblings in her department regarding sexual harassment policies subsided once the senior administrators declared their support. Some others felt that the presence of these offices and policies acted as a deterrent toward most blatant forms of abuse of power but they are ineffective in addressing the root causes of the problem. Most of the people I talked to were of the opinion that the equity and harassment officers work too close to the centers of power, thereby making them not very effective. Besides, the procedures are laborious and bureaucratic. Only those who are ready to face strong social disapproval from different sides, ready to sacrifice years of their life and risk career advancement will undertake these challenges.

Junior faculty without tenure argue that they do not want to make a big issue of various incidents because of fear of reprisal and loss of a job. They are of the opinion that they should wait until they get their tenure. Those who have tenure worried about their promotions and those who have achieved top promotions thought that it is difficult to change the way things are done in various departments. One senior academic woman remarked that the women's movement outside should do something. "We cannot change things from the inside." Besides, many of these women in senior positions, find themselves in a comfortable situation for the first time and they just want to relax and enjoy it rather than complicating their lives.

My impression was that most of them had been co-opted into the system and often did not bother to critically assess various situations confronted by junior faculty, students and staff. One senior administrator remarked that “all of us have to go through these experiences, you know you just have to buckle up and get on with it”. Another said, “well men have problems too you know. I have not met anyone who did not face problems”.

Some of these well-established women are very concerned about offending those in positions of power, and kept on saying that we should not be too radical. “Things cannot change too fast, you should be careful not to offend people who are trying to do whatever they can. Look and see how much has changed rather than how little. One should not expect things to change too quickly. You cannot expect people to do too much”.

There is gender/racial/cultural biases in hiring processes. Almost all admitted to the fact that the interview process during hiring of new faculty differs significantly on the basis of gender. One woman said that in her department the issue of gender equity in hiring is controversial. Men in the department are fed up with this. For example, during the latest hiring, remarks were made to the effect that “the last two times we kept on talking about hiring a woman, now let us concentrate on looking for a qualified person”. These statements are made in spite of the fact that less than 1/3 of the department are women. In addition, the interview process is biased. In one department a woman candidate was left with the secretary after and before the interview. In another case, male members kept on referring to her as ‘he’. Dress and demeanor become a big issue while assessing the qualifications of a woman candidate. Masculine/European style, accent and behavior are used to evaluate performance. Question of

representation of people of non-European origin is not even raised because there is no one to speak to the issue. Very few departments have such faculty represented in the department. In some departments, particularly those that are considered non-traditional for women such as Sciences and Engineering, masculine model of career advancement is privileged. Any interruption in one's career -- which often happens in cases of women who choose to have children, is a liability. Collaborative research is devalued. One has to be a leader to succeed which means one has to be competitive. One woman in Science remarked that if a reference letter of a woman says that she is friendly and helpful, and cooperates with others in the department it will go against her because these qualities are devalued.

The few women of colour faculty members talked about the profound sense of isolation they feel in departments. Racial slurs, homophobic remarks, sexist comments are common place in university life. They are treated like outsiders since they are not integrated into the department. Lack of support and encouragement keeps them in a vulnerable position. They often cannot find anyone to promote their interests in terms of promotion, grants, or administrative positions. Most do not have any access to informal networks where many decisions are made and information about various issues exchanged. Their performance is under continuous scrutiny. As one woman put it, if you make just one mistake you are out. It is almost like people are watching you and wishing that you make a mistake so they can throw you out and bring their friend waiting in the sidelines to replace you. Many of them said that they survive only through the support of their families and support groups in their communities. They are effectively silenced and therefore are the last ones to make any kind of complaint. Only those with exceptional courage venture to undertake such challenge.

One case where a female faculty of colour talked about her experience of being marginalized and silenced in the course of her career, a white female faculty said, "is it not just a matter of learning the ropes in the university?" -- which denied that there is racism in universities and negated her experience and trivialized her struggles.

Women of colour students fare no better. Most of them feel that neither their interests are addressed nor are their identities validated in the courses they take. The curriculum and pedagogical practices in most departments, including Women's Studies, do not integrate issues pertaining to people of colour. Lack of people of colour faculty leaves them without any mentors and role models. Graduate students often cannot find faculty members to supervise their thesis, take them under their wings, promote their educational and career advancement. Eurocentric and Androcentric nature of curriculum and pedagogical practices marginalizes them and effectively silences them. Not much attention is paid to the educational aspirations of these young women nor much attention is paid to their well being. Even when deficiencies in various courses are pointed out changes are not made.

In some cases where these students of colour who muster enough courage to challenge the curriculum and pedagogical practices, they are isolated, labeled as trouble makers, gossiped about, and accused of trying to destroy the career of faculty members and reputation of departments. Most of them do not question and just make do with what is there. Others go part way and give up not being able to withstand the stress and being afraid of losing educational and career options. Many of them are afraid of not being accepted in graduate schools, because their character is maligned and this reputation spreads across the country. One student said that an acquaintance in a university in the east knew about the issues she was confronting in one of the BC universities. Even though there are avenues to challenge

professors in the university system most of them feel it takes too long and in the final analysis they do not succeed in bringing any changes. Their credibility is often questioned every step of the way. They are accused of exaggerating things. The issues are trivialized, the person's character is maligned. One female student of colour said that when she broke down because of stress of this process, she was told to go and get therapy rather than going through with the complaint. Thus the problems are interpreted as being in her head rather than in the structure and practices of university life.

It is important to note that many white students have stood in solidarity with students of colour in their effort to challenge the system. Even though this kind of support is infrequent I think it is encouraging that is happening at all.

The very essence of chilly climate is questioned by some. As one person argued "emotions are not a valid guide to the objective qualities of a situation", "feeling can be highly idiosyncratic". Admitting to the existence of such a climate is considered a threat to normal academic life. Those who argue in favor of inclusive curriculum and inclusive pedagogy are accused of interfering with academic freedom in universities. Inclusiveness and academic freedom are constructed as mutually exclusive.

Issues of representation, inclusivity and chilly climate are all integrally connected. We cannot address one without addressing others. Finally it boils down to not only of accepting and respecting differences and privileging multiple perspectives but also sharing of power and privilege by women and all marginalized groups. I agree with Monique Freeze, Women in Engineering Chair at the University of New Brunswick when she says "a major cultural shift is

needed before the universities are welcoming to women” I add to this statement “and other marginalized groups”.

6. WCAISA Handout

W.C.A.I.S.A. Conference Handout Addressing Intergenerational Conflict by

Vanaja Dhruvarajan

Intergenerational conflict is often due to conflicting expectations. The best way of resolving these conflicts is by identifying the source of these conflicting expectations, and finding ways and means of resolving them. Children of immigrants are caught between cultures — the ethnic culture promoted by parents and dominant culture institutionalized in the schools, the media and various institutions in society. The best way of resolving these conflicts is to delineate our objectives clearly and develop strategies to achieve these goals. Our goal, as parents, is to help our children become accepted and respected members of Canadian Society as well as proud inheritors of ethnic cultural heritage.

For children of immigrants who are raised within Canadian society, Canada is home country. They long to be accepted by their peers and approved by their families. It is important for these children to develop a strong sense of self identity and pride in their cultural heritage. They also need a supportive environment that accepts them and respects them for who they are and provides opportunities for education and employment. It is only under those circumstances they can thrive and achieve.

Parenting is a big responsibility under any circumstances. It is particularly so for immigrants. People in general immigrate searching for better opportunities and want to make sure that their children fare well. They also bring with them their own culture — conceptions regarding a good life, and are eager to pass them on to their children. In cases where the cultural values of the host country do not coincide with that of the immigrants, there can be conflict between parents and youth. This conflict can be intensified in cases where the immigrants are not accepted by the host country and respected for who they are.

Parents not only have to provide a supportive environment at home for children to be able to become fruitful and active members of society, they also have to work toward changing the environment our children are exposed to. It is common knowledge that children of marginalized groups are discriminated against and face barriers to achievement.

It is important that parents not only make every effort to help our children develop a sense of pride in our cultural heritage, they must also try to understand the Canadian social/economic/political milieu and work toward changing it to make it friendly toward our children. It is also important for parents to realize that the environment our children are growing up in is very different from the one we grew up in. It is unrealistic to expect our children to have the same outlook toward life as we did. Besides, culture is something that is always evolving with changes in circumstances. If we look at our own home countries, things are changing very rapidly there also. Therefore, instead of expecting our children to fashion their lives exactly as we did we should help them find their own way. It is our duty to do everything we possibly can to create an environment that is conducive for our children to fashion a good life for themselves.

Following are a few suggestions that might provide guidelines under these circumstances:

1. There should always be open communication between parents and children. The nature of this communication naturally varies as children get older, just as the kind of input provided by them changes. Nevertheless it is always important for parents to understand the thoughts, feelings and interpretations of children at all stages. Only they know the kind of problems they face and how critical they are. Even though parents often feel that they have a better insight into life because of long experience, these insights may not be helpful for children faced with different kinds of challenges. Instead of unilaterally deciding what is in the best interest of the child, it is important to get the child's input before making any decisions.
2. Forming a support group among parents under similar circumstances is helpful. Exchanging ideas and opinions, comparing notes regarding children's experiences will be greatly helpful in arriving at solutions. Even though each of us feel that we are the only ones faced with unique difficulties, more often than not the experiences tend to be common among most parents under similar circumstances. Discussing these issues openly demystifies them thereby making it easier to arrive at solutions.
3. Just as parents, it is important for children to have their own support group — this is particularly true for teenagers. They can provide advice and comfort to each other and learn strategies to cope with problems they face. It also reduces the sense of isolation which often leads to alienation.
4. Speaking our language at home, eating our kind of food, celebrating festivals and life cycle ceremonies, mixing with people with similar cultural background, cultivating music and literature, and becoming aware of our history, religion and philosophy will help the children to develop a strong sense of identify. Parents do well by teaching children by example, that is, by observing the tenets of their culture themselves.
5. Parents must do everything they can to help their children to feel they are part of larger society rather than isolated in their ethnic group. There are different ways of achieving this goal. Participating in neighborhood activities such as becoming active members of community clubs signals that message. Volunteering in various community and school activities will make the ethnic families part of the community. Inviting neighbors to participate in various festivities unique to our own culture will promote a sense of community. Seeing parents actively involved in community life in addition to cherishing their ethnic culture helps the children feel that they can be part of the ethnic community as well as the larger society.

6. **Parents should make every effort to make sure their experiences are reflected and validated in the larger society -- this is empowering to children. Policy of multiculturalism in Canada provides unique opportunities not only to cultivate ones own heritage but to share it with others. Understanding each others cultural heritage is a very important first step to develop respect for each other. Influencing school curriculum to include the history and culture of various ethnic groups is an important way of achieving that goal since children are exposed to these ideas at an impressionable age. Making efforts to influence the content of printed and visual media is equally important because these have wide circulation. Achieving these objectives needs concerted effort on the part of many people in different ethnic groups. Such efforts go a long way to reduce social distance between immigrant population and mainstream population.**

7. **Parents must also work toward establishing an environment for their children where equal access to educational and occupational opportunity prevail. There are many different ways of achieving this objective. Becoming active in the political life on local and national levels is most important. School boards, municipal governments, political parties to name a few provide opportunities for such activities. There are also advocacy groups such as immigrant women's associations and other non-governmental organizations which are involved in anti-racist and anti-sexist activities. Becoming activists or actively supporting these activities parents can help bring about an environment that is free of racism and sexism. Seeing parents involved in activities to bring about social transformation empowers children and inspires them to become active participants themselves.**

These are some of the ways parents can help children become accepted and respected members of Canadian society. It is clear that each of us can do only so much. But together we can accomplish significant goals. Doing whatever we can under the circumstances we find ourselves and supporting and encouraging others to do the same will be most beneficial. What is most important is that we are clear about the goals we like to achieve and coordinate our efforts to reach that goal.

7. Addressing Systemic Discrimination

Vanaja Dhruvarajan

**Professor of Sociology
Ruth Wynn Woodward Endowed chair
in Women's Studies
Simon Fraser University**

Addressing systemic discrimination with a focus on racism and ethnocentrism

A historical legacy of colonialism and imperialism has determined the nature of relationships between people of European origin and people of colour. In this context Canada has been constructed as a country of white people and consequently people of colour are constructed as 'outsiders', 'strangers', 'different', 'other', with the invariable implication of 'inferior'. In the past these conceptions were built into political/legal systems and resulted in racist policies and practices. But in recent years, due to various changes in global/national political climate, Canadian laws have changed to provide citizenship rights to all people irrespective of race, ethnicity, religion, sex, and so on. Nevertheless, these changes have not significantly altered the taken-for-granted assumptions regarding the nature of relationships between people of European origin and people of colour.

People of colour are still thought of as transients despite the fact that many of them have made Canada their home for generations. Although the term 'immigrant' technically refers to those who have recently arrived in Canada and have not yet taken citizenship, the common sense understanding of this term is "non-white" (Ng, 1986). It is not unusual for a citizen of colour to be asked questions regarding his/her whereabouts and plans to stay in Canada even after being here for generations. In addition, as recent discussions in the media indicate, there is a great deal of concern about immigrants taking away Canadian jobs and bringing in too many non-productive dependents, thereby straining the nation's health and welfare systems. Such debate about family reunification has not been evident in discussions about European immigrants. Also, nothing much is said about immigrants from third world countries who come to Canada with skills in various technical and professional fields and save money for the Canadian government in terms of training personnel (Bolaria and Li, 1988). Most of these immigrants, apart from political refugees, are allowed in on the basis of Canadian labour force requirements. The tendency to use immigrants as and when needed and then expecting them to return to where they came from has been evident historically. For example, Chinese workers were allowed in to work on the railway but were not permitted to bring their families. The expectation was that they would return home once the job was finished (Bolaria and Li, 1988). Domestic workers from the Caribbean are being exploited at the present time (Calliste, 1989). In general immigrants take up jobs most Canadians do not want to do. In some cases skilled workers and those with professional and technical expertise are imported when there is a shortage of such personnel, as happened in the late sixties and the seventies.

In Canada, ethnic cultures of people of colour are constructed as traditional, backward and monolithic, and are consequently devalued. One blatantly obvious example of such practice was the debate in the 1990's on the issue of targeting Indo-Canadian women for fetal sex discrimination reproductive technology (Dhruvarajan, 1994). The concern expressed was that these women might abort female fetuses since preference for male offspring was pronounced in some segments of Indo-Canadian communities. The ensuing discourse in the media interpreted this as a cultural issue rather than a political one, despite the fact that there was widespread resistance to this practice within the Indo-Canadian community. Similar kinds of violence against women among white people is often interpreted as a political issue rather than a cultural one. But in this case the ethnic group was defined as "the other", "stranger". This attitude was clearly expressed in the words of a *Globe and Mail* reporter (December 7, 1990) when he argued that "their god is not your god", "they have a right to practice their culture". Such a stance not only revealed a blatant disregard for the survival of female fetuses of this ethnic group but also cast aspersions on the ethnic culture itself.

Eurocentric attitudes have led to the development of negative stereotypes about people of colour. The media consistently reinforce these stereotypes. People of colour are not portrayed in the media as normal people involved in day-to-day life, just like the mainstream population (Bannerji, 1993). These negative stereotypes often interfere with evaluation of qualifications for certain jobs since cultural assumptions mediate social relations (Henry and Tator, 1985). For example, in the early '90's, there was ongoing debate in Winnipeg, about the selection of people of colour as police officers. These people were judged not just on the basis of explicit qualifications for the job of policing, but also on their style of communication, verbal and non-verbal. For example, interviewers used statements like "the way he/she used hands while talking indicated a lack of confidence". It appeared that dress, mannerism, accent of speech were given more importance than qualifications relevant for the job.

In the 70's, official policies changed from Anglo-conformity to multiculturalism within a bilingual framework, a politically expedient move which was expected to raise national consciousness. But as recent events suggest, racial/ethnic intolerance is very much with us — for example, the legionnaire debate pertaining to the Sikh army officers wearing a turban as part of the uniform. In addition, there is evidence of growing disapproval among mainstream Canadians toward the practice of not allowing Christian prayers in schools and making Christmas concerts inclusive of all religions, as the media coverage of news indicates. (*Primetime News* January and February 1994). It is argued in both of these instances, that the Canadian (read Anglo-Saxon and Christian) identity is being eroded. The implication seems to be that other cultural practices should remain private and the public privileging of Anglo-Saxon Christian practices must not be altered.

These actions, I suspect, are motivated by a fear that the centrality accorded to Anglo-Saxon cultural practices will be lost and that consequently the power of the dominant majority will erode. Perhaps that fear is justified, since the ethic of multiculturalism promotes development of pride in one's own heritage for people of colour and thereby strengthens our self esteem. This can lead to people of colour striving harder to achieve race/ethnic equality in Canadian society. This *does* mean people of colour want to share power and privilege with the dominant groups.

As part of the larger society, universities reflect these biases. Experiences of racial and sexual harassment are common to many people of colour in the university context. Use of sexist and racist language is also quite widespread. In recent years most universities have adopted sexual harassment policies. But there is scant attention paid to racial harassment. The university is unfriendly and sometimes hostile to people of colour — both men and women. Even though sexual harassment policies are in place, they do not work effectively for people of colour since it is often difficult to distinguish between racial and sexual harassment. Consequently, people of colour, in general, do not pursue the matter.

Addressing these issues of prejudice and discrimination on an individual level is important to make the university a safer place for people of colour. But these are only symptoms. To address the causes of such attitudes and behavioral patterns one has to delve deeper and look into structural and ideological contexts. In other words, one has to look into systemic racism, ethnocentrism and sexism. Because these have become built into the system, the marginal position of people of colour is produced and reproduced routinely. Treating people of colour as 'strangers' and 'outsiders' with the invariable implication of inferior becomes part of the taken-for-granted reality of day-to-day life.

Universities in North America generally have been, and still are, Eurocentric and androcentric. The whole system is based on the norms and values of the dominant urban, middle-class white society. It is the experiences of white men which are valorized. (Actually, one can go so far as saying that universities are institutions of white male studies). White men have been at the centre of the production and transmission of knowledge. Whatever knowledge is produced is from their perspectives and reflects their experiences. This knowledge is often transmitted as normal, legitimate, and scientific, and is considered as truth which is universally applicable. Any deviation is evaluated in negative terms and considered as deviant, deficient, generally lacking in full humanity. I still remember how, as a graduate student, I had to study the so-called scientific generalizations made about the personality characteristics of South Asian men and women as determined by one of the masculinity-femininity scales. According to the findings using this scale, white men typified masculinity, and white women femininity, while South Asian men were effeminate and South Asian women lacked solid personality. I also remember reading the history of India written by white men. From their colonial perspective, they characterized Indian people as spineless cowards and Indian family systems as being responsible for producing morally deficient adults. Such experiences as mine are common to all colonized people. History books often omit the accomplishments of people of colour. Selective recording of historical events, and an interpretation of these events from the position of Eurocentricism has resulted in the production of knowledge that is incomplete and biased. When people of colour are included, it is only to show their deficiencies, thereby justifying the superiority of the colonizers proving that colonization was for the good of the colonized. This experience is not unique to people from India but is shared by all colonized people. Such a curriculum in the primary and secondary school system and the universities would do nothing but reinforce the marginal position of people of colour.

Curriculum decisions are made by those who administer the programs and those who teach in those programs. By and large, university administrators and teachers have been, and still are, white men. They have fashioned the curriculum to reflect their own interests and experiences. Even if there is some student interest to diversify course content, this is difficult to achieve because professors teach and provide mentoring services only in topics

in which they are well-versed. More often than not, male professors of European origin tend to take interest in subjects that reflect their own life experiences. In addition, even when they take interest in the study of people of colour, their perspectives may not reflect the interests of those they are studying. Thus the experiences of people of colour are either left out of the curriculum or constructed from a Eurocentric/androcentric perspective. Even in universities which operate under liberal democratic ideological principles, where a climate of academic freedom to explore knowledge prevails, marginalization of people of colour continues. Part of this marginalization is because of the way universities are structured and part because of the kind of people that are teaching and making curriculum decisions.

To stem the marginalization of people of colour, the academy has to be transformed to become inclusive. Rather than exclusively privileging the androcentric and Eurocentric, the perspectives of people of colour must be included in the production of knowledge and dissemination of knowledge. In recent years various programs such as Women's Studies, Native Studies, Black Studies, and Lesbian Studies are working toward this goal. But, there are deficiencies that need to be corrected in many of these programs also. For example, Women's Studies programs in many universities, are attempting to address the issue of gender by bringing women's perspectives to the production of knowledge, but more often than not, middle-class white women dominate these programs. The consequence is that white women's perspectives are generalized and universalized for all women. Even though, in recent years, space is being provided in these programs for the perspectives of women of colour, they are still in the margins of these programs. Perspectives of women of colour are usually add-ons to the existing program rather than being integrated into the program as a whole.

In addition, these programs are often isolated and ghettoized, leaving the mainstream curriculum untouched. It is not enough if the university only caters to a few students defining them as "special interest groups". To transform the academy as a whole what is important, as Joseph writes is that "...all students need to learn to see their history through the eyes of members of minority groups, such as a Cherokee Indian grandmother, or a black mother in slavery in order to see the imperialism, racism and sexism embedded in the dominant culture". (Quoted in Hale, 1992: 418).

If the efforts to make the university inclusive are successful, university population will become more aware of the after effects of colonialism and imperialism. They will see how people of Africa and Asia have become a Diaspora — like the Jews driven to countries outside Palestine, they too are a dispersed people forced to look for better opportunities elsewhere when their homelands are devastated economically and politically by the impact of colonization and imperialism. They will also see how various theories of white racial and ethnic superiority gained scientific legitimacy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and boosted the sense of superiority among white people while it eroded self-confidence among people of colour. Finally, they will see that white privilege and marginalization of people of colour are not part of the natural order of things but are the construction of sociohistorical processes.

In Canada, if we add up all the marginalized people, including women, people of colour, homosexuals, people with disabilities, and aged people, they will be a numerical majority. It is time that the perspectives of this diverse population are included in the production

and dissemination of knowledge. If we look at people of colour only, it is true that they are a minority in Canada, but when we look at the population of the world as a whole, people of colour are not a minority. The following quote is from Audre Lorde who wrote in 1989 when the USSR was still intact:

“The US and USSR are the most powerful countries in the world but only 1/8 of the world’s population. African people are also 1/8 of the world’s population. Of that, 1/4 is Nigerian. 1/2 of the world’s population is Asian. 1/2 of that is Chinese. There are 22 nations in the middle east. Most people in the world are Yellow, Black, Brown, Poor, Female Non-Christian and do not speak English. By the year 2000 the 20 largest cities in the world will have one thing in common none of them will be in Europe none in the United States”.

— Audre Lorde, January 1, 1989 (quoted in Mohanty et al, 1991:1).

Many of the civilizations of people of colour are thousands of years old and all of them have to their credit achievements that are exemplary. Universities must become places where we celebrate the achievements of all of humanity, where we learn to recognize, accept and respect differences among people. All of us will be richer for it.

To have an inclusive curriculum the professoriate must be inclusive because professors offer courses that reflect their own interests and experiences. Only when the university includes professors of diverse backgrounds can we expect diversity in course offerings. The curriculum decision-making bodies need to be inclusive if inclusive curriculum is to take effect. Under these circumstances the students will have mentors with diverse backgrounds and different perspectives from which they can pick and choose. They also will have role models to emulate.

If the ideological and structural environment of universities is transformed along these lines, academe will finally promote recognition, acceptance, and respect for diversity in background and difference in perspectives. Only under these circumstances can systemic racism be eliminated. In this climate, the taken-for-granted reality of day-to-day life in the university will not be of privileging androcentric and Eurocentric perspectives but of recognizing, accepting and respecting differing perspectives. The climate will no longer be conducive for racism/ethnocentrism or sexism because the universities will be *truly* inclusive.

It is difficult to say whether there is a political will in the university community to achieve these objectives. It is obvious that the establishment of an inclusive university goes much beyond ensuring civility in interpersonal relations — it involves sharing of power and privilege. Only time can tell what the future has in store for us all.

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8. Celebrating the Goddess - Speech

Goddess in Hinduism

by

Vanaja Dhruvarajan
Ruth Wynn Woodward Endowed Chair
Simon Fraser University

Goddess represents nothing less than the spiritual essence present in every woman. Belief in Goddess is liberating and uplifting. It helps women feel worthy, pure and entitled to all the privileges and responsibilities life has to offer. This belief can be an important source of inner strength and confidence for women to strive for goals they set for themselves. Therefore, many women consider a belief in Goddess is important.

The presence of feminine in the Hindu conceptions of divinity is well documented. Conceptualizing goddesses as representations of learning and creativity — Saraswathi; Prosperity and plenty — Laxmi; spirituality — Parvathi; strength, nurturance and power — Durga/Kali, are very common. Sometimes a goddess is represented as an integral combination of many of these aspects. For example, Ashtabhuja, eight armed goddess, holds different objects in each of seven of her hands symbolizing different aspects and the eighth hand is a gesture of blessing signifying her role as protectress of all her devotees. There are also a multiple of village goddesses, each in charge of protecting a given village. These village goddesses are considered wise and strong. Thus goddesses appear in many forms signifying different aspects. There is a general belief that all these goddesses are personifications of one ultimate goddess — Devi.

There are different traditions in the conception of role of goddesses. These conceptions have consequences for the lives of men and women. One common conception is to think of goddess as a part of god — the female principle merged in the male principle. The role of goddesses in this context is one of being helpmates to the gods as they go about performing their role. The consequence of this conception has been to think of women as helpmates of men. Men are considered more important than women following the divine hierarchy. This conception often has resulted in men dominating women and women's interests being subsumed under that of men.

Parallel to these beliefs there are others which consider goddesses as having power and authority because they are wise and strong. They are nurturing and caring or angry and fierce as the situation demands. For example, the village goddesses protect the villagers from internal and external enemies. They inspire the villagers to be good and law abiding citizens. They also protect them by combating evil spirits in the form of droughts, epidemics and floods. When villagers worship the village goddess, it is to pray for her nurture and care as well as her protection. There is an implicit faith in her ability to do the needful.

The latter tradition has been instrumental in the development of conviction among many Hindus that women are as capable as men in achieving whatever goal they set for themselves. It is because of this belief women in positions of authority, it is argued, are more easily accepted by Hindus than anywhere else. One example of such a practice is that of Indira Gandhi, the former Prime Minister of India. She was thought of as the personification of Durgamatha — mother goddess, protecting her children. There are many examples in various professions where women's ability is not questioned. In addition it is this tradition that has promoted the belief that women are spiritual equals of men. Such a belief creates conditions for the development of relationships between men and women on a level of equality. Many rituals and social practices among lower castes in general, in the Southern and Eastern regions of India in particular, testify to these beliefs. For example, daughters are considered auspicious, daughters-in-law, it is believed, should never be made to feel bad because they personify goddess within the home. The ceremonies conducted during first menstruation of a girl are joyous celebrations of womanhood. Elderly women's advice is sought in all important decisions since they are considered wise. These are only a few examples. In every case women are made to feel good about themselves and are considered important in day-to-day life and therefore are respected.

The optimist in me wonders what would it be like for the lives of women if these women-friendly traditions became popular and part of every day life for all Hindu women. If that were to happen, we would celebrate the birth of a daughter with as much pomp and ceremony as we do the birth of a son. We would nurture and care for our daughters and watch them grow to become young women full of love, dignity and pride. They would be ready to take their rightful place along with their brothers. They would be entitled to rights and privileges life has to offer as well as duties and obligations life demands. No longer would we humiliate our daughters with any talk of dowry because they will get their share of parental property which would be equal to that of their brothers. They can do with it as they choose. Our daughters will not be submitted to the scrutiny regarding their right to live because female foeticide, female infanticide, female child neglect, bride burning and widow burning will all be things of the past — when women were devalued. I believe, ushering in such a world is possible. But I do not know if we have the will to work toward it.

DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN'S STUDIES

presents



**CELEBRATION OF
GODDESS**

*You are invited to a party to
welcome*

DR. VANAJA DHURUVARAJAN
Ruth Wynn Woodward Endowed
Chair
in Women's Studies

Dr. Dhruvarajan, Professor of Sociology, University of Winnipeg, has extensive experience in family and socialization and dynamics of sex and gender. Her research interests concentrate on women of colour, particularly women of Indo-Canadian origin. She will be joined by Dr. Mandakranta Bose, Sessional Instructor in Women's Studies, in giving a short talk on celebrating goddess in Hindu culture using pictures and music to accompany their presentation


HALPERN CENTRE
ROOM 126

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 20

4:30 - 7:30 P.M.

Refreshments Provided
Everyone Welcome

Please call 291-4742 or 291-3333 for further information



BRIDGING THE RAVINE AND GENDER GAP



The grassroots women's movement was largely instrumental in establishing women's studies programs in the university, and it is the ideas that emerge from daily struggles within the community that continue to provide the energy and motivation needed both to transform the academy and to resist co-optation of women's studies by the academic establishment.

This conference will bring together the women-of-colour community and the university to celebrate successful initiatives and achievements, and to focus continued efforts on placing women of colour at the centre of the production and transformation of knowledge within the academy. The type of relationship between the university and the community which will promote the interests of women of colour will be discussed.

TOPICS

Representatives of the women-of-colour community groups in B.C. will discuss the struggles they are involved in to promote the interests of women-of-colour groups by focussing on issues of concern such as:

racism	sexism	multiculturalism
poverty	violence	occupational and educational opportunities

While dealing with each of these topics the problems faced by women of colour in general will be discussed. In addition, efforts will be made to address issues of concern of people with disabilities, lesbians and the aged in these communities. Presenters will comment on the achievements of the community groups, problems faced by them in achieving the goals and possible solutions. Most important of all, presenters will discuss the role of the university within these contexts.

SPEAKERS

Community activists working for the betterment of women in women-of-colour communities.

Scholars who have done research on women-of-colour communities and those who have created bridges between the academy and the community.

DATE

Saturday, May 13, 1995
9:00-4:30 p.m.*

PLACE

Simon Fraser University
Harbour Centre Campus
515 West Hastings St.
Vancouver, B.C.

*Daycare vouchers will be available.



1. Programme

11

**BRIDGING THE RACE
AND GENDER GAP**

**Vanaja Dhruvarajan
R.W.W.P
Department of Women's Studies
S.F.U.**

**Saturday, May 13, 1995
Harbour Center Campus**



Saturday, May 13 Morning

- 9:00 Introduction of RWWP Mary Lynn Stewart
Chair, Women's Studies
Department
- 9:05 Introduction of Conference and Speakers Vanaja Dhruvarajan
RWWP
- 9:15 First Plenary
Monica Buchanan: *M.A. Candidate, Women's Studies, SFU*
No Where to Run, No Where to Hide: Women of Colour
Experiences of Poverty and Violence
- Raminder Dosanjh: *ESL Instructor and Community Activist*
Organizing at the Grass Roots Level and the Challenges
We Face
- Cecelia Diocson: *Chairperson, Philippine Women's Centre, BC*
The Feminization of Global Migration
- Jenny Kwan: *Vancouver City Councillor*
Racism and Multiculturalism
- Priti Shaw: *Advocate: Employment Equity and owner of Drishti
Consulting*
Employment Equity
- 10:15 Coffee Break
- 10:30 Introduction of John Stubbs, President, SFU
- 10:45-12:15 First Plenary Cont'd.

Saturday May 13 Afternoon

- 12:15-1:15 Lunch Break
*The foodfair on the lower mall level will be open and
there are numerous restaurants within walking
distance of Harbour Center*
- 1:15 Introduction of Panel Vanaja Dhruvarajan
RWWP
- 1:30 Second Plenary
Vijay Agnew: *Division of Social Sciences, York University*
Community-based Organizations Providing
Services to Immigrant Women
- Aradhana Parmar: *Faculty of General Studies, University of
Calgary*
Interlacing the University with the Community
- Nandita Sharma: *Grad Student, Dept. of Sociology, SFU*
The Cheapening of Lives: Women of Colour within
Coalitions
- Jill Vickers: *Dept. of Political Science, Carleton University*
Accepting Responsibility: Dealing with White
Privilege in Teaching, Curriculum and Research
- 3:15 Coffee Break
- 3:30-4:30 Discussion: Chair, Vanaja Dhruvarajan

It is well known that the grassroots women's movements were largely instrumental in establishing women's studies programs/departments in universities. It is the new ideas that emerge from daily struggles in the community that energize women's studies and provide support in their efforts to transform the academy. In addition, they provide strength and motivation to resist co-optation of women's studies by the academic establishment. Thus it is fitting to bring the community and the university together to celebrate these initiatives and achievements. It is particularly fitting at this time to listen to representatives from women-of-colour community groups to promote our efforts to center women of colour in the production and transformation of knowledge in the academy.

Representatives of the women-of-colour community groups in B.C. will discuss the struggles they are involved in to promote the interests of women-of-colour groups by focussing on issues of concern such as:

racism	sexism	multiculturalism
poverty	violence	occupational and educational opportunities

While dealing with each of these topics the problems faced by women of colour in general will be discussed. In addition, efforts will be made to address issues of concern of people of people with disabilities, lesbians and the aged in these communities. Presenters will comment on the achievements of the community groups, problems faced by them in achieving the goals and possible solutions. Most important of all, presenters will discuss the role of the university in these contexts.



Dr. Vanaja Dhruvarajan
Ruth Wynn Woodward Endowed Chair
in Women's Studies
invites you to a conference on

Bridging the Race and Gender Gap

on Saturday, May 13, 1995
from 9:00 to 4:30

Labatt Hall
Harbour Centre Campus
Simon Fraser University

R.S.V.P. 291-3333

Practicing Human Values and Strengthening Family Bonds

by

Vanaja Dhruvarajain
Ruth Wynn Woodward Professor,
Department of Women's Studies
Simon Fraser University

Practicing human values such as being fair and just, caring and concerned, sharing and cooperating, being respectful and loving, trusting the other and being trustworthy oneself, being mindful of one's duties towards family and community, does promote family solidarity, strengthens family bonds. Keeping communication channels open facilitates resolution of conflicts as they arise rather than leaving them aside to fester and cause more serious problems. These channels are more likely to be open in contexts where people, in fact believe in human values and practice them consistently.

It is only under these conditions that we as immigrants are able to face the challenges in the larger society successfully, provide good role models to our children so that they are able to integrate into Canadian society and become confident and courageous to achieve goals they set for themselves. The following are a few concrete suggestions to create conditions conducive for practicing human values and strengthening family bonds:

1. Start a study group to look into those aspects of our religion and culture that promotes equality among all people and retrieve woman friendly strands that promote intellectual and spiritual equality among men and women. Writings of Ghandhi and Nehru are particularly useful. I can suggest many other good sources.
2. Start a support group for men and women separately where they can regularly meet and discuss strategies to cope with daily challenges of life within the family and the larger society.
3. Encourage senior members of the community to act as moral and spiritual leaders of the community. It is important to include elderly men as well as women. Encourage them to set the tone of respect among all people as well as justice and care in family relationships.
4. Start a community school for children where they can learn our ethnic language and culture; participate in sport activities. The Uncles and Aunts that provide leadership in these activities are an invaluable source of role models for the children of the community. Whenever they run into problems with their parents these Uncles and Aunts can lend a helping hand.
5. Make available information regarding services in the larger society, and in the ethnic community, to address family violence and discord, alcoholism and so on. Each member in the family, including women and children should know where to go and whom to call when they are faced with a problem.
6. Start a group of concerned citizens of the community to act as a buffer between the service providing agencies in the larger society and individual members of the community in need of help. This group can be a clearing house of information regarding employment and educational opportunities, various service providing agencies, and women's centres to name just a few. The community centre which is already there can provide space for providing such information.

Vanaja Dhruvarajan:

Changing the university: context and content

by Vanaja Dhruvarajan, as told to Gomi Puri

Vanaja Dhruvarajan is a first generation Indo-Canadian woman. Currently, she is the 1994-1995 Ruth Wynn Woodward professor of women's studies at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, BC. Since 1973, Dhruvarajan has been teaching sociology at the University of Winnipeg. She obtained her Ph.D at the University of Chicago.

Dhruvarajan has written a book, *Hindu Women and the Power of Ideology* [published by Bergin and Garvey, Massachusetts, 1989, and in paperback by Vistaar Publications, Delhi, India 1989], as well as numerous articles on Indo-Canadian women.

Dhruvarajan organized a one-day conference, *Bridging the Race and Gender Gap*, held in May at Simon Fraser University, Harbour Centre campus. The objective of the conference was to bring together women from the university and activist communities—and in particular, women of colour from those communities—to discuss issues such as racism, sexism, poverty, violence and occupational and educational opportunities.

Gomi Puri: As the current incumbent of the Ruth Wynn Woodward Endowed Chair at Simon Fraser University, what special focus are you trying to bring to the teaching of women's studies?

Vanaja Dhruvarajan: One of the reasons for the five endowed Chairs across Canada was the bridge the gap between universities and the community. Women's studies itself developed as the result of grassroots women's movements, and is often considered to be the academic arm of grassroots women's movements. The idea is to keep a continuous link between the academy and the movement itself so that both can develop from the interaction.

Puri: You say there are three aspects to your work: research, teaching and community outreach. With regard to research, is there a special focus to your work this year?

Dhruvarajan: I have been involved in doing research on Indo-Canadian women for some time, and my work this year is a continuation of those studies. I have done research on first generation Indo-Canadian women in Winnipeg. I have also collected data on second generation Indo-Canadian women, and during this year will be writing up the findings of that study.

Puri: When we look at the position of South Asian women in Canadian society, the social location of South Asian women here and now, it appears to be a continuation of the colonial exploitation that has characterized our history for much of the past two centuries. Do you agree with this analysis?

Dhruvarajan: By and large, yes. The colonial heritage has impacted on the position of South Asian women. Immi-

gration policies have generally been racist. Their preference has been for able-bodied men. Women have mostly immigrated under family class, with the expectation of being looked after by their menfolk.

Often that does not work out, and then women find they do not qualify for many social services like language training, *et cetera*. So, they are forced to take up jobs in the lowest [paid and most exploited] rungs of the labour force. There were exceptions to this in the late 60s and early 70s when there was a shortage of professionals. [Some] South Asian women were able to [get] professional jobs because of the difficulty of finding European immigrants to fill these positions.

So there is a kind of bi-modal distribution with [South Asian] women in the highest as well as the lowest categories of the employment market. Women in both these categories suffer; the ones in professional fields often cannot find jobs commensurate with their training because training from other countries is considered by universities and professional associations as inferior. Women in the lowest levels of employment face the worst conditions. So the colonial heritage does affect both.

Puri: What has been your experience in trying to bring change to the university context?

Dhruvarajan: Part of the mandate of this Chair is to teach two courses. I taught a course on women of colour in the first term, and one on Indo-Canadian women during the second term. I have faced some difficulty convincing white students of the significance of white privilege, but by and large the courses have been well received.

There are many ways to deal with systemic racism: through changing the university curriculum to become more inclusive, respecting differences and accepting differences, having more women of colour teaching these courses, and consciously trying to raise awareness in the larger society.

Puri: Could you talk about the content of your courses, and about the reaction of the university population to your courses?

Dhruvarajan: I wanted to bring in the perspective of women of colour [into the courses] to make the material more inclusive, to bring the margin to the centre, as [African American writer and academic] bell hooks puts it. In addressing the issues from the perspective of women of colour, I wanted to explore ways in which [our] issues could be addressed.

I did this in several ways. Many of my students were white women. One method was to ask each student to [categorize] herself according to gender, class, race, and ethnicity, make an analy-



Photo courtesy of Vanaja Dhruvarajan

sis of her own life experiences, and then compare [her experience] to [the experiences] of women of colour [they interviewed]. The idea was to help [the white students] understand they have race and class privilege. Although some of the women of colour have class privilege, they do not have race privilege. The idea is to understand the intersection of all these factors.

We also analyzed many of the articles written by women of colour about women of colour, and discussed possible solutions for the problems women of colour face in Canadian society, such as racism, being treated as "outsiders", job discrimination. Many [white] women said they had gained a whole new perspective.

There seems to be a great deal of interest in the [women's studies] department to continue teaching a course on women of colour, to be more inclusive and responsive to the needs expressed by women of colour.

With regard to the course on Indo-Canadian women, there is not much

written information [on or by Indo-Canadian women]. Almost all women in the course were Indo-Canadian women, so part of the course was having them look at their life experiences as Indo-Canadians.

The Indo-Canadian women [in my class] were not only concerned about racism in the larger society, but about the class and caste conflicts in their own community, as well as issues such as dowry, sex selection, *et cetera*.

Puri: Have you had the opportunity to go out into the larger community, and bring the issues of women of colour to them?

Dhruvarajan: One of the exciting things about my work this year has been the opportunity to meet many groups—both of white and of South Asian women. I particularly remember one instance [when] I spoke at a meeting about the global and national issues of women of colour and of their views on these issues. One older white woman came up and said that her perspective on these issues had changed completely, and she had acquired a new dimension to her thinking and analysis.

At another meeting I spoke of the issues of racism and sexism surrounding the sex selection issue [and] the South Asian community, and the treatment of the issue by the media as a "cultural" phenomenon. I pointed out that it was an issue of power, not culture. I drew the parallel of the issue of date rape that happens so frequently in Canadian society and pointed out that a person from a foreign country, coming in, would see this as a cultural phenomenon rather than the power issue that it is. Seeing the light go on when the issue was explained in that way was a very satisfying experience!

Gomi Puri is an Indo-Canadian woman who lives in Vancouver. She works for the Ministry of Women's Equality.

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Indo-Canadian Woman Appointed To SFU Women's Studies Chair

By R. Paul Dhillon

BURNABY - "It is a great challenge, which I look forward to," is how Vanaja Dhruvarajan, a professor of Sociology at the University of Winnipeg, describes her appointment to the Ruth Wynn Woodward Endowed Chair in women's studies at SFU.

Dhruvarajan, who came to study in the United States in 1960 from her native of Karnataka, India, received her Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Chicago.

After graduating, she moved to Winnipeg to teach sociology at the University of Winnipeg, where she is currently a full professor. In a telephone interview, Dhruvarajan explained that her current appointment at SFU, which is a year long position, came about after she applied for the Chair along with other women professors from across Canada.

"Part of my role, of course, is to help support and raise the profile of women's studies," ex-

will return to her teaching position at the University of Winnipeg after her one-year appointment.

"Because this is a grassroots movement, I also want to encourage the ideas, involvement and initiatives of the larger community, to make use of them, and ensure that this process is ongoing."

Dhruvarajan has extensive experience in family and socialization and the dynamic of sex and gender and research interests which concentrate on women of color, particularly women of Indo-Canadian origin.

"Until now, the struggle to place women's perspectives in the centre of all academic disciplines has largely involved white women," says Dhruvarajan. "This must now include knowledge created from the points of view of women of color, who are too often portrayed as exotic stereotypes and pushed away from the centre, to the margins and periphery of society.

"This is everybody's

Although society must continue to fight discrimination by gender, class, race and ethnicity, a very important goal is to significantly expand opportunities for women of color and to bring them into the mainstream of society."

Dhruvarajan is currently teaching a course on Women of Color in Canada and next semester she will be teaching a course on Indo-Canadian women. She hopes that many Indo-Canadian women will take the course since it looks at the experiences of first generation Indo-Canadian women.

The Ruth Wynn Woodward endowed chair was established in 1986 in honor of the B.C. pioneer whose rich life included family business affairs, cattle ranching, and a very active role in community resource groups. Among those who have been appointed to the chair include national political figure, Rosemary Brown, SFU economist Marjorie Cohen and entrepreneur/taxonomist



VANAJA DHRUVARAJAN

