

POSTER WOMEN

Exhibition of Posters from the Women's Movement in India

- An exciting new initiative
- First time such an exhibition has been attempted in India and probably anywhere in the world.
- One of the most vibrant and dynamic of movements, the women's movement in India has produced hundred of wonderful, colourful images and messages to support the many causes it has taken up (violence against women, rape, dowry, gender sensitive laws, health services, the right to food, information, shelter, housing, political participation etc.)
- Often treated as ephemeral, these posters and images have not been well preserved, many have disappeared and/or been destroyed.
- Today Zubaan attempts to retrieve this valuable archive, to showcase it and in doing so, to present a selection of posters that demonstrate an alternative aesthetics and politics, posters that throw light on the movement.
- Posters have been collected from all over the country collaborating with 200 plus groups, organisations and individuals, and over 1200+ posters etc have been collected.

Since the early 1970s, the period that gave rise to the contemporary women's movement in India, the poster has played a crucial part in highlighting women's issues. Many of the feminist organizations were born at this time: they grew out of Left and peasant movements; out of the student movements led by Jaiprakash Narayan; and out of the politicisation of universities. Much of this history of activism, of organizing and mobilizing, of the euphoria of the early days of activism, has been lost to the movement because organizations, particularly activist ones, are rarely able to archive and document their own histories. There exist considerable textual records/information, but very little that documents the movement *visually*. Virtually every campaign has been marked by the production of vivid, sometimes colourful, always eye-catching posters. And yet, much of this material, in the form of posters and pamphlets has been lost, or is lying with groups and individuals in personal collections scattered across the country.

Poster Women, is a project conceived and coordinated by Zubaan, which seeks to document the rich and multi-layered history of the movement by putting together a selection of posters that were created for particular campaigns, and also some that are more general, for example, posters used to mark international women's day, or those used to mark particular women's movement conferences and so on. In recent months, we've managed to put this project together with the help of nearly 200 groups from all over India who have participated enthusiastically in the process of collecting posters, and documenting their histories. All of this material, at the moment a collection of over 1000 posters, will be put in digital format on CD-ROMs and made available to each participating group, and also housed in the Sound and Picture Archives for Women (SPARROW) in Mumbai as a permanent archive. As well, Zubaan will organize exhibitions that showcase a selection of posters focusing on a number of campaigns. This exhibition, scheduled to open at Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, 22 March – 5 April, 2006, and will then travel to many different parts of the country either in actual, or in virtual form. It is scheduled to be at Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath, Bangalore (8-14 Nov, 2006) and soon thereafter in Chennai. We are hoping it will also travel to Hyderabad and Mumbai. As with all Zubaan projects (and following in the

tradition of our mother organization, Kali for Women) we plan to publish a book of posters and some exclusive merchandise like a CD documenting all the posters collected. Some of the issues we plan to focus on include the campaigns against rape, dowry, violence against women, widow immolation, injectable contraceptives, alcohol as well as campaigns around health, the environment, dalit women's rights, disability, sexual rights, women's political participation, literacy and education, human rights, work, law and a host of others. In putting together this exhibition, the book, the entire archive, we hope not only to document and possibly preserve a different history of the movement, but also to address the new and important question of using visual sources as ways of understanding history.

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