

# **SEMINAR: CONVERSATIONS ON SOCIAL REPRODUCTION**

**TITLE:** Sex work & Feminism in India -The vexed relationships

**SPEAKER:** Tejaswi Sevekari

**WHEN:** Friday December 3rd, 1-2pm GMT/6:30-7:30pm IST

**WHERE:** Teams; [Follow the link to register](#)



**ABSTRACT:** Feminist understandings and standpoints about 'agency' 'consent' and 'voluntary entry into sex work' remain fertile ground for discussions and debates but also possible disconnections among the two movements, which lead them to work on parallel lines that are difficult to connect. In India a common feminist perspective concerning sex work is not only to see violence in sex work but to see sex work itself as violence. Secondly, the entry point presumes harm, coercion and victimhood. The third issue is that sex work is associated with trafficking. Sex work itself is taken for granted as trafficking without giving space to voluntary entry into sex work. A feminist opposition to mention 'sex work' as against 'prostitution' is also seen and often experienced as problematic by the sex worker's rights groups everywhere as well as in India (Sahani, et al 2008).

Few scholars and activists had tried to formulate sex work as a form of labour in the context of a global sex market and the labour relations that sex workers experience in this market (Kotiswaran 2015). Efforts to form alliances and to work together with women workers' union is a comparatively new process for collectives of women in sex work in Maharashtra. As these collectives of women in sex work believe in 'sex work as work' and they demand dignity of work/labour along with their fight against stigma and discrimination. The relationship of the sex workers movement with the feminist movement does not seem to be very organic and does not occupy a comfortable position in India. Even though the need to form alliances is felt by both the movements, there is a visible tension among both groups. The seminar will look at understanding the connections and points of difference between the mainstream feminist movement and sex workers movement and discuss the possibility of alliance building.

**BIO:** Tejaswi is a post graduate in medical and psychiatric social work and is working in the field for the past 25 years. She is a certified trainer to conduct empowerment workshop of Empowerment Institute -USA. She is on the advisory board of National AIDS Research Institute, B.J. Medical CRS and AIDS Clinical Trial Network (Global)

Her focus is on HIV related issues in general and women in sex work in particular. She has initiated and coordinated the process of formation of sex workers collective, a Community Based Organization in Pune- Saheli Sangh, of which she is presently the executive Director. She is closely working as a supporter for National Network of Sex Workers (NNSW- India). She has presented many papers at national and international conferences and is currently pursuing her PhD from TISS Mumbai.

**SEMINAR SERIES:** This social reproduction seminar series is part of the Laws of Social Reproduction project led by Prof. Prabha Kotiswaran, and based at King's College London and IWWAGE Delhi.

For more information about the project or to join the network, please email [Prabha.kotiswaran@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:Prabha.kotiswaran@kcl.ac.uk). The Laws of Social Reproduction project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (under grant agreement No. 772946)



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