

India: Obituary for our Beloved Vidya Bal, A Veteran Feminist Journalist (1936-2020)

Saturday 1 February 2020, by [PATEL Vibhuti](#) (Date first published: 30 January 2020).

Our dear Vidya Bal passed away on 30-1-2020.

Vidyatai (*tai* in Marathi language means sister) was a highly respected feminist for her warm, affectionate and welcoming nature. She had a fan-following among 4 generations as she was ready to listen to them with genuine interest and enter into a dialogue. She was a noted feminist, intellectually versatile journalist and committed activists of the women's liberation movement in Maharashtra. She was pioneer of women's rights movement in Pune during early 1970s. At that time, she was extremely popular editor of widely circulated weekly in Marathi, STREE. When her increasing involvement in the women's movement made it difficult to survive in STREE, she quit. Maharashtra Women's writers Forum made a public appeal to make contribution to start an independent feminist journal in Marathi that would provide democratic platform to all progressive ideas for women's rights. Thus Milun Saarya Jani (i.e. All of Us Coming Together). Her respect for plural perspective in the women's movement endeared her to all across ideological spectrum from Gandhian-liberal-socialists and feminists.



In 1985, we traveled to gather for End of the Decade (1975-1985) Nairobi Conference. It was a long journey with a halt in Adisababa while going and returning. I never felt a generation gap in those 10 days of personal and political interactions with her. In Nairobi Conference, there were feminists of 185 countries. Vidyatai interacted all them with a spirit of a learner. Vidyatai was always open to new ideas. When I submitted the Report on "Socioeconomic Status of Muslims in Maharashtra", she asked me to write an exhaustive report on Muslim Women's Status in Maharashtra.

When movement of young women for entry into sanctum sanctorum of Shani Shingnur was initiated by young women in Maharashtra, Vidyatai along with Pushpatai Bhawe went on a hunger strike not because they wanted to enter the temple, but to express their solidarity with the young women spearheading the campaign for temple entry.

She has passed on her legacy of feminism not only to get scientist daughter, Dr. Vinita Bal who is a

member of Saheli, Delhi, but to thousands of girls and women, all over Maharashtra who found in Vidyatai their Role Model.

Vidyatai received lifetime achievement Laadali Media Award by Population First, Mumbai and many more for your dedicated efforts for women's rights.

Vibhuti Patel, 30-1-2020
