



Stree Shakti- The Parallel Force

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EQUAL OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION FOR WOMEN

It was decided at the **4th World Conference on Women in Beijing, 1995** that “Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspective at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved.” But post Beijing we are still waiting for an **EOC for women in India. Stree Shakti - The Parallel Force** has been lobbying since 2001 for an Equal Opportunity Commission to be established in India with an objective to provide Equal opportunities for women of India.

Seminars on Equal Opportunity Commission under the banner of Stree Shakti - The Parallel Force.

- Seminar on **4th December 2001 at Indian Habitat Center** on Equal Opportunity Commission. The seminar was presided by **Dr. Najma Heptulla, Deputy Chairperson, Rajya Sabha & President, and Inter Parliamentary Council.** Other panellist present were Professor Sushila Kaushik, President, Centre for Development studies and Actions, Delhi, Dr. Ranjana Kumari, Director, Centre for Social Research Gender Training Institute, Dr. Neeru Misra, National Coordinator PFHD, UNDP, Ms. Kamal Singh, Head, Governance and Social Justice, British Council Division and Mrs. Indu Jain, Chairperson, Times of India. Moderator was Shri S.K. Sharma.
- Seminar on **5th April 2002 at Calcutta University** in collaboration with the Women's cell of Calcutta University. Dr. Ishita Mukherjee Director of Women's studies Research Center presided the seminar. Other Participants were, Ms Shyamali Gupta and Ruma Sarkar of Pachim Banga Mahila Samity, **Professor Malini Bhattacharya** The Director of School of Woman Studies , Jadavpur University .
- Seminar on **27th January 2003 , at Rajasthan University** jointly with RUWA, Dr. Pratibha Jain, Sunita Satayrthi and CECO- DECON Director Manju Joshi participated in the seminar along with prominent Ngo's and scholars. Lad Kumari Jain, RUWA said that - “Although it is an important and vibrant step forward, it chiefly serves to **“wipe the tears of women”** whereas we also need a counterpart to” **strive to bring smiles on women's faces”**
- **February 2003** participated in a one day work shop on Equal Opportunity Commission at **Development Alternatives** in New Delhi. Ashok Khosla, Aparna Basu were present along with members of AIWC.
- Made a presentation **Mrs. Sonia Gandhi** about EOC She evinced interested in the concept of Equal Opportunity Commission for women and sent **Smt Margaret Alva** on Deputation to a meeting at **British Council** on Equal Opportunity Commission on July 30 2003. Many women M.Ps, women groups and scholars interacted and explored the possibility of setting up an EOC.

- From 2003 to 2005 the BJP Government was in power and during this time We were informed by woman MPs that an Act of the Government was required to bring in Equal Opportunity Commission. The lobbying was intensified. In 2005 during international seminar on Women Work & Health the issue was discussed and received support from various organizations.

In 2006 at a **Stree Shakti award ceremony**, Justice Ruma Pal and the Ex - Director of Woman's Studies Jadavpur University **Dr.Yashodhara Bagchi** acknowledged the importance of Equal Opportunity Commission.

- The recent **Sacchar Report** unfortunately it addresses to the "policies to deal with the deprivations of Muslims and which would sharply focus on inclusive development and mainstreaming of the community." The panel is recommending an Equal opportunity Commission for the Minority community only, which ignores the demand of other Indian women. This issue needs to be seriously addressed.
- Equal Opportunity Commission has been working for woman all over the world. Stree Shakti - The Parallel Force demands that Equal Opportunity Commission should be set up for addressing the need of women in India.
- The National Commission of Woman is overburdened with several women issues and the cause of domestic violence, sexual harassment at work place; while the 33 % Women reservation bill seems to be a distant cry. This demand of ours for an Equal Opportunity Commission for all women is justified and should be implemented.
- A delegation visited **The President of India in September 2007** and submitted a request to look in to the above issue and seeked her support for establishing Equal Opportunity Commission for all women in India.
- **The President of India issued in 2008 September** a statement expressing the need to establish a National Gender Equality Commission.

Stree Shakti, The parallel force welcomes India's first women President's initiative to suggest to Government of India to set up a national gender equality commission to look into issues relating to gender equality.

Stree Shakti – The Parallel Force has been demanding this through seminars and women rallies since 2001. They had called upon the President of India on Oct 16, 2007 with this request. The demand has the support of eminent women leaders like UPA Chairperson Smt. Sonia Gandhi. Dr Najma Heptullah, Prof. Malini Bhattacharya, Smt. Margret Alva, Kumari Selja.

Stree Shakti sees a light of hope through this intervention at a time when the women reservation bill is struggling for its survival. 'Women of India deserve opportunities if not reservation', comments Rekha Mody Founder Secretary Stree Shakti, The Parallel Force.

Women of India welcome the suggestion by the President of India, setting up National Gender Equality Commission. Setting up of such a committee has been long standing demand of women groups. Continuing the battle for equal participation of women in politics Stree Shakti along with other women activist launched a charter in 2018 that central government ensures that 50% seats in Parliament and legislative assemblies are reserved for women.