

Report on

Vocal Conference 3.0

Equal Opportunity Cell

College of Social Work (Autonomous) Nirmala Niketan

12th March, 2025



Introduction

The VOCAL Conference 3.0, organised by the Equal Opportunity Cell of the College of Social Work (Empowered Autonomous), Nirmala Niketan, was held on 12th March 2025 at 2:00 PM. Continuing the legacy of the previous editions, this year's conference focused on the theme "*From Thoughts to Action*," emphasizing the urgent need to translate critical reflections into meaningful social transformation. Around 53 participants participated in this conference.

The event aimed to encourage students to engage with socially relevant literature, strengthen analytical abilities, and nurture a culture of informed dialogue around historical, political, and socio-cultural issues. The session was chaired by Ms. Gauri Sanap, who facilitated the discussion with insight and clarity.

Conference Overview

The program commenced with an opening note by the chairperson, Ms. Gauri Sanap, who highlighted the importance of reading Ambedkarite, Bahujan, and anti-caste literature as a means to conscientize young social workers. She emphasized how ideas develop into collective action when rooted in knowledge, critical thinking, and empathy.


The conference featured four panelists, each presenting a review and critical understanding of a selected book by influential thinkers and writers whose work has shaped discourses on caste, identity, justice, and resistance.

Brief Description of Conference

1. Panelist: Pratiksha Wargude

Book Presented: *Who Were the Shudras?*

Author: Dr. B. R. Ambedkar



Pratiksha provided a comprehensive review of Dr. Ambedkar's seminal work *Who Were the Shudras?*, which investigates the historical origin of the Shudra community within the caste hierarchy. She highlighted Ambedkar's meticulous use of historical, linguistic, and scriptural analysis to challenge Brahmanical narratives surrounding caste formation.

The presentation emphasized Ambedkar's argument that Shudras were originally a warrior community who were later socially degraded due to conflicts with the Brahmins. Pratiksha linked these historical insights to contemporary caste realities, reinforcing the need to understand the roots of oppression to dismantle it in the present.

Her analysis captured how Ambedkar's scholarship transforms thought into actionable consciousness, resonating strongly with the conference theme.

2. Panelist: Mansi Gangurde

Book Presented: Hindu Code Bill

Author: Vasant Moon

Mansi presented Vasant Moon's work on the *Hindu Code Bill*, which documents Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's efforts to reform Hindu personal laws. She explained the historical context in which Ambedkar envisioned the Bill as a radical step toward gender equality and social justice.

Her summary highlighted the resistance Ambedkar faced in parliament, leading to his eventual resignation as Law Minister. Mansi stressed the significance of the Bill in expanding women's rights—such as property rights, divorce rights, and inheritance—while also demonstrating Ambedkar's unwavering commitment to social transformation.

The presentation underscored how legislative reforms reflect the path from philosophical thought to structural action.

3. Panelist: Premsagar Bagade



Book Presented: Birsa Munda: Āryānāchā Adhikār

Author: Mahashweta Devi

Premasagar delivered an engaging review of Mahashweta Devi's powerful narrative on the life and struggles of tribal revolutionary Birsa Munda. He described how the book captures Birsa's fight against exploitative colonial systems and oppressive landlords, as well as the cultural erasure experienced by Adivasi communities.

The presentation explored themes of land rights, cultural identity, and indigenous resistance, drawing parallels to present-day struggles of tribal communities. Premasagar highlighted how Mahashweta Devi portrays Birsa Munda not merely as a historical figure but as a symbol of rebellion and collective action.

His reflections aligned deeply with the conference theme by showing how marginalized communities convert lived experiences into organized resistance.


4. Panelist: Pawan Wagh

Book Presented: Rajarshi Shahu: Vāsā āṇi Vārāsā

Author: Adv. Govind Pansare

Pawan presented a detailed analysis of Govind Pansare's work on Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj, focusing on his pioneering contributions to social justice, anti-caste reforms, and education. The review highlighted Shahu Maharaj's policies such as reservations, free education, and reforms aimed at uplifting the backward classes.

Pawan emphasized how Shahu Maharaj translated progressive thinking into concrete governance measures, demonstrating exemplary leadership rooted in equality. He further connected Shahu's legacy to contemporary socio-political movements advocating for equitable access and representation.



The presentation inspired the audience to reflect on actionable leadership in social work practice.

5. Chairperson's Reflections

Chairperson Ms. Gauri Sanap provided insightful remarks, appreciating the depth, clarity, and critical engagement demonstrated by each panelist. She reiterated that reading such transformative literature is essential for developing a social worker's ethical and political consciousness.

Ms. Sanap concluded by reminding students that knowledge becomes powerful only when channelled into action. She encouraged them to continue reading, questioning, and actively contributing to social change.

Conclusion

The VOCAL Conference 3.0 successfully achieved its objective of fostering a space for critical dialogue rooted in anti-caste, progressive, and justice-oriented literature. The presentations offered diverse perspectives while maintaining a collective commitment to understanding social realities and envisioning transformative action.

Through thoughtful discussion and engaged participation, the conference reinforced the importance of moving *"From Thoughts to Action,"* embodying the true spirit of social work. The Equal Opportunity Cell looks forward to continuing this tradition of nurturing reflective and socially responsible learners.

