

Neera Desai: Mother Goddess of Women's Studies in India

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Neera Desai dies of cancer

Mumbai:

Dr Neera Desai, one of the pioneers of women's studies in India, died at her residence in Dadar on Thursday. She was 84 and was suffering from cancer.

Desai set up India's first Research Centre for Women's Studies at SNDT Women's University and served as its first director. She had authored several books and research works on women's issues including *Feminism as Experience* published by Sound and Picture Archives for Research on Women. Her other major works include *Women in Modern India*, *Two Decades of Women's Movement*, *Women and Society*, etc.

Professor Vibhuti Patel, director of department of Post-Graduate Studies and Research and a close associate of Desai, said, "I had been working with her since 1977. In all these years that I had known her, I thought of her as a warm person who was forever motivating and ever ready to experiment with new ideas. She was a major institution builder. This is a period when women's studies is coming of age. However, she started work in this field in the early 50s and for over two decades fought a lone battle to raise awareness about the same till the 70s when she began garnering support from several quarters."

Patel remembers Desai as an enthusiastic participant of women's rallies on International Women's Day. "No matter which part of the world she was in, she would make it a point to attend rallies on March 8. Such was her spirit," she said.

Desai retired in 1985 but continued working for women's issues. "She would regularly travel from her residence in Dadar to Bhilwada where she was an active participant at a rural development centre. Her major areas of interest spanned from issues of tribal and dalit women to those from other strata of society."

India Express News Service

Posted: Saturday , Jun 27, 2009

* From <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/n...>

Prof. Neera Desai passes away

June 28, 2009

neera 1One of the pioneers of Women's Studies in India, Prof. Neera Desai, passed away on 25th June 2009 in Mumbai. She was 84.

Prof. Neera Desai was the Founder Director of Research Centre for Women's Studies (1974) at the SNDT Women's University in Mumbai, India. She was among the first few women academicians in India who raised their voices against the invisibility of women within academic disciplines.

Her works include: 'Women in Modern India' (1952) and 'Feminism in Western India' (2004). She was a member of Status of Women in India Committee that produced TOWARDS EQUALITY REPORT. in 1974, and was nominated for 1000 Women for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005.

Working on women's issues and feminism across the social categories of tribe, caste and class, she was committed to taking higher education to the grassroots.

A Memorial Meeting is scheduled for 29th June 2009 in Mumbai, India.

Feminists India Network

* <http://feministsindia.wordpress.com...>

Indian Women's Studies Pioneer Dies

Neera Desai, PhD, a pioneer of women's studies in India, died of cancer at age 84 last week. Dr. Desai founded India's first women's studies program, the Research Center for Women's Studies at SNDT Women's University in Mumbai. She also served as head of the Post-Graduate Department of Sociology at the university.

Desai promoted women's rights in both academic and political spheres. She was a member of the Status of Women in India Committee, which published the Towards Equality Report in 1974. She was also a trustee of the Center for Education and Training, a division of the India Center for Human Rights and Law. Desai published several books and research reports on women's issues, including *Women in Modern India*, *Feminism as Experience*, and *Feminism in Western India*.

Professor Vibhuti Patel, who worked with Desai at the university, told the India Express, "I had been working with her since 1977. In all these years that I had known her, I thought of her as a warm person who was forever motivating and ever ready to experiment with new ideas...She started work in this field in the early 50s and for over two decades fought a lone battle to raise awareness about the same till the 70s when she began garnering support from several quarters."

Feminists India Network writes of Desai, "Working on women's issues and feminism across the social categories of tribe, caste and class, she will always be remembered as a major institution builder at the dawn of the women's studies era."

Media Resources: India Express News Service 6/27/09; Feminists India Network 6/28/09

* From Ms. Magazine, 29 June 2009:

<http://www.msmagazine.com/>