



SPARROW

SOUND AND PICTURE ARCHIVES FOR THE ARCHIVES WOMEN

DEGHAM



தேகம்

தேகம்

DEGHAM

Credits:

CAMERA: RV Ramani

EDITING: Swarnima Sinha

SOUND: Jayanth Pradhan

DIRECTION: Vishnu Mathur

PRODUCED BY: CS Lakshmi, SPARROW

A film on the transgender experience with Revathi, Narthaki Nataraj, Priya Babu, Aasha Bharathi and Kalki talking about the complexities of the body.



Aasha Bharathi



Revathi



Priya Babu



Narthaki Nataraj



Kalki

DEGHAM

2008 / 156 min / Tamil with English subtitles

(The Body)



SPARROW

Sound & Picture Archives for Research on Women
ANNUAL REPORT

1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009

Being Carried Far Away

When I am being carried far away
downstream along the sparkling river,
it is not, of course, in the waking hours,
it is but a dream,
downstream along the sparkling river...

When the earth is asleep in pin-drop silence,
when the moon and stars shine at night,
the river sparkles in the moonlight,
there I saw you,
I cannot describe it in words;
when I think of it I see you in my mind,
on the riverbank in the moonlight,
there I saw you.

The features of your face are lighted up by the moon,
so bright and clear are your eyes,
sparkling river in the moonlight,
there I saw you.

No clouds come to darken the moonlight
though the moon is waning,
the shadows of the river rise in waves,
there I saw you;

I cannot describe it in words,
when I think of it I see you in my mind,
on the riverbank in the moonlight,
there I saw you.

Translated by Caroline R Marak from the original Garo
poem *Balpakangenga chel.achi*, unpublished.

BEING CARRIED Far away

Poems and Stories of Women in
Assamese, Bengali, Garo, Manipuri and Mizo



Edited by
Shoba Venkatesh Ghosh



SPARROW

FOUNDER PRESIDENT: ANILKUMAR SIVARAMAN, MD

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S P A R R O W

Sound & Picture Archives for Research on Women
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ANNUAL REPORT

1 April 2008 - 31 March 2009

Preface

In the last twenty years of its life every year has been an eventful one for SPARROW in one way or the other. We have survived these twenty years shifting every eleven months, going through floods and bomb blasts and political upheavals. Last year we finally found a nest of our own and inaugurated it quietly for we knew that finding stability in terms of space did not mean our struggles had ended. It meant new kinds of struggles for an organisation like SPARROW is always swimming against the current.

This financial year began with great anxieties for Sir Dorabji Tata Trust that was funding our infrastructural expenses was to renew our grant after an evaluation. The evaluation was delayed because we were still settling down in the new place. Almost coinciding with the shifting we had lost some of our trained senior staff for several reasons, some professional and some personal. Dahisar was too far for some to commute and for some others family finances called for professional changes. And with a highly reduced staff and a heavy backlog of work we faced evaluation. The evaluators were appreciative and gave some valuable suggestions for improvement. However our renewed application for support to SDTT did not evoke an immediate response although we were assured that a decision will be taken soon. After a wait of nearly nine months we got the news that the funding will not be renewed. To say that it was a great blow would be an understatement. Just when we felt that we were stable in a building came this news questioning our very existence. The funding proposal we gave SDTT was entitled A Sky to Fly. It looked like we had found wings but not a space to fly. But we have taken it in our stride. Our spirit is not daunted and we are still flying forward, though not as fast as we wish.

During the months of anxiety waiting for a response from SDTT, the 26/11 terrorist attack happened shaking the very foundations of the city of Mumbai. It made us realise how vulnerable we were as citizens and here we were archiving history and generating knowledge for posterity while life itself was uncertain. Mumbai is always a city that rises out of any disaster but for the first time there was a sense of gloom and a feeling that this time we were tired and exhausted as citizens.

The important topic that occupied the attention of the media from the beginning of the year was the economic recession that had hit different parts of the world. After 26/11 the terrorist attack became the most important topic of discussion in the media and among people. For SPARROW the economic recession happened after we had acquired a building



at a time when real estate prices were high. And the 26/11 attack took place while we were still experiencing the impact of the recession. It culminated with some of our funders withdrawing support.

Thus, one huge challenge we faced during this year was shortage of funds. We had some anxious times regarding finances and have not yet come out of it entirely.

POLICY DECISIONS, STAFF STRUCTURE AND TEAM SPIRIT

As stated earlier we already began the year with a reduced staff. But we had to face further reduction of staff as the year progressed. Some left us for other jobs and some were forced to go on leave due to sickness in the family or other similar matters. This was another challenge we had to deal with. No new appointments have been made to fill the place of those who have left; the remaining staff members have been requested to stretch themselves to fill the gap. They have readily agreed to do so but it has delayed progress in some of the projects.

Even before the evaluation the trustees had discussed co-opting two more trustees and also reconstituting the Advisory Committee. This was done soon after the evaluation. Dr. Shoba Venkatesh Ghosh, Professor, Department of English in the University of Mumbai and Dr. Usha Thakkar, Director, Mani Bhavan, were co-opted as trustees and SPARROW's Advisory committee now consists of the following eminent people:

Dr. Chhaya Dattar
Dr. Miriam Dossal
Ms. Chandita Mukherjee
Ms. Neela Bhagwat
Ms. Shanta Gokhale
Ms. Vijaya Dass

External Advisors from outside Mumbai

Ms. Urvashi Butalia
Dr. Uma Chakravarti
Dr. Lalitha Iyer

External Advisors from outside India

Dr. Josna Rege
Dr. Geraldine Forbes



With advice from our Advisory committee members with whom SPARROW keeps in touch through e-mail, SPARROW is sure to enhance its archival collection and activities.

Another strange challenge that took us unawares from the later part of 2008 was computer troubles of unprecedented dimensions. Virus in hordes attacked our machines, and they kept coming back even after the technician cleaned them up several times. All the machines had to be formatted more than once. Much precious work time was lost due to this, which was rather discouraging as we were already grappling with backlogs. Even now, our Broadband Internet connection hardly works, which makes working very difficult.

Despite all these stumbling blocks, we are going on. SPARROW is no stranger to difficulties. We are confident that better times will be here again. And in the meantime, we just have to go on working as well as we can. The English teaching classes continue and so does regular reporting on work. That the SPARROW team has not lost its spirit was evident when all of them were present for the *Hot is the Moon* book release after office hours at Crossword book shop, Kemp's Corner.

PROJECT AND ARCHIVAL ACTIVITIES

The project funded by Stichting de Zaaier entitled *Dealing with Words and Silences* which covers in a small way the different areas of work of SPARROW, began in May 2008. For the oral history part of this project we interviewed some very interesting women. Siddamma who runs Bharati Trust to help the Irula tribes in education and livelihood, Krishnammal who established LAFTI (Land for Tillers' Freedom, India) and who has won the Right Livelihood award this year and Sister Braganza, an inspiring and pioneering educationist spoke to SPARROW about their life and experiences. We also had a short interview with Kamala Das, poet and writer. She was ill and could hardly talk, but she was happy to make the attempt to talk to SPARROW. For a long time SPARROW has been trying to speak to two pioneers in Mumbai who set up the organisation Stri Mukti Sanghatana and have worked on several issues affecting women's lives through the medium of theatre and publications and through active work for women. We were able to interview Jyothi Mapsekar and Sharda Sathe this year under the oral history section of the De Zaaier project. Dr. Rohini Gavankar, an academician and activist, who has been part of the women's movement and other progressive movements, did the interview on behalf of SPARROW.

Under the screening and networking section of this project, SPARROW's film *Degham*, a film on transgenders, was screened in different venues in different cities. The inaugural screening was in Chennai at the LV Prasad Film Institute. It was inaugurated by its Director, Hariharan. In Bangalore it was screened in collaboration with The Campaign for Sex Workers' and Sexual Minorities' Rights, Pedestrian Pictures and Alternative Lawyers' Forum



to an appreciative audience. This was followed by a screening in Nagercoil at the residence of Sundaram, who is generally known as Kannan, a publisher of literary works in Tamil who also publishes the literary magazine *Kalachuvadu*. The Women's Studies Department in Trivandrum invited the film next to be screened for students and teachers. Fatima College in Madurai invited SPARROW for a day's workshop with students and teachers and three films of SPARROW including *Degham* were screened. In Mumbai, Research Centre for Women's Studies organised a screening of *Degham*. The last screening this year was in Thanjavur at the residence of Sujan, a teacher, writer and publisher of a literary magazine, to a select audience. After all the screenings there were lively discussions and many felt that the film was a great human document. The film has generally received a heartwarming response. Amidst the gloom of financial difficulties, SPARROW felt a sense of satisfaction receiving heartfelt responses from students, teachers and the general public.

Under the De Zaaier project some useful additions have been made to the archives in terms of books, films and journals and newspapers.

The Prince Claus Fund project is technically over but as mentioned in our annual report last year, this small project of five slim volumes has become a big project with 87 writers from 23 languages of India. This year the first volume *Hot is the Moon* that contains excerpts from interviews, stories and poems of writers in four languages—Tamil, Kannada, Konkani and Tulu—was published. On 11th February, a pre-launch function was held at Kala Ghoda Festival to introduce the book to the public. *Hot is the Moon* was launched at a function at Crossword, Grant Road, on 25th February, 2009. Shanta Gokhale, writer, translator and theatre critic, released the book. SPARROW's Founder Trustee and Director, Dr. C S Lakshmi, made a presentation on SPARROW and the editor, Arundhathi Subramaniam, gave a talk on her experiences on editing the volume. The second volume is in the press now and is expected to be out soon. Three more volumes are to be published after that, making a total of five.

The response to Diary 2009 this year was lukewarm although those who have stood by SPARROW sponsored a few pages. But Diary 2009 with Maya Kamath cartoons when it was published, evoked a good response and although priced high many bought the diary to support SPARROW.

The most exciting project of the year apart from the five major volumes, has been the project on women scientists from the Department of Science and Technology. The project technically began mid-March last year but the actual work began this year. A compendium of 250 pages is to be published with the purpose of encouraging girls to take up science. Till date, we have interviewed 28 women scientists but we plan to interview more than 35 women scientists, many of them winners of Bhatnagar and other prestigious awards. This project has taken us to a whole new world of science and of determined women who have



pursued a science career. It has been exciting meeting mathematicians, physicists, doctors, immunologists, virologists, brain researchers and geologists who have taken us from Antarctica to bone marrow transplant in one great sweep.

After the archives was opened to the public, several visitors have come to make use of it. College teachers came with groups of students and colleagues to view films and see the archives. Researchers came to view the films or to consult the books. The Global Feminisms material put up on the University of Michigan website has brought in good responses from scholars abroad, some of whom came to work out future consultation in the archives. SPARROW's own website that is being maintained with the help of De Zaaier has several visitors who have written to enquire about consultation procedures.

SPARROW COLLECTIONS AND WORK RECORD
1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008

PHOTOGRAPHS

Taken & copied	817
(Backlog archived)	365
Processed & filed	817
Data Entry Completed	2016
Filed Original Photographs	382

FILMS

DOCUMENTARY FILMS

DVD	
English	6
Tamil	1
VCDs	
English	5
Tamil	3

FEATURE FILMS

Tamil	42
Processed & digitised	186
Edited Entries	144

CARTOONS

Received	156
Processed and digitised	156



Edited Entries	226
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BOOKS

English	15
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Hindi	2
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Marathi	42
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Tamil	13
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Gujarati	1
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Kannada	3
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Telugu	2
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Urdu	2
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Malayalam	3
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Maithili	2
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Kodava	1
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Total	<u>86</u>
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Processed and digitised	78
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REFERENCE BOOKS

English	16
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Processed and digitised	16
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ADVERTISEMENTS

English	61
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Hindi	11
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Marathi	1
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Total	<u>73</u>
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Processed	26
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PRINT VISUALS

English	126
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Hindi	31
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Marathi	29
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Kannada	1
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Total	<u>187</u>
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Processed and digitised 160
Edited Entries 22

POSTERS

English 2
Marathi 6
Tamil 1
Rajasthani 1
Film Posters 18

Total 28

Digitised 28

CALENDARS

English 1

BROCHURES

English 8
Marathi 1
Processed and digitised 9

NEWSLETTERS

English 24
Hindi 5
Marathi 23
Gujarati 15
Tamil 1

Total 67

Processed and digitised 67

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

English 370
Hindi 82
Marathi 155
Tamil 8
Kannada 18
Malayalam 4

Total 637



Processed and digitised 637

PRIVATE PAPERS

(Some Private Papers are in two languages)

English	15
Tamil	9
Kannada	1
Total	25

Processed and digitised	9
Edited Entries	4

JOURNAL ARTICLES

English	71
Tamil	66
Gujarati	15
Malayalam	9
Total	161

Processed and digitised	152
Edited Entries	172

AUDIO CASSETTES/CDs

Hindi	11
Marathi	1
Kannada	1
English	2
Total	15

Processed and digitised	112
Edited Entries	146

ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

Interviews Done

Mama Cash Project	2
De Zaire	4
DST (Departement of Science and Technology)	28



DIGITAL VIDEO RECORDING PROJECT

Completed a 156 minutes film on transgender experiences called DEGHAM

PUBLICATIONS

Book (<i>Hot is the Moon</i>)	1
Newsletters	4

WEBSITE MANAGEMENT

Website uploading	2
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LOOKING BACK ON THIS YEAR

We did have some functional problems settling down in the new building. Dahisar is not quite the happening place in terms of roads and transport and communication. When the roads are dug up everything can collapse including telephone lines. There is also a clever thief who steals telephone cables—they are steel which fetch a good price in the black market—and electric wires, which makes functioning difficult for just when the cables are replaced and phones start working he steals them again! And then the building has a water problem and the others feel that women who run offices don't need that much water. It took a while to convince and sometimes fight with them to prove that our office needed as much water as any residential flat. The beautiful glass and aluminum door which the carpenter assured us has a computer made key that was perfect, often gets jammed and it is not unusual to see office assistants Pramod or Pradeep trying to open the door to a visitor who begins to get increasingly impatient when the door refuses to open! The aluminium name board outside looks elegant but the pigeons also like it and prefer to cover it with their droppings. After a long train and bus commute when you reach the SPARROW office and see the name board full of fresh droppings, it can take away your enthusiasm for the day.

Despite all these problems and the sense of gloom that descended on us later in the year around January 2009, the various projects kept us going and the SPARROW team refused to let adverse circumstances affect its work or its attitude towards the future. Birthdays were still celebrated with kala jamuns and ice creams and occasionally we did pluck baskets of jamun from the jamun tree in the compound and the stolen jamuns tasted heavenly.



Don't Roll Up...

Don't roll up the blind
yes, the beautiful blind...
If we saw everything
and heard all the sounds and echoes,
what would we do?
For the courage to reveal
has now been lost.

No possibility for courage for
souls have to be bartered
for we want to stay alive.
So
don't roll up the blind.

We were born to live
we have our burden, our duty.
So long as we live
we have a message to give
a truth to seek.
So
don't roll up the blind.

Never ask
what is happening behind the blind.
The truth may pluck out my lips and tongue.
Nor can we reveal it
for our heads may roll.

You are a human being
and so am I -
we have to do our bounden duty.
So
don't roll up the blind,
don't roll it up again.

Translated by Lt. R K Madhubir from the original Manipuri *Haigatluranu Purdah-do in Aroiba Wahang*, Maibam Ningol Pukhrabam Ongbi Debla at PS & Tamra Publications, Imphal, 2001 and published in *Indian Literature*, New Delhi, May-June 2000.

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Aasha Bharathi



Revathi



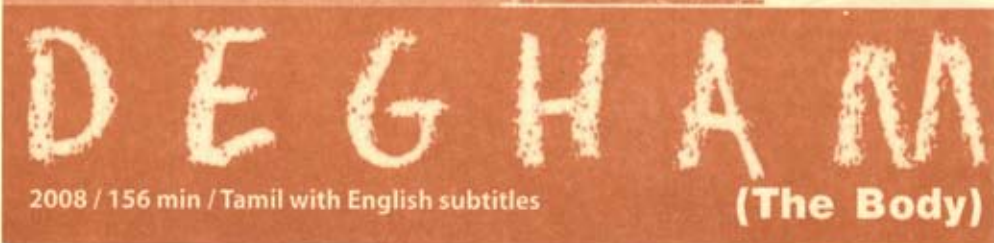
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