

# THE UNIVERSITY WORKER

Teacher, Ambedkar University, Delhi (AUD)

Being a teacher, particularly at a place like Ambedkar University is one of the most stressful experiences that I have so far gone through. Most teachers at Ambedkar are there, because they love what they are doing, which makes it more difficult. We find it very difficult to see it as a professional commitment that can be switched off at a particular time of the day. It is a matter of feeling responsible for students, wanting to do a good job. In a standard university system, responsibility of what teachers teach does not lie with the teachers, only of how it is taught. This can be very liberating, because the fault of a student not learning may lie somewhere else. In AUD the entire responsibility lies with the teacher who is forever struggling with the idea of what is best for the student versus what can realistically be taught in a semester. For young teachers who have never taught at undergraduate level at colleges, it can lead to a wide gap between the expectations of the teacher and the capabilities of the students. Most of us do try to translate our research into classes, which is very good for us, but not necessarily for the students. Most teachers in personal interactions report a very high level of stress, as they are always ‘preparing’ for a class. We are always thinking of best ways to keep students interested and invested, anticipating questions to which we may have no ready answers. The teacher is expected to be the “know all” that s/he often is not. This is distressing. Students think that they are being evaluated. It is teachers who are evaluated each and every day. It is distressing to realize that that student at the back hasn’t understood what is crystal clear in a teacher’s



head. It is distressing to not be able to answer.

Teachers are always formulating assignments, correcting them, commenting on them, sometimes on assignments that deserve just to be trashed. They have to run assignments through google because a large number of students copy, quite unimaginatively, from the internet. But it still takes time! You don’t want students to fail, because they will come back to you! But you do want most of them to go with something that they will be able to connect with, at some later stage in their lives!

Besides in most universities now teachers are expected to do quite a bit of admin work, which leaves them very little time to invest in teaching and learning. After the first few years, rather than take up new challenges, teachers stick to courses they have been teaching for years.

To be promoted, teachers have to show ‘research work’, for which they have little time. Unlike universities

abroad where research time and funds are built into the teaching schedule, in India it has to be fought for.

All this affects our personal lives. By the time we get appointed Assistant Professor in AUD, we are expected to have finished our PhDs. We are likely to be in our thirties, may even have started families. The starting salary of an Assistant Professor makes for a precarious living in Delhi. Uncertainty about medical claims or pension status leads to further anxiety. Being plugged in 24/7 means that our interactions with our families suffer. Particularly women teachers are constantly struggling with anxiety of being able to be “good” parents while being good teachers.

Manoj, security guard, AUD

He is 45 years old and educated upto class 8th. His employer is Rakshak, a security agency. His wages depend on the tenders that the university auctions out to contracting agencies. The terms of the tender may change from year to year. He works 8-hour shifts from 6am till 2pm, and reaches home at 3:30 and earns Rs. 6500-7000 depending on whether he takes on extra shifts. Before this he was working in Delhi University, earning 7000, but he also had PF and ESI. For this he had to work 12-hour shifts. The job ended when the new tender required a complete overhaul of guards and their replacement. He recalled that while he was in DU, the administration prohibited guards from sitting while on the job and removed all the chairs.

We spoke to Manoj a few days after the teachers at AUD had held a public meeting addressing the problems they face with contractualization. When asked about the teachers’ struggle, he said that he didn’t know what they were doing. He said it would be good if they did talk to students, teachers and security guards too because the problems do not seem very different, especially that of contractualization. He said that all the support staff were temporary and had no security or benefits whatsoever. They are also hired by the university but through a contracting agency. So although the problems they face are faced inside the university, formally they can’t make complaints to the university.

He thought that students, teachers and the support staff should try to communicate and struggle together. But he added that it is very difficult since there are “people you cannot trust because they will report to the malik”. He also added that BJP and Congress are really the same. He had heard Modi

say- anyone, even a chaiwala, can be prime minister, but he feels that Modi is not really doing anything either. He can do whatever he wants since he has no opposition. He is a good speaker but all his talk doesn’t change things for the poor, who are still poor even after he has been in power for so long.

Suresh, Security Guard, Delhi University

Suresh is a security guard in a college in Delhi University. His family is in Uttar Pradesh and have a small amount of arable there. He studied till class 10 and first came to Delhi in search of “better” work in 1996. He earns “okay enough” money to pay his rent and send some money back home. He lives at Paschim Vihar on rented accommodation. His wife works as a nurse in the village dispensary and they manage to live with dignity.

His job is to note down the numbers and timings of the teachers’ vehicles that come in to and go out from the college parking lot. His working hours are from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm.

He is unaware whether he is a member of the college’s non-teaching workers’ union or not . He thinks that it is for the office-persons only and not for the security guards who are not directly recruited by the college. This is because the company does not allow its employees to form or be part of any union. There is also almost absolutely no interaction amongst the non-teaching staff of the college.

Both of his sons go to school and he hopes for a better future for them. He does not plan to bring them to Delhi anytime soon, as they are better off in his village than in Delhi.

Student, Delhi University

She went to a public school in Delhi. She wanted to do engineering but, failing to meet the cut-offs, tried for English Hons. Like most students, she began by trying at the North Campus Colleges. Unable to find a seat there landed finally at Ram Lal Anand College. Failing to get the choice of course as well as college, and with added pressure from parents, she found it very difficult to adjust to the new course and the college. Coming from the Science field with its specific

methodology, she struggled a lot in the first year. The first few months were spent memorizing the texts, with no idea of the importance of contextualizing, critiquing and analyzing. With the semester system she finds that there is no time to assimilate properly what is taught. The entire year is spent attending classes and giving exams. This allows no space for extra reading. The classroom space, though friendly, is also a space of cut throat competition and hierarchies: the dominating relationship between the teachers and students (though not all teachers) and between the

students. Groups generally form on the basis of which class someone comes from, how one dresses, how good or bad one’s English is, etc. For financial reasons, she gives tuitions from 4-8pm, 6 days a week, to school kids in all subjects. Since college classes end at 1.30 or 2, this makes for a very tight and tedious day. She enjoys teaching a lot. Though English was chosen in a very random fashion, after 3 years she thinks of it all as a ‘good tragedy’ since she is quite happy she chose it. She wants to do an M.A. in English and someday teach at the university level.

# REPORTS

## Students at Ambedkar University, Delhi (AUD)

Mohan and I have been talking about our course and the problems that we face quite regularly. Quite often we have come to the uncomfortable conclusion that the two of us do not always face the same issues and challenges.

We have four courses and each demands at least 2-3 assignments in the course of the semester. Some but not all ask for exams. Some make class participation part of the assessment as well. Some teachers really expect us to work a lot: weekly thought pieces, 1-2 readings for each class and active participation in classes while others just expect us to submit good assignments and come for a few classes. But there is a difference between what they expect and what they wish and desire. Teachers desire active and participating students, this means that the students must read regularly (2-3 hours a day), and be confident of speaking in the class. Some teachers also expect us to listen to them silently without disturbing them and not get distracted by phones and each other. So along with class what the teacher desires is around 35-37 hours of work a week. They probably expect one to do around 20-25 hours.

There are two kinds of good assignments: one that gets a good grade and one that is the mark of a good student. Mohan feels that it is easy to get a decent grade but much more difficult to be a good student. In his one and a half semesters in MA he has done two “really good” assignments. These take 8-10 days and he has to read at least 10-12 readings. Out of the 10 days 2-3 days went into writing. Some teacher, along with a long and extended bibliography wants to see a well structured assignment- an introduction, well referenced paragraphs, summaries of the arguments of different authors, etc. But what the teacher expects of a good student is obviously an original argument and not just a summary of different texts. Wikipedia is a prohibited reference for a good student. A friend also told me that in some way or the other teachers also expect decent to good English writing skills. One of our teachers had given him a lower grade because of his problems with English. Unlike DU, Ambedkar University does not give the option of writing exams and assignments in Hindi or any other language. Mohan and I both feel that to do any assignment properly one needs around 10 days at the minimum. However, if Mohan finds it possible to do around two good assignments in one and a half semesters, I produce around 4 of them every semester and get better grades than him as well. Mohan often points out that it is my background in

philosophy that helps me score better.

I had joined the masters course in history because I felt that my bachelors in philosophy needed to be supported by something more concrete. But the masters in history programme in AUD was not what I had expected. I found out that it was in the bachelors that one gains empirical data and that in the masters it is really about debates in methodology and comparisons of the frameworks employed by different historians. But my philosophy background helped me a lot with my assignments and allowed me to engage much more confidently in classroom discussions as well. While in the beginning I was nervous about getting good grades in a new subject I soon found that getting a B+ was not a very difficult task. Mohan and others would often tease me about this saying “you philosophy wallas have it easy”. But it wasn’t just that. Both my parents had studied history from JNU and I would often take their help in writing assignments. Mohan also takes more time to read the texts assigned for the readings than I do. He finds it difficult to read properly for most assignments. I am not a very fast reader either but due to my family’s academic background in history the language of most assigned texts is familiar. Several of my friends in class have found it difficult to follow some texts and discussions in class properly because they aren’t familiar with theoretical vocabulary used in them.

But both of us felt that it is really not possible to do more than half of our assignments properly. Mohan said that the major problem was that a lot of the deadlines overlapped. But it’s not just that. If each assignment requires 10 days and there are four courses each with a minimum of 2 assignments this makes 8-10 assignments per semester which means 80-100 days in just assignments!!! Of course we are told that if we just read for classes our reading for the assignments will be reduced but so many teachers give us assignment topics which have not even begun being discussed in class!! But that is the work a dedicated student strives and struggles to achieve. In times of high pressure, with the assignment due date getting closer, Mohan tries to finish the assignments in 1.5 to 2 days. He does this by relying on wikipedia, Google searches, tutorials from BA, book reviews on the internet. He finished one assignment by just copy pasting sections from a book and summarizing the arguments of another. This took 2 days to finish. Copying handwritten assignments takes longer because it gets really boring. In similar times I have asked friends of mine from JNU to send me their assignments. Otherwise

I just read the introduction and conclusion of a book and summarize the major arguments. And make the bibliography look big by adding random Google-searched references. Mohan said that he has to resort to these tactics often as his reading speed is quite slow. I may not do all my assignments “properly” but I have had to plagiarise only twice in the two years of my masters. If I can’t spend ten proper days on an essay I tend to read 2-3 jstor essays, some sections of a book and use some book I had read earlier to quickly cook up an essay. This takes around 2-3 days to do. Mohan complained that even when he gets away with plagiarizing (and other tactics) and gets a good grade the sense of guilt remains. The need to resort to these tactics more often than others (like me) reinforces the identity of being a bad student. In contrast, I don’t feel the guilt very strongly as I end up doing at least half of my assignments properly.

Surprisingly when we talked about our experience of our classes our focus was not the syllabus or course but the teacher. We liked a course or disliked it depending upon whether we liked the teacher or not. We realised that we both generally liked teachers who were not very strict about assignment deadlines. These teachers would not cut grades even if we gave the assignment 1-2 months late. They would also generally not be particular about bunking classes. These teachers often have to absorb the pressures that we feel because we tend to keep pushing their deadlines to finish the work assigned by other teachers who are less “friendly”.

But a friendly teacher is not necessarily a good teacher. Different students depending upon their backgrounds and different needs like different teachers and have different expectations from them. These different expectations often also go against each other. This antagonism can be seen in the classes when teachers who talk in a more theoretical language get attendance primarily from students who are, because of their cultural capital, comfortable with that language. The same students may not attend classes of other teachers who spend more time doing topics that they find to be “simpler”.

These conversations and others were important for me because before I had them I held a very elite idea of student-hood. Through them I realized that every classroom is segmented into students coming from different backgrounds. These differences in cultural capital etc. result in different experiences of and expectations from student-hood which are more often than not antagonistic.

## Ad-Hoc Teacher, Delhi University

She is an Ad-hoc teacher and enrolled in Phd (English), Delhi University. She is from Manipur and lives in a PG in South Delhi. There is too much pressure since both teaching and research need to be balanced, often leaving insufficient time for adequate preparation – be it for classes or for meetings with the supervisor. Research and field work in Manipur isn’t possible with the ad-hoc job, which doesn’t allow for leaves (not paid ones anyway), and with a dearth of jobs here and the highly competitive atmosphere, it isn’t wise to leave the job and come back later and rejoin since there may not be any job left to be had.

While the ad-hoc interviews generally revolve around one’s area of research, and the texts one would like to teach/has taught, as she observes, when the job begins many times the ad-hoc is hardly given a choice of what they would like to teach or are at least familiar with. This leaves the teacher to sometimes teach texts unwillingly and

disinterestedly. Ad-hoc – permanent teacher hierarchy is many times disturbing with the latter calling all the shots. The guest teachers fare even worse, being even lower down the hierarchy. Back in Manipur University the situation is no better – permanent interviews not having taken place in the last ten years and a similar contractualization at work, sometimes at a lesser pay. She recently went for the permanent interview at LSR – now that they have finally begun! The interview lasted for only 5 minutes with hardly any questions asked. Obviously the job had been finalized much earlier. This is seen in the ad-hoc interviews as well where many times candidate selection is done on the basis of the ad-hoc empanelment list with its categories – I, II, III, etc., which are decided based on the percentages scored in B.A, M.A., MPhil, and Phd. Many colleges allow people only from the first three categories to come for the interview.

There is also discrimination against people who are not Delhi University products but have pursued

their earlier education elsewhere, with the candidate sometimes being humiliated and denied a fair interview. In addition to financial insecurity and the uncertain nature of the job, there is an added pressure to always toe the line and do what is told by the establishment, whether one likes it not. The ‘contract’ needs to be renewed every semester and many times with events like the roll back of FYUP (which reduced the workload) there is a sudden reduction in the number of teaching posts required. This has created a scramble among the ad-hocs to get ahead of the other and be the ‘chosen’ one. This introduces a highly unhealthy competitive atmosphere amongst the teachers, with many times the panderers getting ahead and bagging the job.

Also with the ad-hoc having to constantly shift colleges, she feels that no proper connection is established with the students, the teacher having to constantly adjust to new students and environments. Constant movement prevents any solidarity to be forged either with the students or fellow teachers.



# EDITORIAL

The university is like a factory. It produces knowledge (articles, books, seminars) and it makes students into future workers. We all work together in it. But who is this “all”? It is different segments of workers: the guards, the teachers, the house-cleaning staff, the administrative staff, the students, the canteen workers, and others. Although each segment of workers is said to be separate from the others, they are not unrelated; rather, it is through producing these ‘unrelated’ segments and placing them in relationships of hierarchy that power (capital) works. We are students in a university. We are teachers in a university. We are house-cleaning staff in a university. We are Canteen-workers. We are guards. On closer look, each of these “we” is further fragmented. There are “good students” and “average” students, “good” cooks and “bad” cooks, “interesting” teachers and “boring” teachers “hard-working” cleaners and “lazy” cleaners, etc. Each of these segments contains hierarchies with its own antagonisms – more often than not, linked to caste, gender and other socio-economic factors.

### Segmentations within the University-Factory

While working in the same space, all sections appear to be in different terrains and working in accordance with different logics. The field is then set with different groups standing away from, and sometimes against, each other: academic staff vs. non-academic staff, teachers vs. students, guards vs. students, students vs. administration. Keeping all ‘workers’ apart and making them work in segregation aims to prevent the development and concretization of any common understanding and any solidarity which would cut across these segments, even though they are in reality co-workers, sharing the same space and governed by the logic of capitalist efficiency and increasingly similar conditions – tedious work schedule, hierarchies between lower and higher ups, a constant threat to anyone who decides to question or challenge the system, precariousness of the job and the haunting insecurity.

These, however, are not mere segments. They are segments in an antagonistic relationship with one another. When students collectively push deadlines they often do so without considering the resultant increase in intensity of work for teachers (or for houseworkers, when during exams the student abandons all chores). Such struggles instead of alleviating workload end up transferring them on to different segments of workers. The existence of the segments also obstructs possibilities of solidarities between different segments. Even when different segments face similar problems (such as contractualization and precarity) they find it difficult to build solidarities with each other. Teachers struggling against the contractualization and casualization of their jobs did not/could not talk to the guards about their struggle.

### Segmentation within segments - ‘Good’ worker vs ‘Bad’ worker

As mentioned above, each segment (students, teacher or canteen worker) is too often assumed to be homogenous and un-segmented. One of the ways in which segmentations within segmentations are created is through the logic of efficiency. – the ‘good’/‘efficient’ worker v/s the ‘bad’ /‘non-efficient’ one. It needs to be observed this segmenting logic of efficiency serves to keep different workers judging

and evaluating each other (as good, bad, lazy, efficient, inefficient, studious, stupid etc.), and to stall any clear insight into the factors which create/govern this segmentation as well as the consequences it has. We have the ‘good worker’ looking at the ‘bad worker’ and judging that person for not working hard enough. Apparently if everyone worked hard and thought with the ‘right’ mindset, all can ‘succeed’!

The generalized category of the Student/Teacher/Guard is meant to dictate that everyone can and should be equally productive irrespective of differences of gender, class and caste. Any failure then deserves to be dismissed as ‘personal’ and insignificant, and only requiring greater



‘commitment’. So, as the institution sees it, a woman who is a Teacher and a parent should be able to neatly balance both responsibilities without failing to do a ‘good’ job in both; a norm which conveniently neglects the additional responsibility that are put in front of female parent. A further segmentation may be seen between a better-paid female teacher who can hire domestic workers and another who cannot.



The apparently homogenous category of the student/teacher obscures not only the differences in the ability to achieve the work imposed but also the antagonisms that exist between these different internal segments. We all come to the university from different backgrounds of caste, class, gender, cultural capital, etc. We also come to the university with different expectations and different levels of interest and personal involvement in the work that we do. We find students who come “just to get the degree” as well as students who come “because they love the subject” (see Issue 7). These are two different segments within the category of the student with different or even conflicting desires and expectations. While one may want more discussions, more readings and more challenging assignments (more intense work) the other may want less work.

### University Worker and the logic of ‘Efficiency’

As we have seen, the university has students and teachers not just from different backgrounds of caste, cultural capital and gender but they also with varying amounts of interest and passions for the subject. However, interest in work occurs for different students and teachers in different moments. Some aspects of a course, some assignments, and some classroom discussions may excite different students and teachers in different moments. Yet the work that we have to do is structured by Capital in the form of the university and is out of the control of students and teachers. Whether we are interested or not we have to produce a number of assignments, correct a certain number of answer scripts, attend a certain number of classes, read a certain number of readings etc. One of the teachers tells us that with the internet and the smartphone, work pursues her even outside the university space so much so that it becomes difficult to differentiate it from life. Even if we are or get interested in studying or teaching, the “work” that we have to do often frustrates our interest and passions.

Our ability to pursue our interests depends upon our ability to negotiate with the imposed work. Capital needs our interests and passions to be materialized in the form of a specific number of assignments, a minimum level of marks and a certain amount of classroom attendance. For Capital, students with different reading speeds and familiarity with academic language cannot be equally good/efficient. Similarly, two dedicated teachers, one of whom is a woman and needs to do housework and childcare, while the other is a man who does not, will find that their abilities to engage fruitfully with their interests and passions are not equal. What the logic of efficiency invisibilizes (gender, caste, class etc.) returns to frustrate our passions given that we have to materialize them on Capital’s terms.

In line with the ideology of self-fulfillment and the imperative to be ‘happy’, we have an atmosphere of high competitiveness. Feelings of insufficiency – generated by all energies geared towards securing the top position but failing to do ‘well’, or love for one’s work clashing with the nature of that work - ends up producing depression and anxiety in many. The social norm doesn’t accept the failure as inevitably stemming from the very structure of the system itself but rather dismisses it as the individual fault. Recognizing the normality of failure would, of course, put Capital’s own ideological foundations and the notions of efficiency into doubt.

To look at this segmentation and the varied effects it triggers is not to concede however that nothing happens in these segregated spaces. Different segments do come together, tell each other about their own struggles, and this leads towards a common understanding. In this way we realise that what we thought to be personal failures and problems are shared, structural. The task at hand is to explode these imposed (but real) compartmentalisations and build a true solidarity to counter this segmentation and the system that survives (solely) on it. Our inadaptability, our anxiety, our frustrations and our fatigue, are only problems from the standpoint of what aims to subjugate us. They indicate rather a departure point, and simultaneously a meeting point for new complicities.

—Chalis Chor

# REPORTS

## TEACHER REPORTS-AMBEDKAR UNIVERSITY DELHI

These are two reports from teachers at AUD, recounting the experience of the teaching process in terms of classroom work, administrative work and the gendered nature of the job as well as the intervention of the AUD Faculty Association (AUDFA).

### WORKING IN AUD

- Sumedha is a permanent teacher who has been in AUD for over 4 years, having taught for 5 years before that, in a DU college and a university. Unlike DU, the department has to teach from BA to PHD. Harish has been an Associate Professor here for a number of years, having taught elsewhere as well. While in other universities the work load is 8 credits per year and 4 per semester, in AUD they are expected to teach two four-credit courses each semester.
- Beyond classes, there is research, class preparation and other administrative work. Research supervision cannot be precisely calculated in terms of time. Some students require extra attention and out-of-class interaction. Quantitative calculations of all these aspects of work are very difficult, even though they are a large part of the workload. She finds an instrumental, 'black and white' calculation of workload by the university a problem, as it cannot include these aspects.
- Technology also means that work doesn't shut down when she gets home. She does much of her work when her daughter goes to sleep (such as reading, mailing etc.). Work is never-ending; it only stops when she goes to sleep.
- Sumedha finds it very difficult to do her own research as it is seen as the individual's own headache, and not made part of routine administrative processes by the university. Because of the time and effort it takes, the freedom to publish along with teaching and supervision work is not there.
- She has been involved in a research project and wanted to take leave to carry out field work, but almost regretted undertaking the work because of administrative and her colleagues' reactions. There is a false 'bureaucratic mentality' that research is done in one's free time (weekends, holidays etc.), and it took her a month to get leave, leading to some bitterness as well.

### AUDFA

- Sumedha is also part of AUD Faculty Association (AUDFA), which has raised issues of workload and benefits like pensions for the teachers, and issues regarding temporary teachers. Ad hoc and temporary teachers can be and are part of AUDFA. For the past year, not many ad hocs are willing to be part of AUDFA, because of discouragement from the authority.
- Harish points out that the time spent in administrative coordinating committees does not count in their teaching time and the position of 'Coordinator' is a non-statuary position, carrying no value outside AUD. This work load makes promotion difficult since criteria include publications and 'being proactive' in the institution. AUDFA and the administration reached an agreement to factor administrative responsibilities into work hours, yet this was done without a reduction of teaching hours.
- Harish relates how the university is organized top down, with School deans rather than Department heads (each School having some departments). There are many posts within each of them such as program coordinators, the student faculty committee etc but decisions still rest with the School Dean. Given AUDFA efforts for greater involvement of teachers in the decision making process, the administration supports representation via nomination whereas AUDFA supports elections from within the Association.
- Harish also points out that AUDFA has been struggling to moderate teacher workload and for recognition of class preparation time. The expectation is that a teacher is in a position to deliver a lecture without preparation. This leads to narrow overspecialization so that one can easily lecture on a chosen niche area.
- The administration has agreed that two hours of preparatory time be allotted for every hour of class. Insisting that that AUD is equally a research facility as a teaching institution AUDFA demands that 12 contiguous hours be provided per week for the faculty to fulfill their academic research requirements.

## STUDENTS, TEACHERS AND CLASS DYNAMICS

- She has taught in both annual and semester modes, and found more time to teach and learn in the annual mode. The semester is much tighter in that there is less leeway that she can give to students; and less scope to help struggling students in such a short period of time.
- New forms of knowledge and ideas come very fast, and there is not much time to explain them. Ultimately those who are interested will read up and others will not. The semester does not give time to mentor a student. So those who have advantages already can do better on their own.
- AUD pedagogy and structures sometimes hinder students from weaker backgrounds. For example, a couple of her students left because of language problems. In one semester, she had said that if a student has a problem with English, she can explain in Hindi as well. A Hindi background student mailed her asking for extra help, but also asking her not to tell the rest of the class. The student dropped out after the first semester.
- With four courses per semester, the number of assignments also becomes a problem. Factoring in other elements, like the travel time, and lack of facilities, these demands of work from students affect learning and performance adversely. In one course, she gave three rather than four assignments, and felt the students did much better. A minimum three assignments/exams is required as no assessment can be over 40 percent.
- Her expectations of the job are not 100 percent fulfilled, but somewhere in the middle. It fluctuates from semester to semester and in different courses. In some courses, she gets what she wanted out of the job and some seem disastrous. She gets satisfaction and pride in her work when students do well, not the privileged students, but those who come from different parts of the country. They have to struggle more, with lack of facilities like hostels.
- She feels a difference in how students from different backgrounds relate to teachers. Some hesitate more to come and talk, while others do not. As a teacher, being a person of authority, many students are hesitant to approach her, especially those coming from a 'peripheral' area.
- She feels that there are different situations of students who are indifferent or unreceptive to the course. While considering some of them lazy, there are some who later approach her and tell her that they couldn't come because of a particular problem, such as having to work and earn, which she understands. Students often not do well or attend classes because of legitimate reasons, there needs to be communication from both sides to resolve these problems.
- Feedback forms are helpful to her in terms of changing readings and teaching methods. She does not know how effective the Student Faculty Committee is. It often becomes a nitpicking session. No common ground is reached in understanding what went wrong. A general meeting was organized once but not everyone comes to them. So the question of how to reach out to everyone is not resolved.

### WORK, GENDER AND PARENTHOOD

- Balancing work with parenting structures everyday life. While her partner also equally shares the household and parenting burden, he does not have as many responsibilities in the domestic space. She has to put in more (100 percent) and he is able to put in a little less than that. So teaching work is very different for a female parent who has additional responsibilities.
- People see these responsibilities of a mother-teacher as an 'essential part of her nature', as she witnessed before becoming a parent herself with a colleague in her earlier university. Her colleague would leave meetings early to pick up her child, and many people would 'smile knowingly' that a female naturally has these responsibilities, without recognizing the balancing work it entails. She often misses AUDFA meetings because she would prefer to be with her daughter, who is too small to be left on her own.
- There is no concept of leisure left anymore, because work is a constant presence. She reads non academic books for leisure, but gets the chance to do so mainly while on vacations, travelling or visiting relatives. Leisure is possible in this way only when she is out of Delhi.
- She sees these problems for female research students in choosing their topic. She advises them at the outset to choose a field where they will be comfortable working, even though they might ideally prefer some other topic.
- This need to balance work and the lesser degree of freedom/participation is considered a 'personal problem', rather than socially structured. If a student cannot come for a class/event which is scheduled late because she has to travel far, it is considered her own issue rather than gendered and structural. To ease their work conditions, some teachers had wanted a crèche in the university, but the university did not implement this, again indicating that the problem must be managed individually rather than collectively/socially.

## GET IN TOUCH

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