

First Neera Desai Memorial Lecture.

The First Neera Desai Memorial Lecture was organised by the Research Centre for Women's Studies, SNDT Women's University, the Department of Post Graduate Studies and Research, SNDT Women's University and the Department of Civics and Politics, University of Mumbai. The lecture was held in the Kalina campus of the Mumbai University on the 23rd of September 2010.

The programme began with Dr. Kanamma of the Dept of Civics and Politics inviting Prof. Susie Tharu , Prof. Veena Poonacha, Prof. Vibhuti Patel, Mr. Mihir Desai and Dr. Gita Chadha on the stage. A chair was reserved for the Vice Chancellor, Dr. Rajan Welukar.

This was followed by a Welcome Note from Head, Dept of Civics and Politics, Prof. Jondhale.

Prof. Veena Poonacha, Director, RCWS, detailed the tremendous impact made by Prof. Neera Desai to the field of Women's Studies. Prof. Poonacha recollected the contribution of Prof. Desai not only in setting up the RCWS, the first women's studies centre in India but also to the setting up of the Centre for Rural Development at the RCWS. Prof. Veena Poonacha remembered Neera ben, known thus to people in women's studies, to be a warm, gentle but firm human being with a great passion for social transformation.

Prof. Vibhuti Patel, Director of the PGSR introduced Prof. Susie Tharu to the audience. Prof. Patel said that Prof. Tharu has always been an inspirational scholar with a 'special Susie touch' to whatever she does.. Prof. Patel also recollected Prof. Neera Desai and welcomed Ms. Mihir Desai, son of Dr. A.R.Desai and Dr. Neera Desai.

Following Prof. Patel's address, Prof. Tharu delivered the First Neera Desai Memorial Lecture on 'Once again: What is Literature? Notes from Dalit Literary Movements in Kerala and Tamilnadu. Prof. Tharu argued that Dalit writing challenges the literary traditions and conventions of modern western literature. Illustrating her arguments with writings of major Dalit writers, Prof Tharu argued that dalit literary writing challenged conventions of both form and content. She also indicated that there is a need amongst feminists to address issues in Dalit writing which have been marginalized. She said that feminists have to move towards a greater self reflexivity.

The Hon Vice Chancellor of the Mumbai University, Prof. Rajan Welukar, in his Presidential Address remarked that a person of such eminence and stature as Prof. Tharu must be invited to talk to the students .

Dr. Gita Chadha of the RCWS proposed the formal Vote of Thanks.