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KCHR INTERVENTION SERIES

BEYOND CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

PRISONS, JUSTICE AND
THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

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10 NOVEMBER 2023 | FRIDAY | 3.00 PM (IST)

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ABSTRACT

The women's movement in India has had a long history of engagement with the law and criminal justice system in terms of demanding legislations for ensuring justice and equality for women, especially against various kinds of gender based violence. But a rigorous engagement with the other side of this system, embodied by prisons and the carceral state has not been equally a central concern for the movement.

We draw on our own lived experience of incarceration to interrogate the construction of crime and punishment and the workings of law which flatten out the complexities of women's lives and render them 'criminal'. We argue that prisons are deeply gendered spaces and an extension of the patriarchal state which incarcerates and punishes women, mostly from marginalised communities, who do not conform to its moulds. Finally, we argue for the need to interrogate the place and function of prisons and carceral punishments to imagine newer forms of justice which are more aligned to the kind of society we want to create and inhabit.

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS

Ms. Devangana Kalita is a feminist activist and a PhD student at the Centre for Women's Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Her research work focuses on gender, memory and labour history. She was arrested in May 2020 and imprisoned for thirteen months by the Indian state, charged under a draconian anti-terror law for her participation in the peaceful protests for equal citizenship that demanded the repeal of the discriminatory Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).

Ms. Natasha Narwal is a feminist activist and a PhD student at the University of Warwick, UK. Her research focuses on gender, prisons and the carceral system. She was arrested in May 2020 and imprisoned for thirteen months by the Indian state, charged under a draconian anti-terror law for her participation in the peaceful protests for equal citizenship that demanded the repeal of the discriminatory Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).

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