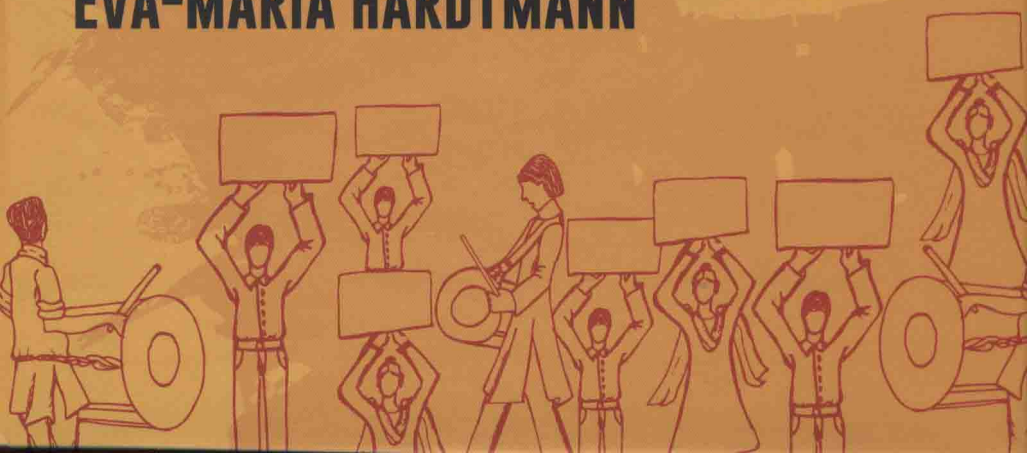


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# SOUTH ASIAN ACTIVISTS IN THE GLOBAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT

**EVA-MARIA HARDTMANN**



# South Asian Activists in the Global Justice Movement

Eva-Maria Hardtmann

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# South Asian Activists in the Global Justice Movement



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## ABBREVIATIONS

.....

AIDMAM	All India Dalit Mahila Adhikar Manch
APWLD	Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development
ATTAC	Association pour la Taxation des Transactions pour l'Aide aux Citoyens/ Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions for the Aid of Citizens
BARCIK	Bangladesh Resource Centre for Indigenous Knowledge
BLHRRI	Buraku Liberation Human Rights Research Institute
BLL	Buraku Liberation League
BLRI	Buraku Liberation Research Institute
BRAC	currently does not represent an acronym, but was formerly known as Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance Committee and then as the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
CA	Constituent Assembly
CACIM	The India Institute for Critical Action: Centre in Movement
CBO	community-based organization

CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CPA	Cordillera People's Alliance
CPI	The Communist Party of India
CPI(ML)	Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
EU	European Union
FEDO	Feminist Dalit Organization
FORUM-ASIA	Asia Forum for Human Rights and Development
GJM	Global Justice Movement
HURIGHTS OSAKA	Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Centre
IDSN	International Dalit Solidarity Network
IFI	International Financial Institute
IFO	international financial organization
IMADR	International Movement against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism
IMADR-AC	International Movement against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism-Asia Committee
IMADR-JC	International Movement against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism-Japan Committee
IMF	International Monetary Fund
(I)NGO	international non-governmental organization
IYC	Intercontinental Youth Camp
JCP	Japanese Communist Party
JESA	Jesuits in Social Action
JNATIP	Japan Network Against Trafficking in Person
KSWU	Karnataka Sex Workers Union
LDCs	least developed countries
LGBT	lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender
MDL	Mothers and Daughters of Lanka
MDG	millennium development goals

MONLAR	Movement for National Land and Agricultural Reform
MR	Mumbai Resistance
MRG	Minority Rights Group International
MST	Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (Brazilian Landless Workers Movement)
NACDOR	National Confederation of Dalit Organisations
NCBL	National Committee for Burakumin Liberation
NCDHR	National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights
NFDW	National Federation of Dalit Women
NFN	NGO Federation of Nepal
NGO	non-governmental organization
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
RINK	Rights of Immigrants Network in Kansai
RPI	Republican Party of India
SAAPE	South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication
SASF	South Asian Social Forum
SAPI	South Asian People's Initiative
SC	Scheduled Castes
SOWETO	South Western Townships
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNLDC	United Nations Least Developed Countries
WAPPDCA	Women's Alliance for Peace, Power, Democracy and Constituent Assembly
WEF	World Economic Forum
WMW	World March of Women
WPASL	Women's Political Academy, Sri Lanka
WSF	World Social Forum
WSF IC	World Social Forum International Council
WTO	World Trade Organization

## CONTENTS

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*Acknowledgements* vii

*List of Abbreviations* x

1. Introduction 1
2. The Global Justice Movement  
and Occupy: Ethics, Visions, and  
Networking Logics 30
3. The Logical Ethics of a 'Neoliberal  
Bricolage': The World Bank, the UN,  
and the Rock Stars 52
4. Dalits and Burakumin:  
Knowledge Production in the  
Early Protest Movements 73
5. Dalits in the World Social Forums 102
6. South Asian Dalit Feminism:  
The Intricate Local Practices of  
Transnational Networking 143

7. Conclusion: Place Matters	194
------------------------------	-----

<i>References</i>	206
-------------------	-----

<i>Index</i>	232
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<i>About the Author</i>	249
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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

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*Yesterday Dappu was the symbol of shame and subjugation.*

*Today it is the symbol of assertion and struggle.*

*Tomorrow it would be the symbol of celebration and liberation.*

—Swarna Sabrina Francis, performer in Chindu, Hyderabad

It was the first day of the World Social Forum (WSF) in Nairobi, which took place from 20 to 25 January 2007. Three Dalit drummers dressed in red and black were the first to get out of our rented bus, which had parked outside the huge Moi International Sports Centre. They lit a small fire at the roadside and, heads cocked to keep the smoke out of their eyes, held their drums over the fire to make the leather smooth before starting the drumming. The rest of us inside and outside the bus waited patiently for them to give the first drum (dappu) signal, which would indicate that we should gather together and get ready to move. And then we were ready. Following the three drummers, we moved in the direction of the sports arena some hundred metres away. We found our way across the street, dodging rushing cars and buses that

were blaring their horns. The 2007 WSF was about to begin and the Dalit activists from India had just arrived.

Activist drummers from different parts of the world have played a crucial role in the Global Justice Movement (GJM), not only in Nairobi, but beginning with the first WSF in Porto Alegre in 2001 and up to the most recent one in Montreal in 2016. Their drumming sound has been central to catching the attention of participants; to make them gather and move to the venue. The drummers have also been an important link between the activists and the world outside of their own circles. Being aesthetically dressed, drumming loudly, and with emotionally charged dancing, they have, without words, always caught the attention of writers and journalists reporting about people's protests against discrimination and increased economic inequalities. This volume is not specifically about activist drummers, but rather about a number of activists in South Asia and Japan, participating in the WSF and the GJM. The focus will be on a number of WSFs, but even more so on an anthropological account of the ongoing work, on a day-to-day basis among a number of activists in South Asia and Japan, in creating and upholding transnational activist networks in between the large forum events.

## **THE GLOBAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT, THE UN-WORLD BANK, AND DALIT FEMINISM IN SOUTH ASIA**

### **The Themes**

In this volume I will combine three broad discussions: first, on the GJM, the Occupy Movement, and the WSF; second, about international non-governmental organizations [(I)NGOs] in relation to the United Nations (UN) and the World Bank; and third, about activism and Dalit feminism in South Asia, including the transnational collaborations between Dalits in South Asia and Burakumin in Japan. These discussions have been occasionally combined in one way or another, but there have seldom been discussions similar to those we could find regarding activism in Latin America or in Europe and the US.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar (1998a).

Activists in the GJM have for more than a decade been united by their protests against economic globalization and neoliberalism associated with the Washington Consensus, known to involve the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Trade Organization (WTO). The features of the neoliberal project have been accompanied by an increase in economic inequality. This has been described in detail by many writers as being not a by-product of neoliberalism but as something inherent in the project.<sup>2</sup> The GJM refers to the networks of heterogeneous movements across the world that are often said to have been born in the demonstrations in Seattle in 1999. The writings about the GJM and the WSF have to a large extent focused on Latin America, Europe, and the US. South Asia has generally been a neglected area of research in this context, and Dalit feminism in South Asia has, with few exceptions, been even more ignored in the context of the GJM.<sup>3</sup> Thus, as also observed by Conway (2013), neither Dalit feminism nor South Asia generally have been given due attention among scholars writing about the GJM and the WSF process. In spite of this neglect, Dalit feminism has played a central role in the GJM and the WSF process, and will be analysed in greater detail later.

This volume is an attempt to explore how two conflicting discourses—one among activists in the GJM and the other emanating from the World Bank—seem to have become intertwined locally within the same circles of activists among whom I carried out fieldwork in South Asia and Japan. The way this happened during the 2000s, in an intricate and, for me, unforeseen manner, struck me as extremely interesting and also challenging to grasp. By putting some questions to the ethnographical material, I have tried to apprehend the processes whereby these incongruences have emerged: What are the guiding values and ethics when transnational networks are created and upheld among activists? How are incongruences handled locally by the activists? How are internal differences understood and explained among activists and how are they negotiated or avoided in the processes?

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Harvey (2010 [2005]) Klein (2008), and Peck and Tickell (2002).

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Loomba and Lukose (2012), an edited volume discussing feminism and activism in South Asia in an interesting way.

The main argument of this volume is that during the last decade parts of the GJM and WSF have increasingly been permeated by a neoliberal discourse, and I will explore how these processes are locally experienced and expressed in South Asia and Japan. Simultaneously, as parts of the broader movement have been influenced by a neoliberal discourse, others have gradually been radicalized. These contradictory processes are now dealt with by activists and (I)NGO workers locally in different ways, depending on the situation and context. Each chapter contains a number of themes that are chosen to highlight the argument. These themes and geographical locations will be gradually introduced to the reader.<sup>4</sup>

In the ethnography I will explore the practices among activists with competing guiding values working side by side, in the process of creating global<sup>5</sup> and international networks.<sup>6</sup> The chapters ahead are, in other words, attempts to understand and describe the complex local relations among a number of activists creating networks in South Asia and Japan, when conflicting worldviews are played out locally.

The main examples are taken from the day-to-day work among activists within a broader transnational network called the International Movement against Discrimination and Racism (IMADR), and more specifically, from the Feminist Dalit Organization (FEDO) in Kathmandu (Nepal), the IMADR branch in Colombo (Sri Lanka), and Burakumin networks in Osaka (Japan).<sup>7</sup> I will also present ethnographical examples from WSFs.

The volume begins by elaborating on two different discourses that often are regarded to be in contrast with each other: the GJM

<sup>4</sup> I have intentionally not written in the form of a classic monograph and the themes are taken from varied levels (from the World Bank and UN to local organizations and movements), as well as from different geographical areas (Nepal, Sri Lanka, Japan, India, and Bangladesh).

<sup>5</sup> The focus on 'global networks' in the volume is with the purpose of drawing attention to transnational activist networks.

<sup>6</sup> The focus on 'international networks' in the volume wants to draw attention to contexts in which activists, (I)NGO workers and representatives of different governments, UN and other international institutions interact with each other.

<sup>7</sup> IMADR was originally created by Buraku Liberation League (BLL) in 1988.