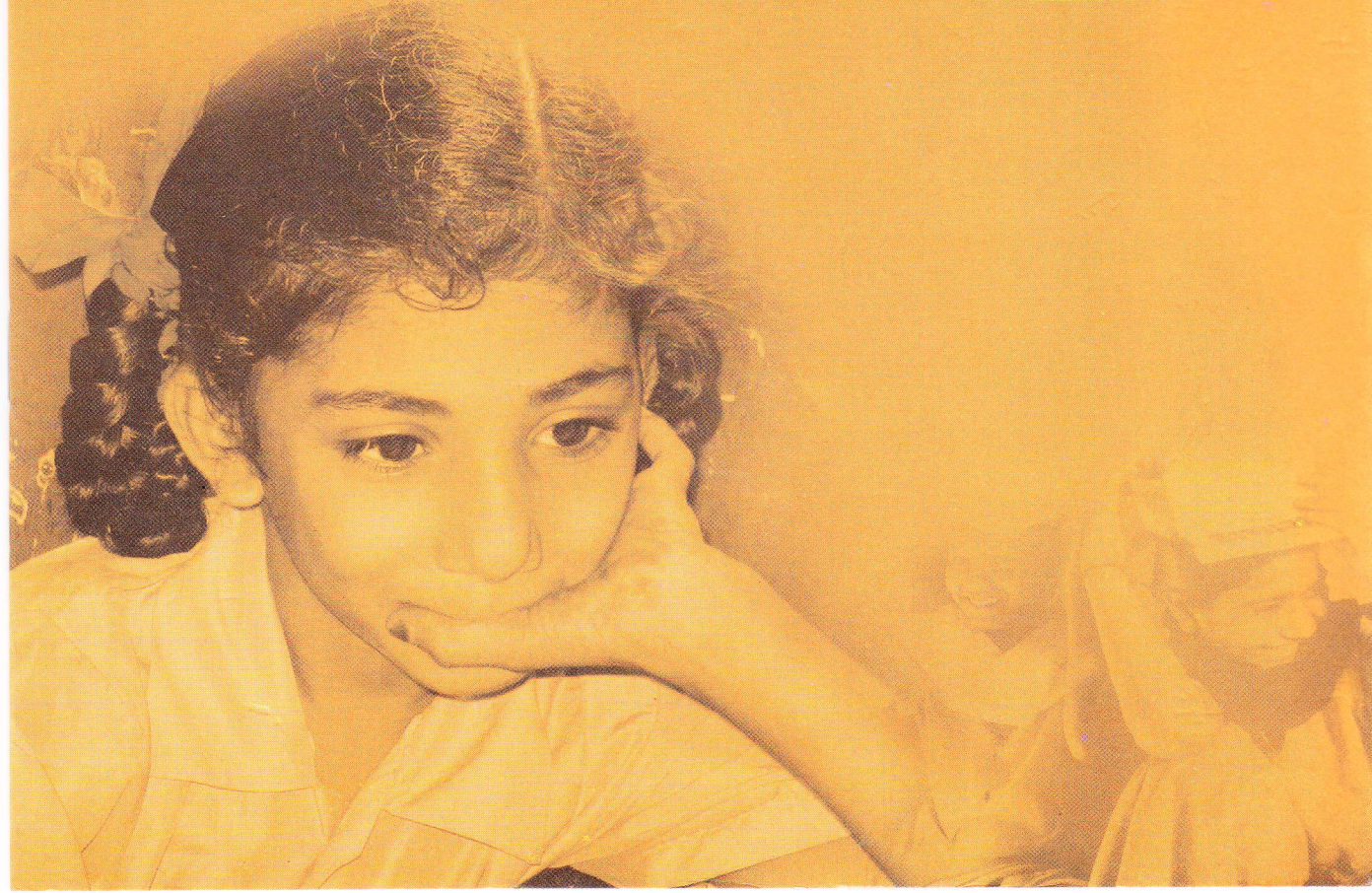


# vachla ditu





# Resource Centre for Women and Girls



VACHA is a women's group that was formed in 1987 as a women's library, together with a cultural centre that created and collected oral and visual resources for use by literacy-deprived women. It also organizes gender training for groups like college youth, teachers and social activists. The organization is Mumbai based and its outreach

programmes are mainly in Maharashtra and Gujarat. It is part of a network of autonomous women's groups in India. It was registered as a trust in 1990.

From 1995 Vacha has focused on issues of adolescent girls who live in *bastis*/ poor neighbourhoods that are referred to as slums by authorities. Girls here suffer gender biases that are compounded by poverty, caste and ethnicity and also by linguistic or religious minority status. Vacha works with them for their empowerment through its development activities, research, documentation, networking, campaigns and advocacy.

Through its programmes, Vacha aims to enhance self-esteem and self-expressions of girls and women and visibilise their issues. It provides training for girls to become better equipped for learning and for accessing opportunities for growth and development. This includes health education and elements of pre-vocational training in its programmes. In recent years Vacha has started including male youth in some of its projects, as their gender sensitization and participation can be important in resolving problems that girls face at home and in community.

*VACHA is a term in the feminine gender in several Indian languages. It means speech, verbal expression or articulation.*





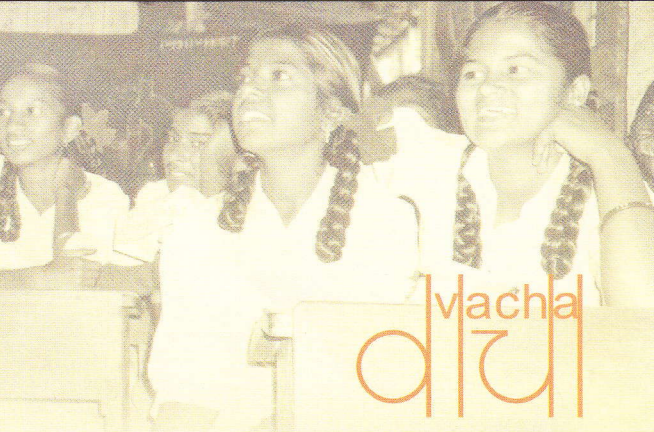
# Girls Centres and Youth Spaces

Youth centres of Vacha are located in several bastis and schools. They are accessed by girls and boys in second decade of life. Some are exclusively for girls. The young participants come for curricular inputs and other activities before or after their school shifts and on week ends. The focus is on training in leadership and youth participation in civic life. Lessons in English and computer skills are organised for them as a working knowledge of both is essential for upward mobility. Music, yoga, photography, art and theatre sessions are integrated in the programmes. A multilingual library provides for vocabulary development and access to general knowledge. A mobile collection of books and other resources for children and youth are taken to community centres regularly.

Vacha organises health and educational funfairs for girls and for mixed groups of girls and boys in bastis, municipal schools and at other sites. The organisation has produced resources such as health diaries, children's rights handbooks, posters and charts, puzzles, games as well as an album of songs of girlhood and other training materials for use in training programmes.

These centres have covered several hundreds of young people directly through its work in communities and in neighbourhood schools and several thousands through outreach programmes.

Each centre publishes their newsletters twice a year and organizes public events. Vacha's ongoing programmes in schools and bastis include Bole kishori - 'Girls Speak Out' where girls receive training in communication skills and voice their concerns and perceptions of their life at home and outside. In some of the bastis slightly older and autonomous youth groups have emerged from Vacha's activities. The leadership and self empowerment programmes for youth are designed to help young people acquire life skills necessary for articulating their needs, understanding role and use of various institutions and facilities, and for creating an awareness of issues like child rights, gender bias, and communal harmony and for preparing them for new socio-economic realities of 21<sup>st</sup> century.



“At Vacha you will have fun, you will do all kinds of fantastic things.”

- Gloria Steinem





## Library and Cultural Centre

Access to information is important to any struggle, movement or development programme. Although the women's movement gave rise to the concept of a women's library in the eighties, none actually existed till Vacha established one in 1987. Originally housed in the home of a member, the library is now located in its Santacruz project centre. It has nearly five thousand books on and by women and for youth. Major areas include Literature, Society, History, Women's liberation, Psychology, Media, Development issues, Sexuality, Health, Religion, Education, and Violence against Women. There are also research reports, magazines, journals and other documents. The library also has books in Hindi, Marathi and Gujarati. Students, social activists, home makers, research scholars, media practitioners and others access it.

The cultural centre evolved along with the library to overcome the limitations faced by literacy-deprived women. Most writing on women's

issues is still in English and therefore accessible to very few. Vacha collects, creates, translates and disseminates cultural resources such as songs, skits, audio and video cassettes and CDs on topics concerning women's rights, women's histories, environment and peace and girls' issues. It screens films of interest to women and youth and organizes interactions between readers and writers. Vacha has produced four albums of songs on gender issues and two documentaries on women freedom fighters as part of a project to take women's history back to women.

The library conducts study circles, film screenings and interfaces with women writers. Library regulars have interacted with visiting writers like Alison Lurie, Ashwini Dhongde, Barbara Ehrenreich, Dhiruben Patel, Gloria Steinem, Jameela Nishat, Mahasweta Devi, Mamata Sagar, Nabonita Deb Sen, Urmila Pawar and others.





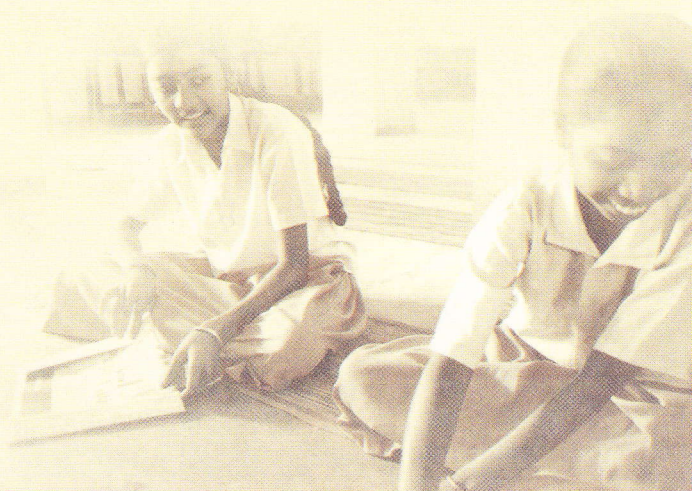
# Research and Training



Members of Vacha have engaged in research and documentation on women's and on girls' issues independently and as part of the group. They also work to increase visibility of women in history, and to highlight the status and contribution of marginalized sections of women and girls. Research areas include Women in the Indian Nationalist movement, Sidi women in the Gir forest in Gujarat, Bene Israel women of Maharashtra, traditional games of Maharashtrian women, Women and Ageing and Gender issues in education.



Today the focus is more on adolescent girls, their health and education status and on their self expressions and their voices. Vacha has produced three volumes on this subject that has, as yet, rarely been covered by researchers and writers. One major area of Vacha's training is workshops for youth on gender, communal harmony and democracy. Vacha's training materials have been used by UNICEF, the state education departments and by many NGOs.



“that repository of stree shakti in the form of books at Vacha continuously challenged and provoked my thought processes.”

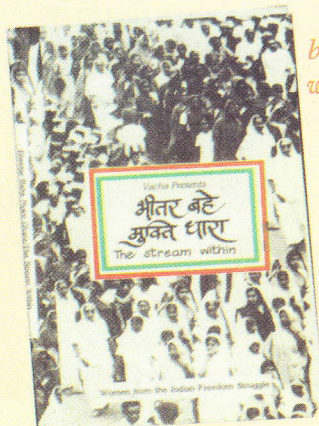
- Pinky Virani in the foreword to 'Bitter Chocolate'



# Books, Reports and Audio-visual Material

*"The role of women freedom fighters, those unsung heroines who shed their traditional roles has hardly been studied. This film (Bheetar bahe mukti dhara) seeks to bridge a gap that has become wider with the death of every woman freedom fighter."*

*-Times of India*



*"Good music for a good cause"*

*-Shanta Gokhale on Apni baheno ke saath*



- *Bheetar Bahe Mukti Dhara* (The Stream Within) – video documentary on women from the Indian freedom movement (Hindi/ Gujarati/ Marathi with English sub-titles)
- *Safia Khan ki Talash mein* (In Search of Safia Khan) – On a forgotten woman leader – video documentary in Hindi with English sub-titles
- Rebecca Reuben – Scholar, Teacher and Community Leader [1889-1957] (English)
- Jewish Indian and Women – Compilation of stories of Bene Israeli women in India (English)
- *Kishori Geet* – audio cassette/CD (Hindi) – songs on girlhood
- *Sakhion ke Sang* - audio cassette/CD (Hindi) – songs for women
- *Sarkhi Saheli* – audio cassette/CD (Gujarati) folk based garba songs on women's issues
- *Apni Baheno ke Saath* – audio cassette (Hindi) – songs from the women's movement
- *Vardhana* – Women and Ageing in India , Report of a national colloquium, (English)
- Women's Question – a Quiz book with 333 women related questions
- *Aaj Zameen Kal Asmaan* (Today the Earth, Tomorrow the Sky) A poster on developmental support to girls in early adolescence

## Resource Production

- Experiencing girlhood - Stories from bastis in Mumbai (English)
- *Bole kishori* (Girls Speak Out)- Self Expressions of adolescent girls living in the poor neighborhoods in Mumbai (Hindi)
- *Maidan khula ab der kis baat ki* - booklet of inspiring stories of sports women (Hindi/Marathi)
- *Munnmit* - a health handbook for girls with rights approach (Hindi & Marathi)
- *Masti ki pathshala* – a puzzle booklet on health for children (Hindi/Marathi)
- *Aple Khel Arogyashi Mel* – documentation of traditional games of women in Maharashtra and their implications for health (Marathi)
- *Bal-Kishori* : the preadolescent girl – a research report (English)
- Gender bias in education of girls from poverty affected families – a research report
- *Geet Vacha* - a book of songs on women's issues (multilingual)

### Forthcoming :

- A collection of articles on women's issues (Gujarati)
- Forgotten Founding Mothers – Women from the Indian Freedom Movement - an anthology (English and Hindi)

*"The Balkishori tape is very inspiring, invigorating, empowering, Wow!"*

*- Kamla Bhasin*



We, at Vacha, are a group of women with backgrounds in social activism, community work, media, research, writing, teaching and homemaking. Vacha is supported by grants and donations. It also derives support and strength from the contributions of individual women and men in form of time, energy, expertise, and gifts of books, furniture and equipment.

Core group:

Dineshwari Thonse  
Kumud Shanbag  
Nina Haeems  
Nischint Hora  
Pradnya Sawargaonkar  
Seeta Setalvad  
Sonal Shukla  
Vibhuti Patel

Trustees:

Dineshwari Thonse, Meenal Patel, Sonal Shukla, Vibhuti Patel

Visitors are welcome to the project office at:  
Project Vacha

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Phone: 022 26055523 Email [vachamail@gmail.com](mailto:vachamail@gmail.com)  
[www.vacha.org.in](http://www.vacha.org.in)

Vacha is registered as a trust and donations to it are exempt under section 80G of the Income-Tax Act. Vacha seeks contributions as grants, donations, relevant books, cassettes, and other materials and individual help in the form of time and energy for its activities.

Donations/correspondence to Vacha may be addressed to the registered office:  
Vacha Charitable Trust, 5, Bhavna Apartments,  
S. V. Road, VileParle (West), Mumbai - 400 056.

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It means speech, verbal expression or articulation.*



