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Katherine A. Kendall Institute for
International Social Work Education

International Social Work Leader Review

Vimla V. Nadkarni (1948 – 2021)

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Although small in stature, Vimla Nadkarni (née Lala) was a giant in shaping both Indian and global social work. Professor Nadkarni is well-known internationally for her work as President of the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) from 2012–2016, although she was active in many areas of international social work and served on numerous international projects, editorial, and advisory boards. She headed the Department of Medical and Psychiatric Social Work and was the Founding Dean of the School of Social Work at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) in Mumbai, India, from which she retired in 2013 after 42 years of service. Professor Nadkarni died 20 November 2021.

Vimla was born into a large family in South Bombay,* and took a Bachelor of Arts (with Honours in Psychology) at St. Xavier's College (University of Bombay) in 1969, a Master's of Arts in Social Work at from TISS (with Honours, with a Specialisation in Medical and Psychiatric Social Work) in 1971, and a Bachelor of General Law from Kishinchand Chllaram Law College (University of Bombay) in 1976. Under the guidance of Armaity S. Desai at the TISS, Vimla submitted her PhD thesis, *Intervention in issues of pollution using integrated social work practice*, (<http://hdl.handle.net/10603/22229>) in 1991 and was awarded her PhD in 1996. (Desai herself was awarded the Katherine Kendall Award of the International Association of Schools of Social Work in 1992.) Vimla married journalist Vithal C. Nadkarni in 1977; their daughter lives and works in the United States.

Vimla started her working career as a medical social worker at the King Edward Memorial Hospital, Bombay, in 1971. She worked in the epilepsy unit, as well as the orthopaedic centre and skin unit. After completing her MA, she joined the College of Social Work at Nirmala Niketan (affiliated with the University of Bombay) as a lecturer in 1976 and worked there until 1984. She became a reader in the Department of Medical and Psychiatric Social Work at TISS in 1985. Vimla was appointed as Head of Department from 1986 to 2006, and then as the first Dean of the School of Social Work at TISS from 2006 to 2008. She then stepped back to continue her teaching and research and retired as Senior Professor in 2013.

In addition to her academic and administrative responsibilities, Professor Nadkarni led more than 20 funded research projects, including initiatives on immunization, drug misuse, women's health, HIV/AIDS, and the health of young people. She began the Integrated Rural Health and Development Project in Shahpur (1993) and the Cell for AIDS Research Action and Training (CARAT), a TISS field action project, from 1993–2011. She initiated the development of the HIV/AIDS counselling policy, which was integrated into the national policy document on AIDS prevention and control in India. Her AIDS-related work was sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme and served as an important advocacy tool for improving the outreach and quality of the social protection programmes for HIV/AIDS-affected people in India. Out of CARAT emerged Saksham, a capacity-building project hosted by TISS for HIV and tuberculosis psychosocial counselling and community engagement, which was first funded by the Global Fund in 2008 (<https://tiss.edu/view/11/projects/all-projects/saksham-hiv-aids-counselling-programme-grant-to-tis/>).

Professor Nadkarni was motivated throughout her life by feminism, a passion for human rights and human dignity, and a drive to elevate the quality of social work education and practice. She served as the Secretary General of the Family Planning Association of India (2001–2002), President of the Bombay Association of Trained Social Workers for two terms (1994–1998), and Vice President for two additional terms (2011–2015). Professor Nadkarni was instrumental in establishing the Indian Association of Social Work Education in 2013 and served as Vice-President of the Association of Schools of Social Work in India (ASSWI). She was elected as a Member-at-Large of the Board of Directors of IASSW in 2008, and as President from 2012 to 2016 (<https://www.iasw-aiets.org/>). Professor Nadkarni was a founding member of the Social Work and Health Inequalities Network (SWHIN; <https://blogs.coventry.ac.uk/swhin/>). Prof Nadkarni served on the Advisory Board of the Global Institute of Social Work, Singapore (<https://www.thegisw.org/>); as Honorary Director for the Niramaya Health Foundation, Mumbai (an NGO focused on child and adolescent health); and the Advisory Group for the Mumbai-based Khula Aasman Trust, which uses the arts to engage social change for marginalised communities (<https://www.instagram.com/khulaaasmantrust/?hl=en>). She remained active throughout her entire life, serving on the Advisory Board for the 9th Social Work Congress of the National Association of Professional Social Workers in India, which was held in October 2021, just a month before her death.

Professor Nadkarni's international recognitions includes Kellogg (1994) and Fulbright (1995) Fellowships. She was the 2nd Annual Hokenstad International Lecturer (nominated by the Council of Social Work Education) in 2008 (<https://www.cswe.org/about-cswe/governance/commissions-and-councils/commission-on-global-social-work-education/hokenstad-international-lecture/>). She participated in numerous international boards, editorial boards, consultancies, and nearly 100 international, national, and local conferences, seminars, and workshops. She published more than 40 articles and book reviews in refereed journals, and many book chapters. A selected list of publications follows below.

**Note: the name Bombay reverted to Mumbai in November 1995. Names current at the time are used here.*

Tributes:

Campanini, A. Shank, B., & Tiong, T. N. (2021). Tribute to the late Emeritus Professor Vimla V. Nadkarni, PhD. <https://www.iassw-aiets.org/featured/7510-tribute-to-prof-vimla-nadkarni/>

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Pulla, V. R. (2021). Vimla Nadkarni: Compassionate and assertive doyen of social work. *Space and Culture, India*, 9(3), 73–76. <https://doi.org/10.20896/saci.v9i3.1239>

Selected publications

1970–1989

Articles

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Nadkarni, V. V. (1986). A model of community health for medical social workers, *Indian Journal of Social Work*, 46(4), 469–482.

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1990–1999

Articles and book reviews

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Nadkarni, V. (1998). Review of the book *Engendering AIDS: Deconstructing Sex, Text, and the Epidemic* by T. Wilton. *National Medical Journal*, 11(6), 298.

Nadkarni, V., Maitra, S., Hans, G., & Kumar, A. (1998). Health advocacy: Implications for the social work profession. *Indian Journal of Social Work*, 59, 321–339.

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Books, book chapters, and technical reports

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Nadkarni, V. (1993). Social work response to mental illness and mental health. In M. Purnima & G. Katy, (Eds.), *Mental health in India: Issues and concerns* (pp. 70–93). Tata Institute of Social Sciences.

Nadkarni, V. (1994). Dynamics of families facing environmental disasters and interventions. In M. Desai (Ed.), *Family and interventions: A course compendium*. Tata Institute of Social Sciences.

Nadkarni, V. (1997). *Intervention in issues of pollution utilising integrated social work practice*. Mumbai: Tata Institute of Social Sciences.

Nadkarni, V., & Sinha, R. (1997). Support to the future role of NGOs in HIV and development in India: United Nations Development Programme Initiative. Cell for AIDS Research Action and Training, Tata Institute of Social Sciences.

Khanna, N., Nadkarni, V., & Bhutani L. K. (1998). India. In T. Brown, R. Chan, D. Mugrditchian, B. Mulhall, D. Plummer, R. Sarda, & W. Sittitrai (Eds.), *Sexually transmitted diseases in Asia and the Pacific* (pp. 114–137). Venereology Publishing Inc.

Faroodi F., & Nadkarni, V. (1999). Sexual health and life skills development among out of school adolescents and young women. In S.D. Bhatt & N.C. Dhoundiyal (Eds.), *HIV risks in adolescents and young adults* (pp. 68–77). Kumaun University.

2000–2009

Articles and book reviews

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2010–2021

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