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## MANAVI'S STATEMENT AT THE CONVICTION OF MS. PURVI PATEL IN INDIANA

### WHO DETERMINES MY RIGHTS?

What are we, as women, and a South Asian women's organization, to make of the conviction of Purvi Patel in Indiana for feticide AND neglecting the fetus she was carrying? Besides the logical contradictions embedded in the ruling, how does it uphold the nuances of Roe v Wade that guarantees women privacy and decision making rights over her body?

Manavi deplores the conviction of Ms. Patel and understands it as a deliberate attempt to chip away at the choice that women in the U.S. have been rightfully claiming vis-à-vis Roe v Wade. It sends a chilling note to all women in Indiana, in fact women in every state, that their rights over their bodies and reproductive actions are limited; they are nothing but vessels for gestation.

As many have pointed out, this conviction is likely to make women wary of seeking medical help when they are suffering a miscarriage, lest they be charged with criminal misdeeds. According to the National Advocates for Pregnant Women, at least 600 women have been arrested or faced forcible intervention for seeking abortions between 1973 and 2011. So far, 38 states have "fetal homicide" laws that claim to protect the rights of the fetus, as well as the woman. These laws, in practice however, are creeping toward the criminalization of women who seek abortions or suffer "questionable" miscarriages.

When the State believes a fetus has more rights than the live woman who is carrying it, it is setting a dangerous precedent. We witnessed its consequence in the 2012 death of Dr. Savita Halappanavar in Galway, Ireland. Despite Dr. Halappanavar's repeated assertions that she was miscarrying her pregnancy at 17 weeks, hospitals refused to perform a life-saving abortion until she was near death of septicemia. She, too, was a gestational vessel after all!

We, at Manavi, strongly protest this privileging of the fetus over the woman. We perceive Ms. Patel's trial and conviction as a blatant injustice and disregard of her reproductive rights, a right that all women must have in society.